MasterBook™

The Key That Unlocks Adventure

Roleplaying Rules
for the Worlds of West End Games

DESIGN
Ed Stark

DEVELOPMENT, EDITING AND ADDITIONAL MATERIAL
Bill Smith, Miranda Horner

COVER DESIGN & GRAPHIC DESIGN
Stephen Crane

GRAPHICS
Brian Schomburg

ADDITIONAL GRAPHICS
Rich Hawran, Tom ONeill, Steven Brown

INTERIOR ILLUSTRATION
Paul Daly, Jaime Lombardo & Ron Hill, Karl Waller

ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATION
Brian Schomburg

***MASTERBOOK* LOGO DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION**
Stephen Crane

THE *MASTERBOOK* PLAYTEST TEAM
Sandy Addison, Grant K. Beery, Tim Bobko, Jeff Cisneros, Shane Hensley, Ed Ladner, Dave Lemon, Steve Lorenz, Greg Masse, Kirsten Masse, Brian McGhee, Bill Olmesdahl, Tom ONeill, Brian Sean Perry, Daniel Phillips, Brian Schomburg, Ron Seiden, Jesse VanValkenburg

Publisher: **Daniel Scott Palter** • Associate Publisher/Treasurer: **Denise Palter** • Associate Publisher: **Richard Hawran** • Senior Editor: **Greg Farshtey**
Editors: **Miranda Horner, Peter Schweighofer, Bill Smith, Ed Stark** • Art Director: **Stephen Crane** • Graphic Artists: **Tim Bobko, Steven Brown, Tom ONeill, Brian Schomburg** • Sales Manager: **Bill Olmesdahl** • Licensing Manager: **Ron Seiden** • Warehouse Manager: **Ed Hill**
Accounting: **Karen Bayly, Wendy Lord, Kimberly Riccio** • Billing: **Amy Giacobbe**

WEST END GAMES • RR 3 BOX 2345 • HONESDALE, PA 18431

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• Welcome to *MasterBook* •

MasterBook is a universal roleplaying game rules system — this means it is flexible enough to be used with virtually *any* game setting you can imagine! You might be a scout ship pilot exploring the outer reaches of space; a two-fisted adventurer battling angry natives to recover a lost treasure; a psychic battling demons from another dimension; or any one of a thousand other roles!

MasterBook contains all the rules you need to start playing in a setting of your own creation. But what if you don't want to make up your own world? West End Games sells Worldbooks for use with *MasterBook* that introduce you to exciting universes to explore! These include:

The World of Bloodshadows
The World of Indiana Jones
The World of Tank Girl
The World of Species
The World of Necroscope

and many more to come!

The MasterDeck

In this book, you will see references to the *MasterDeck*, cards that can be used to enhance your gameplay with this system. These are **optional**, and are not required for you to use the *MasterBook* system.

The *MasterDeck* is sold separately by West End Games. To order, send a check or money order for $10 to:

West End Games
MasterDeck
RR 3, Box 2345
Honesdale, PA 18431

Karl Waller

• An Introduction to • *MasterBook*

Greetings and welcome to the *MasterBook* roleplaying guide. This game system allows you to experience any number of adventures and wonders. It is designed to help you and your friends use a myriad of different universes and game settings. The choices are all up to you...

What is *MasterBook?*

MasterBook is a master game system published by West End Games. This system can be used to roleplay in virtually any game universe, with virtually any options, but it is also designed to be used with specific game settings designed by West End Games.

Each game WorldBook will provide additional information on each of the new fictional settings, but every *MasterBook* world follows the core set of rules set down in this volume.

• Novice roleplayers should have some questions now. Let's start with some answers.

• Experienced roleplayers can skip on ahead to the "Basic Rules Overview," which follows immediately.

What is a "Roleplaying Game"?

Roleplaying games are, simply put, "Let's pretend" with rules. Think of childhood games like "cops and robbers." Every player assumed the role of a cop or a robber, or maybe some other bystander. Then everybody acted out their role (the robbers robbed somebody and tried to get away, the cops chased the robbers and so forth). Everybody ran around and had fun, until ...

"I shot you!"
"No, you didn't; you missed!"
"Did not! Got you right there!"
"I was behind my car!"
"What car? There's no car!"
"It's our *getaway* car! Blam! Ha! I got *you!*"
"No, you didn't!"

To stop the argument, people began coming up with "do overs" and "rules": "You can only shoot somebody if you are *this* close to them and you have to shout 'bang!' and stick out your finger," for example.

That's the idea behind *MasterBook*.

Instead of running around and shouting "bang," *MasterBook* presents a system so you can play a much more sophisticated version of "Let's pretend." In *MasterBook,* you can pretend to play people in much more exotic *game universes.*

What is a Game Universe?

A game universe is a setting where the action occurs. Depending on the setting, different things can, or will, or might, happen. Some game universes are a lot like "reality" — the Earth we all know. Others are radically different.

In roleplaying games, you get to explore these strange settings, and interact with the people, places and things that make these places exciting and strange.

For example, *MasterBook* adventures might take you to many other worlds:

• A *fantasy* world, where dragons and magic are real;

• A *film noir fantasy* setting, where private eyes fight zombies and other-dimensional creatures;

• A *pulp adventure* setting, where you are trying to keep the bad guys from getting their hands on a top secret, experimental time machine;

• A *space opera* setting, where space heroes fight to protect the people of Earth;

... Or anything else you and your friends think of! You can play any of these, and many more, with the *MasterBook* rules system. In fact, you and your friends can create your own worlds!

The rules help you create characters who adventure in these worlds. In essence, you and your friends get to play larger-than-life personalities who go through adventures like those from your favorite books, comics and movies. The big difference is that your characters are the "stars" and you, the players, get to make the choices about what your characters are doing.

Unlike in other mediums, in roleplaying games, you don't *have* to do anything you don't want to. In roleplaying games, you get to tell the story *you* want to play: your characters can do anything you can think of!

What is Roleplaying?

Roleplaying is creating and assuming a fictional personality — a *character* — who will act *for* you in that fictional game setting. Your character may be a reflection of yourself, only transposed into new setting, or it may be a completely fictional creation that has no relationship to you at all. By using the *MasterBook* character creation system, you could create:

• A hard-bitten warrior from another age, with weapons and abilities far beyond normal capabilities;

• A wizard or a super-scientist, whose weapon is knowledge of a bizarre and arcane nature — tools that we would never understand are mundane to that character;

• A hero whose only desire is to help the downtrodden and whose only abilities are wits, guts ... and a shotgun called "Bessie";

• A member of a nonhuman species, whose abilities and attitudes are far from humankind;

Or you can create any other sort of character — as long as he or she (or it!) fits into the game universe you are playing in.

So What do I do in a Roleplaying Game?

Most people who play roleplaying games assume the personas mentioned above. They use the *MasterBook* character creation system to create characters (or they select a pregenerated character from a collection of *templates* listed in various WorldBooks). They can even create fictional backgrounds for these characters — you don't start playing the persona at birth, after all.

Logically, most of the people who play roleplaying games are called *players*. The characters they create are *player characters*. They may, sometimes, be referred to as "heroes" or, more likely, "adventurers" (since, in *MasterBook*, you don't always have to play the good guys) or "protagonists" (taken from dramatic and literary reference — it simply means "main characters"). The player characters are the *main characters* in whatever story is being created and the action centers around *them*.

The Gamemaster

But who creates the universe and plays all the supporting parts? Who plays the enemies and decides what obstacles the adventurers have to overcome to succeed? This role is played by one of the players, who is now called the *gamemaster*.

The gamemaster is the "overall arbiter in the game universe." In simpler terms, the gamemaster has several things he or she has to do:

• Create a story

• Create gamemaster characters

• Use the rules to help tell the story

Create a Story

The gamemaster's main role is to create and tell a story — to be a director and screenwriter for the story the characters are in. He sets up the situations, and the player characters react to them.

The gamemaster also has to "set the stage." The gamemaster is in charge of defining the game setting, the genre, and the obstacles. Often, the gamemaster will get help from authors and game designers — West End Games publishes *MasterBook* WorldBooks that include settings, adventures, story ideas, gamemaster characters, and obstacles. You can even create your own, using suggestions found in this book.

To create a story, the gamemaster must come up with a plot ("The characters have to go rescue the prince, who has been captured by enemy spies."), devise the settings for the story (the hideout of the spies, maybe a village the characters will go to before finding out where the hideout is, and anywhere else the characters will go), and outline the story as a series of events. For example:

• The characters are approached by the king's advisor and offered a "king's ransom" to rescue the prince and are told that a strange ship was spotted leaving the harbor earlier that day;

• Second, they go to the port to see where the ship was headed;

• Third, they travel to the distant city where the ship was headed, where they try to track down the hideout of the kidnappers ... and so forth.

Create Gamemaster Characters

These are the people the characters will meet during their adventures. The gamemaster must not only create these people, but then acts out their role when the player characters meet them during the game.

Gamemaster characters are sometimes *antagonists* who act against the player characters, and sometimes they are *supporting characters* who might help or hinder the player characters depending on the player characters' actions and attitudes. Other supporting characters are used only because they make really neat personalities to encounter, even if they aren't important to the story.

Some gamemaster characters could include:

• Evil wizards who are trying to destroy the player characters, the player characters' friends, or the player characters' pets (or whatever — you get the idea) because they stand in the way of the wizards' "plans for universal domination — *bwah-ha-haa*";

• Friendly shopkeepers who keep the player characters supplied with food, clothing, information, and ammunition;

• Government contacts who show up unexpectedly and want the characters to do something "for the good of national security" (best said behind dark glasses and in a monotone);

• Double-crossing seducers who are looking for the player characters' help, the plans to national defense, and a *really* good time;

• Monsters who have little or no intelligence but an unending appetite for (fill in characters' species here) flesh;

And, as if you hadn't expected it, just about anyone else you can imagine.

These characters are created and roleplayed by the gamemaster much like the player characters are created and roleplayed by the players. However, they usually aren't "on screen" (involved in the game) nearly as much, and their fictional interests and desires are usually tools by which the gamemaster can provoke better "acting" (roleplaying) from his or her "stars" (the players).

Use the Rules to Help Tell the Story

The gamemaster has to know the game system and rules, and must interpret the rules to help tell the story. When characters (both player and gamemaster characters) try to do something, the gamemaster uses the characters' values, dice rolls and the rules in this book to decide what happens: if they succeed or fail, and what happens because of what they did.

In this part of the job, gamemasters must try to be fair and relatively impartial — they are not trying to "beat" the players even though they are playing the bad guys. They are simply trying to use the rules to help tell an interesting and exciting story!

Roleplaying games revolve around characters *trying* to do things — cast spells, fly spaceships through asteroid fields, stop zombies from eating the fair damsel, and so forth. However, there's always the chance that they may *fail* at what they're trying to do.

That's where the rules come in.

Each character has certain *values*, called *attributes* and *skills*, which tell how good or bad he or she is at doing certain

types of things. When a character tries to do something, players look at their character's value for whatever they are doing (for example, shooting a gun requires the *fire combat* skill). They then often roll dice to simulate "the odds" of succeeding or failing.

By using these rules, the gamemaster can determine whether the character really did "shoot the gun out of the goon's hand" or if he missed.

MasterBook's rules cover combat and fighting, interaction (like trying to scare or trick people), skills (like driving a hovercar or operating a computer) and "special effects" (like magic, miracles, psionics, super powers and other things) — in short, *MasterBook* covers virtually anything you might want your character to try.

The Presentation of *MasterBook*

If you are an experienced player (or just plain curious), you may want to skip around a little, reading the sections that interest you most.

MasterBook is organized and presented first from a player's perspective, *then* from a gamemaster's perspective. However, it's important to note that rules books generally don't make good cover-to-cover reading. Instead, view this like any other manual: read the sections that interest you most, or use the Table of Contents to find the section that gives you any information you might need.

Chapter Summary

Here's a brief summary of the chapters in this book so you can see what you will be reading about:

Introduction to MasterBook: This introduction.

Basic Rules Overview: A brief summary of the core rules, including many reference charts.

Chapter One, "Character Creation": Detailed rules for creating a *MasterBook* player character. These rules can also be used for creating gamemaster characters.

Chapter Two, "Background Generation": These rules explore the history and "special abilities" of your character. They allow the player to create "unusual" characters with special abilities and drawbacks. These rules are *optional* — players may choose to simply use basic character generation and not employ background generation.

Chapter Three, "The Rules": The rules system behind *MasterBook* is discussed in a step-by-step manner, including combat, interaction and other core rules ideas.

Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use": Every character in *MasterBook* has certain skills that define the character's areas of knowledge and ability. In this chapter, the different skills are described with the rules for their use.

Chapter Five, "The Card Deck": In the *MasterBook* boxed set, there is a card deck used to enhance roleplaying and game play. The use of this deck are explained in this chapter.

Chapter Six, "Special Effects": Magical spells, super-science, miracles of faith, and psionic powers are all staples of different roleplaying game settings. This system allows players and gamemasters to use a simple system for creating all these effects for their characters.

Chapter Seven, "Equipment": This chapter includes some *very basic* equipment that you can use to equip your characters. Weapons, armor, and general equipment are included along with rules for their use.

Chapter Eight, "Gamemastering *MasterBook*": The gamemaster gets to see how game settings can be created and adventures can be designed. Rules for creating gamemaster characters are also provided.

Well, what are you waiting for? Let's go!

• Basic Rule Overview •

(A Guide to the *MasterBook* Rules System)

• Chapter One: Character Creation •

Selecting A Character

The first thing you need to do is ask the gamemaster what type of world you will be adventuring in. The gamemaster may tell you which *character templates* are appropriate for the world, or the gamemaster may provide character templates.

Each template describes a complete character and provides basic game information for the character — the numbers that describe the character in game terms. The template also gives a brief description of the character's history, motivations and objectives.

Creating A Character

Players can create their own characters from scratch. It is assumed that the player has a *character concept* — a general idea of who the character is and how he or she (or it) fits into the world the characters will be existing in. Photocopy the Character Sheet.

Characters have **eight** Attributes: *Agility, Dexterity, Strength, Endurance, Mind, Intellect, Charisma* and *Confidence.*

You have 68 points to split among these Attributes: 8-9 is average, 5 is the normal minimum and 13 is the normal maximum.

Derived Attributes

Toughness: Once the Attributes are assigned, find the character's *Toughness.* Add the two sets of Toughness Points together to find out what the character's *Toughness* is.

Strength	Toughness Points
10 to 13	4
7 to 9	3
5 to 6	2
Endurance	**Toughness Points**
12 to 13	8
9 to 11	7
7 to 8	6
5 to 6	5

Movement Rates: Every character has certain movement rates (how fast they can move in a round). Find your character's values based on the formula below; your character's movement may not exceed the maximum listed.

Type of Movement	Formula	Maximum
Movement Rate, Ground (running)	**MRG** = [AGI+AGI+STR]/4	MAX 8
Movement Rate, Water (swimming)	**MRS** = [AGI+AGI+STR]/6	MAX 5
Movement Rate, Climbing (climbing)	**MRC** = [STR+STR+AGI]/10	MAX 3
Movement Rate, Long Jumping (jumping)	**MRJ** = [STR+STR+AGI]/10	MAX 3

Life Points

Characters begin with five Life Points. Their uses are explained in Chapter Three, "The Rules." A character may never have more than 10 Life Points.

Skill Adds and Skill Points

Each skill is tied to an attribute. The character has the Attribute's value as the beginning skill value, and *skill adds* add directly to that total.

For example, a character has Dexterity 10, and wants to spend 3 skill points to increase his *fire combat* skill to 3 adds; *fire combat* is a Dexterity skill. The character's *fire combat* skill is now 13 (10+3).

Characters begin with a variable number of *skill points,* which they use to buy skill adds. Add the two totals below to determine beginning skill points.

Character's Intellect	Skill Points
13	10
11–12	9
8–10	8
6–7	7
5	6
Character's Mind	**Skill Points**
13	16
11–12	14
9–10	12
7–8	10
6	8
5	6

Assigning Skill Points: Pick skills from the skill list in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use."

- One skill point buys one skill add.
- Each *specialization* skill add costs 1/2 of a skill point (i.e., one skill point buys two specialization adds). For an explanation of specializations, see the section on specializations in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use."

Skill Add Limits

There are the following skill add limits placed on character creation:

- Maximum of three adds in any one general skill.
- Maximum of two adds in any one specialization.
- Maximum of five adds between general skill adds and specialization adds.
- Must choose a focus immediately when choosing a *macroskill.*
- Must spend all beginning skill points. Any unspent ones are simply lost.

Optional Rule: Gamemasters may rule that characters must use one fourth of their beginning skill points for "professional" or "theme" skills. These are generally "non-combat" oriented skills.

These skill limits apply at all times:

- Specialization adds may never exceed general adds by more than two adds. For example, if you have two adds in a certain skill, you can only have up to four adds in a specialization.
- May have a specialization in a general skill that you have no adds in (up to the maximum of two specialization adds above the number of adds in the general skill).

• Chapter Two: Background Generation •

This chapter contains optional rules that enable players to completely round out the background of their character.

Characters can take "advantages," which are beneficial background elements. Advantages and compensations are rated by columns to show how powerful they are: Column I (CI) advantages and compensations are relatively weak; Column II (CII) versions are more powerful; Column III (CIII) versions are much more powerful; and, Column IV (CIV) versions are extremely powerful.

Each world will limit the number of advantages and compensations a character can have (for example, 4CIs, 2CIIs, 1CIII). Unless otherwise stated, a character must take one compensation for every advantage (the compensation must be from the same column as the advantage).

Jaime Lombardo & Ron Hill

• Background Advantage List •

• Column I •

Additional Skill Adds (CI) One general skill or focus add or two specialization adds

Contacts (CI) Character has a friend or friends who provide minor assistance

Cultures (CI) Character gains knowledge of a foreign culture

Equipment (CI) Character gains unusual equipment (shift one Availability code)

Fame (CI) Character has minor notoriety

Skill Bonus (CI) +1 to a group of three related skills (modifier to bonus number only)

Wealth (CI) Character is upper middle class

• Column II •

Additional Skill Adds (CII) Increase one general or focus skill by two adds, or one specialization by three adds

Contacts (CII) As Contacts (CI), but the "friend" is more influential

Cultures (CII) The knowledge is more extensive than Cultures (CI) or more in-depth

Equipment (CII) The item is more valuable than Equipment (CI)

Fame (CII) The character is better known than Fame (CI)

Luck (CII) The character can use certain card deck enhancements once per adventure

Skill Bonus (CII) Gain +1 to the bonus number of five related skills

Trademark Specialization (CII) The character gains +3 to the bonus number of any specialization, plus he his moderately "famous" for as if he had Fame (CI)

Wealth (CII) The character is from the upper class

• Column III •

Additional Skill Adds (CIII) Increase one general skill by three adds, or one specialization by four adds

Additional Attribute Point (CIII) Increase one Attribute by one point

Contacts (CIII) The "friends" are extremely unusual and effective

Cultures (CIII) The character has "native knowledge" and interactive abilities in the culture

Equipment (CIII) The equipment is artifactual in nature

Fame (CIII) The character is almost always recognized as famous

Learning Curve (Positive)(CIII) The character can improve skills at a cost of one skill point *less* after adventuring

Luck (CIII) The character can choose from other card deck options to use during an adventure

Skill Bonus (CIII) Gain +2 to the bonus number of three related skills or gain macroskill bonus (+1 to all skills in macroskill)

• Column III (cont.) •

Special Abilities (CIII)
Gain strange or unusual talent or ability. Some examples:

- **Accelerated Healing (CIII)** +3 to all Endurance rolls when healing; heal shock at one per round
- **BreatheWater (CIII)** Breathe water, +2 to *swimming*
- **Combat Sense (CIII)** Never completely surprised
- **Fast (CIII)** +3 to Agility or Confidence for initiative, or *haste* up to three time per adventure.
- **Infravision/ Ultravision (CIII)** can see in dark; +3 to all *perception*
- **Natural Hand-to-Hand Weapons (CIII)** Natural weapon, up to +3 to Strength damage
- **Natural Ranged Weapons (CIII)** Range equals value of Endurance, use Dexterity to hit
- **Toughened Skin (CIII)** +3 to Toughness, but weakness to one type of attack (fire combat, fire, etc.)

Special Effects (CIII) Gain the ability to use the special effects skill (or one such skill) as per the game setting

Supranormal Knowledge (CIII) The character can do something no one else can do (+3 bonus is common)

Wealth (CIII) The character is incredibly rich

• Column IV •

Contacts (CIV) The contacts are godlike

Cultures (CIV) The character understands a completely alien culture

Equipment (CIV) The character gains an artifact

Luck (CIV) The character gains more use of his card deck enhancements

Skill Minimum (CIV) Character always gains a +0 bonus number or better on three related skills

Special Abilities (CIV)

- **Accelerated Healing (CIV)** Heal all shock and KO with one round of rest, +3 to healing roll (see text)
- **Environmental Immunity (CIV)** Immune to one environment (water, vacuum, etc.)
- **Hardiness (CIV)** Ignores first wound each attack
- **Multiple Abilities (CIV)** Choose two CIII special abilities
- **Natural Armor (CIV)** +4 to Toughness, no weakness in armor
- **Natural Hand-to-Hand Weapons (CIV)** +4 to Strength for damage or damage value 15
- **Natural Ranged Weapons (CIV)** +4 Strength for damage or damage value 15
- **Permanent Special Effect (CIV)** The character is permanently subject to a particular special effect

• Background Compensation List •

• Column I •

Advantage Flaw (CI)	There is a limitation or drawback to one of the character's Advantages
Age (CI)	The character is older or younger than his prime
Bad Luck (CI)	The character is unlucky; usually when the character rolls a die total of "2," something bad happens (*stymied, setback,* etc.)
Bigotry (CI)	The character is a minor bigot in some way
Cultural Unfamiliarity (CI)	Character is "out of his element"
Debt (CI)	Character owes a small debt to someone
Employed (CI)	Character has a job that takes away some of his freedom of choice
Enemy (CI)	The character has a minor enemy
Handicap (CI)	The character has a minor physical or mental handicap that adds +2 to the DN of five or more related skills
Infamy (CI)	The character is a minor "villain"
Prejudice (CI)	The character suffers as an object of minor prejudice
Poverty (CI)	The character begins the game as poor, with substandard and limited equipment
Price (CI)	There is a "price" to a character's Advantage
Quirk (CI)	The character suffers from a personality or physical quirk that makes his life a little more difficult

• Column II •

Advantage Flaw (CII)	There is a significant limitation to one of the character's Advantages
Age (CII)	The character is very old or very young (see text)
Bad Luck (CII)	The character is even more unlucky than "I" (see text)
Bigotry (CII)	The character is a serious bigot
Cultural Unfamiliarity (CII)	The character is from an alien culture and is significantly limited in cultural knowledge
Debt (CII)	The character owes a large debt to someone under dangerous circumstances
Employed (CII)	The character's "freedom" is virtually nonexistent because of his job

• Column II (cont.) •

Enemy (CII)	The enemy is very powerful or always around
Handicap (CII)	The character has one physical or two mental attributes and add +3 to the DN of all skill checks, except in very special circumstances (see text)
Infamy (CII)	The character is, most likely, a criminal or thought of as an enemy of society
Language (CII)	The character does not understand the language of the area he is in
Learning Curve (Negative) (CII)	The costs for learning skills are doubled
Prejudice (CII)	The character is the subject of fairly serious prejudice
Price (CII)	There is a much higher price to be paid (physical damage as an example) for using an Advantage
Quirk (CII)	The character has a much more often ocurring or serious "personality flaw"

• Column III •

Achilles' Heel (CIII)	The character has a vulnerability
Advantage Flaw (CIII)	The flaw interferes with the use of the Advantage *and* provides an additional disadvantage
Burn-out (CIII)	Under certain circumstances, a particular Advantage goes away permanently
Bad Luck (CIII)	The character will suffer from *at least* a setback periodically (see text)
Cultural Unfamiliarity (CIII)	The character is a complete alien
Debt (CIII)	The character can gain no material goods — all must be turned over to a "lender" at the end of an adventure
Employed (CIII)	Character is, essentially, a slave
Enemy (CIII)	The enemy wants to kill the character and is very powerful
Handicap (CIII)	The character cannot perform many normal activities
Infamy (CIII)	The character will almost always be attacked or pursued
Quirk (CIII)	The character has a severe personality disorder

• Chapter Three: The Rules •

Whenever characters (gamemaster or player) do something, they use the most appropriate skill (or Attribute).

The gamemaster sets a difficulty (DN, for "difficulty number") for the task. The difficulty is either "arbitrary" (set by the gamemaster) or "opposed" (against another character).

The character generates a *skill total*. The player rolls the dice, determines a *bonus number* and adds it to the skill or Attribute used. If the *skill total* is equal to or higher than the difficulty number, the character has succeeded.

Difficulty Numbers

The gamemaster either selects an "arbitrary" difficulty (based on how hard the task is) or the difficulty is "opposed" (one character is acting directly against another), in which case the difficulty is the target character's skill.

• Arbitrary DN Scale •

Difficulty Level	% Chance of Success	DN Value
Simple	100%	*
Routine	97%	0
Nearly Routine	90%	2
Very Easy	85%	3
Easy	79%	5
Average	55%	8
Complicated	36%	10
Difficult	15%	12
Hard	10%	13
Very Hard	3%	15
Extremely Hard	†	18
Incredible	†	22
Nearly Impossible	†	25+

* *Simple* actions do not normally need to be rolled for — opening a door, walking across a room, etc.

† Cannot be achieved without a roll-again

Opposed Difficulty Numbers

The character is rolling directly against another character's skill. The rolling character's total (with the bonus number added in) is compared to the target character's skill. If the total is equal to or higher than the target character's skill, the rolling character has succeeded.

Modifiers

The gamemaster may assign modifiers to reflect that certain tasks are harder or easier because of special circumstances: the situation is modified.

• Modifier Chart •

Modifier to DN or Skill	Situation
+/- 1	The modifier barely affects the skill attempt
+/- 3	The modifier makes a significant difference
+/- 5	The modifier will probably change the overall outcome
+/- 7	The modifer will almost totally change the overall outcome
+/- 10 (or more)	The modifier totally redefines the skill attempt

The Die System

Once the gamemaster has determined a DN, the character must generate a "skill total."

This is a four step process.

1. Find the character's skill (or Attribute) value.

2. Roll two ten-sided dice to get a bonus number.

3. Add the bonus number to the character's skill or Attribute.

4. If the total is equal to or higher than the difficulty, the character has succeeded.

The Bonus Number

Players roll two ten-sided dice and find the number on the bonus chart below.

Roll-Agains

Characters may "roll again" (get bonus rolls) under the following circumstances. When this happens, the characters add the two dice together, then roll a die again, adding the new number to the total.

10s: If the character has any skill adds or has specialized in the skill they are using, they may roll again any 10s that come up. Characters can conceivably keep on re-rolling if they keep on getting 10s.

Life Points: Characters have a certain number of Life Points. If a player spends a Life Point, he may roll both dice again.

Up: This is a special result on the card deck. It allows characters to roll both dice again.

Stopping Roll-Agains

Stymied: This is a special result on the card deck. The character loses their first die roll again (i.e., if they normally would get to roll two dice, they would only get to roll one). See the section on the card deck for specific results.

Cancelled Life Points: When one character spends a Life Point, another character may choose to spend one of their Life Points to prevent the first character from re-rolling.

The Success Chart

The Success Chart can be used to determine *how well* a character did something.

The number of points by which the character's total beats the difficulty number are called *result points.*

To determine a success level, find the result points on the appropriate column. Which column you use depends on the situation, but most skill uses outside of combat and interaction will use the General Success Column.

The result points and success levels can mean very different things, depending upon exactly what the character was doing.

• *General Success:* This column is used for most actions, and is the default column to be used whenever you aren't using the other columns. There are six different success levels in the

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10	11 12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21 25	26 30	31 35	36 40	41 45	+5
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	+1

MasterBook game system: *minimal, solid, good, superior, spectacular* and *spectacular+*.

• *Damage:* Use this column whenever a character or target is hit in combat or might otherwise be injured.

This column has special rules: you add the result points of the "to hit" roll to the damage value of the attack, and compare that to the target's Toughness, finding *those* result points on the Damage Column.

• *Intimidation:* Use this column whenever a character tries to *intimidate* (or frighten) another character.

• *Taunt / Trick:* Use this column whenever a character tries to *trick* or *taunt* another character.

• *Maneuver:* Use this column whenever one character attempts a combat *maneuver* on another character.

• *Push:* Use this column whenever a character wants to *push* their physical limitations: run faster, life more, and so forth. This column is often also used for special effects, such as magic spells or psionics.

Critical Failure

Optional Rule: If a character fails a skill attempt by more than his skill value, he has *critically failed* at his skill attempt. A critical failure can be interpreted by the gamemaster in any way he sees fit, but, in brief, something goes *seriously* wrong because the character failed so badly.

Damage

Attacks

To hit a character in combat, the attacking character will normally be using one of the "Attack Skills" listed on the chart "Interactive and Attack Skills."

Compare the character's attack skill total to the target character's *passive defensive* or *active defense* (see below). If the attack skill total is equal to or higher than the target's defense, the attack has hit. If it is lower, the attack misses.

Martial arts (most focuses), *melee combat* and *unarmed combat* can only be used if the attacking character is within two meters of the target character. *Dodge* is used for ranged attacks: ranged attacks can be used at longer ranges, up to the range of the weapon.

Defense

The default difficulty is the target character's defense skill or Attribute; this is called a *passive defense.*

The target character can also choose an *active defense,* which means the character is actively trying to get out of the way of the attack; the character gets to roll the dice and add a bonus number, which becomes a minimum of +3.

• Success Chart •

Result Points	General Success	Damage	Intimidation	Taunt/ Trick	Maneuver	Push (Shock Taken)
0	Minimal	1	stymied	stymied	fatigued	1(3)
1	Solid	O1	stymied	stymied	fatigued	1(2)
2	Solid	K1	stymied	stymied	fatigued	1(1)
3	Solid	O2	stymied	stymied	fatigued	2(4)
4	Solid	3	stymied	stymied	fatigued	2(3)
5	Good	Knockdown O3	untrained	untrained	fatigued	2(2)
6	Good	Knockdown K3	untrained	untrained	fatigued	3(5)
7	Good	Knockdown KO	untrained	untrained	stymied	3(4)
8	Good	Wnd K/O 3	untrained	untrained	stymied	3(3)
9	Superior	Wnd K/O 5	untrained	untrained	stymied	4(6)
10	Superior	2Wnd Knockdown K3	setback	setback	stymied	4(5)
11	Superior	2Wnd K/O 5	setback	setback	stymied	4(4)
12	Superior	2Wnd KO 5	setback	setback	stymied/fatigued	5(7)
13	Spectacular	3Wnd Knockdown K3	setback	setback	stymied/fatigued	5(6)
14	Spectacular	3Wnd K/O 5	setback	setback	stymied/fatigued	5(5)
15	Spectacular	3Wnd KO 7	break	up/setback	stymied/fatigued	6(8)
16	Spectacular	4Wnd Knockdown K5	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	6(7)
17	Spectacular+	4Wnd KO 7	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	6(6)
18	Spectacular+	5Wnd Knockdown K5	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	7(9)
19	Spectacular+	5Wnd KO7	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	7(8)
20	Spectacular+	6Wnd Knockdown K5	player's call	player's call	player's call	7(7)
+1	Spectacular+	+1Wnd	player's call	player's call	player's call	8(10)

Combat and Interaction Skills

• The first column lists the skills (and their Attributes) used to "attack."

• The second column lists the skills or Attributes used to resist them.

• The third column lists which column on the Success Chart to use to determine results.

• The final column, "Rounds," lists what type of rounds these skills can be used in:

"C" stands for *combat rounds* (10 second rounds)

"I" stands for *interaction rounds.*

"N" stands for *non-rounds*, which is any time the characters are not in rounds of any type.

• Interactive and Attack Skills •

Attack	Defense	Column	Rounds
Attack Skills			
martial arts	*melee parry** or Agility	Damage	C
melee combat or Agility	*melee parry** or Agility	Damage	C
unarmed combat or Agility	*melee parry** or Agility	Damage	C
*fire combat*** or Dexterity	*dodge* or Agility	Damage	C
Interaction Skills			
intimidation or Confidence	*willpower* or Confidence	Intimidation	C, I
taunt or Charisma	*willpower* or Confidence	Taunt/Trick	C, I
trick or Intellect	*willpower* or Intellect	Taunt/Trick	C, I
maneuver† or Agility	*maneuver*† or Agility	Maneuver	C
con or Confidence	*willpower* or Intellect	Taunt/Trick	I, N
charm or Charisma	*willpower* or Confidence	General	I, N
persuasion or Charisma	*willpower* or Confidence	General	I, N
interrogation or Confidence	*willpower* or Confidence	General	I, N
hypnotism or Mind	*willpower* or Mind	General	I, N

* Characters use *melee parry* if they are defending while using a melee weapon; they can use *unarmed parry* if unarmed; they can also use some focuses of *martial arts.*

** All other ranged weapons skills work the same way. They include *energy weapons, gunnery, heavy energy weapons, heavy weapons, martial arts* (depending upon focus), *missile weapons* or *thrown weapons.*

† Depending on what the character is doing, riding, driving or piloting, the character may substitute other skills for *maneuver.* They can include *acrobatics, beast riding, flight, vehicle piloting* (for all vehicles; depends on the focus) or *mechanical maneuver* (for power battlesuits and similar things).

Determining Damage

Add the result points to the damage value of the weapon and read the results on the Damage Column.

A Number: Every damage result ends in a number. This is the number of *shock points* the character takes from the damage of the attack. A character can take a number of shock points equal to his *resist shock* or Endurance before going unconscious.

Characters heal shock at a rate of one point per minute of inactivity. An unconscious character heals shock at a rate of one shock every ten seconds (instead of every minute).

K, O, K/O or **KO:** Each letter is one half of a "KO" condition — a knockout.

A "K" result means the character takes a K.

An "O" result means the character takes an O.

A "K/O" result means that if the character does not have a K, he suffers a K; if he has a K, he takes an O (and is now unconscious).

A "KO" means the character immediately suffers a knockout result.

It takes 30 minutes of rest to heal a K. A character who has been KO'd goes unconscious for one minute.

Knockdown: A *knockdown* is simply that — the character falls down (if possible). All physical actions, even defensive or passive ones, are performed at -4 for the rest of that round and the next round.

"1Wnd, 2Wnd, 3Wnd" ... etc.: "Wnd" stands for *wound.* These wounds "stack" onto each other to form *wound levels:*

• 1 wound equals *lightly wounded*

• 2 wounds equals *moderately wounded*

• 3 wounds equals *heavily wounded*

- 4 wounds equals *incapacitated*
- 5 wounds equals *mortally wounded*
- 6 wounds means the character is *dead*.

• Wound Level Chart •

Wound Level	Modifier(s)	Healing Rate	Healing Difficulty
Light	no modifier	One day	10
Moderate	-2 to physical skills	One day	12
Heavy	-4 to physical & -2 to all other skills	Three days	14
Incapacitated	-8 to all skills	Three days	16
*Mortal**	automatic KO*	One day	18
*Dead**	dead	dead	we mean it; you're dead

* See below

The "healing rate" is how often a character gets to *try* to heal. After this time period has elapsed (from the time of the *most recent* wound), the character generates a bonus number and adds it to his Endurance (roll all tens again and Life Points may be spent on this total). If the character meets or exceeds the DN listed above, then he has healed to the next less-severe wound level and takes on those modifiers (or, if the character was *lightly wounded*, he becomes healthy). If the character fails, he has to wait a length of time equal to the healing rate to try again.

There are special rules for *mortally wounded* and *dead* characters.

• *Mortally wounded* characters take one shock point every round. When the shock points equal his *resist shock* or Endurance, he *dies*. A *mortally wounded* character needs to be *first aided* as soon as possible (See "First Aid" below).

• *Dead* characters get a chance to survive. If someone can get to the character and perform a successful *first aid* on him before the end of the next round (10 seconds), the character becomes *mortally wounded*.

+1Wnd: For every result point over 20, the character takes one additional wound.

First Aid

First aid is used to keep characters alive. When a character suffers a wound of some sort, *first aid* can be used to stabilize the wound and temporarily improve the condition. A successful *first aid* total (see the difficulty on the "First Aid Chart") allows a character to function as if she were one level *less* wounded, and it removes all shock and KO conditions.

Mortally Wounded: *First aid* can be used on *mortally wounded* characters to keep them from dying. If the *first aid* roll is successful (see the difficulties below), the character can act as if *incapacitated* and no longer suffers one shock point per round. *Mortally wounded* characters may also be *stabilized* (see below).

Dead: *Dead* characters can be saved if another character successfully performs *first aid* in the round during or after the character "dies." If the *first aid* attempt is successful, the character becomes *mortally wounded.*

Stabilized: Characters may attempt to *stabilize* a *mortally wounded* character. If the character performing *first aid* can make a *first aid* attempt at the "dead" DN, the character is *stabilized:* he is still *mortally wounded,* but no longer suffers shock every round and can make a healing roll in one day. *Stabilization* can be attempted once per minute on a character who is *mortally wounded.*

• First Aid Chart •

Condition	DN
Shock, KO	8
Lightly wounded	9
Moderately wounded	11
Heavily wounded	12
Incapacitated	14
Mortally wounded	18
Dead	22

• Cover and Concealment •

Concealment is:	Defensive Modifier
One Quarter	+3
One Half	+5
Three Quarter	+8
Complete	+12
Complete Plus	+12+?

Cover is:	Toughness Modifier
Negligible	0
Weak	+2
Moderate	+4
Strong	+6
Very Strong	+8
"Impenetrable"	+12

• Surprise Modifiers •

Suprise Levels	Attacking Modifier	Damage Modifier
Blindside*	+2	0
Partial Surprise	+2	0
Complete Surprise	+5	-2

*The modifiers for a *blindside* attack are cumulative with either *partial surprise* or *complete surprise* modifiers, but neither *partial surprise* nor *complete surprise* are cumulative with each other.

• Ranged Weapons •

This table is used for *fire combat, energy weapons, gunnery* and the similar *heavy weapons* skills. Other skills may be used with this table as appropriate.

Fire Options	Attacking Modifier	Defensive Modifier	Damage Modifier
Burst Fire as Single	-1	0	-2
Full Auto (if possible)	+3	-1	+1
Single Fire as Multi (if possible)	+2	0	+1
Aim (for one round)	+2 (next round)	-2 (same round)	+1
"Trick" Shot	-4*	varies	+2*
Sweep (Ranged) (if possible)	+2	0	-5
Hit Location	special	special	special

• Ranged Weapons (Muscle-Powered) •

This table is used primarily for *thrown weapons* and *missile weapons*. Weapons that are muscle powered but emulate fire weapons (like a "belt-fed crossbow") should use the standard ranged weapons table.

Missile Options	Attacking Modifier	Defensive Modifier	Damage Modifier
Aim (for one phase)	+2 (next round)	-2 (same round)	+1
"Trick" Shot	-4*	varies	+2*
Hit Location	special	special	special

• Hand-to-Hand Attacks •

This table is used for *unarmed combat, melee combat,* and *martial arts* primarily.

Attack Options	Attacking Modifier	Defensive Modifier	Damage Modifier
Short Range	-3	-2	-1
Sweep (Hand-to-Hand)	+3	-1	-5
Grab	-1	-4	-3
"Knockdown"	-3	0	first wnd becomes knockdown
All-out	+4	-6	+1

• Hit Locations •

Hit location is a special option that allows a character to shoot a specific point on his target's body. The table is used to determine the modifiers for hitting a target of human proportions in different areas of his body.

Note that aiming at an arm or leg actually causes less damage — this is because the character took extra care to shoot an area that is "less vital."

Hit Location	Attacking Modifier	Effects
Head	-8	+12 to damage
Chest	-2	+3 to damage
Abdomen	-4	+6 to damage
Left or Right Arm	-3	-2 to damage
Left or Right Leg	-2	-1 to damage

Damage Optional Rules

Damage Cap: Maximum result points equals damage value of weapon.

Non-Lethal Attack: The first "Wnd" becomes three shock points.

Knockout Attacks: Use General Success Column for the attack (not the damage): for each success level, change one "Wnd" to three shock.

Bleeding: Any number of "Wnds" become "bleeders": the character takes one shock per round for each bleeder.

Interaction

Interaction can have a number of results, depending upon how many result points the "attacking" character gets on the "target" character. The results are explained below; in situations where two results are indicated on the chart, *both* results happen.

Intimidation

Stymied: Target loses first die roll again (if he gets to roll both dice again, only one is lost).

Untrained: Character acts *untrained* next round: skill adds do not count and no roll-agains for specializations or skill adds.

Setback: Something "bad" happens to the character.

Break: Affected character will try to run away or surrender next round if he or she can't significantly improve condition.

Taunt/Trick

Up/Setback: Target character is *setback,* while *taunting* or *tricking* character is "up" next round — automatically gets to re-roll both dice.

Maneuver

Fatigued: Target character suffers two shock points of damage.

Life Points

Characters begin with five Life Points. No character may have more than 10 Life Points. Characters can spend 1 Life Point for the following things:

- Roll both dice again, adding the new rolls to the first rolls. Characters may not spend more than one Life Point on any one action (except *hero* or *drama* cards — see the section on the card deck).
- Can cancel someone else's Life Points *for roll agains only.*
- Reducing damage. May cancel three "packages" of damage. Character may only spend one Life Point to cancel damage from any one attack.

Packages of damage:

- 1 wound; Up to three shock points; K; O; Knockdown
- Reduce Interaction Result: 1 Life Point reduces an interaction by one result.

Time and Rounds

One combat round is 10 seconds.

Characters can perform one action per round; when performing more than one action, they must use the "Multi-Action" rules.

Initiative

• Rounds Procedure •

0. Declare Rounds
1. Determine Initiative
2. Announce Approved Actions*
3. Act in Initiative Order
4. Summarize Results (Gamemaster)
6. Award Cards/Flip Over Cards*
7. End Rounds or Begin a New Round

* Only when using the card deck for initiative

• Determining Initiative •

In combat rounds, characters act in Agility order. In interaction rounds, characters act in Confidence order.

No Cards: Each character generates a bonus number.

Cards: Use the *initiative lines:* "S" for *standard* scenes, "D" for *dramatic* scenes. "P" stands for player characters, "G" stands for gamemaster characters.

• Act in Initiative Order •

Characters must declare and take all actions at this time.

If a character is attacked and they haven't gone yet, they may declare an *active defense,* but if they also want to do other actions they must declare them at this time.

Characters can choose an *opportunity action* — they will act after everyone else has gone, but all actions are at +2 to the DN.

Movement

Simple Movement (Ground Movement Only): A character may move two times his movement rate in meters per round as a "simple action." A character with an MRG of 7 could move 14 meters as a simple action.

Complex Movement: Characters move faster than their simple movement, up to the value of their movement rate (find the value on the Value Chart). However, this is an action — they don't have to roll, but they must use "multi-action" rules if they want to do something else in a round. An MRG of 7 has a value of 40; a character could move up to 40 meters per round as an action.

Pushing: Characters can move even farther than their complex movement rate by *pushing.* See "Pushing."

Pushing

Character rolls against DN (for *climbing,* a DN is set; for *running, swimming* and *long jumping,* the DN is the character's Movement Rate or MAX — whichever is lower).

Find the result points on the Push Column. Find the Push Result on the Value Chart, converting that result to a measure of meters — add that measure to the movement, but also take the shock listed.

A character with a movement rate of 8 (40 meters) pushes when running (DN is 8). He gets a skill total of 16; that's 8 result points. On the Push Column, that's 3(3). The character takes 3 shock, and gets a value of 3. On the Value Chart, that's 4 meters. The character moves 44 meters this round.

Multi-Actions

When doing more than one action at once use the multi-action rules. Modify their primary skill by -2, their secondary skill by -3, and so on.

Karl Waller

• Multi-Action Table •

Action Priority	Modifier to Skill Total
Primary	-2
Secondary	-3
Tertiary	-4
Etc. ...	An additional -1 for each

Combined Actions

This chart is used whenever you want to combine the effects of many characters doing basically the same thing at once (for example, five goons shooting at the same character).

Select a DN. Add the DN Modifier based on the number of characters acting. Roll to see if the characters succeeded. If the skill total beats the DN (with the DN Modifiers), then all characters succeeded.

If the skill total is below the DN, drop down until you find a DN (with DN Modifier) that would have succeeded. That tells you how many characters succeeded.

Find the Effect Modifier for the number of characters who succeeded. Add that to the Effect Value of the task.

• Many-on-One Table •

# of Characters	DN Modifier	Effect Modifier
1	DN	–
2	DN+1	+3
3	DN+2	+4
4	DN+2	+5
5	DN+3	+6
6	DN+3	+7
7	DN+4	+8
8	DN+4	+9
9	DN+5	+10
10*	DN+5	+11

* For every two characters above nine, add +1 to the DN Modifier and +1 to the Effect Modifier.

Coordinating Actions: Gamemaster sets a DN for coordinating (working together). Each coordinating character is using a multi-action (coordinating is one action, and whatever the character is doing is also an action).

Roll for each character's coordination. If they fail, they cannot help. If a character succeeds at the coordination, he or she can roll for the action. Find the highest skill total; the gamemaster adds +2 for each character that coordinated to that total.

• Chapter Four: Skills and Skill Use •

Unless otherwise noted, the character can attempt skills even if they don't have any skill adds in the skill: they try the skill with just their Attribute. Unless otherwise noted, characters do not have to *specialize* in a smaller portion of the skill.

What follows is a list of skills. For focuses (in the case of macroskills) and specializations, see Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Uses."

There are several types of special skills:

Specializations: A character can choose to study a more specialized version of the skill. For example, *fire combat* is a general skill and covers everything from M-16s to Colt .45s to black powder weapons. A character could specialize in *fire combat (pistols)*. As noted earlier, specialization skill adds cost half the normal amount.

Trained skills: Listed in **bold** on the skill list. The character cannot even attempt the skill unless they have at least one skill add in the skill.

Macroskill: Marked with an asterisk (*) on the skill list. The skill covers a very wide range of knowledge and the character *must* choose an area of knowledge, called a *focus*. Focuses are listed in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use."

Improving and Learning Skills

Skill Points are necessary to buy skill adds.

1 Life Point buys 3 Skill Points.

Increasing skill add: Number of skill points equal to the number of skill adds you will have in the skill after it has advanced.

Trained skills: Double the normal cost.

Specializations: Half the cost (round up) — either for general skills or trained skills.

Macroskill focuses: Each focus must be advanced separately as if it were a "normal" skill (i.e., not a specialization).

Teachers: Character must have *teaching* skill. If the teacher achieves a *minimal* success, the cost to learn the skill is half; if the teacher achieves a *spectacular+* success, the cost is one-third (round up in both cases).

Learning a New Skill

General skill (not trained): 4 Skill Points to learn the first add.

Trained Skill: 8 Skill Points to learn the first add.

Specializations: 2 Skill Points to learn the first add for a *general* skill, 4 Skill Points to learn the first add for a *trained* skill.

Learning Time: Characters may not improve a skill by more than one add between adventures.

• *MasterBook* Skill List •

AGILITY
- Acrobatics
- Beast Riding*
- Climbing
- Dodge
- **Flight***
- Long Jumping
- Maneuver
- **Martial Arts***
- **Mechanical Maneuver***
- Melee Combat
- Melee Parry
- Running
- Stealth
- Swimming
- Unarmed Combat
- Unarmed Parry

DEXTERITY
- Energy Weapons
- Fire Combat
- **Gunnery***
- **Heavy Energy Weapons***
- **Heavy Weapons***
- **Lock Picking**
- Missile Weapons*
- Prestidigitation
- Thrown Weapons
- **Vehicle Piloting***

ENDURANCE
- **Resist Shock**

STRENGTH
- Lifting

INTELLECT
- **Apportation***
- Camouflage
- **Computer Ops**
- Deduction
- **Demolitions**
- **Divination***
- **Forgery**
- First Aid
- Linguistics
- Navigation*
- Perception
- **Psionic Manipulation**
- **Science***
- **Super-science**
- **Teaching***
- Tracking
- Trick

MIND
- **Artist***
- Business
- **Conjuration***
- **Hypnotism**
- **Language***
- **Medicine**
- Scholar*

CHARISMA
- Charm
- Disguise
- Persuasion
- **Summoning***
- Taunt

CONFIDENCE
- **Alteration***
- Con
- Faith*
- Interrogation
- Intimidation
- Streetwise
- Survival*
- **Willpower**

* Macroskill; must select a focus
Boldface: Skill cannot be used *untrained.*

• Chapter Five: The Card Deck •

Hand Vs. Pool

When not in round-by-round action, players can play any cards from their hand at any time. They may play any number of cards and trade any cards with other players on a one-for-one basis.

In rounds, the players must "pick up" their cards. They may not play their cards except as explained below:

- After a character performs an action during a round, the player may place a card face up into his *pool* (on the table in front of him).
- A player may play any card from his pool; he may not play cards from his hand.
- A player can play any number of cards from his pool, or trade cards with other players (from their pools only) on a one-for-one basis.

Playing for the Critical Moment: When a player declares this, he may play as many of his cards as he feels like but he discards *all* cards. This can be done once per adventure.

Beginning Cards: Characters start each act and scene with a certain number of cards based on how many player characters there are.

Player Characters	# Cards
1	5
2–5	3
6+	2

Enhancement Cards

The cards have the following effects:

Action: +1 to all skill or Attribute totals for one round.

Adrenaline: +3 to any one *Dexterity, Strength, Endurance, Toughness* or *Agility* total.

Breakthrough: +3 to any one skill total *if* the character has no adds in the skill. The character can act as if he or she was trained (i.e. can roll again on 10s).

Claim: Player may pick up any card another player has just played.

Double Cross: +6 to any one action *if* the character betrays one of his party members.

Drama: May be spent as a Life Point during an adventure or turned in for 3 Skill Points at any time.

Effect: +2 to the effect value of any action. This card may played only if the character has succeeded in the basic action.

Haste: Character may immediately perform one extra action.

Hero: May be spent as a Life Point.

Idea: Gamemaster gives the player a hint about the development of the storyline.

Leadership: Player may play up to two cards (total) into other player(s) hands and/or draw two cards into his hand.

Opponent Fails: Cancels the effect of an action that has just affected the character whose player plays this card.

Presence: +3 to the action value of any one *Charm* or *Confidence* skill or attribute value.

Rally: All players draw one card into their hands.

Second Chance: Player gets a second chance to retry the action that was just performed.

Seize Initiative: Player may *either* flip over a new initiative card or keep the card on the top of the stack for the next round.

Supporter: Player character "helps" another character do something, giving the other character +3 to the bonus number of any one action during that round.

Willpower: +3 to any one *Intellect* or *Mind* skill or attribute total.

Subplot Cards

When a player receives a subplot card, he should put the card face up on the table immediately, so the gamemaster can read the subplot line.

A character may not have more than two subplot cards in effect at any one time and no more than two Life Points can be awarded to any one character for having subplots that cannot take effect.

The subplot cards are as follows:

Alertness: Character has a temporary "sixth sense" — at gamemaster's discretion, will be able to spot a previously unnoticed item, character or clue.

Campaign: Can be used to make a subplot permanent (excluding *Alertness*).

Personal Stake: There is something deeply personal or close to the character during the adventure. If a player roleplays the *personal stake,* the character gets two Life Points at the end of the adventure (may be reduced to one Life Point if the card is played after the adventure is half over).

Common Ground: There is a common relationship between the character and some antagonists: villains, aliens, strange characters, the environment or something similar.

Connection: The player character knows a gamemaster character who may be able to help in some way. If not used in the game, it may be turned in for an extra Life Point at the end of the adventure.

Martyr: After every full Act that the *martyr* card has been face up, the character receives one extra Life Point. However, the character must sacrifice his life to perform some gamemaster-designated (and usually heroic or nearly impossible) action. When a player draws this card, he must decide immediately whether or not to play the card.

Mistaken Identity: The character is mistaken for someone else or the character is convinced that someone he meets is someone else. At the end of every Act the subplot is in play, the character gets one Life Point.

Nemesis: Someone develops a serious grudge against the character. This character will have a tendency to keep on turning up during the adventure. Award one Life Point after every Act.

Romance: The character attracts a romantic interest and must roleplay the situation. At the end of the adventure, the character gets two Life Points.

Paul Daly

Suspicion: The character is suspected of something (normally something illegal or something that would cause certain gamemaster characters to make the character's life "difficult").

Picture Cards, or "Jokers"

Wild: Character can use any card in the deck except another picture card. Player can wait until he uses the *Wild* card to determine which card it will represent.

Interloper: A third party shows up.

Disaster: Something really bad happens.

Opportunity: The character gets some advantageous opportunity.

General: The two general cards allows the gamemaster to make up "setting specific" cards.

Cards in Combat and Interaction

Flip over a new card every round to determine initiative (on "S" and "D" lines) and approved actions ("Act"). If a character succeeds at an approved action, they get a new card at the end of the round.

Initiative Line Effects

These effects affect every character on the side listed ("P" for player character or "G" for gamemaster character).

Fatigued: Each character on the side takes two shock.

Flurry: Every character on the side gets an extra action that round.

Inspiration: Every character on the side removes all shock, K, O and knockdown conditions.

Setback: Something bad happens to the side.

Stymied: All characters on the side lose their first roll again.

Up: This side is up for all actions: can automatically reroll both dice.

Break: This side attempts to flee or surrender if the side doesn't significantly improve their position within one round.

Skills: The skill listed is approved for gamemaster characters. If a gamemaster character succeeds at that action, the gamemaster may take one card from the player character that has been acted upon.

Confused: The player characters are confused. No card play for this round.

• Chapter Six: Special Effects •

Magic, miracles, psionics and super-science are all *special effects.* The following are the special effects skills:

Magic:
Alteration (magic involving changing something)
Apportation (magic involving movement)
Conjuration (magic involving creating something)
Divination (magic involving knowledge or information)
Summoning (magic involving drawing things to the caster)

Psionics:
Psi manipulation

Miracles:
Faith

Super-science:
Super-science

Characteristics of a Special Effect

Skill Used: The skill used for the effect.

Difficulty Number: The skill total necessary to use the effect.

Feedback Value: The effect's feedback.

Effect Value: The effect value of the effect.

Duration: How long the effect lasts.

Range: The effect's range.

Cast Time: How long it takes to create the effect.

Using Special Effects

Roll the special effect skill, trying to beat the difficulty number. Subtract the result points from the feedback value. Any remaining feedback is read as damage on the Damage Column (the person casting the effect takes feedback damage).

If the result points are higher than the feedback, the character takes no damage. Any remaining result points (after eliminating feedback) are added to the spell's effect value.

Building Special Effects

For detailed instructions, see Chapter Six, "Creating and Using Special Effects."

MASTERBOOK CHARACTER SHEET

Character Name _____

Player Name _____

SPECIES	HEIGHT	MASS	AGE	SEX

ATTRIBUTES

- ☐ AGILITY
- ☐ DEXTERITY
- ☐ ENDURANCE
- ☐ STRENGTH
- ☐ INTELLECT
- ☐ MIND
- ☐ CONFIDENCE
- ☐ CHARISMA

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

- ☐ TOUGHNESS
- ☐ TOUGHNESS (w/armor)
- ☐ MRG (Movement Rate, Ground)
- ☐ MRC (Movement Rate, Climbing)
- ☐ MRS (Movement Rate, Swimming)
- ☐ MRJ (Movement Rate, Jumping)

COMBAT BOX

K O

WOUND LEVEL / **MODIFIERS**

- ○ *Light* — no modifier
- ○ *Moderate* — -2 to physical skills
- ○ *Heavy* — -4 physical & -2 all other skills
- ○ *Incapacitated* — -8 to all skills
- ○ *Mortal* — automatic KO; see text

LIFE POINTS

SKILL POINTS

SHOCK CAPACITY

SHOCK TAKEN

SKILLS

NAME	ATTRIBUTE/ VALUE	SKILL ADDS	SPECIALIZATION/ ADDS	MODIFIERS	SKILL VALUE

ADVANTAGES

COLUMN	NAME (game effect)

COMPENSATIONS

COLUMN	NAME (game effect)

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10	11 12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21 25	26 30	31 35	36 40	41 45	+5
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	+1

MASTERBOOK CHARACTER SHEET

EQUIPMENT

ITEM	GAME EFFECT	NOTES (ranges, etc.)

GENRE/GAME SETTING DESCRIPTION

BASIC CHARACTER CONCEPT

PERSONALITY

BACKGROUND STORY

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

• Character Creation •

This chapter covers the creation of characters for use with the *MasterBook* system. It is intended for creating player characters, but gamemasters will find these rules good for creating their own characters.

There are two parts to characters in *MasterBook*. One part deals with the numbers and game mechanics of character creation — the nuts and bolts, in game terms, of the character. The character's numeric values allow the players and the gamemaster to use the *MasterBook* rules to define what the character can and cannot do.

But don't forget the other side to character creation: the story factors. Story factors are things like the character's basic history, the character's personality, and the character's general outlook.

When you create your character, think of him or her as a real person, with real feelings and real attitudes — and, perhaps, a real job, a real family, and a real life. You should be comfortable talking about the character you will be playing; that is, you should know the basic answers to questions about that character's life.

• The Character Story •

When you are creating a character, you are telling a story about this individual. You get to choose what the character does (or did before he or she started adventuring) for a living and all the other details about the character's life.

The Character Concept

For right now, you should concentrate on creating a character that fits into the world your gamemaster will be running. Talk to your gamemaster and find out what the game universe is going to be like, and work on creating a character that fits into that "mold." You'll still have quite a bit of freedom.

While you don't have to delve too extensively into the character's background right now, you do want to have some idea of the character's history. What is/was the character? What sort of skills and knowledge would the character have?

Take a look at the sidebar entitled "The Character Concept" to get an understanding.

• Quick Start •

If you want to get started playing quickly, or if you want to just look at some completed characters to get an idea of what your possibilities are, take a look at pages 175 through 176. There are 2 pregenerated characters (character *profiles*) that you can use to get started quickly.

Every character profile includes:

- A complete list of Attribute and Skill Values
- The character's Toughness and Movement Rate Values (these are Derived Attribute Values)
- The character's species and sex
- A brief description of the character's background
- The character's Background Advantages and Compensations with notes on their rules applications (where necessary)
- The character's equipment with notes on special equipment
- A Bonus Chart for skill rolls and a character illustration with a character quote

There is also room for a few character-related notes, but not much — this is a *complete* character.

If you are not interested in a Quick Start, keep reading this chapter and make a copy of the Character Sheet (page 23).

You should note that the back page of the Character Sheet just has "story factors" such as the character concept and background — you can just as easily write all of this information up on a sheet of scratch paper.

• The Character Concept •

All throughout character creation, there will be a running sidebar including examples of character creation that will help you understand the rules involved. A character will be created as you progress through the chapter, and you can model your rules interpretations and choices on this sample character. There will be a sample player and gamemaster involved as well — since the player and the gamemaster will have to interact and make choices throughout the process.

The gamemaster's name is Ted, and the player's name is Jill. Jill asks Ted what sort of game he's going to be running, and he tells her that it will be a "world of high adventure," similar to the *pulp fiction* genre portrayed in many books, comics, and movies. Basically, the characters will be normal people with a few unusual abilities — and maybe even some "super" powers of very low level — and they should focus on skills related to action and adventure, with a little bit of intrigue and investigation thrown in.

Jill thinks about some of the movies and books she's seen and read that fit into the high adventure, pulp fiction genre. She comes up with an idea for a character from one of those. She'd like to play a combination crime fighter/adventuring hero who goes from place to place helping people in trouble, fighting evil ... and trying to get rich and famous at the same time. She also wants her character to be able to create "super-science" effects (gadgets and gizmos like rocket-packs, inviso-belts, and ray guns) that Ted said were part of the genre. Ted says go ahead.

So Jill starts by writing down the "Genre/Game Setting Description" and her "Basic Character Concept" on a copy of the Character Sheet (see page 23).

Player Name: *Jill*
Character Name: *Diane O'Rourke*

GENRE/GAME SETTING DESCRIPTION

Pulp fiction adventure setting, with super-science and some super powers. Some magic and occult. Fast-paced, physical adventure.

BASIC CHARACTER CONCEPT

Diane is an adventurer/hero with good brains and good brawn. She helps out other people, but she travels the world in search of excitement, fame, and wealth. Diane is a globe-trotter. She has probably picked up some languages and knowledge about different cultures. She also has some scientific knowledge she uses to create her gizmos. She is physically and mentally talented.

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Please note that everything in the Basic Character Concept doesn't have to be something you will definitely work with in the final character. Some things won't be possible, and you may come up with other ideas as you progress. The concept is not chiseled in stone — in fact, you shouldn't even write it in ink.

• The Numbers •

There are three major numeric elements that go into character creation, and they are common throughout all worlds designed for use with the *MasterBook* system. They define the basic character you are developing in much the same way a skeleton supports a body — they are the "bare bones" of the character, and you need to build off them to create a true character.

The three numeric elements are:

- *Attribute Values*
- *Derived Attribute Values*
- *Skill Adds*

Attribute Values

Every character created under the *MasterBook* rules system has eight *Attributes*. Attributes are basic abilities, described in numbers, that define how naturally talented your character is at physical and mental activities. They are the most basic "stuff" of the character.

In most cases, characters have *Attribute Values* between 5 and 13, with 8 and 9 being about average. Characters get 68 *Attribute Points* to buy their Attribute Values.

An Attribute Value of 13 is the *normal* maximum for a character's Attributes, while an Attribute Value of 5 is the *normal* minimum. Certain characters from different game settings may have Attribute Values higher or lower than these minimums and maximums, but those are special cases and they are dealt with elsewhere.

Each Attribute is listed below, along with a brief definition of the Attribute. There is also a "rating scale" after this section that shows the relative "worth" of each Attribute Value — the comparisons are broken down into physical, mental, and interpersonal values. Strength, Agility, Endurance, and Dexterity are the physical Attributes, Intellect and Mind are the mental Attributes, and Confidence and Charisma are the interpersonal Attributes.

Agility

A character's Agility is a rating of that character's balance, gross motor coordination, and limberness. A character who has good balance, is good at climbing or can walk across a tight rope has a high Agility.

Dexterity

Fine motor coordination and hand-eye coordination are

both aspects of Dexterity. Dexterity covers things like the ability to shoot weapons accurately, the ability to drive a car or other vehicle, and the ability to pick locks or "palm objects" (the *prestidigitation* skill).

Strength

A character's physical power is defined by his or her Strength Attribute.

Endurance

How hardy and healthy your character is depends on his or her Endurance. This has direct bearing on how much damage your character can sustain before becoming unconscious, but also covers your character's ability to exert him or herself over long periods of time or resist disease.

Intellect

This attribute covers puzzle solving and intuitive thinking. Intellect is much like mental agility, while Mind is more like mental strength.

Intellect covers things like your character's ability to notice things (*perception* skill) or hide things, ability to trick or fool people, and your character's ability to apply scientific reasoning.

Mind

A character's mental strength, memory, and learning ability are all part of a character's Mind.

This covers your character's ability to learn, your character's aptitude for languages and certain other intellectual pursuits. Mind reflects your character's ability to remember knowledge and use it practically, whereas Intellect is the ability to use intuitive reasoning or "best guesses" to come up with a solution to a problem.

Charisma

A character's basic interpersonal nature and ability to relate to others starts with Charisma.This skill reflects how attractive or interesting your character appears to be, as well as the character's ability to persuade people to do things for him or her. It should be noted that this Attribute applies to much more than "physical beauty" — it also covers how "likeable" your character is or whether or not people are likely to trust the character.

Confidence

Emotional hardiness and strength come from Confidence, as do a character's more devious interpersonal relationship skills. This covers things like a character's ability to intimidate, as well as his or her religious convictions and spiritual strength.

Comparing Attributes

The following chart can be used to compare Attribute Values to "real world" standards. Examples of mental, physical, and interpersonal attributes are given.

What Attributes are Used For

As stated above, Attributes are the basic abilities of your character. Whenever a character tries to do something — which is called *performing an action* in game-speak — that character uses the basic abilities defined by the Attribute. The higher the Attribute, the better the chance the character has of succeeding.

But Attributes are only basic, innate ability. *Skills*, described below, are added onto Attribute Values to increase knowledge and ability. High Attributes are good, but without knowledge and practice they are limited in their applications.

If you want a character who is good physically — an athlete, a fighter, or a really talented sneak, for example — then you want to have high physical Attributes (Agility, Dexterity, Strength and Endurance). Intelligent characters, like scientists, doctors, and detectives, need high mental Attributes (Intellect and Mind). And characters who are good at interaction — con men, charmers, and masters of disguise — want to have high interpersonal Attributes (Charisma and Confidence).

• Attribute Value Comparison Chart •

Attribute Value	Relative Quality
13+	Superhuman
13	Exceptional — A genius; an Olympic or professional athlete of the highest caliber would have attributes this high (but would also have many skill adds as well); a movie idol
11–12	Outstanding — A very adept or extremely bright character; in top physical shape; a very popular person
9–10	High average — smart; in good shape; personable
7–8	Low average — not overly intelligent; moderate conditioning; bland
6	Below average — unintelligent; in poor physical shape; dull or abrasive
5	Well below average — "stupid"; almost no physical ability; unpleasant and unpopular
5-	The character has either a severe handicap or another reason for being so below "normal."

Assigning Values

Now that you know what the three types of numeric values your character will have are, you can beginning thinking about how you will get actual values in those blanks. Let's start with your character's basic Attributes.

• Changing Attributes Later •

It is very unlikely that, once you finish basic character generation, any of your character's Attributes will change by more than one or two points during the course of your character's career. Changing a character's basic abilities will not happen easily, so choose Attribute Values your character can live with.

Attribute Points

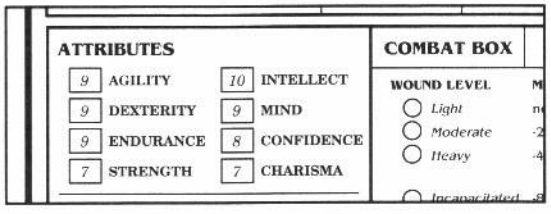
There are several different ways you could assign Attribute points, but we're only going to present one here — other WorldBooks may propose alternate methods, and you should feel free to come up with your own. This method is meant to be simple and direct.

Every character begins with **68 Attribute Points** that can be used to "buy" Attribute Values. It works out that, using these points, you could buy all Attribute Values (for each of your eight Attributes) at an average value of 8.5 — your character would be a little bit better than average in everything (though you should know you can only buy Attributes in whole number units — to obtain an average, half your Attributes would be at a value of nine, and the other half would be at eight). Of course, if you want, you could slight a few Attributes and make a few others a little higher.

Allocate these points as you see fit and then move on to the next step.

• Assigning Attribute Points •

Jill decides that, since her character is mainly physical in nature, with some decent mental abilities, she'll go with the following Attribute Values:



This gives her character, Diane, average or above average abilities in her mental and physical Attributes (except Strength), even though it costs her a little in the interpersonal Attributes.

• Derived Attributes •

While Attribute Values are chosen and assigned numbers, *Derived Attribute Values* are generated by use of simple mathematical formulas (presented below). Derived Attributes are a product of other abilities the character has.

Each game setting provided for use with the *MasterBook* rules system may have new Derived Attributes, but these are the most basic ones, common to virtually every character.

Toughness

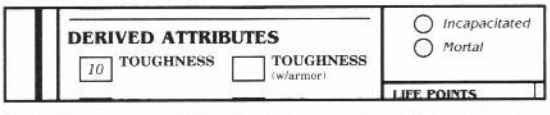
The most commonly-used Derived Attribute, *Toughness* is the physical hardness and natural armor of a character's body. It is the "natural way" characters resist taking damage — it is how *tough* they are.

Toughness is not included as just another Attribute for a reason — even though people differ in how tough they are, the basic human body (which is the template over which other species are overlaid using *MasterBook*) can only be so tough — or so fragile.

For that reason, Toughness comes from two basic Attributes: Strength and Endurance. The more physically powerful — and the more muscular — a character is, the tougher his or her body is. That's the Strength contribution. The more physically fit and healthy the character is, the more he or she can resist punishment from the outside. That's the Endurance contribution.

• Derived Attributes: Toughness •

Jill's character has a Strength of 7 and an Endurance of 9. A seven Strength gives her 3 Toughness points, and a nine Endurance gives her 7 Toughness points. That's a total Toughness of 10.



Toughness Formula

To determine your character's Toughness, use the following table. Add together the "Toughness Points" your character earns from his or her Endurance and Strength values and you will arrive at a Toughness value of 7 to 12.

• Toughness Chart •

Strength	Toughness Points
10 to 13	4
7 to 9	3
5 to 6	2
Endurance	**Toughness Points**
12 to 13	8
9 to 11	7
7 to 8	6
5 to 6	5

So, a character with a Strength of 12 and an Endurance of 10 has a Toughness of 11 (4 + 7).

Note: When using Chapter Two, "Background Generation" it is possible that characters will increase their Strength or Endurance Attributes past 13 (or lower them past 5). If so, Toughness is affected on a *one-for-one basis*. If a character gains one point of Strength, his Toughness is then increased by one point.

However, if, during an adventure, a character undergoes a change in his Strength or Endurance (perhaps by magic, attribute increases, or through some sort of nasty accident), the character's Toughness is *not* affected. After a character has begun adventuring, Toughness is treated as an independent Attribute.

Movement Rates

Movement rates are used to determine how fast your character can move using different types of movement. The most basic modes of travel are listed later on, along with the formulas you can use to determine your character's base movement rates.

Movement Rate Formulas

"MR" stands for "Movement Rate," and this abbreviation is followed by a letter that stands for the type of movement rate. Note that every movement rate has a "Maximum value" or "MAX." This is the fastest a normal character can move using that Movement Rate, regardless of what the result of the formula is.

Movement rates are given in a *value*. Use the Value Chart in Chapter Three, "The Rules" to convert that value to a number of meters every ten seconds (one round).

Always round off to the *nearest whole number* (rounding down if you get a ".5") when figuring movement rates, except no character can have a movement rate lower than 1 (anything less is treated as one).

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• Movement Rate Chart •

Type of Movement	Formula	Maximum
MRG: Movement Rate, Ground (running)	MRG = [AGI+AGI+STR]/4	8
MRS: Movement Rate, Swimming	MRS = [AGI+AGI+STR]/6	5
MRC: Movement Rate, Climbing	MRC = [STR+STR+AGI]/10	3
MRJ: Movement Rate, Jumping (long jumping)	MRJ = [STR+STR+AGI]/10	3

So, a character with a 13 Strength and a 13 Agility would have the following movement rates:

MRG = 10, MAX 8
MRS = 6, MAX 5
MRC = 4, MAX 3
MRJ = 4, MAX 3

A character with an 8 Strength and an 8 Agility would have the following movement rates:

MRG = 6, MAX 8
MRS = 4, MAX 5
MRC = 2, MAX 3
MRJ = 2, MAX 3

And a character with a 5 Strength and a 5 Agility would have the following movement rates:

MRG = 4, MAX 8
MRS = 2, MAX 5
MRC = 1, MAX 3
MRJ = 1, MAX 3

More average characters would, of course, have more average movement rates. Also, make certain to keep track of your movement rate even if your character has a movement rate above the MAX; it will help him or her later because he can "push" his movement rates (see Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use" and Chapter Three,"The Rules").

• Derived Attributes and • Movement Rate Values

Jill's Strength is 7 and her Agility is 9. Her movement rates can be computed as follows:

MRG (Ground): [9+9+7]/4 = 6 (MAX 8)
MRS (Swimming): [9+9+7]/6 = 4 (MAX 5)
MRC (Climbing): [9+9+7]/10 = 2 (MAX 3)
MRJ (Long Jumping): [9+9+7]/10 = 2 (MAX 3)

It should be noted that most characters will have movement rates at or near their species maximum. This is because only practice and training (i.e., skills) distinguish people who have better movement rates. An Olympic-class runner, for example, has practised the skill *running* for years and will be better at it than some character with a high Agility.

If a character's Strength or Agility is increased or decreased during an adventure, the movement rates should be refigured.

There are several skills that characters can use to *push* their movement rate limits (*climbing* for climbing (MRC), *running* for running (MRG), *swimming* for swimming (MRS) and *long jumping* for long jumping (MRJ)). Rules for *pushing* are explained in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

• Skill Adds and Skill Points •

Skill adds reflect knowledge, learning, and practice. A character's basic abilities are defined by his or her Attribute Values, but the character's skill adds improve on those attributes, polishing and adding to them. The more adds the character has stacked onto an Attribute, the more talented that character is. The uses of each skill are explained in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use."

How Skill Adds Work

Every skill is based on a particular Attribute. In Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use," skills are listed *by* Attribute because of this. Usually, when a character does not have skill adds in a particular skill, he or she can use the basic Attribute to attempt the skill anyway, but sometimes at a substantial penalty; some skills are so specialized that they cannot be used with just the Attribute.

For example, if a character wanted to fire a gun, that character would use the *fire combat* skill, or lacking that, the Dexterity Attribute that *fire combat* is listed under.

How Skill Adds "Add"

Each skill add *adds* directly to the Attribute Value when determine the character's *skill value.*

For example, if a character has a 12 Dexterity and one add in *fire combat*, he has a 13 *fire combat* skill value. If he had two adds in *fire combat*, he'd have a 14 skill value. His Dexterity is still a 12, but when he uses that skill, he gains the benefit of the extra knowledge and practice.

Other Benefits to Having Skills

There are several benefits to having adds in skills. Some skills, called *trained skills*, cannot be used at all (or at a *very* substantial penalty) if the character does not have any skill adds in those skills. This is because the skill is so hard to use or figure out normally that trying *untrained* would be practically impossible. Some examples of *trained* skills include *medicine, aircraft piloting,* and *language;* they are noted on the skill list in **bold.**

Another reason a character might assign points to skill adds is that only characters with skill adds get to benefit from *roll-agains*. Roll-agains allow characters to roll higher — and higher is always better. That is covered in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

Types of Skills

As mentioned above, there are different types of skills.

Untrained: Unless otherwise indicated, skills are considered *untrained.* This means the character can attempt the skill with just their basic Attribute. If the skill is *not* in **bold** on the skill list, it can be used untrained.

Trained: These are skills that can only be used if the character has skill adds in them. They are listed in **bold** on the skill list.

General: Unless otherwise indicated, skills are general and they do *not* have an asterisk (*) by them on the skill list.

Macroskills: A *macroskill* is used to "sum up" large lists of skills instead of listing each one separately. A macroskill skill is really just a skill name for a *large* blanket of skill knowledge. For example, the skill *vehicle piloting* could cover ground vehicles, water vehicles and air vehicles such as flying balloons, jets, or helicopters — but a person who knows how to fly a balloon wouldn't necessarily have any idea of how to fly a jet plane. So, each area of knowledge within a macroskill skill must be chosen individually — *vehicle piloting: balloon; vehicle piloting: jet; vehicle piloting: helicopter;* these are called *focuses.* Macroskills are listed with an asterisk (*) on the skill list and the skill description lists sample "focuses."

Specializations: Under each skill description (see Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use"), there are a number of sample specializations listed. Specializations are more focused, more specific versions of general skills (or focuses of macroskills). A general skill covers a general of knowledge, while specializations cover narrow parts of that general skill.

For example, *fire combat* is a general skill: it covers any slugthrowing weapon, from the M-16 to the Colt .45 to the old breech-loader. However, a character may want to learn only about pistols. The character would choose the *pistols* specialization of *fire combat,* so the character would have *fire combat (pistols)* listed.

Normally, choosing a specialization is *optional* — it is "cheaper" (in skill points) to both purchase and improve (later in the game), but covers a much more limited area. A character can almost always have a specialization in a general skill without actually learning the general skill; he or she has just learned that specific knowledge without learning anything else. There are some special rules for learning specializations, but they are covered under "Assigning Values."

Skill Points

Skill points are used in much the same way attribute points were assigned, but with more choices. Your character is assigned a certain number of skill points (using either the system defined here, an alternative system in one of the WorldBooks, or one of your own creation).

This system takes into account how intelligent and how "well-learned" your character is, and assigns skill points accordingly. The more intelligent and well-learned your character is, the more skill points he or she will have. Use the charts below to determine the number of skill points your character starts with.

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• Skill Points •

Intellect Is ...	Skill Points Are ...
13	10
11 to 12	9
8 to 10	8
6 to 7	7
5	6
Mind is ...	**Skill Points Are ...**
13	16
11 to 12	14
9 to 10	12
7 to 8	10
6	8
5	6

Add the two numbers together and that is the number of skill points your character begins with. You will spend these to purchase individual skills (described in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use," and any skills from *MasterBook* Worldbooks that apply to the game universe your character will be in). Most characters will probably have around twenty skill points.

If, during background generation, or after adventuring has begun, a character increases his Mind or Intellect attribute, that has *no effect* on his starting skill points — he's already spent them. After character generation, the only skill points used are those awarded during adventures.

How to Assign Skill Points

Since there are more skills than Attributes, assigning skill points is a longer process than assigning Attribute points. There are many general skills described in this rulebook, and there are more in each of the WorldBooks you may have. In addition, there are several macroskills that can be divided into more exact skills (focuses). You can choose to have specializations of nearly any general skill (including macroskill focuses).

The basic mechanics of assigning beginning skill points are fairly simple. At this point in the game, every general skill has the same cost to purchase, and is purchased the same way.

For one skill point, you can buy *one* skill add in any general skill — regardless of whether that skill can be used *untrained* or must be used *trained*, or whether the skill is a simple general skill or a focus of a macroskill. One point buys one add.

Most skills can be specialized in, and doing this saves on skill points. A specialization add of a general skill or a focus costs *half* what the general skill does. So, for one skill point, you can get two adds in a single specialization, or one add in two different specializations.

There are pluses and minuses to specializations once game play starts. The basic upshot is this: specializations are much more limited than general skills, but they do give the character specialized knowledge and expertise. Because of this, if a character has skill adds in a general skill, and specialization adds in a specialization underneath the general skill, that character can add the specialization adds to the general skill adds when making a specialization *skill check*.

When choosing a macroskill, you must choose a focus immediately: each focus costs one point per add (just like an add for a general skill), and the character has *no* skill in areas under the macroskill outside their focus (just use the Attribute).

• Skill Add Costs •

- General skill: 1 skill point per add
- Focus: 1 skill point per add
- Specialization: 1/2 skill point per specialization add

Limits on Skill Point Allocation

There are certain limits that need to be placed on skill point assignment. They are listed here.

The following limits apply at the time of character creation:

1. No character may have more than three skill adds in any one general skill or focus. For example, you can have *fire combat* at one, two, or three adds at this point, but not four.

2. No single specialization may have more than two adds. You can have the specialization *fire combat (pistol)* at one or two adds, but not at three.

3. No general skill, when combined with a specialization of that skill, may have more than five adds as a total value. This means, if you have *fire combat* at three adds and you buy the specializations *pistol, rifle,* and *shotgun*, you can only have up to two adds in each. So you could have *fire combat* at 3, with the *pistol* specialization at 2, for a total of 5 points when a character uses *fire combat (pistol)*.

4. When you choose a macroskill, you have to choose a focus *immediately*. Whenever you choose the macroskill *science*, for example, you must choose a focus for that skill, like *archaeology*. You can choose as many focuses within a macroskill as you like, but each focus is considered a separate general skill. You can choose specializations of focuses. For example, *science: archaeology (Egyptian)*.

5. All beginning skill points must be spent during character generation. Even though there is a space on the blank character sheet (see page 23) for skill points, those are skill points you get *during* your adventures. You must spend all beginning skill points; all unspent points are lost.

These limits apply at all times:

6. Specialization adds may *never* exceed the number of general or focus skill adds by more than two. If you have the skill *fire combat* at one add, and the specialization *pistols* at three adds, you cannot buy another add in the *pistols* specialization until you buy another add in *fire combat*.

7. You *may* have a specialization in a general skill that you have no adds in. You can buy the *fire combat (pistols)* specialization at one or two adds without ever having to learn the *fire combat* general skill — but, in order to progress further, you must learn one add in the general skill (as per the previous rule).

Constructing a "Skill Theme"

Many roleplayers will want to focus on "all combat" or "all special effect" or other "one-sided" characters.

But are these characters realistic? At the "age of adventuring," should the character really only have one type of skill? That's pretty dull, and fairly unusual.

As a general guideline, gamemasters should require characters to devote at least *one fourth* of their skill points to "professional" or "theme" skills. Failing that, they should make

players devote at least a quarter of their total skill points to skills that are unrelated to "one-sided" skill selections (i.e., all combat skills, or all special effect skills).

For example, "Captain Combat," the death machine-type character (you know the type — every skill and every specialization is devoted to combat), should have to spend one quarter of his skill points on skills that *aren't* directly related to combat. Captain Combat might choose *science: weaponsmith, scholar: tactics, persuasion (leadership),* and *perception (forward observer)* if he wants — these are all combat-*supportive* skills that will only give indirect benefits in combat (as the result of intelligent roleplaying) — or the gamemaster might even decide to make him learn even *more* unrelated skills. Maybe while he was in the "army," Captain Combat learned *science: mechanic, vehicle piloting: heavy trucks, science: cooking* (he pulled a lot of K.P.), and *perception (map reading)*. This makes Captain Combat much more realistic and much more well-rounded.

Skill Selection Tips

Here are some suggestions for selecting skills. They are *suggestions* only, not rules.

If you are playing a character who is probably going to be involved in combat more than once or twice an adventure (quite likely — roleplaying games deal a lot with fictional combat situations), put at least one or two adds in *dodge* (which lets you try to get out of the way of missile weapons, thrown weapons, energy weapons, fire combat weapons and anything else that flies at you through the air) and *unarmed parry*. If you don't, you won't be able to keep from getting hurt — and combat can be very deadly.

Also, pick up at least one or two weapon or unarmed combat skills. *Fire combat, energy weapons, missile weapons, thrown weapons, melee combat, unarmed combat, martial arts*, etc. are all useful. Even if you aren't playing a "combat character," one or two adds in one or two of these skills can go a long way.

Take interaction skills — *especially* you non-physical boys and girls. A super-scientist with most of her adds in Intellect and Mind skills might seem pretty puny when compared to a soldier, but a little *trick* can go a long way. In *MasterBook*, there are many skills that can get you *out* of trouble faster than you got *into* it — and very few of them involve shooting. That means *charm* and *persuasion* are good, and a character with a high *taunt* skill value can take advantage even in combat situations.

Finally, take as many of those *trained* skills as you feel you'll ever need. They are listed in **boldface** on the "Master Skill List" (page 97) and described in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use." Right now, they cost as many points as every other skill — but, after you've been on an adventure, their cost in skill points goes up *dramatically*. Think you might want *heavy weapons, language,* or *medicine?* It is definitely worth a skill point to learn them *now* rather than a lot of skill points later.

• Skill Point Allocation •

Jill's character, Diane, has twenty skill points (she has a Intellect of 10 and a Mind of 9, so she gets 8+12=20 skill points). She reads over Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use," and starts to select her skills.

Jill tries to remain faithful to her character conception. She wants a character that is capable in both intellectual pursuits and some combat abilities. Since the genre she is adventuring in is pulp fiction, this should work out pretty well.

First, Jill decides on a theme for her background. She's an adventuring scientist in a pulp genre. That means she should probably take the Intellect skill *super-science*. She also thinks she should pick up the Mind macroskill *language* (she'll decide on the focus in a moment), and the Intellect skill *linguistics*. Diane will also pick up two adds in *persuasion* (see below).

While Jill did not select a lot of adds in specializations, she did take a few. She selected fifteen different skills (or specializations), giving her a decent spread. She probably would have been a little better off with a few less adds in a few of her skills and more actual skills, but she is satisfied.

SKILLS

NAME	ATTRIBUTE/ VALUE	SKILL ADDS	SPECIALIZATION/ ADDS	MODIFIERS	SKILL VALUE
super-science	*MI/9*	*3*			*12*
language: Chinese	*MI/9*	*1*		*lang: Chinese/1*	*11*
linguistics	*IN/10*	*2*			*12*
persuasion	*CH/7*	*0*	*bargaining/2*		*9*
fire combat	*DX/9*	*1*			*10*
fire combat	*DX/9*	*0*	*pistols/3*		*12*
fire combat	*DX/9*	*0*	*rifle/1*		*10*
dodge	*AG/9*	*2*			*11*
unarmed parry	*AG/9*	*1*			*10*
unarmed combat	*AG/9*	*2*			*11*
stealth	*AG/9*	*1*			*10*
perception	*IN/10*	*0*	*find/2*		*12*
perception	*IN/10*	*0*	*evidence analysis/2*		*12*
vehicle piloting: wheeled	*DX/9*	*1*			*10*
trick	*IN/10*	*1*			*11*

ADVANTAGES **COMPENSATIONS**

• Skill Add Comparison •

Since characters have different Attribute levels that directly effect how well they use their skills, there isn't much point in providing a "Skill Value Comparison" — the higher the skill value, the better the character is at that skill use — but we can compare the level of practice and knowledge the character has achieved by learning skill adds.

Comparison Chart

# of Skill Adds	Level of Knowledge
1	Novice
2	Beginner
3	Intermediate
4–6	Professional
7–10	Advanced Professional
11–15	Adept, or "Master"
16+	Probably the most learned in the world

Since a skill add is an increment of learned or practiced knowledge, you can use the chart below to gain an understanding of just about how much work goes into skill adds.

As you can see, player characters, even if they have three adds (the max) in a particular skill and an additional two adds in a specialization in that skill (again, the max), at best start out at the general "professional" level. They are "good."

However, at the point a character becomes an "Advanced Professional" and beyond, it should be noticed that the character depends less and less on high Attribute values and more and more on achieving greater knowledge and skill adds. A character with 15 skill adds in *martial arts: kung fu* could be a reasonably decrepit old man (say, with an Agility of 6), and still beat the living daylights out of a younger, more agile pupil.

Gamemaster characters should be built along these lines, using this comparison. The player characters are at the *start* of their careers. They have just begun learning, even if they have extensive backgrounds. They need to work if they are going to become the best they can be.

• Filling out the Character Sheet •

Congratulations! You've completed basic character generation! If you don't want to create a background for your character (we recommend that you do, but you might be eager to play right now), then you can skip Chapter Two, "Background Generation," and move on to Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use," after you fill out your character sheet. Otherwise, you should probably go on to Chapter Two and come back here afterwards.

The Character Sheet

Make a copy of the Character Sheet (you can actually write up the background on any spare paper). The front of the Character Sheet contains all the vital information you'll need during a gaming session.

Fill out your name, your character's name, the character's height, weight, age, sex, and species.

Attributes

Next, enter each Attribute value next to each Attribute. Unless you have performed background generation and taken some strange Advantages and Compensations, you should only have one value per Attribute.

Derived Attributes

Figure the Derived Attributes according to the formulas presented earlier and list them here. Also list the character's Toughness. If the character has armor, list their Toughness with armor. See "Armor" in Chapter Three, "The Rules" for an explanation of how armor works and Chapter Seven, "Equipment" for examples of armor.

Combat Box

The "Combat Box" is an area where combat-related stats and wound levels can be recorded. Right now, you only need to put a value next to "Shock Capacity" (the amount of shock damage your character can take — your *resist shock* skill or, lacking that, your straight Endurance Attribute).

Life Points

Characters begin the game with five Life Points. Their uses are explained in "Life Points" in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

Skill Points

This is where a character's skill points are listed — beginning characters should have spent all of their beginning skill points, so they will have a "0" in this box until they complete their first adventure.

Skills

There are six columns in the Skills section: "Name," "Attribute/Value," "Skill Adds," "Specialization/Adds," "Modifiers," and "Skill Value."

Name: List every skill your character has here, along with the focuses and specializations. A focus should be listed after the macroskill name and a colon (*survival: urban).* If you have a specialization in a skill, list it in parentheses (*fire combat (pistols)).* If you had a specialization in a focus, it would look like this: *scholar: archaeology (Egyptian).* You can also use separate lines for multiple focuses or specializations.

Attribute/Value: List the attribute that governs the skill and its value here: Agility/18, Dexterity/11, etc.

Skill Adds: List the number of adds.

MASTERBOOK CHARACTER SHEET

Character Name *Diane O'Rourke*

Player Name *Jill*

SPECIES *human*	HEIGHT	MASS	AGE	SEX *female*

ATTRIBUTES

9	AGILITY	10	INTELLECT
9	DEXTERITY	9	MIND
9	ENDURANCE	8	CONFIDENCE
7	STRENGTH	7	CHARISMA

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

10	TOUGHNESS	10	TOUGHNESS (w/armor)
6	MRG (Movement Rate, Ground)	2	MRC (Movement Rate, Climbing)
4	MRS (Movement Rate, Swimming)	2	MRJ (Movement Rate, Jumping

COMBAT BOX

K O

WOUND LEVEL / **MODIFIERS**

○ *Light*	no modifier
○ *Moderate*	-2 to physical skills
○ *Heavy*	-4 physical & -2 all other skills
○ *Incapacitated*	-8 to all skills
○ *Mortal*	automatic KO; see text

LIFE POINTS *5*

SKILL POINTS *0*

SHOCK CAPACITY *9*

SHOCK TAKEN

SKILLS

NAME	ATTRIBUTE/ VALUE	SKILL ADDS	SPECIALIZATION/ ADDS	MODIFIERS	SKILL VALUE
super-science	*MI/9*	*3*			*12*
language: Chinese	*MI/9*	*1*		*lang: Chinese/1*	*11*
linguistics	*IN/10*	*2*			*12*
persuasion	*CH/7*	*0*	*bargaining/2*		*9*
fire combat	*DX/9*	*1*			*10*
fire combat	*DX/9*	*0*	*pistols/3*		*12*
fire combat	*DX/9*	*0*	*rifle/1*		*10*
dodge	*AG/9*	*2*			*11*
unarmed parry	*AG/9*	*1*			*10*
unarmed combat	*AG/9*	*2*			*11*
stealth	*AG/9*	*1*			*10*
perception	*IN/10*	*0*	*find/2*		*12*
perception	*IN/10*	*0*	*evidence analysis/2*		*12*
vehicle piloting: wheeled	*DX/9*	*1*			*10*
trick	*IN/10*	*1*			*11*

ADVANTAGES

COLUMN	NAME (game effect)
CI	*Additional Skill Adds language: Chinese/1*
CI	*Contacts*
CI	*Fame*
CII	*Cultures*
CII	*Cultures*
CIII	*Special Effects: super-science skill*

COMPENSATIONS

COLUMN	NAME (game effect)
CI	*Bad Luck*
CI	*Cultural Unfamiliarity*
CI	*Poverty*
CII	*Enemy*
CII	*Prejudice*
CIII	*Quirk*

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10	11 12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21 25	26 30	31 35	36 40	41 45	+5
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	+1

MASTERBOOK CHARACTER SHEET

EQUIPMENT

ITEM	GAME EFFECT	NOTES (ranges, etc.)

GENRE/GAME SETTING DESCRIPTION

Pulp fiction adventure setting, with super-science and some super powers. Some magic and occult. Fast-paced, physical adventure.

BASIC CHARACTER CONCEPT

Diane is an adventurer/hero with good brains and good brawn. She helps out other people, but she travels the world in search of excitement, fame, and wealth. Diane is a globe-trotter. She has probably picked up some languages and knowledge about different cultures. She also has some scientific knowledge she uses to create her gizmos. She is physically and mentally talented.

PERSONALITY

BACKGROUND STORY

Diane was born in a Western country early in the twentieth century of Earth (pulp genre). She grew up moving from city to city, and university to university, following her mother, a well-known teacher of chemistry and physics. While her mother did want to settle down and raise her only child in a stable home, she could never land that "right job" because she always intimidated the male scientists who were not ready to accept her talent. But she never became bitter — just lonely.

During her childhood, Diane visited several countries, but only stayed in America, Japan and China for any length of time (that's how she picked up Chinese). She witnessed some of the "darker sides" of science and humanity because of their transient existence. When Diane's mother retired to England, Diane decided she wanted to keep travelling. (Continued under "Notes")

NOTES

Her most unusual experience occurred in Hong Kong only two years ago. She was working for a British company, manufacturing small gadgets and parts, when she was approached by a member of (so he said) a Japanese manufacturing company. He needed certain parts made and he said that no one else could make them as well; he offered her ten times what she thought the goods were worth. Suspicious, she investigated. As it turned out, the parts were to be used to process a new strain of opium. However, she was discovered in her snooping. After a long and harrowing series of adventures, she managed to escape to China, across the Middle East, and then to France.

Modifiers: Here is where you will list any special modifiers from Advantages and Compensations (or any other sources).

Specialization Adds: List the specialization and its adds here. For example, *pistols*/2, *French*/1, etc.

Total: This is the skill's final value: Attribute Value plus Skill Adds plus Specialization Adds plus Modifiers.

Advantages and Compensations

Advantages and Compensations are explained in Chapter Two, "Background Generation." Simply list any that are selected here.

Column: Advantages and Compensations are given "Columns" to rank how powerful they are: I (for weakest), II, III, and IV (very powerful) — the columns can go higher. Simply list the column level.

Name: List the name, with any game effect in parentheses.

Equipment

Almost every character begins the game with a certain amount of equipment. Equipment could mean weapons, armor, adventuring gear, money, or whatever. Generally, it is up to the gamemaster to decide what equipment the character begins the game with (Chapter Two, "Background Generation," has some rules for this).

Equipment should be selected along a theme. If you are playing a combat-oriented character, you probably have decent weapons, armor, and some miscellaneous gear. If your character is a scientist, he should have lab tools, money, and maybe some useful gadgets.

Take a look at Chapter Seven, "Equipment," and, if you are using a *MasterBook* WorldBook, the appropriate chapters for more information.

• Creating Gamemaster Characters •

When the gamemaster creates a character he will use during an adventure, he has to decide a few things.

First, is the character likely to be an important character in the future? Is great detail necessary when constructing this character?

If not, the gamemaster can usually just assign Attributes and skill points based on what purpose the character is going to fill during the adventure. For example, if, during an adventure, a group of "gang members" are supposed to attack the player characters — they aren't really going to do anything else — the gamemaster can quickly assign their Attribute values (not worrying too much about how many are assigned — though he should keep that in mind) and the skills the gamemaster thinks they'll need (combat and basic interactive skills).

Generally, less important "stock" characters can be created very quickly with almost the exact same attribute and skill values — this is "quickie" character creation.

However, if the gamemaster wants to create a "major villain," or a character that is very important to the adventure, he should create the character as if he were creating a player character — but he may wish to assign a few more (or less) Attribute and skill points to the character to make that character more (or less) experienced.

That leads to the second consideration: experience and power. Gamemaster characters who are likely to be the player characters' enemies or opponents should actually have a few *more* skill adds than the player characters (although they probably won't have much higher Attribute values).

They'll have between one and ten Life Points (see Chapter Three, "The Rules," for more information on Life Points): usually one to three for "minions" and more for "important" characters. However, they don't gain the benefits of cards (see Chapter Five, "The Card Deck"). So, in order to be challenging, they should have more skill adds and higher Attribute values.

They might also have more or better equipment (in general), or even more special abilities — see Chapter Two, "Background Generation," for some examples.

Regardless, the gamemaster is not held to the same rules as players are when constructing characters. He should pay attention to things like Attribute limits and skill rules, but he can make up a lot. He's the gamemaster, after all.

CHAPTER TWO

• Background Generation •

This chapter is for roleplayers who want to explore more of their characters' possible backgrounds and abilities. After completing basic character generation in Chapter One, you may come here and "flesh out" your character's history and abilities.

Expanding the Character Concept

Background generation comes in two parts. The first part is the expanding of the character concept, or character's *story*, as begun in Chapter One. That short summary you made of your character's basic background will now be filled out into a more detailed history.

There are several ways you can do this. The easiest is to just come up with a "character history." Answer questions like:

- Where/when was my character born?
- What did my character do as a child?
- What unusual experiences did my character have?
- Why did my character "choose" to become the character he/she is now?
- What was my character doing right before the game begins?

There are, of course, other questions you can come up with, though these are among the most common.

How to Answer These Questions

Try to expand on your answers. You can jot down notes and you can go back and fill in the gaps as you go. Follow along in the background generation sidebars as you read this chapter.

Hit the High Points

Don't dwell on mundane details. Right now, focus on interesting details and specifics. You can make up the name of the character's school, the exact date of birth, and other things as you go along.

Think Ahead to Background Options

The next part of background generation will allow you to select special abilities, new skills, and other interesting game- and story-related options called *Background Advantages* and *Compensations*. Suggest the fact that your character might know things, people, or whatever that aren't reflected in the character's abilities yet.

Use What You Know

This comes in two parts. First, stay true to your "Character Concept." Those brief lines you wrote out before and those skills you selected — provide a *reason* for them. Say your character knows *fire combat* and several specializations? Why? Was the character in the army? A gangster? A member of a secret paramilitary organization? How were these skills learned? You don't have to explain *every* skill, but any skills that are slightly unusual (special effects-using skills or skills

• Diane O'Rourke: • Background Questions

Jill reads over the questions and writes a short paragraph that answers each of them.

Diane was born in a Western country early in the twentieth century of Earth (pulp genre). She grew up moving from city to city, and university to university, following her mother, a well-known teacher of chemistry and physics. While her mother did want to settle down and raise her only child in a stable home, she could never land that "right job" because she always intimidated the male scientists who were not ready to accept her talent. But she never became bitter — just lonely.

During her childhood, Diane visited several countries, but only stayed in America, Japan and China for any length of time (that's how she picked up Chinese). She witnessed some of the "darker sides" of science and humanity because of their transient existence. When Diane's mother retired to England, Diane decided she wanted to keep travelling.

Her most unusual experience occurred in Hong Kong only two years ago. She was working for a British company, manufacturing small gadgets and parts, when she was approached by a member of (so he said) a Japanese manufacturing company. He needed certain parts made and he said no one else could make as well; he offered her ten times what she thought the goods were worth. Suspicious, she investigated. As it turned out, the parts were to be used to process a new strain of opium. However, she was discovered in her snooping. After a long and harrowing series of adventures, she managed to escape to China, across the Middle East, and then to France.

While this is a fairly long description, it does cover a lot of Diane's life, and it suggests several interesting elements. When Jill selects Background Advantages and Compensations, she'll find this quite a help.

that cannot be used *untrained*) should be explained, as well as skills the character has three adds in (he/she is *really* good at those).

The other part of "use what you know" refers to using information about the world-setting your character is in and any "genre references" you may think of. Hopefully, the gamemaster has described the basic setting of the game you'll be playing (or the WorldBook you are using has), and that will give you some ideas. Also, you can remember pertinent books, television shows, or movies — if the genre is similar to one of them, then you can "steal" ideas from them.

For example, you might be playing in a *high fantasy* game where elves, dwarves, dragons, goblins, and other critters roam free. There might be lots of magic — you might even be playing a magic-using character. Think about some high fantasy books you've read and movies you've seen and use some of their ideas. Work magic, magic creatures, and fantasy settings into your background description.

Peruse the Background Options

Finally, you might not want to write a background for your character until you look at some of the options you might have. Take a look at the Background Advantages and Compensations and see some of the benefits/drawbacks you can choose if you use the system. You might see something you want to work in, and that will help give you ideas for a background story.

Developing Advantages and Compensations

Background Advantages and Compensations are special options and background knowledges that you can select for your character (if you want) to make the character more interesting, more (and less) effective, and more fun to roleplay (if you do it right). You know the story of your character — here's what that story means.

Advantages are just what they sound like — they give your character an "edge" that other characters might not have. Compensations offset Advantages — most often in non-related ways — to make the character more rounded and more believable.

For example, a particular character might have an Advantage that gives him a +1 to the bonus number of any combat-related skill total (this is pretty good). The character will have an offsetting Compensation as well. The character might have to add +1 to the DN of all interaction-related skill totals, or there might be a totally unrelated Compensation (of comparative power) — like the character is afraid of the dark and is *stymied* when in the dark.

• Game Mechanic References •

This chapter will be heavy with references to game mechanics — "+1 to the bonus number," "+2 to the DN," "*stymied*," etc. Where it is important that you understand exactly what this means, there will be a reference sending you to a particular section of the book. Otherwise, you can just read along and take a few things for granted — everything will be explained.

Most game mechanic references are explained in Chapter Three, "The Rules," and Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use."

Organization

Advantages and Compensations are organized into *columns*. These columns are numbered (one through four); higher-numbered columns are more powerful. They are abbreviated CI, CII, CIII and CIV, respectively. The summaries below should give you some idea of how powerful each column is:

Column One (CI)

Advantages: Characters gain small bonuses to single skill totals, and they might have "roleplaying help" — friends or contacts who will give them a hand "when the time is right." They might also gain more powerful Advantages that are out of their control. They could have modest sums of cash or helpful equipment (above what is "normal" for a starting character).

Compensations: Characters who select these might have minor personality flaws, modifiers to the DNs of certain types of actions, and some roleplaying "disservices" — gamemaster characters who are "out to get" the characters or circumstances that make the characters' lives a little more difficult. Minor debts or a tendency to get flawed equipment is possible.

Column Two (CII)

Advantages: Characters gain small bonuses to *types* of skill totals, or larger bonuses to single skill totals. They might have significant help from "roleplaying sources" (influential friends, and so forth) or fairly powerful "circumstances" that are beyond their control. They could have significant monetary means or unusually useful equipment.

Compensations: Major personality flaws may be evident, there may be major modifiers to certain types of actions, and there could be some serious threats to the characters' well-being from outside sources. Money is a serious problem — debt is a major factor. Equipment that is fairly necessary is also very flawed.

Column Three (CIII)

Advantages: These Advantages take on the auspices of the uncanny. Skill and ability bonuses are either almost all-encompassing or incredibly significant in a small focus, and special abilities and effects become possible. Friends and allies are either always around or significantly helpful. Money is almost never a consideration, as it is very plentiful, and cutting-edge technology or lots of equipment is quite possible.

Compensations: Any personality flaws of this level are *psychosis* or major *phobias*. There are certainly negative game effects to them, in addition to negative roleplaying effects. Enemies and circumstances would contrive to kill characters selecting these types of flaws at this level. If characters have monetary flaws of this caliber, then all monies ever possessed by these character are probably going to be sucked away. Essential equipment is very flawed and dangerous to use.

Column Four (CIV)

Advantages: At this level, Advantages are into the realm of the supernatural or supranormal. Very specific, incredibly effective skill bonuses are possible, and wide-range bonuses are an option. Friends and allies are probably almost insurmountable to foes, and they can be called upon with relative frequency. Equipment of a supranormal level is available.

Compensations: As far a skill totals go, characters with this type and level of Compensation are probably completely crippled in one or more areas. Enemies are extremely danger-

ous, as are game circumstances, and, at this level, they show up with more-than-alarming frequency. "Cursed" technology is available, and a monetary status approaching "pauper/slave" would be fairly attractive.

Column Five (V) ... ?

Gamemasters and players may long for higher columns and more special abilities. If you want to increase the effect of even the Column Four Advantages and Compensations, you can make a column five, six, seven, and so on.

Don't do this unless you are sure! Chances are very good that you can emulate the effect you want by combining abilities and modifiers from the columns presented — but if you go and create more powerful columns, you will probably be getting into nightmarish escalation that could destroy game balance.

Balancing Advantages and Compensations

If you select an Advantage from a particular column, you have to go to the Compensation section and select a Compensation from the *same* column.

If your character selects three CI (Column I), two CII (Column II), and one CIII (Column III) Advantages, that character must also have three CI, two CII, and one CIII Compensations as well.

The Maximum Number of Options

Each game universe has a set maximum number of options — the gamemaster will tell you what the limits are.

For example, a world with limits of 3CI, 2CII, and 1CIII would allow characters to have three Column One Advantages, two Column Two Advantages, and one Column Three Advantage (and a like number and type of Compensations). Characters can always choose to have fewer Advantages (and Compensations).

Stacking

Unless otherwise specified, you may not "stack" abilities: you may not choose multiple advantages or compensations that affect the same skill or specialization or cover the same *specific* area of the character's background. *This type of selection, or "stacking," can only be done if the gamemaster authorizes it!*

For instance, the Column I Advantage Additional Skill Adds (CI) allows the character to add one general skill add or two specialization adds to a skill; a player selects to get one add for *fire combat*. Then, the player may not have the same advantage again or another advantage affect *fire combat* or any of its specializations unless specifically authorized by the gamemaster. For macroskills, each focus is considered a separate skill when applying this rule.

On the other hand, multiple selections of the same option are allowed as long as they do not affect the same skill or specialization. For example, a player could select Additional Skill Adds (CI) and apply it to her character's *stealth* skill. She could select Additional Skill Adds (CI) again and apply it to another skill, such as *fire combat,* but she could not apply it to *stealth* a second time.

This rule also applies to Compensations. For example, if a player selects the Compensation Minor Psychosis (CI) and chooses kleptomania for the character, there is nothing stopping the player from selecting Minor Psychosis (CI) again and choosing claustrophobia. These are not options that are being "stacked" — they are multiple selections of the same option.

This rule puts the gamemaster on the spot — they have to select whether or not to allow stacking. In general, any crossover that pushes a combat skill or collection of combat skills past a total bonus of +4 (for general skills) or +6 (for specializations) is probably a bad idea. Non-combat skills should be allowed a little more leniency, possibly up to +5 or +7.

Use Your Head and Be Patient

Generally, you can tell from the game setting what sorts of things should be allowable and what sorts shouldn't. A *pulp fiction* setting — one that emphasizes high adventure, fast action, and nearly unbelievable stunts — should have less stringent guidelines than a *real world* setting — one where characters are supposed to be fairly believable, real people. Remember, these are *beginning* characters. They aren't novices — they have some experience; that's why we use background generation — but they are hardly veterans. As adventuring goes on, they will have ample opportunities to improve their abilities.

Optional Rule: Cross-Column Selection

Sometimes, a player will come up with a very good reason or (better still) a very good roleplaying idea that would mean extra Advantages or Compensations.

For example, a character created for a pulp fiction game setting can create a character with the following column options: 3CI, 2CII, 1CIII. However, the player doesn't *want* a Column Three option — but the player does want to gain more Column One options. Under the normal rules, the player would have to be satisfied with three CI Advantages and two CII Advantages and, if the player didn't want a Column Three, tough.

The gamemaster decides to use the following optional rule:

The character can have a number of options in the desired column equal to the "sacrificed" column minus the "desired" column.

In this case, that means the "sacrificed" column is Column Three and the desired column is Column One. Three minus one is two, so the character can have two additional Column One Advantages. However, the character must *still* select a Column Three *Compensation* to balance things out.

If, instead, the same player wanted an extra Column Two Advantage for his character, the character could sacrifice the CIII for *one* CII Advantage. Three minus two equals one, so the character gets one extra Column Two Advantage, but still has to take a Column Three Compensation.

Going the Other Way: But what if a player doesn't like all those Column I Advantages and would like an additional Column Two or even a Column Three (or Four, or Five)? *This is not recommended!* Higher columns have much more powerful Advantages, and some just don't fit into certain game settings.

For example, in a real world game setting, where things are supposed to be, essentially, as they are now, characters have the following column options: 4CI, 3CII. No Column Threes, Fours, or Fives are permitted. However, a player may decide she wants to play a really unusual character — one with a Column Three Advantage, like Special Effects (CIII). The player wants to do something no one else in the game setting can do.

Normally, this should be overruled by the gamemaster — it is, after all, changing the game setting. But, perhaps, the game has been going on for a while and the gamemaster is eager to experiment with "cross-genre" gaming, and the player is a mature gamer who won't abuse the extra abilities.

Paul Daly

In that case, the columns that must be sacrificed must equal the column desired *plus one*. So, since the player wants a Column Three Advantage, the character must sacrifice either four Column One Advantages, two Column Two Advantages, or a Column Two Advantage and two Column One Advantages, or any other number of advantages to total four. In addition, the character must take a Compensation equal to the desired column *plus one* — and the *gamemaster* gets to choose the Compensation (so the gamemaster can fit it into the game setting).

This rule is used even if the character would normally be able to have Advantages from that column. If the character above were, instead, from a pulp fiction game setting, where she would get 3CI, 2CII, 1CIII picks, and she wanted an extra CIII, then she would have to sacrifice four columns' worth of Advantage and take a Column Four Compensation.

Compensations: The rules for changing Compensations only *goes* one way. A character can take a single high-column Compensation instead of several small Compensations, but only one level "shift" is possible. If the character has to take three Column I Compensations, then he could take one CI and one CII instead — but only with gamemaster approval.

The character cannot take several low-column Compensations instead of one high one.

Final Notes

Every Advantage and every Compensation in the lists below has its own rules for implementation. There are, if you look hard enough, some nightmarish combinations. If something looks like it is going to cause trouble in the game later on, check with your gamemaster before choosing it. Ultimately, the gamemaster has final say on the choice of all Advantages and Compensations, as well as final say on the *interpretation* of those choices.

Game Settings and Columns

Depending on the game setting and the gamemaster, every character can select a certain number or combination of Advantages and Compensations. The options depend on the game setting. Here are some very basic game settings you might be using, with column recommendations.

High Fantasy

In this type of game setting, magic and miracles (two types of special effects) generally play a big part in the characters' day-to-day lives. Magic spells, miraculous artifacts, and minor witcheries all blend into a fantastic whole.

In addition, there are probably several "non-human" species — elves, dwarves, lizard-men, or whatever. You can use these rules to construct these species and races.

Because of the high probability of strange creatures and characters, if you are playing in high fantasy game setting, we recommend selecting the following Advantages and Compensations: 1CI, 1CII, 1CIII, 1CIV.

Pulp Fiction

Mad scientists, pulp action, and high adventure are the components of pulp fiction. Heroes with "extranormal" abilities are common, and *super-science* gadgets usually take the place of magic — though not always.

Usually, characters are human and have near-human limits (though the upper ends are pushed by "heroes" and "vil-

lains"). Extra skills and, occasionally, extra Attribute points are likely.

We recommend the following Background Options: 3CI, 2CII, 1CIII.

Low Fantasy

Characters in low fantasy settings are usually in very near real world (below) settings — with a few exceptions. Perhaps magic and miracles function in the world, but they are very rare and special, and often out of the player character's control (if the character has any control at all).

There are not likely to be any magical creatures who can be player characters, and the player characters will usually compensate for this with extra training and knowledge. The suggested Background Options are 4CI, 3CII.

Real World

If the gamemaster uses a world that parallels our own — with maybe a few exceptions — the character should be constructed to fit into the real world setting. There will probably be no "monsters" to fight, but plenty of other dangers. No strange powers or abilities will be evident, but skills and natural abilities will be evident: 3CI, 2CII.

Science Fiction

In a way, science fiction settings are, as far as Background Options go, nearly interchangeable with high fantasy. Instead of magical creatures and weapons, the character will be exposed to the technological equivalent. Psionic powers replace magical spells, and high-tech devices replace mystical artifacts. For this reason, the mix is simply the same: 1CI, 1CII, 1CIII, 1CIV.

Other Game Settings

There are, of course, many other settings you could employ. Each could have a different mix of Advantages and Compensations. The Columns are constructed so that you can "mix and match" however you want.

To determine what Columns you will use in particular setting, ask yourself two questions.

First, is the character going to need or have additional training and experience before adventuring?

Second, is the character going to have "strange powers" or abilities not natural in the real world?

If the first answer is yes, then you probably want to use options from the first two Columns. They are primarily skill bonuses and additional skill adds, as well as other "natural" options. They do not require "fantasy" elements to employ.

If the second answer is yes, then you will also use the third and fourth (or possibly higher) Columns. While some of these options could be obtained by a "normal" character in the real world, most are "special effect" oriented or a little more powerful than you might be comfortable with in other settings.

You can, of course, simply disallow certain Advantages or Compensations for any particular setting. That is the best way to do things, but the most work.

• The Advantage Columns •

As stated above, there are four columns of Advantages (more can be created). The descriptions for each Advantage can be found by its name and, as you record your selections, you should make notes of game mechanics, roleplaying hints, and restrictions on either a piece of scrap paper or the back of your Character Sheet. Be prepared to read through the whole section and make a few changes as you go — and you'll probably be flipping over to Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use" a few times as well.

All Advantages and Compensations have their column listing as part of their name: Additional Skill Adds (CI) or Cultures (CIII). This means, "Additional Skill Adds, Column I" and "Cultures, Column III" respectively. This way, players and gamemasters know exactly where to look for the information pertaining to the Advantages and Compensations.

Advantages: Column I

The focus of Column I Advantages is mainly minor increases in skills and skill effects, roleplaying perks, and some small material possessions.

Additional Skill Adds (CI)

The character may select one additional add in any general skill (or a focus of a macroskill) or one add in two specializations or two adds in one specialization.

Restrictions/Notes: While this Advantage may be selected more than once, a character may *not* "stack" its effects. Characters *may* exceed their normal number of starting skill adds using this Advantage.

Contacts (CI)

This Advantage helps out the character *and* the gamemaster. The character "knows somebody" or a group of somebodies who will generally help out the character if he makes a decent appeal. For example, a Contact (CI) for a player character wizard in a high fantasy setting might be a mercenary warrior. The character is available for hire (for a modest fee, or a share of the treasure) and the wizard can usually get ahold of him by going to the right place and checking around. The mercenary will then go out and help him for a limited amount of time (part of an adventure or maybe throughout a short adventure).

The character might know a "group" with a wider range of influence (but less power) that will help out, again, for a modest fee or under the right circumstances. The influence might not be as direct, but it is easier to come by. For example, in a real world game setting, there could be automotive or travel clubs that will provide certain services for travellers — maps, hotel reservations, emergency transportation, etc. — for a small membership fee. You have to call them or go to their offices, and they won't do much about that maniac with the gun who is chasing you, but they can be of immense help under the right circumstances.

Restrictions/Notes: Contacts should not automatically help the character, but they should be reasonable in their negotiations. Multiple contacts of various columns may be selected and they may be stacked. For example, a certain person might be a "Contact (CI)" in most circumstances, but he could be a "Contact (CII)" or even a "Contact (CIII)" in the right place — for example, that mercenary warrior might help out for a fee versus normal foes, but when fighting his "hereditary

• Background Advantage List •

• Column I •

Additional Skill Adds (CI) One general skill or focus add or two specialization adds

Contacts (CI) Character has a friend or friends who provide minor assistance

Cultures (CI) Character gains knowledge of a foreign culture

Equipment (CI) Character gains unusual equipment (shift one Availability code)

Fame (CI) Character has minor notoriety

Skill Bonus (CI) +1 to a group of three related skills (modifier to bonus number only)

Wealth (CI) Character is upper middle class

• Column II •

Additional Skill Adds (CII) Increase one general or focus skill by two adds, or one specialization by three adds

Contacts (CII) As Contacts (CI), but the "friend" is more influential

Cultures (CII) The knowledge is more extensive than Cultures (CI) or more in-depth

Equipment (CII) The item is more valuable than Equipment (CI)

Fame (CII) The character is better known than Fame (CI)

Luck (CII) The character can use certain card deck enhancements once per adventure

Skill Bonus (CII) Gain +1 to the bonus number of five related skills

Trademark Specialization (CII) The character gains +3 to the bonus number of any specialization, plus he is moderately "famous" as if he had Fame (CI)

Wealth (CII) The character is from the upper class

• Column III •

Additional Skill Adds (CIII) Increase one general skill by three adds, or one specialization by four adds

Additional Attribute Point (CIII) Increase one Attribute by one point

Contacts (CIII) The "friends" are extremely unusual and effective

Cultures (CIII) The character has "native knowledge" and interactive abilities in the culture

Equipment (CIII) The equipment is artifactual in nature

Fame (CIII) The character is almost always recognized as famous

Learning Curve (Positive)(CIII) The character can improve skills at a cost of one skill point *less* after adventuring

Luck (CIII) The character can choose from other card deck options to use during an adventure

Skill Bonus (CIII) Gain +2 to the bonus number of three related skills or gain macroskill bonus (+1 to all skills in macroskill)

• Column III (cont.) •

Special Abilities (CIII)
Gain strange or unusual talent or ability. Some examples:

- **Accelerated Healing (CIII)** +3 to all Endurance rolls when healing; heal shock at one per round
- **Breathe Water (CIII)** Breathe water, +2 to *swimming*
- **Combat Sense (CIII)** Never completely surprised
- **Fast (CIII)** +3 to Agility or Confidence for initiative, or *haste* up to three times per adventure.
- **Infravision/ Ultravision (CIII)** can see in dark; +3 to all *perception*
- **Natural Hand-to-Hand Weapons (CIII)** Natural weapon, up to +3 to Strength damage
- **Natural Ranged Weapons (CIII)** Range equals value of Endurance, use Dexterity to hit
- **Toughened Skin (CIII)** +3 to Toughness, but weakness to one type of attack (fire combat, fire, etc.)

Special Effects (CIII) Gain the ability to use the special effects skill (or one such skill) as per the game setting

Supranormal Knowledge (CIII) The character can do something no one else can do (+3 bonus is common)

Wealth (CIII) The character is incredibly rich

• Column IV •

Contacts (CIV) The contacts are godlike

Cultures (CIV) The character understands a completely alien culture

Equipment (CIV) The character gains an artifact

Luck (CIV) The character gains more use of his card deck enhancements

Skill Minimum (CIV) Character always gains a +0 bonus number or better on three related skills

Special Abilities (CIV)

- **Accelerated Healing (CIV)** Heal all shock and KO with one round of rest, +3 to healing roll (see text)
- **Environmental Immunity (CIV)** Immune to one environment (water, vacuum, etc.)
- **Hardiness (CIV)** Ignores first wound each attack
- **Multiple Abilities (CIV)** Choose two CIII special abilities
- **Natural Armor (CIV)** +4 to Toughness, no weakness in armor
- **Natural Hand-to-Hand Weapons (CIV)** +4 to Strength for damage or damage value 15
- **Natural Ranged Weapons (CIV)** +4 Strength for damage or damage value 15
- **Permanent Special Effect (CIV)** The character is permanently subject to a particular special effect

enemies, the Flame Warriors of Djubek," he might be almost invincible and eager to help.

Remember that contacts are gamemaster characters. They should be created and played *rationally*. If a player refuses to roleplay or takes advantage of contacts, he should be penalized when trying to use them (and possibly lose them). There should also be a reason in the character's story *why* he has these contacts.

Cultures (CI)

This is another Advantage that can be utilized in more than one way. The first way is the simplest. The character has knowledge of a particular (usually unusual) culture that he can use to his Advantage when among people of that culture. This acts both as a Knowledge *(scholar)* type skill and as a bonus (usually +1) to interaction in that culture. For example, a character in a pulp fiction game setting might have Cultures (CI) pertaining to a certain Amazonian tribe. When the character goes on an adventure in the Amazon, chances are good he will get help from that tribe in his activities instead of being attacked as a stranger or trespasser and ending up with his head on a pike.

The second way Cultures (CI) can be used is a little more wide-sweeping. The character has a knack for drawing parallels between unknown/unusual and known cultures. For example, in a *near now* setting where "mutants rule the Earth," the character might be more able to realize that "hey, they're worshipping that school bus because its battery still works and its lights light up!" or something. These should just be bursts of culture-related intuition that the gamemaster supplies occasionally — the player can only remind the gamemaster he has this ability and hope the gamemaster feels the situation is appropriate.

Restrictions/Notes: A character with Cultures (CI) has about the level of knowledge of a frequent tourist — no more. Unless the character has skills like *streetwise, language: (the culture in question),* and other supporting skills, he acts as if he has visited the culture and learned a decent amount about their ways, but he is definitely an outsider. This Advantage may be taken more than once for different cultures.

In the second example, the character has absolutely no control over his ability and only gains very limited insights — though sometimes at critical moments. The character cannot "call upon" this knowledge. This Advantage may not be taken more than once, but it may be combined with the other type of Cultures at any level.

In both cases, the character's background *must* reflect the "special insight" he has into the culture or cultural trends.

Equipment (CI)

The character gains a piece of equipment he would not normally be able to have because it is too expensive or "unavailable," but only if it is allowable under the game setting. For example, in a real world game setting, a character could start the game with a .45 automatic pistol, but not an M16 assault rifle — the later is generally unavailable for civilian use and even characters with military backgrounds have to take the Equipment (CI) Advantage to get it.

Restrictions/Notes: In the "Equipment" chapter, the availability codes state what equipment should be available to the character at the beginning of the game. This Advantage moves the level of availability down one column, making more equipment available. Then, the character can select one piece of equipment from that level of availability. The equipment can't be *too* expensive (a thousand American dollars is about the maximum) — but it is up to the gamemaster. Things like cars or personal trucks cost more, but they should be pretty common (in a real world setting), while a Geiger counter is unusual and a little more difficult to get ahold of even if it is less expensive. Both could be obtained using this Advantage.

Additionally, the character might choose to take lots of little pieces of equipment instead — more than what the gamemaster would normally allow. Equipment (CI) may be selected more than once or in combination with higher columns of the Equipment advantage with gamemaster approval.

Fame (CI)

The character, for some reason, is fairly well known. The extent of the character's fame should be determined by the game setting. In a global game setting (such as pulp fiction, real world, or science fiction), the character has moderate recognition value in a particular region. In a smaller game setting (like high fantasy or low fantasy settings), the character might have more dense penetration of recognition, but with less wide-sweeping effects (e.g., everyone in town knows who they are, but no one from more than a few days travel away has ever heard of them).

Whenever the gamemaster or the player thinks the character might be recognized (and the Fame Advantage would come into play), the gamemaster should roll two ten-sided dice, rolling again on tens. If the result is 15 or higher, the character is recognized. Otherwise, he will have to do something "special" to be recognized (and gain the benefits of recognition).

If a character with Fame (CI) is recognized, he should gain small perks, like being seated in a restaurant early, avoiding small legal hassles (like routine customs' checks), or just be treated generally better (perhaps the character gets to lower the DN of *persuasion, interrogation,* and *charm* by a couple of points). Like most roleplayed Advantages, the gamemaster should decide on the results.

Restrictions/Notes: Fame may be chosen multiple times as long as the player defines how each Fame is different. For example, a character might have Fame (CI) in regards to his warrior abilities, but another type of Fame pertaining to his intelligence or some other ability.

Skill Bonus (CI)

The character may choose a group of *three* related skills in which he gains +1 to the bonus number of any action performed with those skills (or specializations of that skill). The character may or may not actually have adds in those skills, and the gamemaster must approve the fact that they are "related." Some examples of skill groups include:

Hand-to-Hand (HTH) Combat: *Unarmed combat, melee combat* and *maneuver*

Ranged Combat: *Heavy weapons, fire combat* and *maneuver*

Interaction Skills: *Charm, persuasion* and *willpower*

Investigative Skills: *Perception, science: criminology* and *streetwise*

Note that players may substitute certain skills for the ones listed in the groups above, or create their own groups as long as there is a common thread and the gamemaster approves the grouping. For example, a character in a science fiction game setting may choose to take *energy weapons* for the "Ranged Combat" group intead of *heavy weapons.*

Also, characters who choose macroskills *must* choose a particular focus (as per normal). Two specializations may replace one general skill, getting a +1 for two different specializations. For example, in the "Investigative Skills" group, a character might take out *perception* and replace it with *two* specializations — *perception (find)* and *perception (evidence analysis)*. While this means the character gains no bonus for "general" *perception* activities (such as a roll to detect an ambush or to hear a noise), he does have a more "detailed" group. This may be done for all three skills in the group; i.e., choose six specializations instead of three skills.

Finally, characters must have *reasons* that justify these skill bonuses. A character with the "Interaction Group" might be "friendly and outgoing," or a character with the "HTH Combat" package might have "military training."

Restrictions/Notes: Characters should not be allowed to overlap any skills or specializations with any other Advantages unless specifically authorized by the gamemaster. This Advantage may be selected more than once if used for different skills.

Wealth (CI)

A character who selects this Advantage doesn't get money handed to him, but, instead, has a certain economic standing. Since *MasterBook* is a system that can be used for many different game settings (with wildly different forms of currency and ways of measuring status and wealth), this option has to be fairly adaptable.

The character belongs to an "upper-middle class" economic layer. The character has respectable amounts of cash on hand or nearby at most times — in real world figures, the character could come up with one thousand American dollars without too much trouble on short notice, or produce ten times that through loans, credits, and mortgages.

Restrictions/Notes: Characters should only select *one* level of Wealth, unless there is some reason they might have Wealth (CI) and another level of Wealth in other circumstances.

Advantages: Column II

Some Column II Advantages are simply more powerful manifestations of Column I Advantages. However, there are a few unique Advantages in this column as well.

Additional Skill Adds (CII)

The character may increase one general skill (or focus of a macroskill) by *two* adds, or one specialization by *three* adds. In every other way it is identical to Additional Skill Adds (CI), above.

Restrictions/Notes: See Additional Skill Adds (CI), above.

Contacts (CII)

This Advantage is identical to Contacts (CI), except the contact is more powerful, more influential, easier to get ahold of, or affects the game on a larger scale. For example, in Contacts (CI), there was a mercenary warrior who would fight, on occasion, for the player character (for pay and only under the right circumstances). If the same character were a Contact (CII), then perhaps the mercenary would always come when asked, and for no reward. Or, perhaps, the mercenary is much more powerful (a little more powerful than the player character), or maybe there is a whole group of lower-powered mercenaries that the player character could get ahold of.

On the other hand, if the contact is supposed to be a large group, it now has much greater influence over a wider area. In the real world example, instead of having the auto club as a contact, the character might have a government agency there to help him out occasionally.

Restrictions/Notes: Under no circumstances should any contact, regardless of column number, make roleplaying and thinking superfluous. Contacts are totally under the control of the gamemaster and, even powerful and influential contacts from this column should be kept under a tight rein. See Contacts (CI), above, for more information.

Cultures (CII)

This option can be used pretty much like Cultures (CI), only on a larger scale. Instead of choosing a small, unusual culture, the character might choose an "alien" culture (one totally different from his own) and gain an understanding of it comparable to the understanding in Cultures (CI). Or, he could choose to learn *more* about a relatively small cultural group (to the point where the character would be accepted as one who has spent a lot of time with the people). The last option, the sweeping cultural understanding, would also be much more in-depth. The character would be able to call on cultural parallels much more often and the gamemaster should give more information.

Restrictions/Notes: The same as for Cultures (CI), but the character has about the level of knowledge of an outsider who has lived in the culture for a while. Either that, or he would get more useful information on alien cultures or "sweeping" cultural examinations.

Equipment (CII)

The character gains a piece of equipment that would be very hard to get because of expense or availability. Standard military weapons which are usually out of reach of the normal citizen are available. In addition, equipment totalling in cost not more than about five thousand American dollars would probably be okay. In game settings that have magical or superscience equipment, objects of fairly low power would probably be obtained using this Advantage.

Restrictions/Notes: The mechanics of this Advantage work the same as under Equipment (CI), only the level of availability should be shifted *two* levels. The gamemaster should always have the last say, however.

Fame (CII)

The character is very well known. On a global setting, the character would probably be recognized in most fairly civilized cultures and almost definitely in his home culture. The gamemaster should roll two ten-sided dice and, on a 15 or higher, a person from another culture will recognize the person and react (usually favorably). In the character's own culture, this reaction comes on an 8 or more. If the character draws attention to himself in his own culture (identifies himself), then the reaction will probably be automatic (gamemaster's option).

Restrictions/Notes: At this level of fame, the character should (in a real world setting) be treated like a famous author, an occasional movie star or television actor, or a reasonably recognizable sports figure. Some gamemaster characters will be immune to this fame, but most will have some sort of (generally positive) reaction. Otherwise, see Fame (CI) for more information.

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Luck (CII)

The character is blessed with unusual luck. In a roleplaying game, it is often hard to simulate actual luck of a character (versus the luck of a player — which comes into play every time the dice are rolled), but *MasterBook* has a way.

Once per adventure, a character with Luck (CII) can gain the benefit of one of the following cards just by asking for it: *haste, second chance, breakthrough,* or *action.* These effects are all described in Chapter Five, "The Card Deck."

Restrictions/Notes: Luck (CI) can only be declared *once* during a particular adventure, but it may be declared at any time, and it cannot be cancelled by any other effect. In addition, if the character wants, he can have up to *two* selections of this option "stacked" as long as he can have two Column II Advantages. This Advantage *can* be taken with the Compensation Bad Luck (any column) — sometimes really *good* things happen, sometimes really *bad* things happen.

Skill Bonus (CII)

This Advantage works exactly the same as Skill Bonus (CI), only the character may choose *five* related skills for a +1 to the bonus number. Again, the character is not automatically *trained* in these skills and specializations may be chosen on a two-for-one basis.

Restrictions/Notes: See Skill Bonus (CI).

Trademark Specialization (CII)

This Advantage works a lot like a combination of Skill Bonus and Fame. The character is very good at one *very* specific thing, and he is known for it. Choose any specialization that the character has (or would like to have in the future), and the character gains +3 to the bonus number when it is used. In addition, when the character uses it, there is a gamemaster-option chance that people will recognize how "naturally good" the character is at the specialization, and this might produce interesting situations. Also, the character might be contacted by people or recognized by certain people because of how good he is at that one specialization.

Restrictions/Notes: Like Skill Bonus, this character is not, by default, *trained* in the use of this skill. He just gets a +3 to the bonus number when it is used. This option cannot be combined with Additional Skill Adds or Skill Bonus: it must be a specialization unaffected by other options. Also, no character may have more than *two* Trademark Specializations.

Wealth (CII)

This is just like Wealth (CI), only moreso. The character is from the upper class (or is in the upper class for some reason) and doesn't generally have to worry about any sorts of mundane costs. In addition, carrying a few credit cards and large amounts (up to five thousand American dollars in a real world setting) is not unusual. In a high fantasy setting the character would probably be minor nobility.

Restrictions/Notes: See Wealth (CI) for comments. Also, this wealth will not always help and will "go away" if misused (and it should be a major concern to the character at times), but it should be there most of the time. Gamemasters will probably think of ways to work around wealth and players should play along — if you can throw money at every problem, then it isn't that much fun to try to solve, is it?

Advantages: Column III

These Advantages get into the realm of the fictional. Abilities that are "not normal" are possible.

Additional Skill Adds (CIII)

The character may increase any one general skill (or focus of a macroskill) by *three* adds, or one specialization by *four* adds. No general or specialization skill may be increased to more than six adds using this option. There should be some *very* good reasons for this extra knowledge. See Additional Skill Adds (CI).

Restrictions/Notes: This Advantage cannot be combined with any other Advantages that increase the effect of the skill or specialization chosen at *all*.

Additional Attribute Point (CIII)

The character may choose one Attribute and increase it in value by *one* point. This includes any *derived* Attribute related to the affected Attribute. The limit value of the Attribute is also increased by one point. For example, normal Attributes have an upper limit of 13, unless otherwise specified by a Worldbook. If a character selects this advantage and applies it to an attribute (say, Strength), that character's Strength goes up by one point *and* his upper limit to his Strength goes up to 14, as does his Toughness limit — even if his Strength does not actually go up to 14. His movement rate limits also go up, as well as any other derived Attributes.

Restrictions/Notes: Gamemasters may wish to further limit the manner by which this option is selected. Perhaps certain Attributes will be ruled out, or certain derived Attributes will not be affected by the increase. Also, the player should have to come up with a very good *reason* the character has exceeded the normal maximums.

Contacts (CIII)

The contact(s) chosen should be nearly supernormal, supernatural, or uncanny in origin. For example, in the high fantasy setting example that's been running through Contacts (CI) and (CII), the mercenary warrior has been a normal man (presumably). If he were a Contact (CIII), then he would have some sort of very exceptional or unusual ability — like, perhaps, a magical sword or some sort of magical powers. In a pulp fiction setting, a character's Contact (CIII) might be an "Adventurer's Guild" with globe-trotting members and representatives who all have their own slightly unusual abilities — and who can turn up at the oddest moments.

Work with the gamemaster to come up with some interesting contacts. A mystical force that "protects" the character under certain circumstances, or a group of psionic monks who can be called upon for "psychic aid" — or maybe just a *really* complete occult library (for characters who are in game settings where occult and magic are in play).

Restrictions: Again, as with Contacts (CI) and (CII), don't let the contacts take over the game — and don't let the player character abuse them. Contacts are gamemaster-controlled, but they will usually only be brought into play at the player character's request.

Cultures (CIII)

The character is either a native of an unusual culture or has the knowledge and the "respect" of one. A person who has lived a significant portion of his or her life in a culture and has that sort of understanding of it would have Cultures (CIII) — only the character is actually a part of the game setting's "macroculture" as well. In the real world, an American who has also lived among Native Americans and learned enough about them and interacted with them enough to be considered "part" of their society would have Cultures (CIII), but also be part of the American society.

If an alien culture can be, and is, selected, then the character has an extreme familiarity with it. Otherwise, the character might be something of a "cultural anthropologist" — the character can observe a particular culture for a brief time and have a very good (gamemaster controlled) chance of understanding the culture on a respectable level.

Restrictions/Notes: As with Cultures (CI) and (CII), the character must choose what sort of cultural familiarity to have. Also, there must be a very good reason the character has this familiarity or understanding. Finally, if the character chooses to be a "cultural native" of a particular culture, he should probably have to learn *language: (the culture's major language)* at at least three adds — either he can go back and shift skill points around or use other Advantages to learn them. It just makes sense.

Equipment (CIII)

Items of equipment that are normally unavailable to just about *anyone* can be picked up using this Advantage. Any *one* item on any equipment chart can be selected, or the gamemaster can make up a "special" item. Special items could give skill bonuses of up to +3 or have special effects (if appropriate — see the game setting descriptions and Chapter Six, "Special Effects"). Or they can just be really expensive or virtually unavailable items.

Restrictions/Notes: The gamemaster should watch this Advantage carefully. It can only be selected once — though the column one and two versions can also be selected — but it can still unbalance a beginning character. Generally, things like magic wands and swords, military hardware, super-science gadgets, low-powered miraculous artifacts and other related equipment can be handed out fairly easily. They can always be taken away again later.

Fame (CIII)

There is a pretty good chance *anyone* in the game setting (unless it is a multi-world setting) will recognize the character (or what the character is) fairly easily. The base die total needed is 8, and it can be modified by circumstance. The character has the status of a movie star, a famous politician, or a top-ranked sports hero.

Restrictions/Notes: They are the same as for Fame (CI) and Fame (CII) — certain people just won't be impressed. In addition, characters with Fame (CIII) should almost always have to take the Compensation Infamy at at least column one — no matter how nice, talented, or generally well-liked a person is, there's always somebody out there who wishes them harm.

Learning Curve (Positive) (CIII)

The character has an uncanny ability to learn new skills and improve old ones. When the character begins adventuring, he always learns new skills as if he had a teacher (see "Improving Skills" in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use"), and he can improve skills he already knows at a cost of one skill point *less* (minimum cost of one skill point). This Advantage also applies to specializations.

Restrictions/Notes: There should be a background comment explaining how this ability affected the character's life. It is combined very well with the Compensation Age, below, if the character is young — he is a prodigy, and that's why he's learned his starting skills so quickly.

Optional Rule: Some gamemasters might find this Advantage too powerful. If so, then have the character select one physical attribute or two mental attributes. Only skills listed underneath those attributes can be learned at the improved learning curve. If this rule is used, then this is the only way this option can be selected multiple times or in conjunction with the Compensation Learning Curve (Negative) (CII).

Luck (CIII)

Luck (CIII) is an extension of Luck (CII). The character can call upon Luck (CIII) once, asking for any of the following: *haste, second chance, breakthrough, action, hero, opponent fails,* or *alertness.*

There is also an optional use of Luck (CIII) that can be used. If the character has not used his Luck (CIII) Advantage during an adventure and something *really* disastrous happens (probably to the character or because the character did something stupid), the gamemaster *may* choose to counteract the effects and "burn out" the character's Advantage — i.e., the character no longer *has* Luck (CIII) for the rest of the adventure; it has been used to save him. Usually, this is used when the character does something stupid or the player is the victim of incredibly bad luck — die rolling, not the Compensation — and something "stops" the effect.

For example, the character's mission is to turn off the power at a nuclear plant or it will explode and destroy the city that's conveniently downwind. Unfortunately, the character takes too long fighting the minions of the bad guy who set the plant to overload, and, according to the rules, the whole city should go up in a radioactive fireball. The character is too late. The gamemaster might choose to have the character be *really* lucky — the villain was bluffing, and there's really more time on the clock than anyone thought, or the power plant begins a long meltdown procedure instead of exploding; whatever. In any case, the character's Luck (CIII) is gone for this adventure (his luck ran out), but he has a chance of averting disaster. This is a "last ditch," gamemaster-controlled effort when circumstances get out of control. It is also a nice thing for inexperienced roleplayers to have — just in case they do something they really shouldn't have, they get another chance.

Restrictions/Notes: Luck (CIII) may only be taken *once*, and it can only be used *once* during an adventure. However, a character may take Luck (CII) as well as Luck (CIII).

Skill Bonus (CIII)

There are two options for this. Either the character gains +2 to the bonus number of three "theme" skills (as explained underneath Skill Bonus (CI)), *or* the character gains a "macroskill bonus."

A macroskill bonus means the character can select any *one* macroskill and gain a +1 to the bonus number of *any* use of *any* of those macroskills. So, a character with Skill Bonus (CIII) could select *science* and gain a +1 to *science: archaeology, science: electricity, science: biology, science: weaponsmith,* and any other *science* macroskills that come up. This, however, does not mean the character is *trained* in all these *science* skills — he isn't. But the +1 could offset some of any *untrained* modifiers there might be.

Restrictions/Notes: The first application of Skill Bonus (CIII) cannot be combined with *any* other skill-enhancing Advantages. However, the "macroskill bonus" can be overlapped in certain ways.

If the character finishes character generation and background generation with *four or less* adds in a focus of the macroskill selected (or in a specialization of that macroskill focus), then the character can also take the "macroskill bonus." For this reason, "macroskill bonus" should be the last skill-affecting Advantage taken. Otherwise, both uses of Skill Bonus (CIII) fall under the same restrictions presented in Column I and II.

Example: *A character has the skill* science: weaponsmith *at three adds. During background generation, he selects Additional Skill Adds (CI) and gains an additional add in that skill. Since he has four adds in* science: weaponsmith, *but no other bonuses or skill enhancements that affect that skill, he can take Skill Bonus (CIII) and apply the +1 "macroskill bonus" to the entire* science *macroskill.*

Special Abilities (CIII)

The character has a single, or a related group, of special abilities that exceed what is normally possible for a character. These special abilities can be due to the character's species, some sort of unique training, or a magical/super-science/other effect.

The player is allowed to come up with some strange characteristics or abilities that are linked by a common story thread. They modify the character's abilities in some unusual way. Here are some possible examples:

Accelerated Healing (CIII): The character gains +3 to all Endurance rolls when healing damage. In addition, he heals shock points at a rate of one per combat round (ten seconds) of *complete* rest. The character can also roll for healing wounds as if the wound level were one level *less* — though light wounds are rolled for every twelve hours (see Chapter Three, "The Rules," for information about damage and healing).

Breathe Water (CIII): The character can breathe water and will not drown in water. He gains +2 to all *swimming* rolls because he doesn't need to worry about drowning.

Combat Sense (CIII): The character can sense danger. He is never completely surprised (see Chapter Three, "The Rules") and, if partially surprised, he is treated as not surprised at all.

Fast Reactions (CIII): The character gains +3 to his Agility or Confidence when determining initiative or, if the card deck is being used, he can choose to have a *haste* up to three times during the course of an adventure (see "Haste" under Chapter Five, "The Card Deck" for more information).

Infravision/Ultravision (CIII): The character gains the ability to either see in the dark using infravision or ultravision. Infravision allows the character to see changes in heat, while ultravision gives the character a straight +3 to all *perception* rolls (offsetting a lot of the "darkness" modifiers) in the dark because he makes the most of the available light.

Natural Hand-to-Hand Weapons (CIII): The character has some sort of natural weapon — claws, pincers, etc. — that adds up to +3 to his Strength when determining his damage (if he attacks using the natural weapon; usually unarmed). This +3 is added in *before* the maximum damage for the character is determined (see Chapter Three, "The Rules").

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Natural Ranged Weapons (CIII): The character has some sort of natural ranged weapon — using Dexterity and, perhaps, a new skill to "fire." The range should be a measurement equal to the value of the character's Endurance, and the damage should not be greater than 14. A natural "ray blast" or "spike-shooting" ability is possible.

Toughened Skin (CIII): The character has natural armor. His own skin adds +3 to his Toughness. There should, however, be at least one type of relatively common damage (bullets, fire, etc.) that ignores this bonus.

Restrictions/Notes: These are just a few examples. Make up your own. Try not to have special abilities that could just be varying levels of a skill or attribute bonus — these are *special*. They are strange and unusual. As a general guideline, the modifiers for Special Abilities should not exceed +3 if they are combat related or +5 if they are not. It is also highly recommended that the character take some sort of Advantage Flaw Compensation that balances out the character's abilities in certain situations.

Special Effects (CIII)

This Advantage can be selected only with gamemaster approval. When a character wants to use the "special effects" skills (*super-science, faith, psionics*, or the five magic skills) to produce special effects in a game setting where this is not normally possible, the player must select this Advantage. The gamemaster has to okay it, but it gives the character the ability to do something almost no one else in the universe can do.

Generally, the gamemaster will allow the character to begin the game with one add in the special effects skill and one special effect that the player and the gamemaster create using the rules in Chapter Six.

Restrictions/Notes: Gamemaster approval.

Supranormal Knowledge (CIII)

The character knows how to do something no one else in the game universe is likely to know how to do — or the character has knowledge that others could not possibly understand. This is different from Special Effects (CIII) in that the actual *result* is probably not supernatural in nature, but the *process* is. As a result of picking this Advantage, the character gains certain bonuses to the way certain skill attempts work out. The bonuses should not exceed +3, and they should follow a particular "theme." There should also be either story or roleplaying effects as well.

Here are a few possible examples.

Example #1: *A character in a pulp fiction reality has this really strange* martial arts *style. It gives him a +2 to the bonus number of all* unarmed combat, unarmed parry, melee combat *and* melee parry *skill attempts, and he gains a free Fame (CI) Advantage for his odd skill, without having to purchase a Compensation in exchange. The character takes his combat style very seriously and will not teach it to others who do not "prove themselves worthy" (and it is very hard to do that).*

Example #2: *Another character is in a real world setting where the world is normal — except it has been secretly invaded by aliens who look exactly like humans. The character, for some reason, can not only spot the aliens* automatically, *but he gains a +3 to* persuasion

attempts when trying to point out "alien features" to others (and people don't just automatically think he's crazy). The character has no idea how he does this, and he cannot pass this ability on — but once he identifies a particular alien for someone, that person will not only believe the character when he says someone is an alien, but that person will be able to recognize those particular aliens immediately (the ones that were pointed out).

Example #3: *The Wizard of the Blue Circle (in a high fantasy setting) learned his magical skills differently than anyone else in the setting did. And he learned them* better. *As a result, he gains a +1 to the bonus number of all actions where he uses his special effects skills. However, he cannot teach anyone from this game setting how to use magic "his way." Because of his unique abilities, he gains a Fame (CI) for this as well, without having to spend an Advantage point or take an additional Compensation.*

Notice how, with all the examples, there were interesting game and roleplaying effects that did not translate directly to numeric terms. They are just "intangibles" that "carry along" with the Advantage.

Restrictions/Notes: As stated above, the maximum bonus that can result from this Supranormal Knowledge Advantage is +3 — and only if the effect is very narrow. There should be one or two "carry along" effects (like the free Fame (CI) in examples one and four), but there don't have to be. Also, there *must* be some sort of reason why the character has the knowledge, and something that keeps him from teaching it to others. The character might be able to teach it to others, but only under special circumstances (or if they are beginning characters who select this Advantage as well).

The Supranormal Knowledge bonus should not affect skills that have already been modified (or will be modified) by other Advantages. This restriction can be removed if this Advantage is wide in its effect (instead of "deep" — a bunch of +1s instead of a big +3), or if the gamemaster thinks it will not destroy play balance.

Wealth (CIII)

The character is of the upper, upper class and has the money to prove it. Money is seldom a consideration — though there should be plenty of times when money won't help. The character probably has an estate or a series of investments that will keep him comfortable for a good long time. This doesn't mean the character can buy everything — he is still subject to the "availability" rules in the "Equipment" chapter — but he could probably start the game with the equivalent of $10,000 on hand.

Restrictions/Notes: There must be some sort of roleplaying limit on wealth of this magnitude. In the real world game setting, that limit is hard to explore — can you imagine a fabulously rich person being "troubled" by adventures? Well, if you can, then maybe you can use this option (though it is not recommended). Otherwise, there should be fairly extensive reasons why the character can't use his wealth to resolve every situation — or hire somebody to do it for him (which is really the same thing). Check out the Compensation Advantage Flaw in the various columns for some suggestions.

Advantages: Column IV

These Advantages are not allowed in worlds that have strong ties to reality. They derive from either superhuman or supernatural sources.

Contacts (CIV)

There is some sort of strange "force" that "watches over" and occasionally helps the character. In many ways, this Advantage is not as useful in most adventure situations as the other versions of Contacts, but it can have very dramatic effects on occasion.

Some examples of this might include (in a high fantasy setting) a god or a particularly powerful gamemaster character will occasionally listen to the character's appeal for aid or, even more likely, step in occasionally when the character is in trouble to help him. Or, in a real world setting, a large governmental agency might, for some reason, want to step in and aid the character at times.

The list can go on and on. Generally, the character can get minor assistance (as could be gotten from Contacts (CI) or Contacts (CII)) on a fairly regular basis — and under the same sort of circumstances as having lower versions of Contacts — but "the big stuff" only happens when the gamemaster thinks it appropriate. The character might get killed before the Contact (CIV) intervenes — maybe the character just wasn't doing something the contact felt was important to it — but, most likely, assistance will be provided.

Restrictions/Notes: Player characters should take this option only if they want to take Compensations relating to it. For example, if a character in a pulp fiction campaign wants to have a group of super-scientists who like him and will supply him with substantial aid on a regular basis (like a spy who gets outfitted with new gizmos at the beginning of every adventure and who can call for more during certain times in the adventure), then he should take Compensations that reflect that. The character is a member of an organization (see the Compensation Employed), or he must do reciprocating favors for the super-scientists (see the Compensation Price), or there are equally powerful people who want to eliminate him because of his contacts (see the Compensation Enemy).

If the character does not want to take extensive Compensations relating to the contact, then Contacts (CIV) should be very unpredictable and not always useful. For example, a god (in a high fantasy game setting) who helps a warrior out of certain death — by teleporting him halfway across the world — is a help, but it also presents certain problems. But the character can't complain — he got his "help."

Cultures (CIV)

This selection should only be taken if the game setting employs the use of alien (totally not understood by normal people) cultures. The character *understands* the alien culture and can interact within it — he is still an alien to it, but he is treated better than any other outsider (most likely).

For example, in a game setting where "mutants rule the Earth," the character might not be a mutant — he is a member of the dwindling numbers of humans who survived whatever changed the Earth. But, because of something in his background history, he can interact with the mutants (who might hunt humans for food or something) and he can understand their ways. This doesn't mean he's *friends* with them (they still might eat him), but he has a better chance of interacting with them, figuring them out, and outsmarting their "alien logic" than other characters.

Restrictions/Notes: The character should have related Compensations, and there has to be some extensive background description telling why the character has this Advantage. Otherwise, see the other entries regarding Cultures.

Equipment (CIV)

Really bizarre and, most likely, powerful equipment is open to the character — but only one such piece or a collection of small, related pieces. Most likely, no one else can use the equipment without making some sort of exhaustive skill total, and it can probably not be repaired or duplicated. "Special effects" equipment fits into this category.

The equipment could be a weapon more powerful than most personal weapons in the game setting. Or it could be a magical spell that could not normally be used by the character or anyone else in the world at its relatively low difficulty. Or it could be a collection of gadgets and gizmos that can perform many different mundane tasks — but how, nobody knows.

Restrictions/Notes: The character should have Compensations related to the equipment. Maybe Enemies want to steal it, or it has an Advantage Flaw so it doesn't work all the time — or the same way every time. In addition, the equipment should not make the character so powerful that opponents fall before him. Really, in game mechanic terms, the equipment should be just slightly more powerful or more useful than what is available normally.

For example, a character might just choose an average gun and increase the damage value by a modest two points, but make it so it never has to be reloaded. The more powerful the item, the more Compensations and restrictions should be related to it.

Luck (CIV)

Characters with Luck (CIV) can use the options under Luck (CII) or Luck (CIII) once *each*. That means, the character could decide during the first part of the adventure to use the *hero* option (CIII), and then, later, the *action* (CII), or use *action* twice (once as his CII and once as his CIII).

Restrictions/Notes: A character with Luck (CIV) may not select any other column of Luck. The optional rule for Luck (CIII) is also possible (see Luck (CIII) for more information).

Skill Minimum (CIV)

The character can select three related skills unaffected by any other sort of Advantage and the character will *always* gain a *minimum* bonus number of +0 when rolling for a bonus number. This means, if the character selects *persuasion, charm,* and *interrogation* (all interaction skills), and he generates a negative bonus number when rolling the dice, that bonus number turns into a +0. That is the character's *minimum* bonus.

Restrictions/Notes: As stated above, the character cannot select Skill Minimum for any skill that has any other Advantage tied to it. Also, the skills must be related in some way (see Skill Bonus (CI) for information on related skills). The character may only select general skills (or a macroskill focus), but the specializations underneath that general skill are affected (for example, the character selects *fire combat*. He also has the specialization *fire combat (pistol)*. When generating a bonus number for shooting a pistol, the minimum bonus number is +0). This Advantage may be selected only once.

Special Abilities (CIV)

This Advantage is the same as Special Abilities (CIII) only more powerful. Here are some more examples:

Accelerated Healing (CIV): The character heals *all* shock and KO damage after one combat round of rest. The character will heal *light wounds* automatically after an hour, and all other wound levels are healed as if they were *two* levels less. The character gains +3 to healing rolls.

Environmental Immunity (CIV): The character is completely immune to the effects of *one* environment. For example, a character with "water breathing" would also be unaffected by water pressure or temperature as well — but only in the water. A character could be able to exist in a vacuum, even — but when outside of a vacuum, he would have to (for some reason) breathe.

Hardiness (CIV): The character automatically *ignores* the first wound done to him by any given attack. So, if the Damage column (explained in Chapter Three, "The Rules") says he takes "3Wnd" from an attack (that's "three wounds"), he only takes two wounds. This is applied every single time he is attacked.

Multiple Abilities (CIV): The character can use this option to select *two* Column III Special Abilities.

Natural Armor (CIV): This is a more powerful version of Toughened Skin (CIII). The character's epidermis is actually covered with some sort of armor — maximum bonus to his Toughness up to +4. In addition, the character does not have

• Diane O'Rourke: Advantages •

Jill is now ready to select background Advantages. Since she is from a "Pulp Fiction" game setting, she can select three Column Is, two Column IIs, and one Column III (3CI, 2CII, 1CIII).

Looking at Diane's background story, she is able to pick out some key ideas:

- She travelled a lot, especially to the Far East
- She is talented in scientific skills
- She had a fairly important job

She keeps these points of Diane's story in mind while choosing her options. She selects the following:

Column I

Additional Skill Adds (CI): language: Chinese, an additional one add

Contacts (CI): Diane knows a research scientist in a British government lab who will help her get used materials for her gadgets

Fame (CI): Diane is known in the super-scientist "community" as a competent inventor

Column II

Cultures (CII): Diane is comfortable in virtually any Eastern culture, and generally knows enough about those cultures to "get around" (an occasional visitor)

Cultures (CII): Diane is a "knowledgeable visitor" in Chinese city society

Column III

Special Effects (CIII): Diane has the ability to use the pulp fiction special effect skill *super-science*

All of these Advantages follow the course of Diane's life. Jill wanted to be able to give her even more skill adds (particularly in *science*), but she chose options that seemed to fit. The gamemaster reminds Jill that Diane is a *beginning* character, not a seasoned veteran, so she'll be able to improve later on.

a "hole" in the armor, unless he selects Advantage Flaw as a Compensation.

Natural Hand-to-Hand Weapons (CIV) or **Natural Ranged Weapons (CIV):** The same as the Column Three versions of these abilities but the maximum damage is either STR+4 or a damage value of 15.

Permanent Special Effect (CIV): A special effect, created by the gamemaster and the player, affects the character *forever*, or the character can call upon its use whenever he wants (usually player option). For example, the character might have taken a "radiation bath" (pulp fiction game setting) that imbued him with the power to desolidify when he wants. The character is virtually immune to most damage, but he cannot do it forever and he cannot interact normally with the environment around him.

Restrictions/Notes: See Special Abilities (CIII).

Column V and Beyond ...

If you want to create Column V Advantages, you can. The best way is to base them off Column IV Advantages and tie them to proscribed Compensations.

• The Compensation Columns •

Many Compensations will be counterparts to the Advantages listed above. A Skill Bonus is the positive end of a Skill Drawback (below). When choosing Compensations, keep four things in mind:

1. You're going to have to live with the Compensation. Take only Compensations that you don't expect to ever get rid of — there are rules for eliminating Compensations, but that should be done only on occasion.

2. You have to balance the Compensations with the Advantages. Not only does this mean that you normally have to pick a certain number of Compensations from the same columns that you chose your Advantages from, but you also have to balance the Advantages thematically. Several Advantages almost have to be directly affected by Compensations (especially Column Three and higher Advantages), while others *should* be. Discuss your character's Advantages with your gamemaster and come up with some sort of compromise.

3. Choose more roleplaying Compensations than game mechanic ones. Instead of taking easy-to-use modifiers to skill attempts or abilities, select Compensations that you can roleplay. Granted, you won't want to have an overwhelming number of either type of Compensation, but Compensations that can be roleplayed and can work themselves into an adventure story are much more interesting than simple modifiers to difficulty numbers.

4. The Compensation has to be a Compensation. Any Compensation that can be easily worked around, no matter how potent, or that actually helps the character on a regular basis is *not* a Compensation. For example, if a character has an Advantage Flaw where he can't use his Advantage when the temperature is below sixty, and the character is always adventuring in places where the temperature is at least that high, then it is not a Compensation. Check *all* Compensations (and Advantages, for that matter) out with your gamemaster and explain to him what *you* think they mean *before* you start playing the game. That way, you can avoid this problem before it crops up.

Compensations: Column I

These Compensations are either small modifiers to certain skill and Attribute totals or minor roleplaying notes. They are common Compensations that even characters who don't select might end up roleplaying at one time or another.

Advantage Flaw (CI)

This Compensation is linked to a particular Advantage. Whenever the character uses the Advantage, there is a chance for some sort of negative modifier or roleplaying disadvantage. The results are minor, but noticeable. There are several ways this flaw can work, and here are some examples for certain Advantages:

Additional Skill Adds (any column): The character gains the benefit of his additional skill adds, and makes the skill check normally, but if the character fails at the skill check, he is *stymied* either until the end of the scene or until he succeeds at the skill check.

Contacts (any column): The contact will help the character, but will be either "annoying" about it or a "hard bargainer." Where a normal contact would assist the character for an almost negligible fee, the flawed contact will haggle and nag until "rewarded." There should be some reason why the character would want to keep the contact happy as well.

Cultures (any column): When the character gets hints or knowledge about a culture, he knows everything *except* ... There is some sort of critical piece of information that has been withheld from the character. Or, if the character has the "sweeping knowledge" of lots of cultures, his interpretations will *sometimes* be almost totally wrong (gamemaster option). In order to make this flaw work, the character should not find out about the flaw until it would be "interesting."

Equipment (any column): In most cases, there is just some sort of minor mechanical flaw in the equipment that can't normally be fixed. For equipment that requires a skill total, you could either add +2 to the DN of all actions using it, or, on a die total of 2 or 3, the equipment either just doesn't work or malfunctions. For equipment that doesn't require a skill total, use your imagination — there might be occasional side effects or maybe it *does* require a periodic skill check of some kind (around a DN of 10) to keep operating.

Skill Bonus (any column): This works the same as the Additional Skill Adds flaw above.

Special Abilities (any column): The character loses two from the bonus number of any skill check using the special ability, or the special ability doesn't work under particular circumstances, or there is some sort of minor side effect when using the special ability (similar to the "Equipment" flaw).

Special Effects (CIII): There is a minor side effect to using the special effect skill(s), or the character always adds +2 to the DN of all such skill checks.

• Background Compensation List •

• Column I •

Advantage Flaw (CI)	There is a limitation or drawback to one of the character's Advantages
Age (CI)	The character is older or younger than his prime
Bad Luck (CI)	The character is unlucky; usually when the character rolls a die total of "2," something bad happens (*stymied, setback,* etc.)
Bigotry (CI)	The character is a minor bigot in some way
Cultural Unfamiliarity (CI)	Character is "out of his element"
Debt (CI)	Character owes a small debt to someone
Employed (CI)	Character has a job that takes away some of his freedom of choice
Enemy (CI)	The character has a minor enemy
Handicap (CI)	The character has a minor physical or mental handicap that adds +2 to the DN of five or more related skills
Infamy (CI)	The character is a minor "villain"
Prejudice (CI)	The character suffers as an object of minor prejudice
Poverty (CI)	The character begins the game as poor, with substandard and limited equipment
Price (CI)	There is a "price" to a character's Advantage
Quirk (CI)	The character suffers from a personality or physical quirk that makes his life a little more difficult

• Column II •

Advantage Flaw (CII)	There is a significant limitation to one of the character's Advantages
Age (CII)	The character is very old or very young (see text)
Bad Luck (CII)	The character is even more unlucky than "I" (see text)
Bigotry (CII)	The character is a serious bigot
Cultural Unfamiliarity (CII)	The character is from an alien culture and is significantly limited in cultural knowledge
Debt (CII)	The character owes a large debt to someone under dangerous circumstances
Employed (CII)	The character's "freedom" is virtually nonexistent because of his job

• Column II (cont.) •

Enemy (CII)	The enemy is very powerful or always around
Handicap (CII)	The character has one physical or two mental attributes and add +3 to the DN of all skill checks, except in very special circumstances (see text)
Infamy (CII)	The character is, most likely, a criminal or thought of as an enemy of society
Language (CII)	The character does not understand the language of the area he is in
Learning Curve (Negative) (CII)	The costs for learning skills are doubled
Prejudice (CII)	The character is the subject of fairly serious prejudice
Price (CII)	There is a much higher price to be paid (physical damage as an example) for using an Advantage
Quirk (CII)	The character has a much more often ocurring or serious "personality flaw"

• Column III •

Achilles' Heel (CIII)	The character has a vulnerability
Advantage Flaw (CIII)	The flaw interferes with the use of the Advantage *and* provides an additional disadvantage
Burn-out (CIII)	Under certain circumstances, a particular Advantage goes away permanently
Bad Luck (CIII)	The character will suffer from *at least* a setback periodically (see text)
Cultural Unfamiliarity (CIII)	The character is a complete alien
Debt (CIII)	The character can gain no material goods — all must be turned over to a "lender" at the end of an adventure
Employed (CIII)	Character is, essentially, a slave
Enemy (CIII)	The enemy wants to kill the character and is very powerful
Handicap (CIII)	The character cannot perform many normal activities
Infamy (CIII)	The character will almost always be attacked or pursued
Quirk (CIII)	The character has a severe personality disorder

Wealth (any column): The character cannot access his wealth easily. Either it is "tied up" in red tape most of the time, or he has to go somewhere to get it, or someone else (reasonably friendly) has control over it and doesn't always release it easily.

Restrictions/Notes: There are, of course, much more inventive and interesting ways Advantage Flaw can be used — and you should explore them all. In general, at Column I, a flaw should not debilitate a character or take away his Advantage on a regular basis — but it should make it a little less of a "sure thing."

Age (CI)

The character is just below, or just above, his "prime." And, since this is a roleplaying game and not real life, he'll stay that way. In general, characters who are "too young" often have to roleplay through episodes where they are not taken seriously, where they are ignored, and where they have less rights and control than older characters. Those who are "too old" get treated in much the same way — characters "in their prime" often defer to the character, but they will also treat the character as if he were infirm or possibly senile. The player

should roleplay young characters as teenagers in the real world, and old characters as characters around fifty — exaggerated interpretations may be necessary sometimes.

Restrictions/Notes: In general, the gamemaster should try to treat the character as if he were "too old" or "too young" and have fun with it. Game mechanics are seldom necessary, as good roleplaying can make things work here, but if they become necessary, add +1 to the DN of actions performed by the character that you think would be influenced by his age (a young character trying to lead a group of experienced characters, or an older character trying to convince younger characters that he is "with it"). Age may only be taken once.

Bad Luck (CI)

The counterpart to Luck is under the gamemaster's control most of the time. The easiest way to handle it is, whenever the player rolls the dice and two ones come up (regardless of whether this is the first time he has rolled the dice during an action), something bad happens. The gamemaster can choose from making the character *stymied* until the end of the scene, *setback* during the round, or from invoking some sort of strange, but not too terrible, "bad luck effect."

For example, the character might be running from a group of terrorists who he's been fighting since the beginning of the act. He is trying to jump across an elevator shaft when the player rolls a two on the dice. Well, the character probably failed in the *long jumping* attempt (so he falls), but, instead of being able to grab for a cable or a lower ledge, the character's belt gets caught on a hook. Now, the character has to free himself before the terrorists come around the corner and blow him away.

Restrictions/Notes: Bad Luck (CI) may be taken if the character already has Luck (any column). The character might even, on occasion, be able to use the benefits of Luck (any column) to get out of trouble or partially negate the effects of Bad Luck (CI) — that's the way it works. Also, the gamemaster should remember that the *character* has Bad Luck (CI) — not the player. If the player gets into a consistent "streak" of rolling twos on the dice, then the gamemaster should start "skipping" the invocation of Bad Luck (CI) occasionally — more than three or four occurrences of Bad Luck (CI) during an adventure is a little much.

Bigotry (CI)

The character has "something against" a particular race of people, a particular religion, or some other aspect of life that a minority of people "fit into." While this bigotry should not be overt and rule the character, it is something that should be roleplayed. The character will discriminate against other characters who are of the minority, or, at best, accept them as "exceptions to the rule." The character will make insensitive comments and generally be annoying in regards to those people.

Restrictions/Notes: This Compensation really isn't recommended for characters who play in a real world or other setting that is close to real life. In fact, it is not recommended for players who don't think they can roleplay it convincingly or realistically. It is hard to roleplay bigotry, especially in a real world-type setting, without getting too carried away and being offensive to someone, so keep that in mind.

Cultural Unfamiliarity (CI)

The character is not from the "mainstream" culture of the society he spends the most time in. The character should work out where he is from, but it should be somewhere with a different culture than the one he is normally in. For example, a character in a real world setting might be from India but operate out of the United Kingdom. While the U.K. does not have any particular dislike of Indians, there might be a few "cultural clashes" occasionally. Bigots might get in the way of the character, and the character might not always "know" things about the setting that natives would automatically understand. The character is an outsider.

Restrictions/Notes: At the worst, this can be treated like Prejudice (CI), but, most often, the character is just unfamiliar with aspects of the mainstream. Characters cannot usually take this Compensation more than once.

Debt (CI)

The character owes money, or something else valuable, to someone. In most cases, this should be some sort of lending institution or credit house, and the payments aren't too arduous. The character just has a harder time getting credit and has to turn over a substantial amount of any profits he makes on an adventure to the lender.

Restrictions/Notes: Only take this Compensation if you intend to live up to it. There should be some reason the character doesn't want to default on the debt, and that should be worked out beforehand. Also, taking Debt (any column) with Enemy (any column) can be interesting — maybe the character is in deep to a loan shark or a manipulative and not entirely scrupulous lender. This Compensation *can* be taken with the Advantage Wealth (any column), as long as there is some reason it can't be just paid off. A character with Wealth (CIII) (phenomenal resources) might be stuck in a contract where he has to turn over the profits of any adventure to someone, for example — he still has his wealth, but all the little neat things and rewards he gets have to be coughed up at the end of the adventure (or the character has to persuade the lender/contract holder to let him keep them).

Employed (CI)

The character has a job. Maybe the job is related to what the character wants to do during a game session, or maybe not. Regardless, the character wants to keep his job (or has to, for some reason), and he must be responsible about "missing work" and fulfilling his obligations.

Restrictions/Notes: The player and the gamemaster might have to work to roleplay this, but there should be an occasional conflict between what the character *wants* to do and what he *has* to do. The character might even have to keep some activities secret or lose his job.

Enemy (CI)

There is someone in the game setting (or a group of someones) who have it "in" for the character. If the Enemy is a single person of power and influence no greater than the character, then he might actually want the character dead. Most likely, though, Enemy (CI) is a person or group of persons who "hassle" the character for some reason. Maybe in the town the character operates, the law enforcement authorities have his name and picture on file — and they'll use any excuse to run him in or hassle him because they think of him as a "troublemaker." Or, perhaps, the character's landlord throws everything out on the street if he's one minute late with the rent, or the character's boss always assigns him the most boring or most dangerous "missions." The enemy does not have to have

a position in the character's life, even — he can just be someone who, for some reason known to the gamemaster (and probably the player, but not always the character), has a grudge against the character.

Restrictions/Notes: There is no reason this Compensation can't be used similarly to an Advantage Flaw or as a complement to other Compensations or even Advantages. Maybe a character's Contact is sweet and helpful (a secretary in the Pentagon who tells the character "a little more" about the mission he's been assigned), but someone who influences the contact is an Enemy (the secretary's boss who has been trying to seduce the secretary and resents the fact that the secretary likes the character better) and sometimes makes it hard for the contact to help. Enemy (CI) characters should either show up only occasionally (maybe once during an adventure), or they should be minor annoyances that can only be a real problem if the character doesn't deal with them when they show up. Multiple Enemies of various columns can be selected (just don't go overboard).

Handicap (CI)

The character has a minor physical or mental handicap that makes certain actions more difficult. The handicap could be a "bad knee," or just a particular "mental block" regarding certain types of activities.

The player and the gamemaster should work out some sort of affliction and then choose a group of related skills (much in the same way skills are picked for the Skill Bonus Advantage — only, in this case, the minimum number of skills is five). The character then adds +2 to the DN of all actions performed using those skills. Some possible examples include:

"Bad Knee": *Maneuver, acrobatics, running, long jumping, swimming*

"Trick Shoulder": *Unarmed combat, melee combat, climbing, thrown weapons, missile weapons*

"Unobservant": *Perception, linguistics, lock picking, persuasion, willpower*

Restrictions/Notes: As you can see from the sample groups, it is much easier to come up with physical handicaps than mental ones. The mental ones make sense only if you take a particular point of view — the "Unobservant" group is based off the idea that the character not only doesn't easily "spot" things, but he also has trouble picking up on interactive "cues."

Specializations can also be used — with gamemaster approval. Two specializations that the gamemaster thinks the player might have to use reasonably often (like *perception (find)* or *fire combat (pistols)*) could substitute for one general skill. Macroskills, as usual, must have their focus selected at this time. Handicap (CI) can be selected several times, as long as the gamemaster thinks it appropriate. Since it is very much the counterpart to Skill Bonus, additional restrictions and notes can be related to the ones found there.

Infamy (CI)

The character is about as well known as a character with Fame (CI), but for different reasons. The odds of being recognized are the same as for Fame (CI), but the reaction is quite different. The character experiences hostility, prejudice, and intentional "slights" — in game mechanic terms, the character should have the DNs of all interactions increased by at least +2.

Restrictions/Notes: There is a *reason* for this negative attention. Either the character did something, is accused of having done something, or is suspected of having done something not particularly pleasant, or the character has, through other strange circumstances earned a "bad rep." Sometimes, this Infamy will help the character — but it shouldn't help too much. If the character had a combination of Fame and Infamy (by selecting both options), then maybe he'd earn a reputation like Wyatt Earp or Jesse James in the American Old West — certain people would look up to him or respect him, and there would be definite fear there most of the time, but there would also be a lot of people who would enjoy seeing the person leave or die. Of course, Infamy (CI) should be something minor — maybe the character is an "ex-con" or a former criminal, or he did something "questionable" in the past and was cleared. People are not overtly hostile, but they are unfriendly when they recognize him. Several columns of Infamy can only be selected if the character is "infamous" for multiple reasons — but the effects should be cumulative, and this can only be done if the gamemaster thinks it is appropriate (a character with Infamy (CIII) would hardly have to worry about Infamy (CI) in most cases, so it would not be a proper combination).

Prejudice (CI)

The character is of a minority group — or maybe it is just the character himself — that is subject to prejudice and discrimination. The character receives modifiers to the DN (from +1 to +3) during normal interaction with characters not of the minority group, and is generally treated unfairly by society. The "group" the character belongs to, or the "reason" he is discriminated against should be identified immediately, and the player should know how he can expect to be treated in most cases.

Restrictions/Notes: The gamemaster has to be careful with this one (see Bigotry, above). Roleplaying prejudice is not often something players want to get into, and it can be especially uncomfortable in a real world or similar setting. When used in a setting not close to the real world (like high fantasy), where there are many different sapient species, however, it can be quite interesting — especially if there are several characters in the group who are prejudiced against the species.

Poverty (CI)

Since characters who adventure tend to accumulate wealth, this Compensation is only available at Column One. The character begins the game with the shirt on his back and, maybe, a few pieces of cheap and substandard equipment. The character should also have the attitude of someone who is "poor," whatever that might be in the game setting.

Restrictions/Notes: As an excellent combination, this Compensation could be selected with Debt or Price to make the situation more realistic. Poverty can only be selected once.

Price (CI)

This is a Compensation similar to Advantage Flaw, above. But, instead of there being something wrong with the character's Advantage, there is a "price tag" attached. Every time the character wants to use the ability, or — more likely at this level — the character has to pay a Price to continue using the ability at least a few times during the adventure.

The Price might be an actual fee — and a significant one at that. If the fee isn't paid, the Advantage goes away until the price can be paid. But this won't work for many Advantages (at least not in an interesting manner), so there are other ways to do it.

Most likely, the Price will be a roleplaying effect. Maybe every time a Contact does a favor for a character, he not only

demands the normal, negotiated recompense (if any), but the character must do a favor of equal importance for the character. Or, whenever a piece of Equipment is used (most likely after the adventure), parts of it need to be replaced or serviced by a specialist (who may charge a high fee or ask a favor).

One more suggestion for Price (CI) would be that the character has to pay one Life Point at the end of an adventure to "pay for" the use of the Advantage. This reflects the fact that the use of the Advantage "takes something out of" the character when it is used.

Restrictions/Notes: The Price should be fairly easy to meet, but it should take some work. At this column level, it should be something that the character can roleplay along with an adventure or resolve between Acts or adventures (like paying off the recipient of the Price). However, if the character does not pay the Price, the Advantage does go away — and, if in the gamemaster's opinion the character does this too often, both the Advantage and the Price should go away permanently. Price can be taken often at various levels, and the same Price can be linked to more than one Advantage — though, unless the Price is actually double (the character has to pay the same price twice as often), it only counts as one Compensation.

Quirk (CI)

The character suffers from a personality quirk that makes certain types of roleplaying and interaction more difficult. This quirk could simply be a habit or an affectation that has gone too far, or it could be a minor psychological problem. Some examples include:

Dependency (CI): The character has a slight dependency on a substance or even a roleplaying event. The character might be a "pack-a-day" smoker who, if he doesn't get a cigarette at least once an Act, he gets irritable and, perhaps, *stymied* during interactions. Or maybe the character always has to "have the last word" in any situation and will often beat an argument into the ground rather than "lose."

Kleptomania (CI): When in a store or surrounded by small, portable items, the character will occasionally try to "lift" something. When possessed by his Quirk (see rules below), the character suffers +2 to the DN of *prestidigitation, pick pockets,* or related attempts at theft because he really doesn't know he'd doing it.

Indecision (CI): The character does not like making decisions and will delay making them. When roleplaying, the player should actively participate in group discussions, but he should be "wishy-washy" and indecisive at critical moments.

Stutter (CI): When under pressure, or when relaxed, or when some other fairly common "mood" hits the character, he stutters. The upshot is the character suffers +2 to the DN of any interaction at this time and the player should roleplay having a "hard time" getting his ideas across to the other players.

Restrictions/Notes: Good roleplayers will have fun with these, and other, Quirks that they come up with. Indeed, this Compensation is often more fun to play than many Advantages — but the gamemaster should make certain it is being roleplayed. Whenever the gamemaster thinks it appropriate, he should make the player generate a *willpower* or Confidence skill total against a base DN of 8 or "indulge" in his Quirk automatically (i.e, "suffer" for it). The negative effects of the Quirk immediately come into play. Also, if the character repeatedly makes this roll, resisting the impulses of the Quirk, the gamemaster should start modifying the DN upwards until the character fails. Multiple Quirks can be selected.

Additional Note: Some players may choose to have their characters roleplay Quirks they already have or might like to play. Sometimes this works, sometimes it doesn't. It can be hysterical to have a player "steal" dice out from under another player's nose (symbolizing the fact that the *character* is taking necessary items away from the other player's character) as long as things don't go too far (i.e., when people start getting upset). However, players who are "indecisive" should not play *characters* who are indecisive — since they would be anyway. This is too much like getting a Compensation for nothing.

Compensations: Column II

Most of these Compensations are just more serious versions of those found in Column I. You may wish to create some of your own to fill out this column.

Advantage Flaw (CII)

This Compensation works in exactly the same manner as Advantage Flaw (CI), above, but with more serious results. If the flaw would have made the person *stymied* on a failure, maybe he is *setback* instead. If the flaw made things a little more difficult (with, perhaps, an increase to the DN of +1 to +3), then the flaw makes things a *lot* more difficult (+3 to +5). If the flaw came into play occasionally (like every time the character was in a desert), it now comes into play much more frequently (like when he is in a dry environment at all).

Restrictions/Flaws: Having circumstances that effectively take away the complete benefit of the Advantage is certainly within the bounds of Advantage Flaw (CII), and those circumstances can occur reasonably often (no more than during one quarter of a normal adventure, however). They will force the player to roleplay and to think about ways to "get around" the flaw or to try other options, rather than just relying on a particular Advantage. For example, if a character has a Special Ability with the flaw that it only works at night — a Column II flaw if only about a quarter of the character's normal adventuring occurs during the daytime — that would force the character to rely on other abilities and his wits during the daytime. Otherwise, the rules for Advantage Flaw (CII) are the same as in Column I.

Age (CII)

The Compensation is the same, only moreso. Instead of being a teenager, the character is an older child. Instead of being "middle aged," the character is old. The roleplaying situations are basically the same, but the effects are more dramatic.

Restrictions/Notes: The character *automatically* receives +2 to the DN of *all* physical actions (those that use Dexterity, Agility, Endurance, or Strength) that require unusual exertion (running, jumping, fighting, etc.) and should probably suffer *fatigue* penalties fairly often (in game terms, that means any time the character is *stymied* by an interaction result or by an action line occurrence, he takes two shock points as well as all other effects). A young character must add +3 to the DN of all mental actions (those that use Intellect, Mind, Charisma, or Confidence) when attempting to solve "adult" problems or interact with adults. Both types of characters should be roleplayed true to type.

There is no reason characters cannot be "young" or "old" and not take this Compensation. Older characters "in good shape" have no problems jogging, lifting, fighting, or whatever, and young, intelligent people can often interact and think just as

well — if not better — than adults. This Compensation addresses those characters, young and old, who can't "keep up" as easily.

Bad Luck (CII)

The rules for this Compensation are the same as for Bad Luck (CI). However, a die roll of two *or* three on both ten-sided dice (a one and a one, or a two and a one) causes Bad Luck (CII) to activate. The effects are exactly the same, only the gamemaster might make the *setbacks* more uncomfortable.

Restrictions/Notes: See Bad Luck (CI).

Bigotry (CII)

Bigotry (CII) is the same as Bigotry (CI), only more intensified. Instead of "disliking" a particular type of person, the character *hates* that type. Player characters of that type will, most likely, be betrayed and abused at any opportunity — unless the character wants something from them that he can't get.

Or, if the player doesn't want to play that intense a form of prejudice, the character could have a "wider sweeping" bigotry. The character doesn't just focus on one minority group — he dislikes a whole *crowd* of them. Or, perhaps, the character is bigoted against one majority. Use the description for Bigotry (CI) as a guideline.

Restrictions/Notes: The same rules and warnings for Bigotry (CI) should be applied. In addition, any stronger versions of Bigotry should really be used only by gamemaster characters — villains, particularly — because then a player doesn't have to assume the role of an extreme bigot for an entire adventure.

Cultural Unfamiliarity (CII)

The character is of a culture almost totally different from the "mainstream" he operates in. The character should constantly make mistakes and "social gaffs," and all attempts at *streetwise* or similar "getting around town" skills should have +4 to the DN (at least). In addition, the character should probably have trouble with the native language (he could even take the Compensation Language, below).

Restrictions/Notes: The rules are the same as for Cultural Unfamiliarity (CI).

Debt (CII)

The character owes a *lot* of money (or something else valuable) to someone *dangerous*, or the results of owing this debt *are* dangerous. For example, the character could owe his life to a really strange old wizard (in a high fantasy setting), and, every time the wizard needs a favor (usually going off somewhere dangerous and doing something suicidal), the character has to drop everything and go.

Restrictions/Notes: The rules are the same as for Debt (CI).

Employed (CII)

The character works for someone, or something, that pretty much runs his life. When he goes on adventures, he either has to go through lots of red tape to get permission, or its because he was "assigned" the mission. As a result, the character has little free will regarding what he does or how he does it, and he should come into conflict with his employer on occasion. Also, since the character is an employee, if he is "on a mission," he usually has to turn over his share of the "loot" for "corporate disposal" — he'll get something out of it, certainly, but not a full share.

Restrictions/Notes: The rules are the same as for Employed (CI). Just make sure that "the job" is fairly inconvenient for the character, but there are reasons he doesn't quit. Maybe he has the Wealth Advantage only so long as he has the Employed (CII) Advantage — that would be a good way of tying in the Compensation.

Enemy (CII)

The rules are the same as for Enemy (CI), only the character is more powerful, more annoying, and/or more a part of the character's life.

Restrictions/Notes: It should be mentioned that killing the Enemy or running away should *not* get rid of the Compensation — at least not easily (see "Eliminating Compensations," below). At the very least, the character should have to go through a few adventures to "remove" the Enemy from his life. Usually, the character has to deal with the Enemy for quite a long time. Multiple enemies can, of course, be selected.

Handicap (CII)

The disability is much more serious, or more widespread. The character should choose one physical attribute, or two mental attributes and, any time skills are used from that attribute category, add +3 to the DN. Either that, or the player and the gamemaster can define the type of disability the character has and make a list of skills that get modifiers to the DN from +1 to +5 (or even pick skills that he can't do). That is the best way of handling it — a character in a wheelchair would not be able to run at all (an Agility skill), but he should be able to *dodge* at a modifier to the DN (maybe +3 to the opposing character's *fire combat* total), and the skill *thrown weapons* might not be affected at all.

Restrictions/Notes: The player should make certain to define the disability and be prepared to take the modifiers that come. The gamemaster will often have adventures where the character is severely limited in what he can do, so it seems like the gamemaster is "picking on" the character, but a good gamemaster will also have some aspects of every adventure where the character is not inconvenienced. The rules for Handicap (CII) are, otherwise, very similar to Handicap (CI), above.

Infamy (CII)

The character is, most likely, wanted for a crime of a fairly serious nature, or he did something (or is thought to have done something) in the past that makes him hated and reviled by most people. The rules are essentially the same as for Infamy (CI) and the recognition chances are similar to Fame (CII), but the modifier to interactions should be, usually, at least +4.

Restrictions/Notes: As stated under Infamy (CI), unless combined with Fame, this Compensation only allows for the negative aspects of notoriety. A character who has Infamy (CII) would be considered by nearly everyone (but *not* everyone) to be "scum" and someone who "deserves no better than he gets." When combined with an equal or higher level of Fame, there is often that "fear and respect" option — many characters will still try to betray or hurt the character in some way, but most won't be that open about it.

Language (CII)

The character does not understand the language of the area he spends most of his time in. He can learn skill adds in

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language: (the country) (see the description of the *language* skill in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use") or he can learn *linguistics* or use it *untrained* (it is an Intellect skill).

Restrictions/Notes: The character cannot begin the game with more than one add in *language: (the country)*, but may learn more at a regular cost. The difficulty numbers listed under the *language* skill have all the difficulty numbers listed for this Compensation. It is recommended that the character not be able to learn more than one add in *language: (the country)* per adventure. However, the character should speak another language in the game setting fluently.

Learning Curve (Negative) (CII)

When the character attempts to learn a new skill, or improve an old one, he does so at *double* the applicable skill point cost. There should be some sort of reason for this in the character's background.

Restrictions/Notes: This is the counterpart to Learning Curve (Positive), and it should be treated in much the same way. The same optional rules can work for this as well, if the gamemaster thinks it is too much of a handicap — and, if they are, it can be chosen twice.

Prejudice (CII)

This time, the minority group the character belongs to is oppressed. The character experiences disparity virtually every day. While other characters of the same minority group may not actually experience this prejudice (i.e., they didn't select this option), it is probably because they aren't in positions where this discrimination can be easily practised.

Restrictions/Notes: The character often experiences discrimination and most interactions are performed at a +2 to +4 to the DN. This prejudice should be roleplayed at every opportunity. However, gamemasters and players should only use this Compensation when both sides are comfortable with using it in a pretend situation (see Bigotry and Prejudice for more information).

Price (CII)

The Price for using a particular Advantage, or group of Advantages, is much higher than mentioned in Column I, but the rules are the same. Now, Special Abilities will force the character to fulfill certain obligations (perhaps when using "water breathing," the character must remain in the water for at least twenty-four hours or suffer a *wound* for changing environments so quickly). Contacts will be extremely hard to "pay off" or do favors for — maybe an entire short adventure has to be devoted to "paying back" a contact who helped out.

Optionally, paying three Life Points at the end of an adventure where the Advantage(s) were used is a quick way of "paying the price."

Restrictions/Notes: See Price (CI).

Quirk (CII)

The rules for Quirk (CII) are the same as for Quirk (CI), only the chance of occurrence is much greater and the effects are larger. For example, if the character had a "dependency" (see Quirk (CI)), the character would have to fulfill that dependency much more often (once a scene, perhaps), and the character might experience one *setback* per scene that he doesn't (a smoker might have a coughing fit in the middle of a tense negotiation or during a *stealth* attempt, for example).

Restrictions/Notes: The DN of resisting the "impulse" is now 12, but all other rules are the same as under Quirk (CI).

Compensations: Column III

Column III Compensations are more intensified versions of earlier Compensations, except for a few new additions. Many of these Compensations fit into the realm of the fantastic — only characters from "non-normal" game settings should take a few of these.

Achilles' Heel (CIII)

The character has a particular, very serious, vulnerability. It is not something that other characters will find particularly dangerous or inconvenient, but the character suffers severe modifiers to DNs or even damage when exposed to it. Some examples include:

Severe "Allergies" (CIII): The character is strongly affected by reasonably common things that he cannot always avoid. When exposed to the allergen, the character must generate an Endurance total (as an action in a combat round, if applicable) of 12 or higher or automatically take a *wound*. The character can cancel the damage, but he has to generate that total every round he is exposed to the allergen.

Vulnerability (CIII): A particular form of attack or interaction affects the character much more severely than other characters. For example, a character with a vulnerability to firearms might "freeze up" when he sees another character point a gun at him — making the other character +4 to hit him (most likely during the first round of combat only). Another character might automatically apply +8 to the DN of any attempts to resist another character's *con* attempts.

Restrictions/Notes: The Achilles' Heel (CIII) should be very serious, but not "instant death" for the character. There should always be some way to avoid it (not easily), or some chance that it can be countered. The more creative the Achilles' Heel (CIII), and the more likely the character is to be affected by it, the less it actually should do. A character who is

vulnerable to water (he probably has a phobia), for example, might "panic" and suffer +2 to the DN of all actions when exposed to a large body of water, +4 when in it, and +2 when wet. Or, the character might just take a *wound* every time he gets a significant portion of his body wet. There should be a good reason why any Achilles' Heel (CIII) affects the character.

Advantage Flaw (CIII)

This level of flaw takes on some of the characteristics of an Achilles Heel (CIII), only in direct relationship to an Advantage. The rules for the flaw are the same as for Advantage Flaw (CII), but the effects are even *more* severe. Not only does the character lose the benefits of the Advantage (or undergo a condition that essentially negates it), but he also suffers an *additional* disadvantage.

For example, a character with this flaw might be able to use psionics, one of that game setting's special effects. However, the flaw counteracts the use of those psionics and debilitates the character — maybe every time the character uses his psionics, he "taps into" the general mood of the people around him. If the characters near the psionic are feeling strong or negative emotions, the character immediately loses the ability to use psionics and suffers a *stymied* condition until the end of the scene (and a *really* intense headache).

Or, maybe the character has Equipment (CIII) — a really powerful weapon in a near now setting. But, whenever the character suffers a *setback*, the gun not only runs out of ammo, but the character experiences some sort of "feedback" at a moderate damage value (maybe the weapon's normal damage value minus a specific amount). The character then has to recharge the weapon (either through the use of a Price Compensation or by waiting until the end of the Act, most likely).

Restrictions/Notes: Advantage Flaw (CIII) takes a powerful Advantage and turns it into a worse-than-useless Compensation for a comparatively brief period of time. This Compensation should be linked to especially powerful or useful Advantages that the character will want to use fairly often. A single Advantage can have more than one Advantage Flaw, and, if the character wants, several flaws, of various columns, can be linked to one Advantage. See other examples of Advantage Flaw for more information.

Burn-out (CIII)

Under a certain set of proscribed circumstances, the Advantage goes away — *permanently*. The player and the gamemaster should work out the circumstances, with the following criteria:

1. The Burn-out should have a chance of ocurring about once or twice an adventure.

2. The Burn-out should be something that could be avoided — but the character might not want to avoid it.

3. There should be a logical reason for the Burn-out to occur.

4. Both the player and the gamemaster should be aware that the Burn-out *will* occur at some point.

As long as those criteria are met, the Burn-out Compensation should work all right. Some examples might include:

• If the character is soundly defeated in an adventure, the Burn-out occurs.

• When the character completes a particular mission of great importance (this would probably only happen after several adventures — but the mission should be something the character *wants* to complete for some reason), the Burn-out occurs.

• If the character suffers a particular effect (he is *mortally wounded*, he is the victim of a particular type of fairly uncommon attack, etc.) he suffers the Burn-out.

• When a character's Advantage is somehow negated (a Contact who has a chance of being killed, a piece of Equipment that someone is trying to steal or destroy, etc.) the Burn-out occurs.

Restrictions/Notes: Any Advantage could have the possibility of Burn-out. Just think of a logical (or, perhaps, supernatural) reason an Advantage would go away. There should be a decent chance that it could go away, but the character should have some chance of avoiding that occurrence ... for a while.

Bad Luck (CIII)

The same as Bad Luck (CI) and Bad Luck (CII), but the character suffers the effects on a die roll of two, three or four. The *minimum* effect is that the character experiences a *setback* and probably something disastrous happens.

Restrictions/Notes: See Bad Luck (CI) and Bad Luck (CII). Since Bad Luck (CIII) can have such devastating effects, the gamemaster might want to "overrule" occurrences of it. For example, if, during a standard scene of an adventure, a character is trying to *persuade* a shopkeeper to sell him an item at a better price, he might roll a two, three, or four on the dice. The gamemaster could have something disastrous happen — the shopkeeper keels over with a heart attack just as the chief of police walks in and the character is suddenly suspected of murder — but does it serve any *purpose* in the adventure? Possibly, but if it doesn't, save it until later. Then, when the character is at the climax of the adventure and he *doesn't* roll a two, three, or four — but the gamemaster feels a "dose of bad luck" would improve the story, he can use that as an excuse. Players should understand that Bad Luck is arbitrary and will often occur at the worst possible moment.

Cultural Unfamiliarity (CIII)

The character is, in all respects, an alien. Either he's from another planet with a completely different culture, or whatever fits the game setting — he just doesn't *fit in* (socially, and, most likely, physically). Otherwise, this Compensation works exactly the same way as the other column versions.

Restrictions/Notes: See Cultural Unfamiliarity (CI).

Debt (CIII)

The character owes *everything* to someone or something. In the case of worldly goods, all such items must be turned over to the "lender" at the end of an adventure — the character must "borrow" these things back at the beginning of the next adventure. And it is up to the gamemaster what the "lender" gives back.

In most cases, this means the character is either Employed or under some sort of roleplaying restriction. For example, a character in a high fantasy campaign might be a member of a particular cult or religion. He has to "tithe" all worldly goods (or, at least, a large portion of worldly goods) to the cult after every adventure. If he does not, he would be "cast out" — a fate he would not enjoy — or even hunted and killed. At the beginning of each adventure, the character must beg and persuade whoever is in charge to let him have any goods he needs.

Restrictions/Notes: Debt (CIII) is so wide-sweeping that it cannot usually be combined with the lower versions or linked to individual Advantages unless the player and the gamemaster are particularly inventive. A character with Debt (CIII)

might "owe" the possession of a Column III or IV Advantage to a particular source, however (a character with the ability to cast miracles might owe this to a god), and have to pay some sort of other tithe (a sacrifice, all the money the character obtains, etc.) to be able to use the Advantage, but, in most cases, the character is over his head in worldly debt.

Employed (CIII)

The character is, for all intents and purposes, a slave. This does not mean the character is poor or without means — just without free choice. The character does virtually everything because he *has* to. For example, a character might be the head of a megacorporation in a high tech game setting. But the only way things get done is for the character to *do* them or be there to oversee their getting done. Adventures only occur when they are in direct concordance with the interests of the "employer." In all other ways, this Compensation is like its lower column versions.

Restrictions/Notes: See Employed under the other columns.

Enemy (CIII)

Again, the rules are the same as for Enemy (CI) and Enemy (CII). The character is beset by, most likely, a group of enemies or a very powerful enemy who wish to kill or otherwise "remove" the character from the game setting. For example, a pulp fiction adventurer might have an "arch nemesis" who strives to kill the character, hurt people he knows, and do awful things just because the character won't like them. Just about everything bad that happens to the character would please the arch nemesis — and he is probably responsible for a lot of them. The Enemy (CIII) should be involved in, directly or indirectly, most adventures the character goes on.

Restrictions/Notes: Enemy (CIII) is a very powerful, and very important, Compensation. Many beginning gamemasters might not want to go to the trouble of creating and constantly maintaining a villain or group of villains relating to the character — but others will enjoy it. Talk to your gamemaster about this option before you select it.

Handicap (CIII)

There is a substantial group of activities that the character *cannot* do, and they cannot even be compensated for in most cases. A Handicap (CII) might put a character into a wheelchair, but the character can still get around. A Handicap (CIII) would be almost like being confined to a bed.

Restrictions/Notes: Most players will not want characters with this severe a Compensation, and generally, it is not recommended. However, in game settings where special effects are common, this can be used. For example, a character who is confined to bed in a magic-using setting might only be able to go out in the body of a golem — an artificial man with limited abilities. The character should have to suffer for this handicap most of the time, but there can be interesting ways to play it — with the gamemaster's permission.

Infamy (CIII)

The character cannot go out because he will be recognized in most places — a lot of people hate him to the point of violence. Virtually anyone would kill or drive away the character if possible, and it is likely there are those hunting him (at least Enemy (CI) should be chosen in addition to this Compensation). However, the character could use disguises and could avoid populated areas to remain a viable character. Most likely, the character has to move around until he can "live down" his infamy (if ever) or until he dies.

Restrictions/Notes: See Infamy (CI) and Infamy (CII).

Quirk (CIII)

These "personality quirks" are much more serious. The character might be a junkie, a psychotic with a certain type of behavior, or has a severe phobia (he's deathly afraid of something). Some examples:

Dependency (CIII): The character is a junkie, always after a "fix." The "fix" might be an illegal substance, or a perfectly normal one, or even a type of roleplaying interaction (maybe the character has to try to come as close to dying as he can).

Paranoid (CIII): The character trusts no one. He receives a +4 to the bonus number when trying to resist being *conned*, but he also receives this "bonus" when trying to be *persuaded* — and he must be *persuaded* before he'll help even his closest friends. "Everyone is out to get him."

Diane O'Rourke: Compensations

Jill knows Diane has to pick up an equal number of Compensations from equal columns (3CI, 2CII, 1CI). There are several points in Diane's background story that could be used as Compensation-possibilities:

- She was once approached by the Chinese underground (and she refused their offer)
- She has experienced discrimination because of her sex
- She never had a permanent home
- She had to pick up and run from her last job

Column I:

Bad Luck (CI): When Diane rolls a "2" on the dice, she is *stymied* until the end of the scene (this reflects the fact that Diane will often become frustrated with failure)

Cultural Unfamiliarity (CI): Diane isn't comfortable in Western Culture — she is too familiar with the East. She often does or says things when she is a Western country that make people see her as an outsider

Poverty (CI): Diane left all her belongings, except a small set of tools and the clothes on her back, when she fled China across mainland Asia

Column II:

Enemy (CII): A particular crime lord (located in China) wants to "make an example" of Diane for resisting his offers of employment. He has some contacts in virtually every civilized country

Prejudice (CII): In the scientific community, and in interactions involving the scientific community, Diane is discriminated because she is a woman who is "too smart for her own good"

Column III:

Quirk (CIII): Diane is *terrified* by the prospect of encountering the Chinese crime lord again. If she is in danger of being captured by one of his minions, she is *stymied* until she escapes or defeats them. If she is confronted by the crime lord or a particularly threatening underling, she must make a *willpower* roll of 16 or higher to avoid collapsing into a panic or fleeing the situation

Phobic (CIII): The character is *deathly* afraid of *something*. It could be heights, open spaces, spiders, or another character. Unless the character makes his *willpower* roll (below), he dissolves into terror.

Vengeful (CIII): The character cannot stand to "lose" or be "wronged." If the character perceives himself as "looking foolish" (or whatever), he will go to great lengths to "get even" (in reality, the character probably takes it too far).

Restrictions/Notes: The character's DN for *willpower* is 16 — at the least. If, in the gamemaster's judgement, there is a reason the character should have modifiers to the DN, then he will. Players who don't want to play a character that can frequently "lose control" should avoid this option.

Compensations: Column IV and Beyond ...

These Compensations are most likely supernatural or supranormal in origin. Gamemasters and players should work together to create them, using the first three columns as examples. They will have to be custom-designed, in most cases, for characters, so there is no list here. If all else fails, just increase the power and frequency of Column III Compensations.

• Additional Rules •

Getting Rid of Compensations and Losing Advantages

The beauty of roleplaying games is that nothing has to be permanent. Advantages can be taken away (though some, like Additional Skill Adds, are probably around to stay), and others can be added (they're called "adventure rewards" — and you don't have to use this section to get them). Compensations can be "bought off" or "roleplayed out" as well. And that's probably what most players are interested in.

In most cases, Compensations can only go away if the gamemaster allows the player to roleplay through an adventure, or series of adventures, that takes care of the problem. For example, an "enemy" might eventually be killed, a character might be able to negotiate a way out of Debt, or an Advantage Flaw might be "repaired." These things should only happen after the character has been used during several adventures and "earned" the right to get rid of a Compensation. Either that, or the character might sacrifice an Advantage for a Compensation linked to it or of relative strength.

For example, if a character had Equipment (CIII), he might also have a Column III Compensation tied to it. If the character can get rid of the equipment (which he might not be able to do in some settings — a cursed sword or a cybernetic spine, for example), then the Compensation goes away.

If you, as a player, get tired of a Compensation, talk to your gamemaster. You can probably work out a compromise.

Creating a Species

In the high fantasy game setting created by Ted, the gamemaster, there is one major sapient species other than the humans that make up the rest of the world's population. This species is known as the "Grakka," and they are typified by their warlike, belligerent nature, as well as their deviousness in trading and negotiation.

Ted decides he wants every Grakka to have the following Advantages:

• **Skill Bonus (CI):** *Negotiator*; +1 to *persuasion (bargain), con (bad deals), business,* and *intimidation*

• **Wealth (CI):** *Hoard*; every Grakka has a small amount of wealth "stashed away"

The Grakka also have the following mandatory Compensations:

• **Advantage Flaw (Skill Bonus) (CI):** *Anger*; if a Grakka gets the "bad end" of a negotiation or bargain, then he will be *stymied* until the end of the act or until he can recoup his losses

• **Infamy (CI):** *Belligerence*; Grakka are known to be warlike and aggressive, and more peaceful characters will not trust them. They lose their tempers easily.

Ted decides these are enough mandatory options — he had thought about *prejudice* and *bigotry*, since there are only two major species on the planet, but he decided to leave that up to the players. He then comes up with a description for the Grakka.

"They are a little shorter and broader than Humans, with dark, reddish skin. They do not grow hair on their faces, except for bushy brows and long sideburns. Their hair is usually dark."

Then Ted decides what else about the Grakka is unique. He decides that they should only be allowed the following remaining options: 1CI, 1CII, 1CIII. He explains that the Grakka are not "highly magical," so they won't get the option of taking CIV Advantages and Compensations, and he also states that they shouldn't be allowed to increase their *charm* and similar skills using background options.

In the above example, you will note how Ted used two CI options (Advantages and Compensations) each — he didn't have to do that, but he figured that would help with the game balance. Even though high fantasy characters normally only have one CI option (each), the fact that these characters have two is compensated for the fact that they have fewer choices available.

Also note that Ted came up with interesting "themes" that described the Advantages and Compensations — they are listed after the actual option name *(negotiator, hoard, anger,* and *belligerence)*. These describe exactly *how* the options come into play. For example, the generic Wealth (CI) option didn't have to be a "hoard of cash" — it could have been a job, or some other income. This provides a theme that describes the Grakkas' personality.

Customizing Advantages and Compensations

In all of the *MasterBook* WorldBooks, there will most likely be additional Advantages and Compensations. But, in many cases, those additional options will just be more specific versions of those presented here. For example, in a WorldBook covering a pulp fantasy game setting, instead of just using the Skill Bonus (CI) option as presented above, that game setting might require certain sets of skills — based on a character's species, background, or whatever. They may be listed under different names, like "Weapons Master" (the character gains +1 to several weapon-related skills), "Burglar," (the bonus goes to *stealth* and theft-related skills), or "Magical Aptitude," (magic-related skills benefit).

We encourage you to do this on your own as well. It is much more interesting for a character to be known as a "Friend of the Underworld" than as a "character with Contacts (CIII) to the local crime syndicate." The second sounds generic; the first is mysterious and exciting. It adds flavor and depth to any world you adventure in to come up with names and themes that fit.

Aliens/Mutants/Fantastic Species

Non-human characters and monsters have been a staple of roleplaying games since their inception. Elves, dwarves, giants, space aliens, and nuclear mutations are all possibilities in a roleplaying game, depending upon the game setting. As are any other combinations you can come up with.

Gamemasters and players may want to experiment with different types of creatures as player characters. If so, then the gamemaster should restructure the generic game setting recommendations for background options by game setting so that things can work out.

For example, characters in a high fantasy game setting are usually allowed to have the following background options: 1CI, 1CII, 1CIII, 1CIV.

If the gamemaster and the players want to create a certain set of fantastic species, then they can by reorganizing these options and making them work so that they don't unbalance the game. See "Creating a Species" for an example.

When a species is created, then *every* character created from that species *must* have certain background Advantages and Compensations. Then, the character may have a few more that the player can choose. Usually, the character ends up with more options than normal for the game setting, but fewer than the player is able to choose for the character.

On the other hand, the gamemaster may come up with a unique method of obtaining certain Advantages. For example, in a pulp fiction game setting, the gamemaster may decide that Column IV Advantages and Compensations can be used — but only if the character receives them in a certain way. In this case, the "trading up rules" (see "Shifting Columns," above) can be used.

The gamemaster can construct any rules he wants governing the distribution of Advantages and Compensations — the ones presented here are *strong* recommendations, however. But anything that makes the game more fun and more interesting for everyone is a good idea.

CHAPTER THREE

• The Rules •

MasterBook is a game system driven by a few basic principles and rules concepts.

• Whenever a character tries to do something, they are using the most appropriate skill (as determined by the gamemaster) or, if they have no adds in that skill, that skill's Attribute. In fact, you'll notice that descriptions often list both the skill and Attribute when describing the difficulty.

• The gamemaster sets a difficulty number for every task.

• The player rolls the dice, determines a *bonus number* and adds it to his skill or attribute value to get a *skill total* or *Attribute total*.

• If the modified skill or Attribute total is equal to or higher than the difficulty, the character succeeds at the task.

While all that follows provides detailed explanations on each aspect of the rules system, the core of *MasterBook* is that simple. The rest of the material contains "bells and whistles" — options that you can add to your game as you see the need or to better achieve the effects you want in your game.

• Difficulty Numbers •

Difficulty numbers (DNs) are determined by the gamemaster based on how hard or how easy he or she thinks it is to perform a particular action. The higher the DN, the harder an action is to perform.

There are two types of difficulty numbers: "arbitrary" (used when the character is acting against an inanimate object or trying to accomplish a specific task) or "opposed" (used when a character is trying to directly affect another character or living being).

Arbitrary DNs

When using arbitrary DNs, use the suggestions below to help determine the final difficulty.

The *Difficulty Level* is a description of how hard the action should be to perform for an *average person with no skill adds*. An average character has an 8 attribute value, and *no* skill adds in whatever action is being performed. So, an average character who has no idea how to pick a lock might have to generate a *lock picking* skill total of 10 to pick a complicated lock.

The *percentage* listed after each DN Level is the percentage chance that an average character can perform the skill attempt successfully. This is based on the die roll needed to generate the appropriate bonus number (see "The Die System," below). So, that average character, using his Dexterity to perform a comlicated *lock picking* action, has a 36% chance of being successful.

The *DN Value* is the *skill total* or *Attribute total* necessary to succeed at an action. If the character obtains a skill total equal to or higher than the DN Value, he has succeeded in his attempt — though the more he beats the difficulty by, the better the results will be (see "The Success Chart").

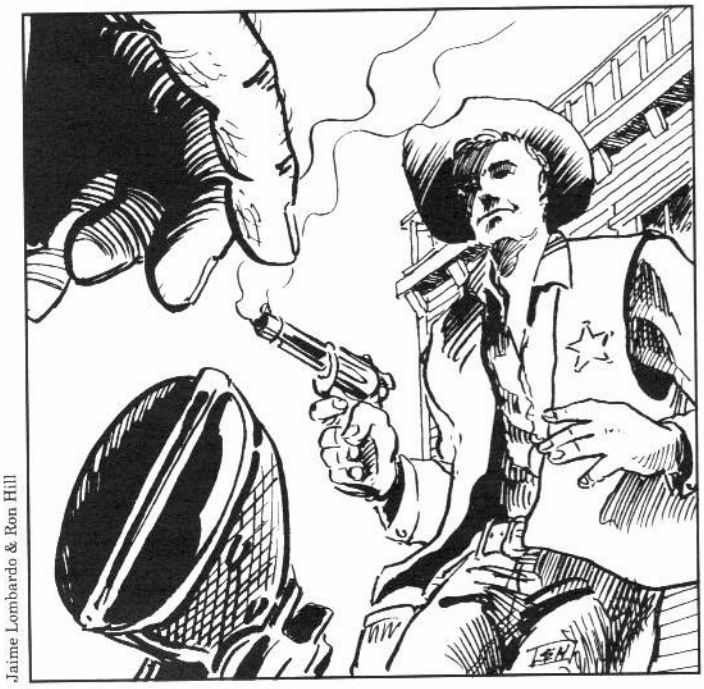
• Arbitrary DN Scale •

Difficulty Level	% Chance of Success	DN Value
Simple	100%	*
Routine	97%	0
Nearly Routine	90%	2
Very Easy	85%	3
Easy	79%	5
Average	55%	8
Complicated	36%	10
Difficult	15%	12
Hard	10%	13
Very Hard	3%	15
Extremely Hard	†	18
Incredible	†	22
Nearly Impossible	†	25+

* *Simple* actions (opening a door, walking across a room, etc.) do not normally need to be rolled.

† Cannot be achieved without a roll-again

Note: Characters will, occasionally, attempt "impossible" actions. "Impossible" is in quotes because, in a roleplaying game, what is or isn't possible depends on the gamemaster's judgement. For a character with no training in a skill, any DN above Extremely Hard is technically impossible unless the character has Life Points or cards to spend.



Jaime Lombardo & Ron Hill

But, for a character with a high skill value — say, an Attribute value of 12 and seven skill adds, for a skill value of 19 — Hard (13) DNs are succeeded at more than half the time.

The gamemaster has to balance his judgement with his view of the situation. The Arbitrary DN Scale is used to determine difficulties for average, *untrained* characters. The DNs go up or down depending on your view of the action. For example, an appendectomy is, for a competent surgeon (say, a character with a skill value of 22 in *medicine*) fairly easy, but the actual DN level on the scale would probably be Extremely Hard (18). A character with no training could never succeed without spending Life Points or cards, but the well-trained surgeon could succeed easily more than half the time.

Opposed DNs

When two characters are attempting to act against each other, the difficulty number is not determined using the chart above. Instead, the *opposed DN* is figured by each characters' Attribute or skill value.

For example, a character who wants to shoot another using a regular pistol uses his *fire combat* skill (or Dexterity Attribute) to attack. The character who is being shot at (the target) uses his *dodge* skill (or Agility Attribute) to keep from getting hit. The shooting character's difficulty is his target's *dodge* — an opposed difficulty.

Another opposed action would occur when one character wants to *trick* another. The first character uses his *trick* skill, while the target resists with his *willpower* skill or Intellect Attribute (whichever is higher). The *trick* difficulty is the target's *willpower* or Intellect — an opposed difficulty.

Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use" has descriptions for each skill, including examples of when the skills can be used for either arbitrary or opposed tasks. Generally, common sense applies — if one character is trying something directly against another character, then opposed DNs are used. If no second character is affected, then an arbitrary DN is assigned.

Modifiers

The gamemaster can choose the arbitrary DN or determine an opposed DN fairly easily, using the guidelines above. But what about *modifiers*?

A modifier will add to or subtract from a character's skill, Attribute value or the actual difficulty number depending upon the situation. Modifiers are used to modify the difficulty to suit the situation as well as provide the player characters with a challenge.

All modifiers are culmulative. Any skill attempt or DN can be modified as many times as the gamemaster sees fit, but don't go overboard. Instead, just pick a reasonable DN in the first place.

How would you use modifiers?

Let's say a character wants to throw a rock through an open window for some reason. He uses his *thrown weapons* skill (or his Dexterity) versus an arbitrary DN set by the gamemaster. The gamemaster decides that the window is good-sized, so he thinks an average character would need to perform an easy action (DN of 5) to do this.

But, before the character generates a skill total (using "The Die System," below), the gamemaster might decide to tack on a few modifiers — either to the character's skill value or the actual DN.

What if the character is very far away from the window? That would decrease his chance of hitting. But if the rock were smooth and aerodynamic, that could increase his chances. What if people are walking by the window, concealing the target occasionally?

The list of possible modifiers can go on and on. This chart below will give you a good idea of how a modifier can affect the outcome of an action.

• Modifier Chart •

Modifier to DN or Skill	Situation
+/- 1	The modifier barely affects the skill attempt
+/- 3	The modifier makes a significant difference
+/- 5	The modifier will probably change the overall outcome
+/- 7	The modifer will almost totally change the overall outcome
+/- 10 (or more)	The modifier totally redefines the skill attempt

The *Modifier to DN or Skill* is listed that way because it can be applied either way. A gamemaster may choose to increase or decrease the DN of an action, or he may use the modifier to add or subtract from the character's skill. What's the difference? Numerically, none. In the story, however, it makes a big difference.

Difficulty numbers should be kept *secret* from the players. They might have an idea of how hard or how easy an action is to attempt, but they should not know *exactly* how hard something is until they've done it — and, even then, they might not know the exact DN.

So, when a gamemaster modifies a DN, he doesn't tell the players. He might tell the players that there are modifiers — if he feels the players would notice — but he won't say what they are.

But, if a gamemaster modifies the character's skill value, then he *should* say by how much and why.

For the character who is trying to throw a rock through a window, the gamemaster has already determined that, because of the size of the window, the DN is 5. He does not tell the player this.

The player character selects a rock. For some reason, he selected a nice, smooth rock. The gamemaster looks at the Modifier Chart and decides that doesn't make a big difference, but it should help. He tells the player to add +2 to his skill attempt.

He also informs the player that the character is pretty far away from the window in question, and that there are people walking by. He doesn't say how much of a modifier this will add, but he does describe the situation to the best of his ability:

"Every five seconds or so, someone is in front of the window. The street is very crowded, and you are a good twenty meters away. Still well within your throwing range, but it's still not that close."

Then he assigns the modifiers to the DN. He chooses to increase the DN by +5 for the people but only +1 for the range. That's a total modifier of +6. So, the final DN is 5+6 = 11. But the character's skill value has also been increased by +2.

• Using Modifiers •

Ultimately, it doesn't matter whether you set a specific DN or pick a modest DN and modify it several times: the end result is still just a DN.

Modifiers are a *tool* to help set DNs you are feel are appropriate to the situation while still providing a challenge to the player characters. You can use the modifiers to explain why a DN is high if your players complain or want an explanation of the situation.

• The Die System •

Now you know how difficulty numbers are chosen and modified. But how do you "generate a skill total?"

That's where the dice come in.

You need two ten-sided dice, numbered one to ten. You also need "The Bonus Chart" printed here and on all *MasterBook* character sheets.

The Bonus Chart

The bonus chart is used to determine a *bonus number* which is then added to a character's skill or Attribute value.

Roll your two ten-sided dice and add them together. Then find the "die roll" on the bonus chart. Add the bonus number, positive or negative, to your skill or Attribute value and that is your *skill total* (or *Attribute total*). Negative bonus numbers actually end up lowering the skill total.

Any modifiers (either given by the gamemaster or from the cards) are added to the *skill total,* not the die roll.

Example: *A character has a Dexterity of 8 and one add in* fire combat, *to give him* fire combat *of 9. The player rolls the dice and gets a 8 and a 5, for a total of 13. That gives him a bonus number of 2, which is added to his* fire combat *of 9, for a skill total of 11.*

Example: *The character is firing again. The player rolls a 3 and a 4, for a total of 7. That gives him a bonus number of -3, which added to his* fire combat *of 9 gives him a skill total of 6 (9-3).*

Example: *The character is firing a third time. This time the gamemaster has told the player that he gets a modifier of +2 to his skill roll because the target is pretty big. The player rolls a 4 and a 6, for a total of 10: that gives him a bonus number of 0. His* fire combat *is 9 (9+0), but it goes up to 11 when he adds in the modifier (9+2).*

Roll-Agains

How do you get die totals over twenty? There are many circumstances where you will get to roll the dice more than once and add all their individual results together to find a die total. They are listed here, but described in more detail later on:

Tens: If your character has skill or specialization adds in the skill or specialization being used, you can always roll any single-die "tens" again and add together *all* rolls for your die total. If you get 10s on a reroll, you can keep on rerolling.

If a character's die total adds up to ten (maybe by rolling a 6 and a 4), that does *not* get the character a roll-again.

If the character does not have any adds in the skill or specialization, the character may not roll again, even if a 10 is rolled.

Example: *If your character has a Dexterity of 10 and an add in* fire combat *(for* fire combat *11) and he is shooting a gun, he'll generate a die total using the two dice. He rolls a 10 and a 3 on the dice; he can roll the "10" die again and add it to the 13 he's already generated: he gets a 3, for a total of 16. That gives him a bonus number of 5, for a skill total of 16 (11, for his* fire combat, *plus the bonus number of 5).*

Later, he rolls again and gets a 10 and a 2. He rerolls the first die, and gets another 10. He gets to reroll that as well and gets a 2, for a total die roll of 24 (10+2+10+2),

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10	11 12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21 25	26 30	31 35	36 40	41 45	+5
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	+1

which gives him a bonus number of 10. He has a skill total of 21 (11 for fire combat *and a bonus number of 10).*

***Example:** Your character has a Dexterity of 10, but no adds in* missile weapons, *and is firing a missile weapon. You roll an 8 and a 10 — great! — but you cannot reroll that 10 because you don't have any adds in* missile weapons. *Your character is stuck with the die roll of 18, which gives him a bonus number of 7.*

Life Points: All player characters, and many gamemaster characters, have Life Points. In most cases, if a player rolls the dice, he can spend a Life Point to get a roll-again on *both* dice. When he spends a Life Point, he can also roll any 10s again even if he doesn't have skill adds.

***Example:** A die total comes up 14 — a six and an eight. The player chooses to spend a Life Point for a roll-again. Then he rolls a ten and a six. That's a die total of 30, but the ten can be rolled again. Another ten comes up and then a three — that's a die total of 43.*

Up: Certain *action line* results (see Chapter Five, "The Card Deck") and interaction results (see "Taunt/Trick" later in this chapter) give a character or a group of characters an *up* condition. An *up* allows the character a free roll-again of both dice.

The character can spend Life Points and achieve roll-agains from tens during an *up* condition as normal — and all of these roll agains are *culmulative.*

***Example:** A character with an* up *rolls a 10 and a 4; he gets to roll both dice again (an 8 and a 9) and then roll one die again because of the ten (a 5) — for a total of 36 (bonus number of 13). If any other tens had been rolled, the character could have rolled* again. *Life Points could have been spent to get* more *roll-agains.*

Stopping Roll-Agains

There are things that can stop roll-agains.

Stymied: A character who suffers from a *stymied* condition must sacrifice his *first* die roll-again during the affected period.

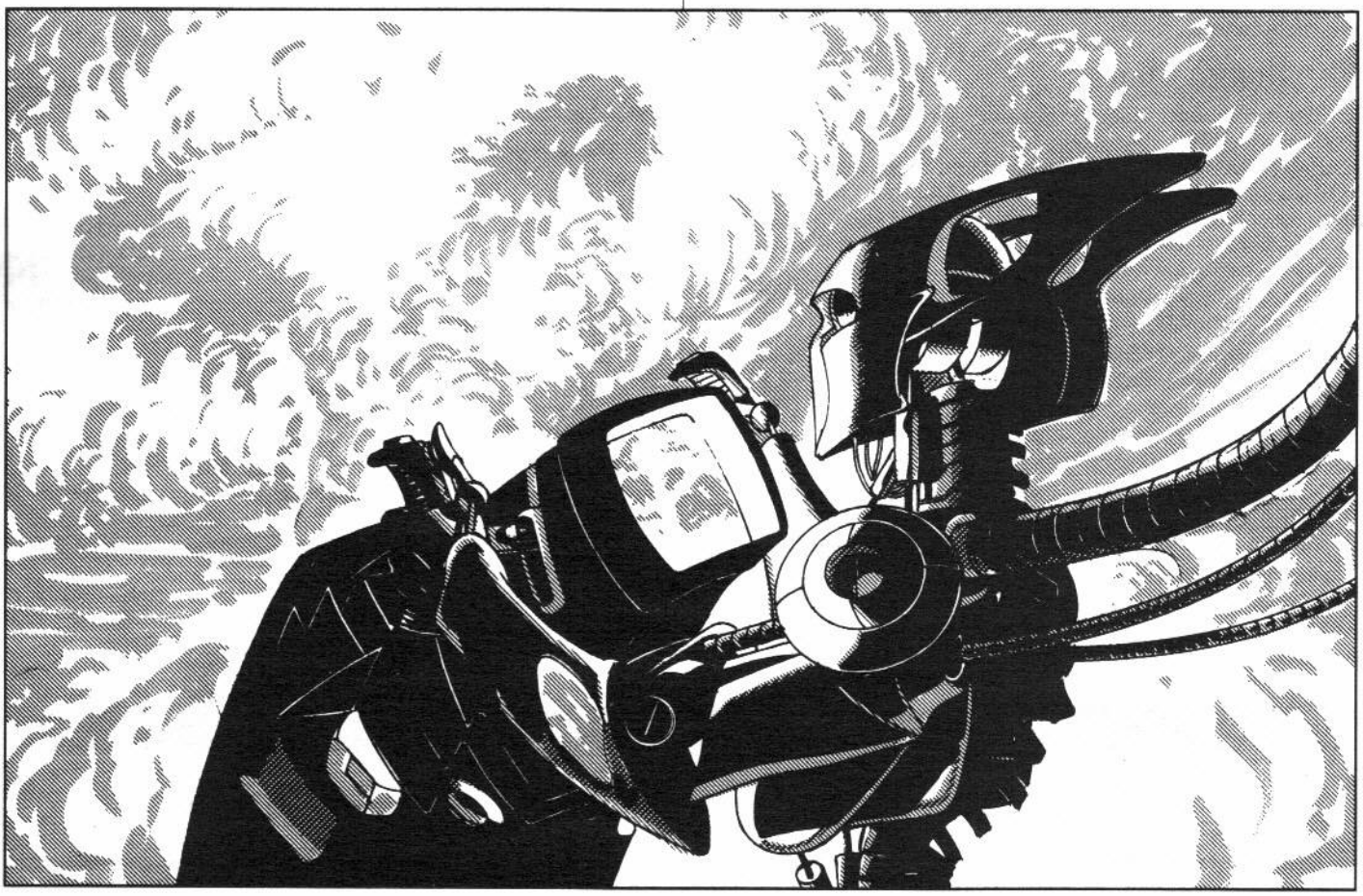
That means, if a character is *stymied* and he rolls a ten, he *cannot* roll it again. If he rolled two tens, he could roll *one* again. A *stymied* character who also gets an *up* loses one die, as does a character who spends a Life Point.

Stymied results can occur as a line action result (see Chapter Five, "The Card Deck") or as a result of interaction (see "Intimidation," "Taunt/Trick" and "Maneuver" later in this chapter).

Cancelled Life Point: Other characters who are aware of Life Point expenditures for roll-agains can *cancel* these expenditures by sacrificing a Life Point of their own. A character can cancel any number of Life Points if he is aware of them (a character who has *complete surprise* on another character may spend a Life Point and not worry about it being cancelled — at least by the surprised character).

When a Life Point is spent to cancel out another Life Point, *both* dice roll-agains are lost.

***Example:** Two characters are fighting and both have Life Points. One spends to get a roll-again, the other spends a Life Point to cancel. There is no roll-again — they cancel each other out.*



Karl Waller

• The Success Chart •

As was noted before, if the character's *skill total* or *Attribute total* is equal to or higher than the DN, the character has succeeded at the task; if it is lower, the character fails.

The Success Chart can be used to determine *how well* a character succeeded at a given action: this is called the *success level*.

To determine a success level, find the number of points by which the character's *skill* or *Attribute total* beat the DN. These points are called *result points*. Then, read down the appropriate column of the Success Chart to see what kind of success the character achieved.

Which column of the chart you use depends on what type of action you are performing. Throughout this book, and in other *MasterBook* supplements, you'll be referred to one of these columns: they are constantly used in the game. The column headings (in most cases) correspond to the skills that are used for that given column.

• *General Success:* This chart is used for most actions, and is the default column to be used whenever you aren't using the other columns. There are six different success levels in the *MasterBook* game system: *minimal, solid, good, superior, spectacular* and *spectacular+*.

Example: *A character has a* tracking *skill of 12 and rolls an 11 to get a bonus number of 1, for a skill total of 13. The gamemaster had decided the DN was 9: that's four result points (13-9=4). Looking on the Success Level column, that's a* solid *result.*

• *Damage:* Use this column whenever a character or target is hit in combat or might otherwise be injured by being shot, zapped by lightning bolts, sprayed with acid or ... you get the picture.

This column has special rules: you add the result points of the "to hit" roll to the damage value of attack, and compare that to the target's Toughness, finding *those* result points on the Damage Column. See "Damage" (later in this chapter) for a complete explanation.

• *Intimidation:* Use this column whenever a character tries to *intimidate* (or frighten) another character.

• *Taunt / Trick:* Use this column whenever a character tries to *trick* or *taunt* another character.

• *Maneuver:* Use this column whenever one character attempts a combat *maneuver* on another character.

• Success Chart •

Result Points	General Success	Damage	Intimidation	Taunt/ Trick	Maneuver	Push (Shock Taken)
0	Minimal	1	stymied	stymied	fatigued	1(3)
1	Solid	O1	stymied	stymied	fatigued	1(2)
2	Solid	K1	stymied	stymied	fatigued	1(1)
3	Solid	O2	stymied	stymied	fatigued	2(4)
4	Solid	3	stymied	stymied	fatigued	2(3)
5	Good	Knockdown O3	untrained	untrained	fatigued	2(2)
6	Good	Knockdown K3	untrained	untrained	fatigued	3(5)
7	Good	Knockdown KO	untrained	untrained	stymied	3(4)
8	Good	Wnd K/O 3	untrained	untrained	stymied	3(3)
9	Superior	Wnd K/O 5	untrained	untrained	stymied	4(6)
10	Superior	2Wnd Knockdown K3	setback	setback	stymied	4(5)
11	Superior	2Wnd K/O 5	setback	setback	stymied	4(4)
12	Superior	2Wnd KO 5	setback	setback	stymied/fatigued	5(7)
13	Spectacular	3Wnd Knockdown K3	setback	setback	stymied/fatigued	5(6)
14	Spectacular	3Wnd K/O 5	setback	setback	stymied/fatigued	5(5)
15	Spectacular	3Wnd KO 7	break	up/setback	stymied/fatigued	6(8)
16	Spectacular	4Wnd Knockdown K5	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	6(7)
17	Spectacular+	4Wnd KO 7	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	6(6)
18	Spectacular+	5Wnd Knockdown K5	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	7(9)
19	Spectacular+	5Wnd KO7	break	up/setback	setback/fatigued	7(8)
20	Spectacular+	6Wnd Knockdown K5	player's call	player's call	player's call	7(7)
+1	Spectacular+	+1Wnd	player's call	player's call	player's call	8(10)

• Extended Push Table •

Result Points	Push (Shock Taken)
22	8(9)
23	8(8)
24	9(11)
25	9(10)
26	9(9)
27	10(12)
28	10(11)
29	10(10)

• *Push:* Use this column whenever a character wants to *push* their physical limitations: run faster, life more, and so forth. This column is often also used for special effects, such as magic spells or psionics.

Combat and Interaction Skills

The following chart lists the various combat and interaction skills, which skills are used to resist them and under what circumstances these skills can be used.

• The first column lists the skills (and their attributes) used to "attack."

• The second column lists the skills or attributes used to resist them.

• The third column lists which column on the Success Chart to use to determine results.

• The final column, "Rounds," lists what type of rounds these skills can be used in:

"C" stands for *combat rounds* (10 second rounds)

"I" stands for *interaction rounds* (rounds where no combat is happening but characters are trying to gain an advantage on the other, such as one character trying to *persuade* another character to do something, or one character trying to *intimidate* another; these rounds can be as short as 10 seconds or can represent minutes, hours or even days of game time)

"N" stands for *non-rounds*, which is any time the characters are not in rounds of any type. See "Time and Rounds" for more information.

Critical Failure

Optional Rule: Characters are rewarded for obtaining unusual successes. What about when they blow their actions

• Interactive and Attack Skills •

Attack	Defense	Column	Rounds
Attack Skills			
martial arts	*melee parry** or Agility	Damage	C
melee combat or Agility	*melee parry** or Agility	Damage	C
unarmed combat or Agility	*melee parry** or Agility	Damage	C
*fire combat*** or Dexterity	*dodge* or Agility	Damage	C
Interaction Skills			
intimidation or Confidence	*willpower* or Confidence	Intimidation	C, I
taunt or Charisma	*willpower* or Confidence	Taunt/Trick	C, I
trick or Intellect	*willpower* or Intellect	Taunt/Trick	C, I
maneuver† or Agility	*maneuver*† or Agility	Maneuver	C
con or Confidence	*willpower* or Intellect	Taunt/Trick	I, N
charm or Charisma	*willpower* or Confidence	General	I, N
persuasion or Charisma	*willpower* or Confidence	General	I, N
interrogation or Confidence	*willpower* or Confidence	General	I, N
hypnotism or Mind	*willpower* or Mind	General	I, N

* Characters use *melee parry* if they are defending while using a melee weapon; they can use *unarmed parry* if unarmed; they can also use some focuses of *martial arts.*

** All other ranged weapons skills work the same way. They include *energy weapons, gunnery, heavy energy weapons, heavy weapons, martial arts* (depending upon focus), *missile weapons* or *thrown weapons.*

† Depending on what the character is doing, riding, driving or piloting, the character may substitute other skills for *maneuver.* They can include *acrobatics, beast riding, flight, vehicle piloting* (for all vehicles; depends on the focus) or *mechanical maneuver* (for power battlesuits and similar things).

really badly? There should be some penalty, right? There is — if you want to use this optional rule.

If a character fails a skill attempt by more than his skill value, he has *critically failed* at his skill attempt. A critical failure can be interpreted by the gamemaster in any way he sees fit, but, in brief, something goes *seriously* wrong because the character failed so badly.

Example: *K'Rok, a flying lizard man in a high fantasy world has a* flight *skill of 11. He is being chased by a group of needlebeaks (blood-sucking birds) through a canyon. At one point, he tries to "thread the needle" and go through a very narrow break in the canyon.*

The gamemaster secretly determines that the flight *total K'Rok needs to get to succeed is 22 (he's going very fast and the area is very small). K'Rok's player generates a bonus number of -1. That gives K'Rok a* flight *total of 10. He fails by 12 points — more than his skill value of 11, which means a critical failure.*

Normally, if K'Rok had failed in such a maneuver, the gamemaster would have let him pull out in time, swerving away from the too-small hole. This would leave him to the mercy of the needlebeaks, but that's the price of failure.

But since he critically failed, that's not the case. The gamemaster rules K'Rok slammed into the wall and loses control of his flight trajectory (he falls). He'll take damage from the impact (his current speed value plus a bonus number, the gamemaster decides) and, unless he can pull out of the fall, he'll hit the ground and take more damage. Then the needlebeaks will start in on him.

• General Success •

These are the "story effects" for the different success levels:

Minimal: The action total was just barely enough. The character hardly succeeded at all, and only the most minimal effects apply. If "minimal effects" are not an option, then maybe the action took longer than normal to succeed.

Solid: The action was performed completely, but without "frills." It was a success.

Good: The results were better than necessary, in most cases, and there may be added benefits.

Superior: It is almost certain that there are additional benefits to performing an action this well. The character performed the action better, faster, or just more adeptly than expected.

Spectacular: The performance of the action was deft and expert. Observers would notice the ease or grace with which the action was performed (if applicable).

Spectacular+: Wow! Better than incredible — there should be added benefits and, if there aren't, it's because the gamemaster isn't very imaginative (hint, hint).

In most cases, success levels are used in skill descriptions (Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use") to describe a skill attempt's results. The more a character succeeds by, the more effective the skill use was.

For example, a character who is trying to use the *survival* skill to forage for food gets a *minimal* success — she finds "subsistence level" food; it's barely better than garbage. The next day she gets a *spectacular* result — not only does she find good, wholesome food, but she finds enough for two days instead of one.

Sometimes, skills actually have to be performed at *better* than a *minimal* success to have any effect at all. If so, this will be noted underneath the skill description (see Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use").

• Damage •

The Damage Column is used whenever a character might suffer an injury: when taking damage during combat or from traps or accidents. First though, you need to learn about attacks, since the result of an attack affects damage.

Attacks

To hit a character in combat, the attacking character will normally be using one of the "Attack Skills" listed on the chart "Interactive and Attack Skills."

Compare the character's attack skill total to the target character's *passive defensive* or *active defense* (see below). The attack skill depends on the type of attack. If the attack skill total is equal to or higher than the target's defense, the attack has hit. If it is lower, the attack misses.

Martial arts (most focuses), *melee combat* and *unarmed combat* can only be used if the attacking character is within two meters of the target character. *Dodge* is used for ranged attacks: ranged attacks can be used at longer ranges, up to the range of the weapon (see Chapter Seven, "Equipment").

Defense

The default difficulty is the target character's skill or Attribute; this is called a *passive defense.* Modifiers can reduce a character's *passive defense* considerably.

Example: *A character with a* fire combat *skill of 9 is shooting at a target character who has a* dodge *of 11. The difficulty to hit that character is 11.*

Example: *A character with a* fire combat *skill of 10 is shooting at a target character who has a dodge of 12. However, the gamemaster rules that the target character is moving very slowly because of a previous injury, giving a modifier of -3 to the DN. The difficulty to hit that character is 9 (12-3).*

The target character can also choose an *active defense,* which means the character is actively trying to get out of the way of the attack; the character gets to roll the dice and add a bonus number to their basic defensive skill.

The character gets a minimum bonus number of +3 when declaring an active defense. While other modifiers will come

into play, the actual bonus number from rolling the dice is always counted as at least +3.

Example: *A character with a* fire combat *skill of 9 is shooting at a target character who has a* dodge *of 11. The target character's player declares an* active defense, *and rolls two dice. He rolls a 15, which gives him a bonus number of 4. This makes the character's* dodge *this round a 15 (11+4).*

Example: *A character with a* fire combat *skill of 9 is shooting at a target character who has a* dodge *of 11. The target character's player declares an* active defense, *and rolls two dice. His die total is only a 6, which would normally be a bonus number of -5. However, the* active defense *yields a minimum bonus number of +3, which added to the* dodge *of 11 gives the character an* active defense *of 14. The shooting character needs a total of 14 to hit the target character.*

Example: *A character with a* fire combat *skill of 9 is shooting at a target character who has a* dodge *of 11. The character declares an* active defense, *rolls for his* dodge, *but only gets an 8, for a bonus number of -1. Since this is an* active defense, *the -1 becomes a +3. However, because the character is on a narrow ledge and cannot move around much, the gamemaster assigned a -5 modifier. The character only has an* active defense *of 9 (11+3-5): this is still a lot better than it would have been if the character suffered the original -1 for the poor die roll.*

Determining Damage

Characters who are attacking unarmed use their basic Strength as their damage value. Each weapon has either a set damage value ("static" damage) or damage is modified by the character's Strength. For examples of weapon damage values, see Chapter Seven, "Equipment."

Below are some sample "generic" weapons; specific weapon types will vary considerably:

Weapon	Damage Value
Pistol	16
Rifle	18
Knife	STR+3
Sword	STR+5

Example: *A character has a Strength of 8 and is attacking with a knife (STR+3). The basic damage, before adding in any modifiers or result points is 11 (8+3).*

Add the result points of the attack to the weapon's damage. Compare this damage total to the target's Toughness attribute (with armor, if any) and find the result points on the Damage Column.

Example: *A character is using a small pistol with a damage value of 14 and has a skill total of 16 to hit. The difficulty to hit the target character was 11, and the target character has a Toughness of 9.*

The attacking character got five result points (16-11). The attacking character adds those five result points to the pistol's damage value of 14, for a modified damage value of 19. Comparing this damage value (19) to the target's Toughness of 9 equals 10 result points. On the Damage Column, that means "2Wnd Knockdown K3."

Example: *A character is attacking with a knife (damage value STR+3). His Strength is 9, for a damage value of 12 (9+3). The character has a skill total of 12 to hit; the target character's* melee parry *is 9 and his Toughness is 9. The attacking character got 3 result points (12-9), which he adds to the damage value (STR+3+3), for a modified damage value of 15. Comparing this to the target's Toughness of 9 gives 6 result points on the Damage Column, or a result of "Knockdown K3."*

Armor

Some characters have *armor:* plate mail, kevlar vests, or whatever. Armor simply adds to a target's Toughness when resisting damage. Even heavy clothing will help sometimes — see Chapter Eight, "Equipment," for some examples of armor.

Example: *Brian's character, Derrick, has an Agility of 12, a Toughness of 9 and he is wearing a type of leather armor that adds +3 to his Toughness. He has an armor value of 12.*

When an ogre attacks him with a club, the ogre gets a skill total of 16 to hit. That's four result points over Derrick's Agility (Derrick doesn't have melee parry*). The ogre's Strength is 16, and his oversized club has a damage modifier of +5. The damage is 25 (16 + 4 + 5).*

Against Derrick's armor value of 12, that's 13 result points. On the Damage Column, that reads as "3Wnd Knockdown K3." If Derrick hadn't been wearing armor, the result would have been 16 result points, or a "4Wnd Knockdown K5" — ouch!

Damage Effects

All damage effects are applied *immediately.* The effects on the Damage Column are described below:

A Number: Every damage result ends in a number. This is the number of *shock points* the character takes from the damage of the attack. A character can take a number of shock points equal to his *resist shock* or Endurance before going unconscious.

Example: *A character with a 12* resist shock *(from a 10 Endurance and two adds in* resist shock*) goes unconscious as soon as he takes 12 shock points.*

The player should keep track of how much shock he has taken during a combat (there is even a box for it on the character sheet).

Characters heal shock — which is really just minor damage from exhaustion, minor scrapes and being "bumped around" and beat up — at a rate of one point per minute of inactivity (walking is okay; performing any complex actions or being involved in combat is not).

An unconscious character heals shock at a rate of one shock every ten seconds (instead of every minute). A character who falls unconscious from shock damage will wake up after *all* shock damage is healed

The skills *first aid* and *medicine* can be used to help heal shock damage quickly.

K, O, K/O or **KO:** Each letter is one half of a "KO" condition — a knockout.

A character who takes a K result from damage circles that letter on his character sheet. It takes 30 minutes of rest to heal a K.

If that same character takes an O before the K heals, he goes unconscious immediately. If a character suffers an O without having first taken a K, the O lasts for the rest of that round. If the character takes a K during the rest of the round, the

character goes unconscious. If the character does not suffer a K, the O "goes away" (it heals).

If a character has a K and takes another K, the second K is changed to two shock points of damage. The same thing goes for a second O — two O's make an O and two shock.

A character who has been KO'd goes unconscious for one minute. After the minute passes, the character wakes up, the O is gone (the K still lasts for the balance of the half-hour). Shock will still heal normally.

A "K" result means the character takes a K.

An "O" result means the character takes an O.

A "K/O" result means that if the character does not have a K, he suffers a K; if he has a K, he takes an O (and is now unconscious).

A "KO" means the character immediately suffers a knockout result.

First aid and *medicine* can remove K's, O's, and KOs quickly.

Knockdown: A *knockdown* is simply that — the character falls down (if possible). If it is not possible for the character to be knocked down, then he is "stunned" temporarily (but suffers the same penalties below).

A character who is knocked down or stunned has momentarily "lost his balance." All physical actions, even defensive or passive ones, are performed at -4 for the rest of that round and the next round. Essentially, for one round (during which the character gets up or "recovers") all skills and attributes that apply to physical actions suffer the four point penalty.

"1Wnd, 2Wnd, 3Wnd" ... etc.: "Wnd" stands for *wound*, and the number before this designation means how many wounds the character takes.

These wounds "stack" onto each other to form *wound levels:*

- 1 wound equals *lightly wounded*
- 2 wounds equals *moderately wounded*
- 3 wounds equals *heavily wounded*
- 4 wounds equals *incapacitated*
- 5 wounds equals *mortally wounded*
- 6 wounds means the character is *dead*.

"Wnds" add to each other and to old wounds. A character who takes "1Wnd" is *lightly wounded*. If, later on, the character takes another "1Wnd" result, he becomes *moderately wounded*. If he was hit again and took a "2Wnd" result, he would then jump from *moderately wounded* past *heavily wounded* to *incapacitated*. Another "2Wnd," "3Wnd," or higher result moves the character to *dead*.

Each wound level has its own effects, its own healing rate and difficulty number for healing. See the "Wound Level Chart" for these rules.

The modifiers are used until the character heals. The "healing rate" is how often a character gets to *try* to heal. After this time period has elapsed (from the time of the *most recent* wound), the character generates a bonus number and adds it to his Endurance (roll all tens again and Life Points may be spent on this total). If the character meets or exceeds the DN listed above, then he has healed to the next less-severe wound level and takes on those modifiers (or, if the character was *lightly wounded*, he becomes healthy). If the character fails, he has to wait a length of time equal to the healing rate to try again.

• Wound Level Chart •

Wound Level	Modifier(s)	Healing Rate	Healing Difficulty
Light	no modifier	One day	10
Moderate	-2 to physical skills	One day	12
Heavy	-4 to physical & -2 to all other skills	Three days	14
Incapacitated	-8 to all skills	Three days	16
*Mortal**	automatic KO*	One day	18
*Dead**	dead	dead	we mean it; you're dead

* See below

There are special rules for *mortally wounded* and *dead* characters.

• *Mortally wounded* characters are in trouble. They are expiring (bleeding to death, undergoing severe trauma, whatever). A *mortally wounded* character takes one shock point every round he is *mortally wounded* until he takes a number equal to his *resist shock* or Endurance (*mortally wounded* characters do not heal shock, either). When the shock equals that total, he *dies*. This shock total includes any damage he has taken already. A *mortally wounded* character needs to be *first aided* as soon as possible (See "First Aid" below).

• *Dead* characters are not necessarily food for the fishes ... yet. If someone can get to the character and perform a successful *first aid* on him before the end of the next round (10 seconds), the character becomes *mortally wounded*. Of course, from there on, he has to be on "life support" — someone has to make *first aid* rolls almost continuously to save his life (see "First Aid" below).

+1Wnd: For every result point over 20, the character takes one additional wound (i.e., if a character who suffers from 23 result points would suffer a "9Wnd Knockdown K5"). This is important for several reasons. First, characters can use Life Points and some cards to reduce damage that they take — so a character might actually take "7Wnds" and survive. Just tack these extra wounds onto the "6Wnd Knockdown K5" result.

Second, a character who takes seven wound levels cannot be "saved" by use of *first aid* (above). He's dead unless he can save himself with Life Points or cards. A character who takes nine or more wounds is a complete mess. This may mean nothing to the character, but the gamemaster can use this fact to determine how much of the character's clothing, supplies, and equipment survived the attack (hey, it's gruesome, but if you've played with some of the guys *I* know ...).

First Aid

First aid is used for "battlefield medicine" and is used to keep characters alive and functioning until they can get healed or heal by themselves. It does not involve anything more complicated (usually) than setting a broken bone or stitching a wound — though sometimes serious situations call for improvisation.

• Story Elements: Damage •

So a character has taken a wound or two — so what? What does that mean in descriptive terms?

Well, it depends on what was done to cause the wounds. The following chart supplies some general guidelines for describing what *might* have happened to the character's body when he was hurt:

Wound Level	Description
Light	Moderate bruise or minor sprain; laceration; muscle tear; minor dislocation of joint
Moderate	Severe abrasion or sprain; deep laceration; torn ligaments; major dislocation or minor break
Heavy	Broken bone; gaping wound; ripped cartilage and muscle; concussion
Incapacitated	Multiple fracture; laceration in vital area; heavy concussion
Mortal	Above options combined with multiple internal injuries
Dead	Broken neck; punctured lung; eviscerated

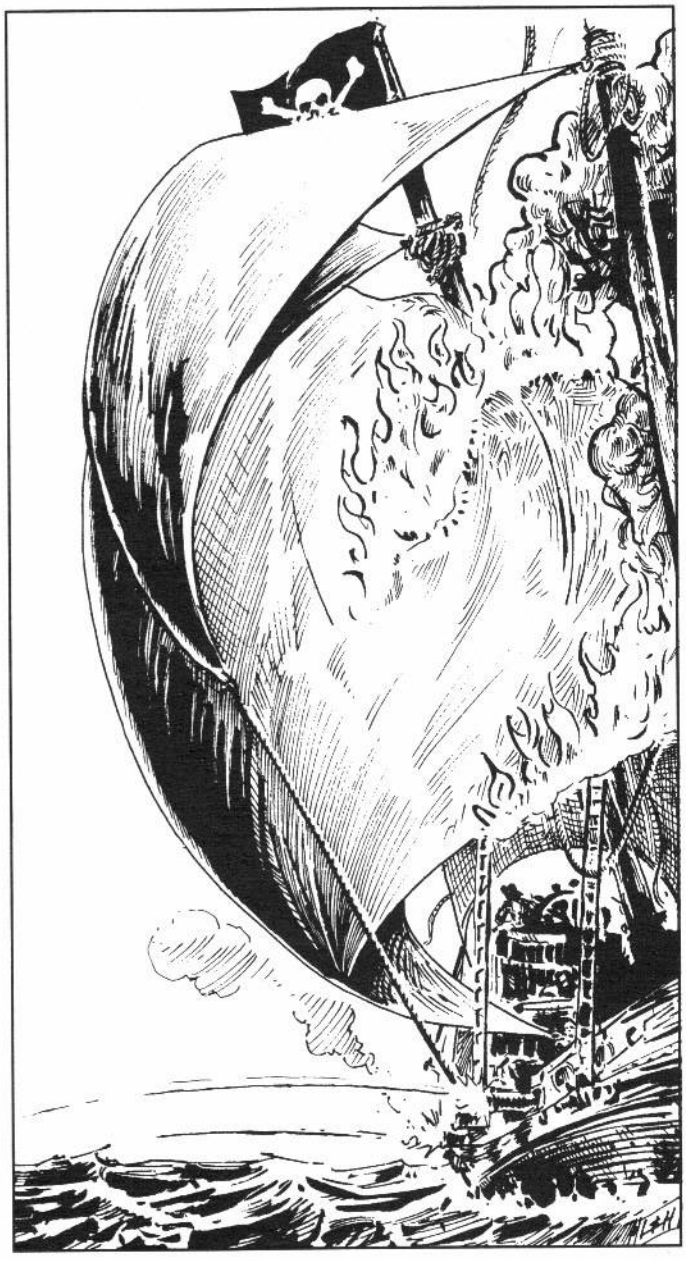
These are just a few examples. Really interested gamemasters can come up with charts, tables, or really detailed descriptions of damage for those gamers who "really want to know." The gamemaster may also want to assign different modifiers to more appropriately indicate the type of injury that was suffered.

When a character suffers a wound of some sort, *first aid* can be used to stabilize the wound and temporarily improve the condition. A successful *first aid* total (see the difficulty on the "First Aid Chart") allows a character to function as if she were one level *less* wounded, and it removes all shock and KO conditions. For example, a *mortally wounded* character would act as if *incapacitated;* a *lightly wounded* character would act as if she had not been wounded at all.

This condition, however, is temporary. It only lasts until the character suffers another wound in combat. The character then suffers the effect of the original wound *plus* whatever additional damage has been done. Additional shock, KO's, and knockdowns do not cause this reaction. For example, a character who is *incapacitated* might be *first aided* so that he functions as if *heavily wounded*. Then, when he is hit in combat for another wound, he is now *mortally wounded*.

Mortally Wounded: *First aid* can be used on *mortally wounded* characters to keep them from dying. If the *first aid* roll is successful (see the difficulties below), the character can act as if *incapacitated* and no longer suffers one shock point per round. *Mortally wounded* characters may also be *stabilized* (see below).

Dead: *Dead* characters can be saved if another character successfully performs *first aid* in the round during or after the character "dies" (the character is saved through CPR or similarly drastic methods). If the *first aid* attempt is successful, the character becomes *mortally wounded.* The character must have *first aid* performed on them contantly to remove shock (at the difficulty of 8 to remove shock, Ks and Os) or else they must be *stabilized*.



Jaime Lombardo & Ron Hill

Stabilized: Characters may attempt to *stabalize* a *mortally wounded* character. Normally this will only be attempted on characters who have been moved from *dead* to *mortally wounded,* but it can also be attempted on a character who is *mortally wounded* and the attempt to heal them to *incapacitated* fails. If the character performing *first aid* can make a *first aid* attempt at the "dead" DN, the character is *stabilized:* he is still *mortally wounded,* but no longer suffers shock every round and can make a healing roll in one day. *Stabalization* can be attempted once per minute on a character who is *mortally wounded.*

First aid attempts are not "stackable." A character gets one chance to help, with the exception of removing shock and KOs or attempts to *stabilize* a character (these options can be used

repeatedly). However, if a character is wounded again, she can be *first aided* to improve the new condition. The "First Aid Chart" has all the difficulty numbers for the different conditions.

• First Aid Chart •

Condition	DN
Shock, KO	8
Lightly wounded	9
Moderately wounded	11
Heavily wounded	12
Incapacitated	14
Mortally wounded	18
Dead	22

Medicine

Characters may substitute their *medicine* skill for *first aid*, otherwise using the first aid rules as explained above.

Medicine may also be used to help a character heal. Every time a character is allowed a healing roll, another character with *medicine* is allowed to try to help. Use the following chart to determine the difficulty to help wounded characters.

If the character succeeds at the *medicine* total, then read the result points on the Push Column (ignore the "Shock Taken"). That Push Result is added to the Endurance total of the injured character when he tries to heal.

Example: *Neil, a character, has been* heavily wounded *and has an Endurance of 9. Drew, another character, has* medicine *at 12. When Neil attempts to heal, Drew makes a* medicine *roll to see if he can help.*

Drew rolls a 15 to get a bonus number of 4, for a medicine *total of 16 (12+4). The difficulty to help a* heavily wounded *character heal is 13. That's a success, with three result points. Drew's player reads the results on the Push Column, which is a +2.*

When Neil attempts to heal, his difficulty is 14 (for heavily wounded*). He rolls a 14, for a bonus number of 3. Adding his Endurance and the bonus gives him only a 12 (9+3), but by then adding the* medicine *modifier gives him a 14 (12+2) — a success! Neil now heals from* heavily wounded *to* moderately wounded.

• Medicine Chart •

Wound Level	DN
Lightly wounded	10
Moderately wounded	12
Heavily wounded	13
Incapacitated	15
Mortally wounded	17

• Combat Options •

There are a number of options that gamemasters may wish to incorporate into their combat scenes: special types of attacks, cover and concealment, and surprise.

Cumulative Modifiers

Unless otherwise noted, all modifiers are *cumulative*. There are some exceptions, but most gamemasters will be able to use common sense to exclude unusual combinations.

Range

Ranged weapons have several ranges: *point-blank, short, medium, long* and *extreme*. As noted in Chapter Seven, "Equipment," different weapons will have different to hit modifiers based on the range (normally noted as a plus to the DN). Some weapons may also have to modify damage based on range (for example, a weapon that does less damage at longer ranges).

Maximum Damage (MAX)

Strength powered weapons (like axes and swords) have a maximum damage, or MAX. The MAX is the maximum damage for the weapon prior to adding in a bonus number of modifiers.

Example: *A giant with a Strength of 15 is using an axe that is STR+5 with a MAX of 18. His damage would normally be 20 (15+5), but that is above the MAX of 18. When the giant uses the axe, the damage is limited to the MAX of 18.*

General Combat Modifiers

These modifiers are used during combat rounds to change the results of a character's *attacking skill value, defending skill value,* or the *damage value* the character would normally use.

The "Attacking" modifier is added to the character's appropriate attack skill (such as *fire combat, unarmed combat*, or *missile weapons*) when appropriate.

The "Defending" modifier is added in to the *attacking character's* defensive skill (*dodge, unarmed parry*, etc.) during either the immediate performance of that skill or during the next round in which the character is attacked (some attacking skill modifers affect how well a character can defend himself).

The "Damage" modifier is added to the *result points* of the attack. The result points are then added to the damage value of the weapon used.

MasterBook makes a couple of assumptions about combat. First, single shot weapons (like pistols) will only be used for one shot per round unless the character declares *single fire as multi.*

Weapons that are normally fired in bursts (assault weapons and such) are considered to have been fired in burst mode unless the character declares otherwise.

Burst fire as single can only be performed with a weapon that is capable of burst fire (like an assault rifle) and that can be switched to single fire. The firer fires only one shot instead of a burst; it is primarily used to conserve ammunition.

• Ranged Weapons •

This table is used for *fire combat, energy weapons, gunnery* and the similar *heavy weapons* skills. Other skills may be used with this table as appropriate.

Fire Options	Attacking Modifier	Defensive Modifier	Damage Modifier
Burst Fire as Single	-1	0	-2
Full Auto (if possible)	+3	-1	+1
Single Fire as Multi (if possible)	+2	0	+1
Aim (for one round)	+2 (next round)	-2 (same round)	+1
"Trick" Shot	-4*	varies	+2*
Sweep (Ranged) (if possible)	+2	0	-5
Hit Location	special	special	special

• Ranged Weapons (Muscle-Powered) •

This table is used primarily for *thrown weapons* and *missile weapons*. Weapons that are muscle powered but emulate fire weapons (like a "belt-fed crossbow") should use the standard ranged weapons table.

Missile Options	Attacking Modifier	Defensive Modifier	Damage Modifier
Aim (for one phase)	+2 (next round)	-2 (same round)	+1
"Trick" Shot	-4*	varies	+2*
Hit Location	special	special	special

• Hand-to-Hand Attacks •

This table is used for *unarmed combat, melee combat,* and *martial arts* primarily.

Attack Options	Attacking Modifier	Defensive Modifier	Damage Modifier
Short Range	-3	-2	-1
Sweep (Hand-to-Hand)	+3	-1	-5
Grab	-1	-4	-3
"Knockdown"	-3	0	first wnd becomes knockdown
All-out	+4	-6	+1

• Hit Locations •

Hit location is a special option that allows a character to shoot a specific point on his target's body. The table is used to determine the modifiers for hitting a target of human proportions in different areas of his body.

Note that aiming at an arm or leg actually causes less damage — this is because the character took extra care to shoot an area that is "less vital."

Hit Location	Attacking Modifier	Effects
Head	-8	+12 to damage
Chest	-2	+3 to damage
Abdomen	-4	+6 to damage
Left or Right Arm	-3	-2 to damage
Left or Right Leg	-2	-1 to damage

Full Auto is only possible with weapons that can fire at fully automatic settings. Since the character is taking quite a bit of time to "hold down the trigger" and pump ammo into the air, the extra "to hit" and "damage" bonuses are somewhat compensated for by the modifier to the character's defensive value during the round he is performing a full auto attack.

Single Fire as Multi is when a character fires a weapon several times in a round at the same target. The most common example is when someone fires a pistol several times in a row at the same target: the number of shots taken doesn't matter — two shots net the same benefit as five or six shots. This option can only be used when a weapon automatically reloads itself after firing a single shot or when it is fairly easy to ready it for firing again (such as a .45 automatic, which puts a new cartridge in the slide as soon as the first one clears the barrel). It increases the character's chance to hit a target, as well as the damage. It does not count as a multi-action as long as the shot is taken at the same target. One die roll, one damage value.

Aim can be used by characters who take a full round to do *nothing* but track a target with their weapon. They must keep their target "in sight" for this one round; they fire next round. As a reward, they gain bonuses to damage and accuracy, though they are vulnerable to being hit during the round they aim; if they are hit for any damage, they lose their aiming bonus.

"Trick" Shots are used when a character wants to perform something other than a "standard" shot for damage. For example, shooting a gun out of a target's hand might be a trick shot, or shooting in between the layers of a target's armor.

Trick shots have different bonuses depending on what the object of the attack is. Shooting at a target where he is unarmored would gain the additional benefit of applying damage to the target's Toughness only, ignoring the armor. Shooting the gun out of a target's hand means he has to retrieve his weapon.

These modifiers are highly variable depending upon the situation and should be assigned by the gamemaster on a case-by-case basis, but the ones listed above are a starting point.

Sweep (Ranged) are used when a character wants to "spray an area" with ammo. This can only be done by characters with weapons that go *full auto, burst* or *single fire as multi*. They gain a positive modifier to hit (because of the sheer volume of shots), but this "non-targeted" attack results in a lower damage value.

Short range attacks are made at targets who are between two and four meters away at the time the attack is initiated (below two meters is hand-to-hand — HTH — range, while further than four meters is too far to make a HTH attack without moving first). They are used when a character cannot move quite far enough using his movement options (see "Movement") but would like to assault the target. The character flails out at the target and leaves himself open to attack.

Sweep (Hand-to-Hand) attacks are used when the character wants to make certain he hits the target — regardless of whether damage is caused. Usually, foot sweeps or roundhouses are used. The character will do less damage and will leave himself open to attack.

Grab attacks are used to physically grasp a target. Few melee weapons allow this option, so it is generally only used in *unarmed combat* or *martial arts* attacks. The character does less damage with the grab, but he has hold of the target.

"Knockdown" attacks are special moves designed to knock down a target. By lessening the chance to hit, the character stands a better chance of knocking the target off his feet. If a "Wnd" result comes up on the Damage column, then it is treated as a *knockdown*. This goes for only the *first* wound caused; other wounds are figured normally.

All-out is used by berserkers. It is attacking with no thought to the consequences. When an all-out attack is declared and initiated, the target has a better chance of being hit, but the attacker stands a good chance of getting hit because he is hardly defending himself. In addition, any attacker performing the all-out cannot *actively defend at all!*

• Cover and Concealment •

Concealment is:	Defensive Modifier
One Quarter	+3
One Half	+5
Three Quarter	+8
Complete	+12
Complete Plus	+12+?
Cover is:	**Toughness Modifier**
Negligible	0
Weak	+2
Moderate	+4
Strong	+6
Very Strong	+8
"Impenetrable"	+12

Cover/Concealment

When a target hides behind something, he gains a bonus to his defense and perhaps his armor value.

Concealment covers *how much* of a target is hidden. *Cover* describes how well protected that target is.

Concealment

One quarter, one half, three quarter and *complete cover* relate to how much of the target's body is concealed by the cover. A target who is standing behind a short fence might have one quarter cover, while another might be poking his head out of a foxhole for three quarter cover. Complete cover would mean you couldn't see your target at all.

Complete plus means that not only is the target completely covered, but there is a lot of extra area. So, if you tried to shoot a target through a wall that was, say, five meters wide, it would provide *more* than complete cover — since you wouldn't know where exactly to shoot. Generally, for every square meter of "extra" cover, add +2 to the target's defensive value.

Cover

Negligible means that the cover provides no actual "protection" — it just screens the target from the attacker visually. A bush, thick smoke or a paper wall would provide this type of cover.

Weak cover would be something most attacks would go through with limited resistance. A thick bush, picket fence or tree limb might provide such cover.

Moderate would be fairly tough cover, but still fairly penetrable. A human body, or a thin cover (like an interior door).

Strong cover would be tough. A door of decent construction or an overturned table.

Very strong would be an improvement on the above. A car body, sandbags, or even a moderately well-made wall.

"Impenetrable" cover could give +12 protection or more. Normally, you wouldn't even try to go through this cover. A tough wall.

Using Cover and Concealment

When applicable, the gamemaster assigns the modifier for *concealment* first — since you have to see if you hit before you do damage.

If the attack roll is equal to or higher than the character's *dodge* and *concealment* modifier combined, the character has been hit: roll damage normally.

If the attack roll is lower than the target character's *dodge,*

Paul Daly

the attack has missed completely.

If the attack roll is equal to or higher than the character's *dodge* but lower than the character's combined *dodge* and *concealment,* that means the attacker has hit the cover the character is hiding behind.

Example: *A target with a* dodge *of 10 is hiding behind* three quarter *cover (+8; he's poking his head and shoulders over a fence). The character has a Toughness (with armor) of 12 and the gamemaster rules the fence provides a Toughness bonus of +5. The character has an effective defensive value of 18 and a "covered" Toughness of 17.*

If the attacker gets a fire combat *total of 18 or higher, then the target is hit with no bonus from the cover of the fence. If the attacker gets a* fire combat *total of 10 to 17, that means the attacker has hit the character, but some of the cover helps protect the character. If the attacker gets a* fire combat *total of nine or less, the attack has simply missed.*

In the case of the clear hit (total of 18 or more), the target can only resist damage with his basic Toughness of 12. For the shot where the character is partially protected by the cover, the character can add the cover's Toughness Modifier to his Toughness to resist damage: his effective armor this round is 17 (12+5).

When attacking a target with *complete* or better cover, this is not an option. The only way it would work is if the attacking character were using an indirect fire weapon (like a grenade or a mortar). In that case, it would work in essentially the same way.

A character may target a hit location, such as an exposed head or arm, and forgo these modifiers.

Surprise Modifiers

When characters surprise other characters, they gain bonuses to their attacks. The gamemaster should judge for him or herself when surprise is appropriate, but if he wants to use a game mechanic, use the rules below.

The gamemaster should roll *for* each character (since having the players roll will alert them that "something" is up). Roll each character's *perception* or Intellect, applying modifiers as deemed appropriate. Normally the DN will be the attacker's *stealth* or Agility roll. If the *perception* is equal to or greater than the DN, then the characters have detected the attackers and will not be surprised. If the roll is lower, the characters will be surprised.

If the player characters have reason to suspect an attack (i.e., they are searching a house where they know someone is hiding), the worst possible result is a *partial surprise.*

If the player characters have no reason to suspect an attack, they suffer *complete surprise* or *partial surprise.* If they miss the DN by one to four points, they are *partially surprised.* If they miss the DN by five or more points, the characters suffer *complete surprise.*

Blindside is a condition that occurs when one character attacks from behind another. The target might be aware of the attack, but he is at a significant disadvantage because he cannot see it coming. Normally, this situation only occurs as part of a surprise or when one character cannot turn and face another (or when mutiple opponents attack from multiple sides). If two characters are in combat, a character must get a Setback/Fatigued result on a *maneuver* to get behind his opponent and achieve a *blindside* effect (see "Maneuvers," below). Blindside is cumulative with all other modifiers.

Partial suprise occurs when, in the gamemaster's judgement, a character is suitably startled or has come upon another character with little or no warning. Jumping out from behind a bush to attack a target that is looking for trouble would probably constitute partial surprise.

Complete surprise is a condition that comes when the target has *no knowledge* that the attack is coming and is not looking for an attack. The target's defensive value *cannot* be modified by a bonus number (i.e., no *active defense*), cards, or Life Points.

Note: The damage value of the attack is actually *decreased* after the target is hit. This is because the +5 "to hit" bonus does not carry over entirely to the damage of the attack. There is still a "net gain" of +3 with the attack.

• Surprise Modifiers •

Suprise Levels	Attacking Modifier	Damage Modifier
Blindside*	+2	0
Partial Surprise	+2	0
Complete Surprise	+5	-2

*The modifiers for a *blindside* attack are cumulative with either *partial surprise* or *complete surprise* modifiers, but neither *partial surprise* nor *complete surprise* are cumulative with each other.

• Damage Options •

There are four options that you can consider when interpreting damage results.

Damage Cap

The first is the *damage cap*. This rule is strongly recommended for all game settings except those that are totally fanciful (like most superhero settings or some "pulp fiction" worlds).

When using the damage cap rule, the *maximum* number of result points any attack can achieve is equal to the damage value of the weapon. This keeps damage values within realistic limits and keeps a character with a lot of Life Points from taking out a giant mechanized robot with a single shot from a .45, for example.

> ***Example:*** *A character has a Strength of 10 and a weapon with a damage value of +3 (for a total damage value of 13). When the character attacks a target, his damage cap is 13 result points — if he got 14 or more result points, the situation would be treated as if he got 13 result points.*

> ***Example:*** *A character has a weapon with a damage value of 16. The maximum number of result points the character can get on any attack is equal to 16.*

If you are using the *damage cap* optional rule, *nothing* — no modifiers, no cards — can increase the number of result points you can obtain on any attack.

Non-Lethal Attack

The second optional rule is called the *non-lethal attack*. When, in the gamemaster's judgement, a character makes a "non-lethal" attack, the first "Wnd" that comes up on the Damage Column counts as three shock points instead of a wound level. So, if a character does "3Wnd Knockdown K3" to a target with a non-lethal attack, he really does "2Wnd Knockdown K6."

Non-lethal attacks would include those made with bare fists or "soft" objects — generally those that break on contact, like bottles. While characters can still die from non-lethal attacks, it will make combat a little less lethal.

Note: Certain *martial arts* focuses should be considered *lethal* attacks even if they are used unarmed. Indeed, if you want to get interesting, a martial artist might have several different types of attacks to choose from — some lethal and some non-lethal.

Knockout Attacks

Knockout attacks should only be used when the gamemaster thinks it is possible. This can only be done when the attacking character is using a non-lethal attack (or one that can be made non-lethal — such as by hitting an enemy with the hilt of a dagger or the side of a sword instead of with the edge).

The character attacks normally, but with a modifier of +1 to +5 to the DN (depending on how hard the gamemaster thinks it is to turn the attack into a non-lethal one). When the damage effects are interpreted, though, they are changed.

Use both the Damage Column to find the damage, but also use the General Success Column for the attack total (*not* the damage total). For every success level of the attack on the General Success Column, change one "Wnd" to three shock points. A character who gets 13 result points on an attack (a *spectacular* success, or five success levels) can turn a result of "6Wnd Knockdown K5" into "1Wnd Knockdown K20." The target will almost definitely go out.

This type of attack is seldom allowed with ranged weapons unless they have been specially designed for this task (blunt arrows or plastic bullets, for example).

Bleeding

The fourth and final optional rule for interpreting damage is the *bleeding* option. A gamemaster can choose to change any number of wound levels ("Wnd" on the chart) to *bleeding* results.

The gamemaster simply states that the character, instead of taking "5Wnd" (for example) takes "4Wnd and one bleeder," or "3Wnd and two bleeders," or whatever.

A *bleeder* means that the character is taking one shock point at the beginning of every round (every ten seconds) thereafter. If the character passes out from shock damage, restart the shock total at zero and he continues bleeding. A character who is unconscious and bleeds up to his *resist shock* or Endurance takes another wound level.

> ***Example:*** *Joe is in combat with a knife-fighter. The knife-fighter gets a really nasty result on an attack, giving Joe a damage result of "4Wnd Knockdown K5." The gamemaster decides that, since the knife-fighter is using a sharp weapon, he'll change one of those wound levels to a bleeder. So Joe takes three wounds (he's* heavily wounded*), a knockdown, a K, five shock, and a bleeder. Joe is bleeding one shock a round.*

> *At the beginning of the next round, Joe bleeds for one shock. Joe has a* resist shock *value of 8 and he's taken six shock — five from the previous attack, one from the bleeder. During this round, the knife-fighter gets an O against Joe, so he goes unconscious (since he already suffered a K). Joe will now be unconscious for one minute because he was KO'd.*

> *The next two rounds he bleeds two more shock, for a total of 8, so Joe now slips to incapacitated. Joe will be unconscious for four more rounds so he will suffer four more shock from bleeding. When Joe wakes up, he is still incapacitated, but all shock are erased. However, he's still suffering from the bleeder and will take one shock per round until it is healed.*

This rule is meant to be arbitrary. The gamemaster can use it to save a character from death when dramatically appropriate. As a general guideline, however, you can use this table to check how often characters take bleeding damage:

• Bleeding Table •

Type of Attack	1D10 Roll
Knife, spear or similar	6 or less
Bullet or fast projectile	5 or less
Fist or club	3 or less

Karl Waller

If the gamemaster wants to assign bleeders randomly, just roll a ten-sider whenever a character takes a wound. If the die result equal to or less than the number found on the chart, the character takes a bleeder instead of a wound.

However, no character should get away from multiple-wound damage without taking a wound. The first "Wnd" of any attack should *always* be treated as a wound. So, if a character takes "2Wnd," he might take a bleeder and a wound, but not two bleeders.

Finally, remember this is an *optional* rule. Use it as you see fit, or don't use it at all. You may only roll for bleeders occasionally, only for player characters, or not at all. You can assign bleeders when it is appropriate.

The difficulty for *first aiding* a bleeder (stopping all bleeding) is equal to 8 plus two points for every bleeder past the first. So, a character who is bleeding three shock a round would have a DN to fix of 8+2+2 = 12. For the ease of game play, bleeders do not "re-open," though characters should have to wear bandages and "be careful" when moving for a little while — purely a roleplaying choice.

• Interaction •

MasterBook features a number of *interaction* options. Instead of trying to cause damage to other characters through combat, characters can use a number of *interaction skills* to accomplish other objectives: frighten away attackers, force them to surrender, or force them to divulge secret information.

For a complete list of *interaction skills,* see the interaction skills list on the "Interaction and Attack Skills" table, which also lists which result column to use, as well as when a specific skill can be used (*combat rounds, interaction rounds* or *non-rounds* time: see "Time and Rounds").

Interaction skills work more simply than combat. Simply roll the attacking character's skill or Attribute (*intimidation, trick,* etc., as listed on the "Interactive and Attack Skills" chart).

The resisting character can use either a *passive defense* (use their basic defense skill or Attribute, as listed on the "Interactive and Attack Skills" chart) or an *active defense* (use the skill or Attribute, but generate a bonus number, getting the minimum +3 bonus number for an active defense).

Compare the attacker's skill total to the defender's passive defense or active defense total. If the attacker's total is equal to or higher than the defender's total, then he got at least a minimal success; if it is lower, he failed. If the interaction was successful, read the result points on the appropriate success column (General Success, Intimidation, Taunt/Trick or Maneuver) and use the rules in the appropriate sections to determine what happens.

"Interactive Cap"

If you are using the "Damage Cap" rules, then you might consider imposing a similar cap on interaction. The result point maximum is equal to the character's skill level. Many

gamemasters will choose not to use the "interactive cap" optional rules.

Example: *Thet has a* persuasion *skill of 10. She confronts a gangster with a* willpower *of 10. She wants to* persuade *him to let her "sneak past" him and escape from his bosses. The gamemaster knows the gangster has a* willpower *of 10, but also decides that the gangster is very opposed to the idea (the gamemaster selects a +12 modifier to the DN) because he knows he'll be killed if he lets her go. That's a total difficulty of 22.*

That means Thet would need to generate a skill total of at least 22 to have even a minimal *success, but that would be 12 result points, which is above the Interactive Cap (Thet's* persuasion *skill is only a 10).*

However, if she offers him an "inducement" — say, a pearl the size of her rather large eyes — and also states that she's planning on making certain the crime boss "isn't around to punish anyone" — then that might provide a bonus of, oh, +7. The gamemaster should add the +7 to Thet's attempt, so she needs only to get a bonus number of +5 to get a minimal *success. While she will still have a tough time convincing the gangster to let her go, at least now she stands a chance.*

Intimidation

The *intimidation* skill (or Confidence Attribute) is used whenever one character wants to intimidate, frighten or bully another character. During combat, it is often used to make opponents hesitate. Characters resist *intimidation* with their *willpower* or Confidence. Results are found on the Intimidation Column.

Gamemasters can choose to apply the following modifiers:

• Intimidation Modifiers •

Condition	Modifier to Attack
Target is in a weakened position	+3
Target is helpless	+5
Target has already been successfully intimidated	+1
Target is in an equal position	0
Target is in superior position	-3
Target is in control	-6
Target is "among friends"	-2

The following effects are possible:

Stymied: A character who is *stymied* loses his first reroll (one die) during his next action phase. If he rolls the dice and gets a ten, he cannot re-roll. Likewise, if the character was "Up" or spent a Life Point, he would only get to re-roll one of the two dice. This condition lasts only for the character's next action (that round or the next) and then goes away after, even if it has not come into play during that action phase.

Untrained: During the next action, the character generates all skill totals as if *untrained* in the skill or skills he is using. This means the character cannot use *any* skill adds (he only uses the base Attribute) and he cannot roll tens again unless the action performed is a straight Attribute roll (and not an *untrained* roll used for a skill). This also means that the character may not be able to use certain skills (those that cannot be used *untrained*) or use them only at a penalty.

Setback: Something *bad* happens to the character. The most common occurance means the character cannot act during his next phase — he is "frozen." But any sort of "bad thing" could happen if the gamemaster is creative. See Chapter Five, "The Card Deck," for more descriptions of *setback* conditions.

Break: The character affected tries to abort the conflict primarily by running away or, if that is not appropriate, by surrendering *if* his position does not significantly improve after his next action phase. If the character affected is able to injure his opponent, or achieve a significant interaction success, or if "reinforcements arrive," the *break* goes away — otherwise the affected character flees or surrenders.

Player's Call: Whenever a character attempts an interaction, he must state exactly what he is trying to achieve. When a *player's call* comes up, that goal is achieved as long as it is possible and not completely inappropriate. For example, one character might *intimidate* another by pointing his gun at the character and yelling "Freeze or die, scumbag!" and state that his *player's call* is for the target to faint. That's fairly reasonable. But to say "I want to scare him to death" is a little farfetched.

• Story Elements: Intimidation •

The effects of a successful *intimidation* can vary greatly. Generally, one character is trying to scare or bully another into doing something or not doing something.

But how to determine success. Yes, a *stymied* result inconveniences the character, but what does it mean the character will do? How will the character respond? Do you have to get a *player's call* to get a character to react the way you want?

No. The *player's call* is the "certain effect" for a high result. An *intimidation* can be successful without it.

For example, a character might hold a gun on another and try to *intimidate* him into holding still. If the target character were, say, your average man-on-the-street, that goal would probably be achieved even if the *intimidation* attempt failed — but, then again, it might not.

Use the break points — the success levels — to determine your general success. A *minimal* success means the target probably won't do much different because of the *intimidation* — though he is *stymied*. A *solid* success would influence the target if the attacker had a significant advantage, or if target were timid. A *good* success means fear has introduced itself into the equation, and the target will go along as long as he doesn't have other acceptable alternatives (like fighting back). On a *superior* success, only equal footing will allow the target to recover easily, and anything higher probably means the target will at least "wait and see."

None of these guidelines are absolute. Getting a *superior* success with an *intimidation* against a particular street punk when you tell him to leave you alone could get him to back off (and be *setback*, possibly), or it might cause him to attack out of fear.

Taunt/Trick

This column is used when one character successfully *taunts* or *tricks* another in conflict.

Characters use their *taunt* skill or Charisma Attribute to taunt and their *trick* skill or Intellect Attribute to trick. Characters use their *willpower* skill or Confidence Attribute to resist taunts and their *willpower* skill or Intellect Attribute to resist tricks.

• Taunt/Trick Modifiers •

Condition	Modifier to Attack
Taunt/trick is especially appropriate	+1 to +3
Taunt/trick involves more than an element of truth	+1 to +3
Taunt/trick has been tried before	-3

The result points are read on the Taunt/Trick Column, with the following results:

Stymied: See under the description of "Intimidation," above.

Untrained: See under the description of "Intimidation," above.

Setback: See under the description of "Intimidation," above.

Up/Setback: The character who performed the *taunt* or *trick* did it so well that he is "Up" during his next action. The character automatically gets to roll both dice again as if he had rolled tens on both of them. The character can spend Life Points or cards to affect this roll and, if the character rolls tens again, he continues rolling.

The target of the attack is not so fortunate. He experiences a *setback*. See under the description of "Intimidation," above.

Player's Call: See under the description of "Intimidation," above.

• Story Elements: Taunts and Tricks •

These two actions are meant to distract, unsettle, upset, or deceive an opponent. The character performing the action should set a reasonable goal — such as "I want to get him so mad he completely loses control and can't defend himself" for a *taunt*, or "I want him to *believe* my partner just came in behind him" — and roleplay it out.

The gamemaster then determines how much the character believes, based on the success level. To translate this to the General Success Column (to get a general idea of how the target reacts), on a *minimal* success the target is only vaguely unsettled. A *solid* success has the target second-guessing himself, while a *good* success is probably good enough for most average *tricks* or *taunts* — the character "believes" for a second or is upset. A *superior* success starts to edge toward having the target react as desired, while a *spectacular* is going to be almost exactly what the attacking character wants to happen.

Of course, you can modify these results by how ingenious (or how inappropriate) the *trick* or *taunt* is.

Maneuver

This column is used when one character tries to move, feint, or otherwise try to unbalance another character with physical motion.

For example, this column covers when one characters makes a "fake" move to the left, hoping to get his opponent to jump left, and the character will really cut to the right. *Maneuver* also covers characters trying to maneuver around other individuals and so forth. *Maneuver* can normally only be used during combat rounds.

Note that *any* maneuver skill can be used to defend against *any* maneuver attack skill, as long as the circumstances are correct.

Maneuver Attack/Defense Skills: *Acrobatics, beast riding, flight, maneuver, martial arts* (depends on focus), *mechanical maneuver, vehicle piloting*

For example, if one character uses *acrobatics* to perform a maneuver attack on a target, the target can use *acrobatics, maneuver*, or whatever other skill he has listed above that is appropriate (obviously, a character piloting a vehicle would have to use *vehicle piloting*, while a character who is flying would have to use the *flight* skill).

Maneuver Attacks and Defenses

These are handled in the same way as interactive attacks. The character performing the attack declares what he wants to do. The target can *actively* or *passively defend*.

Maneuver Modifiers

There are no general maneuver modifiers — only specific ones that the gamemaster will have to assign on a case-by-case basis. The only exception is for surprise. The general combat modifiers for *partial surprise* and *complete surprise* (listed above) can be used for maneuvers as well. *Blindside* has no effect on a maneuver's outcome, although, as stated under "Surprise," characters have to achieve a *setback/fatigued* result to get a *blindside* on a character they had been face-to-face with previously.

• Story Elements: Maneuver •

When a character *maneuvers* on another, he is usually trying to throw his target off balance. But sometimes the Maneuver Column needs to be used differently.

Say there is a hallway littered with eye-beam traps. The character might need to make a *maneuver* to get by them. The *maneuver* would have a difficulty number, but the result points would indicate how well the character succeeded.

On a *minimal* success, the target barely *maneuvers* and should gain no extra benefits (for example, if the goal were to *maneuver* behind a target in combat, the character does so, but doesn't get a *blindside* bonus for attacking).

A *solid* success means the character gets the minimum results of the *maneuver* — but the success was pretty good. A *good* success probably lets the character do what he wanted to do, the way he wanted to do it. The target will probably react as expected.

From there on, the success of a *maneuver* can be interpreted as in other examples — extra bonuses or "smooth moves" should be awarded.

Results

The following results are possible:

Fatigued: The target character gets "winded" and takes two shock points of damage as the result of the *maneuver*.

Stymied: See under the description of "Intimidation" above.

Stymied/Fatigued: The target character takes both results at once.

Setback/Fatigued: The target character takes both results at once.

Player's Call: The target reacts along the lines of the character's statement of intent (within reason). If the goal of the *maneuver* was to cause the target to fall down, the target falls down. The gamemaster has the final ruling on what "player's calls" are appropriate and which aren't — though he should state this when the call is made.

Con

Con is basically a long-term version of *trick*. Characters use their *con* skill or Confidence Attribute to *con* and resist with their *willpower* or Intellect. Results are read on the Trick/Taunt Column.

The major difference is that *con* cannot be used in combat rounds — a *con* takes several rounds, minutes or hours to stage, often involving a series of lies that build upon each other to get the desired effect. Use the same modifiers as for *trick*.

Charm

Charm is the skill used when a character tries to "make friends" with another — to get another character to trust the *charming* character. Characters use their *charm* skill or Charisma Attribute to *charm* and their *willpower* skill or Confidence Attribute to resist. Results are read on the General Success Column.

Charm is normally a long process and should not be performed during conflict rounds — usually. Instead, the player should have to roleplay the situation and "win over" the target when appropriate — skill rolls will come when there is cause.

However, a target who is successfully *charmed* should then consider the character at least a friendly acquaintance, if not more. The target will respond much more easily to suggestions and, when necessary, *persuasion* attempts. A *charmed* target will usually act independently on the character's behalf until the target has reason not to.

In running *charm* attempts, gamemasters should consider the target character's attitude.

Agreeable: The target wants to act as the character desires, but is holding out for that little "nudge" of *persuasion* or *charm*.

Friendly: The target is inclined to do what the character wants, but needs to be convinced.

Neutral: The target would be just as happy not to be cooperative, but will come around with prodding.

Hostile: The target is resistant to acting as desired, and probably has a considerable "what's in it for me" attitude.

Enemy: Not only does the target not want to do what the character desires, but he really doesn't like the character and/or the proposition at all.

Gamemasters should assign the following modifiers.

• Charm Modifiers •

Condition	Modifier to DN
Target is agreeable	-1 to -3 (or more)
Target is friendly	0
Target is neutral	+1 to +5
Target is hostile	+5 to +10
Target is an enemy	+11 to +20 (or more)
Player roleplays the attempt very well	-1 to -3
An appropriate bribe is offered	-1 to -5
Player does not roleplay well	+1 to +3
Target feels insulted by attempt	+2 or more

Persuasion

Persuasion is used when one character wants to convince another character to do something. Characters use their *persuasion* skill or Charisma Attribute, while target characters resist with their *willpower* skill or Confidence Attribute. Results are read on the General Success Column.

When using *persuasion*, the character is usually trying to talk the character into doing one thing — sell an item at a particular price, "look away" while the characters escape, or whatever.

Persuasion cannot be attemped in combat (under most circumstances), as it normally takes several rounds, minutes or hours to convince somebody to do something for you.

Gamemasters should consider the target character's attitude, as per *charm,* and assign modifiers as follows.

• Persuasion Modifiers •

Condition	Modifier to DN
Target is friendly to *persuasion*	0
Target is neutral	+1 to +5
Target is hostile	+5 to +10
Target is an enemy	+11 to +20 (or more)
Player roleplays the attempt very well	-1 to -3
An appropriate bribe is offered	-1 to -5
Player does not roleplay well	+1 to +3
Target feels insulted by attempt	+2 or more
Persuasion is in target's best interest	-1 to -5
Persuasion is ultimately detrimental to target	+1 to +3
Persuasion is likely to be detrimental to target	+3 to +6
Persuasion is obviously detrimental to target	+7 or more
Persuasion will be very detrimental to character, possibly deadly	+10 or more

• Story Elements: Charm/Persuasion •

The character being *persuaded* or *charmed* should react to these attempts logically *and* following the skill totals. Most characters will not respond to outrageous, rude, or mechanical suggestions — but with good roleplaying and explanation, a *charm* or a *persuasion* might become much more "logical."

Also, there is no reason the character has to "stick to the same line" every attempt. A character might try to *persuade* a target to part with a weapon the character needs. The target could start out as hostile. Then, regardless of whether the character succeeds or fails at his first attempt at *persuasion*, the character might offer a fair market value for the weapon. That could drastically help the *persuading* character's chances.

On the other hand, if a character was trying to *charm* a target by flattering him and making him feel good about his physical appearance and then the character blurted out "get your hands off me you fat, ugly slob!" or something equally rude and insulting, that could end the process, regardless of any skill rolls.

Interrogation

Interrogation can only be used during interaction rounds or during normal game play; it cannot be used in combat rounds.

When one character *interrogates* another, he attempts to "forcefully persuade" the character to tell what he knows about something — usually something the target does not wish to talk about.

• Story Elements: Interrogation •

Interrogation should not just be rolling dice — it should be roleplayed. Threats might be issued, or bribes offered, and the characters participating should describe what they are doing to help or hinder the *interrogation*.

The gamemaster should be free to apply modifiers to or against *interrogation* depending on the circumstances — and he doesn't have to be consistent. The threat of violence might work against one character, but not another.

When *interrogating* player characters, you have to be careful, though. Most players, especially novice roleplayers, insist they would "rather die" than give up the slightest information — regardless of the circumstances or their supposed backgrounds. Explain to them that this isn't necessarily good roleplaying. Sure, they should be able to play "tough guys," but they should try to go along with the situation.

Also, when a gamemaster character is undergoing *interrogation*, try to establish "levels of success" based on the shifts in resilience by the target. When an *interrogation* is going reasonably well, the player characters should be able to get the information piecemeal — they may not *need* to go the entire stretch of beating down their target's resistance to get the information they seek. Other characters might fake slipping when they actually go the other way and lie. Use your imagination.

Characters use the *interrogation* skill or Confidence Attribute to attack, while targets use the *willpower* skill or Confidence Attribute to resist interrogation. Results are read on the General Success Column.

Gamemasters should carefully consider the forcefulness of the interrogating character, the target character's attitude toward his interrogator (generally neutral at best, but probably hostile or enemy), as well as whether or not the target character feels the information is very important and how the target character feels about the consequences of not giving up the information.

Target is helpful: The target feels it is better for him to help his interrogator than resist: he fears torture or whatever else may occur to him.

Target is cooperative: There is some reason the target does not want to talk, but it isn't a very compelling one. The character will probably be convinced to talk fairly easily — the hint of torture may be enough to break him.

Target is resistant: The target is either unusually resilient or the information begins to be precious or important to him.

Target is hostile: The target may be extremely hostile to the interrogator. The character will endure a great deal before beginning to break.

Enemy: He will be extremely resistant and may be willing to suffer a tremendous amount, or may consider the interrogator a blood enemy.

• Interrogation Modifiers •

Condition	Modifier to DN
Target is in a weakened position	-3
Target is helpless	-5
Target has already been successfully intimidated	-1
Target is in an equal position	0
Target is in superior position	+3
Target is in control	+6
Target is "among friends"	+2
Target is helpful	-5 or more
Target is cooperative	-1 to -4
Target is resistant	0 to +2
Target is hostile	+5 to +10
Target is an enemy	+11 to +20 (or more)
Target feels information is unimportant	-5 or more
Target feels information is of minor value	-1 to -4
Target feels information is important	0 to +3
Target feels information is very important	+4 to +6
Target would rather die than reveal information	+7 or more
Player roleplays the attempt very well	-1 to -3
Player does not roleplay well	+1 to +3

Target feels information is unimportant: A character may also divulge this information because he doesn't really care if someone else finds out about it or does not believe the information to be particularly important.

Target feels information is of minor value: The character may believe the information to be of some value, but may not think it is not that useful or not worth suffering over.

Target feels information is important.

Target feels information is very important: The secret is a dear one, or the target has some compelling reason not to give it up.

Target would rather die than reveal information: The target thinks he would rather die than give up the information; this is something that is *very* important to the character.

A character who *interrogates* a target during a "normal" conversation is not in a very superior position — while one who *interrogates* his target after tying the character down and threatening violence is probably in a better position.

Characters may attempt multiple *interrogations* to "wear down" a target. Failing an *interrogation* causes the target to become more resilient.

Recovering from an *interrogation* that is interrupted may go slowly or fast. If a character was about to break and then something interrupts the process, the character may almost instantly "strengthen his resolve" and become hard to *interrogate* again. Or, he may continue to remember any threats or promises offered during the *interrogation* and be at the level achieved when the process is resumed.

Hypnotism

Hypnotism is used to get information out of a target character. The specific rules are explained in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use."

Characters use their *hypnotism* skill to hypnotize a character, while target characters resist with their *willpower* skill or Mind Attribute. *Hypnotism* can be used much like *interrogation*. The results are read on the General Success Column.

• Life Points •

Every player character generated using the *MasterBook* character creation system starts the game with five *Life Points*. Characters gain Life Points over the course of adventures, but no character may have more than 10 Life Points at any one time.

Fine. But what are Life Points?

The Game System Answer — Character Control

Life Points give the player (and the gamemaster — gamemaster characters can have Life Points, too) more control over what happens during the game. Too often, even in good games, a player character dies or is seriously wounded in a situation where it *doesn't* make sense in the context of the adventure story. Or, sometimes the character has been roleplayed well and everything comes down to one die roll ... and the dice go against him.

Life Points allow players to affect the die rolls and to keep their characters alive when things like that happen. Think of Life Points as your "safety reserve." Hoard them and spend them when they'll make a difference.

The Story Answer — Excitement, Danger, and Potential

People do not live up to their potential more often than they do. That's why "average" characters fail at *average* tasks 45% of the time. But characters with Life Points can surpass that — when the player thinks it is important enough.

A Life Point can be used to help a character realize his true potential, even if only briefly. A surge of adrenalin, a brief moment of insight, a freak occurance of good luck: Life Points can represent all these things.

How Life Points Work

Life Points can be used in three ways: to increase die totals, to cancel other Life Points and to reduce damage. No character can spend a Life Point for another character.

Increasing Die Totals

When a player rolls the dice and gets a particular die total, he may not like what he sees. Or, he may want to get a *better* result. By spending a Life Point, he can try.

After rolling the dice, but *before* the gamemaster reveals the success or failure of an action, the player can spend a Life Point. If the Life Point isn't cancelled (see below), the player can roll both dice again, and add the second die total to whatever he obtained the first time, as described in "Roll-Agains" under "The Die System."

A character may not spend more than *one* Life Point on any particular action unless additional Life Points come from *hero* or *drama* cards (see Chapter Five, "The Card Deck"). So, a character could roll the dice, then spend a Life Point (roll the dice again and add the die totals). He could *then* spend a *hero* or a *drama* card (or more than one) to get more roll-agains. He can do this in any order — spend cards first and his own Life Point next — but he can only spend one of his own Life Points on the action.

Cancelling Life Points

When one character spends a Life Point to improve a die total, another character (a player or a gamemaster character) may choose to cancel that Life Point with one of his own (or one from one of his cards). Both characters mark off a Life Point and no roll-agains are obtained (the Life Points cancel each other out).

A character may cancel Life Points using cards or his own Life Points. He may cancel Life Points of other characters or from other characters' cards. He may cancel as many Life Points as he has Life Points or cards. However, the character must be "aware" that a Life Point is being spent. This means that the character has be be able to observe the action being performed.

A character who is *completely surprised* cannot spend a Life Point to cancel one spent by the person who completely surprised him, nor could one character spend a Life Point to cancel

another's expenditure if he did not notice what the character was doing.

This can get kind of strange. For example, let's say one character is charged with guarding a door. Another character wants to sneak past him. If he fails, the guard will see him. The second character generates a *stealth* total. He decides to spend a Life Point to increase his chances. The guard, technically, hasn't seen him yet — can he cancel?

In most cases, no. The only way the guard could cancel was if he had a *strong* reason to suspect that the character was going to try sneaking by at that particular time — and, even then, the gamemaster might not allow it. For example, let's say the "sneak" had tried to bribe the guard into letting him past and, somehow, he tipped the guard off that he would have to get past before a particular time. The gamemaster might decide that the guard will remain unusually alert during that particular time and could cancel Life Points used to *stealth* by — but this would be unlikely.

As a general guideline — if characters are being *attacked* (physically or otherwise) and they are aware that they will be attacked (they aren't *completely surprised*, even though they might not see the attack coming), they can spend Life Points. For example, a player character is fighting in a brawl with five thugs. Even if he can't see all the thugs at once, he should be able to cancel any Life Points used to attack him because he is aware that he *will be* attacked. If one of the thugs decides to generate a *perception* total to see if help will arrive for the "hero," and the hero can't see the thug doing that, then he probably shouldn't be able to cancel that expenditure.

Characters may *never* cancel Life Points used to reduce damage (below).

Reducing Damage and Interaction

When a character is successfully hit in combat or when a target is affected by an interactive attack, he may reduce the damage or interactive effect by spending a Life Point. He simply declares that he will do this and he expends the Life Point.

Unlike for increasing die rolls, characters can spend Life Points to reduce damage or interaction results *after* they know how bad the result is.

Life Points spent to reduce damage or an interactive effect may not be cancelled by other characters.

Damage

In regard to physical damage, one Life Point may cancel three "packages" of damage. One wound is a package, up to three shock points are a package, a "K" or an "O" is a package, and a "Knockdown" is a package.

Again, a character may combine Life Points with *hero* and *drama* cards, but no character may spend more than one of their own Life Points to cancel damage from any one attack. For example, if a character has no cards and he takes six packages of damage from an attack, he can use a Life Point to cancel three of them; he cannot spend two Life Points to cancel all six.

1 Wound: A "Wnd" result is a package of damage. Two wounds ("2Wnd") are two packages, and three wounds ("3Wnd") are three packages.

3 Shock Points: Up to three shock points count as *one* package (theoretically, up to *nine* shock could be cancelled using one Life Point). One or two shock can count as a package as well.

1 K or O: A K result is a package, as is an O result. A "KO" counts as two packages.

Knockdown: A knockdown result is also one package.

Any combination of the above damage results may be cancelled using one Life Point. "Mixing" damage packages is expected and allowed.

Example: *Tim (the character) is hit by a car. The gamemaster tells Tim's player that his character takes 13 result points of damage — "3Wnd Knockdown K3." There are six damage packages there:*

Each wound (3)
The knockdown (1)
The K (1)
The 3 shock points (1).

Tim's player chooses to spend a Life Point to cancel up to three of those packages. The player cancels two of the wounds and the K — Tim takes a wound, a knockdown and three shock.

When the gamemaster describes Tim being hit by the car, he states that Tim was clipped by the car, knocked down, and he twisted his ankle. Since he takes three shock and a wound (making him lightly wounded*), this is much better than what would have happened had Tim suffered the full three wounds.*

When damage is "cancelled," it means that the effect of the attack or the injury was not as critical as it first seemed. In movies and stories, characters are always surviving what seem like deadly attacks, sometimes unscathed. Life Points give your characters that same opportunity.

Interaction

A character who has a Life Point may spend that point to reduce the results of *any* Interaction result: *interrogation, intimidation, trick, taunt, charm, persuasion, con, hypnotism* or *maneuver*. The character does this by spending the Life Point *after* he knows the result of the successful attack against him.

A character can spend one Life Point to lower the effectiveness of an interaction attack by *one* level on the chart. On the "Maneuver" column, for example, there are five levels:

fatigued
stymied
stymied / fatigued
setback / fatigued
player's call

A character who received, for example, a *stymied / fatigued* result could reduce that effect to *stymied* by spending a Life Point. A character who was *fatigued* could reduce the result to nothing. A character may only spend *one* Life Point to lower an interaction result.

Limits on Life Points

A character may cancel damage or interaction effect *any* time he is "injured" *and* concious of the "damage" he takes. An unconcious character may not spend Life Points or cards, nor could one who is being affected by something he cannot perceive the effects of (like a magical "mind control" spell that he is not aware of).

A character can cancel damage or interaction effects from different attacks as many times during a round as he has Life Points, but each effect must be countered singly. A character who is shot by four different opponents during the same round

can spend four Life Points (and any combination of cards) to cancel the damage of each attack as each attack occurs, but he cannot "carry over" the effect of a Life Point to another attack or wait until the end of the round to cancel damage from all of the attacks. So, if the first attacker does him only two packages of damage, he can't "save" the third package until the next attack.

Gaining More Life Points

Since characters can never have more than 10 Life Points, and they will use those to get Skill Points sometimes (see Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use"), they are going to run out. How do they get more?

Life Points are awarded by the gamemaster during and after adventures. Generally, player characters will gain one to two Life Points between "Acts" (large parts) of long adventures, and more after the completion of the entire adventure. No player character will usually gain more than six Life Points at the end of an adventure (three or four is more the average), so Life Points should be conserved.

Gamemaster Characters and Life Points

Many (but not all) gamemaster characters will have Life Points. Major villains may have close to the maximum of 10, but "cannon fodder" thugs may not have any Life Points.

When the gamemaster gives out Life Points to his characters, he will have to be careful. Only important or especially interesting (or dangerous) gamemaster characters will have more than one Life Point. Gamemaster characters don't have cards, so Life Points are often their only salvation.

• Time and Rounds •

MasterBook uses three types of "time" in the game: *non-round time, interaction rounds* and *combat rounds.*

Non-round time is time in the game when characters are not in conflict or otherwise competing with other characters. Non-round time covers the minutes, hours or even days between rounds, or covers the passage of time between scenes or adventures.

This would include "travel," such as when characters might take a train from one city to another: there is no need to play this out round by round since not much is happening. Non-round time could also include research at a library, for example. Non-round time also covers when characters are meeting with gamemaster characters, but not actively competing against them. For example, in a stereotypical tavern scene, the characters meet the bartender or other adventurers — this is all non-round time. If a fight breaks out, the game shifts to combat rounds.

Non-round time is used to "summarize" or "gloss over" the long periods of time during an adventure when nothing critical is happening. Characters may learn about the background of their villain, or meet important gamemaster characters, or fix a damaged vehicle, but they are not faced with a "life and death" situation.

Interaction rounds are any period where characters are not physically fighting or otherwise competing. An interaction round can cover several hours, a few minutes or just ten seconds (like normal combat rounds). The distinction here is that the characters are interacting with gamemaster characters and are trying to gain an advantage. Uses of *persuasion, interrogation, charm* or *con* could be covered by *interaction rounds.* At the gamemaster's discretion, the cards may be used for "action line effects" or "approved actions" (as explained in Chapter Five, "The Card Deck").

For example, if one character is trying to seduce another, the gamemaster may choose to use interaction rounds. The gamemaster decides that each round represents ten minutes of flirting and other elements of the seduction attempt.

It should be noted that few gamemasters will choose to use interaction rounds since they are very similar to non-round time; they are provided as an option.

Combat rounds are most often used during combat (or other times when characters are actively competing against other characters and the amount of time that passes is critical). Each combat round represents ten seconds of time. In combat rounds, there are special rules for determining who gets to act when (called *inititative).* Instead of just chiming in and acting whenever they want, characters will have to wait their turns.

Entering Rounds

Characters enter rounds any time the gamemaster says so. He knows when this happens in one of two ways: if someone starts fighting, combat rounds begin; or, if two characters (or more) enter into a very tense negotiation, interaction rounds begin (as previously noted, use of interaction rounds is optional).

Actions

Whenever a character does anything during a round, he is performing an *action.* A *complex action* requires a skill roll and may fail. A *simple action* does not require a skill roll and should nearly always succeed, but it may affect the performance of other actions.

A character can perform *one* complex action per round. Characters may attempt more than one complex action per

• Some Simple Actions •

Reloading a standard weapon
Performing *simple movement* (see "Movement")
Communicate (briefly) with characters nearby
Glance around and "take in" the basic situation
Draw a weapon

• Some Complex Actions •

Performing *any* action that requires a skill roll (an attack, a maneuver, a *perception* roll, etc.)

Spend the entire round communicating complex ideas with nearby characters

Performing *complex movement* (going past simple movement limits — see "Movement")

• Notes on Simple Actions •

A *simple action* is described as one that requires no skill total be generated. The character may perform the action automatically during a round.

The gamemaster will have to be the final judge of what actions can be performed automatically and which require skill totals.

However, simple actions should be limited to what might be considered "reasonable." As a general guideline, a character should not be able to perform more than *three* simple actions during a round without either some sort of skill total or a modifier to any complex actions the character is taking.

For example, reloading a weapon is usually a simple action. But if a character were walking, reloading, drawing a new weapon, and lighting a torch all during the same round, that should affect the character's ability to do anything else. Indeed, the gamemaster should think about whether the character should be able to do all these things at once.

While a simple action is easy to perform, each simple action might make performing several of them at once a little more difficult. When the gamemaster feels that the actions being performed will start interfering with each other, he should apply modifiers or difficulty numbers.

The gamemaster should be reasonable in his judgements. In the above example, the gamemaster should probably say that the character can walk, light the torch, and draw the new weapon all at the same time, but if he wants to perform a complex action, he has to add, say, +2 to the DN because he's doing so many other things. Or, if he wants to reload as well as perform all those other actions, he has to generate a Very Easy (difficulty of, say, 4) Agility total or he doesn't reload this round.

Simple actions shouldn't worry you too much as a gamemaster, but don't let the players abuse them.

round, but they suffer penalties for attempting to do more than one thing per round. This is explained under the rules for "Multi-Actions."

A character can perform as many simple actions during a round as seem appropriate to the gamemaster — since simple actions take time to perform, there is a limit to the amount that can be done in one round.

Initiative

Initiative determines when player characters and gamemaster characters get to act in a round. It can be determined through two methods. The first uses the card deck, while the second simply requires characters to roll dice.

Initiative is the order characters are allowed to perform actions: characters with *high* initiative get to act before characters with *low* initiative.

A ***"cards only"*** or ***"cards"*** indicator means use this step only using the cards for initiative. A ***"no cards"*** indicator means this step only occurs when not using cards for initiative.

0. Declare Rounds

The gamemaster simply states that the characters are entering conflict rounds, meaning they will have to abide by

• Rounds Procedure •

0. Declare Rounds
1. Determine Initiative
2. Announce Approved Actions*
3. Act in Initiative Order
4. Summarize Results (Gamemaster)
6. Award Cards/Flip Over Cards*
7. End Rounds or Begin a New Round

* Only when using the card deck for initiative

the "special rules" listed here.

Once in rounds, characters may only use cards in their *pool* as described in Chapter Five, "The Card Deck."

Cards Only: When using cards for initiative, the gamemaster needs to decide whether the scene is *standard* or *dramatic*. What makes a standard or dramatic scene is discussed in Chapter Five, but, simply put, a dramatic scene is a "climactic" or very important scene of the adventure, while a standard scene is more "matter-of-fact."

The gamemaster then uses the *initiative lines* on the cards to decide who goes first, the player characters ("P") or the gamemaster characters ("G"). For more information, see Chapter Five, "The Card Deck."

Example: *Three player characters, Thet, Derrick, and Tuoton, are being confronted by a group of gangsters in a pulp fantasy game setting. The fighting is about to begin, so this is a combat round, and the gamemaster decides this is a* dramatic *scene. He describes what the player characters see and hear, and gives them an overall view of the situation ...*

1. Determine Initiative

Basically, one side gets to act and then the other — characters within each side act in Agility order (in a combat round) or Confidence order (in an interaction round), from highest to lowest. Ties are considered simultaneous.

No Cards: Every player generates a bonus number for his or her character at this point, and the gamemaster rolls for each gamemaster character. All tens are rolled again, but Life Points cannot be spent on this roll.

The bonus number is added to each character's Agility (if this is a combat round) or Confidence (if this is an interaction round). The character with the highest total acts first, while the character with the lowest total acts last, with ties being resolved "simultaneously." If a character with a lower initiative is eliminated before he gets to act, that's life.

Cards: The gamemaster flips over the top card on the action deck to determine initiative for the two sides in the conflict. He uses the *initiative lines* — "S" for standard and "D" for dramatic scenes.

If a "P" is first, that means the player characters go first; if a "G" is first, that means the gamemaster characters go first. There may also be *action line effects*. They are listed after the "P" and "G" entries — these things affect every character on that given side.

The characters act in Agility order (for combat rounds) or Confidence order (for interaction rounds) within their side ("P" or "G").

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For more information on action line effects, see Chapter Five, "The Card Deck."

Example: *The top card is flipped over. As this is a dramatic scene, the gamemaster uses the "D" line, which is "P: — G: —." That means the player characters get initiative and act first, then the gamemaster characters act.*

The player characters will perform their actions in order of Agility:

Derrick: 12

Thet: 11

Tuoton: 10

He also notes that the gangsters (there are six of them), have the following Agilities:

Gangster #1: 10

Gangsters #2–6: 8

Since gangsters two thru six all have Agilities of 8, they will act simultaneously, but only after gangster number one goes.

2. Announce Approved Actions

Cards Only: The *approved action line* lists any actions that are "approved" for player characters. If any player character successfully performs that action during the round, they get a new card. For more information, see Chapter Five, "The Card Deck."

3. Act in Initiative Order

The side that has initiative acts *first* (in Agility order for combat rounds and Confidence order for interaction rounds).

Once a character has acted, they are done for that round — they may not later declare more actions or change what has already been done.

No Cards: When not using the cards, characters act in the order of the Agility or Confidence skill totals. For example, you might have a player character go, then two gamemaster characters, then a couple more player characters, then the rest of the gamemaster characters.

Cards Only: After every character from that side has acted, all characters on the other side take their actions (in Agility order for combat rounds and Confidence order for interaction rounds).

Defenses

Characters can choose an *active defense* during their action, even if they have not been attacked ... yet. They may only have an *active defense* with *one* of the defensive skills unless they choose to have two active defenses and take the penalties with multi-actions (see "Multi-Actions").

If a character is attacked before they have acted, the gamemaster should ask the player if he or she would like their character to do an *active defense* — they then get to roll an active defense total. However, they must declare any *additional* actions they want to perform at this time as well (but they have to wait until it is their turn to roll for any other actions).

Opportunity Actions

Characters can choose an "opportunity action." This means that, for whatever reason, they are going to wait until after everyone else has gone and *then* act. However, characters

suffer a +2 to the DN penalty for any actions because they hesitated at first, and were rushed when they finally did act.

If more than one character chooses an opportunity action, they resolve their opportunity actions in the same order as their initiative. Characters may not choose another opportunity action at this time — they act now or have no action for the round.

Declaring Multiple Actions

Normally, a character can perform one complex action during a round. Characters *can* perform multiple actions in a round, but there are penalties for doing see. See "Multi-Actions," later in this chapter.

Example: *From the previous example, the player characters go first.*

Derrick has the highest Agility and goes first. He attacks the nearest gangster (#3) using his knife. He hits, and he knocks the gangster down.

Thet decides to make an active defense and performs a maneuver on the two nearest gangsters (she tries to get around behind them and past them, toward #1, who is obviously the leader). She rolls her active defense total and then rolls for the maneuver: she succeeds.

Tuoton performs a single attack and incapacitates gangster #4.

Now the gangsters go:

Gangster #1 pulls out his gun and fires at Thet — but her active defense was good enough that the shot missed.

Gangster #2 is armed only with a club. He was near Thet at the beginning of the round, but she maneuvered past him; the gamemaster decides she got out of his club-swinging range. He can't attack.

Gangster #3 was knocked down by Derrick, so he can't do anything this round but get up.

Gangster #4 was incapacitated by Tuoton, so he'll just lie in pool of blood.

Gangsters #5 & 6 both try to perform "Multi-Target" maneuvers on Tuoton and Derrick, to get around behind them. Gangster five succeeds, but six was apparently caught off guard by the ferocity of their defense and doesn't make it. For more information, see "Multi-Target" later this chapter.

5. Summarize Results (Gamemaster)

After all actions are taken, the gamemaster should briefly summarize the action of the round to prevent any possible confusion.

Example: *The gamemaster describes what happened:*

"You reacted faster than your opponents expected. They moved in for the kill, but Derrick and Tuoton intercepted them. You managed to take two down — one is unconscious and the other is getting up — and the others were caught off guard by Thet's defense. One gangster has managed to slip around you, Derrick and Tuoton, and he'll be in a better position this round, but you managed to keep everyone else in view.

"Thet, the guy you're on is obviously the leader — he's the only one with a gun; the others only have knives and clubs. He looks pretty grim."

• Mixing and Matching •

Some gamemasters will want to "mix and match" the two systems — maybe they don't like using the card deck to determine initiative, but they want to use the cards for enhancement and subplot possibilities. Or, on the other hand, they may not want characters to have cards, but they do want to use the cards for initiative.

That's fine. However, if you are not using the card deck for initiative, we do not recommend its use otherwise during the game. There would not be opportunity enough for characters to earn cards to make the process worthwhile. But, if you don't want to use the rules as presented, you can always experiment.

6. Award Cards/Flip Over Cards

Cards Only: At this point, every character who performed an approved action gains a card into his hand (as described in Chapter Five, under "Approved Actions"), and every character who still has cards in his hand can flip over one card into his pool (also as described in Chapter Five). Cards that are flipped over are now in the player's pool.

Example: *Every player character puts one card into his or her pool. In addition, any who peformed approved actions (which would have been announced during Step One) gain cards into their hands.*

7. End Rounds or Begin a New Round

At this point, the conflict is either over or you need to have another round. If you need another round, go back to step one, "Determine Initiative."

Combat continues round by round until one side is defeated, surrenders, runs away (or something else which stops the conflict).

Example: *It doesn't look like anyone is backing off, so the gamemaster goes to Step One, announcing another round of combat.*

• Movement •

In *MasterBook* there are two types of movement that can occur during conflict rounds: *simple movement* and *complex movement*.

Simple Movement

This rule applies only for ground (MRG) movement. Simple movement is a simple action. Every character can move a certain number of meters "for free" during a conflict round, without affecting the performance of other actions.

For simple movement, a character can move two times his movement rate in meters per ten second round. Therefore, a character with an MRG (movement rate ground) of 7 could move 14 meters as simple movement; this is called his *conflict movement rate* (CMR). This is "free movement" that the character can do without rolling or without the movement counting as an action.

This movement rate may be modified by exceptional circumstances, such as an impassible barrier in a hallway, but applies in most situations.

Simple movement also fails to consider special movement like *maneuvers*. If a character performs a *maneuver* — say, to get around behind another character he is fighting — he has to make a *maneuver* roll. But, as long as he is within his conflict movement rate, he can do this without resorting to a multi-action (see "Multi-Actions," below).

Tactical Scale

If you are using a tactical map, we recommend using a scale of one inch equals two meters (or six and a half feet). This way, "standard" 25mm miniatures will work just as well as quick sketches on a piece of paper. The measurement may not be exact, but it's close enough.

A character can move a number of *inches* equal to his standard movement rate (don't multiply the number by two since one inch equals two meters). A character with an MRG (movement rate, ground) of 7 could walk seven inches on the tabletop.

Complex Movement

Complex movement occurs when a character wishes to move farther than his conflict movement rate (allowed under "Simple Movement"), when he wants to "push" his movement (defined later), or during circumstances when the character has to make a skill roll to move.

Moving Farther: Each character has an "actual movement rate" — the value of their movement rate. For more information on values, see "The Value System," but this is a brief overview:

Each movement rate represents a value — find the movement rate on the Value Chart; the value it converts to on the Chart is the number of meters per round that the character can move as part of a run or short sprint.

If the character wishes to move faster than his conflict movement rate (determined above), but less than or equal to his movement rate (as found on the Value Chart), he can do so without making a skill roll, but it counts as if he were performing a complex action during the round. The movement has to be declared and, unless the character wants to perform a multi-action (see "Multi-Actions," below), or he has some way of performing two actions during the round, then this is his action for the round.

Example: *Diane has a ground movement rate of 8. Her conflict movement rate would be 16 meters, but her movement rate, translated on the Value Chart, would be 40 meters every round (ten seconds). If she wants to move 17 to 40 meters during a conflict round, it counts as her action, but she does not have to make a skill roll.*

Pushing Movement: If a character wants to move even *farther* than his actual movement would normally allow, he can *push* his movement. Pushes are explained later in this chapter. Pushing movement counts as an action during a conflict phase.

Example: *Diane's MRG of 8 (40 meters) won't be enough to get her out of a collapsing building in time. She declares she will push her movement and try to run faster. Diane uses the "push" rules to generate a* running *total.*

Circumstances: A character may have to make a movement roll under certain circumstances just to move. The most common example of this is when a character is climbing. Unless the character is climbing something simple (like stairs), the skill *climbing* (or Agility Attribute) must be used, and this counts as the character's action. Each movement skill description *(running, swimming, climbing, long jumping* and so forth) describes the circumstances under which it must be used.

• Pushing •

"Pushing" is the phrase used when a character wants to make every effort to run a little faster, climb a little higher or jump a little farther. Pushing represents a character "giving it his all" — and while the character may move faster than he ever has before, the attempt may exhaust him.

Every character has four basic movement rates: running (MRG), swimming (MRS), climbing (MRC) and long jumping (MRJ). The skills *running*, *swimming*, *climbing*, and *long jumping* are used to increase a character's speed through pushing.

To increase your character's Movement Rate, you have to know the character's base Movement Rate or the maximum move (MAX) the character is allowed to make in one round (ten seconds). You found these out in Chapter One, "Character Generation."

Roll the character's skill against the DN. For *climbing,* the difficulty is based on the surface being climbed. For *running, swimming* and *long jumping*, the base difficulty is the characters Movement Rate or MAX (whichever is lower), with any modifiers (as noted under the skill's description in Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use").

Find the result points on the Push Column. Then, find the Push Result on the Value Chart, converting it to a measure of meters. Add those extra meters to the character's Movement Rate (or MAX) to determine how far they move in that round.

This procedure is used for *running, swimming* (there is a maximum of 20 result points), *climbing* (there is a maximum of 23 result points) and *long jumping* (there is a maximum of 23 result points). These limits are imposed only in game settings that reflect some sort of realism: in more fanciful settings, the limits may be ignored.

Example: *Marie LeFloure, a cat burglar, is climbing out of a window and up the side of a building to escape her pursuers. The DN is 18. Her MRC (Movement Rate, Climbing) is 3 and her* climbing *skill is 16.*

She rolls and gets a bonus number of +7, for a skill total of 23 (16+7). That's five result points over the DN. Read on the Push Results Table, that gives her a Push Result of 2 and she also takes two shock

She reads the +2 on the Value Chart, which translates to 2.5 meters. Adding that to her normal climbing *rate of four meters (MRC of 3), she has moved six and a half meters up the building.*

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Example: *Russ Neibler, a Dark Warrior from the Future, has a MAX MRG of 8 (forty meters every ten seconds). He is running across a desolate wasteland, fleeing from a HSK (Hunter/Seeker/Killer) drone. He decides to push his movement to put some distance between the two of them.*

The DN is 8 plus some modifiers: there's wreckage around (+2), and the terrain is rough (+2), for a final DN of 12.

Russ has a running *skill of 14. He generates a bonus number of +6, giving him a skill total of 20. Russ obtained eight result points, which gives him a +3 on the Push Column. On the Value Chart, that translates into a measure of 4. This increases his movement rate temporarily from 40 meters to 44 meters, and he takes three shock points. Not a lot, but he may be able to duck around a corner or something.*

Lifting

This is another "Push" skill. The character can use his *lifting* skill to lift great weights.

Every character can lift a number of kilograms equal to the measurement of his Strength value *minus three* without Pushing (this is a character's *lifting capacity).* If the character wishes to lift more, then he must push.

Generate a *lifting* skill total; the difficulty is the mass value of the object being lifted. The result points are read on the Push Column. The Push Result is then added to how much the character can lift for the round.

Example: *Heron Starfire, a high fantasy character, has a Strength value of 10 and a* lifting *skill of 13. She can lift 25 kilograms without pushing (her Strength of 10-3 equals a 7, which translates to 25 kilograms on the Value Chart). She is attempting to lift a tree trunk off one of her comrades (the hapless and unconscious Mert). The gamemaster determines that the mass of the tree trunk is 150 kilograms (a value of 11).*

Heron can only lift 25 kilograms normally, so she must Push. Heron's player rolls the dice and gets a bonus number of +7, for a skill total of 20. That's 9 result points over the difficulty of 11. The gamemaster checks the Push Column, which means a Push Result of 4 and Shock Taken of 6.

The push of 4 is added to her Lifting Capacity of 7, increasing it to 11. She can, this round, lift 150 kilograms. She succeeds in freeing Mert ... but just barely.

Continuing a Lifting Push: Obviously, a character is not going to dramatically increase his base ability to lift weights using these rules unless he gets lucky. However, a character may continue to push his Strength in successive rounds if he wishes.

Immediately after generating a *lifting* value, the character can use his next action to do this again. But, this time, when the result points are determined and shock assigned, the character adds the additional mass onto his already-pushed total. In this way, the character can take more time and more actions to push for greater and greater Strength. Of course, he could knock himself unconscious with the strain. Each push must be performed in consecutive rounds and any other actions "break" the character's concentration and the benefits of the last push are lost.

Example: *Later on, Heron decides she needs to lift the same mass again. The DN is still 11, her lifting capacity is still 7, and her* lifting *skill is still 13.*

Heron's player generates a bonus number of +2. This makes her skill total 15, beating the DN of 11 by 4 result points. Reading these points on the Push Column, she gets a Push result of 2 and takes three shock points. Adding the Push result to her lifting capacity gives her a new lifting capacity of 9. On the Value Chart, she can lift 60 kilograms. Not enough.

But Heron doesn't give up. She continues to lift, pushing again. This time she gets a lifting skill total of 17, for six result points. On the Push Table, that's a Push result of 3 and five shock points. Heron has an Endurance of 10, so she stays conscious. She adds the Push result of 3 to her temporary LC of 9, for a value of 12. She can lift 250 kilograms this round, so she heroically lifts the log up and moves it out of the way. Then she rests.

Note: In game settings that are more "realistic," gamemaster may want to impose limits on how much a Push can help a

character improve his Lifting Capacity. As a general rules, no character in a realistic game setting should be allowed, even for such a short burst as a *lifting* attempt, to lift more than 600 kilograms.

Special Effects

In Chapter Seven, "Special Effects," you will find that many special effects employ the Push Column as well.

Limiting Shock

Optional Rule: A character can take a lot of shock damage by pushing. There is an optional rule that will allow a character to take less shock from a push.

When a character finds out what his Push Result is and how much shock damage he takes, the character can opt to take only *half* the shock damage by reducing the Push Result by one. A character who pushes his Strength, for example, might get a *lifting* value that gives him 15 result points over the DN. That would give the character a Push Value of 6 and eight shock points. The character could reduce the Push Value to 5 and take only four shock points. Always round up.

• Falling Damage •

If a character fails any *climbing* roll by more than two points, he or she has fallen.

To determine damage from a fall, add the weight value of your character to the value of the distance fallen, plus a bonus number (minimum of +1) to get the damage value. Armor can provide up to +2 protection from a fall, but no more. Apply damage normally.

On planets with Earth-like gravity, terminal velocity has a value of 14. This means that a height value of no more than 14 may be added to a character's weight value to determine falling damage. This number will have to be modified as needed when calculating damage from falls on planets with heavier or lighter gravity than Earth.

Example: *Marco fails his* climbing *roll. He has a weight value of 10 (he weighs about 100 kilograms) and is falling 60 meters (a value of 9). He rolls for a bonus number and gets a +1 for a total damage value of 20. He has a Toughness of 9, which means 11 result points, for total damage of "2 Wnd K/O 5" — ouch!*

Example: *After healing his injuries, Marco attempts another climb. This time, he falls from a height of 16 (1,150 meters). "Fortunately" for him, the terminal velocity rule comes into play, so his basic damage is 24 (10 for his weight value and 14 for the distance fallen). He then generates a bonus number: he rolls a 5, which would give him a -6, but the minimum bonus number is +1. That gives him a damage value of 25 (24+1). Compared to his Toughness of 9 means 16 result points, or "4 Wnd Knockdown K5."*

• Multi-Actions •

Normally, characters may only perform one complex action during a round. But, if they do not mind increasing the difficulty of each of their actions, characters may perform multiple actions during a round (assuming other rules don't preclude this option).

For example, a character might shoot a gun at two targets, or try to *trick* one character and *intimidate* another, etc.

Theoretically, there is no limit to the number of actions that may be performed during a conflict round — but there is common sense. The following rules provide for performing up to ten actions during an action phase all at once. This is probably *higher* than any situation should go — but that's up to the gamemaster.

When a character does more than one action, he must declare the order in which he will do them, and rank them in importance (most important, second in importance, third, fourth, and so forth). The first action performed does *not* have to be the most important.

Players roll for actions in the order they will be performed. When the character performs the *most important* action he declares, he subtracts *two* from the skill total he achieves. The next most important skill total is reduced by -3. The third most important is reduced by -4, and so on.

Any time a character attacks more than one target, or attacks the same target more than once, or uses more than one skill during a conflict phase, he is performing a multi-action and has to apply these modifiers.

• Multi-Action Table •

Action Priority	Modifier to Skill Total
Primary	-2
Secondary	-3
Tertiary	-4
Etc. ...	An additional -1 for each

Shooting the same target using the *single fire as multi* or *full auto* conflict options is *not* considered a multi-action — those are different types of modifiers. A character who unloads a full-auto burst into a target is only performing *one* "to hit" action, using the capabilities of his weapon — he is *not* performing multiple shots.

Multi-Targetting

When a character performs multiple actions using the same skill, the gamemaster *may* — if the situation is appropriate — have the character only generate *one* bonus number and then add it to his skill value. Then, he subtracts the "Multi-Action" modifiers as if he had made several rolls. This speeds up the game and will often reflect the action at hand. It is called *multi-targetting*.

Example: *A character with a* fire combat *skill of 14 is armed with a fully automatic weapon. He attacks three people using his weapon (which is set on full automatic).*

The gamemaster has the player generate a bonus number. He gets a +2. That's a skill total of 16. He adds in the full auto bonus (+3), for a modified skill total of 19. However, since the character attacked three targets, the skill total is modified further: the first target (the primary target), is attacked with a fire combat *skill total of 17 (19 - 2). The secondary target is attacked with a skill total of 16 (19 - 3), and the third most important target is attacked with a skill total of 15 (19 - 4).*

For example, if a character were trying to *stealth* past several watchers, the character is performing an automatic multi-target skill use. Each watcher has a chance to spot him, so the number of watchers increases the likelihood that he will be seen. The character generates one skill total, but the skill total is adjusted for each individual watcher. If he generates a *stealth* total of 17 and there are four watchers, the *stealth* total becomes 15 versus the primary watcher, 14 versus the next, 13 versus the third, and 12 versus the fourth.

Multi-Actions and Cards

Regardless of how many actions a character performs during a conflict phase, he can only receive *one* card unless he is getting extra actions through *haste* or *flurry* conditions, in which case he can get an extra card for each *haste* or *flurry*.

Some cards modify attributes or skill totals for an entire round. If they do, they add to *all* the character's actions during the round — from the time they are played. The *action* card is a good example of this.

When a character is allowed to use the "Multi-Target" system — one die total, with skill totals modified depending on how many targets there are — he can make good use of cards and Life Points. Since he is generating only one skill total, he can affect the outcome of *all* his "targetting" with one play of a card or expenditure of a Life Point.

• Combined Actions •

The combined action rules are used whenever you want to simulate the effects of large groups of characters (gamemaster or player) working together or doing roughly the same thing at the same time. For example, if a character is getting shot at by five or six thugs, these rules allow you to determine what happens with one die roll rather than rolling once for each character.

There are two main ways to use these rules. The first, "Many-on-One," is usually used by gamemasters when several gamemaster characters attack a single target independently (they aren't coordinating; the gamemaster just doesn't want to roll the dice several times for each individual attacker).

The second is used by player or gamemaster characters when they want to *coordinate* on an action to make it more effective.

Many-on-One

Quite often during an adventure, the gamemaster will be confronted with a similar situation: a player character is attacked by a group of gamemaster characters.

The gamemaster could have each gamemaster character attack separately, but in most of these cases these characters are "story fodder" — thugs, mercenaries, or whatever — and are simply obstacles the player character has to get past. The combat should go as quickly and easily as possible.

That's where the Many-on-One rules come into play. The gamemaster determines an "average" attacking skill value for the gamemaster characters and an "average" effect value (or damage value), and makes one die roll to generate a bonus number. He then uses these rules to interpret the results.

The "# of Characters" is the total number of gamemaster characters participating in a particular action.

The "DN Modifier" is the modifier the gamemaster adds to the difficulty number of the action.

The "Effect Modifier" is added to the average effect value obtained from the result of a successful action.

Here's how it works:

The gamemaster determines the difficulty for the action (if only one character were doing the action). The gamemaster then adds the DN Modifier for the number of characters to get a final DN.

The gamemaster then generates a bonus number and adds it to the average skill value of the characters. No Life Points may be spent on this action unless *everyone* spends a Life Point.

The skill total is then measured against the DN. If the total is equal or higher, then *every* character has succeeded in his attack. The result points and the Effect Modifier (third column) are added to the average effect value. The new effect total is then applied normally against the target.

But if the average skill total was not high enough to beat the DN, that doesn't mean the attack *completely* failed: some of the characters may have succeeded.

The gamemaster starts to go up the chart to determine how many of the characters *did* succeed.

Determine at what modifier to the DN would the characters have been successful. When the gamemaster finds this number, he then looks under "# of Characters" to determine how

• Many-on-One Table •

# of Characters	DN Modifier	Effect Modifier
1	DN	–
2	DN+1	+3
3	DN+2	+4
4	DN+2	+5
5	DN+3	+6
6	DN+3	+7
7	DN+4	+8
8	DN+4	+9
9	DN+5	+10
10*	DN+5	+11

* For every two characters above nine, add +1 to the DN Modifier and +1 to the Effect Modifier.

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many characters actually succeeded in the attack. The "Effect Modifier" for that level is then added to the average effect value and applied normally.

Example: *José, a skin-diver, is attacked by four sharks. The four sharks have an average* unarmed combat *value of 17. Their average damage value (for their teeth) is 19. José has an* unarmed parry *of 15 (it has been modified because he is under water). He also has a Toughness (with armor) of 15 (he chose to wear a special diving suit today — lucky him).*

The gamemaster checks the Many-on-One Table and sees that, with four sharks attacking, the DN modifier is +2. That means José's unarmed parry *value is increased to 17 (15+2) when they all attack.*

If the sharks got a skill total of 17 or higher, that means all four succeeded in attacking. To determine damage, add the Effect Modifier of +5 (for four characters) to their damage value of 19, for a damage of 24.

If the sharks get below a 15, they all fail (since that is the basic difficulty to attack José).

If the sharks get a 16, that means some of the sharks succeeded. The 16 is equal to a "DN+1" (since the basic DN is 15). On the Many-on-One table, a DN+1 is equal to 2 characters: two sharks succeeded. The gamemaster then adds the Effect Modifier for two characters, which is a +3. The sharks' damage value is 22 (19+3).

Measured against José's Toughness of 15, that's 7 result points. José takes a "Knockdown KO." The sharks prepare for their next pass.

Coordinating Actions

When characters team up for a better effect, they *coordinate* with each other. This is different from a Many-on-One attempt because it represents several characters actively working together, as opposed to a Many-on-One which simulates several characters doing the same thing at the same time but who aren't really working together.

The gamemaster sets a DN for coordinating based on how hard it should be to get everyone to do the same thing at once (Easy, Difficult, etc. — use the guidelines for "Abitrary DNs" earlier in this chapter).

Example: *The characters have crashed their car into a ditch. They decide to coordinate to lift the car out of the ditch. The coordination is as simple as "On three, everyone pull — one, two, three!" The gamemaster decides that this is a fairly Easy attempt and assigns a difficulty of 5.*

Example: *The characters are trying arm a series of switches for a bomb, but they are being shot at by thugs ... and they are on board a plane that is tumbling uncontrollably toward the ground below. Normally, just getting three or four people to plug something in at the same time is fairly easy, but because of the tumbling of the plane and the fact that people are shooting them, the gamemaster decides this is quite a bit harder, and assigns a difficulty of 13 (for a Hard task).*

Each character must declare a multi-action. One of the actions is the "coordination" attempt; the other is the actual skill attempt. As for other multi-actions, the actions must be rated for how important they are so the gamemaster can assign

the appropriate modifiers (-2 for the most important, -3 for the second most important, etc.).

The characters use whatever skill they are using for their skill attempt as the "coordination skill." They generate their skill totals normally, assigning multi-action and other modifiers.

If a character fails at his coordination roll, the character fails to meaningfully help in the skill attempt. If he succeeds at his coordination skill attempt *and* if he succeeds the skill attempt, he has succeeded at working with the other characters.

The gamemaster should add +2 for *every* character that succeeded to the *highest* skill total of all the characters.

As you can see, if characters can coordinate and succeed, they can get some spectacular results.

Example: *Joe, Diane, Marco, and René are fighting a giant robot with a Toughness of 20 and a dodge of 11. They are armed with pistols, and, individually they haven't been doing much damage to it.*

They decide to coordinate. They all declare only two actions during the next round — attacking and coordinating. Each player figures that the gamemaster will keep the DN for coordinating fairly low, because the four have worked together as a team before and the robot is fairly stupid — it won't think to disrupt their attempt. So, they decide their coordination attempts will be their secondary actions.

The gamemaster decides to make the action Complicated (10) just because it is a combat situation — no real problems from the robot, but they are being attacked, after all.

Each character generates a coordination total using his or her fire combat *skill values; because the coordination is the secondary action, they subtract -3. The results:*

Joe 12 - 3 = 9
Diane 13 - 3 = 10
Marco 19 - 3 = 16
René 14 - 3 = 11

So, even after adding in the multi-action modifier, three of them succeeded in coordinating. These three then roll to see if they hit (Joe, who failed to coordinate, can still roll his attack separately — he may still end up helping, but his attack is resolved separately). They obtain the following skill totals:

Diane: 17 - 2 = 15
Marco: 11 - 2 = 9
René: 14 - 2 = 12

So, of the three of them, Diane and René hit the robot with their shots. Diane had the skill total and got four result points versus the robot's dodge *of 11. The average damage value of René's and Diane's weapons is 16.*

Their final damage value is 24 (16, for the weapon, +4, for result points, +4 for the coordination bonus). They beat the robot's Toughness by four points — not much, but it's a start.

Example: *Two characters are attacking that same giant robot. They both succeed at coordinating, but only one character succeeds at the attack roll. The character who hit still gets to add +2 to his damage value even though he was the only one to hit the robot. The gamemaster describes the situation as "the robot tried to get out of the way of your shots — while it got out of the way of one shot, it veered directly into the path of the other shot, making it even more successful!"*

Coordinated Pushes: When the skill being coordinated is a push, there is one extra step. The total result points (with the Effect Modifiers) are read on the Push Table and the shock points are divided equally among each character who *attempted* the coordination. If five characters attempt to, say, lift a heavy weight and three succeed, check their result points on the Push Table.

While only three characters' rolls would count towards the actual *lifting* roll, the shock would be applied against *all five* characters who *attempted* to help.

• The Value System •

The *MasterBook* game system is built upon something called the *value system*. The value system is a tool gamemasters and players use to determine how much a character can lift, how long it takes a plane to fly across the country and countless other things. This system is a means of approximating these effects — by using it, you can get a rough idea of what "realistic" results would be.

The Value Chart

Fortunately, the values used in *MasterBook* are not simply numbers pulled out of thin air and given importance because some game designer thought they were important. An Attribute of 9 or a skill value of 12 or a car with a weight value of 15 *means something*. This is expressed by the *Value Chart*.

The Value Chart has two columns labeled "Value" and "Measure." The values, listed one to one hundred, are used throughout *MasterBook*. The measure is what those values mean. For example, a value of 10 has a measure of 100, and a value of 14 has a measure of 600.

These measurements are based on "real world" systems of measurement: seconds for time measurement, kilograms for mass and weight, and meters for distance. For example, the value 10 equals 100 kilograms, 100 seconds, or 100 meters, depending on what you are using the value system for. Kilograms, seconds, meters, and liters can all be converted to values on the Value Chart. In addition, using the Value Conversion Chart (on page 95), other measurements — pounds, minutes, days, feet, etc. — can all be converted easily.

When converting measurements to values, or vice versa, you'll occasionally need to make "value judgements." For example, if a character has a mass of 70 kilograms, that falls in between the values 8 and 9. In many cases, since the measurement is closer to the mass value of 8, you'll just use that as the mass value. But, if you need to make certain — say, another character can only lift something with a mass value of 8 or less — you might need to be *inclusive*. In that case, use the higher of the two split values — that way, you are sure to "include" the measurement in question.

Why this is Useful

There are several ways the Value Chart will help gamemasters and players. First off, character attributes can

VALUE CHART

Val.	Meas.	Val.	Meas.	Val.	Meas.
0	1	35	10 million	70	100 trillion
1	1.5	36	15 million	71	150 trillion
2	2.5	37	25 million	72	250 trillion
3	4	38	40 million	73	400 trillion
4	6	39	60 million	74	600 trillion
5	10	40	100 million	75	1 quadrillion
6	15	41	150 million	76	1.5 quadrillion
7	25	42	250 million	77	2.5 quadrillion
8	40	43	400 million	78	4 quadrillion
9	60	44	600 million	79	6 quadrillion
10	100	45	1 billion	80	10 quadrillion
11	150	46	1.5 billion	81	15 quadrillion
12	250	47	2.5 billion	82	25 quadrillion
13	400	48	4 billion	83	40 quadrillion
14	600	49	6 billion	84	60 quadrillion
15	1,000	50	10 billion	85	100 quadrillion
16	1,500	51	15 billion	86	150 quadrillion
17	2,500	52	25 billion	87	250 quadrillion
18	4,000	53	40 billion	88	400 quadrillion
19	6,000	54	60 billion	89	600 quadrillion
20	10,000	55	100 billion	90	1 quintillion
21	15,000	56	150 billion	91	1.5 quintillion
22	25,000	57	250 billion	92	2.5 quintillion
23	40,000	58	400 billion	93	4 quintillion
24	60,000	59	600 billion	94	6 quintillion
25	100,000	60	1 trillion	95	10 quintillion
26	150,000	61	1.5 trillion	96	15 quintillion
27	250,000	62	2.5 trillion	97	25 quintillion
28	400,000	63	4 trillion	98	40 quintillion
29	600,000	64	6 trillion	99	60 quintillion
30	1 million	65	10 trillion	100	100 quintillion
31	1.5 million	66	15 trillion		
32	2.5 million	67	25 trillion		
33	4 million	68	40 trillion		
34	6 million	69	60 trillion		

BENCHMARK CHART

Value	Time	Weight	Distance
0	Second	1 kilo	1 meter
2			Tallest human
3		Human baby	
9	Minute	Human female	
10		Human male	Football Field
11		Lion	City block
12		Brown Bear	
15		Small Car	Kilometer
16		Large Car	Mile
17		Elephant	
18	Hour		
20		Empty Truck	
22		APC	
23			Marathon race
24		Loaded Truck	
25	Day	Blue Whale	
27		Boeing 747	
28		C5A Galaxy	
29	Week	Tramp Freighter	
30		Destroyer	Length of Great Britain
32	Month	Six-flat building	Paris to Moscow
33		Fully loaded train	New York to L.A.
34			New York to London
35			London to Tokyo
38	Year		Circumference of Earth
39		Battleship	
41		Aircraft Carrier	
45		Loaded Oil Tanker	

MASTERBOOK

MEASURE CONVERSION CHART

Measure is in units of	Value Modifier
Seconds	0
Minutes	+9
Hours	+18
Days	+25
Weeks	+29
Months	+32
Years	+38

Measure is in units of	Value Modifier
Meters per round	0
MPH	+3
KMH	+2
Kilos	0
Pounds	-2
Tons	+15
Meters	0
Feet	-3
Kilometers	+15
Miles	+16

often be converted to measurements.

A character's MRG (movement rate, ground) value of 7 translates directly — the character can move 25 meters in a round.

Likewise, you can use this system to determine difficulties in the game. To know how difficult something is to lift, make the value into the difficulty number. For example, a rock that weighs 400 kilograms has a value of 13. A character trying to lift that rock would have a DN of 13.

Large numbers can be converted to values, or values can be converted to large numbers to make rules judgements easy. For example, let's say your character's car has a mass of 4500 kilograms. That's a split value of either 18 or 19 (it's closer to the value 18). For some reason, you need to know the mass value of the car — maybe it is falling on someone, and you need to determine the damage value. In that case, you'd probably use the mass value of 18.

Note that, since the Value Chart is based on a logarithmic scale, it can make multiplication and division of large numbers much easier. For example, if you needed to know the *approximate* measurement of 150,000 times 150, you don't have to multiply 150,000 times 150. Just *add* the values of both numbers. The measure 150,000 has a value of 26. The measure 150 has a value of 11. Add the two values together: 26+11=37. And the value 37 has a measurement of 25,000,000. If you take a calculator and multiply this out, you get 22,500,000. That's pretty close — in most cases, it should be close enough.

Division works the same way, only you *subtract* the value to be divided from the divisional value. One hundred and fifty thousand divided by 150 is, using the Value Chart, 26-11=15, or a measurement of 1,000. That's right on.

This system is not exact, but it's great for quick-and-dirty solutions.

How Values are Determined

Values are either determined by measurement conversion, assigned through use of other rules, or assigned from examples and playtest. Here are some examples, though, that you can use as a frame of reference.

You can use values to determine values, especially if you know a few simple mathematical formulas. For example, if you have a rock that weighs 10 kilograms, it has a mass value of 5. If that rock was sitting on the top of a building that was 60 meters high, the value of its height displacement would be 9. Let's now say that the rock falls off the building and strikes someone. How do you determine the damage value of the rock? Simple — add the height value to the mass value and there you are. The damage value of the rock falling from the height is 9+5=14. (By the way, you would also want to add in a *bonus number* to account for random factors, but that is described below.)

The formula used there is *mass*, plus *velocity*, equals *force*. This formula is based on scientific fact. Other scientific formulas can be used by gamemasters to approximate other effects — we will include those formulas as they become necessary (this is just an example).

Using the Value Chart in this way makes conversions to game terms and approximations easy — damage values especially.

For example, a character with a mass of 60 kilograms falls 100 meters. How much damage does he take? On the Value Chart, 100 meters reads as a value of 10. He has a mass of 60, or a value of 9. The character takes a base amount of damage equal to 10 + 9 = 19, plus a bonus number.

This works the same way for approximating weapon damage. How much damage does a thrown rock do? Well, the force of the throw should be equal to the character's Strength. The speed at which the rock is thrown would be the character's Strength value minus the rock's mass value (since the heavier the rock, the slower it's thrown). A character with a Strength of 10 who throws a rock with a mass value of 1 would do 10 + 1 = 11 damage value to the target (plus the bonus number).

Really Large Values

A possible flaw in the value systems occurs when people use very high measurements all the time. Split values — measurements that fall in between one value and another — occur more and more often. There's a big difference between the numbers 400,000 and 600,000, but they are only one value apart. Is this a problem?

Not really. When you get up into numbers that large, the difference doesn't usually make that much of a difference — if it does, you can just pull out your trusty calculator. And, in some situations, it helps. For example, if you drop a rock that has a mass of 400,000 kilograms or one that has a mass of 600,000 kilograms on some poor slob's head, is there that much of a difference? The damage value would be increased by only one point, but that makes sense — at that point, it is much harder to *make* a difference.

On the other hand, if you had a vehicle that could transport you 500,000 meters before it ran out of fuel, that number falls in the middle of the two values. If you were trying to "push" the fuel consumption of the vehicle so you could get farther, you'd have to use the lesser value and go from there.

Basically, most of the time the Value Chart will work for you. Occasionally, it will work against what you are trying to do. When it does, don't use it.

CHAPTER FOUR

• Skills and Skill Use •

Skills are one of the most important elements of *MasterBook:* they define how good characters are at certain tasks. This chapter provides all the related rules on skills and their use in the game.

What skills are available depends on the genre or game setting you are playing in — *energy weapons*, for example, might be available to characters in pulp fiction and science fiction game settings, but not to characters whose worlds are high fantasy ... at least not usually.

The skill descriptions are categorized by Attribute. Characters who do not have adds in a particular skill will often be able to use an Attribute to attempt an action; this is called an *untrained* use.

Some skills cannot be used *untrained*, and these are noted in their descriptions. On the Master Skill List these skills are listed in bold.

Other skills are *macroskills:* they are really a grouping of many different skills under one category name. They are noted on the Master Skill List with an asterisk (*). Characters must select a *focus* for each macroskill — each focus is really a separate skill. Focuses are listed under the skill's descriptions. These listings aren't complete: it is very likely that many more possible focuses exist for most macroskills.

Possible *specializations* (always optional) are also listed with each skill. A character may choose to learn the general skill (or a macroskill focus), and then learn specializations in that skill. A character might even forgo the learning of the general skill and learn only specialization(s) instead — but only to a limited degree (as explained later). Often, the specialization list is not exhaustive: gamemasters should feel free to create new specializations to fit their particular game setting.

Skills are basically used as noted in Chapter Three, "The Rules." The gamemaster sets a difficulty number and the character rolls a bonus number, adding it to their skill value. The skill description covers all the rules necessary for using the individual skill, including sample difficulty numbers and modifiers. Several skills have specific results or special rules for their use and are noted under the skill's description.

Note: When modifiers are given in this chapter, they are always modifiers to the *difficulty number*. A "+2" modifier makes a skill use *harder*, not easier.

• MasterBook Skill List •

AGILITY
- Acrobatics
- Beast Riding*
- Climbing
- Dodge
- **Flight***
- Long Jumping
- Maneuver
- **Martial Arts***
- **Mechanical Maneuver***
- Melee Combat
- Melee Parry
- Running
- Stealth
- Swimming
- Unarmed Combat
- Unarmed Parry

DEXTERITY
- Energy Weapons
- Fire Combat
- **Gunnery***
- **Heavy Energy Weapons***
- **Heavy Weapons***
- **Lock Picking**
- Missile Weapons*
- Prestidigitation
- Thrown Weapons
- **Vehicle Piloting***

ENDURANCE
- **Resist Shock**

STRENGTH
- Lifting

INTELLECT
- **Apportation***
- Camouflage
- **Computer Ops**
- Deduction
- **Demolitions**
- **Divination***
- **Forgery**
- First Aid
- Linguistics
- Navigation*
- Perception
- **Psionic Manipulation**
- **Science***
- **Super-science**
- **Teaching***
- Tracking
- Trick

MIND
- **Artist***
- Business
- **Conjuration***
- **Hypnotism**
- **Language***
- **Medicine**
- Scholar*

CHARISMA
- Charm
- Disguise
- Persuasion
- **Summoning***
- Taunt

CONFIDENCE
- **Alteration***
- Con
- Faith*
- Interrogation
- Intimidation
- Streetwise
- Survival*
- **Willpower**

* Macroskill; must select a focus
Boldface: Skill cannot be used *untrained.*

The *MasterBook* Skill List

The *MasterBook* Skill List is a list of all the basic skills available. *MasterBook* WorldBooks and supplements will include more skills specifically tailored for use in those game settings, but this list is fairly complete.

Note that some skills, as mentioned before, are not appropriate for all game settings. Many of these skills are noted here, but you should always clear the selection of any skills with the gamemaster. Only the gamemaster will know if particular skills are appropriate for particular game settings.

• Agility •

Agility skills are those that require physical coordination, balance, and/or speed.

Acrobatics

Sample Specializations: Floor maneuvers, tightrope walking, swinging from ropes, reducing damage from falls

Acrobatics is a special kind of maneuver — but not a *maneuver* specialization — that emphasizes a more theatric, rather than combative, style of movement. Circus performers use *acrobatics*, as do gymnasts. For more "practical" examples, cat-burglars and second-story thieves use *acrobatics*. Many martial artists learn *acrobatics* to enhance their physical abilities.

In combat, *acrobatics* can be used in place of the *maneuver* skill on the Maneuver Column, but add +2 to the DN of all actions. Cards can be gained from its use when *maneuver* is an approved action.

In addition, a character can use *acrobatics* to lessen the damage taken from a fall (see "Falling Damage"): this skill helps characters "absorb" some of the impact to lessen damage.

• Acrobatics DNs and Modifiers •

Condition	DN	DN Mod
Swinging on a rope over a pit	6	–
Reducing damage from a fall	8*	–
Performing a back-flip	12	–
Performing a combat *maneuver*		+2
Resisting a combat *maneuver*		+2

*Find the result points on the General Success Column. For every success level, reduce the damage of the fall by one result point

Beast Riding*

Sample Focuses: *Horse, camel, pegasus, unicorn, elephant, giant spider, dolphin* and whatever other "beasts" are appropriate to your game setting.

Sample Specializations: Certain types of maneuvers performed on the beast

A character who takes *beast riding* must select a focus in a type of beast. The gamemaster has the final say as to how specific the character's focus must be, but similar animals should require similar knowledge to ride. The general skill *beast riding: horse* might include all types of horses, ponies, mules, and donkeys, but fantastic animals like unicorns and pegasi might need their own separate focuses.

Using *beast riding* allows the character to push the beast to faster speeds (using the "Push" rules in Chapter Three, "The Rules"). It is also used when the character attempts a *maneuver* with the beast and is even used for the character's *dodge* skill when missile attacks are directed at the character and the beast.

The Arbitrary Difficulty Number chart (see Chapter Three, "The Rules") should be used to determine different difficulty numbers based on the beast — to make a horse jump a fence, for example, might be an Average (8) action, but making a camel perform the same maneuver might be much harder (a DN of 14 would not be out of line), and it would be better off to let an elephant run through the fence (elephants can't jump).

Climbing

Sample Specializations: Rope, wall, mountain

This skill allows a character to scale vertical or near-vertical surfaces. Characters move at their MRC ("Movement Rate, Climbing") as determined in Chapter One, "Character Generation." A character may "Push" his climbing rate (see Chapter Three, "The Rules"). When a character moves at his base rate, the difficulty number for moving along a particular surface can be easily determined using the chart below.

Appropriate tools and climbing gear can modify *climbing* totals — and lack of proper tools may hinder certain climbing activity. The gamemaster will inform you of any modifiers you receive for special conditions.

Falling: Any character who fails any *climbing* roll by more than two points falls. See "Falling Damage" in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

Being Careful: A character who opts to move at only one meter a round while *climbing* is "being careful." He can subtract two from the DN.

• Climbing Chart •

Surface/Condition	Difficulty/Modifier
Ladder	0
Tree	5
Cracked wall, lots of handholds	13
Wall with handholds/natural rock	15
Smooth stone, metal	21
Slick surface	+2
Less than a 90-degree angle	-2
Less than a 60-degress angle	-4
Less than a 45-degree angle	-6
Rain	+5
Darkness	+5
Character is pushing	+3
Character is "being careful"	-2

Dodge

Sample Specializations: Types of missile attacks (*fire combat, missile weapons, etc.*)

The use of *dodge* is detailed in Chapter Three, "The Rules" under "Damage." It is used to get out of the way of any ranged attack *(missile weapons, thrown weapons, fire combat, energy weapons,* etc.).

Flight*

Use: If used *untrained*, +8 to Agility DNs
Sample Focuses: *Rocket pack, wings, flight power*, etc.
Sample Specializations: Certain types of maneuvers

This skill is one few characters will have. Only characters with the natural ability to fly (winged characters or those with strange flight powers) need *flight* (and only they can take the *flight* skill). And, they must take a focus in *flight — rocket pack, wings, flight power*, or something else that is appropriate.

Flight is used like *maneuver* and it is a movement rate skill. A character who can fly can use *flight* to maneuver in combat, to *dodge*, and to perform aerial acrobatics. The character will also have a base MRF ("Movement Rate, Flight") that he can push using this skill and the "Push" rules.

Gamemasters should determine the difficulty numbers for different *flight* maneuvers based on the type of flight and the Arbitrary DN Scale on in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

Note: Characters who are "forced" to fly or who must attempt it during desperate circumstances (say, a character is in a zero-gravity chamber and he wants to get to the other side but he can't touch any of the walls) can attempt to fly using their base Agility with a DN modifier of +8.

Long Jumping

Sample Specializations: Broad jumping, running long jump

Every character has a jumping movement rate (MRJ). Having the *long jumping* skill helps a character to "push" past that limit (use the "Push" rules in Chapter Three, "The Rules").

Modifiers to the *long jumping* maneuver are based on the terrain and other factors. They are all added to the difficulty number (the character's *long jumping* movement rate) and are cumulative.

• Long Jumping Modifiers •

Base Difficulty	Character's MRJ
Modifiers	**DN Modifier**
Flat surface to flat surface	+0
Unlimited landing area	-1
Limited landing area	+2
Almost no landing area	+4
Rough or unsteady terrain	+2 (or more)
Uphill (more than 30°)	+4
Carrying more than 50% of own weight	+4
Carrying 75% of own weight	+6
Carrying 100% of own weight	+8

Long jumping can also be used when a character does not have to push his movement. In that case, the DN is determined using the Arbitrary DN Scale in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Modifiers can be determined using this chart and the Modifier Comparison Chart in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

Maneuver

Sample Specializations: Combat, treacherous terrain

Maneuver is a skill primarily performed in combat. Basically, a character can use *maneuver* to cause his opponent to fall off-balance or even injure himself (though it is not primarily a skill used to directly cause injury). It is explained in "Maneuvers" in Chapter Three, "The Rules": results are read on the Maneuver Column of the Success Chart.

The *maneuver* skill can also be to resist being *maneuvered* upon. When another character *maneuvers* on your character, you can perform an *active defense* using your *maneuver* skill. You both generate bonus numbers (yours is a minimum of +3). If yours is higher, then the other person fails to "fake you out."

Finally, *maneuver* can also be used to perform physical actions in a non-combat manner, much like *acrobatics* (see above). Your character can use *maneuver* to keep from falling down when the ship under him roils in a turbulent sea, or when he is jogging along over unsteady terrain to keep from slipping.

Martial Arts*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: *Boxing, judo, karate, kendo, kick-fighting, ninjitsu, wrestling,* etc.
Sample Specializations: Particular attacks or maneuvers

Martial arts covers a wide range of physical combat skills. Kicking, punching, throwing (an object or even another character), or using certain weapons can all be defined under *martial arts*.

A character who selects *martial arts* must select a focus. There are some focuses listed here, but gamemasters should feel free to create new ones. All focuses have different effects on your character's abilities. Every *martial arts* skill lists how it can be used and what the effects are.

Boxing: This *martial art* focuses on the upper body and the fists and arms. The character who uses *martial arts: boxing* can substitute this skill value for *unarmed combat* when attacking. When defending, he can use it as *unarmed parry*. The boxer can also use an "uppercut" or "haymaker" as an *all-out* attack. He gains +3 to his Strength if he hits, but his opponent(s) gain +1 to hit him during their next actions. The character can also perform a "combination" — he can perform two attacks versus the same opponent but at no multi-action penalty.

Judo: This style implements throws and holds and is very defensive in nature. A character with *martial arts: judo* can perform a *passive defense* versus any melee attack, unarmed attack or missile attack even if he is unarmed. In addition, the martial artist has a minimum bonus number of +4 when *actively defending*. Finally, the character may opt to use his judo as if it were the *maneuver* skill during combat — but he can choose *after* he determines the result points of the attack whether to read the result on the "Damage" or "Maneuver" column of the Success Chart.

Karate: Punching, kicking, and striking are *karate* attacks. It is very similar to boxing, only the whole body is used. This *martial artist* gains +2 to any unarmed attack, and the skill can be used the same as *unarmed parry*.

Kendo: This skill utilizes swords (usually katanas). The character should be quick and graceful. When using a sword (or two swords) the character gains +2 to his skill value when attacking, and he can use the skill as *melee parry*. Kendo

artists also gain +2 when they attempt to disarm armed opponents (a *trick shot)* but they are subject to all other modifiers.

Kick-fighting: Kick-fighters develop their legs as boxers develop their arms. A kick-fighter adds +2 to his skill total for all kick attacks and he can use this *martial art* as *unarmed parry*. He can also use this skill to *maneuver*.

Ninjitsu: The actual fighting side of this secret style is based on sneak attacks and surprise. A character with *ninjitsu* gains an additional +2 when attacking using this skill as *unarmed combat* or *melee combat* if he has any type of surprise. He may also use this skill to *maneuver* in combat.

Wrestling: This skill focus is used to immobilize opponents and then (perhaps) hurt them. In some ways, it is similar to judo. The character may use his *martial arts: wrestling* skill when trying to grapple another character. If he succeeds in beating the character's Agility or appropriate defensive skill *(unarmed parry*, usually), then he has grappled him and may read the result points on the "Maneuver" column of the Success Chart. During his next action, he can generate a skill total at +2 to his skill total and read the result points on *either* the Maneuver or Damage Column — his choice, before results are determined. To break free of a wrestler's grip, the victim needs to either generate a *solid* success using his Agility versus the wrestler's most recent skill value, or a Strength total higher than the wrestler's Strength plus his *martial arts: wrestling* adds. Finally, the character can use *martial arts: wrestling* to defend against wrestling or grappling-type attacks (including *judo*).

Martial arts focuses are almost always better than their non-*martial arts* equivalents not because of their bonuses, but because they can usually be used for other things. Normally, a character who learns *unarmed combat* also has to learn *unarmed parry* to defend himself. A character with *martial arts: boxing* can use his training to attack and defend.

Characters who learn *martial arts* and other skills that they can substitute their *martial arts* for may always use the *higher* of the two skills. For example, a character who knows *martial arts: karate* at three adds and *unarmed parry* at six adds would choose to defend using *unarmed parry* when appropriate — otherwise he'd be worse off.

A final note on *martial arts*: This is an *overview*. Gamemasters and players who know the intricacies of real martial arts styles should feel more than free to modify or replace the styles listed here. But remember — just because a character learns *martial arts: karate* doesn't make him a martial artist. Additional skill adds will make the character proficient. At three or less adds, the character is just an amateur.

Mechanical Maneuver*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: Specific type of vehicle
Sample Specialization: Types of maneuvers

This skill covers high tech battlesuits and similar types of weapons; it does not cover vehicles such as cars, planes or boats. The character must choose a focus based on what type of equipment he has available. The *mechanical maneuver* skill allows the character to use powered armor or other mechanical exoskeleton-type equipment when available (in a pulp fiction genre, it could be an oversized battle-suit; in a high tech setting, it could be a giant humanoid robot exoskeleton). Otherwise, the skill is used exactly like the *maneuver* skill (above).

Melee Combat

Sample Specializations: Knife, sword, club, mace

This skill covers all melee weapons (such as swords, knives, clubs, battle-axes, poleaxes, and so forth). Characters use this skill when they wish to attack with these weapons (as outlined in Chapter Three, "The Rules"); characters wishing to defend with these weapons use *melee parry*.

Melee Parry

Sample Specializations: Certain types of weapons used by the character (knife, sword, club, foil)

This skill covers all melee weapons (such as swords, knives, clubs, battle-axes, poleaxes, and so forth). Characters use this skill when they wish to defend with these weapons (as outlined in Chapter Three, "The Rules"); characters wishing to attack with these weapons use *melee combat.*

Running

Sample Specializations: Sprints, long distances

Running can be used to "Push" the limits of your MRG (Movement Rate, Ground). Simply generate a bonus number and add it to your *running* skill and measure it versus the difficulty (normally your MRG or the MAX, whichever is lower, plus modifiers).

• Running Modifiers •

Condition	Modifier to DN
Smooth track	+0
Rough terrain	+2
Yielding obstructions (high grass, brush)	+1
Unyielding obstructions (wreckage, boulders)	+2
Uphill (less than 30 degrees)	+3
Downhill (less than 15 degrees)	-1
Downhill (15 to 30 degrees)	+2

When *running*, a character increases his movement for ten seconds. If the character fails in his Push attempt, he runs at his normal movement and takes no shock. If he fails by ten result points or more, he falls down (is *knocked down*) and takes two shock points.

A character can run at normal movement for a number of rounds equal to his Endurance. After that, he takes two shock points a round from fatigue. If the character has the specialization *running: long distance*, he can increase the number of rounds he can move at his maximum MRG by one for each add.

Stealth

Sample Specializations: Hiding; sneaking; stalking

Characters use *stealth* to hide from other characters, surveillance devices, etc.; to sneak up on each other; and to follow each other without being noticed. Characters who use *stealth* try not only to be quiet, but to be *unnoticed*. In a large crowd, for example, a character may be stealthy by being loud and boisterous — he is merely "blending in with the crowd."

The difficulty number for a *stealth* roll is usually the target's *perception* or Intellect value. Surveillance equipment may also

have Intellect values and there are modifiers depending upon the environment the character is in. The chart lists *some* possible difficulty number modifiers. The modifiers are added to the difficulty number of the *stealth* maneuver (the *perception* or Intellect of the target).

Note that the modifiers listed in the chart presume that the target is not equipped with special apparatus to defeat situations. For example, a character who waits for darkness to sneak by an infrared/ultraviolet/motion-sensitive camera is not helping matters. Likewise, certain surveillance and security devices are available that defeat many of these situations.

• Stealth Chart •

Condition	DN Modifier
Heavy rain/snow	-1
Dawn or dusk, fog, trees, crowd, etc.	-2
Night	-3
Inattentive observer	-3
Dense concealment (thick jungle)	-3
Many distractions (a party, a parade, a combat)	-4
Attentive observer	+3
Open terrain	+3
Good lighting	+4
Several observers	use "Many-on-One" Chart

Swimming

Sample Specializations: Endurance, sprint

Swimming can be used to push your character's MRS (Movement Rate, Swimming) past its limits and to keep your character from drowning.

The Base DN for *swimming* is 3. It is modified by the chart below:

• Swimming Modifiers •

Condition	Modifier
Smooth water	+0
Rough water (bad weather, etc.)	+2
Nasty undercurrent (as in many large rivers)	+3
Character is not dressed for swimming	+2
Character is carrying 25% of own mass	+2
Character is carrying 50% of own mass	+4
Character is carrying 100% of own mass	+8
Character is trying to lifesave a conscious character	+6*
Character has swim fins, water wings, etc.	-1 to -5
Character can breathe water	-3

*This modifier is *not* cumulative with the mass modifiers, and an unconscious character does not count as mass

Paul Daly

Drowning: When a character fails a *swimming* roll by more than eight points, he is *drowning*. He takes two shock during the first round, and he must make a *swimming* roll equal to the original DN plus two. If he fails *at all*, he takes two more shock and then he must beat a DN increased by *four*. This progression continues until the character saves himself, is saved, or takes enough shock to go unconscious. At that point, the character takes one shock a round until the total number of shock equals his Endurance. Then, he dies.

Characters who can breathe underwater (because of a Background Advantage, most likely, or by mechanical assistance) don't drown.

Unarmed Combat

Sample Specializations: Types of attacks (punch, kick, sweep, all-out)

Unarmed combat covers any unarmed attacks, such as punches, kicks, bites and so forth. Some animals are equipped with claws, fangs and other nasty weapons — these also use *unarmed combat. Unarmed combat* is used in combat as described in Chapter Three, "The Rules." A character's damage with *unarmed combat* is their Strength. Characters wishing to defend unarmed use the *unarmed parry* skill.

Unarmed Parry

Sample Specializations: Versus *unarmed combat*, versus *melee combat*

Unarmed parry covers defending against attacks without any weapons. *Unarmed parry* is used in combat as described in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Characters wishing to attack unarmed use the *unarmed combat* skill.

• Dexterity •

Dexterity skills, like Agility skills, require coordination and speed. However, they are dependent more on hand-eye coordination than physical adeptness.

Energy Weapons

Sample Specializations: Laser rifle or pistol, plasma weapons, blaster pistol or rifle

Energy weapons covers lasers, blasters, plasma weapons, sonic weapons and many other "futuristic" or "science fantasy" weapons. It is used in combat as outlined in "Damage" in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Characters avoid *energy weapons* attacks with the *dodge* skill.

Energy weapons can only be used by characters who have access to high-tech weaponry or super-science gadgets.

Fire Combat

Sample Specializations: Rifle, pistol, submachine guns, shotguns

This skill covers all guns (rifles, pistols, shotguns, machine guns) and slug-throwers, including breech loaders, black powder pistols, muskets and so forth. It is used in combat as outlined in "Damage" in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Characters avoid *fire combat* attacks with the *dodge* skill.

Gunnery*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: *Catapults, ballistae, ship's cannon,* various starship guns, etc.
Sample Specializations: None

Gunnery covers large, vehicle-mounted weapons (tanks, catapults, ship's cannon, and similar devices). It is used in combat as outlined in "Damage" in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Characters avoid *gunnery* attacks with the *dodge* skill.

Heavy Energy Weapons*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: *Heavy repeating lasers, pulse cannons,* and any other single type of heavy energy weapon.
Sample Specializations: None

Heavy energy weapons covers large, vehicle-mounted energy weapons (laser cannons and similar devices). It is used in combat as outlined in "Damage" in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Characters avoid *heavy energy weapons* attacks with the *dodge* skill. *Heavy energy weapons* can only be used by characters who have access to high technology or super-science. As an optional rule, an *untrained* character may fire a heavy energy weapon at a DN modifier of +4, but the character cannot reload.

Heavy Weapons*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: *Heavy machine guns, mortars, grenade launchers,* etc.
Sample Specializations: None

Heavy weapons covers large weapons such as heavy machine guns, mortars, SAM missile launchers, grenade launchers and other large caliber slug throwing weapons and indirect fire weapons. In general, it covers anything that is larger than a personal weapon but not quite large enough to *require* a vehicle (although many heavy weapons are mounted on vehicles). It is used in combat as outlined in " Damage" in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Characters avoid *heavy weapons* attacks with the *dodge* skill.

Note: As an optional rule, an *untrained* character may fire a heavy weapon at a DN modifier of +4, but the character cannot reload.

Lock Picking

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Specializations: Door opening; safecracking

In order to use this skill, the character almost always needs tools. Tools can include a screwdriver, chisel and hammer; acids and small explosives; a soldering kit with a blowtorch; electrical tools and batteries; or a bent hairpin — it depends on

• Lock Picking Chart* •

Sample Locks	Difficulty Number
Typical interior door	9
Padlock	12
Wall Safe/Deadbolt	15
Vault	22
Condition	**Modifier**
Poorly constructed lock	-3
Well constructed lock	+1
Military or Security lock	+3
High-Security lock	+5
No time limit	-2
Unlimited, appropriate tools	-1 to -5
Lock blueprints and diagrams	-2

*This chart is for mechanical locks. Electronic locks often require *science: electronics* to manipulate

the gamemaster's judgement and the situation. There are very few locks that can be picked without some sort of tool.

A character without the *lock picking* skill may actually try it if she wishes, but must take an automatic +8 to the difficulty number. This is cumulative with the modifiers below.

Lock picking difficulties depend on the type of lock and the general manufacturing quality. Characters may take *science: construct lock* as a skill, but, for the most part, characters only need to worry about generalities.

Characters can also use their *lock picking* skill to defeat traps and alarm systems around locks. Normally, if a character does not check a lock for surveillance systems or traps, she automatically trips the alarm (this depends upon the individual lock) but an alarm can usually be defeated if it is detected using *perception* or Intellect at the same difficulty as the *lock picking* DN. Usually, that is also the difficulty number for removing the trap or alarm.

Missile Weapons

Sample Focuses: *Bows, slings, crossbows, slingshots,* and other weapons that use simple mechanical power.

Sample Specializations: Special types of missile weapons.

This skill covers bows, slings, crossbows and other simple mechanical and strength powered weapons. It is used as a combat skill as described in "Damage," in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Characters use *dodge* to get out of the way of *missile weapons* attacks. Missile weapons tend to be low-tech and powered by a character's muscle.

Prestidigitation

Specializations: Stage magic; card dealing; pick pocketing; concealing items

Normally associated with stage magic and the rabbit-in-the-hat trick, *prestidigitation* is not only sleight-of-hand, but the art of misdirection as well. A character has to have nimble fingers to use this skill, but also timing and presence of mind. Fooling a mark is not nearly as important as making certain the mark doesn't know he's been fooled.

Prestidigitation is used against the observer's *perception* or Intellect. Modifiers vary from situation to situation, but there are some sample modifiers that can be applied to the target's skill value listed in the chart.

Prestidigitation is often used following a *trick*, *con*, *charm* or other supporting skill. For example, a character may use a *trick* to distract a mark, and then pick the mark's pocket using *prestidigitation*. The gamemaster should modify the *prestidigitation* difficulty according to how attentive the target (and surrounding onlookers) are.

Using the Trick Column works very well in some *prestidigitation* situations. For example, if two characters are gambling, and one is cheating using *prestidigitation*, the difficulty number would be either the target's Intellect, *perception*, or *scholar: gambling* skill. Rolling on the Trick Column would affect how well the target could play during the next round.

To determine whether or not (or when) the character performing the act of *prestidigitation* is perceived, go by success levels. On a *minimal* success, he may still be perceived — if the target is watchful or observant. If the prestidigitator gets an *solid* success, only a watchful target would have a chance of noticing. On a *good* success, it is unlikely the character will notice he has been a victim for another round or so. On a *superior* or higher success, the gamemaster will have to decide when the character is alerted by the situation.

• Prestidigitation Chart •

Modifier	Situation
+5	Watchful target that is ready to catch the prestidigitator
+3	Observant target
+1	Suspicious target
+1 to +5	Difficult act (picking a zipped pocket, or hiding a large pistol on one's body)
-3	Unobservant target
-2	Confused or distracted target
-1 to -5	Simple act (palming a very small object or sliding a hand into one's own pocket unnoticed)

Thrown Weapons

Specializations: Daggers, shuriken, rocks

Thrown weapons covers any weapon that is thrown, including grenades, daggers, shuriken, rocks and so forth. It is used as a combat skill, as outlined in Chapter Three, "The Rules," and a target uses *dodge* to avoid the attack.

Vehicle Piloting*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*

Sample Focuses: *Car/truck, motorcycle, beast-powered cart, motorboat,* etc. The gamemaster should distinguish how broad a generality to make.

Sample Specializations: Types of maneuvers (speed pushing, off-road)

This macroskill covers the operation of all types of vehicles. Each focus should be defined according to the needs of the game world, from very broadly (boats) to very specific (star fighter, star freighter, star cruiser, etc.).

It is up to the gamemaster, however, to determine how complex the vehicle is and how hard it is for an *untrained*

• Vehicle Piloting: • Untrained Modifiers

Vehicle is:	Modifier:
Very commonly used in game setting (RW*: Car, small truck, bicycle)	+2
Commonly used (RW: Motorcycle, motorboat)	+4
Moderately common (RW: Speedboat, horse and cart, APC)	+5
Uncommon (RW: Ultralight, tank, hang-glider, parachute)	+7
Unusual (RW: Prop plane, glider)	+9
Rare (RW: Jet, submarine)	+11
Exotic (RW: Fighter plane, space shuttle)	+13
Not native to game setting	+3**

* RW stands for "real world." The comparisons were all made in a real world setting so that you can extrapolate into other settings easily

** This modifier is cumulative with the above modifiers.

person to use it. In many cases, if a character does not have skill adds in a particular focus, he should not be able to attempt the use of the skill. In others, there should be anything from a major to a minor modifier to the DN.

Each vehicle will normally be rated for its speed. Characters can make skill attempts to "Push" its speed, as well as make complex maneuvers. Characters will also make skill rolls for chases.

A lot of this judgement is based on what vehicles are "typical" for the game setting. For example, in a real world game setting, four-wheeled vehicles (cars) are the most common vehicles available. Characters who come from backgrounds that suggest they are familiar with such vehicles should only receive penalties when performing speed pushes or complex maneuvers. A character from a real world environment would, on the other hand, have a hard time using a *beast-powered* vehicle (like a horse and cart) with no difficulty. In a high fantasy setting, where these vehicles are fairly common, the modifier for *untrained* use would be much less.

Use the chart to determine some DN modifiers based on the "common/uncommon" nature of the vehicles for *untrained* use. Remember, "common" vehicles are vehicles that most people have an opportunity to use, not merely "see" all the time. An airplane is a common sight in a real world setting, but not one that most people can use.

For example, a character with *vehicle piloting: car/truck* could probably drive anything from a regular car to a moving van about equally well — but an eighteen-wheeler would be a different skill.

When trying to push a vehicle for speed, the character generates a skill value equal to a DN defined by the vehicle description. The result points are usually read on the Value Chart; convert the value to a number of meters and add that to the vehicle's speed value for that round.

• Endurance & Strength •

Endurance

Endurance is an attribute that is almost always "used" unconsciously. However, a character may train to be more hardy or more resistant to certain types of physical stress.

Resist Shock

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Specialization: None

This skill is used in a special way. It simply adds to a character's Endurance, increasing the amount of shock they can take before passing unconscious.

Optional Rule: Gamemaster may rule that characters may not have more adds in *resist shock* than their Endurance Attribute.

Strength

The character's physical power can be directed better when skills are learned that enhance control.

Lifting

Sample Specializations: Power lifting, bench press

The character can use his *lifting* skill to lift great weights, as described under the "Push" rules in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

Note: In game settings that are more "realistic," gamemaster may want to impose limits on how much a Push can help a character improve his Lifting Capacity. As a general rule, no character in a realistic game setting should be allowed, even for such a short burst as a *lifting* attempt, to lift more than 600 kilograms. This is only a little outside the realm of believability, so it can be used as an overall limit.

• Intellect •

These skills are a reflection of practice rather than learned knowledge (though learned knowledge is often important too). Puzzle-solving and deductive skills are under Intellect.

Apportation*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: Depends upon game world
Sample Specializations: Specific spells

Apportation is a *special effects* skill (see Chapter Six, "Special Effects"). It is used to produce magical special effects. *Apportation* is available only in game settings where magic is used.

In some cases, *apportation* is a macroskill where a focus must be taken. The focus of the skill depends on the types of magic used in the world. For example, if alchemy is used in a particular game setting, then *alchemy* could be used as a focus. If you do not have a WorldBook, you may want to use *apportation* without focuses.

Apportation governs magic involving *movement*. For example, a telekinesis spell, by which a character could "grab" an object and move it using magic, would be an *apportation* spell. Spells that restrict movement could also be *apportation* spells.

When casting an *apportation* spell, the character generates an *apportation* skill total and tries to beat the Difficulty Number of the special effect. If the *apportation* skill total is higher than the DN, then the spell works (to some extent). Subtract the result points from the spell's Feedback; the character takes any remaining Feedback as damage on the Damage Column.

Camouflage

Sample Specializations: Natural; using man-made tools

The base DN to *camouflage* an object (hide it from view) is the size value of the object. You can determine an object's size value by adding its length value to its width value to its height value. A typical car could be three meters long, 1.5 meters high and two meters wide. The appropriate values are three, one, and two. The DN would be 6.

The result points of the *camouflage* total then become the DN needed to spot the hidden object. If a character hiding a car generates a skill total of 18, that's 12 result points. The *perception* or Intellect total needed to spot the object is 12.

The same modifiers found on the "Stealth Chart" (see above) can modify the DN of the *perception* total needed as well. Also, the tools used to *camouflage* the object might make a difference. If a character were trying to hide his jeep in the jungle, and the jeep was camouflage-color, and the character was using jungle-brush to hide it, then the DN of the *perception* would go up considerably. Use the Modifier Comparison Chart in Chapter Three, "The Rules" to judge other modifiers.

Computer Ops

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Specializations: Brands of computers, types of actions

Computer ops is the skill used to *operate* and *program* a computer. It also governs the use of programs. Gamemasters who get into game settings where computers are common may even want *computer ops* to be a macroskill, with focuses being in particular styles of programming.

In general, *computer ops* can be used to program computers and to access information. Since computers can be so widely diverse in operation and programming, the DNs and modifiers will have to be determined by the gamemaster using the Arbitrary DN Scale in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

Computer ops should only be selected by characters from game settings that have computers.

Deduction

Specializations: Types of deductive reasoning

A character can use *deduction* to analyze evidence found at a crime scene, or to put the pieces of a mental (or physical) puzzle together. The Arbitrary DN Scale in Chapter Three, "The Rules" is usually used for determining difficulty numbers, though a character who has certain types of skills (such as *science: master criminal)* might use his skills to eliminate evidence.

When analyzing objects or clues and using *deduction* to figure out how they were used, what their purposes are, or what importance they have in a puzzle, you can use the following modifiers.

• Deduction Modifier Chart •

Physical Evidence	Modifier to DN
Object is familiar and evidence is fairly clear (a knife at a murder scene, lock picks near an open door)	-4
Object is reasonably familiar or evidence is only partly clear (a bloodstain outside a closet where a body is hidden)	-2
Evidence is reasonably obscure (water droplets on the floor forming a trail from the door to the window)	+2
Evidence is unusual or with no apparent meaning (a warm candle wick indicating that someone was here; the refrigerator is humming, showing that someone opened it recently)	+4

The types of evidence are wide and varied, and, unless the character performing *deduction* is roleplaying well, the DNs should be high in most cases. Also, the Success Level chart should be used to determine how much information the character obtains. A *minimal* success should yield very little helpful information, while higher success levels should let the character draw more and more conclusions.

What a character does with the information he *deduces* is always up to the player.

Example: *Oscar Marsh, a detective, is at a murder scene. The player, Ted, announces that Oscar is going to "look for clues" regarding the murderer's identity. Since Ted did not say what Oscar is looking for, the DN the gamemaster sets is pretty high. He calls it an Impressive (18) task. He also throws in a total modifier of +6 because the evidence that is there is obscure. Oscar looks around and finds nothing.*

During his next chance to investigate, Ted plays it a little smarter. He decides to take the investigation one piece at a time. This time, Oscar is going to look for how the murderer entered the scene. The gamemaster decides this is a much more realistic goal and sets the deduction *DN at complicated (10). He also tacks on a +2 modifier because there isn't much evidence.*

Oscar searches around and pieces together the evidence. Making a perception *roll, he found that the hinges on the door are slightly bent, but the lock was unbroken. When Oscar gets a good success on his* deduction *roll, the gamemaster informs him that it looks like the murderer forced his way in, bending the hinges slightly, but the door was unlocked.*

Demolitions

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Specializations: Bridges; buildings; armor

Using *demolitions* allows a character to do two things: one, to determine how much explosive is necessary to blow something up and, two, to increase the damage explosives do.

The first use of *demolitions* involves the player stating what object his character wants to blow up, and what, if any, other effects the character wants to have on the object (say, using an explosive to topple a tree across a road). The character should make a *demolitions* skill total against a DN set by the gamemaster. If the roll is successful, then the demolitions expert knows how much explosive he needs to use, and where the best effect will be. The Demolitions Chart gives some sample difficulty numbers and modifiers.

If the character succeeds at the skill total, then he knows exactly how much damage needs to be done to the object to break it (generally, this is one *wound* to an object's Toughness for a break, up to six *wounds* for complete annihilation). The advantage to this is simple: if the character knows how much damage he needs to cause, and has the right amount of explosive, then the placing and detonation of the explosives is considered successful (unless something else is going on, in which case other rolls may need to be made). No bonus number is rolled, and the damage done has the desired effect.

If, however, a character needs to get more damage out of an explosion, the use of *demolitions* can provide that extra damage. First, place the explosives. Then, make a skill roll versus *half* the damage value of the explosives. The result points of the skill total are read on the Push Column as a plus to the explosive's damage. Ignore all shock damage on the Push Column.

• Demolitions Chart •

Target	DN
A familiar target (e.g., a tree, wall, rock)	5
A moderately familiar target (e.g., an armored bulkhead; a tank shell; a bridge support)	9
An unfamiliar target (e.g., a building of unknown but familiar construction; an alien tree)	12
A totally alien target (e.g., the character doesn't know what it is or what it is made of)	15+
Object is not of its apparent consistency	+1 to +5

Divination*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: Depends upon world
Sample Specializations: Specific spells

Divination is a *special effects* skill (see Chapter Six, "Special Effects"). It is used to produce magical special effects. *Divination* is available only in game settings where magic is used.

In some cases (but not all), *divination* is a macroskill where a focus must be taken. For example, in a game setting where necromancy is used, *divination: necromancy* might be an appropriate skill choice.

Divination governs magic involving *obtaining knowledge*. For example, scrying spells, "far-sight" spells, and "speak with the dead" types of spells are all covered by *divination*. Spells that block the obtaining of knowledge are also *divination* spells.

When casting a *divination* spell, the character generates a *divination* skill total and tries to beat the Difficulty Number of the special effect. If the *divination* skill total is higher than the DN, then the spell works (to some extent). Subtract the result points from the spell's Feedback; the character takes any remaining Feedback as damage on the Damage Column.

Forgery

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Specializations: Licenses; receipts

The character may forge documents and hard-copy passports for inspections. The character makes a skill total which is modified by the gamemaster (using the chart below). The skill total then becomes the difficulty number any inspector needs to spot the forgery.

Note that characters may end up having to use skills other than *forgery* to duplicate some documents. For example, a passport that has a photo, hologram, and perhaps a retina-scan or DNA print will be harder to forge than a straight "text-only" document.

Note: Forging things like artwork (paintings, sculptures, etc.) requires use of the skill *artist* with the appropriate focus. This skill does not cover the forging of art works.

• Forgery Chart•

Condition	Modifier
Character is intimately familiar with documents being forged (or has a sample)	-5
Character is somewhat familiar with documents (has used them quite often)	-2
Character is passingly familiar (has seen them often)	0
Has only had them described	+2
Is guessing blindly	+8
Forger has all the tools necessary	-5
Some tools	0
Is missing important tools	+5

First Aid

Use: Can be used *untrained*

First aid is "battlefield medicine" and is used to keep characters alive and functioning until they can get healed or heal by themselves. It does not involve anything more complicated (usually) than setting a broken bone or stitching a wound — though sometimes serious situations call for improvisation.

Using *first aid* is described in Chapter Three, "The Rules" under "Damage."

Linguistics

Sample Specializations: Individual language types

This skill allows a character to figure out languages and codes of communication. The character rolls against a difficulty number set by the gamemaster to figure out what someone is saying. This is much more versatile than learning an individual *language* (below), but at no time does the character become "fluent" (unless she spends skill adds to do so). Use the Linguistics Chart for sample DNs. The Success Level Chart will tell how much is understood — a *minimal* success means that the character can only grasp the "basics" of what the other character is saying, while a *superior* or better success means he can understand him perfectly.

• Linguistics Chart •

Situation	Difficulty
Different dialect of own language	3
Language is derived from common language (e.g., understanding Spanish if you understand French)	10
Completely foreign language (e.g., Chinese is foreign from English)	15
Alien language (e.g. a language for a species from a different planet)	25
Concepts stated are simple	-3 to DN
Concepts are very complex	+3 to DN
Concepts are alien	+7 to DN

Navigation*

Sample Focuses: *Sea, land*
Sample Specializations: Certain terrain types or areas

Navigation is usually used by travellers who spend a lot of time in the wilderness, at sea, or in strange environments. A character can use *navigation* to "guesstimate" where they are on a map, to chart routes, and to find the points of a compass.

The Difficulty Numbers for *navigation* depend on how lost a character is, how strange the environment is, and how familiar the character is with the general environment — as well as what the character is trying to find out.

For example, finding the points of the compass is generally an Easy (6) *navigation* attempt, modified by time of day and weather. If you have a compass, that makes the action Routine (0). If you are trying to find how far you are from a city based on where you think you are on a map, the DN might be Average (8). But if the map is only a sketch, that could add to the DN (a +3 modifier, perhaps), and if you've never been in the area before, that might add another modifier (say, +4).

There are two predominant focuses for *navigation — sea* and *land*. Specializations should include different areas or terrain types (a character might be better at finding his way through the Sahara Desert than anywhere else in the world, or around the Cape of Good Hope, for example). *Navigation: space* might be used in space-born adventures.

Perception

Sample Specializations: Find, detect ambush

Perception is used to "see" the world around you and react to it appropriately. Characters roll on their *perception* skills to detect ambushes, find clues, and generally keep track of the world around them. Difficulty numbers can include other characters' *stealth* and *camouflage* skill totals, as well as those determined on the Arbitrary DN Chart. Modifiers are on a situational basis as well — heavy fog, overwhelming smells, etc. — and should be considered by the gamemaster.

Note that some characters, especially those in unusual game settings, do not use their eyes as their main *perception* outlet. If your character uses a different sense (such as smell), then note that on your sheet. Your character will probably be largely unaffected by conditions such as darkness, fog or very bright light.

Psionic Manipulation

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Specializations: Specific psionic powers

Also known as *psi manipulation*, this is a *special effects* skill (see Chapter Six, "Special Effects"). It is used to produce psionic special effects. *Psi manipulation* is available only in game settings were psionics are used.

Psi manipulation covers special effects pertaining to *mind over environment*. A psionic power is used to create some sort of effect with unusual results, using only the power of the mind. A character who uses the power of his mind to start fires or move objects or see into the future is using his *psi manipulation* skill.

When using a *psi manipulation* special effect, the character generates a *psi manipulation* skill total and tries to beat the Difficulty Number of the special effect. If the *psi manipulation* skill total is higher than the DN, then the psionic power works (to some extent). Subtract the result points from the Feedback Value; the character takes any remaining Feedback as damage on the Damage Column.

Science*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: *Archaeology, armorer, cooking, chemistry, electronics, mechanical, weaponsmith (energy), weaponsmith (fire)*
Sample Specializations: Any type of science within the chosen focus

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Science is the application of knowledge and design, and the figuring out of things and processes.

The use of *science* involves building and creating things. Any building process, from construction engineering to basket weaving, employs *science*. You can use your imagination to come up with several different focuses, including:

Archaeology: Delving into the past by analyzing artifacts and unearthed knowledge.

Armorer: Building and repairing suits of armor (*mechanical armor* must be taken as a specialization if the armor has hydraulics or moving parts)

Cooking: The preparation of foodstuffs and the mixing of different flavors.

Chemistry: Mixing different chemicals and compounds to produce a desired result.

Electronics: Manipulating, repairing and building electronic devices.

Mechanical: Building and repairing mechanical devices, such as vehicle engines, vehicles, lockpick sets, etc.

Weaponsmith (energy): Building and repairing energy weapons, both heavy and personal.

Weaponsmith (fire): Building and repairing fire combat weapons, both heavy and personal.

There are thousands of different sciences that can be chosen. Because of this, the gamemaster may wish to allow broad generalizations and also allow *untrained* characters with related skills to generate *science* totals at reasonable modifiers. For example, a character with *fire combat* at six adds (who doesn't have the *science: weaponsmith* skill) might be able to fix a damage sight with an Average (8) total if the character had *science: weaponsmith;* the gamemaster decides to allow the character to use his *fire combat* skill to attempt the repair, but increases the difficulty to Very Hard (15).

Super-science*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Specializations: Specific experiments

Super-science is a *special effects* skill (see Chapter Six, "Special Effects"). It is used to produce "pseudo-scientific" special effects. *Super-science* is used only in game settings where the super-science special effect is used.

Super-science involves *producing "impossible" effects using scientific "laws."* Creating a serum that increases a character's Strength or building a flying car is *super-science*. Usually super-science is building an *object* that has "powers" in it, not creating a "spell" or "miracle" out of thin air.

When a *super-science* experiment is created, the scientist builds a "device" out of materials he has created. The character uses his *super-science* skill and must beat a Difficulty Number. If he succeeds, the device has been created. Subtract the result points from the experiment's Feedback; the character takes any remaining Feedback as damage on the Damage Column.

Note: The "device" created by *super-science* is not actually an item that is automatically *charged* (see "Charges" in Chapter Seven). It is just that no *super-science* special effect can be created without the effect going into *something*. It is, otherwise, treated like any other special effect.

Teaching*

Use: Can be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: Subject teacher wishes to teach, usually another skill
Sample Specializations: Types of teaching techniques

Under "Learning and Improving Skills" (later in this chapter), there are benefits listed for having a teacher. Characters can become teachers by taking the *teaching* skill.

The focus is the subject the character wants to teach — usually, another skill. The character must have at least *one* add in the skill he wants to teach. But *teaching* can also work another way. While a character can only *teach* at a maximum skill value equal to his *teaching* adds, he can *teach* in another focus equal to one-half his teaching adds if the skill is related, or one-quarter if it is not.

For example, a character might select *teaching: fire combat* and have four adds in that focus. He also has at least one add in *fire combat*. He wants to teach another character how to shoot an *energy weapon*. The gamemaster determines that, since they are both personal weapons, the character can *teach* that skill as well (the teacher must have at least one add in *energy weapons* as well), but at *half* the number of *teaching: fire combat* skill adds. If the teacher wanted to instruct the character in *dodge* (an unrelated skill), he could only *teach* using one of his four *teaching* adds.

The reason this is important is simple. *Teaching* cannot normally be performed during an adventure (see "Learning and Improving Skills" for exceptions), so the character will not actually have to make any skill rolls (usually), but the number of adds is very important. The instructor can *never* teach a character who has a number of adds in the skill in question equal to his skill adds in *teaching: (the focus)* or better.

That means, if a character has four adds in *medicine*, and he wants to find a teacher to learn the next add, he'll have to find a teacher with *at least* five adds in *teaching: medicine*, or *ten* adds in a related focus (such as *teaching: first aid*).

Tracking

Sample Specializations: Types of terrain — rocky, desert, forest, jungle

The character with the *tracking* skill can use it to follow the trail left by a person, animal, or thing. It combines the finding of clues with the processing of that information. A character with the *perception* skill might find the clues, but wouldn't know what to do with them.

The base difficulty to *track* someone or something is 8. This is modified by circumstance and by what the quarry does. A character that actively hides his trail, or is very stealthy, will leave less clues than one that isn't. Likewise, a group of characters, or a vehicle (like a truck), will leave more tracks to follow. Use the following chart for modifiers to *tracking*.

• Tracking Chart •

Situation	Modifier
Trail is a day old	+2
Trail is a few days old	+5
Trail is a week old	+8
Tracking during inclement weather	+5
Tracking over a hard surface (e.g., rock)	+10
Tracking through mud or snow	-5
Per person being tracked	-1
Tracking a wheeled vehicle	-5
Per vehicle	-2
Target is using *stealth* to hide tracks	+1 per success level over *minimal* at a DN equal to the tracker's base skill value
Target is using *survival* to hide tracks	+2 per success level over *minimal* at a DN equal to the tracker's base skill value

Trick

Sample Specializations: Misdirection, deception

Trick is used to fool an opponent and is often used in combat and interaction rounds (see Chapter Three, "The Rules"). The skill is used to deceive a target *briefly* with a lie or feint. It is *not* used for a prolonged deception, which is covered under *con*. A character might use *trick* to keep a fellow combatant off guard, or to fool him into surrendering. Characters resist *tricks* with *willpower* or Intellect, whichever is higher; as with other interaction skills, the defender may attempt an *active defense*. Result points are read on the Taunt/Trick Column.

Tricks should always be modified by the gamemaster in relation to circumstances and believability — and the player's roleplaying ability. If a character uses a simple but believable *trick*, that should increase his chances (or at least not lower them), as opposed to unbelievable or complex *tricks* that don't make sense.

• Mind •

Most Mind skills come from "book-learning," practice and memorization. Mental strength, however, is an important part of Mind skills.

Artist*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: Painting, composing music, writing books, dance, etc.
Sample Specializations: Type of procedure within the focus of art; forgery of art works

A "catch-all" term used to encompass most of the arts (painting, composing music, writing books, etc.). This macroskill is used to create works of art and must have a focus. Usually, but not always, this skill is chosen to "flesh out" the background of a character, though an artist can make quite a bit of money and/or quite a few contacts by utilizing the *artist* skill successfully.

The time needed to perform the *artist* skill varies, but is usually a matter of days or weeks. The difficulty numbers are also variable, depending on what is created. Generally, if the gamemaster wants to be "realistic," there shouldn't actually *be* a difficulty number: the character should just plan out the work of art and roll a skill total. The higher the skill total, the better the art. As a general guideline, no "good" art should have a skill total less than 15, while a masterpiece would require a total of 25 to 30 or more.

Artists can use this skill to judge other works of art — perhaps to determine their values, to detect forgeries, or merely to better appreciate the art work (they can even use the skill to *forge* artworks). The gamemaster will assign the appropriate difficulty numbers based on the circumstances.

There are other arts that do not employ Mind as the principle attribute — if you are interested in learning those arts, discuss them with your gamemaster. A character who wants to learn *artist: dance*, for example, would have to learn the techniques of dance as a Mind skill, but the actual practice would be a new Agility skill — *dancing*.

Business

Sample Specializations: Value; stock speculation

A character with the *business* skill can use it to judge the strength or weakness of a business, an enterprise, or stocks. It can also be used to put a price on them or negotiate a contract.

Difficulty numbers for valuing stocks or businesses start at 10 and go up, depending on how complicated the business or the stock enterprise is. Figuring out what sort of business or stock is likely to be a success in the future has a DN starting around 14 and goes up depending on the complexity of the market, resources, and information.

Conjuration*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: Depends upon world
Sample Specializations: Specific spells

Conjuration is a *special effects* skill (see Chapter Six, "Special Effects"). It is used to produce magical special effects. *Conjuration* is available only in game settings where magic is used.

In some cases (but not all), *conjuration* is a macroskill where a focus must be taken. For example, when a game setting includes the possibility of, say, vitomancy (life-magic), the skill selected might be *conjuration: vitomancy*.

Conjuration magic involves *producing something from nothing*. A spell that produces gold out of thin air is *conjuration*, as is one that imbues an inanimate object with animate features (such as creating a stone man and giving it the attributes of a person).

When casting a *conjuration* spell, the character generates a *conjuration* skill total and tries to beat the Difficulty Number of the special effect. If the *conjuration* skill total is higher than the DN, then the spell works (to some extent). Subtract the result points from the spell's Feedback; the character takes any remaining Feedback as damage on the Damage Column.

Note: *Conjuration* is used for only one purpose: creation of something out of nothing. For example, if you wanted to animate a plant and give it the power of speech, you would use *conjuration* — you would have to "create" in it the ability to talk and the Intellect and Mind necessary to speak. *Conjuration* is *not* used to bring things from one place to another — that is *summoning*.

Hypnotism

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Specializations: None

Hypnotism is used to place a character into a trance-like state under which his or her subconscious mind can be probed. It is an effective interrogation technique, except for the fact that excited or hostile characters are very hard to hypnotize.

To use *hypnosis*, the character must focus all the target's attention on one point (usually an eye-catching simple object, like a shiny coin or pen, is used) and must then try to relax the subject until he or she "falls asleep."

The difficulty number for a willing character is equal to 22 *minus* her Mind attribute. Willing characters with high Mind attributes are fairly easy to hypnotize. The DN might be modified up or down due to the character's current mental state.

For an unwilling character, the DN is equal to the target's Mind or *willpower* +8. This resistance can be beaten down with

repeated uses of *interrogation* (gamemaster option: sometimes a character will become too tired or despairing to resist).

When the target is successfully hypnotized, *hypnosis* can be used for two purposes: one, to *interrogate* the subject and, two, to implant a suggestion in the subject's mind.

To *interrogate* the subject, the character who performed the *hypnosis* — or another character "introduced" by the hypnotizer — may attempt to *interrogate* the target using the rules for *interrogation* (see "Interrogation" in Chapter Three, "The Rules").

Planting a suggestion is a little more difficult. The difficulty number of planting a suggestion depends on how "serious" the suggestion is in relation to the hypnotized character's morals and/or preferences. Basically, the hypnotizing character is using *persuasion* or *charm*. The gamemaster should rate the level of "friendliness" the hypnotized character has to the suggestion and assign the difficulty level accordingly *(willpower* is still the appropriate resistance stat).

Hypnosis can also be used to *interrogate* people who have forgotten information or blocked it out. The gamemaster should assign a difficulty level for the resistance.

Language*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*

Sample Focuses: French, Chinese, Russian or any other language

Sample Specializations: Specific dialects, phrases, reading, writing

Language is a macroskill and its focuses are different languages of the game setting the character is in. Chinese, English, German, Latin, or any other language could be the focus of the *language* skill.

Basically, for every add a character takes in a particular language, he achieves a certain level of understanding. For simplicity of game play, a character with adds gains the ability to speak, read, and write the language in question at the same level of ability — if the language has all these elements.

Use the chart below to determine how "adept" the character is at understanding the language focus.

• Language Chart •

# of Skill Adds	Level of Understanding
1	Very basic ("Where bathroom?" "Help me!" "Danger?")
2	Basic ("Where is the bathroom?" "Can I have some money?" "Someone is chasing me!")
3	Remedial ("I want to find the bathroom." "Please give me ten dollars." "There is a large bear chasing me!")
4-5	General (The character can understand or speak most simple words and phrases)
6-9	Basic Native (The character understands all terms common to the language but not many specialized ones)
10-13	Advanced Native (The character understands quite a few specialized terms)
14+	Very Advanced (The character has a integral understanding of the language)

Note that the number of *"language* adds" a character is considered to have in his native language is equal to his Mind attribute. Characters with average Mind attributes are considered to have high school understanding of their native language, while, after that, the character starts becoming an expert.

The gamemaster should only call for *language* skill totals when a character with a basic understanding of a language has to speak or understand "above his level." Then he should use the rules for general skill use in Chapter Three, "The Rules" to determine DNs and success levels.

Medicine

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*

Sample Specializations: Types of wounds (optional), surgery

Medicine is the skill used to help characters heal wounds. It can also be used as *first aid* at the same skill level. But the primary use of *medicine* is to help the healing process.

Helping characters heal is explained under "Damage" in Chapter Three, "The Rules." *Medicine* can be used to help *all* characters heal.

Every time a character is allowed a healing roll, another character with *medicine* is allowed to try to help. Use the following chart to determine the difficulty numbers for helping characters of the appropriate wound levels.

If the character succeeds at the *medicine* total, then read the result points on the Push Column. That number is then added to the Endurance total of the injured character when he tries to heal.

• Medicine Chart •

Wound Level	DN
Lightly wounded	10
Moderately wounded	12
Heavily wounded	13
Incapacitated	15
Mortally wounded	17*

*Note that *mortally wounded* characters must be kept alive by continuous *first aid* or *medicine* until they can try to heal.

When using *medicine* as *first aid*, simply use the *first aid* chart — the rules for *first aid* are also used.

The *medicine* skill can also be used to perform surgery, implant cybernetics (if you play in a world where cybernetics are used), or to perform autopsies. Gamemasters may even wish to change this skill to a macroskill if they think it will be appropriate.

Scholar*

Sample Focuses: *Chemistry, criminal activities, physics,* a particular culture or country, or any other specialized field of knowledge

Sample Specializations: Knowledge within the different focuses

The *scholar* skill must have a focus. Sample focuses are listed below, but the general skill description is as follows.

Scholar adds reflect an area of knowledge. A character with *scholar* adds in a focus has learned, either through "schooling" or through experience, about that area of knowledge — more, in fact, than your general character-on-the-street probably knows. The "scholar" can use this knowledge to figure things out and draw upon resources other people do not have.

Chemistry: the character has a theoretical knowledge of chemistry and knows the principles behind elements, acids, bases, and chemical compounds. The character can predict chemical reactions and may know how to alter or impede their progress.

Criminal Activities: the character has knowledge of criminal organizations and/or operations and can use this knowledge to predict (or perform) criminal activities.

Physics: the character is acquainted with the principles of physics, including theories of motion, space-and-time, and energy. The character can draw on this knowledge for use in the game.

A culture/country: the character has knowledge of a particular country or culture and may draw on that knowledge to "remember" details others might not know.

A character can have the *scholar* skill in anything. The character can even have the *scholar* skill in another skill, so he or she can know how the skill is done without actually being able to perform it.

To use this skill in the game, ask the gamemaster a question. If the gamemaster thinks this is something your character *might* know, but doesn't know automatically, the gamemaster will set a difficulty number and have you make a *scholar* roll. Then, depending on the result points you get, the gamemaster will let you know how much your *character* knows.

The levels of success listed in the chart will usually impart a corresponding amount of knowledge.

A character with the *scholar* skill may apply that knowledge much like a character with the *science* skill, only at two adds *less*. For example, a character who has *scholar: chemistry* might not be satisfied with the knowledge and theory, but might actually want to create something. Using the *scholar* skill, he could apply that knowledge, but at two adds *lower* than he could theorize about the knowledge.

• Scholar Chart •

Level of Success	Amount of Knowledge
Minimal	Snippets of information; unconfirmed "rumors"
Solid	An "introduction" of information that might lead to more clues
Good	A decent amount of information with some details
Superior (or higher)	A lot of information, including peripheral details and extrapolations

• Charisma •

Personality and appearance increase the effect of Charisma skills, as does knowledge of interaction and persuasive abilities.

Charm

Sample Specializations: Seduction, general friendliness

A character uses *charm* to "make friends." It is a long process — it usually takes a while to *charm* someone successfully. The character must "wear away" any resistance action by action. The target of a *charm* may use his *willpower* or Confidence to resist (targets may *actively defend)*; results are read on the General Success Column.

The gamemaster should be alert to possible modifiers — a character who makes no effort to verbally roleplay his *charm* attempt should receive positive modifiers to the DN. Characters who "get into it" and use flattery, bribery, and other means should get positive bonuses.

It takes some time to perform a *charm* correctly. A "rushed" *charm* will not be as effective or last as long. For example, if a character is trying to *charm* a guard into releasing him, he won't want to try every ten seconds. He'll have to wait and attempt *charms* at different times of the day, hoping to win over the guard with persistence and the appearance of sincerity.

Charm can *never* be used during combat rounds, but may be used during interaction rounds.

Disguise

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*

Sample Specializations: Stage costuming; impromptu disguises

Using *disguise* alters a character's features so that he is unrecognizable — or recognizable as someone else. Usually, the character uses makeup, wigs, and costumes, but sometimes the character is forced to use impromptu materials to create this illusion.

The base difficulty of creating a disguise is 8. The character

• Disguise Modifier Chart •

Condition	Modifier
Disguised as a specific person	+8
Other sex	+4
Different race	+3
Other species (close resemblance)	+4
Other species (moderate resemblance)	+6
Other species (no resemblance)	+10 or more
Great age difference	+3
Much larger build	+3
Much smaller build	+5
Character resembles the disguise already	-3
Character is disguising another character	+0
Character is disguising himself unaided	+2
Character is *untrained**	+5

*Only with gamemaster approval

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generates a skill total and the gamemaster records the success level on the General Success Column. The difficulty can be modified as in the Disguise Modifier Chart.

Further modifiers may be applied as necessary. Many characters may have access to extremely good disguise "kits" or props — these can add up to +10 to the skill total (though a normal kit does not actually add anything).

If a character disguises himself as a specific person, and an observer does not know what the specific person looks like, the base difficulty of 8 should be subtracted from the overall difficulty (that is, the character achieved eight more points of success).

As far as the "other species" modifiers go, they depend on the species *and* the individual. A male Human who is about a meter and a half tall might try to disguise himself to look like a tall "Elf" — and get the +4 "close resemblance" modifier — but if he tried to disguise himself as a shorter "Elf," he would incur the "much smaller build" modifier as well.

If the character succeeds in the *disguise* skill total, then he is considered *disguised*. At a *minimal* success level, the character will pass inspection (the "man on the street" will not see through the disguise). At a *solid* success level, a casual observer will not be prompted to look at the disguise closely (a cashier at a store who is verifying a credkey purchase).

A *good* success means that even a fairly close observer (a bank teller or guard) will not be prompted to investigate the disguise. Finally, a *superior* or better success means that only if the character "screws up" will anyone investigate the disguise.

These success levels, and their effects, mean that the character can "pass inspection" automatically — until someone is prompted to "second guess" the disguise. If the character does something inconsistent with the disguise (like a "bag lady" pulling out a wad of money and buying a hot dog), then *any* observer is allowed to make a *perception* check to see through the disguise.

If the *perception* check is higher than the skill total of the *disguise*, then the disguise is penetrated. If the success level of the *perception* check is equal to or greater than that of the *disguise*, then the observer actually "sees through" the disguise and figures out who is underneath (at least what the character really looks like, if not who the character is).

Note: A character *may* use *disguise* to alter another character's appearance. The base DN is 10, however, and the target character must actively work at keeping up the disguise using his own skill or Charisma (and roleplaying).

Persuasion

Sample Specializations: Bargaining, diplomacy, negotiation

Persuasion is a skill that can be used in combat and interaction rounds. Characters resist with their *willpower* or Confidence (targets can *actively defend)*, and the results are read on the General Success Column.

Persuasion is used to convince a character to do something. The results of a *persuasion* attempt are described in "Charm/Persuasion" (see Chapter Three, "The Rules"), but, basically, a character cannot expect to *persuade* anyone but an almost willing character in one round of interaction. Usually, *persuasion* must be roleplayed for several rounds or even minutes before any significant improvement in a target's attitude results.

Summoning*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: Depends on world
Sample Specializations: Specific spells

Summoning is a *special effects* skill (see Chapter Six, "Special Effects"). It is used to produce magical special effects. *Summoning* is available only in game settings where magic is used.

In some cases, *summoning* is a macroskill where a focus must be taken. The focus of the skill depends on the types of magic used in the world. For example, if a game setting employs "demonology" (the study of demons), a character might select *summoning: demonology.*

Summoning governs magic involving *"called" movement*, which means bringing something from one place to another either by having it move under its own power or through magical means. Calling a dagger from a box at home to your hand is *summoning*, as is teleporting yourself to another place. *Summoning* can also cause a person or creature to move from one place to another under its own power.

When casting a *summoning* spell, the character generates a *summoning* skill total and tries to beat the Difficulty Number of the special effect. If the *summoning* skill total is higher than the DN, then the spell works (to some extent). Subtract the result points from the spell's Feedback; the character takes any remaining Feedback as damage on the Damage Column.

Summoning is not *conjuration* — the object or the creature summoned is in existence at the time the spell is cast, the *summoning* spell simply "calls" the object or creature.

Objects must always be "apported" (using either the "Apportation" optional element), or "carried" using magic — or they could be *teleported*, moving instantly from one place to another.

Characters or creatures may either be *summoned* by compulsion, apported or teleported. When the *summoning* spell uses compulsion, the effect value is compared to the target's *willpower* or Confidence in much the same way a *persuasion* attempt would be used — the target's attitude toward being *summoned* must be assessed, and the spell works as if it were "persuading" the target.

When the target is apported, the summoning spell lifts up the target and brings him to the caster — in much the same way an *apportation* spell would. The target can try to avoid the effect value of the spell (using his Strength to break free).

When the target is teleported, the effect value has to overcome the target's mass value. The target can resist by generating a bonus number and adding it to his mass value (theoretically, he is trying to make himself harder for the spell to grasp). But, if the effect value is higher than the mass value, the character is teleported. This goes for self-teleportation as well (though the character is not likely to resist).

Taunt

Sample Specializations: None

Taunt is explained under "Taunt/Trick" in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Targets resist *taunt* with their *willpower* or Confidence (they can *actively defend).* The result points are read on the Trick/Taunt Column.

Characters use *taunts* to insult and upset their opponents. They can annoy their opponents and make them so angry that they are less effective in combat — temporarily. *Taunts* should be roleplayed and they should make a certain amount of sense. Calling a large man "tiny" isn't much of a *taunt* unless there is some secondary meaning or background note that would make it appropriate.

Attitude is also a key. A player who is able to adopt a snide, sarcastic, and/or insulting tone when roleplaying a *taunt* might receive bonuses for appropriate *taunts*, while an uncreative player should have to beat a higher DN. Remember, however, that *taunts* are between *characters,* not *players* and *gamemasters.*

• Confidence •

A character's Confidence is his spirit and strength of will. It also has a lot to do with his wit and interactive abilities.

Alteration*

Use: Cannot be used *untrained*
Sample Focuses: Depends upon game world
Sample Specializations: Specific spells

Alteration is a *special effects* skill (see Chapter Six, "Special Effects"). It is used to produce magical special effects. *Alteration* is available only in game settings where magic is used.

In some cases, *alteration* is a macroskill where a focus must be taken. The focus of the skill depends on the types of magic used in the world. In a game setting where "wizardry" is a type of magic, *alteration: wizardry* might be the focus.

Alteration governs magic involving *change*. Change means taking something that exists and modifying it or mutating it into something else. A magic spell used to increase a character's Strength attribute would be an *alteration* spell, as would one that converts a simple flame into an exploding fireball.

When casting an *alteration* spell, the character generates an *alteration* skill total and tries to beat the Difficulty Number of the special effect. If the *alteration* skill total is higher than the DN, then the spell works (to some extent). Subtract the result points from the spell's Feedback; the character takes any remaining Feedback as damage on the Damage Column.

Alteration must work with things that are *already there*. An *alteration* spell can only modify existing attributes. It could be used to change a person into a bat — but it would not give the person the ability to fly; that would be *conjuration* (creating wings and the *flight* ability out of nothing, even though the character's arms would actually be changed into wings).

Con

Sample Specializations: Types of con games

This skill involves elaborate deception and planning and is used similarly to *persuasion*. *Con* can only be used during interaction rounds and non-round time. Targets resist *con* with *willpower* or Intellect (they can *actively defend).* Results are read on the General Success Column.

Whenever a character tries to trick another into a long-term action or series of actions (selling the character a fake treasure map, for example), *con* must be used instead of *persuasion*. The effects are the same, the process is different.

The gamemaster should modify *con* attempts according to

the reasonable (or unreasonable) nature of the *con* being attempted and any other factors that the gamemaster sees fit. Note that elaborate, well-planned *cons* are almost impossible for the "mark" to resist, while hasty, desperate *con* attempts are almost always ridiculous.

Faith*

Use: Can be used *untrained* (sometimes)
Sample Focuses: Particular religion or tradition
Sample Specializations: Specific miracles

Characters with *faith* believe, strongly, in *something*. What it is depends on the focus. It may be a religion or a tradition, or it may be a strong belief in oneself.

Faith can be used instead of *willpower* to resist attacks that are antithetical to the focus of the *faith*. For example, a character being *interrogated* by a "heathen" can use his or her *faith* instead of *willpower* to keep from being overwhelmed by the *interrogation* — it would be bad "for the faith" if the character gave in.

Faith should really only be selected if the character has a serious belief in *something* — a god, a culture, or something equally as "large." Faith in oneself is usually just read as *willpower* — though if you wish to make the distinction, you can.

Faith also confers some knowledge on the user in the same manner as *scholar*. A character with *faith* in a focus can use those adds as a *scholar* as well — the knowledge that, in this case, comes with belief. This means "the faithful" knows about the religion or tradition he believes in.

Faith may also be used as a special effects skill, in exactly the same way other special effects skills are used. However, characters who are *untrained* in *faith* cannot use this part of the *faith* skill, and gamemasters may want to restrict this further — perhaps only characters who have achieved "professional standing" (i.e, priests) can cast miracles.

Interrogation

Sample Specializations: Torture, browbeating, bribery

Characters use *interrogation* to force characters to divulge information. Targets resist *interrogation* with their *willpower* or Confidence (they can *actively defend)*, and results are read on the General Success Column. For more information, see "Interrogation" in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

The character using *interrogation* is trying to force another character to supply information he probably doesn't want to provide (though not always). *Interrogation* usually requires that the interrogator have a superior position and a decent amount of time to perform the *interrogation*.

There are several factors that can modify how hard it is to *interrogate* someone. Is the target unwilling? If not, why can't he just tell the information? Is the target in an equal position than the interrogator — or better? Usually, an interrogator needs to be in a superior position to *interrogate* successfully.

Intimidation

Sample Specializations: None

The details of *intimidation* are described in "Intimidation" in Chapter Three, "The Rules." *Intimidation* is used to frighten or intimidate another character and can be used in combat and interaction rounds. Targets resist *intimidation* with *willpower* or Confidence (they can *actively defend);* results are read on the Intimidation Column.

A character who attempts to *intimidate* another is trying to make the target back down. The character can resist using threats of violence, a superior position, and believability can affect the use of *intimidation* considerably.

Streetwise

Sample Specializations: Certain cities, criminal organizations, types of people

This skill is used to get information, goods, and/or make contacts in an environment where people live. Usually, *streetwise* is employed in large cities where there is a "shadowy" side of legality beneath the veneer of civilization. *Streetwise* is the *survival* skill of the cities.

Using *streetwise*, a character can make contact with "people who know things" that can't be found in libraries, on maps, or through more aboveboard inquiries. It is very good for coming into contact with the less-legal side of the population.

To use *streetwise*, generate a skill total and use the following chart to determine the difficulty number of "making contact" with the person, organization, or group that might be able to help you.

There are many other modifiers that can be added in — is the character looking for a specific person? Is the character well known in the area? What *is* the overall impression the character gives off? Is the character willing to spread a little money around? All these things affect how the character's *streetwise* overtures are accepted.

Gamemasters may wish to make *streetwise* a macroskill if the cities and environments in the game setting differ greatly from each other.

• Streetwise Chart •

Condition	DN
Large city	8
Small city	10
Town	12
Very small town or settlement	14

Information Modifiers

Information Type	Modifier
Legal (e.g., directions to the nearest "soup kitchen")	-4
Semi-legal (e.g., asking how "straight" the local law is)	-2
Illegal, but generally inoffensive (e.g., asking what size bribe would be "appropriate" for local law enforcement)	0
Illegal (e.g., seeking out a pickpocket)	+2
Prohibited (e.g., seeking out a safecracker)	+4
Extremely illegal (e.g., looking for an arms dealer)	+8

Area Modifiers

Type of Area	Modifier
Strict law enforcement	+6
Moderate enforcement	+4
Light enforcement	+2
Very little enforcement	0
No enforcement	-2

The General Success Level Chart should be used to award varying degrees of information.

Survival*

Sample Focuses: *Desert, forest, jungle, urban,* etc.

Survival is used to "make do" with the things provided by nature. It is almost always used in a wilderness environment — though the definition of "wilderness" can be expanded to include abandoned bases, cities, and ghost towns.

A character uses *survival* to find food, clothing, shelter, medical supplies, or anything that will help her survive. Scrounging and innovative adaptation are combined into one skill. Foraging through dumpsters and finding nuts and berries are included.

The character must choose a type of environment he or she is good at *surviving* in. This can be *desert, forest, jungle,* or it can be *urban* (covering any man-made area that is no longer "civilized"). There are many different types of *survival*.

• Survival Chart •

Condition	Difficulty
Easy environment (e.g., woods, grasslands*)	3
Moderate environment (aquatic, swamps)	6
Moderately difficult environment (e.g., mountains, abandoned cities)	8
Barren environment (e.g., desert)	12
Inhospitable environment (e.g., polar regions)	15
Hostile environment (e.g., little or no atmosphere)	22†

*Note that all examples are centered around what *most* people would find "easy" or "hard." Characters native to other environments would have very different opinions.

†The character must have some sort of equipment to survive — if the character does not need any, then this is not a "hostile environment."

In addition, a character who chooses one type of *survival can* use it to survive in another area. The character simply isn't "as good" at it. The way it works is simple:

- If the character is in his or her focus environment, apply skill adds normally.
- If the character is in a *near* environment (one similar), the character can use *one* less add.
- If the character is in a *neutral* environment (one not *near* the focus, but not opposite either), then the character can use *two* less adds (minimum of zero adds).
- If the character is in an *opposite* environment (one that is not at all like the focus environment chosen), the character can use *three* less adds (minimum of zero adds).

Note that a character who is reduced to zero adds acts as if *untrained* in the environment.

Examples of *near* environments include *forest* and *jungle*; *polar* and *desert*; *plains* and *rough*. *Neutral* environments are *forest* and *plains*; *desert* and *plains*; *rough* and *mountains*. *Opposite* environments include *city* and *forest*; *desert* and *aquatic*; *plains* and *mountains*. Also, any "vacuum" environment is the opposite of *anything*.

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For example, the character Abel Cain grew up in the cities and took the skill *survival: urban* at four adds. He is out in the wilderness (*forest*) and he wants to use his skill to survive. He can only use one add because *forest* and *city* are opposite environments.

Use the Survival Chart for some sample Difficulty Numbers and modifiers.

Willpower

Use: Special

Sample Specializations: Versus *intimidation, interrogation*, torture

Willpower can be used to resist *all* forms of interaction attacks and many other forms of mental attacks. It is explained more fully in Chapter Three, "The Rules." Essentially, *willpower* is a very specialized form of mental resistance that makes a character hard to browbeat, cajole, entreat, or influence when he does not want to be.

Willpower can be used *untrained* only if there is no other applicable resistance skill involved. For example, a character can use *willpower* or Intellect to resist a *trick*. If the character has one add in *willpower*, but his Intellect value is higher than his skill value, he may use his Intellect instead and roll *untrained*. However, if he had no adds in *willpower*, he could not use his Confidence (*willpower untrained*) to resist the effects of a *trick*.

This skill can be used as an *active* or *passive defense*. An *active defense* allows a skill roll (with a minimum bonus number of +3), but it takes an action. A *passive defense* requires no action, but the character must use only his base *willpower* skill value.

• Improving and Learning Skills •

Your character has a certain number of skill adds based on your choices during character and background generation. They probably aren't enough to satisfy you. Fortunately, you can improve the skills you have and pick up new skills as you go.

Improving Skills You Have

During an adventure, you will earn *Life Points* and *skill points*. At any time during an adventure or afterwards, you can turn in Life Points for skill points: one Life Point "buys" three skill points. Skill points are used to "buy" skill adds.

There are three things to consider when improving skills:

1. Is the skill a general (or focus) skill or a specialization?

2. Can the skill be used *untrained*?

3. Do you have a teacher?

These three factors directly affect how many skill points increasing a skill will cost.

General Skills versus Specializations

The *base* cost in skill points to improve a general skill one add is equal to the number of skill adds you have in the skill plus one (or, in other terms, the destination add). The cost of increasing a specialization is half that (rounding up).

So, the base cost to increase the skill *fire combat* from three adds to four would be four skill points. To increase the specialization skill *fire combat (pistols)* from two adds to three would cost two skill points (half of three points rounded up).

Trained vs. *Untrained* Skills

Skills that can be used *untrained* are generally easier to learn than those that can only be used *trained* (or used *untrained* with heavy modifiers).

When improving a skill that can be used *untrained*, do not modify the base cost of the skill add.

When improving a skill that can only be used *trained*, double the base number of skill points necessary for improving the skill.

Both these rules hold for specializations of *trained* and *untrained* skills.

So, the base cost to increase the skill *fire combat* from three adds to four is four skill points. Since the skill can be used *untrained*, there is no modifier. If the skill were *medicine*, which can only be used *trained*, the base cost would be *doubled*, since *medicine* cannot be used *untrained*. To improve the *medicine* skill from three to four adds would cost 8 skill points.

Teachers

A teacher can greatly enhance your ability to learn skills. A teacher is a character with the *teaching* skill (as defined under the skill *teaching*, above). There are special rules for what constitutes a teacher (as listed above), but if you *have* a teacher, you can do one of two things.

If the teacher is a player character, or if the gamemaster wants to do this for a gamemaster character, the teacher generates a *teaching* skill total versus the character's existing skill value. If the teacher generates a total less than that skill value, then the teacher has failed to help the student — there is no modifier to the skill point cost of the skill.

If the teacher achieves a *minimal* to *spectacular* success, then the student can increase the skill for half the Skill Point cost (round up). On a *spectacular+* success, the student may divide the number of Skill Points he must spend by *three* (rounding up).

So, a character who wishes to increase *medicine* from three to four adds must spend eight skill points. He finds a teacher, and the teacher is good enough that he generates a *superior* success versus the student's current *medicine* skill value. The fourth add of *medicine* costs only *four* skill points (half the normal cost of eight points).

Note on Gamemaster Character Teaching: Most gamemasters won't want to go to the trouble of creating teachers for the players every time they want to improve a skill or learn a new one (below).

Generally, you can presume that a character can find a teacher who will get a *minimal* to *spectacular* success almost every time if your characters have skill totals under 17. After that, the characters may have to perform "quests for knowledge" and seek out talented individuals and teachers who can instruct them.

The more exotic the skill, the less populated the locale the characters are adventuring, and the money the characters are willing to pay should also play a part in modifying the likelihood of finding a teacher.

• Overlapping Skills •

Quite often, you'll find that skills "overlap" in their uses. Sometimes, you might not be sure which skill to use. As the gamemaster, you should listen to *how* the character is going to perform the action, and assign modifiers if you think that the skill the character wants to use is not the best one that could be chosen.

Example: *A character has the* navigation: land *skill. He wants to use it to find "which way is north." Unfortunately, it's nighttime, and it's cloudy — there's no sun or stars to use. The gamemaster would probably rule that the* survival *skill should be used here to find north. If it were daytime, or the stars were out, either skill could be used to find north.*

Example: *A character has the skill* fire combat. *For some reason, the gamemaster declares that his gun jams and a shell casing is caught — and the mechanism for his gun slide may be damaged. He rules that the character must make a* science: weaponsmith *roll to clear the weapon and check for damage. The character wants to use his* fire combat *skill, since he doesn't have* science: weaponsmith. *The gamemaster could determine that, since this is a fairly simple operation, the character can use the* fire combat *skill, but the DN will be modified higher.*

Learning a New Skill

The base cost to learn a new general skill (or macroskill focus) is based on whether the skill can be used *trained* or *untrained*.

If the skill can be used *untrained*, it costs four skill points to learn the first add. If it can only be used *trained*, it costs double that. A teacher can be used the same way to learn new skills as for improving old ones. Specializations are also treated the same way.

Most new skills should only be available to characters who would have some knowledge of how they work. The first add of *dodge*, for example, can be picked up by any character who has ever been attacked by a missile weapon. But the first add of *science: engineering* would not usually be available unless the character has spent significant time around engineers, watching them work and assisting, or if he has a teacher.

Gamemasters, use your heads for this. Usually, you can be lenient in your rulings, but don't let the players get away with everything they want. It can be interesting, if occasionally frustrating, for the players to have to go places and meet people in order to learn the skills they want.

Learning Time and Other Restrictions

In between adventures, characters can usually learn skills and no one has to worry about learning time. But characters can *never* improve a skill by more than *one* add (or two adds for specializations) between adventures. They can improve many different skills by one add each, or even learn lots of new skills between adventures, but they can't go from virtually no knowledge to expertise in almost no time at all.

During adventures, gamemasters *may* allow characters to learn new skills or improve old ones *if* and *only if* there is a significant "time lag" available *and* a teacher. In this case, the character gains *no* benefit from learning from the teacher (except the teacher must still make the skill roll and he must have all the requirements to be a teacher), and he must be able to pay the skill points immediately upon learning the new skill add (he can turn in Life Points to get skill points, of course).

This might work, for example, if you were playing a long adventure. During the first section (or *Act*) of the adventure, the characters might be in England, trying to uncover a spy ring and defeat saboteurs. At the end of the Act, they have traced the spies to the London docks, where they see them board a vessel on its way to India.

The characters board another vessel and "give chase" — but they have to go at the vessel's speed, and it will be some weeks before any "action" occurs. The players are "in transit" from Act One to Act Two. In game time, weeks are passing. In the real world, maybe the gamemaster just describes the voyage and you are there.

But, perhaps, one of the player characters wants to learn about *navigation*. He finds an "old salt" on board who can teach him. During the trip, the old salt generates a *teaching* total and, if it succeeds, the player can pay the cost in skill points (unmodified by the *teaching* roll) to learn *navigation: sea* at one add (or improve his existing skill by one add).

When a character learns or improves a skill during an adventure, he *may* improve that same skill by one add after the adventure. However, no character can learn more than one skill add in any single skill during an adventure either.

Increasing Attributes

Attribute values may only be improved one value at a time. If a character wants to increase one of his Attribute values, he must spend a number of skill points equal to *three times* what the new Attribute Value will be.

So, if a character has a Dexterity of 9 and wants to increase it to 10, it costs 30 skill points.

When a character increases an Attribute value, all derived attributes (Toughness and movement rates) that depend on that Attribute value may be affected as well. The character's skill values go up as well, since the character's skill adds will be added to the new Attribute value normally.

So, if the character who just increased his Dexterity from 9 to 10 has *fire combat* at three adds and *lock picking* at two adds, his *fire combat* skill value now goes from 12 to 13, and his *lock picking* skill value increases from 11 to 12. All other skill values based on the character's Dexterity Attribute will increase similarly.

CHAPTER FIVE

• The Card Deck •

If you purchased *MasterBook* as part of a boxed set, then you have one of the most interesting elements of the game in your possession: the *MasterBook* card deck. Also known as the *Action Deck*, this game aid can be used to fine tune your adventures to make them more fast-paced, action-packed and exciting. If you do not have the *MasterBook* card deck, you can order it from West End Games directly.

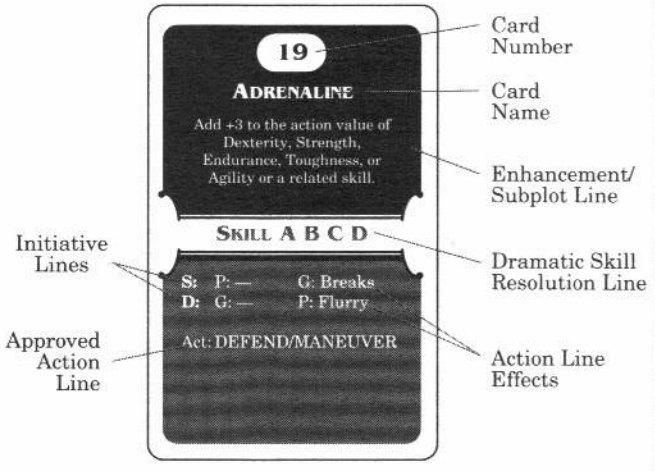
Anatomy of a Card

In order to understand how the cards are used in play, you have to understand the make-up of the card. Take a look at the diagram, "The Anatomy of a Card," as an example.

The Card Number

The *Card Number* is at the top of the card's face. It is used to identify the card in case you have to stop playing and pack up in the middle of a session. When this happens, every player should write down the numbers of the cards he has on a sheet of paper or the character sheet. The cards can be found easily when play resumes.

• The Anatomy of a Card •



The Card Name

This identifies the type of card. The *Card Name* can be used to look up the effects and rules surrounding the card. All the cards are listed in this chapter, by type, alphabetically.

The Enhancement/Subplot Line

This short paragraph outlines the effect the card has on gameplay. You can look up each card in this chapter initially, but when you get used to the card deck you probably will find all the rules you need on this line.

Critical Skill Resolution Line

Critical Skill Resolution is explained later; this line is used only for this system.

Initiative Lines

There are two *Initiative Lines* on each card. One is labelled "S:" and the other "D:." The first indicates a *Standard* scene and the second indicates a *Dramatic* scene.

"P:" stands for *Player Characters* and "G:" stands for *Gamemaster Characters*. These abbreviations are followed either by a dash ("—") or a word (called an *Action Line Effect)*. Conditions affect only the side indicated on this line and are explained below.

Approved Action Line

The last tag on the card is the *Approved Action Line*. This is abbreviated "Act:" and shows what actions, if any, are approved during a particular combat round. This line is explained below.

The Anatomy of the Card Deck

The Action Deck is made up of 108 cards. Of these cards, 83 are *enhancement cards*, 17 are *subplot cards*, and six are *picture cards*. There are also two *blank cards*. All are used differently at some point during the game. But all have some similarities as well.

Enhancement Cards

Enhancement cards are colored **black** on the top and **red** on the bottom. The **black** area of the card is the enhancement side. Players only have to worry about the top of the card (**black** side).

Subplot Cards

Subplot cards are distinctive because they are all **red**, rather than **red** and **black**. When a player is dealt a **red** card,

he should turn it face up on the table and alert the gamemaster *immediately*. The gamemaster will then tell the player whether or not that particular subplot can be used during the adventure. If it can, then the player keeps the card in front of him for later use (as described below). Otherwise, he puts it in the discard pile and the gamemaster awards the character one Life Point. Regardless, the player draws one more card (if it's a subplot card, repeat the procedure above; if it's an enhancement card, the player keeps the card in his hand).

If the player draws a subplot card and simply has no interest in pursuing it, he may choose to discard it. Again, he can receive a Life Point for doing this.

No character can have more than *two* subplots in effect at any one time, and no more than *two* Life Points can be awarded to any one character for having subplots that cannot take effect — all other subplot cards are lost. The gamemaster can overrule either of these rules if he feels the need.

Subplot cards *do not* count as cards in the character's pool/hand. A character who receives a subplot card should draw another to put into his hand — regardless of what happens to the subplot.

Number of Cards

The number of cards given to each character (and it *is* "character" since players have been known to play more than one character, though this is seriously discouraged) is based on the number of player characters in the party.

• Card Distribution Chart •

Number of Player Characters	Number of Cards for Each
1	5
2–5	3
6+	2

The Hand vs. The Pool

The card "hand" and the "pool" are mentioned several times.

Whenever player characters are not in combat rounds (round-by-round combat), the cards are in the player's *hand*. They can be played at any time simply by throwing them into the discard pile and applying their bonuses or effects. Any number of cards may be played in this manner, as long as this does not violate any other rule.

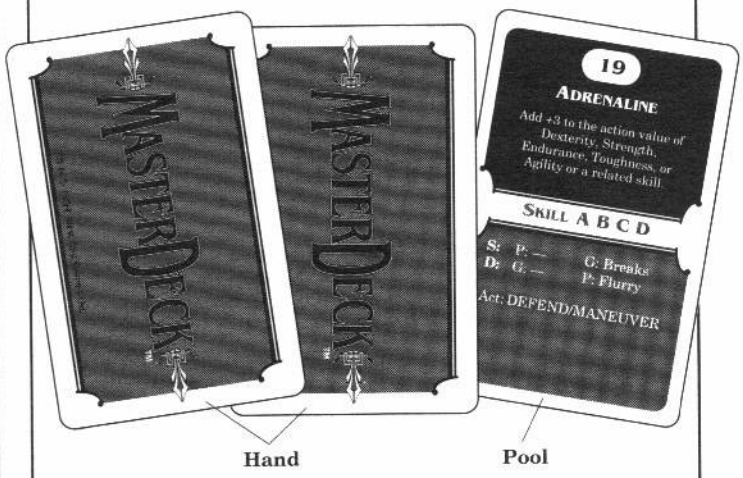
Cards may be traded between players on a one-for-one basis *only*. No player may give or receive a card without receiving or giving an equal number of cards.

Combat Rounds

However, once the action of the adventure enters a *round* sequence — always during combat, but sometimes during tense interaction or critical skill resolution as well — the players "pick up" their cards and should hold them in their hands. At this point, players *cannot* play or trade any of their cards until they have been put into the player's *card pool*.

How this works is simple. After a character performs an action during a combat round — a simple or complex action — he may place a card face up into his *pool* (on the table in front of him). At this point, all the players and the gamemaster can see the card.

• Hand vs. the Pool •



After the player has placed the card into his pool, he can then play it or trade it with other players on a one-for-one basis.

There is no limit to the number of cards a player may have in his character's pool at any one time.

Cards received as part of a trade are placed in the character's pool. Cards received from approved actions must go into the player's hand first, and can only be played into a hand at least one round later. Other means of receiving cards (use of *leadership* or *rally* cards, or the *inspiration* effect) are discussed in other areas of the text.

During rounds, there is no limit to the number of cards a player may have in his hand or pool.

After rounds are over (the combat or the interaction is resolved), the players pick up their cards. They may have to discard cards because cards in their hands may not exceed the total on the Card Distribution Chart.

Gamemaster or subplot (all **red**) cards and most joker cards *never* count toward the player's hand total (the *wild* card is an exception).

"In" and "Out" of Rounds

Most of the time, characters are "out" of rounds during an adventure. A round is any time period where something very important to the adventure is happening — or, at least, something very intense. Whenever fighting breaks out in an adventure, the characters are automatically "in" rounds (normally ten second *combat rounds)*; sometimes, the gamemaster will put the characters "in" rounds when the tension of the adventure has grown to a peak, or when something time-critical is happening (called *interaction rounds,* which can cover any period of time from ten seconds to representing much longer periods of time).

Playing for the Critical Moment

This is an exception to the "in rounds" hand vs. pool rule. During a crisis situation while in rounds, a player may announce he is "playing for the critical moment" and play *all* his cards in that round. He *must* discard any cards he does not

want to play — at the end of the round, the player has no more cards.

When a character plays for a critical moment, he can only obtain new cards through the normal rules. In addition, a character may play for only *one* critical moment per *adventure*.

The only reason characters can only "play for the critical moment" during rounds is because they can throw any number of cards from their hand when not in rounds so there is never a need to declare a "critical moment" when not in rounds. If a character were, for example, trying to run quickly down a street in non-rounds time and he had three *adrenaline* cards, he could use them all to increase his *running* skill without having to declare a critical moment.

• Enhancement Cards •

This section contains the information that players will use when they play their cards. All of the enhancements and subplots are explained in alphabetical order below.

Action Cards

By playing an *action* card, the player can add +1 to *all* skill or Attribute totals or values for the rest of that round. This includes actions, Attribute values, and damage values. The card can be played after the player has rolled the dice, but it *must* be played *before* the player knows the result of an action.

Note that the *action* card modifies *all* actions, including involuntary ones. A +1 applies to the character's Toughness for purposes of resisting damage as well as any conscious actions performed. The card is discarded at the end of the combat round during which it is played.

Outside of combat, the *action* card can only be used to modify *one* action, or all the actions that are part of a multi-action (though those rules are seldom used outside of combat).

Example: *At the beginning of the round, Jill (playing Diane O'Rourke) lays down an* action *card. For the rest of the round, the bonus numbers of all her character's actions, passive or active, are increased by one point. At the end of the round, the card is discarded.*

Roger, who is playing the burglar Hugh Cromwell, gets attacked and hit twice before he gets to act. At that point, he lays down an action *card. All the actions he performs* after *he throws the card are increased by +1 (his Toughness goes up +1 to resist damage, for example), but the* action *card does not change the fact that he has already been hit in combat.*

Adrenaline Cards

These cards add +3 to the action value of any *one* Dexterity, Strength, Endurance, Toughness or Agility skill or Attribute total or value. When playing the card, the player must state which Attribute or skill total he wishes to affect.

A character who uses an *adrenaline* card to increase his Toughness to resist damage from one attack does not apply that +3 when another character hits him, even in the same round.

Breakthrough

Using the *breakthrough* card, the player can add +3 to any *one* skill total in which the character has *no* skill adds; the character is also allowed to roll as if *trained* (he gets to reroll and 10s). For example, if a character does not have the *medicine* skill, the player can play the *breakthrough* card to increase the *medicine* skill total by +3 *and* roll as if he was trained in *medicine*. This card cannot modify a skill total that the character has skill adds in.

Claim

The player who throws the *claim* card may take the top card on the Action card discard pile in exchange for this one. The top card then goes into the player's hand.

Double Cross

A character who wishes to betray his party or one of his party members may play the *double cross* card to add +6 to any *one* action. The action should be taken to the detriment of another player character, and the player using the card must state what single value he wishes to affect when he plays the card.

Unlike other cards, the *double cross* card does *not* have to be played into the pool during combat — it can be played directly from the player's hand at *any* time.

Drama

This card may be spent as a Life Point during an adventure or turned in for three skill points at *any* time. If spent as a Life Point, it may be spent in addition to other *drama* cards, *hero* cards, or in conjunction with one of the character's own Life Points. It may be cancelled just like any other Life Point. If spent to gain skill points, the character discards the *drama* card and adds three to the total number of skill points he has. This has no immediate affect on the number of skill adds the character has since the character cannot normally learn or improve skills during an adventure.

Effect

This card can be played to add +2 to the effect value of *any* action. This includes the damage value of an attack or the skill total if used to increase the effect of an action that has its own effect value (effectively increasing result points for things such as *taunt, intimidate, persuasion*, etc.). The effect in question must be declared upon throwing the card. The card *must* be played before the results of the action have been interpreted.

Example: *Hugh Cromwell is trying to* stealth *past a guard. He generates a skill total of 16. The guard generates a* perception *total of 17 and spots him. It is too late to throw the* effect *card to modify the effect value of the* stealth *attempt.*

Li Chan, a martial artist who is working with Hugh jumps out of the shadows and attacks the guard from behind. He also has an effect *card. When he determines that he has hit the guard, but before the damage is resolved, Li throws the* effect *card, stating that he will use the +2 to modify the damage value of the attack (which is normally his Strength plus a modifier for his* martial arts *style).*

Haste

When this card is played, the character may *immediately* perform one extra action. This card may not be used to

Karl Waller

interrupt an action already in progress. This card cannot be used outside of combat.

Hero

This card may be spent as a Life Point during an adventure but may *not* be turned in for skill points at any time. If spent as a Life Point, it may be spent in addition to other *drama* cards, *hero* cards, or in conjunction with one of the character's own Life Points. It may be cancelled just like any other Life Point.

Idea

When a player throws this card, he may ask a question of the gamemaster regarding the development of the storyline, and the gamemaster should provide related hints that help the players move the plot along. The gamemaster has sole judgement over what hints are appropriate.

Example: *Diane O'Rourke has been on the trail of a Chinese opium smuggler and she is closing in. However, due to unfortunate circumstances (she was jumped by a street gang), she has lost the trail. After making a few fruitless attempts at picking up the trail again, Jill throws Diane's* idea *card and asks, "How can I find the trail again?"*

The gamemaster answers, "You've heard in your travels about a restaurant called The Serpent's Elegant Repose*." It has a history of opium dealing. Maybe you can pick up the trail there."*

The gamemaster knows that the smuggler isn't actually at The Serpent's Elegant Repose*, but there are other drug dealers there who might know where he is hiding. If Diane is smart, she might be able to pick up the trail again.*

Leadership

By using *leadership*, the player who throws this card may play up to two cards (total) into one or two other players' pools and/or draw two cards into his hand from the Action Deck. These cards can be given from the character's hand, his pool, or a combination of both.

Opponent Fails

After an opponent or enemy has completed an action against the cardholder's character, this card may be played to cancel the effects entirely. The action is then wasted, and play continues. This card may *not* be played to cancel an action that is not directed at least partially at the cardholder. The gamemaster has sole judgement over when this card can be played.

Example: *Hugh and Li are still battling that guard. During the guard's turn, he uses his wrist alarm to alert other guards. Hugh throws his* opponent fails *card. However, the gamemaster rules that since the guard was only performing a simple action, this is not an appropriate use of the card — and the guard was not trying to do anything directly to Hugh.*

The same thing goes when Li is punched by the guard. Hugh could trade Li the opponent fails*, but he cannot play it to make the guard miss Li. However, when the gamemaster tells Hugh that the guard has shot him for several* wounds*, a K, and lots of shock, Hugh can throw his* opponent fails *— the bullet miraculously missed (or didn't do any damage or whatever).*

The gamemaster should attempt to work the *opponent fails*

card into the story. In the above example, maybe Hugh carries a small sidearm in a concealed holster — the guard's bullet hit the sidearm and glanced off. Hugh *thought* he was going to get hurt, but he was saved.

Presence

These cards add +3 to the action value of any *one* Charm or Confidence skill or Attribute total or value. When playing the card, the player must state which skill or Attribute he wishes to affect. The card can only modify *one* number value per play. Otherwise, it works exactly like the *adrenaline* card above.

Rally

When a character plays the *rally* card, *all* players (including the one who played the card) may draw *one card each* into their pools.

Second Chance

Playing this card allows the character to attempt any action he has just tried again, from the very beginning. Play of this card, however, may not be used to negate "bad choices" — the action performed must be performed again — nor does it allow the character to "get back" Life Points or cards spent on the original action. The character merely gets another chance, immediately following the first attempt, to perform the action again. All effects from the first attempt are negated.

Seize Initiative

By playing this card, the player may *either* flip over a new card onto the initiative stack *or* keep the card on the top of the stack for another round. The card must be played either at the beginning of the round or before the beginning of the next round respectively. It may *not* be played during a round in which the card holder's character is *confused*. This card cannot be used outside of combat.

Supporter

To play the *supporter* card, the character must be trying to help someone else — but no action need be attempted or used in this support. The "help" should be described in roleplaying terms as the card is being thrown.

It adds an automatic +3 to the bonus number of any other character's action during the same round — but must be thrown as the other character is performing the action. The card adds to both the skill use and the effect (if any).

Willpower

These cards add +3 to the action value of any *one* Intellect or Mind skill or Attribute total or value. When playing the card, the player must state which Attribute or skill total he wishes to affect. The card can only modify *one* number value per play.

• Subplot Cards •

Alertness

When this card is placed face up in front of a player's character, that person has a special "sixth sense" outside of all other rules and roleplaying situations that will help him to spot a previously unseen item, character, or clue selected by the gamemaster. The card is not omniscient, however — and the gamemaster can select his own time for having it come into effect. It is normally used to allow a character to spot something he missed before; something that is important to the adventure. Usually, the gamemaster will ask if the player wishes to "spend" the *alertness* card before taking it away — but he doesn't have to.

Example: *Diane has entered* The Serpent's Elegant Repose *and started to look around. She's been asking some annoying questions, and there are more than a few people who would like to see her Occidental face out of there. But Diane is oblivious to the glares and mutterings (i.e., Jill ignores the gamemaster when he tells her things are getting hostile) — she is intent on following up this lead.*

The gamemaster decides one particularly nasty individual will try to plant a throwing knife in Diane's back. He determines that the character has complete surprise *and gets ready to roll. But he notices that Diane has an* alertness *card face up. He asks Jill if Diane would like to play it. She does, and the* alertness *card is discarded. The gamemaster informs Jill that a knife-wielding individual is about to attack.*

Campaign

This card can be used to make another subplot permanent. The subplot must be one that could be made permanent — such as *nemesis, romance,* or *personal stake* (not *alertness*) — and the use of the card must be approved by the gamemaster.

From then on, any time the character is able to roleplay the permanent subplot, he receives the award dictated by the card — but only when the gamemaster deems it appropriate. Also, the "permanency" of the subplot is only as long as the gamemaster decides it is fun — or until the player character takes steps toward ending it.

Unlike other subplot cards, the *campaign* card can be held in the player's hand until an appropriate subplot comes up. It *does* count as a card in the character's hand until it is played, and the only way the character can get a Life Point for it is if the gamemaster rejects the permanent subplot. When it is played or discarded in this manner, the character receives another card.

Personal Stake

This makes a mission, situation, or occurrence much more *personal* for the character. Somehow, possibly through the character's background, or even through situations arising at the moment, the character has more riding on the adventure than anybody else. The player must roleplay this personal stake, acting in accordance to the situation. If he does, the character gets an award of **two** Life Points at the end of the adventure (the gamemaster can reduce this award to one Life Point if the *personal stake* card isn't played until over half the adventure is over, or if the player doesn't do a very good job of roleplaying the situation).

Example: *During the fight with the guards, Li Chang is given a card for an approved action. It is a* personal stake. *Li's player, Jeff, decides that could be an interesting subplot. He asks the gamemaster if he can play it.*

The gamemaster looks over the adventure being played and decides he can work it in. He checks Li's background, and discovers that the martial artist has had trouble with criminal organizations in the past, particularly the Japanese Mafia, the Yakuza.

When Li and Hugh manage to silence the guard, they have a split second to search him and escape. Li notices that the guard's shirt is torn, revealing an elaborate tattoo — one that signifies he is a member of the Yakuza. A further search shows that the Yakuza is not here by accident — Li suspects that they are hunting him again.

Common Ground

When a character has this subplot in effect, the gamemaster uses it to establish a common relationship between that character and an otherwise alien or strange person, environment, or culture. For some reason, that the gamemaster may or may not explain, the character is able to relate to the alien situation fairly easily — if through a narrow focus.

Example: *Diane O'Rourke has had no luck in* The Serpent's Elegant Repose, *so she gets ready to leave. But the gamemaster sees that she has a* common ground *card face up. Just as Diane is exiting, she feels a hand press against hers. She looks down, and she sees a scruffy street urchin. They exit together.*

The street urchin turns out to have been raised by European missionaries, and the little girl has decided to help Diane because she knows not all "round eyes" are bad. She tells Diane that she saw a man matching the drug dealer's description enter a bath-house down the street. She gives directions and runs off.

Connection

Played face up, this card means that, sometime during the adventure, the gamemaster will introduce a gamemaster character (or characters) who will help the player character in some way. Usually, this help will be in the form of information, but sometimes it could be more substantial. Again, the gamemaster chooses the time and form of the help. If it does not get used by the end of the adventure, the character *may* be awarded an extra Life Point by the gamemaster — at the gamemaster's option.

Example: *Li and Hugh have escaped from the guards, but Li has informed his partner of the Yakuza involvement. Hugh frowns, knowing this can put a crimp in their cat-burglary scheme (they were breaking into a corrupt politician's house to find evidence against him, but if he's connected with the Yakuza ...).*

Hugh looks into his background and reminds the gamemaster that he has Contacts with the local underworld. He also has a connection *card face up. The gamemaster takes the* connection *card and sets up a short scene where Hugh and Li can find a connection in the local underworld who might know if the politician is "connected" with the Yakuza or if they are here hunting Li.*

As you can see from the example, using background information to work the subplot in can make the subplot more "real" — but it doesn't have to be used that way every time. If Hugh and Li were somewhere where Hugh's contacts didn't reach, the gamemaster might set up another connection — maybe Li would bump into someone who just wants to be friendly. A little careful roleplaying, and the new acquaintance might help them in their adventure.

Also, *connection* cards are not *idea* cards. The gamemaster has total control over how they are fulfilled, and for what purposes. The player controlling Hugh made a *suggestion*. The connection didn't *have* to involve Li's subplot — the gamemaster just thought it was a good idea.

Martyr

A "last-ditch effort" card, the *martyr* card has two major uses. After every full Act (or nearly full — gamemaster's judgment) that the *martyr* has been face up in front of a character, that character receives one *extra* Life Point as an award. However, sometime in the adventure, the character has to "pay the piper" — he must sacrifice his life to perform some gamemaster-designated (and usually heroic/normally impossible) action.

When a player draws the *martyr* card, he must *immediately* decide whether or not it is going to be used. If, later on, the player changes his mind, he must *immediately* "pay back" the Life Points he received (if any) *times two*. If he doesn't have that many, he has to give up all the Life Points he *does* have, all his cards, and he has to pay back the rest he owes *immediately* upon receiving them. This includes getting *hero* or *drama* cards.

The *martyr* card should be used selectively. It means killing off a character in a high-profile, exciting way. The player shouldn't do it if he doesn't want to, and the gamemaster should let the player know if there is likely to be some heroic/exciting way the character can die. Diving a screaming B-17 into the cave of a master villain to foil his plans of world domination is more exciting than throwing yourself in front of a bus to save a puppy. Both are "heroic," but only one is really exciting.

Mistaken Identity

According to this subplot, either the character becomes convinced that someone he meets is someone else (intentionally or unintentionally) or the character is mistaken for another person. This *mistaken identity* becomes important to the adventure and/or the character's situation, and causes interesting roleplaying scenarios. It is *not* just a "Say, aren't you–?" "No, I'm not," sort of thing. It is pretty important.

Example: *Diane heads down to the bath-house and enters, looking for her quarry. She changes into bath clothes and surreptitiously looks from room to room. While she is walking along, she hears someone yell at her. She's startled, but then she notices it is the chief attendant. She finds out that, instead of changing into bath clothes, she's changed into the clothing of an attendant — he thinks she's "that new Western girl" they hired. He wants her to go check the water levels in each room. Diane smiles and nods. Sneaking is no longer a problem.*

Not all *mistaken identities* will be as helpful. Diane (in the example above) could have been mistaken for a prostitute, an assassin, or something equally unsavory. On the other hand, she could have gone into a room and mistaken an innocent bather for the drug dealer (or maybe a local crime lord, if she was really unlucky).

Mistaken identities only give awards during Acts that they are still in play and still interesting. In the above case, it is likely Diane will gain one Life Point for roleplaying the *mistaken identity* during the Act she was in the bath-house, but no more. The gamemaster can, however, change the *mistaken identity* if he wants it to keep running — Diane could be mistaken for different people throughout the course of the adventure.

At the end of every Act the subplot is in play, award the character one Life Point (if the subplot is played in an interesting manner).

Nemesis

Someone the character meets during the adventure (or interacts with, or who is hanging around) has or develops a grudge against the character — of dangerous intensity. This can be an old defeated opponent from the character's past, or a new one who just doesn't like the character. Whichever it is, the *nemesis* may do anything from annoying the character, to making his life difficult, to attempting to kill the character. The character then has to deal with the situation. The *player* will know that the *nemesis* is in effect, but the *character* may not.

At the end of every Act the subplot is in play, award the character one Life Point (if the subplot is played in an interesting manner).

Example: *Li already knows he has a personal stake in his current adventure, and then he draws a nemesis card. The gamemaster okays it, but doesn't tell Jeff what the nemesis is. As it turns out, the gamemaster decides that a particular Yakuza warlord has come to the area on a mission — controlling local politics — but he has found out about Li's presence. He now has a hobby to hunt Li down.*

Romance

The character attracts a romantic interest and must roleplay the situation. This does *not* mean the character has to "fall in love" — love might not even be the issue. But, there must be roleplaying involved in the acceptance, rejection, or combination of the two. If the player roleplays the situation, at the end of the adventure, the character receives **two** bonus Life Points as an award — assuming the gamemaster feels the player roleplayed adequately. No awards are given by Act.

Suspicion

The character who plays this subplot card will be "under a cloud of suspicion" sometime during the adventure. Some gamemaster character, or characters, will suspect that the character is not who he seems. Usually, the "suspect" will have his motives misinterpreted, his footsteps dogged, and/or his loyalties questioned.

The *suspicion* should, in most cases, inconvenience the character. Someone will refuse to trust the character, and that someone should be a relatively important or influencial part of the adventure. For every Act that the suspicion subplot comes into play, give the character one Life Point if he roleplays it in an interesting manner.

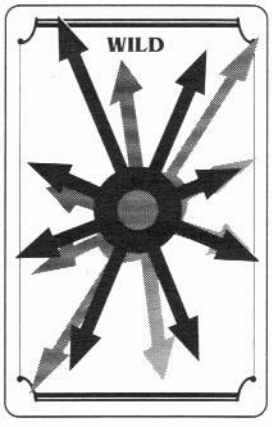
Example: *When Diane leaves the bath-house, she feels like she is being watched. As it turns out, the local police are going to have her watched — they feel she might be causing trouble in their city. Diane will have to be extra careful in her investigations.*

• The Picture Cards •

Also known as the *jokers*, the *picture cards* are special cards that can be used in several ways. When a character is dealt a particular picture card, it has the results described below.

In the *MasterBook* Worldbooks, some *jokers* have different results. If you are using a Worldbook created by West End Games, you should check to see if the *jokers* are used differently in that game setting.

The "Wild" Card

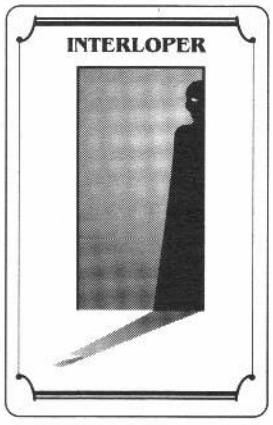


When a character gets the *wild* card, he can look through this chapter and use the card as *any* card in the deck except another picture card. In addition, the character does not have to decide what card the *wild* card will be until he needs it. The *wild* card is used exactly like whatever card it becomes.

Example: *Diane draws new cards at the end of the "bath-house scene," and she gets the* wild *card. She puts it into her hand and starts thinking about what she'll use it as. Later on, Diane gets stuck in her investigation again. Jill decides to use the* wild *card as a* connection *card, and she asks the gamemaster if he can come up with a "friend" that will help her. The* wild *card is flipped face up, and sits in front of her until the connection is revealed.*

Example: *Li Chang gets a* wild *card during a fight. He plays it into his pool just before two more Yakuza assassins jump in. Hugh is wavering, and Li is hurt, so he decides that he'll use the* wild *as a* hero *card — he throws the* wild *card, gains a Life Point, and uses it to grab Hugh and crash out of a window, escaping.*

The "Interloper" Card



When a character is given this card, it must be played face up as if it were a subplot (**red**) card. Sometime during the adventure (hopefully soon, but the timing is up to the gamemaster), a "third party" should show up. The third party might show up to help the player characters, the gamemaster characters, or to pursue their own interests. When they show up, the card is discarded, and they act normally.

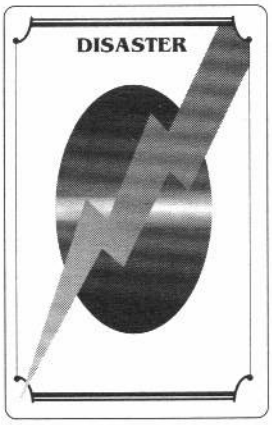
Example: *Diane has had very little luck with her investigations. After identifying the drug smuggler at the bath-house, she failed to track him back to his lair. Now she is wandering the streets of a strange city, knowing she is close to her quarry, but not close enough.*

Suddenly, she is beset by street-toughs working for the drug smuggler. He has employed them to "scare her off,"

even if they have to kill her to do it (that would make anyone pretty scared). In the ensuing fight, Diane takes the worst of it.

But the interloper *card is face up in front of her. Just when the toughs are getting ready to finish her off, she hears whistles. The thugs are scared off by local police. Diane is relieved ... until the handcuffs are thrown on her wrists. Apparently, they want to bring her in for "questioning."*

The "Disaster" Card



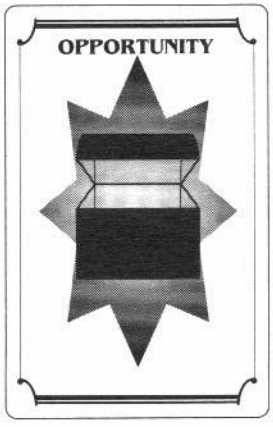
When a character draws this card, something *really bad* happens — not necessarily to the character, but *in general*. It is like a gamemaster-controlled *setback* (see below).

If this card comes up outside of combat or in a situation where it is unlikely something bad would happen, then the player should put it in front of him and draw another card (as if it were a subplot card). When the gamemaster can work the disaster in, the card is discarded and something bad happens.

Example: *After much fighting and running, Li Chang and Hugh are finally cornered at the docks near a lake. They had hoped to escape using a boat, but the bad guys have taken them all. As the Yakuza close in, the gamemaster notices the* disaster *card in front of Hugh's pool.*

A storm hits. The gamemaster informs the players that it has been raining all night (an unimportant detail originally) but now the storm has whipped itself into a frenzy. Everyone will have a hard time seeing, shooting, and moving on the docks (+4 to the DN of all those actions, the gamemaster says), and the waves are becoming dangerously high (on a setback, *a combatant will be swept off the docks and into the water). The question is: will this help the characters escape or seal their doom?*

The "Opportunity" Card



This cards is somewhat the reverse of the *disaster* card when it is drawn by a player. The player puts the card into his hand and works it into his pool as if it were an enhancement card (see below for using hands and pools). When the player wants, and when the card pool rules allow, he can throw the card and receive an *opportunity*.

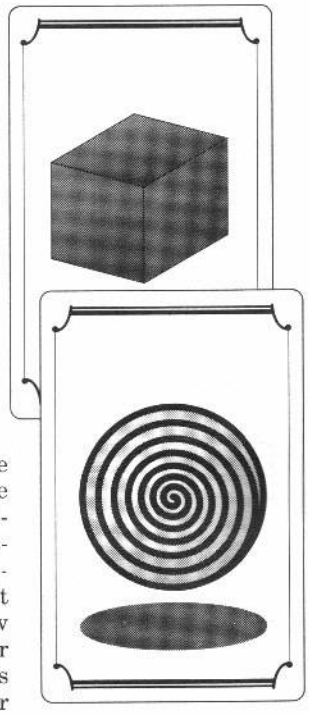
The *opportunity* is totally up to the gamemaster, but it should be something that helps the player. The best description is that the cards is a thematic cross between an *idea* card and a *breakthrough* card. The player should be given some sort of brainstorm idea or temporary "boost" that helps him solve a problem or perform an action. The bounds of the *opportunity* should be up to the gamemaster, but the actual execution depends on the player and the character.

Example: *Diane is in the police station undergoing intense interrogation. For some reason, the police figure that everything that has gone wrong in their precinct is her fault. Was she connected with the brawl at the bathhouse? What does she know about the drug trade at* The Serpent's Elegant Repose? *Why did the street-toughs attack her? The answers she gives are never enough.*

Then Diane plays the opportunity *card. The gamemaster states that, at that moment, a scuffle has broken out on the other side of the stationhouse. A hooker has grabbed a gun and is screaming at the police. Everyone is paying attention to her.*

There's the opportunity. *Diane could try to* stealth *out, away from the police, or she could try to disarm the hooker, hoping that will win the policemen's favor, or she could try anything else she wants — it's up to her. But move fast ... with every second, the opportunity is slipping away.*

The General Cards



These cards are considered "setting specific." In order to tailor your MasterDeck to the world setting you are using, these two cards have effects left up to the gamemaster. The gamemaster may even change the effects of the cards from adventure to adventure — tailoring their effects to each adventure that comes up.

Certain *MasterBook* WorldBooks will include rules for using these cards as well.

The Blank Cards

There are two blank cards in the Action Deck. These are for the gamemaster's use. Take them out before play. You can use them by creating new *enhancement, subplot,* or *picture* cards, or you can wait for West End to put out WorldBooks with new card ideas. Or you can even copy other cards — maybe you think there needs to be one more *opponent fails* card, or a few more *action* cards in the deck.

To fill out the card, determine first what type of card it is going to be. *Picture* cards are easy — the gamemaster just has to draw a picture and give the card a title and paste the picture onto the card (we don't recommend actually writing on the slick surface). Create the rules for the card's use (in combat and in general — see above and below), and tell the players.

To create *enhancement* cards, come up with some attribute or skill that can be modified. You may choose to modify individual Attributes instead of Attribute "groups" (as the *adrenaline, willpower,* and *presence* cards modify now), but you probably shouldn't get more specific than that. Try to keep away from card rules that cannot be written on the actual face of the cards — they are too long to understand.

Subplot cards should be gamemaster-initiated by player-interactive "story elements" that make roleplaying more interesting. In the above examples, you can see how subplots can influence the game — but they shouldn't take it over. Normally, an individual character will not experience more than one or two subplots during an adventure — for good reason. The subplot is exactly that; a *sub*plot. It is not as important as the overall adventure plot.

• Cards in Combat and Interaction •

The *MasterBook* combat and interaction system is enhanced by the card deck, which speeds up play and introduces an interesting aspect of chance to the game. Instead of simply determining initiative by rolling a die or checking an attribute, the card deck is used instead. And characters on both sides can be affected by interesting "side effects" that come up when the cards are flipped.

Determining Initiative

During a combat or interaction round, it is always important to determine who acts first. This is called *determining initiative.* The card deck does this for you in *MasterBook*.

When the card deck is used to determine which "side" — the player character side or the gamemaster character side — acts first in a combat or interaction round, and which side acts last, you need to use the initiative pile and the card deck.

To begin a combat or interaction round, the top card on the card deck is flipped over and the *initiative line* read to the players. The card should be laid out in front of the players, starting the initiative pile. This is different from the regular discard pile where *enhancement* cards go after they are used — the *claim* card cannot remove a card from the initiative pile.

Initiative Lines

Every initiative line begins with either an "S:" or a "D:" and these abbreviations stand for "Standard" and "Dramatic." They are the types of *scenes* the story is currently in. During a "Standard" scene, use the "S:" line; during a "Dramatic" scene, use the "D:" line.

The next notation on the initiative line will be either a "P" or a "G." These letters stand for either "Player Characters" or "Gamemaster Characters." Whichever is first in the line gets to act first in the round.

Following the "P" or "G" may be one of the following words: *fatigued, flurry, inspiration, setback, stymied, up, breaks, confused* or a skill name. These are called *initiative line effects.* If one of these results is found, apply those results to the side it is listed with.

For example, if you get a result of "P: *flurry,* G: *breaks,*" that means for this round that the player characters go first and the *flurry* condition applies to them. The gamemaster characters go second and the *breaks* condition applies to them.

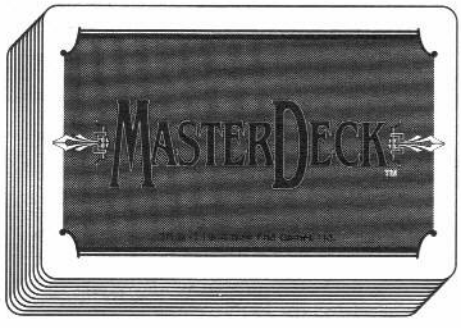
After both sides have acted, flip over another card and a new round begins. Each flip of the card deck stands for another ten-second round.

Standard versus Dramatic Scenes

Adventures are split into subdivisions called *Acts.* An Act is a significant part of the adventure. If there are three parts to an adventure, each third would be an Act.

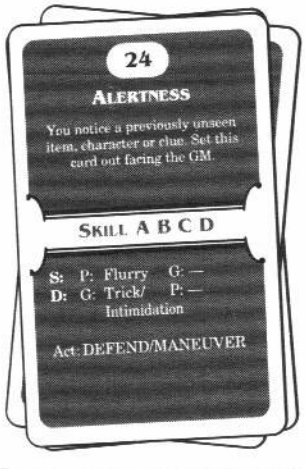
Each Act is then divided into a number of *Scenes* — the

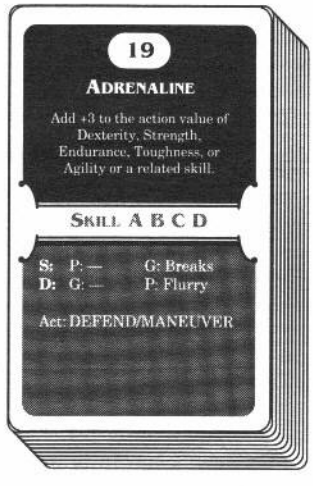
• The Piles •



The Card Deck
We begin with the card deck. After player characters have been given their cards, the remaining card deck should be set out on the table where everyone can see it. This deck will be used to draw cards from to determine initiative, and to replenish player characters' hands at different times. When this card deck runs out, shuffle the discard pile and the initiative pile and start over again.

The Initiative Pile
The top card on the pile is always the initiative card for the current round. It has all the information about the action of the current round, including who goes first and all initiative line effects. It also tells what the approved actions are.





The Discard Pile
When a card is used by a player, or discarded for some reason, it ends up on top of the discard pile. This is the pile referred to in the description regarding the claim card.

number of Scenes and Acts in an adventure is completely up to the gamemaster (though we recommend at least two Scenes per Act). A Scene usually has one or two significant events (possibly fights, possibly roleplaying events, or whatever) in it, though it may have more.

Certain Scenes are more critical to an adventure than others. These are *Dramatic* Scenes. During a Dramatic Scene, the tension is great and everything that is done is probably of great importance to the outcome of the Act — or even the adventure. Fighting a major villain, struggling to uncover a major clue, or being caught up in a whirlwind of exciting action would occur in a Dramatic Scene.

During a *Standard* Scene, important and dangerous things may be happening, but the tension is not as great. Player characters should be able to progress through Standard Scenes with reasonable ease — sure, a character could get shot or injured, or an important clue could be overlooked during a Standard Scene, but the level of activity is not as great as during a Dramatic Scene.

Every Act of an adventure should close with a Dramatic, climactic, Scene. Several Standard Scenes may be used to build to this climax, but the Dramatic Scenes should definitely be outnumbered by the Standard Scene.

When combat or interaction rounds are entered, the gamemaster should declare *immediately* what type of scene the characters are in. Since the card deck initiative line favors the player characters during Standard Scenes, and favors gamemaster characters during Dramatic Scenes, this will help to increase the tension of the latter as well.

Initiative Line Effects

These *initiative line effects* simulate the dramatic, changing, and often dangerous nature of adventures. Instead of being able to perform combat in a static, unchanging environment, the players and the gamemaster use the initiative line effects to simulate uncontrollable contingencies that affect their abilities and actions. Think about books, movies, and television shows. During a fight or a tense interaction between the characters, doesn't something sometimes happen that is out of the control of either side, but affects the scene dramatically? Perhaps a roof falls in, or a noncombatant gets in the way. Or maybe one side or the other gets a lucky break — or an unlucky one. The initiative line effects simulate that possibility.

Here are the different effects that can come up either on the player or gamemaster side:

Fatigued

Due to the stress of the situation, every character on this side suffers *two shock points* of damage from *fatigue*.

Flurry

Every character on this side gets one *extra* action this round. All characters on this side act once (as normal) and then act again. Characters can receive cards for performing approved actions during either or both actions. Characters can also play cards from their hands into their pools twice if they perform two actions.

Inspiration

When this effect comes up, all characters on the side can remove all shock, K, O, and knockdown conditions *immediately*. Unconscious characters wake up, but are considered *knocked down*. In addition, any player character on an *inspired* side receives a card at the beginning of the round.

• Gamemaster Fiat •

Part of being the gamemaster is knowing when to "change the rules." As has been said several times in this book, the gamemaster should not let the rules get in the way of a good story — as long as it is a good story for *everybody*. That's where *gamemaster fiat* comes in.

Imagine, if you will, your players have been struggling against an unknown foe for weeks of play time. Over the last several sessions you have been building the tension to a fever pitch, while the players figure out puzzles, defeat enemies, and make and remake plans. Finally, it is time for the ultimate confrontation with their true enemy. They have him at last, on even terms, and it is time to settle the score.

The first four initiative cards flipped either *setback* the players' foe or gives the player characters *ups* and *flurries*. The player characters easily defeat their foes and there is a tremendous feeling of anticlimax.

In situations like this, you can "change the rules" for the sake of the story. You use *gamemaster fiat*. When the gamemaster declares this, he can draw four cards from the top of the deck. He can then decide whether or not to use any of the cards as initiative cards, and in what order, and discard those that are not appropriate. This way, the gamemaster can use the card deck to "influence" the flow of the scene.

But gamemaster fiat does not always have to be used when the gamemaster characters are getting beat. Sometimes, through no fault of their own, the players just have a run of bad luck. A couple of *setbacks*, a *confused*, and some "G: Up" results can take their toll on any party. In this case, the gamemaster should call *gamemaster fiat* to balance (but not rescue) the players' situation.

Gamemaster fiat should be used sparingly, because every time it *is* used, there is a chance someone will feel unfairly cheated. Most storylines can handle a run of "bad cards" — but, in those occasions when they can't, go ahead and modify.

Many gamemasters will never use fiat; others may use it once or twice during an adventure. If you find you have to use it more than once nearly every adventure, then there may be something *else* wrong that you need to fix.

Setback

Something *bad* happens to this side. This can take two forms. The easiest *setback* to play is that everyone on the affected side loses one action this round. The more interesting method of enforcing a *setback* is to figure out an appropriate "disaster" the side suffers (similar to the *disaster* card above, but only affecting the appropriate side). Combinations of disasters for some characters and missed actions for others is also appropriate (maybe one character misses an action, another's gun jams, and a third finds the catwalk he is standing on collapsing), but *no* character should suffer more than one *setback* from this result.

Stymied

The side that receives a *stymied* result loses the *first* roll-again they get on *any* action performed this round (if they would get to roll two dice again, as from spending a Life Point,

they would lose one of those two dice). If the character does multiple actions in a round, the first roll-again for *each* action is forfeit.

Up

This side is *up* this round for *all* actions. The *up* cannot be cancelled by use of a Life Point, and it can be combined with any other *up* conditions the character is entitled to or earns during this round.

In an *up* condition, the character automatically gets to re-roll both dice — and can then use Life Points, *hero* or *drama* cards for additional re-rolls.

Breaks

Note: This effect only comes up for gamemaster characters.

When this comes up on the initiative line, the gamemaster characters have one round to either cause damage to the player characters, significantly improve their situation, or severely affect their opponents negatively. If they do so, even if they only manage to affect *one* character on the player side, then play continues as normal next round. If not, then they must break off the combat or the interaction if at all possible. If it is not possible for them to depart, or if the player characters make it impossible, then they will resume the interaction or combat as normal, but will be at +4 to all their DNs until they improve their situation significantly.

Skills

Note: This effect only comes up for gamemaster characters.

The gamemaster characters may have skills such as *intimidate, trick,* or *taunt* listed on the action line. During the round, if a gamemaster character performs one of these actions successfully on a player character, the gamemaster can take one card from that player (either from his hand or pool — but hand cards are chosen randomly) and place it in the discard pile. This effect is valid for the entire round, so if the gamemaster characters are enjoying the benefits of a *haste* card, they could have more than one opportunity.

Confused

Note: This effect only comes up for player characters.

The player characters are *confused* and their plans are disrupted. They may not perform *any* card play this round. They may not play cards, trade cards, put cards in their pools, or draw cards from the deck. A *seize initiative* card cannot be played to remove this condition, and it is in effect for the whole round. In addition, gamemaster characters acting on the players' side act confused and have difficulty following orders or making plans this round.

The Approved Action Line

Immediately below the initiative lines of the cards is a line labelled "Act." This is the *approved action line.* An approved action is a skill (or skills) that is randomly determined as "appropriate" for this round. Whether the action is actually appropriate or not is up to the players and the gamemaster — more the former than the latter.

The approved action rules are an incentive for players to do more than just blaze away with their guns. Most of the approved actions are not directly combat-oriented, and they stress inventiveness and roleplaying.

Any player character that *succeeds* at an approved action during the round receives a new card off the top of the Action Deck. He then puts the card into his hand and may play it into his pool as per the normal rules.

Characters can only receive one card a round in this manner unless they play a *haste* card or a *flurry* action is in effect.

Determining Success

In order to win a card by performing an approved action, all the character has to do is *succeed.* The action may end up having little or no effect (an example would be hitting someone during an "Any" approved action round, but not causing any damage — only the *hit* was important, not the effect) and still be a success.

However, the action must move the story along. As the gamemaster, you will have to put your foot down on "card chasers" who only perform the approved actions for cards. If they are doing inappropriate actions just to get cards, tell them, and the next time they do it, don't give them the card — but let them perform the action first. As long as you are open-minded and consistent, you shouldn't have any problem enforcing the rule.

Finally, it is important to remember that approved action means approved *action.* Only actions that require skill rolls can be approved actions — no matter how appropriate a simple action may be. For example, if a character is flying a plane while other characters are fighting in the passenger area, and *maneuver* comes up on the approved action line, the pilot doesn't get a card if he is not rolling to fly the plane — as flying a plane normally only requires a skill total if the character is in a stressful situation (or if he doesn't normally know how). But, if the pilot decided to swerve and dive the plane to throw the gamemaster characters off-balance, then that could count as a *maneuver.* It is appropriate, and it requires a skill total.

• Critical Skill Resolution •

On each card is a box with one of the following results: "Skill" followed by some letters, "Critical Problem," "Complication," or "Possible Setback." This box is used for *critical skill resolution*, an optional set of rules that can be used for very intense, "crisis" situations.

During certain situations that arise during the game, you, as the gamemaster, may want to increase the tension of a difficult situation by imposing a time limit, or a "hurry-up" sequence of actions that make the characters move quickly to solve a complicated task. This task is usually one that involves several different steps, a special order in which they must be accomplished, and a time limit. During those occasions, critical skill resolution can be used to set the pace.

During a tense situation, the characters will be informed of the task(s) they need to perform, and how many steps they'll need to take to accomplish the task. That is where the cards come into play. The steps can only be performed when the initiative card flipped has the appropriate *step letter* on its face.

The steps are represented by letters "A," "B," "C," and "D." To succeed at a critical task, the players must first perform step A, then step B, then step C and, finally, step D.

In order to complete critical skill resolution, skills or tasks

must be performed during these steps. Characters can only attempt a step if that step's letter is on the card for that round.

If the next step in the task is due to be performed, and the appropriate letter is not on the card during that round, then the opportunity to complete the task is not there.

The gamemaster should assign each step, A through D, its own difficulty number and its own appropriate skill use. Some steps may be easy, while others hard. Sometimes, the skill used in one step will be the only skill needed; other times, several skills are necessary to perform the action.

The words that sometimes appear in the box are *challenges* the characters must overcome in order to perform their complicated task. They affect the characters negatively during critical skill resolution and may cause them to start over, repeat steps, or even fail.

Critical Problem

When a *critical problem* comes up on the action stack, the character must make a skill roll for the next step he needs. If the character makes the difficulty, then he has accomplished that part of the task and gets to move on. However, if he fails, not only does he not get that letter, he must use a *whole new skill* for that step. If every step of the critical skill resolution uses the same skill, then this means the *whole process* must be performed (from where the character left off) with a different skill.

The player must figure out a new skill that could work. Disarming a bomb, for example, would come under the heading of *science: demolitions*. But, if the character failed a critical problem sequence, then this skill will no longer work. The player will have to think of another way to perform the task. Perhaps *science: electronics* could be used to rewire the bomb, or *science: mechanical* to mess up the detonator's gears or levers.

The gamemaster must then come up with new difficulty numbers for the remaining tasks. Since the new skill is not as appropriate as the old one was, they will probably be one or two points higher.

Complication

During a *complication* round, the character may attempt the next task and earn a letter if he succeeds, but, if he fails, the gamemaster adds +1 to the difficulty of *all* further difficulty numbers. Due to the character's mistake, the task has gotten harder. If more than one *complication* appears during a critical skill resolution, then the effects are cumulative.

Possible Setback

Failing a skill use during this round causes the character to *slip back* one level. If the character had finished step B and was attempting step C, then he would have to move back to A. He would now have to succeed at step B *again*.

Dramatic Skill Use as an Approved Action

If an initiative card comes up that has an approved action the character is using to complete the critical skill resolution, then the character can earn cards as normal during the round.

Last Ditch Effort

During critical skill resolutions that have a time limit — a number of times the initiative cards can be flipped — there are times when the characters just won't have the opportunity to complete their tasks in time. Either the letters just didn't come up right or they failed to perform the tasks. When the timer is ticking down, the characters may attempt a *last ditch effort* to complete the skill resolution during any round — regardless of the level they are at or what the card says.

To perform all the remaining tasks, the character(s) attempts the skill use as a multi-action. All steps must be completed *now*, this round. Due to the "hurry-up" nature of the tasks *all* difficulty numbers are increased by +2 per level.

If a character has completed step C and is going to rush step D (it hasn't come up on the card), then the DN is increased by +2. Performing steps A, B, C, and D all in one round would increase *all* the DNs by +8 — and *every* step must be completed, or they *all* fail.

Characters can elect to perform last ditch efforts when there is no clock ticking — perhaps they are in a hurry for their own reasons. This can be done at any time, with the same rules, but failing the skill check means the characters have *failed*. They have ruined their chances to complete the task *at all*.

• More On Getting Cards •

In the beginning of this chapter, you were told how you get cards at the beginning of an adventure. Depending on how many player characters there are, each character gets a certain number of cards. But after they are gone, then what?

The End of a Scene or Act

As previously noted, adventures are broken down into Acts, and each Act has a number of Scenes. When a Scene or an Act ends every player is allowed to replenish his character's hand. All cards still in pools are picked up. Characters with more cards than they were issued at the beginning of the adventure (not counting **all red** subplot cards that don't count toward hand totals) must discard down to that number.

At this point, any player may discard any or all cards, even if he has less than he started with, drawing a number of new cards until they have as many cards as they began the adventure with.

For example, if there are four player characters and three of them discard their entire hands but one keeps two cards, the first three receive three new cards each but the fourth only receives one new card.

Subplot cards are handled now as they were at the beginning of the adventure. If a character receives a Life Point award for a particular subplot, he receives it at the end of the Act or adventure as appropriate.

Exceptional Roleplaying

Optional Rule: Sometimes, when a player does an exceptional job of planning, roleplaying, or leadership, the gamemaster may choose to award that player with an extra card. Only one card is given, even if it turns out to be a subplot card.

Gamemasters should keep track of how many "card awards" they give out, however. No more than one should be given out per player per adventure — it might seem like the gamemaster is showing favoritism.

• Examples of Card Play •

There are, as discussed above, several ways cards can be used in the game. Here are some examples of card play in different situations. For the purposes of this example, the players and characters are Bill, playing Tuoton the Giant; Brian, playing Derrick; and Jill, playing Thet. Ted is the gamemaster.

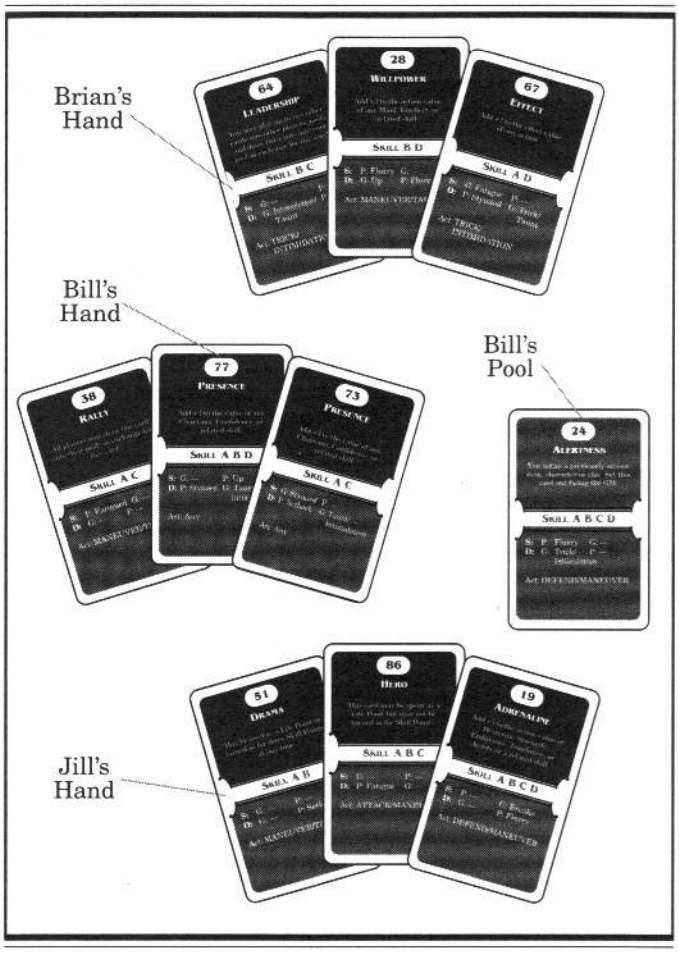
General Card Use

At the beginning of the adventure, which takes place in a pulp fantasy game setting, Tuoton, Derrick, and Thet are "introduced" to each other. At the beginning of the adventure, they are all "hanging around," waiting to be contacted by a potential employer.

As the gamemaster supplies them with the basic information they need to know about the adventure, he gives them each three cards. They are dealt as follows:

Tuoton (Bill): *Rally, alertness, presence*
Derrick (Brian): *Leadership, willpower, effect*
Thet (Jill): *Drama, hero, adrenaline*

Because the *alertness* card in Tuoton's hand is **all red**, he flips it up in front of him and tells the gamemaster that he received a subplot card. The gamemaster gives him another card — another *presence*.



The adventure begins as the group's potential employer, a man named Brick Rupert, comes in and sits down.

GM (as Brick): "I hope you all had dinner, because I'm gonna make this quick. I want to hire you to do a job, and I want it done right away."

Bill (as Tuoton): "Oh, really? Well, maybe you'd better tell us about it — especially what we're going to get for it — before you get all excited."

GM: *(sighs)* "All you gotta know is what I tell you — you'll like the deal."

Jill (as Thet): "Why don't you let us decide." **(As Jill)** "Ted, do I know this guy from anywhere? I have background contacts in the local underworld. And he sounds like a crook."

GM: "No. But he does sound like he's from out of town." **(As Brick)** "All right, sweetheart, here's the deal."

The gamemaster goes on to explain the terms of Brick's proposal. He wants a group of bodyguards to protect him during a "riverside" — a meeting between two different criminal factions — and he wants a secondary negotiator. His bodyguards met with "accidents" along with his primary negotiator, but he can't go back to his organization for more. He's heard about the characters' reputations (possibly through some of Thet's contacts) and thinks he can trust them — if they can settle on a price. After the details are spelled out, that subject comes up.

Brian (as Derrick): "Okay, it sounds like a decent job. And you aren't going to screw with anybody — or you woulda brought more men. The deal sounds fair. What are you offering?"

GM (as Brick): "I can pay you three thousand Guildstamps" (the local currency) "now, and another three after the meeting."

Jill: "Does that sound reasonable?"

GM: "Does anyone have the *streetwise* or *business* skill?"

Jill: "I have *streetwise* at 12."

GM: "Okay, generate a skill total."

Jill rolls the dice and gets a 6, a pitiful total. That would be a bonus number of -5, for a skill total of 7 (12-5).

Jill: "Can I spend my *hero* card?"

GM: "Sure. You aren't in rounds — things aren't that tense — so you can throw any cards you want."

Bill: "Wait a minute. I've got two *presence* cards. They add +3 to *streetwise*. Let's trade."

Jill thinks about it, realizing that figuring out the price for a "meet" shouldn't be that hard, so she trades Bill (Tuoton) her *hero* card for one of his *presence* cards.

Jill: (throws the card on the discard pile) "Okay, I got a ten." (The presence card is worth +3 to any Charisma, Confidence, or related skill, and *streetwise* is a Confidence skill, so her 7 skill total is moved up to 10.)

GM: Ted had assigned a DN of 8 (Average) to the DN of correctly determining the "going rate" for bodyguarding, so Thet received three result points. On the General Success

Column, that reads as a *solid* success. "All right. You think that a total of five thousand for the three of you isn't unreasonable — but, because he's an outsider, you could probably get more. After all, you have no guarantees he isn't going to mess things up and leave you holding the bag. No more than eight thousand, though."

Jill: "I'm going to try to *persuade* him, then. I have *persuasion* at 10 and the *bargain* specialization at 12. I assume I can use *bargain*, right?"

GM: "Go ahead."

Jill generates another skill total. This time, she gets a ten on one die and a seven on another. She gets to roll the ten again, because she's *trained* in the skill, and she gets a three. That's a die total of 20, for a bonus number of +9. That's a *persuasion (bargain)* total of 21 (12+9).

Jill (as Thet): "That's a little low, Brick, considering you don't know anybody in this town, and you've got the meet set already. We're your best shot." She names a price modestly above what he originally proposed.

GM: "Brick grumbles a lot, but he starts to cave in." (The gamemaster determined that Brick would consider increasing the price by a reasonable increment.) **(As Brick)** "Well, I don't know if I can spare that much. I didn't come prepared for much bargaining."

Bill: "I'm going to try to *persuade* him, too. My skill value's a ten, but maybe I can push him in the right direction." Bill rolls the dice and gets a bonus number of 0. He throws the other *presence* card on for a +3 — a 13.) **(As Tuoton)** "C'mon, man. We're only asking for a fair price. You wouldn't want to start over with a whole new group, would you?"

GM: "Brick looks pretty disgusted, but he caves in pretty easily. He'd been prepared to go that high, but he doesn't have to like it." **(As Brick)** "Okay. I'll pay. Meet me at the site tomorrow at this time. Don't be late — and, Thet, I expect you to help me negotiate."

Jill (as Thet): "Right."

The gamemaster informs the players that Brick hands them three thousand Guildstamps in a small, leather bag and gets up and leaves. The scene has ended, so they can trade in cards or get new ones.

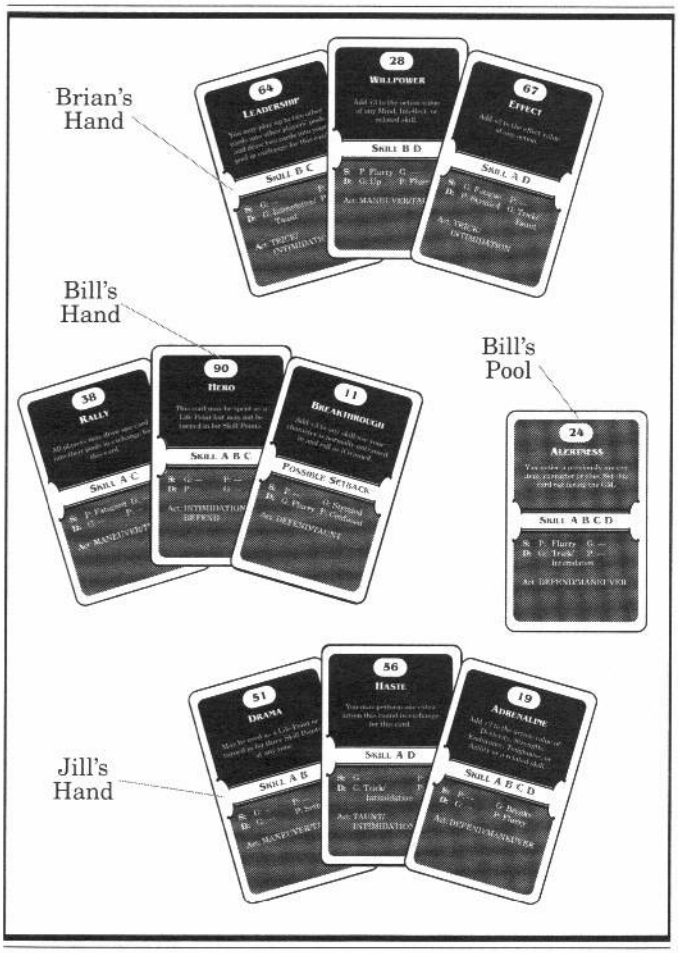
Tuoton still has his *rally* card, but he has no other cards (the *alertness*, since it is an **all-red** card, doesn't count toward the number of cards in his hand) left. He draws two more. Derrick didn't use any cards, but he discards his *willpower* card and draws another one. Thet is happy with her *drama* and *adrenaline* cards, so she just draws one more. The characters now have the following cards:

Tuoton (Bill): *Rally, hero, breakthrough (and alertness, face up)*
Derrick (Brian): *Leadership, supporter, effect*
Thet (Jill): *Drama, haste, adrenaline*

Using Cards "In Rounds"

Later on during the evening, the party is on its way to their quarters when out jump a group of street-toughs. Not knowing any better, the thugs think to pick on the three adventurers for a little fun and maybe some extra cash. There are five of them.

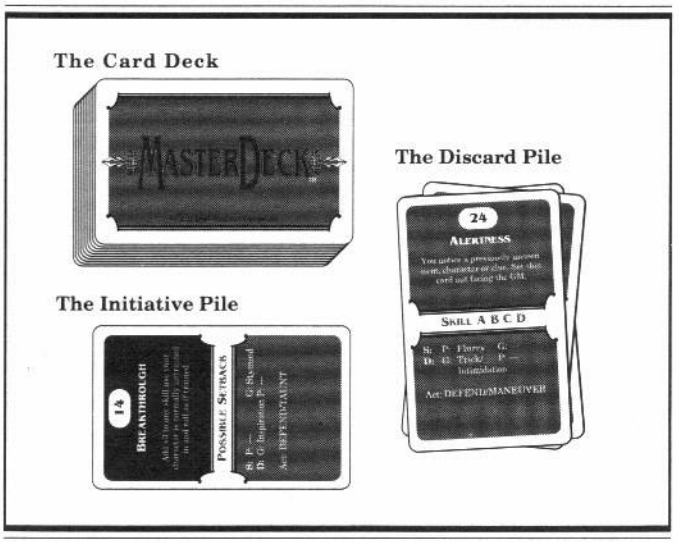
GM: "Suddenly, without warning, a group of tough-looking men and women come at you out of the shadows. You're surprised."



Bill: "What about my *alertness* card?"

GM: "Oh, yeah. Okay, Bill. Tuoton was stopping to tie his shoe, so he was a little farther back. Everyone else is surprised, but you see them before they can get to you." The gamemaster takes the *alertness* card and puts it on the discard pile.

The gamemaster flips over the top card of the Action Deck. It is card #14.



GM: "It's a standard scene — as far as you know, these are just some guys who decided to jump you. It says the players go first" (P: —) "and the gamemaster characters are *stymied*." (G: Stymied) "The approved actions are *defend* and *taunt*.

"Thet and Derrick are surprised but, since your side goes first, you can *actively defend* if you want. You can't perform any offensive action, and you can't run away or anything. They're attacking. Tuoton, since you weren't surprised, you can act first, then Thet, then Derrick."

Bill: "I'll try to step in front of Thet to keep them from rushing her, and I'll hit the one rushing me with my club."

GM: "Tuoton, you're performing a *maneuver*, and a *melee combat* attack. Whichever is your primary action, subtract two from your skill total. Then subtract three from your secondary."

Bill: *(Bill rolls the dice and gets a 10 and a 6. He rerolls the ten and gets a three)*: "My primary action is the *maneuver*. I got a 19 — that's a bonus number of +8. My *maneuver* skill is an 8. So that's a sixteen, minus two because of the multi-action, so my skill total is 14."

GM: "All right. Roll your attack."

Bill: *(rolls dice, gets a 9 and an 8)* "Sixteen. The bonus number is +5. Can I spend my *hero* card? I'd really like to club this guy."

GM: "No. It's the first round of combat. You don't have any cards in your pool."

Bill: "Okay. My *melee combat* skill is 12, so that's a 17, minus three for the secondary action — a 14."

GM: *(the gamemaster checks the defending thug's* maneuver *and* melee parry *skills — he did not* actively defend, *so he uses the base skill values)* "The *maneuver* succeeded, and so did the *melee combat* attack."

Bill: *(looks at the other players and smiles)* "Punks. We can take 'em."

GM: "Thet, now it's your turn."

Jill: "I'll *defend*."

Brian: "Me, too. Can I draw my weapon so I can use my *melee parry*."

GM: *(considers)* "Well, you guys were supposed to go first, so, okay. The thugs prepare their actions. It looks like three of them will attack."

Silently, the gamemaster notes that three of the thugs will attack, while two will "hang back" in case of trouble.

As Bill and the gamemaster work out the damage for Tuoton's *melee combat* attack and the results of his *maneuver*, Brian and Jill generate *active defense* totals. Derrick gets a *melee parry* of 16 while Thet only gets an 11.

GM: "All the thugs are armed with knives. Tuoton, you successfully *maneuvered* on the one that was going after Thet, so he's *unskilled* this round. Thet, because that thug can't reach you, you didn't actually *successfully defend* this round; you don't get a card. Derrick, the one on you will swing, and the one on Tuoton was *knocked down* by his attack, so he'll get up. Derrick's thug cuts at him with a knife and gets a *melee combat* total of 14."

Brian: "All right, he missed!"

GM: "*Defend* was an approved action this round — you get a card. You can't put it in your pool, but you can draw one into your hand."

Brian draws the top card off the Action Deck and gets an *opponent fails* for his hand.

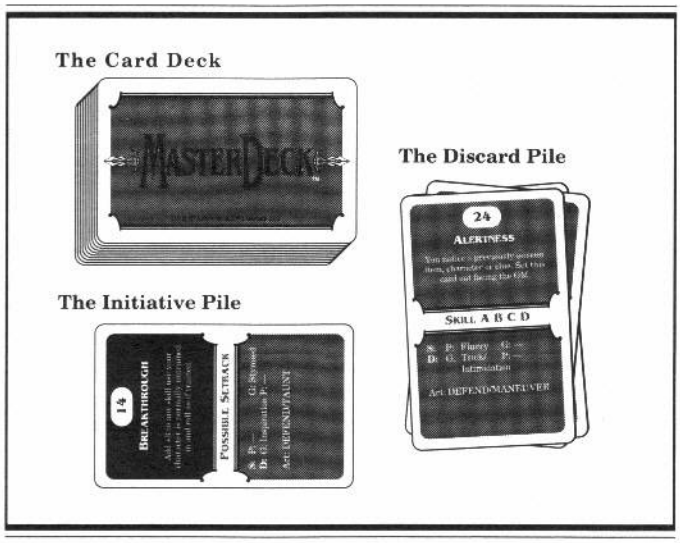
GM: "Tuoton, the thug on you — the one that was going to attack Thet — gets a 5."

Bill: "My *melee parry* skill is 12, so he misses."

GM: "Right, but you don't get a card, because you didn't perform an *active defense*. The other thug gets up. Two of the thugs were hanging back. That's the end of the round."

Tuoton, since he was not affected by surprise and performed an action this round, gets to put a card from his hand into his pool. He chooses to flip up the *hero* card. The other two were surprised, so, even though they performed actions — rolling for their *active defenses* — they cannot put cards into their pools this round.

The gamemaster flips over another initiative card. This one is #13.



GM: "The player characters go first again, and the gamemaster characters are *stymied*. I guess the fact that they didn't touch anybody last round kind of unsettled them. The approved actions are *defend* and *taunt*."

The gamemaster checks the characters' Agility values this round and gets the following initiative order: Tuoton, Derrick, Thet.

GM: "Okay, Tuoton, what are you going to do?"

Bill: "I'm going to *taunt* them. I'll also be ready to *defend* if I'm attacked. But the *taunt* is my primary action. I hold up my club. 'All right you little street-rats; any of you who want more, come here!"

GM: "That's more of an *intimidation* than a *taunt* ..."

Bill: "Okay, I stick out my tongue and make faces at them."

GM: *(laughs)* "All right; go ahead." The gamemaster decides to lower the targetted street thug's resistance by one because he thinks Tuoton's *taunt* is especially appropriate.

Bill: *(rolls dice, gets a 3 and a 1)* "Yeck. I'll spend my *hero* card."

GM: "It's in your pool; go ahead."

Bill: *(throws the* hero *card on the discard pile and waits to see if any of the thugs is cancelling with a Life Point. None do,*

so he rolls the dice and gets a 9 and a 6) "Fifteen! That's a die total of 19 and a bonus of +8. My *taunt* value is 10, so that's an 18."

GM: "Minus two because *taunt* was your primary action. But don't worry; a sixteen succeeds. You'll get a card at the end of the round." The GM notes that the *taunted* character is *unskilled* by the *taunt*.

Brian: "I'm next. I've got my knife out, so I'll attack the one nearest me. I'll also be ready to *defend* — and that will be my primary action."

GM: "That's also a multi-action, so it's -2 for your primary action and -3 for your secondary action.

Brian:*(rolls dice and gets a die total of 20 — he had a roll-again)* "Plus eight — all right. I stick the thug near me. I have a *melee combat (knife)* skill value of 14, so that's a 23 — minus three — equals 20."

GM: "You hit. What's your damage value?"

Brian: "The knife does STR+3, and Derrick's Strength is 9. That's a 12."

GM: *(Ted notes that Derrick got seven result points with his attack, giving a modified damage value of 19 (12+7). Against his foe's Toughness of 10, that's nine points on the Damage Column: a wound, a K, and five shock points.)* "You slashed him across the stomach. He looks more than a little woozy."

Jill: "My turn! I'd like to use my *martial arts* to *maneuver* and *defend*. *Maneuver* will be my primary action."

GM: "Good. Same modifiers as before."

Jill: "I'm going to try to dance around to the side, keeping everyone in view. I'm *maneuvering* on the thug who is near Tuoton, but not the one he *taunted*." *(rolls dice; gets a die total of 10)* "Rats! I still can't spend a card. Oh, well. My bonus number is +0, so my base *maneuver* using *martial arts* is 11. Minus two for my multi-action, that's a nine."

GM: "You failed. The thugs attack." Ted rolls *stealth* totals for the two thugs: they want to *stealth* around behind the party to get the advantage on them. One of them rolls two tens, but he's *stymied* and only gets to roll one of them again. He ends up with a *stealth* total higher than anyone in the party's *perception* — even with multi-action modifiers — so he fades into the shadows. The other one practically trips over his own feet, so he isn't a successful.

"The one you wounded, Derrick, is going to try to *maneuver* away from you and, possibly, flee."

Brian: "Can Derrick try to resist the *maneuver*?"

GM: "No, you've already acted this round." *(Ted rolls, but it is a bad one and the thug's* maneuver *total is lower than Derrick's basic* maneuver *skill. The thug can't get away.)*

Brian: "I'll actually let him run if he wants to — I just don't want him getting behind me or anything."

GM: "All right. Thet, the next one is on you ..."

The combat continues normally. The party keeps working cards into their pools — at the end of the round, Brian puts an *effect* card into Derrick's pool from his hand, and Jill puts down her *haste* card into Thet's pool. Bill decides not to put a card into his pool — he has a *breakthrough* and a *rally*, but he doesn't think he'll need them here.

Only Bill gets another card for Tuoton's *taunt*. Bill gets a *hero* card, respectively. Bill can't put the new *hero* card into his pool: he has to wait at least one round.

The fight goes predictably. After the surprise was foiled by Tuoton and the cards started getting into play, the thugs find they are the ones who are "outnumbered." Eventually, they are driven off.

The gamemaster informs them that the end of the scene comes soon after the fight. They have to discard their cards down to three each — not counting "all **red**" cards — and they can trade in their other cards if they want.

Critical Skill Resolution

The adventure passes along eventfully. After a few more scenes and some more action, Thet, Tuoton, and Derrick end up at the riverside.

But the whole set-up proves to *be* a set-up. After the dust settles, the three find themselves trapped in a cage that is slowly being lowered into a river full of blood-hungry pirhanna.

The three have the following cards:

Tuoton (Bill): *Breakthrough, breakthrough, seize initiative*

Derrick (Brian): *Hero, presence, opponent fails*

Thet (Jill): *Hero, supporter, claim, connection* (face up), *mistaken identity* (face up)

GM: "You all wake up at roughly the same time. Apparently, from what you remember, the meeting was a trap. The guy you were bodyguarding tried to doublecross the crimelord, but they were ready for him. They cut him into little bits."

Brian: "If they hadn't, we would have."

GM: "Well, anyway, they knocked you all unconscious and now you're in this strange mechanized cage. It is slowly sinking down toward water that is swirling faster and faster."

Jill: "I don't think it's a jacuzzi."

GM: "No, it isn't. You're in rounds, by the way. And you'll have to think of a way to get out — quick. The scene is Dramatic and, unless you can think of something else, you're going to have to try to disable the mechanism to stop the cage from sinking. You only have a little time, so you'll have to use Critical Skill Resolution: the result is an A and a C. This round, the players are *inspired*, so you each get a card. You also act before the 'gamemaster characters,' so you get to try to do something before the cage sinks."

Because of the *inspiration*, the gamemaster gives the characters each one card into their hands.

Bill: "What can we do to stop the mechanism?"

GM: "Make a *perception* or Intellect roll."

Bill: "That will be an action, won't it?"

Jill: "Damn! And this round has an 'A' in it, too."

Bill: "I know! I'll make a *perception* roll."

GM: "You can do that."

So, in the cage, Tuoton stands up and starts looking around for any signs of weakness. Bill rolls the dice, and the *perception* total ends up at 18.

GM: "Okay. You see that the mechanism is very bulky — it's a series of gears. If you had your guns, you could probably shoot at it and knock the teeth out."

Brian: "We don't have our guns. I have a knife?"

Jill: "I don't think we'll be able to throw it hard enough."

Brian: "If we could get close enough, we could jam the knife in the gears."

GM: "The cage looks like it will swing ..."

Jill: "All right! So we'll swing the cage back and forth and then stick the knife in when it's close enough!"

GM: "The clock is ticking ..."

Bill: "I already did my action ... Derrick and Thet, why don't you start swinging? Next round I'll join in and then Derrick can wait on the edge of the cage with the knife."

GM: "All right. You can roll your Agility values and try to accomplish Step A."

Derrick and Thet swing. The gamemaster looks over his notes. According to his DNs, the group needs to swing (using Agility or *acrobatics*) twice at a DN of 15 (Steps A and B), then they have to stick the knife in the mechanism (*melee combat* or Agility) at a DN of 17, and, finally, they have to catch the mechanism and stabilize the cage (a Strength total of 21). They have six rounds to do this before the pirhanna can get into the cage.

By coordinating their swings (using the "Coordinating Actions" rules in Chapter Three, "The Rules"), they beat the first DN. All three characters can put cards into their pools. Tuoton chooses a *seize initiative*, Thet chooses a *hero*, and Derrick chooses a *hero*.

GM: "All right, you've succeeded at Step A. Derrick and Thet have gotten the cage swinging; now they have to go a little farther." Ted flips over the top card. "*Trick* and *intimidation* are the approved actions, and you have Steps B & C on the card. The players go first, but there are no action line effects."

Bill: "I'll start swinging, Thet will keep swinging. Derrick, get ready."

Bill and Jill roll. Jill has to spend her *hero* card because she rolls badly, but nothing else goes wrong. They succeed in their action again, and Step B is accomplished.

GM: "Tuoton and Thet can put cards into their pools — they perfomed actions."

Brian: "I'm waiting to stick the mechanism!"

GM: "Good for you — but you aren't actually *doing* anything. You can't put a card down."

The gamemaster notes that they still have three rounds to perform Step C and D — the first round started their swinging, and the second continued. He flips over the top card of the action deck.

Jill: "Oh, no! 'A, B, and D'! We can't stick the knife this turn!"

Bill: "Well, Thet and I will keep the cage swinging — do we have to make skill rolls for that?"

GM: "No — the cage won't swing on its own, but it is going fairly well. Maybe too well; that could be why you can't stick the mechanism."

Brian: "I'm going to lean out as far as I can, and poise the knife to strike."

GM: *(grins)* "Don't want to be left out again, huh? Okay — you are all *trying* to do something useful; you can put cards into your pools."

Tuoton puts a *breakthrough* into his pool, while Thet and Derrick put a *supporter* and an *opponent fails* into their pools. The gamemaster flips the next card up.

Brian: "Jeez — we can't get any luck! Another 'A, B, or D'!"

Bill: "That's it! I'm throwing my *seize initiative*!"

GM: "That will change the action card, all right." He flips over the next card. Collective cheers. "You got an 'A, B, C, and D' card. *Defend* and *taunt* are the approved actions."

Jill: "The heck with that — stick the damn knife, Derrick!"

Brian rolls the dice and Derrick ends up with a skill total of 16, even after spending a Life Point of his own and a *hero* card — he rolled *really* badly.

Jill: "I have a *supporter* card!" Jill throws it before the gamemaster says whether Derrick succeeded or not — they had a feeling, though, that the 16 wouldn't be high enough. "Thet grabs Derrick's legs and anchors him, so he can extend himself farther. Tuoton can keep rocking the cage."

Brian: "That gives me a 19." They all look at the gamemaster hopefully.

GM: "The cage continues down toward the water. Derrick, you notice a few of the more energetic pirhanna are lunging up, out of the water, at you. But you hold onto your knife as Thet clutches your ankles. Just as you swing up to stab at the mechanism, your hand brushes the water. You almost drop the knife as you pull away, but you retain your grasp. And, just as you feel the cage nearing the end of its arc, you stab out and wedge the knife in between the gears! There's a loud 'cracking' sound, and the cage lurches. Luckily, Thet has a good hold on you. She reels you in, and you notice the cage has stopped moving!"

General cheers greet this news. The gamemaster notes that the time factor for the cage descending no longer matters, but the trio will still have to complete the difficult Step D to catch the mechanism and haul the cage over to dry land. He flips over the next card.

GM: "A 'B and a D'! How lucky can you get!"

The three make their skill rolls and, after a few expenditures of cards and Life Points, they work their way out to the shore.

Bill: "That was too easy!"

Brian: "Oh, yeah? Next time *you* hang out of the cage over the pirhanna. I bet there's a 'complication' or 'possible setback' with your name on it!"

GM: "Speaking of which — as you exit the cage, you hear the door open at the other end of the dark room. You hear some growling and some scraping, as if something huge and dangerous were being let into the room. Too bad you broke Derrick's knife ..."

CHAPTER SIX

• Creating and Using • Special Effects

This chapter discusses the four categories of special effects (SFX) used in *MasterBook*. After reading this chapter, you should be able to create any type of special effect for use in the *MasterBook* game system.

The Types of Special Effects

Most roleplaying games have elements of fantasy: magic, miracles, psionics, or any number of other things. They are really *special effects*. They allow characters to do things that, in the real world, are considered impossible. Producing flame out of nothing and hurling it to explode against a faraway target, summoning the help of otherworldly beings or powers, and using the power of the mind to lift objects or predict the future — in *MasterBook*, all of these things are covered under special effects.

In the game worlds of *MasterBook*, impossibility varies depending on where you are. Sometimes the impossible is merely a state of mind, or, perhaps, a state of grace. Other times, performing impossible tasks only requires a little practice.

In this chapter, a system is introduced so you can create and use these special effects. It is a basic, easy-to-understand and easy-to-implement system, but it is also flexible — other *MasterBook* supplements, particularly WorldBooks, will provide additional suggestions and rules for "customizing" the special effects system for use in those worlds.

The four terms used in this chapter to categorize these special effects are *magic*, *miracles*, *psionics*, and *super-science*. Each one has its own "feel" and "flavor," as well as some game mechanic adjustments — but they all have similarities as well. All are covered under this basic system.

Magic

Magic is perhaps the most-used special effect in roleplaying games. Magic spells and effects are not only used in "straight" or "high" fantasy genres, but in many non-fantasy or near-fantasy worlds as well. Horror stories, space fantasies, and mythology all use magic for flavor and texture.

There are two ends of the spectrum on magic. On one end is "unexplained magic." In a world such as a near real world or an alternate Earth, this effect is common. Many mythologies, particularly Arthurian legend, utilize this type of magic. Unexplained magic is magic that is not under the control of a "normal" person — most people, even if they had the least clue as to how magic worked, could not use it. Mostly, magic is present in the form of magical artifacts or beings (super-sharp swords, enchanted creatures, and so forth) or is only utilized by beings who are "magical" in nature (witches who are given their powers through mystical bargains, elves, pixies, giants, etc.). This type of universe often employs miracles as well.

The other end of the spectrum is "common magic." When common magic exists in a game universe, it means that almost anyone (sometimes within some stringent guidelines) can "learn" to use magic. Magic is fairly common and is used much in the same way as technology — instead of buying a butane cigarette lighter, a person might purchase a spell or an item that lights cigarettes through magic. Spells are probably well quantified and explained, and rules for magic use are probably well known by the inhabitants of the world. Extremely powerful magicks exists (such as offensive spells like fireballs and lightning bolts, or long-range summoning spells), but normally only "professionals" who have devoted their lives to learning and practicing magic have any chance of using them.

MasterBook special effects cover both ends of the spectrum, but definitely lean toward the "common magic" idea. Most roleplayers like to have the option of having their characters use magic, so the rules are structured primarily for them.

With *MasterBook*, unexplainable magic is actually *easier* to use than common magic. Common magic has a strict set of rules (described below), while unexplainable magic doesn't have to be explained — it just *is*. Unexplainable magic appears infrequently and it is out of the player characters' control — only the gamemaster has to know how it works. This system explains how to create common magic effects.

Miracles

In many ways, miracles are the same as magic — effects that are created not through scientific or realistic processes, but through non-corporeal means. In some game worlds, miracles and magic overlap. A sorceror-priest may not distinguish between a magical spell that summons "demons from beyond the pale" and a miracle that calls forth a holy avatar. The priest may see the two differently — or he may not.

But, in game terms, we do. Magic is a power derived from "mystical science" — legendary principles and laws that, to the person who uses them, obey their own self-consistent rules (even if they aren't scientific in nature, they are generally consistent — or at least consistently inconsistent).

When using a miracle, however, the caster is channeling energy and effect from another source — usually a god or demon or some sort of "natural" entity or force. When using miracles, the caster prays and follows rituals that may seem like magical spells, but they are based on the "power of the faithful."

This, then, leads to the two ends of the miracle spectrum. One, again, is the "unexplainable miracle." A character prays, or may not even pray, and some deity or entity or force causes

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something to happen. This is very common in mythology and legends — less so in roleplaying games. In essence, the gamemaster decides when, where, and how the unexplainable miracle occurs, and causes the effect to happen — often employing no rules at all.

This is, perhaps, why this type of miracle is infrequently used in roleplaying games. Roleplayers like to have rules they can look up and predict — they don't like having wholly arbitrary effects come down from "on high," even if that is fitting with the genre.

Indeed, even moreso than unexplained magic, unexplainable miracles should be infrequent and questionable in origin. Was the giant wave that wiped out Atlantis an act of an angry god, the effect of a devastating prayer, or simply a freak of nature? Different people in that game world would give you different answers — and that's how it should be.

"Common miracles," however, are also hard to rationalize. Even in the most liberal of legends, it is not likely that a character can simply pray for an effect, or perform a religious ritual, and have it happen every time. That's not the way things usually work. Indeed, miracles are almost always sparsely given and seldom exactly what the faithful wanted. They are much more in the control of the gamemaster than the player. Otherwise, they just become another type of magic spell that the character can use any time he or she wants.

In the description of how to use miracles (below), some recommendations are made regarding strictures that should be placed on miracle use. Only the most devout followers of a particular religion should be able to call forth help from their god, entity, or whatever, and only under very proscribed circumstances. In many game worlds, only gamemaster characters are allowed to use miracles. In others, only certain individuals — high priests, those gifted from the "gods," and those actually *related* to the gods have any chance of casting successful miracles (of any magnitude). In others, minor miracles are as common as other everyday things — a character might cast a blessing every day to keep his food from spoiling or to keep him heading in the right direction, while another might know how to read the "laws of nature" and brew up healing poultices using semi-mystical principles.

Psionics

Probably the least-used special effect in roleplaying games, psionics are, perhaps, the most easy to regulate. "The power of the mind," they are a blend of science and "magic" that science fiction and science fantasy genres have employed to get that extra "special effect" without seeming to go too far into the fanciful. Even in the real world, there are probably more people who believe in the existence of psionic powers than magic — that doesn't make it real, and it doesn't make it unreal, it just gives it an air of "authenticity" that magic and miracles don't quite have.

That's the primary reason psionics are interesting in a science-based campaign. They don't necessarily make sense, but there is that interesting "basis" in fact. The power of the mind can be seen in every technological advance and every overwhelming exertion of character and willpower in the world — psionics are the "next step."

Most uses of psionics fit into the privileged or "unexplained" realm. A character has a "power of the mind" — telepathy, telekinesis, pyrokinesis, etc. — that he or she can perform with little or no "props" or "rituals" (save concentration) and that's

it. Maybe the character can train to learn more abilities, or to make existing abilities stronger; maybe not. Seldom can a person not "gifted" with psionics "learn" psionic abilities — except through extraordinary means, such as super-science or incredible circumstance.

At the other end, where psionics are fairly common, that stricture still exists — except that more people are "gifted," or it is easier to *become* "gifted." This traces back to the idea that psionics are "evolutionary" rather than mystical in nature. Some genres may treat their psionic characters as mystics, mutants, or monsters, but the general idea that the power is within the character's mind is still there — and that the character is unique.

This makes psionic powers easier to regulate. Creating spells and invoking prayers and miracles is one thing common to most genres, but very seldom is a new psionic effect created — usually, there are less than ten or so powers, and they have similar characteristics. The gamemaster only has to worry about how to utilize these powers and effects, and not how to come up with new ones with any great frequency.

Most psionics, in addition, are very personal in nature, and very central to the character. Some involve "group minds" and cooperation, but this doesn't usually get too complicated. Occasionally, psionic effects occur that are wildly off the power scale — but these are usually special effects that only occur occasionally and only when the gamemaster says so. In other words, you don't need to worry about the rules very often.

Super-Science

Lastly, super-science covers science that is not necessarily more "technologically advanced" than our own (as found in many science fiction novels, movies, and games), but science that is *different* in its capabilities than ours. A better computer, a faster car, a new weapon — none of these are necessarily "super-science." They could just be explainable advances.

Super-science deals with the mainly *unexplainable* and, theoretically, *impossible*. Effects that cannot be created through the normal advancement of science — or the rational, theoretical projection of science — can be created using super-science. For example, in the real world today we have lasers that can be used for surgery, as incredibly bulky, non-man-portable weapons, or any number of other things. A rational explanation and a theoretical process might lead a science-fiction author to create more advanced lasers that work as man-portable weapons — this is not necessarily "super" science. It could just be technological advancement.

However, jumping over several theoretical stops on the way to development, the "ray gun" (as featured in pulp magazines and fiction, and even some "science" fiction — more likely, science fantasy) is more along the lines of super-science.

The best examples of modern super-science come from comic books. The gadgets, gizmos, and weird weapons the superheroes and superheroines in today's comic books use almost all fit into the realm of super-science.

Basically, any item that really doesn't require a strong basis in fact to create is super-science (you can expand this definition to anything that doesn't currently *exist* in technology if you want — splitting hairs on what *could* be real and what *couldn't* be can be difficult). Invisibility screens, ray guns, flight belts, anti-gravity cars, web-shooters, x-ray goggles, darkness projectors — all these things fit into the realm of super-science.

• Using Special Effects •

Before telling you how to create special effects, we'll tell you how to use them in the game. That way, when you are designing your effects, you can decide what type of skill or difficulty number or feedback or effect value is desirable for your effect.

Decide on a SFX Skill

In Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use," there are descriptions for each of the following special effects skills:

Magic:
Alteration (magic involving changing something)
Apportation (magic involving movement)
Conjuration (magic involving creating something)
Divination (magic involving knowledge or information)
Summoning (magic involving drawing things to the caster)

Psionics:
Psi manipulation

Miracles:
Faith

Super-science:
Super-science

Usually, before you design a particular special effect, you'll decide which of these skills you are going to use when it comes time to cast it. But, if you haven't, it's time.

Use the skill descriptions in Chapter Four to determine which skill is appropriate. Chances are, if you think a particular rationalization is "stretching the limit" of plausibility, it probably is. You'll probably only have this trouble with the magic skills, since each of them covers a different type of effect.

• Customizing Your Game World •

The listed special effects skills should be considered the core special effects skills in *MasterBook*. However, the gamemaster should be free to customize the skills or create new skills to best fit the gameworld that will be created.

For example, Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use" notes that each special effect skill is a macroskill, with focuses to be determined on a case-by-case basis. On some worlds, those focuses might be *air, earth, fire* and *water;* on others, focuses might be based on specific cults native to the world; in others, the focuses might be based on a type of component (*blood magic, rock magic, rune magic,* etc.).

There is nothing preventing a gamemaster from creating *several* psionics skills in a game universe where psionics are extremely common: *psi manipulation, psi resistance, psi information, psi attack, psi touch, psi ranged,* etc.

Gamemasters should feel free to use what they want and change or create what they need.

To show how the special effects system is used in the game, we'll start with a spell that was created with this system. Each spell's quality will be explained in game terms.

• Illusionary Fireball •

Skill Used: Conjuration
Difficulty Number: 16
Feedback Value: 19
Effect Value: 20 (15)
Duration: 5 (ten seconds)
Range: 9 (60 meters)
Cast Time: 21 (about four hours)

This spell is used to imbed five charges of a fireball spell into a wand. The caster must concentrate for one hour, making a *willpower* total of 12 (using multi-action penalties). The caster must prepare the wand: it must be an ivory carving with runic symbols for fire on it. The wand is prepared by scraping a flint-stone across it until the stone fragments. During the flaking, incense is being burned and the wand must be held in the flame of a candle.

At the end of the cast time, the caster can then generate a *conjuration* total. If the DN is met or exceeded, the wand is imbedded with its five illusionary fireball charges. Otherwise, the spell fails.

The result points (if any), are then measured against the Feedback Value (19). If the FV is higher, the caster reads the difference as result points on the Damage Column. If the result points of the *conjuration* exceed the FV, however, these excess points are added to the effect value of the spell.

The wand contains the spell until the caster performs the following trigger: he gestures in a circle around his target. He then yells "Burning Flame" (in the "fire salamander" *language* focus, which he must have one add in), and he generates an *apportation* or Intellect total (with a +2 to hit) which is his "to hit" versus his target. The fireball created is a sphere two meters in diameter.

If his "to hit" total is higher than or equal to his target's *dodge* or Agility, or if the target is within the area of effect of the spell, the effect value *minus two* is read versus the target's Toughness (with armor) on the Damage Column.

The effect value *minus four* is also measured against the Intellect or *perception* value of the target(s) affected. The result points are then read on the Push Column, with the Push Result being subtracted from the characters' sight-based *perception* totals for the duration of the spell.

The caster can turn the spell off at any time during the duration, and the spell can be maintained.

The Characteristics of a Special Effect

There are eight characteristics of a special effect. They are described below.

Skill Used

The *skill* listed is the one necessary to cast the special effect. Since no special effect skill can be used *untrained*, the character must have at least one add in the skill listed to attempt the spell, miracle, psionic power, or super-science experiment.

The Difficulty Number, or "DN"

The *difficulty number* is the skill total a character must generate to get a special effect to work. Since there are so many different possible skills that can be used, this chapter will use the term *SFX skill*.

The Feedback Value, or "Feedback"

When a special effect is employed, it often takes a physical or mental toll on the SFX user. This toll is called *feedback*. The feedback value is measured against the *caster's* Mind attribute and read as damage on the Damage Column. The higher the feedback value, the more damage the character is likely to take. Feedback can be reduced by good *SFX skill* totals (see "Using Special Effects," below).

The Effect Value

The *effect value* of the special effect equals how powerful it is, and how much it can affect the target. The effect value is always measured against either a target's Attribute(s) or against some specified value. In general, the higher the effect value, the more powerful the SFX.

There are two major types of effect values you need to worry about: *comparison* effect values and *changing* effect values.

A *comparison* effect value is used when the target's Attribute or resistance value remains unchanged by the special effect. For example, a special effect that creates a damage value — such as a magic spell that shoots a bolt of ice at a target — will damage the target using the normal combat rules (substituting the effect value for the damage value of the "weapon"), but the target's affected attribute — it's Toughness — remains unchanged.

Another example would include a special effect that simulated an interaction attack — like a *trick*. A "magic mirror" that could be held up to a target and make him think something bad was behind him (much like a *trick* statement of "look behind you") doesn't lower the target's *willpower* or Intellect — but those values are used to resist.

A final example of a comparison effect value would include any special effect that has its effect value measured against a set DN that remains unchanged. For example, if a character were using a super-science special effect that created a machine he could use to look back through time, the effect value would be measured against the length of time he wanted to look back, as read on the Value Chart. The time value of one day, for example, is 25 — so the effect value would have to be higher than 25 in order to achieve anything.

A *changing* effect value works differently. Not only do you have to overcome the target's resisting attribute or value, but you have to *change* it. Whenever an effect value is used to increase or decrease a target's appropriate value, the effect value is measured against that value and the result points are then read on the Push Column. The Push Result is then added or subtracted from the target's value (as appropriate); ignore the shock of the Push.

For example, a character might create a psionic power that allowed him to boost his Strength with his mental powers. The character has a Strength of, say, 10, and the effect value of his psionic power is 17. If the character's psionic power skill — *psi manipulation* — beats the difficulty number of the SFX, then the effect value is measured against the character's affected

value — his Strength. The effect value, 17, minus the affected value, 10, equals seven result points. On the Push Column, that's a Push Result of 3. The character's Strength would be increased from 10 to 13 for the duration of the SFX. The same rules would work if the character were trying to reduce an attribute value — only the Push Result would be *subtracted* from the character's value.

An effect value can be modified upwards if a character is very successful in using the effect. However, result points from "to hit" rolls do *not* add to the effect value — excess result points from the "to hit" total are simply lost.

See "Using Special Effects," below.

Duration

Duration specifies how long a special effect will last. The duration is given in both "real" time (minutes, seconds, hours, etc.) and in a time value (as read on the Value Chart).

There is a special effects optional element called "Maintenance" (below). This option allows a character to redo the special effect at a reduced difficulty and feedback at the end of the duration. This does not affect the actual duration value.

Range

The maximum distance of the effect is called the *range*. In most cases, the character using the SFX can only use it at this range or less. Often, the caster can choose the exact range when the effect is used. Sometimes, the character must use the SFX at this range *exactly*. Ranges are given in meters and in distance values (as read on the Value Chart).

Cast Time

This value, given in both real time and in a time value, is how long the character must spend creating the special effect. During the period of *cast time*, the character may be performing related actions (like concentrating, performing rituals, arranging components, etc.), but no other skills can be used during the cast time.

The Description

Every special effect will have a *description*. The description will tell what skill is needed to create the SFX, what the SFX does, what any success levels mean, etc. The description may be very short, or it may include tables and descriptive effects.

Using Special Effects

Roll the SFX skill for the effect in question to get a skill total. If the total is higher than the difficulty number, the effect has succeeded.

Now, *subtract* the result points for the skill total from the feedback value. Any remaining feedback is read as damage on the Damage Column (the person *casting* the spell takes damage).

If the result points are higher than the feedback, the character takes no damage; any remaining result points (after eliminating feedback) are added to the spell's effect value.

Example: *Magister Mike is casting an* illusionary fireball. *He generates a* conjuration *total of 20. Since the difficulty is 16, he succeeded; he also got four result points. He subtracts those four result points from the feedback value of 19, giving him a feedback of 15 (19-4). On the Damage Column, that means he takes a "3Wnd KO 7." The spell is cast.*

Later Mike is trying his illusionary fireball *again. This time, he gets a* conjuration *total of 37! The spell is a success, and he has 21 result points. Since 21 result points are greater than the feedback value of 19, he takes no feedback; since he exceeded the feedback by 2 result points, he gets to add those two points to the spell's effect value, which goes from 20 to 22!*

Determining "Hits" and "Misses"

Many SFX require separate skill totals when they are used. The most common of these are combat effects that act like weapons.

For example, in "Magister Mike's" *illusionary fireball* spell, the gamemaster decided that he had to generate an *apportation* or Intellect (the *apportation* attribute) skill total to hit his target. Even though the fireball will go where he wants it to, there still has to be some way to determine whether or not anybody is hit by it.

This keeps effects from being automatic "killers." Granted, most SFX won't need this — a psionic power that a character uses to take over a target's mind needs no "to hit" total; it is just the effect value versus the target's *willpower* or Confidence. But some SFX do need this control.

In general, any special that works like a weapon needs this, and a few others might. Gamemasters in doubt, may wish to assign a skill check in addition to the SFX skill total, but don't go overboard. Usually, the effect value versus the target's resistance value is enough. Again, it should be noted that excess result points from "to hit" totals are "lost" — they do *not* add to the damage as normal weapons do.

Applying the Effect Value

This value is applied differently depending on the purpose of the special effect.

Damage and Interactive SFX: Many special effects can use the Damage Column, the Trick/Taunt Column, the Maneuver Column, or the Intimidation Column. For example, a spell that is supposed to frighten the targets into doing the caster's bidding sounds a lot like an *intimidation* attempt — treat the spell as if it were an *intimidation* attack, but because this is a special effect, the results are either treated as "instant" (if they overcome the target's level of resistance) or they fail.

Skill Simulations: Many special effects can be used instead of skills. For example, the effect value of a "healing" psionic power might be compared to the DN for *first aiding* a target. In this case, the SFX works just like the *first aid* skill.

General Effects: This is where the General Success Column comes in. When you have a "general" effect, you'll have to make up "levels of success" for a particular special effect. A *solid* success is usually exactly what you want the special effect to do — with no frills — and the success levels above and below are modified accordingly.

For example, a super-science television that can see into the future has the effect value measured against the time value it is trying to see into the future (one day would be, for example, a time value of 25). Every level of success that the effect value exceeds this number by might "improve the clarity" of the future-vision by one notch. The gamemaster would describe a *minimal* success as having a "fuzzy picture" and details would be vague, while if the character got a *superior* success, the details would be sharp and the character would notice things he might otherwise have normally missed.

In some other cases, the result points might actually turn into a useful value. For example, a psionic power of telekinesis is used to lift an object. To determine whether or not the object is lifted successfully, measure the effect value against the


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mass value of the target. Then, if there are any result points, measure them on the Value Chart as the speed in meters per round that the object can be moved.

Changes: Any SFX effect value that modifies an Attribute or characteristic of any target up or down goes through the same process: the effect value is compared to the Attribute value. The result points are read on the Push Column. The Push Result is either added or subtracted from the Attribute or characteristic value until the duration runs out. All skills or "sub-values" are affected as well.

Using Special Effects: The Gamemaster

Special effects can be exciting and fun for players and gamemasters alike — but, when players start to study up on the SFX rules system and experiment with new ideas, they are going to start to tax the gamemaster's ability to control them. Here are several suggestions for controlling how special effects are used in your game setting.

"Quick and Dirty" Special Effects

What follows is a detailed system for creating special effects. Well, what about if you want to start using effects in your game *right now?* Use the "quick and dirty" system guidelines below.

Define the skill used. Then define the effect value, the range, the speed and the duration, totalling up these numbers (we'll call this the SFX Total for this example). Define a cast time and subtract its value (find that on the Value Chart). You then split the remaining number into a Difficulty Number (DN) and a Feedback Value (they do not have to be equal, but the larger cannot be more than double the smaller total). This is basically all you need to quickly define special effects.

If you want to figure in all the other possible options — apportation, area of effect, concentration, community and so forth — you can increase (up to double) or decrease the SFX Total (by up to half) and still be able to "probably" make the effect work with this system. You should also define all the various things that must be done when casting the effect — chanting, concentrate for a full minute, spell can be cast before hand and if cast successfully the character has memorized five charges of the spell.

Using this abbreviated system, the gamemaster can quickly make up a "common spell list" that can be used in his or her gameworld.

Requirements

As the gamemaster, you can invoke "requirements" on any, certain, or all special effects used in your game setting. For example, you may decide that every magic spell used in your game setting consumes a minimum of one ounce of gold per point of difficulty. That will make gold important in the game setting, and your magic-users will have to hoard it to be effective.

To reflect the notion that magic is "harder" in your world, you might stipulate that there is a +5 modifier to the difficulty of all spells. To suggest that only some magic is harder, you might add a modifier to only spells with an effect value of 20 or higher, or to *apportation* spells, or whatever.

Or you might be a little more lenient — maybe, in your game setting, psionic characters are allowed to use "charges." Charges are normally used in magic and super-science, but, for some reason, characters can get charges with their psionic powers in your world.

In any event, the gamemaster has the right to set up any special rules to apply to his gameworld.

Learning SFX

How many effects can a character learn? In general, a character can "learn" one "blueprint" (spell, miracle, super-science gizmo, etc.) for every three points in that special effects skill (round up). The character can create additional effects via the "On the Fly" rules later in this chapter. However, in order to actually "learn" the effects, he must spend one Life Point per effect.

Once he "buys" them, he cannot "forget" them to make room for other spells. He can cast other spells, but unless he learns them, they must be cast "on the fly."

This rule, again, serves to keep the power levels of the SFX under control, and it restricts the amount of different things characters can do. A mage might have a "spell book" of 60 or so spells, but she can only cast so many of them without the "on the fly" penalty. And she might not want to buy her maximum number of spells because something better might come along.

Example: *Joel, a character, has an apportation skill of 15 — he can learn 5 apportation spells. He also has a divination skill of 17 — that means he can learn 6 divination spells (since he rounds up).*

This is a "default" rule: *MasterBook* gameworlds will often feature their own rules for special effects, including customized limitations on the number of effects a given character can learn.

Artifacts and Legends

Every once in a while, the gamemaster will come up with a special effect that is either too powerful for game balance, or she just won't want to explain how the special effect works for some reason. In that case, the gamemaster should use the "artifacts and legends" rule. In other words, cheat.

The gamemaster can simply assign values to a SFX and state that the special effect is "legendary" or part of an "artifact" (or it is a unique "prototype," for high-tech environments, or a "new process"). It only works the way it does because the *gamemaster* says it does. She can assign any side effects, rules, or whatever to the special effect because it is, truly, a *special* effect.

Examples of this include swords that are permanently magicked to drain the life out of victims and pass that energy on to others, starships that can fly between the stars in an instant, or devices that could be used to draw the moon crashing down onto the planet Earth. Any of these effects would be a nightmare to create with the SFX system but, because the gamemaster wants to use them in an adventure, he can — *nothing* is impossible unless the *gamemaster* says it is.

Of course, the gamemaster will want to weigh this "gamemaster fiat" both ways. If all the villains and opponents in a campaign seem to come up with "super mind-control drugs that control the minds of armies," or "ships that sail between the planes of existence," or other equally improbable things, the gamemaster should, occasionally, let the player characters get ahold of some of these things. Sure, they may have nasty side effects — maybe to sail between one plane and another, a human being must be sacrificed to the Void — but they can make a campaign interesting. And the gamemaster can make certain that no one is able to "copy" the effect because it is unique.

• Building The Special Effect •

If you can add and subtract, you can do just about all the math necessary for special effect creation. As you create each effect, you will keep track of a "SFX Total" — certain elements, like the effect value and the range of the effect, will cause the total to go up (i.e., make the effect harder to "cast"), while other elements, like a longer casting time, will make the total go down (i.e., make the effect easier to "cast").

You will need a paper and pencil and an active imagination for this part, so get ready. A calculator might also help.

Start at Zero

Most SFX Totals will begin at zero, but some *MasterBook* Worldbooks will specify a higher or lower starting total for certain effects.

This would be because the particular special effect(s) used in that world is not as easy to create as on other worlds. The higher the beginning SFX Total, the more difficult the effect type is to create in that world.

Determine *Your* Effect

At this point, write out on paper what you want the effect to do — basically. What sort of special effect are you trying to create? What range will you need? Will it need charges? How long will the effect last? All things along these lines should be considered.

Just jot down the basics. Follow along with "Magister Mike" (see the sidebar) for examples.

The Basic Elements

Each step will move the SFX Total up or down. Use the "Special Effects Worksheet" on page 143 to keep track of all modifiers, elements, and your own ideas. Also, *go in order!* This is *important!* If you take steps out of order, you will mess up the special effect.

• Magister Mike: • Describing the Effect

Mike, a new gamemaster for *MasterBook*, has decided he'd better try out the SFX System before he lets his players loose with it. He sits down and starts playing around with the rules.

Mike decides he's going to try to build a magic spell: a good old reliable fireball. Mike jots down the following characteristics he can think of:

Mike's Blazing Ball o' Doom
Create a fireball and hurl it at a target
Fireball explodes (BOOM!), and affects a radius
Range: about fifty meters
Duration: it just blows up
Effect Value: enough to hurt, but maybe not kill
Cast time: either pretty fast or charged
Multiple uses without recasting

So Mike now has a quick sketch of the fireball spell. He moves on.

1: Effect Value

Assign an effect value. Here are some guidelines: damage spells affect Toughness. The average Toughness for a *MasterBook* character is around 10. If you want to hurt someone, fifteen to twenty is a safe bet. If you want to kill someone,

• The Warning Sign •

Only the first five steps, called "The Basic Elements," are actually necessary for the creation of a special effect. They are the framework other modifiers and enhancements can be built upon. The other steps can be used to make your special effect more interesting, more effective, and more detailed.

Some of these steps contain bulky rules that are necessary because of the incredible effect they have on the special effect. For those of you who are just learning the system, we have put a "warning sign" next to the heading of each of these more difficult steps:

We recommend that you skip over these steps when beginning with this system. Most special effects can be created without the use of these steps, so you can have quite a bit of fun just getting used to the basic system before you use these rules.

a thirty is usually necessary. Check the Damage Column for some ideas — the effect value of the SFX will be the damage value used against the target's Toughness.

SFX that are used to increase, decrease, create or otherwise affect attributes or skill values are determined the same way, as are "strange" effect values.

When you decide on an effect value for your special effect, simply write it down. This is the first element of your SFX Total.

• Magister Mike: The Effect Value •

Since Mike's spell is a simple damage spell, he knows it will go against a target's Toughness: normally about an 8. He adds about four points for armor. He decides to bump it another eight points since he doesn't want to have to count on getting a really great roll. He comes up with the following:

Effect Value: 20
SFX Total: 20

2: Range

Determine how far away you want to be able to affect things with your special effect. Then read the measurement on the Value Chart (See Chapter Three, "The Rules") to get a range value (round up). Add the value to your SFX Total.

Remember, unless otherwise specified, you can use the special effect to "target" anywhere *within* that range. You can "target" a spot or a mobile target (i.e., a person, etc.). If you are trying to hit a moving target within the range of the effect, if the target leaves the range of the SFX, the special effect ends (unless you use "Focus," below). Even if the target comes back into range, the SFX has to be created *again*.

• Magister Mike: The Range Value •

Checking his notes, Mike sees he wanted the range to be "about fifty meters." On checking the Value Chart, Mike sees that fifty meters is between the values eight (forty meters) and nine (sixty meters). He rounds up to a 9 to get sixty meters (otherwise he would have had to cut his range to an 8, or 40 meters). He could have left it at fifty meters and used the value of nine, but why waste ten meters?

Range: 60 meters (9)
SFX Total: 29 (20+9)

3: Speed

How fast does the special effect get from you to the target? The *speed value* determines this.

First, look at your range value (above). That is the maximum distance the effect travels. If you select a speed value equal to the range value, then the special effect travels from you to your target in one second. Why? Because the speed value is a *velocity* value.

You can select a lower speed value for a special effect. The measure of the speed value is how quickly the spell's effect moves.

To see how long it takes the effect to reach a given target, subtract the speed value from the range value to the target (not the range value of the spell). Read the result as a value on the Value Chart. The measurement is the number of seconds it takes for the special effect to go from you to your target.

Example: *A psionic power called* projective telepathy *allows one character to send thoughts to another. The range value of the special effect is an incredible 30 (one million meters, or one thousand kilometers). The speed value, however, is only 20 (10,000 meters per second, or 10 kilometers per second). The target is 400 kilometers away (a value of 28). The range of 28 - 20 (the speed value) gives a result of 8 — it takes 40 seconds for the effect to reach the target.*

Sometimes, you'll use a lower speed to keep the SFX Total lower. However, quite often, especially with "attack" special effects, you'll need that instantaneous effect. If you build an "attack" special effect with a lower speed, you have to be aware that the special effect will be less "accurate" — that is, the target will be able to get out of the way much easier.

The difference between the speed value and the range value of the target is added to the target's *dodge* or Agility when getting out of the way of a slow attack. So, in the previous example, not only would it take a value of 8 (40 seconds) to

• Magister Mike: The Speed Value •

Mike decides not to mess around: he makes the speed value equal to the range value and leaves it at that:

Speed Value: 9 (60 meters / second)
SFX Total: 38 (29+9)

That means the target will not gain any bonus to *dodge* out of the way.

MasterBook Special Effects Worksheet

MANDATORY ELEMENTS

Special Effect Skill/Focus: _____

	Cost of Step	SFX Total
SFX Total (Add previous line to new points unless otherwise indicated)		
1. Effect Value	☐	☐
2. Range (cost = range value)	☐	☐
3. Speed (cost = value of meters/second)	☐	☐
4. Duration (cost = value of time)	☐	☐
4a. SFX Total (sum 1-4)		☐
4b. Minimum SFX Total (4a/2, round up)	☐	
5. Casting Time (cost = value of time) • May not be greater than 4b.	☐	
5a. SFX Total (4a minus 5)		☐

Note: If you don't want to use optional elements, go to step 16.

OPTIONAL ELEMENTS

	Cost of Step	SFX Total
SFX Total (Add previous line to new points unless otherwise indicated)		☐
6. Area of Effect • Two dimensional: cost = 2 pts./meter in diameter • Three dimensional: cost = 5 pts./meter in diameter • Shape: +1 pt. = 1 other shape; +3 pts. = any number of shapes; +6 pts. = fluid movement	☐	☐
7. Multi-Target _____ Number of targets • 3 pts. per target (including the first); double if also area of effect.	☐	☐
8. Multi-Attribute List multi-attributes: • Cost = 3 pts. per attribute beyond the first.	☐	☐

OPTIONAL ELEMENTS (cont.)

	Cost of Step	SFX Total
9. Change Target • Cost = 5 pts. per target (including the first). If multi-target, pay for each separately. Area of effect or multi-attribute mulitply by 1.5; if both, x2.	☐	☐
10. Variable Effect • Cost = Move effect value up *or* down (not both) 1 for every 2 pts. spent	☐	☐
11. Variable Duration • Cost = 4 pts. = can turn off at any time. • Cost = 8 pts. = turn on and off as many times as you want. • Increase duration by measure of points (9 pts. = 60 extra seconds).	☐	☐
12. Apportation +_____ to hit • Increase to hit by value of pts. (10 points = +5) • Move effect: Effect value — mass; find remainder on Push Column to get value of speed. (Costs 10% of current SFX Total)	☐	☐
13. Maintenance • Costs 10% of current SFX Total (round up) • Maintain spell for 1/3 DN and 1/2 feedback. Can't maintain charged spells.	☐	☐
14. Focus • Costs (Effect Value + Duration Value)/5 (round up)	☐	☐
15. Charges • Costs measure of charges to be created (5 charges = 10 points) • Wards: +10% of charges cost (round up).	☐	☐

DIFFICULTY AND FEEDBACK

15a. SFX Subtotal ☐

	DN	FV
16. Determine the Difficulty Number and the Feedback Value • Divide (15a) SFX Subtotal into DN and FV. Do not have to be equal, but one may not be more than double the other.	☐	☐

OPTIONAL MODIFIERS

All of these subtract from DN *or* FV (not both; may not split any single modifier among DN and FV). May not reduce either to less than half the amount found in 16. Sum of DN and FV may never go below Minimum SFX Value, found in 5a.

	Modifier	New Difficulty Number	Modifier	New Feedback Value
17. Community (See description)	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Components • See description • Multiple components may be used, but limited to half DN or FV (whichever is lower) Components (and use): _____ _____ _____ _____	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Concentration Time Value:_____ *Willpower* DN:_____ • See description; must make *willpower* roll as specified.	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Gestures (See description)	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Incantations (See description)	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Related Skill Totals Skill (DN): _____(___)	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Other Optional Modifers	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Unreal Effects • See description • Can be split among DN and FV DN Mod: _____ FV Mod: _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

	DN	FV
25. Totalling Up	☐	☐

THE FINISHED EFFECT

Skill Used: _____

Difficulty Number: _____ **Feedback Value:** _____

Effect Value: _____ **Duration:** _____

Range: _____ **Cast Time:** _____

Description: _____

_____

_____

reach the target, the target would get a bonus of +8 to *dodge* the spell's effect if it were an attack.

Having a higher speed value than the range value is of no benefit.

Add the speed value onto the SFX Total and keep on going.

4: Duration

How long does the effect last? *Duration* is the time value of how long the effect lasts; add the value to the SFX Total. To determine how long the duration is, find the time value on the Value Chart and convert it to seconds, minutes, hours or whatever.

The minimum duration for any SFX is zero. Since the duration begins from the moment the spell is cast, the duration may have to be quite long, especially if it takes a while for the spell to travel to its target (determined above).

Many spells, especially combat spells, have the minimum duration because their *effects* are permanent. For example, a damage effect may have a duration of one second, but if it actually *causes* damage: that damage lasts until healed. An effect that is used to open a door opens the door and unless someone or something closes the door at the end or the duration, it stays open.

• Magister Mike: Duration •

Mike thinks about the fireball spell. At first, he thought he'd give it a zero value (one second) since it only takes one second to go to its full range. Then he reconsiders: wouldn't it be interesting if the fireball "hung around" for a while? Mike decides to he wants the spell to have a ten second duration — that's a time value of five.

Duration Value: ten seconds (5)
SFX Total: 43 (38+5)

5: Casting Time

The last of the mandatory elements is casting time. This is the time the character must spend preparing the special effect and performing any optional modifiers (such as rituals, concentration, and so forth). This time must be spent every time the character casts the special effect.

The minimum casting time is zero (one second). Unlike the other mandatory elements, casting time *subtracts* from the SFX Total.

Before you decide on your cast time, divide your current SFX Total by two (round up): this is the Minimum SFX Total. It is the lowest total you can *ever* have for this special effect. Your casting time value may not exceed this Minimum SFX Total; if you had to round, it may not exceed one value lower than this minimum.

Select a casting time, and then find its value on the Value Chart. Check to make sure the value is not greater than your maximum. Subtract the time value from the SFX Total.

Example: *Your current SFX Total is 31; half that value is 15.5. Your minimum SFX Total is 16. Because you rounded, your maximum casting time is 15 (one less than the 16; that's 1,000 seconds, or about 15 minutes). If you selected this cast time (15), you would also subtract 15 from the SFX Total, which would drop it to 16 (31-15). That also means the minimum SFX Value you can ever have for this special effect is 16.*

Some Notes Regarding Casting Time: For non-combat SFX, or for SFX that will be built into charges (see the optional modifier "Charges," below), high casting times are good. The character can spend some time during or between adventures preparing and casting the SFX and then release it using an activation. For example, when a super-scientist builds a ray gun, he is not going to rebuild it every time he wants to use it — instead, he'll build the gun and imbue it with charges for later on. He can use a fairly high casting time, since he won't need to "cast" the SFX during the adventure (at least until he runs out of charges).

Casting times of over one day are treated specially. A character cannot work for more than twenty-four hours straight. When a cast time is higher than twenty-four hours, it takes *double* that time to actually cast the spell: the character spends the rest of the time eating, sleeping, and so forth. So, if a character has a special effect with a cast time of 29 (one week), it really takes him *two* weeks to create this effect. However, he cannot do anything else that substantially detracts from his "casting." This means he can't go on adventures or fight battles — but he can go to the store to get spare parts for his device or a quick snack.

• Magister Mike: Casting Time •

Right now, Mike's fireball spell has a SFX Total of 43. Dividing that by two and rounding up, that gives him a minimum SFX Total of 22 — he knows he can never lower the SFX Value below that. Because he rounded, his maximum cast time is 21 (22-1).

Mike's going to pull out all the stops for casting time anyway: he wants to see how easy he can make this special effect. He assigns the maximum casting time value of 21 (that's 15,000 seconds, or about four hours):

Minimum SFX Value: 43/2 = 22
Casting Time Value: 21 (15,000 seconds — about six hours: this is the max)
SFX Total: 22 (43-21)

Summary

To this point, you have created a basic special effect. It has a set effect value, a set duration, and a set casting time. It may be used at any range up to the maximum and can only affect one specific target (person, tree, car, spot of ground, etc.). At this point, there are no controls or modifications.

If the spell is an "attack" spell (i.e., needs a "to hit" total to see if it hits its target — like a lightning bolt spell, a telekinesis power, a "blue bolt from heaven" miracle, or a ray gun gadget), the player and gamemaster must decide whether to use the character's *casting total* (whatever skill is used, like *super-science, faith* or *apportation)* or an appropriate skill (like *energy weapons*, if your SFX is charged into a ray gun) to hit. Common sense should be used to determine which skill to use. The target uses *dodge* or Agility to keep from getting hit.

The Optional Elements

Now, we get into the optional elements. You may not care about having any options but without optional elements, your SFX is pretty limited.

To keep things simple, the optional elements are numbered consecutively after the mandatory elements. You may use any

or all of the optional elements — you are not required to use *any* of them, either.

If you do not want to use any optional elements, go to step sixteen, "Determine the Difficulty Number and the Feedback Value."

If you do want to use any optional elements, go *in order*. Sometimes, you will be asked to make numeric determinations based on the current SFX Total: if you go out of order, you're totals will be wrong.

6: Area of Effect

With *area of effect*, the SFX user can create a special effect that will be used to attack an *area* rather than a single target. Unless this option is selected, SFX only attack single targets — one person, a tree, whatever. But, with the area of effect option, the effect fills an entire area and *everything* within that area is affected by the effect.

For example, a fireball without area of effect affects one person (it's more like a "fire bullet" than a fireball); by choosing an area of effect of say, three meters diameter, it affects *everyone* within that diameter.

As another example, if you were to create a psionic power that allowed you to see behind a wall, and you did not use area of effect, your character would only see a small area of space, less than a meter across. But, if you added on an area of effect of, say, a ten meter diameter, you could broaden your perspective and you would see everything inside that range (you would still have to make *perception* rolls to actually pick out hidden details).

Area of effect is chosen in a meter diameter: one-meter diameter, two-meter diameter, etc. There are two types of area of effect. The first is two-dimensional and is shaped like a circle (unless "shape," below, is chosen). The cost for two-dimensional is two points per meter diameter. In game terms, the "two-dimensional" area of effect actually has the third dimension — it's about one inch thick (or smaller, if the caster chooses that).

The second area of effect is "cubic" and is shaped like a sphere (unless "shape" is chosen). A sphere costs five points per meter in diameter.

The cubic option is often used for exploding SFX (like grenades, fireballs, etc.) and the gamemaster may insist on having you pay that cost for those types of areas (a super-science grenade should not be allowed to explode in only two dimensions ... normally). Cubic area of effect is also used when the SFX is supposed to create illusions (like giant dragons or spaceships) or when the SFX is designed to hold objects (like a telekinesis SFX that is supposed to pick up a ton of water or loose earth).

When an SFX with an area of effect is used, the user may target it on an object or specific point. It then expands out in a circle or a sphere. As a result, area of effect SFX can affect anyone in the area.

In fact, an area of effect SFX *must* try to affect every possible target in the area. If you drop a grenade into a room, everyone and everything in the room gets affected. Some of these targets may successfully move out of the way or resist the damage, but they are all "affected."

Special effects that use area of effect also gain a bonus to hit the target — since it is much harder to get out of an area of effect than out of the way of a "line of sight" attack.

If the area of effect is two-dimensional, then the special effect is at +1 to hit for every two meters of diameter (round down). So, a special effect with a four-meter diameter gets +2 to hit; a five-meter diameter still only gets +2 to hit, while a six-meter diameter gets +3 to hit.

If the area of effect is three-dimensional, then the special effect gets +1 to hit for every meter in diameter.

Optional Rule: This "to hit" bonus should only be applied to targets close to the center of the area of effect — indeed, the gamemaster may wish to force the caster to select a target as the center of the effect and then subtract one from the "to hit" bonus against targets for every meter they are from the center of the blast. So, if there are five targets standing in the blast radius of a three-dimensional five-meter diameter area of effect special effect, the caster would be at +5 to hit the "central" target, but anywhere from +4 to +1 to hit the other targets.

Shape: By purchasing the "shape" option, the caster can determine the shape of the effect. For a cost of one point, the caster may have the area of effect be a single different shape (square, cylinder, pyramidal, whatever). For a cost of three points, the caster can choose any number of different shapes, but when the effect is cast it can only have one shape: it will not change shape during the duration of the effect. For a cost of six points, the caster may have the area of effect be "fluid" — it may change shapes as many times as the caster wants.

A "shape" must fit within the area of effect determined based on the sphere or circle. For example, if a character chose a three-meter diameter area of effect, any new shapes (pyramids, dragons, whatever) would have to fit within that three-meter diameter range.

• Magister Mike: Area of Effect •

Mike knew that his fireball spell was going to have an area of effect — but, now, he has to choose which kind. The cubic fireball would explode into a big sphere, while the square one would be a more flat circle.

Because of the point cost, Mike would like to use the square option but, as the gamemaster, he knows he would give his players grief if they tried that. He goes for the cubic area of effect.

Mike picks an area of effect that is two meters in diameter. When his fireball goes off, it fills a sphere two meters long, wide and high! It also gives him a +2 to hit a target standing in the center of the fireball. It costs him 10 points.

He decides not use shape for this — so his fireball can only take the form of a "ball" and affects everything in its range.

Area of Effect: two meter diameter, cubic (10 points, +2 to hit)

SFX Total: 32 (22+10)

7: Multi-Target

Basically, multi-target allows you to affect more than one target. When you use the special effect, the effect is actually "cast" as many times as you have multi-target, and each effect can affect a different target (as long as all of them are within the effect's range).

The cost for multi-target is three per target *including* the first target. So, if you choose to have the effect work on up to three targets at once, the multi-target would cost nine points.

This cost is *doubled* if the special effect also has an area of effect. So, a multi-target *and* area of effect spell with three multi-targets would have a multi-target cost of 18 (9 x 2).

Multi-target is the ability to attack multiple targets, but

you do not *have* to use multi-target. When the character casts the spell, he must state how many multi-targets he is using. For example, if a character constructs a "multi-healing" spell that affects up to four characters, he has to pay the cost of the special effect when he creates it, but he can have the special effect applied to one, two, three, or four targets when it is cast or used from a charge.

The character cannot have a multi-targeted special effect attack the same target more than once: no extra effect or damage will result.

Finally, if the special effect requires a skill total to hit a target, this *is* a multi-action and it does require the use of the multi-action rules (see Chapter Three, "The Rules").

Example: *Mike is going to use a fireball that has five multi-targets. Mike casts the spell once — five different fireballs shoot from his fingers, flinging out to hit five different targets!*

• Magister Mike: Multi-Target •

Since Mike has built the fireball with an area of effect, it would be very costly with a multi-target as well. He passes on this element.

Since Mike skips this step, the SFX Total remains at 32.

8: Multi-Attribute

The optional element multi-attribute is necessary when you want to change more than one "characteristic" of a target. For example, a special effect that blasts a character, damaging him is attacking one attribute (or characteristic) — the character's Toughness. A SFX that blasts the character *and* drains his Strength affects *two* characteristics (Toughness and Strength) and must use the multi-attribute optional element.

Multi-attribute works very much like multi-target because, in a sense, the SFX is going after two or more "targets" — they just happen to be part of the same whole.

Multi-attribute costs three points per attribute *beyond* the first. So, if you wanted a miracle that would increase a target's Strength, Agility, Dexterity and Endurance, the cost for the multi-attribute would be nine points.

As the power of a special effect is spread out over many attributes, it loses power. Determine the attribute that you *most* want to affect on a target. Then determine the next most important, and then the next. Write this list into your special effects description.

When the effect value is applied to the primary (first) attribute, subtract two from the effect value. Then subtract *another* two (total of -4) when you apply the effect value to the next attribute, and subtract an *additional* two for each additional attribute (-6, then -8, etc.).

For example, in the miracle described above, the attributes might be organized in this order:

1st: Strength
2nd: Agility
3rd: Dexterity
4th: Endurance

If the miracle had an effect value of 20, when the miracle was successfully cast, the modified effect values would be as follows:

1st: Strength vs. 18 (20-2)
2nd: Agility vs. 16 (20-4)
3rd: Dexterity vs. 14 (20-6)
4th: Endurance vs. 12 (20-8)

So, it is very likely that the first attribute, Strength, will be affected more than the last attribute, Endurance.

In some cases, it is better to simply cast two or more different special effects than to have one effect do several things.

• Magister Mike: Multi-Attribute •

Mike doesn't feel he needs a multi-attribute effect for his fireball, but he does want to learn how it works. He decides that the fireball's explosion causes such a flash that it might blind a target for the duration of the spell. He determines that the fireball not only attacks the person's Toughness, but his *perception* as well.

Multi-Attribute: Toughness and perception. Cost: 3
Primary Attribute: Toughness vs. 18 (20-2)
Secondary Attribute: perception vs. 16 (20-4)
SFX Total: 35 (32+3)

When Mike uses the fireball, the effect value *minus two* will be applied to the target's Toughness if it hits a target, and the result points are read on the Damage Column. The effect value *minus four* is also applied to the target's *perception* and the result points are read on the Push Column and the result of the Push is subtracted from the target's *perception* for the duration.

9: Change Target

This optional element can be used to *change* the target of your special effect. Basically, as long as the duration has not elapsed, the special effect can be moved to any appropriate target within range without doing the whole effect over again.

For example, if you create a Strength spell that measures its effect value versus a target's Strength and adds the result points of the Push to that target's Strength value, you could take the effect away from the initial target and put it on another — until the spell wears off.

There are some restrictions on change target. First, the SFX modifier is determined by how many times you can change the target (the more times, the higher the cost). Second, while you do not have to reconstruct the special effect, you may have to actually "attack" the second and succeeding targets all over again — the effect value has been determined, and the SFX works, but that doesn't mean you automatically "hit" any target you want after the first. Third, if an affected target moves out of range before you change targets, the SFX ends and has to be redone.

Change target costs five points per target (including the first). If you use multi-target, you must pay for each target separately. If you use area of effect or multi-attribute, multiply the cost by 1.5 (round up); if you use both, the cost is doubled.

For example, building a spell with three change targets costs 15 points (5 x 3). Three change targets with four multi-targets would cost 60 points (15 x 4). But if you built a spell that had three change targets, three multi-targets and an area of effect, your cost would rocket to 68 points (15 for the change target; then, x 3 for the multi-targets, making the cost go to 45; then, multiply that by 1.5 to add in the area of effect). Ouch!

Change target may be redundant with "apportation" (below) in some cases. Check it over to see if that is what you want instead.

Example: *A character has a psionic "mind probe" power that he can use to read the surface thoughts of a target. It has a range of ten meters, a duration of one minute, and an effect value of 12.*

The character has installed "change target" so that he can read the minds of several people successively — five target changes total. The cost is 25 (5 targets times 5 per target).

He uses the power later on. The character is in a room with four people, one of whom is a murderer. The room is twenty meters in diameter, so everyone is in range if the character stands in the center. He uses the power to read one person's mind.

The psionic beats the difficulty and takes the feedback and gets an effect value of 13. The description of the power states that, for every result point he gets (his effect value versus the target's willpower *or Confidence), he can ask one question of the target that the target must answer truthfully. The question must be a simple sentence and must be easily understood.*

As it turns out, the first character has a Confidence of 9. The psionic asks four simple questions, and gets four answers. This takes about twenty seconds (gamemaster option), so he still has forty seconds left.

Rather than reuse the power on the next character, the psionic utilizes the "change target" option and moves on. He still has the effect value of 13, but, this time, the character he targets has a willpower *of 16. He's into negative result points, so he can't ask any questions.*

The gamemaster says this takes him another ten seconds. He has thirty left, so he moves on to the next target. This one has a willpower *of 10, so he has to answer three questions — but, while the psionic is asking questions, the man moves out of the room and out of range. The psionic power is broken even though there were at least thirty seconds left on the duration.*

• Magister Mike: Change Target •

Even Mike is hard-pressed to work change target into his fireball. He decides to let this one pass.

Since Mike skips this step, the SFX Total stays at 35.

10: Variable Effect

The effect value of every special effect is constant — unless you employ *variable effect*. For every two points added to the SFX Total, you can, later on, move the effect value up *or* down one value.

This means the effect value of the SFX is variable within a certain range. If your effect value is 10, and you spend four points on variable effect, you can move the effect value. If the caster chooses higher, then the effect can go as high as twelve; if the caster chooses lower, then the effect can go as low as eight.

This option gives the SFX user quite a bit of control. Often, especially when you are using damage special effects, you won't want to use the maximum damage value of the SFX.

When you select variable effect, you *must* specify which direction(s) the effect value can move — and each direction must be paid for *separately*. If you decide to increase the SFX Total by 10 points, and you specify that you can adjust the effect value downwards by up to five points at any time, you can do that — but you can't *increase* it at all.

• Magister Mike: Variable Effect •

Decreasing the fireball spell's effect value might be a nice option, Mike thinks. Right now, it has an effect value of 20. That will hurt pretty much anyone a little and, combined with the *perception*-decreasing effect, it is fairly nasty.

Mike pays ten points so that he can decrease the effect value of the fireball by up to five points at any time in the future — the effect value stays at 20, but he puts fifteen (15) in parenthesis beside it (so he knows that's how far down it can go).

Variable Effect: 10 points (decrease effect value by 5)
SFX Total: 45 (35+10)

11: Variable Duration

By increasing the SFX Total by four points, you can build an "off" switch into your SFX's duration. This means you can turn the effect off before the duration expires — something you can't usually do. By spending a total of eight points, you can build in an "on/off" switch — you can turn the effect on and off as many times as you want until the duration expires. You don't have to make any skill rolls, and the effect comes back instantly upon command.

However, you do have to keep track of the overall duration. If a special effect has a duration of one hour, you can't run it for ten minutes, turn it off for a few hours and then turn it back on for another fifty minutes — that's not how it works. The clock begins running when you first use the effect.

The other option for variable duration is increasing duration. For every point you increase the SFX Total, you can increase the duration by that *measurement* later. For example, if a SFX normally has a duration of sixty seconds (value 9) and you spend another nine points on variable duration, you can increase the duration by up to one minute later on. When casting the spell, the caster can choose whether or not to use the variable duration, or how much of the duration to use.

The increased duration cost is separate from and in addition to any "off" or "on/off" cost.

• Magister Mike: Variable Duration •

Mike would like to be able to turn off his fireballs at will — since he might someday have to move through their areas of effect if he isn't careful. He doesn't care about being able to add extra duration to the spell, so he just records the following:

Variable Duration Value: 4 ("off" only)
Running SFX Value: 49 (45+4)

12: Apportation

Apportation allows the caster to control the motion of the special effect after it has been released. Apportation not only allows you to move the effect of the special effect around (within the proscribed range), but it can also increase the accuracy of attack effects.

Accuracy (to hit): Select a number of points to spend on the accuracy, and find that measure on the Value Chart.

Convert the measure to a value to determine the to hit bonus, which is a modifier added to the skill total.

For example, if you spent 10 points on targeting, you would find that a measure of 10 converts to a value of 5. It would cost 10 points, and the character would get a bonus of +5 to hit when using the effect.

Even though the value of one has a measurement of zero, spending zero points does not get you a plus one to hit. You have to spend one point to get a +1 to hit.

This type of apportation allows you to "bend" your SFX shot. At +1, you can bend your line of effect around intervening obstacles as long as they are smaller than your target (even if they are in direct line of your shot). At +3, you can swerve your attack around objects the same size as the target (like other characters), as long as you can see your target. At +5 or higher, you can shoot around corners or around people, even if you can't see your target — but, when you do this, give your target a bonus for complete concealment (see "Damage" in Chapter Three, "The Rules").

Moving the Effect: The second type of apportation is the movement of the effect "after the fact." If your special effect is movement related, or must include a movement component, then you must buy apportation. This allows the caster to control the movement of the special effect within the range of its effect.

For example, the character must purchase apportation to control the movement of a levitation special effect. Likewise, if a character wants to create an illusory dragon, the character must purchase apportation so that the illusion can move around within the range of the effect.

The speed value at which the special effect can be moved is equal to one of two things. If the special effect is actually being used to move another object (such as a "flight power" or a "telekinesis" ability), compare the effect value to the mass value of the target. Read the result points on the Push Column (ignore the shock); the Push Result is the apportation's speed value (in meters per second). So, if a character with a mass value of 10 employed a flight special effect with an effect value of 20, you'd read the difference (10) on the Push Column. The value of the Push is 4. The speed value of 4 is six meters per second.

The other way to determine the speed value of the apportation only comes into play when you are moving the actual special effect. For example, a character might create an illusionary dragon flying through the air. In this case, since nothing is actually being moved *by* the special effect, the Speed Value of the special effect is also the speed value of the apportation.

The cost of the second type of apportation is 10% of the current SFX Total (rounded up).

• Magister Mike: Apportation •

The fireball spell Mike has created has a duration value of five (ten seconds), so it is only going to be around for one round; he can't actually move it during that time period unless he gets a *haste* action or is in a *flurry* round.

Mike decides to play for that chance — he increases the SFX Total by ten percent of the current SFX Total (10% of 44, rounded up, is 5). Now, if he gets to act more than once in the round he uses the fireball, he can move the fireball around at a speed equal to the fireball's speed value.

Apportation: movement, Cost: 5
SFX Total: 54 (49+5)

13: Maintenance

Maintenance allows a user to keep a special effect going after its duration (rather than forcing the character to redo the whole process). By increasing the SFX Total by ten percent, rounded up, at the end of the special effect's duration, the character can *maintain* the effect: he is effectively recasting it, but at a much lower difficulty and feedback.

The DN of the effect is reduced to *one third* (round up) its normal level, and the feedback value is reduced by *one half*. So, if a miracle had a DN of 16 and a feedback of 19, the maintenance DN would be 6 and the feedback would be 10. The cast time is automatically *zero* for a maintenance check. Regardless of the casting total, the effect value remains at whatever level it was during the initial casting. If the maintenance is successful, the effect is recast with the same effect value and duration as the first casting; if the maintenance fails, the effect simply ends.

A character may use maintenance as many consecutive times as they desire. Special effects may only be maintained *immediately* after their durations run out. Special effects that have very short, or even one second, durations may be maintained as well (although it looks as if they are being recast to outside observers).

The gamemaster has the last say on whether a SFX can be maintained or not — some just *shouldn't* be (thematically speaking).

Special effects that are imbued into characters or objects using *charges* (see below) may *not* be maintained because they are not actually being cast when they are released from their charge.

If the special effect requires any optional modifiers ("Optional Modifiers," below), the gamemaster and the player should determine what modifiers need to be "performed" during the casting. Roughly one third of the modifiers should carry over in a simplified form (the cast time is zero, after all).

Example: *A psionic power requires a component (a mind-enhancing drug), concentration (for a certain length of time), and a gesture (injecting the drug) to perform initially. The gamemaster and the player decide that the character can maintain the effect by generating a reduced psi manipulation total at the end of the duration, but he has to inject the drug every time. He does not have to concentrate for maintenance, however.*

• Magister Mike: Maintenance •

Mike decides that he likes the maintenance idea for his fireball spell, but he is disappointed to hear that he can't use maintenance for charged SFX — and he intends to charge the fireball, since it has a cast time of over four hours.

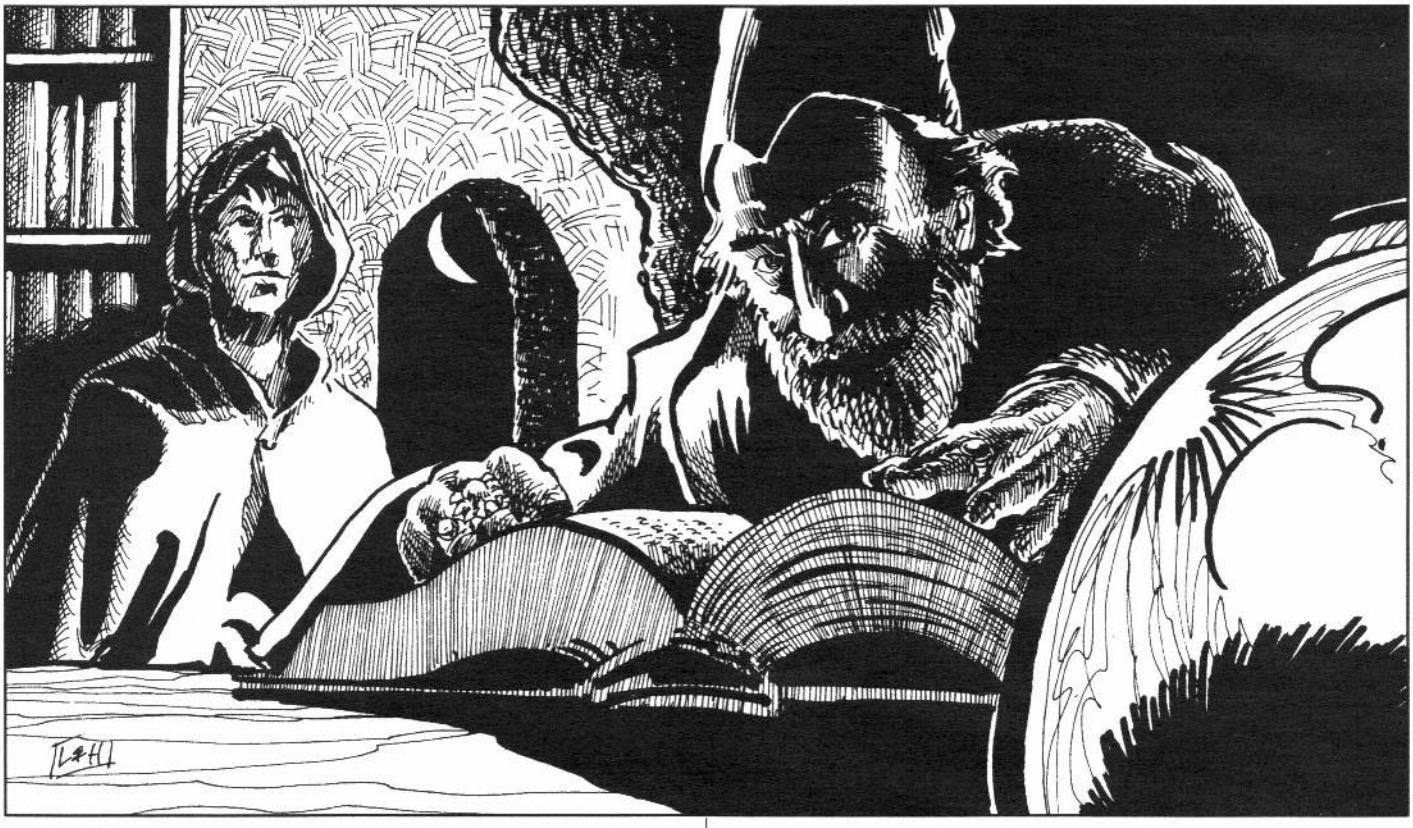
Oh, well.

Maintenance Value: 0 (no maintenance)
SFX Total: 54 (unchanged)

14: Focused

Certain spells can benefit from being *focused* on them. Unless effects are focused, the effect stays where it was sent: it does not move! With focused effects, after the special effect is released, a focus "attaches" the *effect* to the target and the effect now moves with the target: range is no longer a factor.

For example, an ordinary light spell might have a range of



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10 meters. The character releases the light spell, sending it five meters away. The light spell stays where it was released, even if the character moves.

If the spell could be focused, the character could, for example, cast the light spell on a pebble (provided the pebble was within the 10 meter range). Now, the light spell stays with that pebble. The caster could pick up the pebble and throw it down a hallway — and the light would move with the pebble, even 20 or 30 meters away.

As another example, a psionic power that causes a character's adrenal glands to pump up his Strength (i.e., a special effect that increases a character's Strength) might have a range of 60 meters. If the character goes more than 60 meters beyond where the spell was cast, the effect ends. But, if the effect is focused on the target, the effect is considered to be "attached" to the target; the target can move about freely.

This works for quite a few effects, although instantaneous special effects (like ray gun blasts or fireballs) seldom need to be focused. Only long duration effects need this option.

The cost of focusing a special effect is equal to the SFX's Effect Value, plus the Duration Value, divided by five and rounded down. This is because larger effects are harder to focus, and the longer the duration, the harder it is to focus the effect on the object. So, an invisibility spell with an Effect Value of 20 and a Duration Value of 10 would cost 6 points to focus (30/5).

Focus is different than "charges" (below, under charges). With charges, you are storing the spell in another object and you will release the spell later (the object is basically "carrying" the spell). With focus, once the spell is cast, the effect stays on whatever the target was.

Types of things that would be focused would include magic lanterns, flight belts and so forth.

Damage effects that last multiple rounds and are focused on the target cause damage *each* round.

If a special effect has the *multi-target* option, each target must be paid for *separately*. So, if a special effect can affect one to five targets, the creator has to decide here and now how many of those five possible targets can be focused, and the SFX Total must be adjusted for each one (for example, if there are three multi-targets and all of them can be focused on, then the cost is tripled).

As always, gamemasters may disallow focus for certain types of spells (such as damage spells, for example).

• Magister Mike: Focus •

Mike doesn't see any point in applying this optional element to his magic spell. He could focus the fireball by increasing the SFX Total by 5, but he chooses not to.

Focus Value: 0 (no focus)
SFX Total: 54 (unchanged)

15: Charges

The last of the optional elements, it is quite possible *charges* will be the most used. When the option charges is selected, the creator of the special effect can "store" multiple uses of the effect, either in his mind or in an object. The effect can be released later by "activating" it.

When this is done, the creator makes all skill rolls and takes all feedback at the time the SFX is *created* — not when the special effect is released. Normally, only special effects that require separate skill totals (like combat special effects, which

require skill rolls "to hit") need skill totals at the time of activation (see below).

This option gives special effects users several advantages. First, they can employ long cast times, as well as many difficult optional modifiers (see below) to reduce the difficulty and feedback of the special effect. That way, a character can create a fireball effect that takes five hours to cast, cast it "between adventures" and "store" it in his mind, a wand, or anything else. During the adventure, he can activate one of the charges, releasing the fireball immediately. With charges, the caster will know the general level of effect (or, in some cases, the *exact* level of effect), before they have to use it.

In story terms, using normal charges just means saying "I put this special effect into that object/person, and here's how it is activated."

Charges increase the SFX Total by the *measure* of the value of the number of charges that will be created. The minimum cost for charging is two, even if only for one charge. See the Value Chart for information on measures and values.

For example, you have a magic spell that will increase your Charisma. You want to store it in a necklace for later release. If you wanted to have five charges (you could release the spell five different times), then you would increase the SFX Total by the measurement of the value five — 10 points. If you wanted only to use the special effect one time, then you would have to increase the SFX Value by two points. Either way, you only have to cast the special effect *once* to get the charge(s) imbedded into the object as many times as you have specified here.

When a charge is released, it acts as if it were a spell cast by a character; it is simply released by the object (or person) storing the charges instead of from the caster. If the SFX would normally require a skill roll to hit or to accomplish some sort of effect, then the caster makes that skill roll to release the charge. However, the SFX caster does *not* have to generate his casting total again. The SFX has been cast, when it was charged; it does not have to be cast again.

Wards: A ward is simply a charge triggered either by a set of circumstances that occur or after a set period of time. Wards do not have to be consciously activated (and usually aren't).

For example, a ward might be a light spell imbedded on a room. Whenever anyone walks into the room, the light comes on. There may or may not be a mechanism for turning it off — that is a function of duration. The light spell turns on (i.e., releases a charge) every time a person walks in until the charges run out.

A ward costs extra: an additional ten percent of the "charges" cost (rounded up). Why? Because wards have to be imbued with the ability to activate themselves.

You use the following rules when you determine whether a ward goes off when "triggered."

When the SFX caster charges the ward (creates the special effect the first time), he defines the parameters that will cause the ward to go off. These parameters can be simple ("When someone comes in the room") or more complicated ("When a person larger than two meters tall walks in the room and stomps his feet twice"). It does not matter which.

The result points of the SFX casting (over the DN) equal the *perception* skill value of the ward. The gamemaster should assign a DN against the ward "perceiving" the circumstances that cause the ward to activate, but they should be fairly easy — wards can usually "see" everything in their immediate area and characters nearby cannot usually see them. A character might be able to *stealth* past a ward, but whether that is possible or not is up to the gamemaster.

Charges work best in high magic or super science campaign worlds. These settings are conducive to powerful magic/super-science, and charges don't unbalance the game too much.

When a character picks a number of charges the special effect uses, that's the number it *always* uses. Also, when the character picks the object the special effect is focused into, that's the object (in general terms). If the character pays for five charges but, for some reason, would only like to charge something once — too bad; that character will have to create another special effect.

Objects of charges are stated in general terms (unless the optional modifier "components" is selected and used for the charged object — see below). That means that, if a character says his special effect can be charged into a wand, it can be charged into *any* wand. If he says it can be charged into a person, then it is *any* person. This can only be changed by use of the aforementioned optional modifier.

Charges, when released, go off "immediately" — in that round; the cast time requirement was fulfilled when the charges were placed in the object or person.

• Magister Mike: Charges •

Mike's been waiting for this one. He decided that he was going to build charges into it. He decides to "charge" a wand with the fireball spell. That way, he can cast the spell between adventures or during rest time and have it ready to go.

Mike decides, since the character will be spending a lot of time using the SFX, he'd better make it worthwhile. He decides he'd like the character to be able to hold ten charges. He looks at the table — ouch! That's a step of 100 points! He can't do that; it will more than *double* his SFX Total.

But nothing in the rules states that Mike can't charge his wand *twice*. He decides to build in the five charges option — that only costs 10 points. If he wants, he can perform the special effect twice and charge his wand for ten charges — it will just take twice as long.

This gets Mike thinking, and he makes a note — he decides that no character in his campaign can charge the same special effect into one particular object (or himself) more than once — but the number of charges is actually unlimited.

Charge Value: 5 charges, cost: 10 points
SFX Total: 64 (54+10)

Other Optional Elements

While these elements cover just about every special effect option, gamemasters and players may discover new ones to add to the list — and *MasterBook* Worldbooks will probably add a few as time goes by. Most likely, optional modifiers (below) will be added more often, but feel free to add elements or expand on existing elements as you see fit.

SFX Subtotal

At this point, take a look at your current SFX Total. This value is your *SFX Subtotal*. It contains the base *Difficulty Number* and the *Feedback Value* for the special effect you are creating.

16: Determine the Difficulty Number and the Feedback Value

To determine the Difficulty Number, or "DN," and the Feedback Value, or "FV," simply divide the SFX Subtotal into two values that add up to the subtotal. Neither value can be more than *double* the other.

So, if you have an SFX Subtotal of, say, 60, you could make the DN 30 and the FV 30, or you could make one value as high as 40 and the other 20 — but that's as far as you go, since 40 is double 20.

• Magister Mike: SFX Subtotal •

Mike's multi-fireball spell has a SFX Total of 64. That means his SFX Subtotal is 64.

SFX Subtotal: 64

He thinks about how he wants to divide up the numbers. He simply splits the values.

Base Difficulty Number: 32
Base Feedback Value: 32

Optional Modifiers

Now, you are probably looking at those numbers and saying "Ack! Those are *really* high!" That's expected.

But those totals don't have to stay that way; that's where the *optional modifiers* come in. Optional modifiers are "thematically linked" modifiers that *subtract* from either the DN or FV of the special effect.

Usually, optional modifiers make the SFX less "convenient" to use, meaning that, in addition to generating a SFX skill total and comparing it to the DN, the character has to do something else to make the SFX work. Either that, or specific circumstances have to be adhered to or the SFX won't be possible.

Below are listings of different types of optional modifiers. *Subtract* the totals for the modifiers from your DN or FV. Unless otherwise stated, their numeric modifiers can be applied to *either* the DN or the FV of the special effect, but no single modifier may be distributed among both (except "unreal effects" as noted below).

This is *not* a complete list of modifiers, nor are all modifiers appropriate for each type of special effect. The gamemaster may come up with more optional modifiers, and he is encouraged to restrict the use of some modifiers.

After each optional modifier, there is a short paragraph commenting on how appropriate the modifier probably is for each type of special effect. This is a *guideline* for how the modifiers should be allowed in different game settings. Also, if a gamemaster allows a seemingly inappropriate modifier because the player has a good reason, he should restrict the value of the modifier to at least one level *less* than it would have gotten in a more appropriate case.

Neither the DN nor the FV of the special effect can *ever* be reduced to less than *half* its original value. So, if a character has a SFX with a DN of 20 and a FV of 40, the DN could be reduced as far as 10 and the FV could be reduced to 20, but no further.

Also, refer to the Minimum SFX Total (figured in "5: Casting Time"; step 4a of the "Special Effects Worksheet"). The total of the DN and the Feedback may never go below the Minimum SFX Total.

17: Community (Optional)

The caster must have "helpers" to create the special effect. There are two factors that contribute to the effectiveness of community: the *number* of helpers, and the *participation* of the helpers.

The number of helpers determines the basic modifier. The "# of Helpers" is a range of helpers the character has assisting him. The character must specify when the SFX is created *exactly* how many helpers are necessary.

The participation of the helpers is determined by what the helper actually has to do during the cast time. The following table is used. Decide how much help the helpers lend, and multiply the community modifier by the corresponding participation multiplier.

Subtract the final optional modifier from either the DN or the FV.

The character creating the special effect must declare what type of actions the helpers must perform. Simple actions include readying components, chanting simple incantations, praying, passing tools, etc.

"DN" actions means that the helpers actually have to perform some sort of complex action during the casting — performing a sacrifice, making a *science* skill total, or whatever. Different helpers can be doing different things — of the same DN — for this purpose. Multiple groups of helpers might be performing different levels of actions, for multiple community multipliers.

• Community Modifiers •

# of Helpers	Base Modifier	DN Modifier
1	1	–
2	2	+2
3-4	3	+4
5-6	4	+6
7-10	5	+8
11-15	6	+10
16-25	7	+12
26-40	8	+14
41-60	9	+16
61-100	10	+18

• Participation Multiples •

Helpers perform ...	Multiplier
Simple actions	0.5
DN 8 actions	1
DN 10 actions	1.5
DN 12 actions	2
DN 14 actions	2.5
DN 18 actions	3

For example, a priest might perform a miracle to make crops grow. There might be two communities involved. The "faithful" (a group of 31) might be "praying" (a simple action) This gives an optional modifier of 4 points (8 x .5), while a cadre of 5 minor priests perform the sacrifice of a lamb (DN 8, for a modifier of 2 times 1 for 2 points). These are two separate optional modifiers worth four and two points respectively, or a total of 6 points.

When the SFX user finishes the cast time of a community-affected special effect, the gamemaster generates a skill total for any communities involved (when necessary). The skill of the community should be fairly average, unless the gamemaster has reason to think differently (the "faithful," above, would probably have *faith* skills of around eight, while the priests might have *melee combat (knife)* skill of 10 or so).

If the group is a small one (under six), or if the community role is being performed by player characters or specific gamemaster-controlled characters, however, the skill totals can be made separately. Otherwise, add the DN Modifier to the DN to determine the chances of having the *entire* group succeed (in a mass skill total). So, if the 31 "faithful" in the above example had to generate a *faith* total of 8 using their average skill level (8), the actual DN would be 22 (8 + 14). For this reason, it is best if large groups only participate by performing simple actions. If *any* community group or member of a community fails in his skill total, the entire special effect does not work.

This modifier is especially appropriate for miracles, less appropriate for magic and super-science, and only occasionally for psionics. Usually, the "community" should be required to have certain skills or perform designated actions to make this work. The actions or skills have to make a certain amount of sense as well.

The "Community Modifiers" chart is based on the Value Chart, so you can extend the modifiers accordingly. To get the DN Modifier, multiply the "base modifier" by two and subtract two from that. For example, a miracle that use 1,000 faithful would yield a bonus of +15. The DN Modifier would be +28 (15 x 2 = 30 -2 = 28).

• Magister Mike: Community •

Mike doesn't want to have to depend on others for his spell, so he chooses not to use the community modifier.

DN: 32 (unchanged)

FV: 32 (unchanged)

18: Components (optional)

In order for the SFX to be used, the character must include a special component — an item — in the casting of the SFX. The item might be a simple object, easily obtainable, or it might be something very rare and expensive (and hard to get). But, regardless, if the character does not possess the component, the SFX cannot be cast.

The rarity of objects depends, in part, on the game setting. In a pulp fiction setting, a super-scientist might require a pistol to imbue with his special effect. A pistol should be easy to get, so the modifier will be fairly low. On the other hand, in a setting where pistols are only possessed by the very rich because they are very rare, that might be a much more effective modifier.

On the chart below, the "Component Type" is listed, but it will have to be customized by game setting (as mentioned above). The examples (listed in parenthesis) are real world. The "Modifier" is then subtracted from the special effect's DN or FV.

• Component Modifiers •

Component Type	Modifier
Commonplace, easily obtained (a rock, dirt, a branch)	1
Very common, can usually be purchased or traded for easily (a match, a board, incense)	2
Common, but must be purchased for reasonable cost (a lighter, inexpensive clothing, oil)	3
Uncommon, but available (a gun, computer chip, prescription medicine)	4
Rare or expensive (a valuable gem, gold or silver, rare drug)	5
Very Rare (near-priceless gem, uranium or plutonium)	6
One-of-a-Kind (King Tut's burial mask, a prototype weapon)	7
Component is totally destroyed by casting	x2

Magical spells that require this modifier are *very* common, as are miracles. This modifier is also extremely appropriate for super-science SFX. It even works for psionics, as the character might need to use a component to "focus" his energies or put him in the proper "state of mind."

• Magister Mike: Components •

Mike decides he wants to use several components in his spell. Since his DN and FV are both 32, the maximum amount he can get from this step is 16 points ... but that's still a lot of points.

He decides that he will charge his spell into a wand. That would be a very common item, but he decides to up the ante a little — the wand has to be carved out of ivory with "magical runes," and it will be very expensive (4 points).

During the cast time of the spell, Mike will also have to burn incense constantly (very common, destroyed — 4 points). He will also rub a flint-stone over the wand during the cast time, until it is rubbed away (very common, destroyed — 4 points). Finally, the wand will have to be held over a burning candle for the duration of the cast time (very common, destroyed — 4 points). Mike distributes these points as follows:

Components: 16 points: 4 (ivory wand), 4 (incense, destroyed), 4 (flint-stone, destroyed), 4 candle, destroyed)

Modified DN: 16 (32 - 16)

Current Modified FV: 32 (unchanged)

Mike writes down how the components are used as well.

Karl Waller

Also, if the gamemaster thinks that the component the character has selected is uniquely appropriate *and* inventive, he may award up to three points as a "bonus" for using such an object in the spell. For example, a character who builds a cold-ray gun that must be filled with water has an appropriate component, but not a particularly inventive one. If the character had to build in coils filled with freon (a gas used in refrigeration units), then he might get the added bonus.

Gamemasters may want to limit the number or kind of components that can be used for a special effect. This modifier is especially prone to abuse, so gamemasters will probably want to require that each component make a *meaningful* contribution to the creation or use of the effect. They might also want to limit the *total* allowed from components to be half of the DN or FV (whichever is smaller).

• Concentration Table •

Concentration Time Value(s)	Modifier	*Willpower* DN
0 (1 second)	0	6
1–3 (1.5–4 seconds)	1	7
4–6 (6–15 seconds)	2	8
7–9 (25–60 seconds)	3	9
10–12 (1.5–4 minutes)	4	10
13–15 (6–15 minutes)	5	11
16–18 (25–60 minutes)	6	12
19–21 (1.5–4 hours)	7	13
22–24 (6–15 hours)	8	14

19: Concentration (Optional)

During a portion of the cast time, the character has to concentrate *completely* on what he is doing or the SFX will automatically fail. If the character is attacked or even distracted during the concentration, the SFX just won't work, and all of the previous cast time is wasted. The gamemaster will determine what constitutes a "distraction."

The character must select a time value for concentration; it may not exceed the cast time, but it may be lower than the cast time. The character can then subtract one third that value from either the DN or the FV. The character will then be required to make a *willpower* total to see if they have been able

• Magister Mike: Concentration •

Mike's spell has a pretty long cast time (value 21, about four hours). He decides to use concentration, select a time value of 18 (one hour). That gets him a bonus of 6 and he needs to make a *willpower* total of 12.

Mike balances the options: on the one hand, a high concentration DN would be rough, since if he blows it, he's wasted four hours on charging his wand — if he were on an adventure, that's probably the maximum amount of time he'd get on a daily basis. On the other hand, a low concentration DN won't give him a lot of help, and he needs to get that FV down some.

Concentration: Time value 18 (one hour), modifier 6, willpower DN 12
DN: 16 (unchanged)
FV: 26 (32-6)

to maintain their concentration. If they fail this total, the effect automatically fails. However, they may still make a spell skill total to attempt to reduce feedback.

Magical spells that require this modifier are *very* common, as are miracles. This modifier is also appropriate for super-science devices (the character must spend time performing "very delicate" operations). It even works for psionics, as the character might need to "focus all his will" on making the psionic power "happen."

Using concentration *does not* count as a multi-action.

20: Gestures (Optional)

The character must perform either simple or elaborate physical gestures (wave his hands, wiggle his ears, dance around, etc.) in order to get the SFX to work. Depending on how elaborate these gestures are, this modifier can reduce either the DN or the FV significantly.

Gestures can also be used as "triggers" for wards and charges. Perhaps a character stores a spell in a wand. In order for the spell to be activated, the character has to move the wand in three circles and point it at the target. Even though this action is, technically, performed *after* the SFX has been imbedded in the wand (i.e., the spell has already been cast), this can lower the DN or FV of that SFX value.

The chart below, "Gesture Modifiers," has two columns: "Gesture Complexity" and "Modifier." The first column has a description and an example, and may have a DN listed. If there is a DN, then the character has to beat the DN with a Dexterity or Agility total (depending on the type of gesture — gamemaster's option) at the end of the cast time, or he can't even make the SFX skill total; the SFX just automatically fails. The "Modifier" is subtracted from the special effect's DN or FV.

• Gesture Modifiers •

Gesture Complexity	Modifier
Simple (point finger, tighten bolt, flip switch, etc.)	1
Fairly simple (make circles with finger, adjust dials to settings, etc.)	2
Complex (DN 8)	3
Very complex (DN 12)	4
Extremely complex (DN 16)	5
Downright hard (DN 20)	6

The character has to define *exactly* what these gestures are, because there may be circumstances when using the SFX is impossible because the gestures can't be used. If the character must hold his arms over his head (a simple action), he couldn't do that if his hands were tied behind his back. However, don't worry about *why* a particular DN is as high as it is. A character might say he has to "point his finger" at the target, but there is a DN of 8 involved — maybe he has to quickly trace the outline of the target or something. Multiple gestures are allowed as separate modifiers, as long as the cast time is long enough and each modifier is explained.

Magical spells that require this modifier are *very* common, as are miracles. This modifier is only somewhat appropriate for super-science SFX, though the gestures could include special "steps" the character must perform to get the SFX to work. It is seldom useful or appropriate for psionics. The gamemaster may award extra points for very creative gestures (up to three).

If the caster selects a gesture that requires a Dexterity or Agility total, that action does *not* count as a multi-action, even though it is performed at the same time as the SFX casting.

• Magister Mike: Gestures •

Under components, Mike already decided he'd burn incense and strike the wand with flint. Both of these are simple gestures as well, worth one point each. Mike also decides he'll use a fairly simple modifier to release the wand's charges — he'll draw a quick circle around each of his targets. That's a two point modifier.

Gestures: 1 (burn incense), 1 (strike flint), 2 (circle around targets), Modifier: 4
Current Modified DN: 16 (unchanged)
Current Modified FV: 22 (26-4)

21: Incantations (Optional)

When casting the SFX, or releasing it from a charged "item," the SFX user must say something — a keyword or phrase, or a long incantation (like a prayer or a formula). The intricacy and length of the incantation should control the effect of the modifier. The following table provides modifier guidelines.

"Complexity" refers to how intricate the incantation, or voice component, is and the "Modifier" is subtracted from the special effect's DN or FV. Note that some levels of incantation require Mind totals to perform the incantation correctly.

• Incantation Modifiers •

Complexity	Modifier
One or two words or sounds	1
A complete sentence	2
A complex incantation (DN 8)	3
Litany (DN 12)	4
Complex formula (DN 16)	5
Extensive, complex elements (DN 20)	6
Incantation is in a foreign tongue and character must have one add in that *language* focus	+1
Incantation may only be said very loudly	+1
Incantation will offend most hearing it	+1

The character must determine what the incantation is — though the player doesn't have to record it unless he wants to (no need to write out a long litany — the character either makes or fails his Mind roll). At the end of the cast time, the character generates a Mind total (separate from his special effects skill total or any other skill rolls) to see if he remembered the incantation correctly. If he fails, he did not and the special effect does not work. If he succeeds, he generates any other skill totals he needs to perform (including the special effects skill total) and proceeds normally. The Mind total does *not* count as a multi-action.

Magical spells that require this modifier are *very* common,

as are miracles. This modifier is almost *never* appropriate for super-science SFX, though it might occur occasionally. A "mantra" is fairly common for psionics.

• Magister Mike: Incantations •

Mike likes the idea of some voice-activated modifiers. He begins with some during the actual casting process.

In order to activate the wand, Mike will have to say "Burning Flame" in a loud voice and in "the tongue of the fire salamanders," which he has to learn at least one add in to speak correctly (3: 1+1+1).

Incantations: "Burning Flame" in "salamander speak," modifier: 3
Current Modified DN: 16 (unchanged)
Current Modified FV: 19 (22 - 3)

22: Related Skill Totals (Optional)

One optional modifier that can add interesting story elements to any special effect is this one. When a caster picks *related skill totals*, he designates a particular skill that must be used to create the special effect — in addition to the special effect skill.

For example, a character who constructs a flashlight that will see into the infrared spectrum might use *super-science* as his SFX skill. But that character might also use *science: electronics* to work on the basic flashlight. This means the character has to have both skills and risk two separate skill totals at the end of the cast time, using the multi-action penalties (much like the "concentration" roll, above, or other modifiers that require skill or attribute totals).

This also limits who can use the special effect — in the above example, a character must have *science: electronics* as well as *super-science* to use the SFX. These rolls can *never* be made *untrained* (unless the character has a *breakthrough* card and plays it — see Chapter Five, "The Card Deck), even if the skill total could normally be made *untrained*.

The modifier value is dependent upon how hard it is for the character to make the skill roll.

• Related Skill Modifiers •

Modifier Value	Skill Total Necessary
1	DN 6*
2	DN 7
3	DN 9
4	DN 11
5	DN 14
6	DN 17

*You'll notice that these totals are much lower than the "concentration" DNs and other similar modifiers. This is because the character actually has to buy the skill necessary.

The gamemaster has the final say on whether a skill is actually "related" or not. This modifier works best for *super-science*, but it can be useful for any other special effect skill as well.

The related skill total does *not* count as a multi-action.

Note: Quite often, certain special effects will require skill totals that are *not* used to modify the DN or the FV. For example, a spell could be designed to create a spear with a damage value of 20 and a +2 to hit (using the "apportation" optional element). The wielder would still have to generate a *thrown weapons* skill total to hit his target. This does not count as a related skill total modifier.

• Magister Mike: Related Skill Totals •

Mike could make the carving of the flute (*science: ivory-working*) a very appropriate related skill total, but he chooses not to. This way, he doesn't have to invest the skill points in a skill he'll probably only use for this purpose.

Related Skill Totals: Not used
Current Modified DN: 16 (unchanged)
Current Modified FV: 19 (unchanged)

23: Other Optional Modifiers

There can be plenty of other modifiers — circumstantial limitations, or otherwise. Make them up and get the gamemaster to approve them. Generally, no single modifier should reduce either the FV or the DN by more than six points.

• Other Modifier Ranges •

Condition	Modifier Value
The condition can be fulfilled most of the time or with simple preparations	-1
The condition is not met normally, or at least without some preparation	-2
The condition is out of the caster's control, but is fairly frequent, or the caster has to go to elaborate lengths to meet the condition	-3
The condition occurs very infrequently, or is very hard for the caster to obtain	-4
The condition will not occur without the caster taking elaborate measures	-5
The condition is rare and almost totally (or totally) out of the caster's control	-6

• Magister Mike: Other Modifiers •

Mike chooses not to experiment with any conditional modifiers at this time, but he does jot down a few examples in case he ever re-does the spell:

Conditional Modifier:
This spell can only be charged into a wand at night: -3
The mage must have at least one add in the skill *scholar: fire magic* : -3
The mage must have a lit fire nearby (other than the incense) during the casting: -1
The mage must be inside during casting: -2

24: Unreal Effects (Optional)

This modifier must always be applied *last* to any special effects.

When this optional modifier is used, it turns a heretofore real magic spell, miraculous effect, psionic power, or super-science experiment into an illusion. The effects are not real — they are just perceived as real.

The special effect is automatically believed unless a target or an observer actually states otherwise. Then, depending on the "Disbelief DN" (see the chart below), the illusion may lose all of its effects. The easier an illusion is to disbelieve, the more the modifier is worth (the "Modifier Multiplier").

• Unreal Effects Modifier •

Disbelief DN	Modifier Multiplier
0	.75
6	.5
10	.25

Since the effect is what is being tampered with, the effect value of the SFX directly controls how much the modifier can be worth.

Start with the current effect value, determined way back in "1: Effect Value." Then, when you decide how hard it is for a character to disbelieve the illusion, multiply the effect value by the "Modifier Multiplier." Round up. The resulting value is the amount you may reduce the Current Modified DN and/or FV by.

For example, if you have a super-science ray gun that shoots a beam with a damage value of 30, but it is an illusionary effect with a Disbelief DN of 0, you multiply 30 by the Modifier Multiple of .75. for a result of 22.5 (rounds up to 23). If the Current DN is 26 and the FV is 14, you could reduce either or both by a total of twenty-three points — say, make the DN 9 and the FV 8 (provided you stayed within the rules for not cutting the DN or FV below half and the total of DN and FV was at least equal to the Minimum SFX Value).

The guidelines for disbelief are as follows:

• Any player character can disbelieve at any time he sees a special effect occur *but*, if the special effect was used during a conflict round, this counts as an *action*.

• Gamemaster characters should only disbelieve when the gamemaster thinks it is appropriate, or when the character using the SFX is using it quite often (and effectively).

• When a character disbelieves, he generates an Intellect total. If the total is equal to or higher than the Disbelief DN, he is successful. The SFX has *no* affect on him whatsoever — it does not disappear, but any effects it had do not apply to him.

• If a character is encouraged to disbelieve by another character who has successfully disbelieved (and who he trusts or who can *persuade* him), he gains +4 to his Intellect total.

• A character who has disbelieved a special effect will not believe in the effect later if it comes from the same source in the same way (i.e., if the character disbelieves the effect of a particular ray gun, that ray gun will never be effective against him again, but he may or may not believe in other ray guns).

• The character who uses or creates the special effect *knows* it is an illusion and can *never* be affected by its effect.

• The gamemaster can, and should, apply DN modifiers to the Disbelief DN based on how believable (or ridiculous) the SFX seems to be. In a world where magic spells are common, disbelieving a fireball should be much harder than disbelieving the effects of a ray gun.

• In the event a character takes damage or suffers some sort of debilitating effect from an illusion that would, logically, disappear after he disbelieves the illusion, it does. For example, if a character falls into a "trap" and takes damage from falling, and then finds out the whole pit was an illusion, he'll be healthy. But, a character who is "killed" by an illusion is dead unless another character, who does not believe the illusion can, first, perform a *first aid* or *medicine* total equal to 18 and then, second, help him disbelieve the illusion. This has to be done within a number of hours equal to the character's Intellect attribute — otherwise, he slips into an irreversible coma and dies.

Unreal effects work best for magic and psionics. Super-science is somewhat appropriate, but illusionary miracles are a contradiction in terms. Some special effects should not be used with "unreal effects." Generally, only those that affect a character's perceptions or his abilities (or attack him) should be allowed. It is up to the gamemaster.

• Magister Mike: Unreal Effects •

While Mike isn't crazy about his totals, he is still close to his minimums. He decides to keep his spell "real" and skips this step.

Unreal Effects: Not used
DN: 16 (unchanged)
Current Modified FV: 19 (unchanged)

25: Totalling Up

Now, just record your DN and FV.

"On the Fly"

Theoretically, anyone with a special effects skill can sit down, in the middle of an adventure, and come up with a special effect whenever he wants. This is called "on the fly" SFX creation — which usually leads to "on the fly" SFX casting.

Can't figure out who the murderer is? Well, just come up with a "lie detector" special effect. Spoil the whole adventure with one or two die rolls.

Sorry. It isn't that easy.

When a player decides to come up with an "on the fly" special effect, he is doing what he is *supposed to do* — he's making the most of the game system and he is using his character's abilities to the best of *his* ability. Try not to discourage that. However, there is a penalty for doing this. Several, actually.

The Time Taken

First of all, a player who learns the SFX system can probably come up with a basic special effect in a matter of minutes. The gamemaster can review it quickly, and it can be used right away.

Well, not exactly. The *character* has to spend time working out the special effect, too. He has to experiment, do trial and error, and come up with the effect — or risk blowing himself up.

In general, if you add the SFX's Effect Value, Range Value,

Duration Value, and Speed Value together, and then divide that number by two, you can determine the base *time value* it takes the *character* to work out the whole special effect. Read this on the Value Chart to determine how long it takes for the caster to come up with his "on the fly" special effect.

Example: *A character, Joel, decides he needs to build a* super-science *flight belt so he can get off a high-flying plane where he's been trapped by two mad scientists. The player who controls Joel sits down with the Special Effects Worksheet and starts to come up with values.*

When he is done, he shows the gamemaster the special effect — a flight belt that will carry him for a duration of one hour. Joel has a mass value of 10 (100 kilograms), so the effect value of the belt will have to be at least that to lift him. He chooses an effect value of 15 — meaning it will lift him and move at a speed value of 5 (10 meters per round; uses the apportation formula — see "12: Apportation" and is 15 (effect value) - 10 (his mass)).

The Base SFX Value is 15 (the Effect Value) + 0 (the Range Value) + 0 (the Speed Value) + 18 (the Duration Value) = 32. That means it will take Joel a time value of 16 (1500 seconds, or 25 minutes) to design the blueprint for the special effect.

This time value has *nothing* to do with the Cast Time of the special effect itself — this is just the amount of time it takes for the special effect to be *designed* and laid out. So, during the adventure, the *character* will spend this amount of time constructing the "blueprint" of the special effect.

Optional Rule: Characters may decide to reduce the "blueprint time value" by rushing their projects. If so, add *one* to the final Difficulty Number or Feedback Value of the special effect for every time value they subtract from the blueprint time.

Example: *Joel will be at the Mad Scientists' fortress in under fifteen minutes. He needs to rush the blueprint out if he is going to have enough time to construct the flight belt.*

He decides to reduce the blueprint time by a value of six to a time value of 10 (100 seconds, or a minute and forty seconds). He hastily scribbles the plans and begins working on the belt immediately. He'll have to add +6 to either the DN or the FV (or a combination of both) afterwards.

The "On the Fly" Penalty

In addition, since "on the fly" special effects are untried and untested, they are dangerous. After the special effect has been laid out, and the entire "blueprint" (the Special Effects Worksheet) is filled out, the player must increase both the DN and the FV by *one third* (round up) just because it's so risky.

Example: *Joel's flight belt was simple to construct, once he had the blueprint:*

Component	***Modifier to SFX Value***
Effect Value 15	*+15*
Duration Value 18	*+18*
Cast Time 14	*-14*
Variable duration ("off")	*+4*
Apportation (control direction of flight)	*+3*
Focused (on belt)	*+6*
Base DN	***16***
Base FV	***16***

Optional Modifier	***Modifier to DN/FV***
Component	*-6 to DN (Jet Engine Parts)*
Component	*-4 to FV (Jet Fuel)*

So, by cobbling together spare parts found in the hold of the robot plane, Joel comes up with a rocket belt special effect with a DN of 10 and an FV of 12. But, since he rushed the blueprint, he has to add +6 to these numbers. He chooses a DN of 12 and an FV of 16.

Now, since he wants to use the flight belt on the fly, he increases each number by one third. The final DN of the super-science *experiment is 18 and the final FV is 22.*

This modifier should help control the use of "on the fly" SFX, but still make them useable.

• Magister Mike: Totalling Up •

Mike lays out his complete special effect:

Illusionary Fireball

Skill Used: Conjuration
Difficulty Number: 16
Feedback Value: 19
Effect Value: 20 (15)
Duration: 5 (ten seconds)
Range: 9 (60 meters)
Cast Time: 21 (about four hours)

This spell is used to imbed five charges of a fireball spell into a wand. The caster must concentrate for one hour, making a *willpower* total of 12 (using multi-action penalties). The caster must prepare the wand: it must be an ivory carving with runic symbols for fire on it. The wand is prepared by scraping a flint-stone across it until the stone fragments. During the flaking, incense is being burned and the wand must be held in the flame of a candle.

At the end of the cast time, the caster can then generate a *conjuration* total. If the DN is met or exceeded, the wand is imbedded with its five illusionary fireball charges. Otherwise, the spell fails.

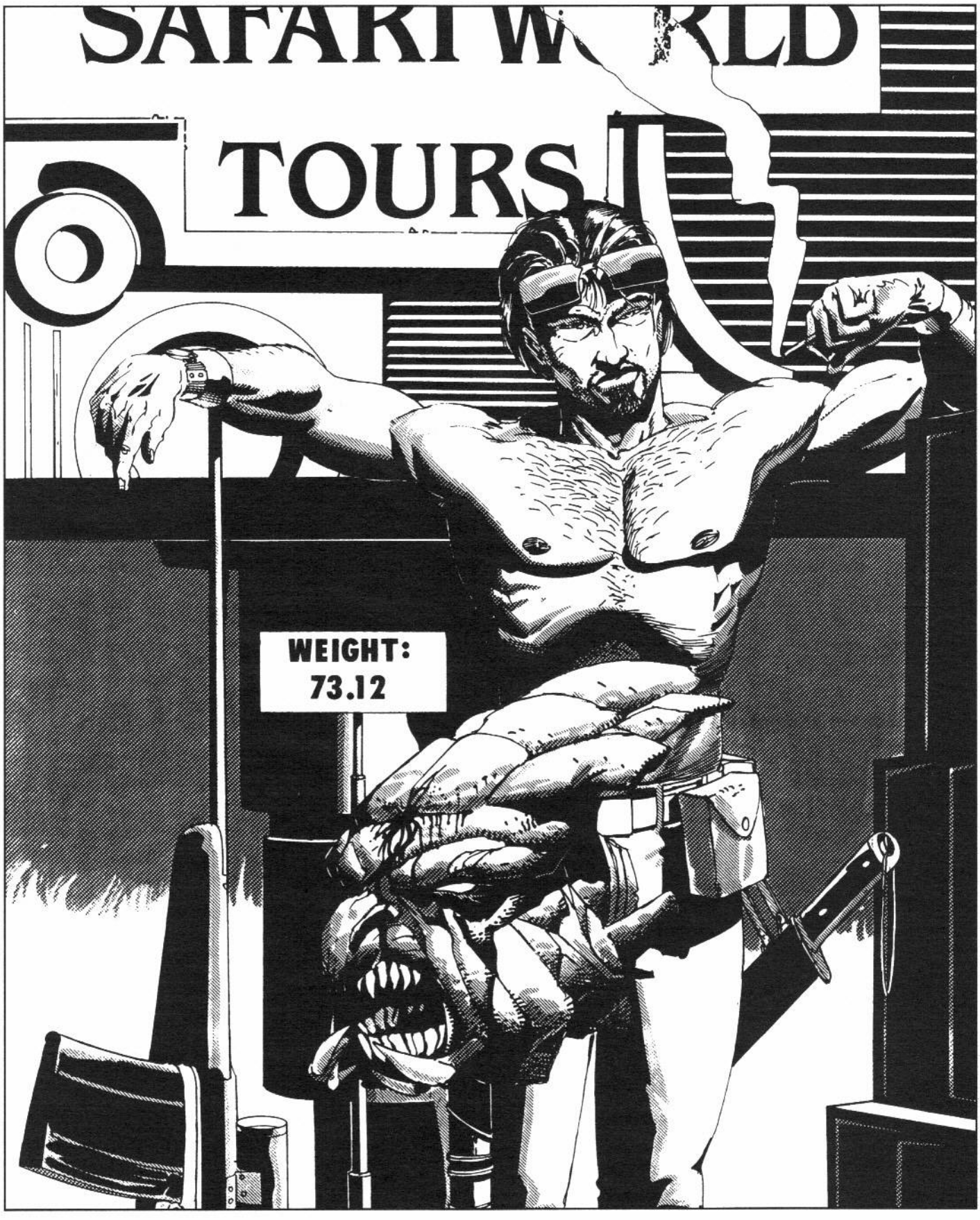
The result points (if any), are then measured against the Feedback Value (19). If the FV is higher, the caster reads the difference as result points on the Damage Column. If the result points of the *conjuration* exceed the FV, however, these excess points are added to the effect value of the spell.

The wand contains the spell until the caster performs the following trigger: he gestures in a circle around his target. He then yells "Burning Flame" (in the "fire salamander" *language* focus, which he must have one add in), and he generates an *apportation* or Intellect total (with a +2 to hit) which is his "to hit" versus his target. The fireball created is a sphere two meters in diameter.

If his "to hit" total is higher than or equal to his target's *dodge* or Agility, or if the target is within the area of effect of the spell, the effect value *minus two* is read versus the target's Toughness (with armor) on the Damage Column.

The effect value *minus four* is also measured against the Intellect or *perception* value of the target(s) affected. The result points are then read on the Push Column, with the Push Result being subtracted from the characters' sight-based *perception* totals for the duration of the spell.

The caster can turn the spell off at any time during the duration, and the spell can be maintained.



Karl Waller

CHAPTER SEVEN

• Basic Equipment •

Instead of listing specific pieces of equipment that may or may not be useful in individual *MasterBook* game settings, this chapter introduces guidelines you can use to create your own equipment and use it with the *MasterBook* system.

There are three types of equipment that will be discussed here: *weapons*, *armor*, and *adventuring gear*.

Weapons

There are two types of weapons in the *MasterBook* game system. There are *muscle-powered* weapons, that do damage according to the Strength of the user, and *static* weapons that have set damage values, regardless of the character's physical attributes.

The rules for applying a weapon's damage value are explained in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

Static Weapons

Static weapons include all firearms — pistols, rifles, submachineguns, assault rifles, machineguns, etc. — grenades, and other explosives. Most "special effects" weapons (ray guns, lasers, etc.) also have static damage values.

As described in Chapter Three, "The Rules" when one character attacks another in a combat situation, he generates a skill total "to hit" (using his Dexterity, *fire combat*, *heavy weapons* or similar skill) versus the target's Agility or *dodge* skill. If the attacker's skill total is higher than the defender's, he adds the result points of his attack to the damage value of the weapon, and reads that number versus the target's Toughness on the Damage Column.

Sample Static Damage Values

The following table provides a comparative look at some "real world" weapons and their damage values. The damage value is listed in the first column, followed by some sample "real world" weapons. In parentheses, the skill needed to use the weapon is also listed.

You can use the above chart to "gauge" weapons you might use in your game setting. For example, if you were playing in a pulp-fiction setting, you would probably allow characters to have pistols like the ".45 Automatic," the "Thompson Submachinegun," and the "12 gauge shotgun." The damage values are 19, 20, and 21. So a damage value of 20 would be "about average" for weapons in that game setting.

Different Types of Weapons

Okay, so there are a lot of weapons listed here. Why would you not simply select the weapon with the highest damage value? Well, the following explanations should help.

Pistols: Pistols are small and comparatively light, and usually easily concealable. In most game settings, most pistols will be readily available and not illegal. In fact, in most modern game settings, they will be the weapon of choice for most adventurers — carrying a .45 automatic or a .38 Special is a lot less conspicious than a submachinegun or an assault rifle.

Rifles: Single-shot rifles, such as most hunting rifles or the lever action .30-30, are also very common, and not overly regulated in most game settings. True, they attract considerable attention in cities, but most small towns in "modern" game settings don't have a problem with them — and they are perfectly acceptable in the wilderness.

Shotguns: Like rifles, shotguns are considered "civilian" weapons and are not overly regulated. They will attract a lot of attention in highly populated areas, but only if they are out in the open.

Submachineguns: Here, you are getting into the "military/criminal" area. Submachineguns are illegal in most popu-

• Static Weapon Damage Chart •

Damage Value	Real World Weapon
14	Small "holdout" pistol (.22 caliber)
15	Small pistol (.22 Long, .25 caliber)
16	Light rifle (.22 Long)
17	Luger (9mm), .38 Special
18	Ingram Submachinegun (9mm)
19	Colt .45 Revolver, .45 Auto, .357 Magnum, 9mm Uzi SMG
20	.44 Magnum Pistol, .45 Thompson SMG
21	.30-30 Lever-action Rifle, 5.56 Commando SMG, 12 gauge shotgun
22	.45-70 Winchester Rifle, AK-47 7.62 Assault Rifle, .30-06 Rifle
23	M16 .223 Assault Rifle, fragmentation grenade (*thrown weapons*)
24	7.62 HK21 Machinegun (*heavy weapons*)
25	7.62 Maremont Lightweight M60 (*heavy weapons*)
26	7.62 "Chain Gun" (*heavy weapons*)
27	GE Minigun M134 (*heavy weapons*)

lated areas, and they attract attention anywhere. They are very effective weapons for adventurers, but can often cause more trouble than they are worth.

Assault Rifles: Seldom available in many populated areas, they are heavily regulated and usually only brandished by military organizations. They are marginally more acceptable than submachineguns (since they are less concealable), but they cause the same types of problems.

Machineguns: These are truly "military only" weapons. A character with a machinegun had better keep it under wraps everywhere except the wilderness. It will cause trouble and attention. Machineguns are usually hard to get, expensive, and their ammunition is not readily available.

Grenades: These bear the same stigma as the machinegun, but they are easier to conceal. However, using or brandishing a grenade will *always* attract unwanted attention.

Ranges and Other Considerations

In addition to the social ramifications, there are differences between weapons that need to be explained. A weapon's range, its ammo use and capacity, and its various "fire options" are all things an adventurer needs to consider. The following listings describe some of these considerations, so that the gamemaster can be aware of them and adapt them into his or her game setting as applicable.

Pistols: These weapons are for close-up work. Even though most pistol rounds will travel a good distance with a high-impact velocity, most pistols have a fairly short effective range. The following table lists the five ranges, in meters, along with the modifiers "to hit." These modifiers can be added onto the pistol-using character's *fire combat* total to simulate the changes in effective range.

• Sample Pistol Ranges •

Range	Distance (in meters)	Accuracy Modifier
Point-blank	0–3	+2
Short	4–10	+1
Medium	11–25	0
Long	26–50	-1
Extreme	51–150	-3

Most pistols are good for close-up work because they are easy to aim and quick to fire. A target at close range gets less time to react. Of course, there are a wide variety of pistols — from the tiny .22 one-shot Derringer to the large .44 Magnum.

Most pistols hold between six and 15 rounds. They can always fire single-shot, and most can fire *single fire as multi*. Pistols cannot fire *full auto* — a pistol that can do that is classified as a submachinegun in these rules.

Individual *MasterBook* WorldBooks may provide more specific details on more specific pistols in the future.

Rifles: These weapons are classified as single-shot rifles (one shot at a time). They tend to have longer effective ranges than any other weapon (barring the machinegun), and they have slightly better damage values than pistols, mainly because (in general) they maintain better velocities over distance and are capable of firing larger rounds.

• Sample Rifle Ranges •

Range	Distance (in meters)	Accuracy Modifier
Point-blank	0–4	-2
Short	5–15	0
Medium	16–50	+2
Long	51–150	+1
Extreme	151–250	-1

The rifle's negative accuracy modifier at *point-blank* range comes from the fact that a moving target is better able to anticipate the direction and timing of a rifle shot than other weapons. The rifle is large and relatively bulky, so all movements will likely be gross movements. Gamemasters may wish to add +2 to the damage value of a rifle at *point-blank* range.

While some rifles only hold single bullets, most adventurers will have rifles that hold six, nine, or even 15 rounds. Usually, higher damage value rifles hold fewer rounds, since the bullets are larger.

Rifles can always fire single-shot, and many can fire *single fire as multi*. They cannot fire on *full auto*, since that is the province of assault rifles.

Shotguns: The range on a shotgun is less than that of a rifle, but shotguns are slightly better "up-close" weapons. They usually shoot a spray of pellets, rather than a single round. So, they are more accurate at shorter ranges and they do quite a bit of damage as well. However, because the spray of pellets scatters quickly, they do not have the range of regular rifles.

• Sample Shotgun Ranges •

Range	Distance (in meters)	Accuracy Modifier
Point-blank	0–4	+1
Short	5–20	+3
Medium	21–30	0
Long	31–75	-1
Extreme	76–125	-3

There are many single-shot and pump-action shotguns available. The "double-barrel" shotgun can gain the *single fire as multi* bonus by firing both barrels at once. Only pump-action or autofeed shotguns can gain this bonus. There are a few fully-automatic shotguns, but they are usually very illegal and hard to get.

Submachineguns: These weapons are for close-up work because they fire in *bursts*. A burst is a barrage of bullets, usually three to five, all being released quickly at the single pull of a trigger. Submachineguns gain their close range bonuses because of these bursts, but are then less accurate at longer ranges because a submachinegun burst has the effect of pushing the wielder's hand out of line with the target.

• Sample Submachinegun Ranges •

Range	Distance (in meters)	Accuracy Modifier
Point-blank	0–4	+4
Short	5–10	+3
Medium	11–20	0
Long	21–50	-2
Extreme	51–75	-5

While most submachineguns hold around twenty or thirty rounds, their rate of fire is so high that they unload themselves quickly. A burst will fire between one-fifth and one-sixth of the weapon's magazine, while a *full auto* shot will discharge the whole clip. Even so, a *full auto* shot, combined with the close range modifiers received by the weapon, will usually settle most differences between parties quite quickly.

If a submachinegun is capable of *burst fire as single*, the weapon should also lose its bonuses "to hit" at *point-blank* and *short* range (since it is not firing a burst).

Assault Rifles: These weapons are like a mix between submachineguns and rifles. They are larger and heavier than either type of weapon, making them bulky to carry, but also more accurate than submachinegunes over longer ranges.

• Sample Assault Rifle Ranges •

Range	Distance (in meters)	Accuracy Modifier
Point-blank	0–3	+2/-1
Short	4–15	+2/0
Medium	16–40	0/+1
Long	41–75	-2/0
Extreme	76–150	-4/-1

The first set of accuracy modifiers are applied if the assault rifle is fired using a burst of three to five rounds. The second set should be used when the weapon is fired single-shot (there are no penalties because assault rifles have selector switches). If the weapon is fired *full auto*, then the bonuses for the burst fire are added to the *full auto* bonus. The weapon may even be fired *single fire as multi*, using the second set of modifiers.

Assault rifles hold around twenty to thirty rounds. Their ammunition is usually expensive and harder to get than normal rifle ammo.

Machineguns: These are heavy weapons usually fired from a vehicle mount or a bi- or tripod. They can seldom be fired by a single character holding the weapon. As a result, they are much more accurate at longer ranges, since they are hard to swing around in a tight arc to "bring to bear" on a close, *dodging* target.

Machineguns are almost always belt or drum-fed, meaning they can hold hundreds of rounds. However, many machineguns have cyclic rates of over 500 rounds per minute. They seldom fire on anything but *full auto*, unless they are loaded with only one round (because of their long range and high damage value, they are often used by snipers).

• Sample Machinegun Ranges •

Range	Distance (in meters)	Accuracy Modifier
Point-blank	0–5	-4
Short	6–15	0
Medium	16–75	+1
Long	76–150	-1
Extreme	151–500	-2

Grenades: These are *thrown weapons* and, even though their damage values are not based on Strength, their ranges are.

Instead of having set ranges, the range a grenade can be thrown is dependent upon the thrower's Strength.

To determine the ranges a character can throw a grenade, use the following chart.

• Grenade Ranges •

Range	Distance Value
Point-blank	2
Short	Strength-4
Medium	Strength-3
Long	Strength-2
Extreme	Strength-1

These are the maximum distance values for each range. The actual ranges, in meters, can be determined when you read the "Distance Value" on the Value Chart shown in Chapter Three, "The Rules."

For example, a character with an average Strength of 8 has the following ranges:

Point-blank: 2 (0 to 2.5 meters)
Short: 4 (2.6 to 6 meters)
Medium: 5 (7–10 meters)
Long: 6 (11–15 meters)
Extreme: 7 (16–25 meters)

But grenades are even trickier than that. Even though a thrown grenade uses the *thrown weapons* skill to hit, the character using the grenade should not actually be aiming at a person but, rather, a *place*. Grenades do not, usually, explode on contact — they explode after their fuse (usually three seconds) burns up and they damage anything in a given area.

So, when throwing at a specific area, the following difficulty numbers can be used.

• Grenade "To Hit" DNs •

Range	DN
Point-blank	0
Short	5
Medium	10
Long	15
Extreme	20
Condition	**Modifier**
Character cannot directly see target area	+5
Target area is not "even ground"	+3
Target area is very hard (grenade will bounce)	+3
Target area is very soft (grenade will sink)	-3

If the grenade thrower does not hit his target, the grenade deviates in a randomly determined direction. Roll on the chart below to determine the direction of deviation.

• Grenade Deviation Chart #1 •

Die Roll (d10)	Direction
1–2	Back toward thrower
3–5	To the right
6–8	To the left
9–10	"Over" the target area (too long)

To determine how far the grenade goes in that direction, you have to use the following table.

• Grenade Deviation Chart #2 •

Range	Deviation Distance
Point-blank	1–3 meters
Short	3–5 meters
Medium	4–6 meters
Long	5–10 meters
Extreme	6–15 meters

The gamemaster can determine the actual distance of deviation by judging how badly the throw missed its target, or by randomly generating the number of meters using a system of his or her own creation.

The final "special rule" for grenade use is the *blast radius*. Grenades explode, usually sending out shrapnel in a spherical area. This is what makes them so dangerous — if you are within the area, you will probably take damage.

The following chart has a sample blast radius area of effect, along with modifiers to the damage value.

• Grenade Blast Radius •

Distance from Target Area (in meters)	Damage Modifier
0–1 meter	+2
2–3 meters	0
4–6 meters	-2

Now, the only way a character can get out of the blast radius of a grenade is to *dodge* as an *active defense*. Technically, normal movement might do it, but this is a combat situation — the grenade thrower is timing his throw to catch a target in the blast radius.

Like the thrower, the target has to beat a DN to get out of the blast radius of a grenade. The base DN to get out of the blast radius of a grenade is 12, but the character has to get out of all three "zones" of the blast radius.

If a character gets a 12 or higher with his *active dodge* or Agility total, then he moves one blast radius "zone" away from "ground zero." So, if a character is either zero or one meter away from the target area of the grenade and he rolls a twelve exactly, he moves to 2-3 meters away and takes less damage from the grenade.

For every success level above *minimal* the character achieves, he moves one more blast radius "zone" away. Characters who are right on the edge of the grenade's blast radius (4-6 meters from the target area) only have to generate *minimal* successes to get out of damage completely, while those within 0-1 meters have to get at least two success levels to take no damage at all.

Muscle-Powered Weapons

Muscle-powered weapons include all those that are dependent upon a character's Strength to cause damage. Instead of having their damage values listed as a single number, muscle-powered weapons have damage *adds*. These adds are combined with a character's Strength value to get the actual damage value of a weapon (much like skill adds are combined with the characters' Attribute values to achieve skill totals).

For example, a muscle-powered weapon might have a damage value listed as "STR+6." That means the character's Strength, plus six, is the damage value of the weapon. This may then be modified by the result points of an attack (as explained in Chapter Three, "The Rules").

But muscle-powered weapons also have one more value listed. They have a *maximum base damage value* or "MAX." For example, a weapon with a damage value of "STR+6/17" has six damage adds and a maximum base damage value of 17.

What this value is used for is simple. Some weapons, being stronger or more effective than others, have a higher *capability* for causing damage — even if their damage adds are initially lower. For example, a small knife might have a damage value of "STR+2/19." A gamemaster might also give two damage adds to a broken bottle — but the bottle would have a damage value (if it were written up) of something like "STR+2/14." The number following the slash would be the maximum base damage of the weapon.

If you add the damage adds to the wielding character's Strength and get a number higher than the maximum base damage of the weapon, then the MAX is the damage value of the weapon. So, if a character with a Strength of 13 were wielding the broken bottle mentioned above, the +2 would

push the damage value over the max of 14 — so the damage value would actually *be* 14.

The reason for this is balance. In most campaigns, characters will have Strength values between 5 and 13, but, in a few, the Strength values will go higher (due to special abilities, special effects, etc.). Is it realistic that a character with a Strength of, say, 16 (more than three times the maximum Strength of a human) should gain a damage bonus of +2 from a broken bottle? Probably not. The character's fist is more dangerous than the broken bottle, so there is no real reason for the character to use that weapon.

• Maximum Base Damage, • the Damage Cap, and Non-lethal Weapons

If you are using the Damage Cap or Non-lethal Weapons rules, you have even more reason for understanding the maximum base damage value. A character with a high Strength might choose to use a weapon the gamemaster considers "lethal" (like a broken bottle) rather than his fists if the non-lethal weapons rules are in play. Otherwise, the first wound he would cause with his bare hands would turn into shock damage instead. With the broken bottle or small knife (or a similar, weapon), he does not have that problem.

If you are using the damage cap, the maximum number of result points is still equal to double the weapon's damage value. So, if a character with a Strength of 8 is using a weapon with a damage value of STR+4, his damage value is 12 and the maximum number of result points he can benefit from is also 12 — meaning he can't do more than 24 points of damage with the weapon.

• Muscle-Powered Melee Weapons • Damage Chart

Damage Adds	Real World Weapon
STR+1	Small rock*, pocketknife
STR+2	Big rock*, small knife
STR+3	Blackjack*, knife
STR+4	Dagger or combat knife, small club*, brass knuckles*
STR+5	Short sword, baseball bat*, billyclub*, nunchakas*
STR+6	Quarterstaff*, rapier, mace
STR+7	Light sword, spiked mace, war-hammer, hand-spear
STR+8	Broadsword, hand-axe
STR+9	Morning-star, pike
STR+10	Two-handed sword, battle-axe

*These weapons would be considered "non-lethal" if you are using that optional rule. In that case, you may wish to increase the damage adds of these weapons by one or two points.

Melee Weapons

Most muscle-powered weapons are melee weapons. Swords, knives, brass knuckles, clubs, etc. are all examples. The following chart lists a range of damage adds with some real world examples you can use for creating your own weapons. All of these weapons are used with the *melee weapons* skill or Agility (or, in some cases, a *martial arts* focus).

Other Characteristics: Many of these weapons have other characteristics that might be important to a gamemaster. For example, a battle-axe is generally more effective against a man in armor, while a combat knife is much more "wieldy" against a foe than, say, a baseball bat. If you wish to add pluses or minuses to a character's skill value when he uses some of these weapons, go ahead — just remember, though, that if you add bonuses "to hit," you are also adding to the number of result points the character will achieve on a hit — so you may wish to subtract that number of points afterwards.

MAX Damage Values: For most melee weapons, the MAX damage value range from around 15 to 25. Weapons that are more improvised than anything else (like rocks or pocketknives) have MAX values between 15 and 18. Smaller weapons or those not usually used as weapons (like daggers or baseball bats) MAX out around 17 to 20. MAXs of 20+ are usually reserved for heavier, larger weapons like axes, swords, or spears.

In most campaigns, melee weapons that are intended to *be* weapons should not MAX out if added to 13 — the maximum Strength of a normal character. So, the gamemaster doesn't have to worry about this all that much. In campaigns where

• Muscle-Powered Ranged Weapons • Damage Chart

Damage Adds	Real World Weapon
STR+1	Small rock* *(thrown weapons)*, combat dart *(thrown weapons)*
STR+2	Big rock* *(thrown weapons)*, small throwing knife *(thrown weapons)*, throwing stars *(thrown weapons)*
STR+3	Large throwing knife *(thrown weapons)*
STR+4	Small slingshot* *(missile weapons)*, hunting bommerang* *(thrown weapons)*
STR+5	Sling* *(missile weapons)*, high-powered slingshot *(missile weapons)*, short bow* *(missile weapons)*
STR+6	Medium bow *(missile weapons)*, throwing axe *(thrown weapons)*, bolo* *(thrown weapons)*
STR+7	Composite bow *(missile weapons)*
STR+8	Long bow *(missile weapons)*
STR+9	Light crossbow *(missile weapons)*
STR+10	Heavy crossbow *(missile weapons)*
STR+11	Compound bow *(missile weapons)*

*These weapons would be considered "non-lethal" if you are using that optional rule. In that case, you may wish to increase the damage adds of these weapons by one or two points.

• Sample Missile Weapon Ranges •

Weapon Type	Ranges (Accuracy Modifier) Point-blank	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme
Throwing knives /stars/darts	0–2 (+2)	3–5 (0)	6–8 (-2)	9–15 (-4)	—
Slings	0–3 (-3)	4–6 (0)	7–15 (0)	16–20 (-2)	21–30 (-4)
Small bows	0–3 (-1)	4–10 (0)	11–20 (+1)	21–30 (0)	31–50 (-2)
Large bows	0–3 (-2)	4–15 (0)	16–30 (0)	31–50 (-1)	51–100 (-2)
Crossbows	0–4 (+2)	5–10 (+1)	11–20 (0)	21–40 (-1)	41–75 (-2)

characters have Strength values higher than 13 (say, in high fantasy games), this becomes a consideration. No melee weapon, unless produced or enhanced by a special effect, should have a MAX higher than 30.

Ranged Weapons

These are mostly primitive weapons that are used by characters who do not have access to *fire combat* weapons. They can, however, be very effective. The skills necessary to use them are either *thrown weapons* or *missile weapons*, or a character might use Agility (or, in some cases, certain *martial arts* focuses).

Range: Thrown weapons generally have ranges that can be figured out using the "Grenade Ranges" chart (above), with modifiers for mass and aerodynamics (a large rock would have a shorter range than a spear, for example, while a throwing knife would have an even shorter range, even though it is lighter, because of the mechanics involved).

Weapons that rely on hinges or other characteristics for their ranges (like bows and slings) have more "set" ranges. Use the following chart to determine some sample ranges for these types of weapons.

In reality, such weapons are often customized to a wielder's Strength to account for range as well as damage value. But the formulas would be a little more complex than necessary to arrive at similar numbers.

Armor

With all the weapons likely to be used in a roleplaying game, it's important to have some protection. Armor is that protection.

In most cases, armor is heavy material worn over, or as, clothing. Armor tends to be bulkier and heavier the more effective it is — though higher technologies might produce lightweight, flexible, but highly protective armor.

There are two characteristics you, as the gamemaster, need to worry about with armor: the *Toughness adds* and the *maximum base armor value* or "MAX."

Toughness Adds

Every Toughness add a piece of armor has adds to the character's own inherent Toughness. If a character has a Toughness value of 10 and armor with "+3" Toughness adds, he has a Toughness with armor, or armor value, of 13.

This armor value is the only thing that stands between a weapon's damage value and the character's own life. When a character is hit by an attack, the damage value of the attack, plus a number of result points, is measured against the character's Toughness (with armor). The result points, if any, are read on the Damage Column. So a high armor value will protect the character from damage.

The following list shows some Toughness adds along with some sample real world armor types. You can use this when creating your own types of armor.

• Armor Add Chart •

Armor Adds	Real World Armor
TOU+1	Heavy "adventurer's clothing"
TOU+2	Heavy furs
TOU+3	Heavy padding or metallic woven fabric
TOU+4	Leather armor
TOU+5	Leather armor with metal links
TOU+6	Chain link armor, "light" bulletproof armor
TOU+7	Scale link armor, standard bulletproof armor, light kevlar
TOU+8	Plate & chain armor, flak jacket
TOU+9	Plate mail, standard kevlar
TOU+10	Plate armor, kevlar ceramic

Mass & Encumbrance

In most cases, any armor with adds over +3 will be encumbering, heavy, and hot. Normally, a character wearing heavy armor should have to take modifiers to many Agility (and some Dexterity) actions, and probably incur *fatigue* penalties (any time a *fatigue* result occurs that affects the character, apply one or two extra shock points).

Of course, the penalties for high-tech armor should be a little less than for low-tech armor. A full suit of plate armor might lower a character's Agility by -4 for certain actions, while a full suit of kevlar ceramic might only cause a modifier of -1 or -2.

Note, however, that any modifiers applied to Agility should *seldom* be applied to the character's *dodge* or *parry* skills. Even though the character should be easier to hit, that would negate much of the effectiveness of the armor. And, as we know, armor is not generally useless.

Think of it this way: even though a character wearing a body suit of chain mail should easier to hit than a character wearing no armor at all (if they both have the same defensive characteristics), some attacks that should have hit the armored

character can be considered "glancing" or they hit the armor, without affecting the character. This rationalization makes armor work in the game system.

Armor Placement

Not all armor necessarily covers all of the body. If a character only wants to wear "a little armor" (say, a bulletproof vest), the gamemaster should come up with a simple mechanic for deciding whether a particular attack hits the armor or the character.

The optional rules for "Hit Location" (listed in Chapter Three, "The Rules") can help, and the gamemaster should be able to come up with a random table that makes the determination easy.

However, tell the player that, the less armor he wears, the less penalties he'll get against his Agility — but the less protection he'll get as well. It's not a bad idea to go into battle wearing a helmet, but only an occasional shot is going to hit that small area.

Maximum Base Armor Value

The maximum base armor value (or "MAX") is the maximum Toughness with armor value a character may have wearing that type of armor. It works in just the same way as the "MAX" for muscle-powered weapons (above).

In many cases, the MAX won't matter. But, in campaigns where characters have Toughness values higher than the normal maximum (13), it will. Throwing heavy clothing on a character with a Toughness value of 15 (more than twice the human maximum) won't help that much — and putting plate armor on a character whose Toughness is the equivalent of a battleship hull (say, a 35), would be useless.

But characters may opt, if allowed, to wear more than one type of armor at a time. For instance, if a character in a high fantasy campaign normally wore heavy "adventurer's clothing" (armor value +1/15) and then put on full plate armor for a joust (armor value +10/25), what is the character's armor value if he has a natural Toughness of 11?

It's simple: build the armor adds from the *inside out*. The armor closest to the characters' skin is added in first. If that does not "max out" the armor, or even if it does, then add in the next layer of armor, and so on. So, the character in the above example would have a total Toughness with armor of 11+1+10=22.

Now, say, a mage throws a spell on the character that increases his Toughness to 16. The character still has the heavy clothing on, but, since the maximum armor value of that type of armor is 15, it is useless. Next comes the full plate. The armor value is TOU+10/25. The character's Toughness is now 16, and 16+10=26. But, since that would "max out" the armor value, the character's new Toughness with armor is 25.

Determining the MAX

For low-tech armor, the MAX is usually between 15 and 18 for "heavy clothing" (effectively — like hides or padding), and between 19 and 25 for "real" armor. High tech armor usually begins to MAX at around 17 and doesn't end until around 30. Again, unless you are playing in a campaign where a character's Toughness might exceed 13, it just won't matter that much.

Adventuring Gear

This section will be the shortest of all, even though it covers the broadest ground. There are, basically, two types of adventuring gear you need to worry about. The first is *general* gear — gear that is used in a very general way, seldom requiring a skill total (like a lantern, survival rations, a watch, or whatever). The second is *enhancement* gear — equipment that helps a character do something better using his skills or attributes.

General Gear

As gamemaster, you simply have to determine, using common sense, how much of this gear is important to your campaign, how much it will cost, and how much it will affect play. This is a determination only you can make for yourself. Gamemasters who want to run very realistic games (even in fantastical settings) will want to create lists of equipment with prices, weights, and availability notations. Other gamemasters, who don't care that much how hard it is for their player characters to get a flashlight or a meal when they need one, will take things on a case-by-case basis.

For those of you who are of the former type, we recommend picking up a catalogue of "wilderness gear" from an outdoors shop. That will have complete descriptions and illustrations of all sorts of equipment, along with real world prices. You can then make conversions to your world as you see fit. Or, you can take a look in our *MasterBook* WorldBook supplements. They will have world-specific gear you can use.

Enhancement Gear

As far as finding examples of enhancement gear, we recommend the same guidelines used for general gear, with one exception: look over Chapter Four, "Skills and Skill Use," *first*.

In this chapter, you have skills and skill use guidelines that should put you onto some ideas about what sort of gear might enhance character abilities. For example, under the skill description of *climbing*, there are sample difficulty numbers you can set. Can you think of anything that would make a particular *climbing* skill check easier?

Well, the "ladder" condition actually makes the DN of a climb 0. If a character were climbing up a smooth stone wall, the base DN would be 21. If he had a ladder to prop up against that wall, the DN would be zero.

What if he had climbing picks, rope, and/or a grappling hook? How would that modify the DN or the skill use?

Guidelines for Enhancement Gear Modifiers

In general, you can use the modifiers rules in Chapter Three, "The Rules," for setting these up. Or you can just remember — every +2 you apply to a character's skill total *doubles* his ability to perform an action. Some gear should do this or more — a grappling hook and rope would make a steep climb much easier — while other gear might be necessary just to make a skill attempt. Can you imagine picking a door lock with no equipment (no lock picks, no hairpin, no credit card)?

It isn't a bad idea to encourage characters to equip themselves by being fairly generous with modifiers. This makes them think and plan. Of course, you don't want them carrying around every piece of equipment they think they might ever need (that's not realistic), but if you get them to start thinking, "What will I need on this adventure?" then you're doing your job.

Equipment Availability

In Chapter Two, "Background Generation," the Equipment Advantages mention "Availability Codes." Well, since this chapter is not a listing of pieces of equipment but, rather, guidelines for creating your own equipment, you have to have some way to create these codes as well, right?

Using the Codes

Equipment is rated by codes, which run from zero on up. These codes are not exact, but rather, the specific code for a specific piece of equiment should be rated based on how legal the weapon is, how closely the laws are enforced, the relative cost of the equipment and how likely anybody in a certain area is likely to have that equipment.

In other words, while a handgun might have an availability code of 1 in the United States (moderate cost and legal for most "average" citizens), the availability code might go up to two or three in places where handguns are strictly regulated, and handguns might be impossible to get in certain settings (such as fantasy campaigns).

Therefore, the gamemaster should set availability codes to reflect the nature of the game setting, instead of having "hard and fast" codes from a series of charts.

After the code description is a "Difficulty Number." This DN corresponds to the *streetwise*, *survival*, or other skill level a character would normally have to achieve to "find" the equipment in an average area. For example, if a character wanted to track down an automatic weapon (AC 1) in a typical area, he might have to generate a *streetwise* total of 10.

Availability Code 0

Equipment at this level of availability is stuff that anyone might have — it is either so inexpensive as to have a negligible cost (like a pack of gum or a pen) or "everyone" has it (like clothing). Generally, this type of equipment would cost, in the real world, far less than $100. Characters should seldom, if ever, have a hard time laying their hands on this type of equipment.

As far as weapons go, knives, most missile weapons, and "civilian" guns fit into this category (though they are often a little more expensive than listed here).

Difficulty Number: 3

Availability Code 1

This pertains directly to the "Equipment (CI)" Advantage, but it translates to further roleplaying as well. The piece of equipment is commonly available, but requires a little special effort to obtain. The character might have to go to a specialty store, or make his own, or get someone to make the equipment for him — but the cost and effort should be relatively low.

For example, a high-caliber pistol or semi-automatic rifle in most real world settings would fit into this category; not impossible to get, but requiring some effort.

Difficulty Number: 10

Availability Code 2

At AC 2, the equipment is much harder to get. Weapons are usually "military-only," while miscellaneous gear fits into the "rare and expensive" category. A box of grenades would probably be at this level, as would an x-ray machine — everyone knows where to find them, but actually *obtaining* them can be tough.

Difficulty Number: 15

Availability Code 3

This equipment is seldom available to anyone — except those with really good connections or Equipment (CIII). A fully-automatic machinegun would be a good example of an AC 3 weapon, while a laser-surgery apparatus could be an AC 3 piece of "gear."

This code level can also be used to describe "special effects" gear — magical, super-scientific, or whatever — at a fairly low-key level. This all depends on how prevalent this type of thing is in the game setting. If everyone has a magic watch, for example, then that would be AC 0 — but if a gun that shoots laser beams is as uncommon in the game setting as it is in the real world, then AC 3 just about describes it.

Difficulty Number: 20

Availability Code 4

This equipment is pretty much unavailable to anyone — because it is either one-of-a-kind or as close as doesn't matter. In the real world, a new weapon that is unknown to the public and ninety-nine percent of the military might fit into such a category. Cures for incurable diseases or ailments could also fit.

Difficulty Number: 30+

Higher Codes

While higher Availability Codes shouldn't be necessary, you can feel free to expand upon them if you wish. Truly impossible equipment could come in at AC 5 or higher, though you might have to worry about disrupting your game setting entirely if you mess around with this type of thing too often. Remember, these are just basic *guidelines* that you can use to structure your worlds.

CHAPTER EIGHT

• Gamemastering *MasterBook* •

Each of the *MasterBook* WorldBooks contains information for gamemastering using the *MasterBook* system in a specific game setting. But there are several general guidelines beginning and veteran gamemasters can keep in mind when they are using the *MasterBook* system in any game setting — one created by a WorldBook or by their own imaginations.

World Creation

In all honesty, this is the easiest part of gamemastering. Generally, *MasterBook* gamemasters will use game settings, or "worlds," created for use with *MasterBook*. But if you want to create your own world, it isn't all that hard. You just have to answer a few questions for yourself.

What Genre is the Game Setting?

This book has mentioned several different game settings in previous chapters, using different genre names as referents. If and when you create your own *MasterBook* game setting, you will need to come up with a basic "statement of genre" that will allow your players to conceptualize your game setting easily. Here are some examples of game settings with their gamemaster-related definitions.

Pulp Fiction

A fast-paced, action-oriented game setting, the pulp fiction genre emphasizes excitement over complicated plot development, mission-oriented adventures over long puzzle-solvers. Mysteries and suspense are often built into the pulp fiction game setting, but action is the key.

High Fantasy

Myths, legends, and magic are the keywords in a high fantasy campaign. Often, the characters are larger-than-life heroes who are battling an even larger foe. Good and evil are living entities, and quests are popular adventure hooks.

Low Fantasy

A low fantasy world is much more "grey" than high fantasy. Magic is mysterious, and monsters are dangerous and often few and far between. Not everyone in the world is either good or evil, and the player characters may be of mixed morality.

Real World

The game setting is not far removed from the real world. Often, however, there is at least one change — maybe magic has suddenly become possible, or aliens have invaded, or the time period has changed from the 20th century to somewhere in the past. Characters are usually normal people.

Science Fiction

Usually set in the future, the science fiction genre employs psionics and high tech devices instead of magic or miracles. Aliens, mutants, and power-hungry humans are the enemies. Often, the theme is the "lone dissident" or the "survivor" against the "oppressors." Guess which one the player characters are.

Your Own Game Setting

You can always make up your own setting. The following guidelines will help you do this, quickly and easily.

Establish a Tone: Even more important than the "facts" of game setting creation is establishing the *tone*. For example, it doesn't matter that much in a pulp fiction game setting whether the historical period chosen is 1930s Earth, the 1990s, or the 1820s — the important thing is the *feel*. In a pulp fiction game, things move fast, characters are either heroes or they are villains, and all other considerations can be approximated.

You'll also have to decide how "realistic" the world is. Most science fiction and real world game settings are based in fact and scientific theory — any "impossible" characteristics (like ray guns or mutants) have to be established at least a little bit in fact. But other game settings often treat the impossible as stock-in-trade. Does it really matter to you, as the gamemaster, if a pulp adventurer is able to escape his arch-enemy's death trap by "reversing the polarity?" Or does it make a difference if a twenty-meter tall giant is stomping villages in your low fantasy game setting, when everyone *knows* that violates all scale-to-mass logic ever established?

If so, now's the time to decide. If not, then you can wing it as it comes up.

The best way to establish a tone for your genre is to tell the players a story — or write one down. It doesn't have to be a long one, or even a complete one — you just have to get them "involved" in the tone of the game setting. The story should reflect the general attitudes of people in the game setting, and the general tone of the genre.

If you feel that this story does not do justice to your game setting, don't worry about it — the important thing is to get the "tone" across. If you can, tell your players what books they can read or what movies they can watch that have the same tone of your game setting — there should be something out there that is at least a close fit.

Establish the Limits: Players will assume that their players can do or know anything that they can do or know in the real world unless you specifically state otherwise. You will have to establish some limits to your game setting.

The three main limits you will have to impose are fairly easy

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to understand: technology, special effects, and world awareness.

Technology is not only the level of technology (which could be described as 20th century tech, "Middle Ages" tech, or "Renaissance" tech, or any number of other catch-phrases), but the *kind* of technology. For example, in a high fantasy setting, you might describe the technology level as roughly equivalent to the Middle Ages of Earth — swords and armor are the best personal weapons, bows exist, and catapults, but gunpowder hasn't been invented yet — but you might also provide exceptions or "replacement tech."

For example, you might state that, since this is a high fantasy setting, many people use magic and/or miracles to perform many tasks done today with technology. There might be magic-driven cars, certain herbs might work as well as or better than modern medicines, and there might be other interesting additions. It's up to you. You have to define what is available and how common it is.

Next, the special effects limitations should be easy to figure out. What, if any, special effects are allowable? In a high fantasy setting, characters should probably be able to use magic and miracles, though super-science and psionics would probably be right out. You have to judge how easy these things are to use, though — Chapter Six, "Special Effects" has some recommendations (you can increase or decrease the DN and FV of spells, miracles, psionics, or super-science attempts to make some easier to use than others) — if they are possible at all.

Finally, world awareness is a pretty big deal. In many games, the world is spread out before the characters like a big menu — they can go where they choose and try to do what they want because everything has been presented to them at once. In some cases, this is fine — in a real world setting, where much of the world has been explored, the characters should be able to go to the local library and pick up a book on virtually anywhere in the world, complete with maps. But in many other settings, the characters will have a comparatively narrow view of what their world is like.

This latter type of world awareness is usually best — for experienced gamemasters and beginners alike. First of all, anything the players don't know that you haven't decided on yet, you don't have to tell them. "What's on the other side of those mountains?" they might ask. In a high fantasy world, you might respond, "there be dragons ..." — or ogres or giants or whatever — because nobody knows until they go there.

This can even work in science fiction game settings, though usually on a larger scale. Say the characters have a space ship and can "planet hop" anytime they want. They want a new adventure, so they decide to make for the next star over — what's there? "No one has ever gone there and returned," you answer mysteriously. Then you start coming up with something.

It is important that the players and their characters have *some* sort of world awareness, though. If at all possible, you should sit down with each player individually, while he or she is creating a character, and talk about the world with them — from the character's perspective. Some characters might know more, or less, about the game setting, while others will have different information.

Establish a History: This is the most involved part of creating your own game setting. You have to create a history for your world. You've gone through what it's like — how did it come to be that way?

This is the big advantage real world, most pulp fiction, and many science fiction game settings have over other game settings. "The world was the same until *<fill in the blank>*, and then everything changed" works very well. Maybe "the aliens landed," or "the plague was released," or "you realized you were different" — whatever fits your story.

For other worlds — such as low or high fantasy worlds — you'll have to establish some sort of history you make up yourself. But don't worry — it isn't all that hard. You can use Earth historical texts to get a "feel" for what sorts of things you need to establish, and you can always use "world awareness" to cheat a little — every character might not have taken a course in world history; he or she just needs to know immediate history and "big happenings" at the beginning.

Then, you start making up things as you go. Contradictions, though they should be few, can be explained away as "misinterpretations of history," or "errors in recording events" — as long as there aren't too many of them, they should actually *add* verisimilitude to your histories.

The best way to develop a history as the campaign begins to run is to have at least one player keep a "log" of events and adventure happenings that you can look over later. It doesn't have to be really complete — even notes are fine. But you can then write up those notes in your spare time and add things to them — past, present, and future — as you think the characters would learn them. Thus, your history begins to grow from the inside out.

What Sorts of Adventures will be Played?

The genre definition should help define this — in pulp fiction game settings, action-oriented adventures are most appropriate; in science fiction game settings, high-tech conflicts and exploration are probably key. But that's only a beginning; you need to customize your types of adventures to make the world your own.

Often, at the beginning of a campaign, you won't know what sorts of adventures you want to run. If you don't, then start off with whatever seems easiest. Try to stick to short adventures (see "Adventure Creation," below), and keep things simple. Don't confuse your players with a complicated adventure or plot while they are trying to learn a new game setting as well.

But, soon, you'll start to get a feel for two things: first, what types of adventures you think best work in your game setting and, second, what types of adventures you and your player group enjoy the most.

The latter consideration is key. It is more important that you and your players enjoy the adventures you run than anything else. For example, perhaps you are running a science fiction game setting, and your adventures begin by being dark, grim, and dangerous — characters die at a rate of one every adventure or so, and everyone seems "out to get" the player characters.

But, despite all this "grim and grittiness," one player creates, say, an heroic character with a naive heart-of-gold. The character acts as if he were in a pulp fiction setting — everything is good versus evil, and he is taking chances and performing actions that are really dangerous and should be impossible. But he's getting away with it.

Do you crack down on this character, possibly disillusioning him or killing him outright? Maybe ... if he is disrupting the campaign to the point where no one is enjoying themselves. But if he is popular or interesting or even just plain fun to have around, then encourage him. He's "bucking the system." Soon, you may have other players trying to play "different" characters — instead of the dangerous space marine character Joe used to play, he's now running the "funny alien" guy he created when he was messing around; and Debbie has stopped playing her "hard-bitten space captain" and is, instead, trying her hand at a "space vixen" who uses her wits and her charms instead of a gun. Maybe the campaign shifts from "realistic, hard science fiction" to "unrealistic space opera."

Or maybe not. It doesn't matter, as long as everyone is having fun.

Is There an Overall Goal?

Are the player characters there for a *purpose?* Are they fighting a war, seeking out a magic artifact, or fleeing from a ruthless tyrant? Is there some sort of "shadow" on the game setting that will affect every player character — perhaps every *character*, gamemaster and player alike — or not?

There are positives and negatives to both ways of running a game setting. If there is some sort of overall conflict or overshadowing element to a campaign, it gives everyone — both players and the gamemaster — a focus they can always latch onto.

But it also reduces freedom of choice and the importance of the characters' own interests. If the main "story factor" of the game setting is that the characters are fighting aliens from another dimension, for example, then nearly every adventure will have to have the aliens as at least a backdrop — and, almost always, a main focus. If the players or the gamemaster ever get tired of this, the game setting has to be adjusted. Otherwise, it gets dull.

If you feel that you can introduce these elements and then work through them easily, then go ahead. If the characters are fighting a war or searching for an artifact or doing something else that will culminate in a climax eventually, start planning for that climax soon — and plan for what to do next as well.

Adventure Creation

The next step is to actually create these adventures we've been talking about. Again, without having a specific game setting described, outlining hard rules for adventure creation would be somewhat pointless. But there are several guidelines you can use when creating adventures in any game setting.

The Adventure Breakdown

MasterBook adventures are organized like works of fiction — because that's what they really are. They are plays, movies, novels, poems, etc. that your characters act out. You, as the gamemaster, are the writer/director, and you play all the "secondary" or "supporting" characters. The players are the actors playing the main characters — and they do a little "script doctoring" of their own at times.

That's the main difference between an adventure and a fiction story. Where an author has (theoretically) complete control over where the characters in her work of fiction go and what they do, you don't have that control — nor would you want it. Instead, you introduce stories, scenes, and situations that the players then have to "act through" to complete the story. Sometimes, they go off in different directions than you had planned. Other times, they stick to the storyline you plotted out. Either way, the adventure can be fun, involving everyone.

The following "Table of Organization" can be used to structure any *MasterBook* adventure, with the guidelines listed below.

• Table of Organization •

The Introduction
The Act(s)
  The Scene(s)
    The Event(s)
The Climax
The Resolution

The Introduction

Every adventure should begin with an Introduction. There are two types of Introductions: the *Involved Introduction* and the *Third-Person Introduction*. As a gamemaster, you should try both occasionally.

In an Involved Introduction, the player characters participate in the "set-up" of the adventure story. They might be sitting around in their local bar, tavern, inn, space station, or other hang-out and have some gamemaster character come up and hire them for a job. They might be walking down the street and be attacked by a group of unknown maniacs. They could even be out looking for adventure, and trying to cause trouble.

The Third-Person Introduction does not involve the player characters in any way other than they might hear about something happening to someone else and choose to act on it. The Third-Person Introduction usually tells the beginning of a story from another perspective, perhaps introducing clues or conflicts that the player characters can investigate.

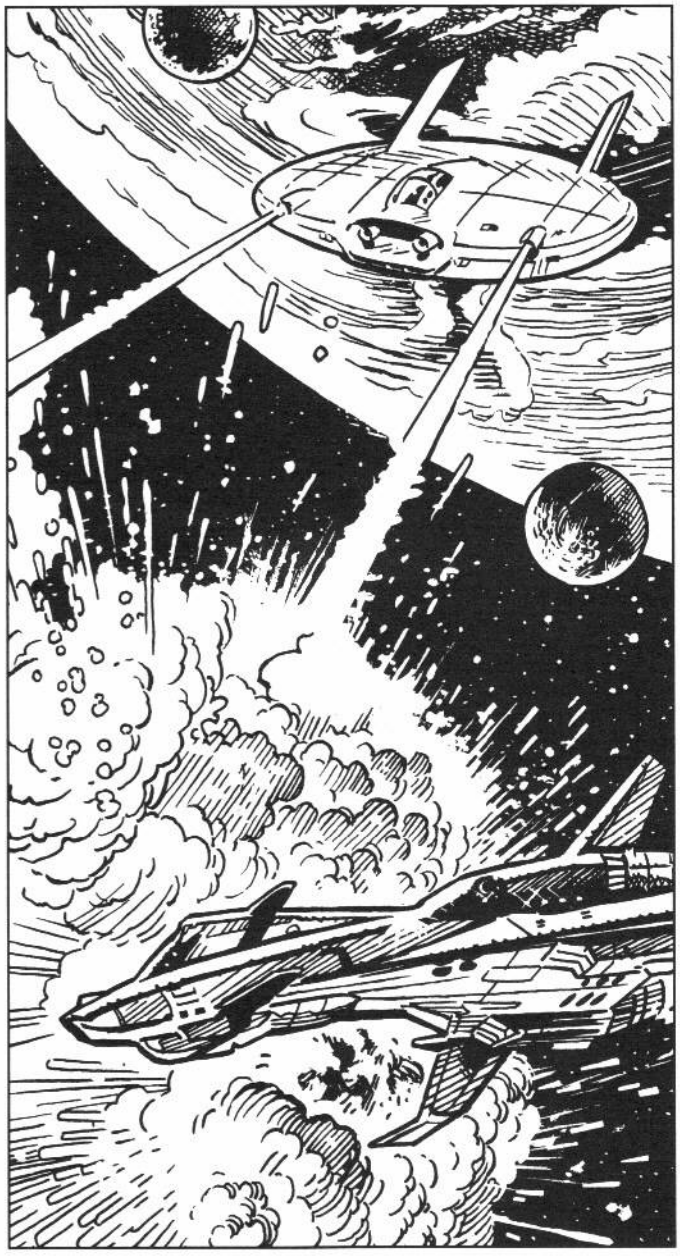
Either introduction must be used to accomplish the same goals: first, the introduction must impart basic information to the player characters that will get them involved in the story/adventure and, second, the introduction must get them interested in what's going on.

Involved introductions are often the easiest to pull off. The player characters have a "personal stake" in what's going on from the beginning. If they are hired to do something, presumably they will want to fulfill their contract and get paid. If they are attacked for no apparent reason, they might want to find out why and by whom. When they are "out looking for adventure" and they find it, well, they were already pretty eager to go as it is.

Third-Person Introductions are a little tougher. Usually, the "third person" should be someone the player characters "know" (that is, someone the characters know, even if the players have not had a chance to encounter that person yet) or have an interest in. For example, a Third-Person Introduction might be a story of how one character's mother was kidnapped by the Evil Thus-and-Such, and now is the time to do something about it. Or the Third-Person Introduction might be the story of how a pirate buried treasure off on some desert island and, now, the player characters can go off and find it.

Either way, the introduction accomplishes its goals by immediately catching the characters' attention *and* giving them an idea of how to proceed. A failed Involved Introduction might have the characters attacked by a group of ninja — but they drive off all the ninja or kill them without finding any clues about where they can go from there. Unless the player characters are very motivated and have a good understanding of the game setting (i.e., they would have a good idea of where the ninja came from), the introduction is useless.

An example of a failed Third Person Introduction could occur when the player characters hear that there is a battle



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going on in a foreign land involving mythical beasts and evil villains — unless the player characters have some specific reason why they want to just go off to this foreign land and fight these enemies, they might just say, "who cares?" and leave it at that.

As you begin gamemastering, stick to simple introductions. Make the "characters' interests" fairly obvious — they are promised treasure, or some other reward for their services, or they will be killed or otherwise inconvenienced if they don't participate. When you've gotten a feel for the player characters' interests, you can get more subtle in your adventure introductions.

The Act(s)

After the introduction, the first *Act* is introduced. An act is a significant portion of time that will be further divided into *Scenes* (below) and should be a significant portion of the

adventure itself. Indeed, many short adventures contain only one act, while few long adventures contain more than four or five.

Basically, every act should be designed to cover a particular aspect of the adventure — if it is not the whole adventure itself. For example, if an adventure in a low fantasy setting had a basic plotline that concerned travelling to a far-away land and killing an evil monster, the first act of the adventure might cover the travelling and the events that occur during the quest, while the second act could concern itself with finding and killing the monster.

At the end of every act, the player characters usually have a few brief moments to rest, recoup, and look around. When an act ends, each character should receive an *Act Award*. Act awards are a number of Life Points based on how tough the act was to complete and how long it took.

As a general rule, at the end of each act each character should receive *one* Life Point *per scene in the act*. Since every scene should have some sort of crisis or Event (see below), this means a player character can probably spend one of his Life Points per scene and still end up with enough to complete the next act — of course, characters are likely to spend more than one Life Point in some scenes, and none in others.

The gamemasters may then adjust the act award according to how tough or easy he thinks the act should have been. If the act was supposed to be a "cake-walk" (really easy), then he may wish to subtract one Life Point from the act award for each character.

On the other hand, if he felt the act was supposed to be exceptionally difficult, he may add one or two Life Points to the act award. No more than two Life Points should ever be added to the base act award, however — if the scene is *that* tough, the player characters shouldn't have gotten through it.

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However, if the player characters mess up and the act ends up being *harder* than the gamemaster anticipated (and he didn't miscalculate), then the gamemaster should give them their low act award. Again, they deserved it.

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Most scenes are standard. During a standard scene, the player characters are progressing through the adventure normally. They are interacting with characters, solving puzzles, fighting enemies, or doing whatever they need to do to get through the act. Nothing "extra special" is going on, but there should be quite a bit of excitement anyway.

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The Resolution

After the climax, the *Resolution* is used to "wrap everything up." When the player characters' enemies have been driven off or defeated (assuming the player characters win), the world has been saved, or the loot has been gathered, the resolution can be used by the gamemaster to "tie up" loose ends — and to introduce the next adventure, if he wants.

During the resolution, the gamemaster can summarize what happened during the adventure for the players, and, perhaps, explain motivations and events that the player characters were not able to witness themselves. For example, if the gamemaster thought it was appropriate, he might state during the resolution that the big villain of the adventure singled out

• Table of Organization •

The Introduction
The Act(s)
  The Scene(s)
    The Event(s)
The Climax
The Resolution

The Introduction

Every adventure should begin with an Introduction. There are two types of Introductions: the *Involved Introduction* and the *Third-Person Introduction*. As a gamemaster, you should try both occasionally.

In an Involved Introduction, the player characters participate in the "set-up" of the adventure story. They might be sitting around in their local bar, tavern, inn, space station, or other hang-out and have some gamemaster character come up and hire them for a job. They might be walking down the street and be attacked by a group of unknown maniacs. They could even be out looking for adventure, and trying to cause trouble.

The Third-Person Introduction does not involve the player characters in any way other than they might hear about something happening to someone else and choose to act on it. The Third-Person Introduction usually tells the beginning of a story from another perspective, perhaps introducing clues or conflicts that the player characters can investigate.

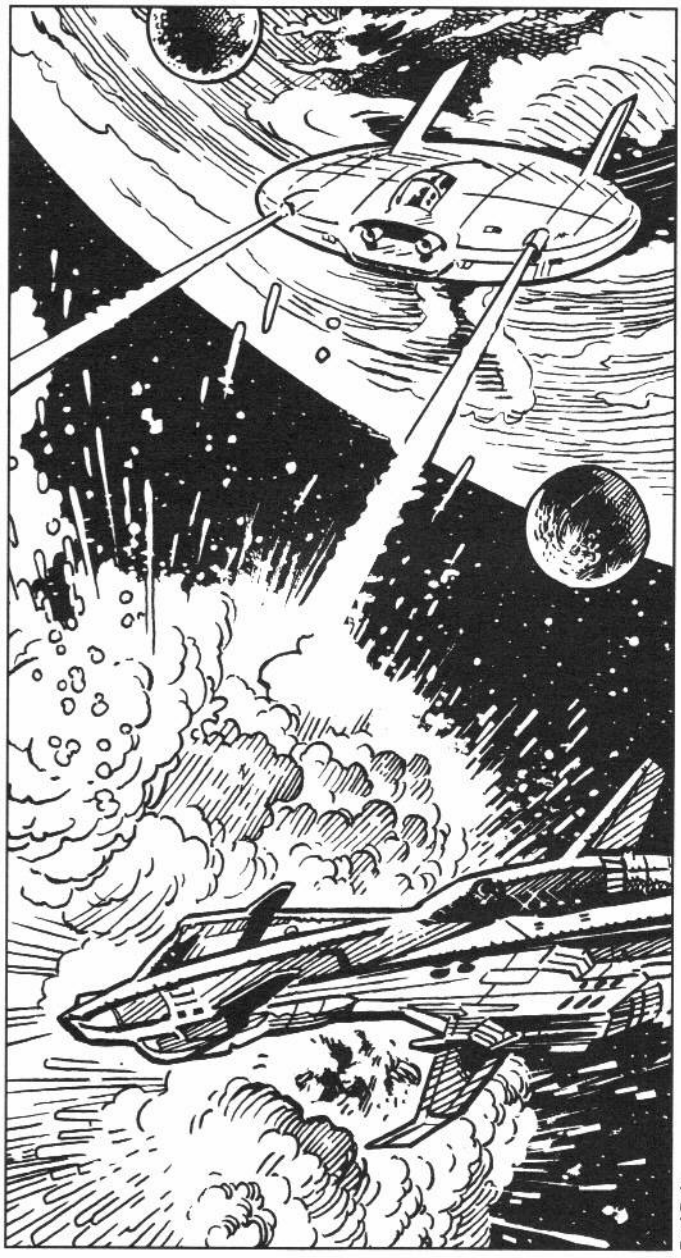
Either introduction must be used to accomplish the same goals: first, the introduction must impart basic information to the player characters that will get them involved in the story/adventure and, second, the introduction must get them interested in what's going on.

Involved introductions are often the easiest to pull off. The player characters have a "personal stake" in what's going on from the beginning. If they are hired to do something, presumably they will want to fulfill their contract and get paid. If they are attacked for no apparent reason, they might want to find out why and by whom. When they are "out looking for adventure" and they find it, well, they were already pretty eager to go as it is.

Third-Person Introductions are a little tougher. Usually, the "third person" should be someone the player characters "know" (that is, someone the characters know, even if the players have not had a chance to encounter that person yet) or have an interest in. For example, a Third-Person Introduction might be a story of how one character's mother was kidnapped by the Evil Thus-and-Such, and now is the time to do something about it. Or the Third-Person Introduction might be the story of how a pirate buried treasure off on some desert island and, now, the player characters can go off and find it.

Either way, the introduction accomplishes its goals by immediately catching the characters' attention *and* giving them an idea of how to proceed. A failed Involved Introduction might have the characters attacked by a group of ninja — but they drive off all the ninja or kill them without finding any clues about where they can go from there. Unless the player characters are very motivated and have a good understanding of the game setting (i.e., they would have a good idea of where the ninja came from), the introduction is useless.

An example of a failed Third Person Introduction could occur when the player characters hear that there is a battle going on in a foreign land involving mythical beasts and evil villains — unless the player characters have some specific reason why they want to just go off to this foreign land and fight these enemies, they might just say, "who cares?" and leave it at that.



Paul Daly

As you begin gamemastering, stick to simple introductions. Make the "characters' interests" fairly obvious — they are promised treasure, or some other reward for their services, or they will be killed or otherwise inconvenienced if they don't participate. When you've gotten a feel for the player characters' interests, you can get more subtle in your adventure introductions.

The Act(s)

After the introduction, the first *Act* is introduced. An act is a significant portion of time that will be further divided into *Scenes* (below) and should be a significant portion of the

adventure itself. Indeed, many short adventures contain only one act, while few long adventures contain more than four or five.

Basically, every act should be designed to cover a particular aspect of the adventure — if it is not the whole adventure itself. For example, if an adventure in a low fantasy setting had a basic plotline that concerned travelling to a far-away land and killing an evil monster, the first act of the adventure might cover the travelling and the events that occur during the quest, while the second act could concern itself with finding and killing the monster.

At the end of every act, the player characters usually have a few brief moments to rest, recoup, and look around. When an act ends, each character should receive an *Act Award*. Act awards are a number of Life Points based on how tough the act was to complete and how long it took.

As a general rule, at the end of each act each character should receive *one* Life Point *per scene in the act*. Since every scene should have some sort of crisis or Event (see below), this means a player character can probably spend one of his Life Points per scene and still end up with enough to complete the next act — of course, characters are likely to spend more than one Life Point in some scenes, and none in others.

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the player character group for destruction because "she was the sister of the villain you killed last month," or "he was infatuated with one of the player characters and became angry when that love wasn't returned," or whatever.

Also during the resolution, the gamemaster gives out the Adventure Award. Usually, the base adventure award is equal to one Life Point to each character per act of the adventure, plus certain bonuses. The bonuses could include an extra Life Point for exceptional roleplaying or puzzle-solving, an extra Life Point for an extremely hard adventure, or whatever. Generally, Life Point awards for adventures should not exceed five points for any single character, unless the story was *really* grueling.

Finally, gamemasters who really want to reward good roleplaying or inventiveness should feel free to give out skill points or even skill adds to individual characters. For example, if a player character who usually relies almost entirely on his combat-related skills gets involved in a non-combat-oriented adventure and tries new things (even if he fails), the gamemaster might give him an extra 1–3 skill points he can use to spend on any non-combat-related skills later on. Or, the gamemaster might pick out one particular skill that the character really tried to use repeatedly and give him one add of advancement. It is up to the gamemaster.

Populating Your Adventures

The last section of gamemaster "hints" deals with creating gamemaster characters that your player characters will interact with. These characters will perform a variety of functions in your world — they will be enemies, allies, friends, sources of information, and "window dressing" for your settings. Some will have particular talents your player characters will need to persuade them to use. Others will be dangerous enemies the player characters will want to avoid. You have to know how to create them all.

There are three main types of gamemaster characters that you'll want to create: *standard* characters, *grunts*, and *archetypes*.

Standard Gamemaster Characters

Standard characters aren't created often, but they show up enough that they've earned the title "standard." A standard character is indistinguishable from a player character, except for the fact that the gamemaster creates him or her and has complete control over the character.

Standard characters should be created, initially, using the same character generation rules you are using to create player characters in your game setting. They will get the same number of starting Attribute points, skill points, and background options your player characters get. They begin with 5 Life Points, too.

Then you can cheat a little. If your player characters have been around a while, you can start increasing the number of skill adds they have and maybe bump an Attribute value or two up a little. Who knows — you may wish to *decrease* some of their values, depending on what role you'll want them to play in your game setting.

In general, a standard gamemaster character should have two to five more skill adds and one more Attribute point than the most highly-developed player character in the campaign. Remember, they don't get to use cards — they need a slight edge.

You may also wish to unbalance their Advantages and Compensations a little bit. If the character is supposed to be "on an equal footing" with the player characters, he or she should have more Advantages than Compensations than the best player character as well.

Using Standard Characters

Standard characters are almost always used as continuing allies or gamemaster characters that the player characters will have little or no reason to kill or flee from. They are, in essence, player characters themselves (you are the player). They take a lot of work to create — you should develop a good background story for them — and you don't want them to walk on the stage and off again in a few moments.

Some sample standard characters might include the local chief of police (or other semi-friendly authority figure in your game setting), a knowledgeable bartender who "gets involved" with your player characters, a relative or friend of the player characters, or some other character who is going to show up and stick around for part of an adventure.

When you use a particular standard character in an adventure, you also have to think about his or her progression. The player characters are going to get awards, and they are going to increase their abilities. If the standard character doesn't progress as well, he'll be no match for the player characters.

If the standard character participated in nearly a full act of the adventure, give him or her the act award for that part of the adventure, and maybe a few skill points (1–3). If he or she was involved in more of the adventure, increase this award proportionally. If he or she only showed up and didn't do much at all, just give the standard character one or two Life Points or a few skill points and that's that.

Use these awards to increase the character's abilities. If you create a lot of standard characters, and don't use them all that often, presume they are off "doing their own thing," and give them awards occasionally anyway. That way, when they show up in an adventure again, they'll have progressed somewhat.

The most important rule, however, is to treat standard characters as the player characters themselves want to be treated. The more "real" they are, and the more realistically you play them, the more interesting they'll be. Don't let your player characters walk all over them, and, conversely, don't let yourself start acting as if your standard characters are invulnerable or omniscient because you're the gamemaster — remember, your standard character is only a *supporting* character. If he or she does most of the work during the adventure, the players will get bored.

"Grunt" Gamemaster Characters

Grunts are the characters you will create most often. Sometimes, grunts will go on to be standard or archetype characters, but this is unlikely. The grunt is the usually nameless, nearly faceless character who is built with one purpose in mind.

You should decide on that purpose before you create the grunt, as you'll see here. A grunt might be a shopkeeper your player characters are only likely to encounter once or twice during an adventure, or a local cop, or even a thug who wants to beat up the player characters.

Depending on what purpose you have for the grunts you create, you only need to know certain things about the grunt character. For example, if you are creating a group of grunts who happen to be gang members you need to attack the player characters in "Act One, Scene Two, Event One" of your adventure, you only need to know their combat-related skills and attributes. Maybe you need to know a few other things about them — say, some special abilities and equipment they may have — but does it really matter if one of the grunts has *science:*

Karl Waller

weaponsmith and another knows *language: German?* If so, fine; if not, then who cares? Just jot down *one* set of Attributes and skills for the "typical grunt gangmember" and use those for the whole gang.

The same rules go for other types of characters. For example, if you need a shopkeeper to sell your players some equipment, you need to know the grunt's *business* skill value, his or her *persuasion (bargain)* skill, and the grunt's *willpower* — that's probably it. If the player characters try to attack the shopkeeper, you can come up with the other Attributes and skills quickly, but you probably won't need them. Don't waste the time "fleshing out" grunt characters that you could spend plotting your adventure or creating more important characters.

Using Grunts

Grunts are one-dimensional. They are walk-on characters who fulfill one, perhaps two, purposes in an adventure. They show up, they do whatever it is they need to do, and they disappear. You can use grunts over and over again, perhaps actually developing personalities and histories for them (at which time they start to become standard characters or archetypes), or you can just create them over and over again.

Best bet? Keep a record of the grunts you create — maybe on a set of index cards. You can pull out your "Grunt Gang Members" or "Grunt Shopkeeper" or "Grunt Weaponsmith" whenever you need to. Maybe you can even have a list of names written down, with a few notes. For example, one "Grunt Gang Members" card might have three "name" listings — "The Sharks," "The Jets," and "The Black Hand"; three gangs that populate a particular city in your campaign. They are all roughly the equivalent of each other, so you only need one card.

You will want to gauge how powerful your grunts are. A grunt can be a grunt and still be better at what he or she does than any player character. Most grunts the player characters will go to for help are like this — why go to a grunt weaponsmith if he only has a *science: weaponsmith* skill value of 10? Sure, the grunt may be lame at everything else, but his or her pertinent skill value should be pretty high.

On the other hand, enemy grunts, like the "Gang Members" mentioned above, should usually be somewhat weaker than your average character. Face it; it is more fun for the player characters to fight against overwhelming odds of comparatively weak grunts than equal numbers of equal-abilitied grunts. You can use standard characters and archetypes to beat up the player characters later.

Which leads to the final rule when running grunts: they often have standard characters or archetypes above them, *especially* enemy grunts. For example, a grunt group of petty thieves that have been plaguing the player characters all throughout the adventure might have a "Master Thief" standard character supervising them, or even an archetype in charge — or maybe several.

This is what leads to the climax of an adventure. The player characters struggle through standard scenes and fight grunts, and then they battle standard characters and archetypes in the dramatic scenes and the climax of the adventure. The opposition gets tougher and tougher as the adventure goes on.

Archetype Gamemaster Characters

Archetypes are almost always "major villains" or "mentor" characters the player characters will encounter only at the end

Paul Daly

of an act or under special circumstances. "The Evil Sorcerer," "the Cruel Overlord," and "the Legendary Hero" are all examples of archetypes from different works of fiction.

An archetype is built, in most ways, like a standard character — but without all those annoying rules. Player characters start with around 68 Attribute points, right? Well, archetypes can have as many as you *want* them to have (though don't get ridiculous). And that "balancing columns" rule — forget it! Usually archetypes will have one or two nasty Compensations (usually so the player characters have a chance against them), but their Advantages outweigh any Compensations they do have.

As for Life Points — ten's still the cap. But they can have ten if you think they'll need it. They should also have as many standard characters and grunts around them as you think appropriate.

Using Archetypes

Depending on your game setting, your style of play, and the abilities of your player characters, your use of archetypes can vary from the "almost never appearing" to the "every #%@ gamemaster character who shows up is an archetype!" Archetypes take a little more effort to create than standard characters — even though you don't have to follow the rules for character creation, you'll want to create larger background stories and put more effort into selecting skills and background options — but they are usually more fun to run.

In most cases, enemy archetypes should show up no more than once per act during an adventure — sometimes less. Sometimes, they don't show up at all; they are manipulating things from beyond the scope of the story. In most cases, though, your player characters should encounter at least one or two archetypes to "do battle with" (either metaphorically or literally) per adventure.

And these archetypes won't often be alone. They'll be better equipped than most player characters, they'll often have access to whatever special effects are allowed in the game setting, and they will have lots of grunts, some standard characters, and even a few other archetypes on their sides.

Archetype enemies often become recurring villains or *nemesis* subplots. That's what they are good for.

On the other hand, archetype allies are usually teachers, mentors, or "friends in need." They should seldom get directly involved with the adventure (they'll steal the player characters' thunder, since they are supposed to be more powerful), but they will provide assistance, advice, training, and, sometimes, inspiration.

For example, in a real world setting, an adventure might pit the player characters against a corrupt corporate official who wants to bulldoze a rainforest to put in a factory. The player characters have to find a way to save the rainforest, without getting eliminated by the corporate official.

The adventure could be initiated by a friendly archetype — a tribal elder of a rainforest tribe. He is old and wise, but very passive — he wants help, but he can only protect his people and remain true to his beliefs. He cannot strike back directly at the corporation.

The corrupt official might be an enemy archetype — he sends grunts in to attack the villagers and the player characters, then mixes in a few standard characters when he meets resistance. The friendly archetype provides healing and advice, and the player character get to confront more grunts, standards, and even archetypes (though not necessarily the corporate exec) at the climax of the adventure.

Archetypes may end up getting killed or "destroyed" often or may hang around for a while. Either option is okay, depending upon the type of world you are using. You should try to keep them around if at all possible. It will make the player characters more interested in further adventures if they think "that dirty #$@$ is behind this again!"

Good Luck

While the above notes will not tell you everything you will ever need to know about gamemastering using the *MasterBook* rules system, hopefully there's enough information to get you started. Like anything else, gamemastering takes practice. Remember, the most important thing is to have fun — you are playing the game too, and don't let your players forget it!

MASTERBOOK™ CHARACTER SHEET

Fantasy Warrior

NAME	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	SPECIES	AGE	SEX

ATTRIBUTES

AGILITY 9
Acrobatics 10, beast riding: camel 10, climbing 10, dodge 10, maneuver 10, melee combat 10, melee parry 10, stealth 10

DEXTERITY 8
Prestidigitation 9, missile weapons: bow 9, thrown weapons 9

ENDURANCE 8

STRENGTH 12

INTELLECT 8
First aid 9, perception 9, tracking 9

MIND 7

CONFIDENCE 8
Intimidation 9, streetwise 9, survival: desert 9, willpower 9

CHARISMA 8

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

10	**TOUGHNESS**
	TOUGHNESS (w/armor)
7	**MRG** (Movement Rate, Ground)
5	**MRS** (Movement Rate, Swimming)
3	**MRC** (Movement Rate, Climbing)
3	**MRJ** (Movement Rate, Jumping)

LIFE POINTS	SKILL POINTS
5	

COMBAT BOX

K O

WOUND LEVEL	MODIFIERS
○ *Light*	no modifier
○ *Moderate*	-2 to physical skills
○ *Heavy*	-4 physical & -2 all other skills
○ *Incapacitated*	-8 to all skills
○ *Mortal*	automatic KO; see text

SHOCK CAPACITY 8

SHOCK TAKEN

BACKGROUND

Advantages: Cultures (CI), in addition to her native culture, the fantasy warrior has knowledge of one foreign culture "just beyond the known lands"; Equipment (CII), the fantasy warrior has a "magic bow" which is +2 to hit; Luck (CII), as per standard description

Compensations: Age (CI), the fantasy warrior is young and inexperienced: whenever she fails an interaction or knowledge type of skill total, the character fails *dramatically* due to her youth and recklessness; Bigotry (CII), the fantasy warrior considers all people outside her villagers "uncultured barbarians" and treats them as such until they "prove themselves"; Language (CII), because of her inexperience, the fantasy warrior has trouble understanding any language besides her own

DESCRIPTION

Sent by your village beyond the Blue Mountains (the "known lands"), you (the fantasy warrior) are a youth unwise in the ways of a dangerous, magical world. You are quick to act, often with dire consequences. Nonetheless, you are an idealist of pure heart and noble intent, even if the execution lacks subtlety and finesse. You will someday make a fine warrior ... if you survive.

EQUIPMENT

Magic bow (STR+5, +2 to hit), water flask, medallion with family runes, knife (STR+3)

Brian Schomburg

"There is no time for talk, only time for action!"

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10	11 12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21 25	26 30	31 35	36 40	41 45	+5
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	+1

MASTERBOOK™ CHARACTER SHEET

Futuristic Trader

NAME	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	SPECIES	AGE	SEX

ATTRIBUTES

AGILITY 8
Dodge 9, stealth 9

DEXTERITY 8
Energy weapons 9, vehicle piloting: star freighters 10

ENDURANCE 8

STRENGTH 8

INTELLECT 9
Computer ops 10, deduction 10, first aid 10, perception 10, science: physics 10

MIND 9
Business 10, language: Yinnerian 10, scholar: Yinnerians 10

CONFIDENCE 9
Con10, streetwise 10, willpower 10

CHARISMA 9
Charm 10, persuasion 10

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○ *Light*	no modifier
○ *Moderate*	-2 to physical skills
○ *Heavy*	-4 physical & -2 all other skills
○ *Incapacitated*	-8 to all skills
○ *Mortal*	automatic KO; see text

SHOCK CAPACITY 8

SHOCK TAKEN

BACKGROUND

Advantages: Equipment (CII), the character has a small, unreliable freighter for star trading; Luck (CII), as per standard description

Compensations: Debt (CII), character owes the equivalent of a year's salary on said freighter; Quirk (CII), character is somewhat paranoid and thinks everyone is out to "con him" as badly as he is trying to con everyone else

DESCRIPTION

You are the epitome of "buy low, sell high, no refunds or exchanges." You travel from system to system, trading fancy colored baubles for other fancy colored baubles that can fetch higher prices in more civilized systems. You're the type who is the first to discover a new civilization ... and leave the natives with the impression that developing advanced technology isn't really going to be worth the effort. You're a cross between a sleazy used-car salesman and a tacky tourist.

EQUIPMENT

Small, unreliable freighter, laser pistol (damage value 25), first aid kit, comm-set

Brian Schomburg

"I'll sell it to you for ... 50 of those little blue things over there."

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 10	11 12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21 25	26 30	31 35	36 40	41 45	+5
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	+1

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