MYRIAD

A Universal RPG System

Ashok Desai

MYRIAD

The Myriad RPG System was designed, written and illustrated by

Ashok Desai

Thanks also to the staff and members of www.rpg.net for their input and support

Contents

What is Myriad?

Myriad is a free-usage RPG system. By free usage, we mean that anyone is free not only to play the game but also to write additional material for it, create their own games based around it, even to reprint the text included herein to your heart's delight. You can give your products away for free or sell them in whatever form you desire, it really is that open. However Myriad is not a complete RPG in its own right; some assembly is required. We've made this very easy for you with plenty of notes and examples but if you are new to the hobby Myriad may not be for you.

Symbols

The Myriad System Manual is designed to help you create the game you want with a broad selection of tools, examples and options on offer. Keep an eye out for the following bullet points that will help you identify useful snippets of information:

M stands for Module Makers. This information is here to help people incorporate the Myriad System into their own products, and how to adapt its various rules to cope with different styles and genres of game. If you're interested of using this manual for commercial ventures, or if you just want to adapt your existing games to these rules, keep an eye out for the M symbol.

O stands for Optional. It's always good to have options when planning a roleplaying game. Rules pasted next to an O symbol are house rules that can be used or ignored as individual gaming groups wish. These are usually the kind of rules that add extra realism or variety to the game which nevertheless might overcomplicate things for some people.

I stands for Information. Here you will find little snippets of data about how the system was created, how its various rules work and so on. Though you certainly don't need to know every last little thing about Myriad to play it, there is plenty of extra information hanging around which we thought you might find useful or interesting.

N stands for Notes. These hints are there to bring your attention to points that may not be readily apparent from the rules. Unlike optional material, these are generally considered compulsory unless you are intending to use your own house rules to govern that particular aspect of the game. They are factors that the Guide really needs to keep an eye on.

Lexicon

The following terms may be used frequently throughout this manual. Many of them will be familiar to experienced role-players, but for the convenience of newcomers to the hobby here are some standard definitions.

Ability Test : when a character attempts to do something in the game, the controlling player must roll dice in order to ascertain whether she is successful or not. This process is known as making an Ability Test, or just a Test for short. For a full explanation of the process see page 17. See also Burning Sixes, Opposed Test and SFX below.

Action : any activity that a character within the story can attempt. More specifically, this usually refers to an activity that is risky enough to require a roll of the dice. See also Opposed Action.

Adventure : the story that the player characters assist in creating. An adventure is often a single stand-alone plot, but sometimes multiple adventures are merged together into an ongoing campaign. If role-playing was a TV series, one adventure would be the equivalent of one episode. See also Session and Campaign.

Attribute : a numerical value that defines how adept a character or item is within a particular broad field such as strength or intelligence. Attributes are usually values that all items of a given type have in common, rather than those which may be absent in some cases. All humans have a certain amount of Intellect no matter how stupid they are, and all cars have a Speed.

Burning Sixes : every six that a player rolls during an ability test grants a bonus of +1 to the final result of the roll. However, if the player has a suitable SFX he can burn these sixes in order to earn special benefits. A burnt six is still counts as the highest rolling die, but it no longer grants the usual +1 bonus to the test's result.

Campaign : a number of adventures that continue on from one another, usually with the same player characters and some recurring NPC's, which build into a story larger than each individual adventure. If role-playing was a TV series, one campaign would be the equivalent of an entire season of a serialised show. See also Session and Adventure.

Conflict : when two sides oppose one another directly for some purpose, and it is inappropriate to decide their fates with a single roll of the dice, the Guide may call for a conflict. Conflicts are more formal, as time is divided into rounds and players must act in a strict order according to their initiative. Note that although the most common form of conflict is mortal combat where two 'teams' attempt to beat the living daylights out of one another, this is far from being the only kind. The standard system includes two types of conflict; Mortal Combat and Social Combat. Others can be added as the module designer sees fit.

Experience Points (XP) : a common method of measuring how experienced a particular player character is. XP is usually awarded to each player at the end of a session by the Guide. Characters that performed particularly well usually receive more XP than those who performed poorly. Depending on the preferences of the module or gaming group you are playing with, these are either spent like points to improve your character or are saved up until enough are accumulated to advance to the next level.

Extended Action : an activity that is complex enough to warrant more than one ability test, or an action performed during a round of conflict that would take longer than the length of the round to complete successfully.

Game Time : the amount of time that passes for the character as opposed to the amount of real time that passes for the players. A task that takes a character an hour of game time to perform will likely only take the player a few seconds to resolve. The Guide should always remember that when one PC attempts a long-winded action, the other PC's should be allowed an equal amount of time to do other things. See also Real Time.

Guide : the person primarily in charge of the storyline and adjudicating the rules. Think of the Guide as a kind of referee who makes sure that all the players get a fair crack of the whip during play. The Guide writes the basis for the stories that the player characters will attempt to influence, plays all the minor bit-parts, villains and other NPC's, and makes rulings where the standard rules given in this manual do not seem appropriate.

Initiative : an abstract value used in conflict that measures how quickly the player character can react to external stimuli. In a round of conflict, each character must act in strict Initiative order, with the character possessing the highest initiative going first.

Level : the word Level is used to refer to a great many things, but in all cases it means a number that quantifies a given aspect of a character or item. For instance, the rules might talk about the level of a skill, meaning the value allocated to it. Alternatively it might talk about the level of a character, a value that measures roughly how much experience she has earned during play.

Modifier : a value applied to the final result of an ability test as a result of any situation that significantly helps or hinders the character making that roll. They are most commonly used in Opposed Tests and during Conflict.

Module : This manual contains only the basic rules of the game and a number of hints to help you customise it to your own game setting. Myriad is however a free usage game, and the contents of this manual may be used in anyone's products free of charge provided that certain license restrictions are obeyed, namely giving the author credit. That means anyone who wishes can make supplementary material that supports the Myriad system. For the sake of simplicity, supplements for Myriad are called Modules.

There may be Setting Modules detailing new worlds for you to adventure through, Rules Modules detailing new ways of playing the game, or even Resource Modules containing new spells, playable races, equipment and other odds and ends. Modules could even combine two or all three of these, it's entirely up to the author what he or she wishes to include. Check the website at www.sanestudios.co.uk for more information about existing and upcoming modules.

Non-Player Character (NPC) : a character within the story that is controlled by the Guide rather than the players. NPC's are often villains against whom the players will battle, sidekicks and benefactors who will assist the players, or just innocent bystanders. It all depends on the type of adventure that the Guide has prepared.

Opposed Test : If an action that a character wishes to take directly opposes the wishes of another character, it is an opposed test. Instead of attempting to beat a difficulty number, both participants make a test and whoever achieves the higher result gets his way. Examples might include arm wrestling, sneaking past a guard or arguing over who gets the last toffee.

Player : a person who takes responsibility for the actions of a single Player Character, dictating what they say, what they do and how they do it. Player refers to the real live person in control, not the fictional one that actually takes part in the story.

Player Character (PC) : a character under the direct control of a player rather than that of the Guide. Each player will normally have one PC to her name, although this is not an absolute and some games might allow or even require players to take control of more than one PC, or in fact that the players must share PC's with each another.

Quote : A particularly memorable sentence spoken during Social Combat that may be worth a +1 bonus to your social attack roll, and/or +1 resolve damage to the enemy at the Guide's option. See also Stunt below.

Real Time : time as it passes for the players, as opposed to game time that passes for the player characters. In short, time according to your own wristwatch. See also Game Time.

Resilience : a value used in Conflict to determine when the character is forced to drop out and take no further part in it. Each type of conflict may have its own resilience values, or may share resilience values with other types of conflict. For example, Mortal Combat uses wounds as its resilience value, while Social Combat uses resolve.

Round : an abstract measure of time in combat during which every character has the chance to take one or more actions. During a round of conflict, all characters are expected to take their actions in strict order of Initiative, highest score acting first.

Session : an evening's role-playing, from the time that the Guide begins narration to the time that the players put down their dice and start to worry about how much XP they have earned. Some adventures take only one session to complete, but others may take many. If role-playing were a TV series, one session would be the equivalent of any part of the show between ad breaks. See also Adventure and Campaign.

SFX (Special Effects) : an ability, often supernatural in nature or granted by the use of special equipment, that breaks or alters the normal rules of the game. SFX usually require the player to burn sixes in order to activate them. See also Burning Sixes above.

Stunt : A particularly imaginative description of an action, usually an attack in Mortal Combat, that is entertaining, amusing or just plain showy. Stunts, like Quotes, give a +1 bonus to the attack roll (but not to the damage). See also Quote above.

Tally : a value used during chase scenes that measures how far away each vehicle is from the lead vehicle. Also used in races to indicate how far along the race track each participant has travelled.

Target Number (TN) : in a non-opposed Test, this is the value you are aiming to equal or beat with your dice roll. The Guide sets all target numbers based on how difficult she believes a particular action to be, ably assisted by the guidelines given in this manual.

Character Design

If you're going to play the game you're going to need a persona to portray. There are lots of different ways to build a character, and different RPG's go for different methods from the strict structure of the character class to more freeform systems. Myriad supports several methods of both character creation and character development. This chapter will introduce you to their subtle points. It's packed with different options for all kinds of player and Guide, and there are plenty of hints, optional rules and plug-ins that you can use to customise the process to your liking. Remember, a good story starts with an excellent collection of characters.

The Basics: What Makes a Character?

A character should be more than a collection of numbers. A character should be a fully-fledged person in their own right, with all the little foibles and flaws that makes him human. Or alien. Or elf, dwarf or ork. That's the great thing about role playing games, the wondrous variety. Try to make your new persona more than just the sum of his parts though. Put a real effort into thinking about his background, how he grew up, where he came from, how he thinks, what he likes and what he hates. What are his strengths and what are his weaknesses? We will flesh these out with game information later in the process, but it is important to start with a good idea of what he's going to be like personality-wise before even looking at the rules.

Cosmetic details need no rules to govern them, although the Guide may want to exert a little control over what kinds of people are going to be adventuring in her game. The rules however require more than just imagination. There has to be balance so that all the players can begin on an even footing. Though RPG's are more about teamwork and interaction than facing off against one another, if one character has a distinct advantage over the others it can lead to jealousy. There are four basic things that go to making up a character in Myriad, the most important being Statistics, Skills, SFX – the three esses – and of course resilience values. These are defined on pages 17 and 18 so let's talk instead about how to decide what values they have. There are many different ways to fairly decide on what values a character has and each gaming group, Guide or module designer will have their own preference.

Points-based is usually the fairest method of character creation but can be a little open to players giving their characters a heavy bias towards one area of expertise, for instance combat, and becoming utterly lethal in that field and simultaneously useless in all others. This is sometimes called min-maxing.

Randomised generation involves rolling dice to decide upon the most important aspects of the character. Most of the earliest forms of RPG involved some kind of random element. It is far less prone to player min-maxing, but takes a lot of the decisions out of the player's hands and can also lead to groups of PC's with wildly different capabilities.

Template based characters revolve around a group of stereotypes based on the PC's race, career, history or a combination. This system gives the characters a decent amount of control over who and what they are while encouraging players to think about their character's past, but can also lead to all characters of the same race and/or career feeling very alike.

So which of these is the best method for you? Each has its own benefits and flaws. Each will appeal to different kinds of gamer. Some involve a lot more work to prepare for use in a new game while others will be ready to use as is. In truth, most people adopt a mixture of approaches blending elements of one with those of another. In accordance with this, the following examples of how each method might be used in the Myriad RPG system are split as much as possible into sections so that you can mix and match one style with another. There are also a number of handy hints on how to customise your character creation system scattered throughout the text. Keep an eye out in particular for the M symbol during this chapter.

Aspects of a Character

The first thing you will need to decide upon before going into the generation system itself is what features do characters require in order to be fully functional within your game? Let's take a closer look at each of the elements in turn.

Statistics are the bare bones of the character. The basic system has four, namely Power, Grace, Intellect and Spirit, but you can put whatever statistics into your game that you see fit. Maybe you think that Spirit is too broad and would prefer to split it into Confidence and Perception instead. Maybe you want a totally different set of stats to make your game a bit more individual. If it feels right for you, then go ahead. Try and keep each statistic approximately as useful as the others. This alone can be a bit trial and error, as different types of adventure will make more or less use of each stat. Also keep in mind that you'll need one attack and one defence statistic for each type of conflict you're going to use. The standard system categorises everything into either mortal combat or social combat, but if you want to include more you may also want to add extra statistics to cover them. Here are a few examples of statistics and what they represent:

Power : physical strength and resilience.

Grace: agility, speed and reflexes

Intellect : intelligence, reason and life learning

Spirit : confidence, perception and creativity

Charisma : how easy it is to manipulate others

Perception : acuity of vision, hearing, etc.

Dexterity : hand-eye coordination

Will : mental resistance, strength of mind

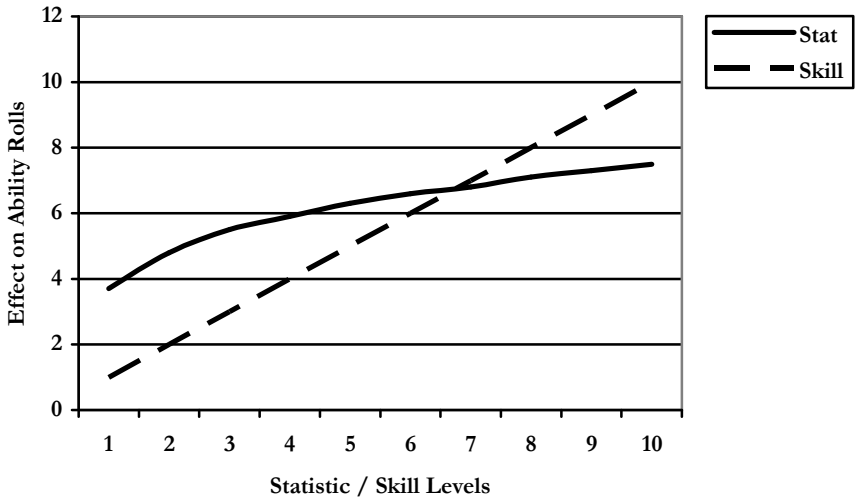
Wisdom : deductive ability, common sense

Health : resistance to damage and disease

Magic : ability to perform magical spells

Psyche : ability to use psychic powers

The question remains though, how useful are statistics? Here's a handy table that shows how much, on average, a statistic of a particular level will affect the outcome of the character's ability tests compared to a skill. As you can see, the effect of raising the statistic initially has a marked effect on test results, but the effect of increasing it wanes quickly as it reaches the higher levels and is soon surpassed by the effects of a high level of skill, which increase uniformly. This is the reason why we recommend that skills be capped at no higher than five.



Skills represent the life learning of the character. These will vary immensely from one game setting to the next based on genre. Choosing a well-rounded skill set is a tricky process, and opinion is divided on what is the best method. Some games keep their skill tables short and to the point with as few skills as possible, each of which covers a wide variety of different applications. Others try and introduce skills for every possible thing that a character could want to attempt. Small skill sets are easier to handle, but can lead to strange anomalies such as lorry drivers inexplicably being able to fly helicopters because there's no distinction between a driver and a pilot. Large skill sets take up a lot of space, both in the manual and on the character record sheet, and make it difficult for the Guide to decide which skill is appropriate to which situation. A healthy balance between the two extremes is generally preferable.

You would probably be best off considering what the players are going to be doing the most in the setting you envisage, and select skills for those first. Try to think about how different the various disciplines are, and only subdivide a skill if there is a vast difference between how the component parts work and if one is not particularly rare. Should Archery be a skill in its own right, rather than being lumped in with Firearms because it has a similar effect? In a fantasy setting, probably yes since firearms will be rare and require a lot of knowledge on how to reload, how much gunpowder to use and so on. In a science fiction setting, probably no. Who would use bows and arrows when there are laser guns available?

To help you get started there are several skill sets for different genres on page 53 in the Resources chapter. Feel free to use these as a basis, or just insert them into your game as is.

SFX are a complicated subject. Not only will they vary a great deal from one setting to the next, but they are also purely optional. You don't need to include this step in your game at all if you want to create a normal setting with no fancy mystic powers or eldritch monsters. For those of you who do wish to create a setting with a little magic to it, how to build good SFX is dealt with in the Sample Modules chapter on page 29. That chapter also contains a number of handy examples of how common game features can be adapted to the Myriad system.

Resilience Values are the easiest thing to determine. They fall into two types, critical and non-critical. Both consist of a row of boxes that are crossed off when a character takes damage during a specific type of conflict. The difference between the two is that a critical resilience value could potentially have a permanent effect upon the character if she is forced to cross out too many boxes. Critical resilience values have a second row of boxes. If the first line runs out then the PC is knocked out of the conflict and may take no further part in it. If the critical line runs out, then the permanent condition takes effect. The most common permanent condition is death, but it could also mean for example insanity or loss of limbs.

Each type of conflict included in your game needs a resilience value associated with it. Many of them can share resilience values with one another, but others will need one of their very own. Think about the type of conflict and what aspects of the character it would grind down. Does it affect the character's health in some way, or maybe her confidence? Once you have decided on a name for it, decide whether it should be possible to have a permanent effect on the character or not and add a critical line if it does. Resilience values begin at a level equal to an appropriate statistic and may be increased during character creation. Here are a few examples:

- Wounds (Critical = Death) how damaged the PC's body is, based on Power
- Resolve (Non-Critical) how determined the PC is to continue arguing her case, based on Spirit
- Terror (Critical = Madness) represents how frightened the PC is right now, based on Spirit
- Distance (Non-Critical) in races, how far behind the PC is lagging, based on Grace
- Mana (Non-Critical) how much magical energy a wizard has, based on Intellect
- Concentration (Non-Critical) depleted when engaged in psychic combat, based on Intellect

Boons and Flaws

A common feature of RPG's is to list a number of miscellaneous advantages for the character to obtain, and a number of disadvantages that they can accept to gain extra points, die rolls or similar. Myriad calls these Boons and Flaws. They differ from SFX in that you do not need to burn sixes in order to activate them. Most boons and flaws are always active, or take effect under certain circumstances. Common boons include being particularly wealthy or having useful allies. Common flaws include being wanted by the police or having poor eyesight. You don't need to include these extra features in your game if you don't want to, this is more a catch-all category for aspects of the character that don't fit into any other field.

Campaign Power Level

The power level of the campaign is a basic measure of how realistic it will be. There are three power levels supported by Myriad, but you can make up your own if you so desire. Mundane level is designed for games where the players will be everyday people with no particular bells-and-whistles. The PC's will be weak, unskilled and die easily. This power level is most commonly encountered in the horror genre. Far more common is the Heroic power level, wherein the players are powerful entities in their own right. This is the default level for most campaigns, and is perfect for fantasy or supernatural games. The final power rating, Godlike, is rather over-powered and will mostly be used for superhero games.

It is up to the Guide to choose the power level of the campaign she intends to run. The following methods of character generation are all presented with three appropriate power levels to make things easier for you. Note that there is nothing to stop the guide from creating her own power levels as well if those given do not suit her needs.

Points-Based Generation

Using points-based generation the player is given a number of points to spend on various aspects of his character. These points are divided into several 'pools' that can only be spent on certain aspects of your character. One point is worth one level of whatever the pool is meant for. For example Statistic Points must be distributed amongst the character's statistics, and Skill Points amongst his skills. Some Guides also like to give out a few general points to spend on buying extra points for these pools. The cost of one extra point depends on the pool it is going into, and is shown in the table below.

Points Pools by Power Level

Power Level	Stat Pool	Skill Pool	SFX Pool	Health Pool	GP Pool
Mundane	2 per stat	2 per 4 skills	3	4 per Resilience	3
Heroic	3 per stat	3 per 4 skills	5	6 per Resilience	6
Godlike	4 per stat	4 per 4 skills	7	8 per Resilience	10
GP Cost	3 GP's	1 GP	2 GP's	1 GP	N/A

The number of points in some pools depends on how many skills and/or statistics your game supports. For instance if your game uses six statistics, the stat pool for a heroic level campaign would be 3 x 6 = 18. The recommended system uses 4 statistics and around 16 skills.

If your game setting supports boons and flaws, these are bought using general points. You can if you wish convert points from other pools into general points in order to buy boons at the same rates for converting general points into pool points. However, you cannot convert them back into points from a different pool, you may only use them to buy boons.

Resilience values begin with a number of boxes equal to the level of one of your character's statistics and points spent on them increase the number of boxes. The base statistic is related to the kind of conflict that the resilience is intended for, i.e. your Wounds begin at the same level as your Power, while your Resolve begins at a level equal to your Spirit. Critical lines begin at half the level of the resilience they are attached to, rounding fractions up. A critical resilience will usually cost two points per box for the main line, while boxes on a critical line or a non-critical resilience cost one point each.

Most games impose minimum and maximum values on statistics and skills to prevent characters from becoming over-powerful. Statistics always have a minimum level of 1, but also have a maximum level of 5, 7 or 9 for Mundane, Heroic and Godlike campaigns respectively. Skills are likewise capped at 3, 4 or 5 depending on the power level. That said, it's your game and you are free to impose whatever maximum and minimum values you wish.

Randomised Generation

Some people prefer to let the dice decide when it comes to certain aspects of their character. This method is normally only used for determining statistics, although it can be adapted to the other stages of the process as well. For statistics, roll a die once for each stat, make a note of the results and then assign them to whichever statistics you wish, one result per stat. Six-sided dice (D6's) are used for Heroic level campaigns, four-sided dice (D4's) for Mundane level campaigns and eight-sided dice (D8's) for Godlike campaigns.

This method gives a slightly higher average than spending points, which may not be to your liking. It is possible to get three, five and seven sided dice if you want to achieve the same average score as the points spending method, but they are quite rare and difficult to get hold of. You're unlikely to find them even in the best of hobby shops. They are also rather odd shapes, and some people don't consider them to be truly random because they are not mathematical solids. As an alternative, for Mundane and Heroic level campaigns you could use a D6 or D10 respectively and halve the result, rounding fractions up, to get exactly the same effect as rolling a D3 or a D5. Sadly the D14 is just as rare as the D7 so there is no easy Godlike equivalent.

Rolling dice is easy enough for determining statistics, but what about skills, SFX, boons and flaws? This is where the module creator has to do a little extra work. If you want to allow people to randomly choose the other aspects of their character, you will need to draw up some randomisation tables like the example one overleaf. It's usually best to stick to rolling a single die on these kinds of tables since if you roll two dice and add the results together, numbers closer to the average are far more likely to come out than those at the extreme ends. The percentile die (D100) is your friend here. Suggestions for how to deal with specific cases follow:

Skills: roll for seven skills on the random tables provided with the module, then roll a D4 to determine the level of each. For Mundane campaigns, subtract one from the result of the D4 roll (to a minimum of 0). For Godlike campaigns, add one to the result instead.

SFX: roll three times on the random SFX tables provided with the module for Mundane campaigns, five times for Heroic campaigns, and seven times for Godlike campaigns. Ignore and re-roll any results that would indicate an SFX that the character doesn't have the prerequisites for.

Resilience Values: roll a D4 for Mundane campaigns, D6 for Heroic campaigns or D8 for Godlike campaigns and add the result of this die roll to the base level for that particular resilience to determine its value. Roll once for each resilience.

Boons and Flaws: roll a D4 and subtract 2 to see how many boons you have then, if your result is 1 or more, roll on the provided tables to see which you get. Repeat the process for flaws.

D100	Skill Chosen	D100	Skill Chosen	D100	Skill Chosen
1-8	Acrobatics	9-12	Arts and Crafts	13-18	Athletics
19-27	Close Combat	28-34	Deceit	35-39	Drive
40-43	Electronics	44-46	Geography	47-49	History
50-54	Linguistics	55-58	Mechanics	59-64	Occult
65-72	Perception	73-78	Persuasion	79-81	Pilot
82-89	Ranged Combat	90-94	Science	95-100	Stealth

M You don't have to stick to the same range of numbers for every skill. As you may notice in the example table above, few of the skills listed have exactly the same chance of being rolled. Common skills should have a larger range of numbers associated with them so that they are more likely to crop up, while rare skills should conversely have much smaller ranges.

O If you don't like that players' choice is severely restricted by the use of random tables, then use this optional rule. Allow players to roll three times for each item and choose the one which they prefer. This keeps their choices fairly random but allows them a small amount of freedom in how to build their character.

Template-Based Generation

Also sometimes referred to as 'character class', template-based generation is one of the fastest types there is. The player is given a choice of different pre-generated stereotypes to choose from. Sometimes there is only one type of template, but more often the player chooses from several different types of template and combined the results from each. Sometimes all of the template's benefits are granted to the character but often there will be one or two choices to make, for instance 'choose any two combat skills' for a warrior template. You can make templates based on any aspect of a character's past or racial heritage, but the recommended method for template-based generation is to combine one each of the following three types of template.

Race Templates depict the character's parentage. This kind of template is most commonly used in fantasy, horror or science fiction settings where available races are very different from humans. In a normal earth setting with no weird creatures, racial templates for various nationalities (i.e. Caucasian or Afro-Caribbean) might be considered bad taste by some people. Racial templates usually contain statistic values between 1 and 3, as well as any SFX, boons and flaws that are directly related to the character's species. Examples might include a dwarf's ability to see in the dark or a vampire's vulnerability to sunlight. Race templates do not usually contain skills.

Background Templates are all about the character's upbringing. Was she a university graduate, or did she grow up on the streets as an urchin? It could also include some reflection upon what part of the game world she lived in for her formative years. Background templates usually contain very low statistic values between 0 and 1, and a few minor skills that she might have learnt. Skills commonly gained from background templates are things like close combat, survival, science or arts and crafts. Anything, basically, that could have been learnt through childhood lessons and mainstream education. They might also contain a few boons and flaws, particularly ones that relate to money or useful contacts. They do not normally contain SFX.

Career Templates tell us what the character has done as a job for most of his life, and usually his current career. Although it may contain some alterations to statistics that are important to the career with values between 0 and 2, career templates are mostly made up of skills. They sometimes also include boons and flaws, particularly those related to money or contacts. In highly cinematic campaigns, careers are frequently packaged with SFX as well. A wizardly career would no doubt come with a selection of magical SFX, while a warrior career may have a number of SFX to represent advanced combat tactics.

M The important thing to remember when designing templates is that all those of a particular type should balance out evenly with one another. If you allocate five attribute points to one, then an equivalent number of attribute points (or another characteristic of equal value) must be given to the others as well. A good way of balancing templates is to ensure that each would cost the same number of general points under the points-based generation system.

Combining Different Types

As has been pointed out, you don't have to choose any one of these methods for your game, you can mix and match them. Maybe you'd like to use random statistics with everything else being points-based. Perhaps you'd like to allow players a choice of templates that they can then customise with a few bonus general points. If you're feeling really cruel, you could require your players to randomly select templates. In particular, including a small amount of general points as the final stage of character creation is a good way to add a little customisability to the more rigid methods, and there's no harm in including optional templates with an associated points cost in an otherwise points-based system to illustrate the kind of PC's that exist in your game world. There are plenty of combinations you could use. Experiment and see which method works best for you.

The Recommended Method

- Use the points-based system with the Heroic power level as follows:
- Divide 16 statistic points amongst the four statistics Power, Grace, Intellect and Spirit
- No statistic may be less than 1 or greater than 7 during character generation
- Spend 14 points on skills from the appropriate sets (see page 53)
- No skill may be raised higher than level 4 during character generation
- Select 5 points' worth of SFX from the relevant listings for the module
- Starting Wounds are equal to Power, Critical Wounds half that (rounded up)
- Starting Resolve is equal to the character's Spirit statistic
- Spend 12 health points enhancing your Wounds, Critical Wounds and Resolve
- Wound boxes cost 2 health points, Critical Wound and Resolve boxes cost 1 each.
- Everyone gets 6 general points to spend on any aspect of their character they wish
- Stat points cost 3gp, SFX points cost 2gp, skill or health points cost 1gp
- Boons can be bought for gp's also, and flaws may be accepted to earn extra gp's

Power measures your physical strength and dexterity, your ability to lift heavy weights and manipulate objects. If you want to kick in a door or hit a coconut with a thrown ball, use Power. It is the offensive physical statistic, and is used to make attack rolls related to mortal combat.

Grace represents how fluidly and quickly you can move, both in terms of athleticism and agility. If you want to jump over a speeding car or win a dance contest, use Grace. It is the defensive physical statistic, and so is used to defend against attacks when engaging in mortal combat.

Intellect tells you how quickly you can think and how much information you know in general terms. Winning a chess competition or repairing a broken car requires intellect. It is the offensive mental statistic, and so is used to make attack roles related to social combat.

Spirit reflects your willpower, confidence, perception and creativity. If you need to resist the lures of a handsome face, paint a masterpiece, spot small details or tell an enormous lie, use Spirit. It is the defensive mental statistic, and is used to avoid attacks made against you in social combat.

Gaining Experience

Creating a character, though very important, is only a beginning. Once you've played a few sessions you'll want to know how that character is developing from a raw recruit into a formidable hero. What new skills is she learning, how are her current skills improving and the like. Character experience is an important part of any role-playing game. Nobody wants to play the same person forever, and having your PC's abilities improve is almost as interesting as having a whole new character to play as. Myriad supports three main methods of character progression. These are outlined below in more detail.

Level-Based Progression

Early RPG's rated characters in levels that represented how powerful they were. A huge number of computer-based RPG's also adopt this method since it gives a solid definition of how effective the character is. As the PC plays more sessions he accrues experience points, usually abbreviated to XP, and when a certain amount has been obtained he advances in level. Obtaining a new level is accompanied by increases in statistics, skills, SFX and so forth. The higher the PC's level, the more points it will take to get to the next level.

In the Myriad system, each time a character gains a new level he is given two skill points, each of which can be used to purchase a new skill at level 1 or improve an existing skill by one level. The character also gains an SFX point on every even-numbered level if the module being played supports SFX. One new health point may also be used to upgrade any one of the character's resilience lines, or saved in order to buy a box that would normally cost two points. Finally, the character earns one quarter of a statistic point to improve any one statistic with. The usual maximums must be observed with regards to skill and statistic levels.

Characters gain experience points each session of play. The amount they are given is determined by the Guide, and is usually between 3 and 10. Factors that could positively affect the amount of XP received include number of monsters defeated that are of equal or greater level to the player, amount of money earned, if the player had any particularly good ideas and, most importantly, how well he portrayed his character. Factors that will have a detrimental effect upon XP might include killing innocents, not doing anything for the entire session, failing to interact with other players, whining about the rules and generally making everyone else miserable. Precisely what factors are good and bad will depend on the type of game you are writing. The table below outlines how many XP a character needs to amass in order to reach a particular level.

Upon Attaining a New Level, Characters Earn:

- Two skill points to increase existing skills or purchase new ones
- One SFX point on every even level (2, 4, 6 etc) in systems that support SFX
- One new health point to spend on extending a resilience line
- At level four and every four levels thereafter, one new statistic point

XP Required to Attain Level X

Level	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
XP	0	10	25	45	70	100	135	175	220	270
Level	11	**12**	13	14	15	**16**	17	18	19	**20**
XP	325	385	450	520	595	675	760	850	945	1045
Level	21	22	23	**24**	25	26	27	**28**	29	30
XP	1150	1260	1375	1495	1620	1750	1885	2025	2170	2320

*The character gains 1 statistic point upon reaching a level written in **boldface**.

M If you're going to be using level-based progression, you might want to base the experience bonuses received from defeating opponents on the level of that opponent. You might for instance give one point for enemies that are between one level lower and one level higher than the PC, two points for enemies that are two levels or more higher, and no points at all for those that are two levels or more lower. Alternatively if you want a finer degree of control (and especially if you foresee a lot of monsters being killed) multiply all the values in the XP level table by ten and use the following rule: a monster is worth 3XP, minus 1 for every level that it is below the character's own to a minimum of zero, or plus one for every level that it is above the character's own to a maximum of ten.

Gradual Progression

Some people find level-based advancement too unrealistic. People don't usually improve their abilities in sudden leaps and bounds, it's a gradual process that can take months or even years. Gradual progression provides a gentler learning curve that allows a character to improve a little at a time. Its major advantage is that it allows PC's to improve a little bit every few gaming sessions, whereas it could take a level-based character ten or fifteen sessions to improve at some of the higher levels of ability.

Gradual progression is fuelled by experience points just like level-based progression. The difference is that the player can spend her points at any time between sessions. The cost of increasing the level of a particular aspect of your character varies depending on what it is and what its current level is. The higher a skill rises, the more expensive it will be to improve it to the next level. You may only improve an aspect by one level at a time regardless of how many XP you have to spend, and must play more sessions before you can improve it again.

N Usually a skill can only be raised if the character has made use of it during the preceding session of play. This is to represent her getting better through practice. Why should she get better at linguistics if she never talks in foreign languages? How could she improve her carpentry skills if she hasn't touched a lump of wood in months? The exception is if a long period of game time occurs between one session and the next, during which time she could have been practicing whatever disciplines she desires.

Suggested Cost of Improving Various Aspects

- Statistics cost a number of points equal to 5 multiplied by the level it is raised to

If you want to raise your Power statistic from 3 to 4, it costs 4 x 5 = 20 points

- Skills cost a number of points equal to 3 multiplied by the level it is raised to

If you want to raise your Acrobatics skill from 2 to 3 it costs 3 x 3 = 9 points

- New skills may be purchased for three points each, and start at level 1

If you want to buy the Electronics skill at level 1, it will cost you three points

- New SFX cost 5 points plus double the number of SFX that you have already

Assuming you already have three SFX, a new one will cost you 5 + (3 x 2) = 11 points

Random Progression

One of the least common methods of character advancement is random progression. Here it is down to the dice to decide if a skill or statistic improves or not. This is an interesting way of dealing with the problem which can sometimes cause problems when PC's in the same group evolve at vastly different rates due to ill fortune on the part of one of the players. That said, it may well be the most accurate modelling of how real people learn and improve. It does require a little more bookkeeping on the player's part though.

Skills are improved through either practice or trial and error. The first time that a player fails an ability roll involving a particular skill during a single session of play, she should make a note of it. Putting a small tick next to the skill's name usually does the trick. At the end of the session, roll two dice for each skill that has been used. If both dice roll higher than the skill's current level then that skill increases by one point. In addition to this the player may elect one skill that she has not already ticked to also roll for. This bonus skill advancement roll represents the character practicing or studying. You may not roll to advance a skill more than once per session.

Gaining New Skills is also possible. Using random progression, the player may choose (or randomly roll) one new skill at level one when he has successfully gained five skill increases. The player should therefore keep a careful eye on how many times he has thus far gained skill increases. The easiest way is to keep a running tally on the record sheet somewhere, and rub the marks out when they reach five.

Statistics improve when the PC makes extensive use of the skills associated with them. When a skill advances, put a tick next to the statistic that it is most closely associated with. By way of example, close combat is normally associated with Power. Once the statistic has five marks adjacent to it, the ticks are erased and the statistic increases by one.

It may seem that statistics with more associated skills than others, particularly Intellect and Spirit, would be capable of increasing far more readily than others. It is certainly true that these statistics have more capacity to increase from their starting values than the others. However, Grace and Power are routinely used in combat. In action-centred games the skills associated with them will be used pretty much every session. The balance is not perfect though, and the mental statistics do tend to increase further and more quickly than the physical ones.

SFX increase based on the number of times the player burns dice to activate them. Keep a running tally of how many dice you burn during the session. When the number of dice burnt exceeds ten multiplied by the number of SFX you have already, you may select a new SFX from the list provided by the module you are playing. The number of dice burnt so far is then reset to zero and you must start again.

Which Experience System is Best?

This is a tricky question to answer. Everyone will have their preferences just like all other aspects of the Myriad system. Here are a few snippets of information that might help you decide.

Level-Based Progression is the most traditional method. It works best in games that are mostly centred around the age-old adage of killing monsters and taking their stuff. The optional rules regarding the experience value of enemies are particularly useful in the hack-and-slash genre, and fans of that kind of game are likely to be more au fait with the idea of levelling up than the more esoteric forms of progression. It is not however a good method for games that rely more on character interaction and politics than fighting.

Gradual Progression is good middle ground. It is best employed in games that are meant to be adaptable to a number of different styles of play. Because the players have a great amount of control over how and when they increase in ability, it will also result in the most capable player characters. Though it can be used for out-and-out combat games, it is probably not the best method since combat stats will soon be maxed out to the detriment of other skills.

Random Progression is an odd beast. It is best suited to games that attempt to model real life, especially those where the player is not meant to have complete control over who her character is. Though this is technically quite realistic – even people's personalities are largely a result of the personalities of the people that they grew up with – it is not on the whole a very popular method with players. Use this one with care!

The Basics

Like most role-playing games (RPG's) this is a game about imaginary characters created by the players, and the adventures that they have under the guidance of the Guide. Each player speaks for his or her character, while the Guide takes control of the bit parts, the villains, and other people who are essential to the story being told. Characters controlled by the players are frequently called Player Characters (PC's) and those controlled by the Guide are logically Non-Player Characters (NPC's). Though it is ultimately the Guide that determines whether the actions performed by the PC's are successful or not, he is ably assisted by these simple rules.

So why do we need rules?

Put simply, you don't. It's quite possible to run through an entire session without touching a single rule. The Guide can decide what works and what doesn't without any recourse to this manual, weaving the actions of the entire group of players into one coherent story. Group storytelling can be a lot of fun, but it is not without its problems. Sometimes even amongst the best of friends there will be disagreements. Even when these can be amicably discussed and a compromise agreed upon, this slows down play and breaks the flow. How enjoyable would a film be if the actors stopped every five minutes to argue about the plot? Thus we have the rules, useful mediators for those times when arguments might otherwise occur.

The Ability Test _ the Keystone of the System

The key point of contention in any RPG, the one that could occur more times than any other, is whether a character should be able to do what her player wants her to do. Different people have different levels of ability after all. The Myriad System has one simple mechanic to deal with this kind of problem known as the Ability Test. There are three different factors specific to your character that affect how you should make an ability test. Each factor has a varying level of influence over matters and represents a different aspect of your character. The factors are called Statistics, Skills and SFX. The Three Esses if you will. So what do these faceless terms mean?

Statistics define the very basics of your character's physical makeup from how strong he is to how clever he is or even how sharp his senses are. They are the most fundamental pieces of information, and each applies to a very wide variety of situations. Each has a value, called its 'level', which is expressed as a number between 1 and 10. Values between 1 and 5 represent levels of ability attainable by normal humans whereas levels of 6 to 10 are reserved for entities with abilities beyond the scope of mere mortals, such as fantasy heroes and supernatural creatures.

The four recommended statistics are Power, Grace, Intellect and Spirit. More information about these can be found on page 13. In fact a module may have as many or few stats as the author desires with whatever names and functions seem most appropriate to the setting.

Skills tell you what your character has learnt in her lifetime, what talents she possesses and what abilities she has gained. Though not as wide-reaching as statistics, they are far more focused. A high level of skill is far more likely to help you succeed at a task than an equal level of statistic, but is applicable in far fewer cases. Like statistics they are rated in levels, this time ranging from 1 to 5. A level 1 skill represents a rank amateur or hobbyist with little talent for the particular skill. A level 5 skill indicates one of the leading experts in the field, unrivalled in the whole world.

What skills are available is even more likely than statistics to vary depending on the module you are playing. The kind of skills that would be useful in a medieval feudal setting are unlikely to crop up in a futuristic space opera and vice versa. Where would a simple farmer go to learn how to fly a starship? Why would an astronaut ever learn to be an expert blacksmith? As a result most modules will have their own lists of skills, although examples for the more common genres are given on page 53.

SFX is short for Special Effects. These are the factors that make the heroes stand out from the crowd, the techniques that allow them to do things that ordinary folk cannot. Exactly what SFX do can vary immensely. A powerful magician's spells are SFX, but at the same time so is a pro wrestler's famous 'finishing move'. Put more simply, the term SFX applies to abilities that break the usual rules of the game, or even of physical reality. If a particular effect is beyond the capabilities of a human, or just very, very flashy, then chances are it's an SFX.

Like skills, SFX are specific to the setting. A wizard's spells are SFX, but so are the cinematic stunts pulled off by modern-day martial artists or the cybernetically enhanced antics of humans from the future. There are plenty of examples in the Samples chapter.

Making an Ability Test

So now you know what the three major components of an ability test are, how do you make one? Simple, but make sure you have the right equipment first. You will need some ordinary six-sided dice. These can be salvaged from old board games or bought in any good hobby store. You won't need more than ten, and five ought to be enough for most players.

When you declare that your character is going to do something that the Guide deems is tricky enough to have a chance of failure, but is not so hard that it ought to be impossible, he will ask you to make an ability test. More specifically he might say, "Make me a Power / Athletics test". What does this mean? Well, Power refers to the statistic that is applicable to the task, while Athletics refers to the skill that is most likely to be of use to you given the action you are attempting. In this example Power has been chosen, so clearly the action requires a lot of strength or stamina. A Power / Athletics test would most likely be called for when trying to lift a heavy weight, march for several miles without pause or smash down a door.

Now that you know which statistic and which skill are appropriate, take a look at the levels of both on your character sheet. The level of the attribute tells you how many dice you are allowed to roll. You do not add up the results of this roll, but instead pick the highest value rolled on a single die. To this you add the level of your skill. To complete the previous example, if your character has a Power attribute of 3 and an Athletics skill of 1, you roll three dice and choose the highest, then add 1 to obtain a result. Assuming you rolled 3, 5 and 2, your total would be 6.

SFX and Burning Sixes

After you've rolled the dice there's something else you can do to affect your action. For every six you roll you may activate an SFX. You can only use each six once, so this is known as 'burning sixes'. Once a six is burnt, it can't be burnt again. It does however still count as your highest rolling die so don't worry about adjusting your total. The cost of an SFX is the number of sixes you have to burn in order to activate it. Most of the time it's 1. If you don't have enough sixes then you can't activate that effect. Most SFX can only be activated during certain types of rolls.

There is an advantage however to not burning your sixes. Every unburnt six adds a cumulative bonus of +1 to your final result. The fewer sixes you burn, the more likely you are to succeed. You must therefore balance the advantages gained from activating SFX against the advantages of having a higher final total.

Success and Failure

Now you have a result in the form of a number, but how does that help you decide if your character succeeded or failed in her task? There are two basic methods for determining this. The first, sometimes called the Opposed Roll, occurs when you are acting in direct opposition to another character. Here, both participants make an ability test as described above and whoever gets the highest result wins with ties going to whoever initiated the action. The two parties may be required to test different statistics and skills to one another. A thief attempting to sneak past a guard for instance would pit her Grace / Stealth against his Spirit / Perception.

If nobody is obviously opposing the character, then the Guide assigns a Target Number (TN) instead. If the player's result is greater than or equal to the TN, she succeeds. Below is a list of example TN's and a brief description of the kind of difficulty each represents. What exactly constitutes an Average difficulty action is purely down to the Guide. Mathematically though, it would mean the kind of task that the average man in the street (statistic 3, skill 1) would have a better than 80% chance of succeeding at. Here are a few select examples of different types of action to further illustrate the point.

Standard Target Numbers

Foolproof	Easy	Average	Tricky	Difficult
TN4	TN5	TN6	TN7	TN8

Very Hard	Infeasible	Superhuman	Godlike	Impossible
TN9	TN11	TN13	TN15	TN17

- Tearing your way out of a wet paper bag – TN4 Power / Athletics test
- Reading a large print book by the light of the moon – TN5 Spirit / Perception test
- Filling in your tax returns correctly unassisted – TN6 Intellect /Academia test
- Ballroom dancing without treading on your partner's feet – TN7 Grace / Acrobatics test
- Shoulder-barging through a sturdy wooden door – TN8 Power / Athletics test
- Getting a politician to give a direct answer to a question – TN9 Spirit / Persuasion test
- Throwing a dart through a letterbox at 50 metres range – TN11 Power / Ranged Combat test
- Building a fully functional ocean liner single-handedly – TN13 Intellect / Mechanics test
- Catching a bullet in the bare hands without being hurt – TN15 Grace / Ranged Combat test
- Shattering a planet by kicking a geological fault line – TN17 Power / Close Combat test

Opposed Test Modifiers

Making an opposed test is not always as simple as seeing who can roll the highest. Sometimes one side has a distinct advantage over the other that has nothing to do with being more skilful or having a higher level of statistic. Trying to sneak past an alert guard in broad daylight is a lot more difficult than on a dark and moonless night, or in a thick cloud of fog for example. This kind of advantage is represented in the Myriad system by test modifiers. If one character in an opposed roll has a small advantage, then she gets to add 1 to her final result. If she has a large advantage she might even get +2. Modifiers of +3 or more are a little overwhelming and should only be used in cases where the advantage is likewise overwhelming. To continue the previous example, the sneak thief would only get a +3 bonus if the guard was temporarily blinded, for instance by a flash bomb. Modifiers aren't applied to unopposed tests since they are already worked into the TN. Here are a few more examples.

- Pushing an enemy over a cliff – when they are standing on a patch of ice (+1)
- Hacking into a government database – using the very latest hi-tech computer rig (+1)
- Confronting a vampire without fleeing – when you have a holy symbol to believe in (+1)
- Shooting at a distant foe – using arrows enchanted with a target-finding spell (+2)
- Beating a supercomputer at chess – after giving it a nasty virus (+2)
- Spotting a stealthy enemy at night – using thermal vision binoculars (+2)

Full Ability Test Example

Just to make matters doubly clear, here is a brief example of how a full ability test might run.

Helen has decided that her character would like to jump over a wide chasm that is preventing her from reaching the fleeing assassin whom she is chasing. The pit is a good nine or ten metres wide and that's a long jump even for the most highly trained human athlete. Fortunately, Helen's character isn't human. She's a species of alien with spring-loaded back legs like a kangaroo. This doesn't change the TN of the action however as all difficulties are based on average human statistics. The Guide has accordingly assigned a TN of 9 to the task. On the other hand her alien ancestry gives her access to an SFX called Mighty Leap that will no doubt help.

The Guide tells Helen that this is to be a Power / Athletics action. Helen's character has a power rating of 4 and Athletics at level 3. She therefore rolls four dice, obtaining results of 2, 4, 5 and 6. So far her roll is worth 6 + 3 = 9, a very respectable score and easily enough to clear the gap. She also has a six to burn. She could use it to gain a further +1 to her roll for a total of 10, but she already knows that she has succeeded.

The description for the Mighty Leap SFX says 'burn one six on a jumping test to gain a free close combat attack action with a +1 bonus'. That means she can not only clear the chasm, she can also kick the fleeing assassin in the head as she does so! Helen burns her six, which nevertheless remains her highest rolling die (her total is still 9) and prepares to make her attack roll.

O Sixes don't occur on rolls all that often, even when you've got a whole heap of dice to roll thanks to a high level of attribute. If you want to create a game that relies more heavily on SFX abilities you should allow players to burn fives as well as sixes, or could even rate your SFX based on what result dice you need to burn to activate it. It is recommended that the +1 bonus for unburnt dice should only apply to sixes though, or statistics would become far more important than skills.

Extended Actions

Sometimes it might not seem appropriate to allow a single roll of the dice to dictate the outcome of a lengthy series of events, especially if those events have far-reaching consequences. Take for example the case of an inventor building himself his own personal spaceship. Certainly you could deal with this by having the player make an Intellect / Mechanics roll, but is that really enough? Making a spaceship is a big project. The inventor will need to draw up a blueprint, acquire parts and (probably) a few extra people to help with construction, and finally build the thing. At the very least, each part of the process would require its own ability test not to mention a goodly amount of time.

An extended action is by definition a task that requires more than one test to accomplish. The tests in question need not all involve the same attributes and skills either. The Guide should first divide the task into sections as we did with the example above, and then allot a base TN, a progress target and a duration to each. The player may then make an ability test versus the base TN. If the roll fails, the character loses progress points equal to the amount it failed by, to a minimum of zero. If it succeeds, then the character gains progress points equal to the amount it succeeded by, plus 1 bonus point for the success. Once the progress target has been reached, that particular section of the task has been completed. The duration is the amount of time consumed in the process of a single roll of the dice. It is up to the Guide whether the various sections of the task need to be completed in a specific order or not.

N Some sections of extended actions may require entire adventures to complete, and cannot be left to a series of dice rolls. Acquiring the resources for the spaceship for example would take a whole lot of work. Those things are expensive you know!

N While one character is attempting an extended action, spare a little thought for what the other PC's are doing. They can help with the extended action if they like, since once begun anyone can contribute to – or subtract from – the completion point total for the task. On the other hand they may want to do other things while the inventor is slaving away. Try not to neglect the other PC's while one of them is performing an action that could take hours or even days.

Extended Action Example

The 'building a spaceship' example has already been divided neatly into three sections, namely Design, Acquire Resources and Build, so we may as well expand upon it. The Guide dictates that both the Design and Acquire Resources sections must be completed before the character can begin the Build section, but that it doesn't matter which of the two is completed first. We will assume that the inventor working on the project is filthy rich and will have no problem acquiring the parts he needs to build his rocket. That leaves just the design stage to be done before he can begin to build.

Designing something as large as a spaceship is pretty time-consuming, so the Guide sets a duration of eight hours on it. That's a full day's work for a nine-to-five job. Each roll made will take the inventor eight game hours to perform. Don't forget that he will need to sleep as well! The Guide sets a progress target of ten and a base difficulty of TN7 for the design stage. The ability tests will be Intellect / Mechanics, both of which the inventor has in abundance. Let's assume that his first three rolls are 9, 6 and 10 and that he works on his project for eight hours a day. The first roll nets him three progress points. That's one for succeeding, plus two bonus points because the result was two points over target. The second roll however failed by one, so he loses one of those progress points. The roll of ten gains him another four for a total of six so far. He needs to amass another four progress points before this part of the project is complete. If he can roll another ten on his next attempt, he will be ready to proceed to the building stage. So far though designing the rocket has already taken him three days.

Conflict, the Opposed Extended Action

We have dealt with how to resolve short, simple actions and how to adjudicate long-winded actions that could go on for an indefinite amount of time. There is only one major type of resolution left to cover – that of Conflict. Conflict does not need to be representative of the typical fantasy swordfight or even a mass gun battle. It can by definition mean any situation where two or more parties vie against each other to reach separate, usually contradictory goals. Poker players are involved in a conflict of skill to see who can win the most money at the gaming table. Politicians arguing over new guidelines are engaged in a conflict of wits to see who can get their bill through into common law. It doesn't always have to be about blood and sand.

Any extended action that is being hindered by a second party could be resolved as a conflict. The two examples that we shall explore in this manual are just the most common. Mortal combat involves foes attempting to kill or subdue one another. A good example would be the gladiatorial games of ancient Rome. Social combat is more to do with two parties arguing over something in an attempt to persuade one another, or an independent party, that their views are correct. A good example of that would be a court case, where the minister for prosecution tries to persuade the jury that the prisoner is guilty, and the minister for defence tries to establish his innocence.

The Attack and Defence Statistics

Every conflict has an associated attack statistic and defence statistic. These are not statistics in their own right, merely ones that the character already possesses. They vary depending on the type of conflict engaged in. With our two examples, mortal combat uses the two physical statistics Power and Grace for attack and defence respectively, while social combat uses the two mental statistics Intellect and Spirit instead. The attack statistic is used, appropriately enough, for attacking one's enemies, whether that means clubbing their skulls in with a mace or hurting their self-esteem with a cutting remark. The defence statistic is used for avoiding the consequences of an attack, i.e. dodging the blow or wriggling out of a socially awkward situation.

M Module makers may wish to us the attack and defence statistics model to help decide which statistics players should possess in the first place. The default four statistics for example are based on a game that contains the two standard types of conflict, mortal and social. If you wanted to introduce a third type of conflict that was very important to the theme of the game, say for instance Car Racing for a Formula 1 RPG, you could introduce two new statistics to be the attack and defence statistics for that, maybe Acceleration and Handling.

Rounds and Rolling Initiative

The order in which people act is very important to conflict. If a swordsman is killed by his foe before he can attack, he can no longer make that attack. Likewise if a public speaker loses all his confidence to hecklers in the audience, he will not be able to finish his rousing speech. For this reason we have rounds and initiative.

The round, as many roleplayers will no doubt already be aware, is an indeterminate length of time just long enough for every participant to take one action. The exact length of one round is unimportant, and will in fact vary from one type of conflict to the next just as the duration of an extended action can be anything from a few seconds to a few minutes. In mortal combat, one round is about six to ten seconds. In social combat it can be up to a minute long depending on how much everyone has to say. What is more important is that everyone gets a chance to make one action and that they do so in order.

Initiative is the order that participants in a particular conflict act in. At the beginning of a round everyone involved rolls one die and adds the result to their defence statistic. The person with the highest result acts first, followed by the person with the second highest result and so on. If two people act on the same initiative, then they act at precisely the same time. Even if one kills the other while resolving his action, the dispatched opponent still gets to make his own action before dying because it technically occurred in the same instant.

Once every PC and NPC involved in the conflict has resolved their actions, a new round of combat begins and everyone rolls for initiative a second time to determine the order for the new round of combat.

N You do not have to act the instant that your initiative comes around. You can if you prefer wait to see what everyone else is doing before taking your action, or in order to act simultaneously with an ally. See the optional rule below for another method of dealing with this.

O Some people may think that players acting later in the round have a slight advantage over those who act earlier in the round in that they know what their opponent is going to do and can react to it instantly, ditching whatever plans they had made for the round. In social combat it is important that they be able to do this, as the art of arguing is all about adapting to new developments as smoothly as possible. In mortal combat it might seem a little unfair.

To solve this problem, the Guide may require players to declare what their characters are attempting to do in reverse initiative order, lowest value to highest, before they are resolved in the normal order. Players are not allowed to change their minds after their action is declared and must either continue to perform the action they declared or, if there is a very good reason why they really shouldn't perform the action when the time comes, forfeit their action for the round. This means for example that if someone manages to kill an enemy that someone else on a lower initiative was also aiming to dispatch, the slower fighter will waste his action striking at a corpse.

The Attack Test

The most important part of any conflict is the attack test. This need not be a physical attack, it is merely a method by which you attempt to remove your opponent from the contest. In social combat, an attack is often a cutting jibe, or a logical reason why the foe's own schemes would not work. Regardless of the cosmetic details, an attack test is resolved in the same manner. The attacker makes an opposed Attack Statistic / Attack Skill test against the defender's Defence Statistic / Defence Skill. If the defender wins the test then the attack misses. If the attacker wins then the defender may take damage (see below.)

The attack and defence statistics, as has already been discussed above, is determined by the type of conflict that is being engaged in, i.e. Power and Grace for mortal combat. The attack and defence skill however is determined by the type of attack. Shooting a gun at someone for instance would mean using the Ranged Combat skill. In the default system the defence skill is the same as the attack skill.

M If you prefer, you can give your game defence skills that are separate from attack skills. For example you might require players to us the Dodge skill to avoid ranged attacks and the Block skill to avoid melee or unarmed attacks. This is particularly useful if your game has a large variety of different skills for various kinds of weaponry or fighting styles but you don't want players to have to own the entire set in order to defend themselves against all of them. For example a character with Dodge could use it to defend against a character using a Firearms skill, an Archery skill or a Thrown Weapons skill rather than having to own all three attack skills.

Sample Modifiers for use in Conflict Situations

Modifiers Applicable to All Forms of Mortal Combat			
-1	Dim lighting, i.e. moonlight	-1	You have the high ground
-2	Total darkness, i.e. a dark cavern	-1	Unstable footing, i.e. slippery ground

Modifiers for Ranged Combat Only		Modifiers for Close Combat Only	
+1	Firing at a large target	+1	Fighting an unarmed opponent (while you yourself are armed)
+2	Firing at a very large target		
-1	Firing at a small target	-1	Fighting while lying down
-2	Firing at a very small target	-1	Fighting underwater / in zero gravity
-1	Firing at a target at medium range	-1	Fighting in cramped conditions
-2	Firing at a target at long range	-2	Fighting while forcibly restrained

Scaling in Combat

You may have noticed that some of the entries in the modifier table above are a little vague, particularly the modifiers for firing at small or distant targets. This is because these modifiers depend heavily on the scale of the combat you are involved in. What do we mean by scale? Quite simply, this refers to the size of the entity making the attack. Larger entities take longer to turn, and will thus find it more difficult to make the minute adjustments to angle that would be required to hit a smaller target.

For a human, a small target would be child-sized and a tiny one about the size of a cat. However for a tank, anything smaller than another tank is going to be tricky to hit and result in a negative modifier. Similarly, what is long range to a human isn't nearly so distant to a tank's powerful cannon, so range values will also change considerably based on the attacker's scale. The quickest and easiest way to deal with ranges and odd sized targets is for the Guide to make a spot judgement, and this is most sufficient for the vast majority of cases.

O If you don't want the pressure of spot judgements, or would like a more precise 'official' ruling on how to scale combat, then begin by finding the firing character's size scale in the table below to tell you the approximate range limits. To find the modifier for the target's size, count up or down the rows of the table until you reach the one corresponding to the target. Each row you move upwards represents a -1 modifier to the attack, and each row you count downwards is a +1 bonus. For example, a child's scale is two steps above a car's scale and thus represents a -2 penalty.

Scale	Example	Short	Medium	Long
Miniscule	Coin, insect	0 - 60cm	60 - 150cm	150 - 300cm
Tiny	Cat, large rat	0 - 10m	10 - 25m	25 - 50m
Small	Child, dwarf	0 - 50m	50 - 125m	125m - 250m
Average	Adult human	0 - 200m	200 - 500m	500 - 1000m
Large	Horse, family car	0 - 500m	500 - 1,500m	1,500 - 3,000m
Huge	Tank, star fighter	0 - 0.5 miles	0.5 - 1.5 miles	1.5 - 3 miles
Immense	Aircraft carrier	0 - 2 mile	2 - 5 miles	5 - 10 miles

Descriptive Bonus – Stunts and Quotes

When a player declares an action they describe what their character is going to do. Some people will simply say (for example) 'I attack Doctor Apocrypha with my laser beam vision!' or something of that ilk. Others go into a bit more detail, with a rare few reaching cinematic levels of choreography. This is actively encouraged in the Myriad system. Combat can be very boring if all anyone says is 'I attack blah with blah' and leaves it at that. The Guide may award a +1 bonus to any attack action that is accompanied by a particularly imaginative, tactical or amusing description. Even a +1 bonus is a substantial edge, so such bonuses should be given sparingly. In mortal combat a descriptive bonus is called a Stunt because it often entails fancy acrobatics. In social combat it is called a Quote because it involves a spoken word or phrase.

The quote is an important part of social combat. In a fist fight, declaring your action can be as simple as saying "I hit him!" In a full-blown discussion, people will want to know what your character is saying to support her argument so that they can respond to it with points of their own. Social combat is basically a formalised discussion where each character makes a statement in turn in response to statements made previously.

Examples of Stunts in Mortal Combat

- 'I use my laser-beam vision to cut through the RSJ that's holding up the roof above Doctor Apocrypha, causing a large chunk of masonry to fall on his head.'
- 'I slash at the evil dark wizard's exposed chest violently, the keening voice of my razor-sharp magical sword Oblivion singing in the air like the cry of the hawk!'
- 'I grab the fallen gang leader by the lapels of his leather jacket and throw his dazed body directly at the other muggers with a blood-curdling yell.'
- 'I prime the barrel of my laser pistol with a deft flick of the wrist, level it at the charging mutant and say "Hey ugly! Time for a facial!" before unloading into his twisted skull.'
- 'I smash a chair over the vampire's head. As she grins evilly and spreads her arms to show that she is unharmed, I drive the sharp splintered end of the broken chair leg through her heart.'
- 'I open the traditional mobster's violin case to reveal not a tommy gun but a Stradivarius. While the Mafiosi are still laughing, I batter the Don over the head with my violin.'
- 'I swing around the asteroid with the bad guys in pursuit, then when I'm on the opposite side I open up with both laser cannons, blasting a hole clean through and hitting the enemy vessel.'

Examples of Quotes in Social Combat

- 'If you would show me the benevolence of sparing my miserable life, o wise and noble king, I shall demonstrate my contrition by taking a place in the front ranks of your mighty army.'
- 'You really don't want to suck out MY blood mister vampire. I'm very high in cholesterol. Besides, my friend here's a vintage year. 1966 Eu de Vivre, a real classic.'
- 'The Galactic Emperor is dead, his empire crumbling even now! I say we wrest the weapons from his guards, storm the palace and put an end to the rest of the scum! Who's with me?'
- 'Either you tell me what I want to know right now, or I'm going to jam this red hot branding iron into the first handy orifice I can find about your person.'
- 'If it wasn't you that poisoned Professor Vermillion, perhaps then you'd like to explain why you visited the chemist on April fourth and purchased a small bottle of strychnine?'
- 'Lipstick on my collar darling? Ah yes, I was thinking of buying you some for our anniversary but then I thought, 'what if it doesn't wash out?' so I'm testing it first.'

Resilience, Damage and Armour

Now that we know how to make an attack, we also need to know how many attacks a person can withstand before being knocked out of the running, whether that means being KO'd literally, shouted into submission, or tied up so tightly in logic that she cannot continue the argument. For this we need three new values, Resilience, Damage and Armour.

Resilience, like the attack and defence statistics, is a value determined by the type of conflict. In mortal combat, resilience is measured by Wounds, representing the character's physical condition. In social combat, Resolve measures the character's patience and willpower in carrying her cause to victory. The mechanical effects however are all the same. Each resilience value represents how much punishment the character can take before giving up, falling unconscious or whatever. It is usually represented on the record sheet as a row of boxes which must be crossed out as the character takes damage. When the last box is crossed out, she is out of the running.

Forms of conflict that are potentially lethal have a second row of boxes underneath the resilience row called critical boxes. When normal resilience boxes have all been crossed out the character is incapacitated in some way (i.e. knocked out, or immobilised by psychic powers) and can not make any actions until revived. Any further damage comes from the critical boxes. When critical boxes run out, the character is dead or permanently affected in some other way. For instance if the conflict is about causing fear he might be driven stark staring mad with terror.

Damage represents how likely a particular attack is to knock a foe out of the conflict. The amount of damage varies with the type of weapon used. A sword will have a higher damage rating than a dagger for instance. In social combat, where the only true weapon is words, the damage rating is usually one. The Guide may grant a bonus to the damage of a social attack for a particularly good quote, or if physical evidence is produced to support the attacker's cause. Regardless of the type of conflict, damage refers to the number of dice you will roll.

Characters aren't the only things that can have SFX. Items of equipment can too, and that includes weapons. A pack of bullets might have an Armour Piercing SFX for example. This could work in a number of ways, such as by lowering the target's effective armour rating, or allowing the player to burn sixes to get free wounds without having to roll to see if they penetrate armour. You can find a few examples of equipment-specific SFX including some sample weapon upgrades starting on page 65.

Armour is a measure of how much protection the defender has against the attack. This is most commonly in the form of protective garments used in mortal combat to deflect blows, hence the name. Unlike Defence statistics, armour is always about nullifying the damage caused by an attack that strikes home rather than avoiding that attack in the first place.

Although armour is mostly used in mortal combat, there is nothing to stop you introducing armour values for other types of conflict as well, perhaps as SFX or items of equipment. For example if your game includes rules for psychic combat, maybe brainwave-blocking headbands can be used to provide a little protection.

Making a Damage Roll

When an attack lands, the attacker rolls a number of dice equal to the damage rating of the weapon or attack. Every die that rolls higher than the target's armour rating causes one point of damage. The defender must then cross off a number of boxes on the appropriate resilience line equal to the amount of damage caused. If he crosses out the entire line he can fight no longer. If the resilience line has a critical line associated with it, any further damage taken applies to that instead. If the critical line runs out, the character is dead or suffers some other permanent malady. When only one side in the conflict still has members active, they are declared the winner.

Different types of conflict have their own Resilience lines, and losing an entire line only precludes the character from that kind of conflict unless the Guide says otherwise. An exhausted warrior on the battlefield may still be allowed to shout moral support to his comrades even if he is too wounded to continue fighting. Similarly more than one social combat has broken down when an impatient heckler, having completely run out of Resolve, resorted to mortal combat to end the debate by more permanent means.

Manoeuvring During Conflict

Most of the time it is easy enough to assume that anyone involved in the conflict can attack anyone else at any time. Sometimes though, this is a touch unrealistic. How would a party of brawlers cope with struggling up a steep hill to attack a phalanx of archers at the top? By the time they'd reached the enemy they'd be full of arrows already. The Guide therefore needs to make a snap judgement about how far the character can move in one round. The rule of thumb is this: a character may move three units each round plus one more for every level she has in her defence statistic. She can move up to three times this distance if she forgoes her action for the current round. In mortal combat, one unit is equal to one metre.

The Guide is fully at liberty to make changes to these values depending on the circumstances. The aforementioned charge uphill might restrict characters to moving twice their defence statistic in metres when not performing an action due to the difficulty of moving up a steep incline. Similarly, running through a thick tar pool may be completely impossible.

An Extended Example of Mortal Combat

Bronthar the Barbarian is facing off against his nemesis, the evil archer Nefarius. Unfortunately for Bronthar, the archer has seen him coming– probably something to do with the yodelling war cry – and is preparing to sling arrows in his direction. The two are forty metres apart at the beginning of combat. Bronthar's Grace is 3. He can therefore move 6 metres per round for free, but since he has no projectile weapons he's got nothing much to do while he charges, so he can treble that to 18 metres. He won't be able to attack Nefarius until the third round of combat.

There is no need to roll initiative at this point. Since only Nefarius is going to be making an action, there is no need to work out how quickly he manages it. Funnily enough he's going to try and shoot Bronthar with an arrow. He makes an opposed test using his Power / Ranged Combat versus Bronthar's Grace / Ranged Combat and fails. The evil archer curses through his teeth and strings another arrow.

The next round comes and Bronthar is now (40 – 18 = 22) metres away. Again he takes no action so Nefarius is free to try and shoot him again. This time the opposed test is a success! Bronthar could be in trouble now. He's wearing the thick cured hides of several yaks, as most barbarians from the cold steppe do. This isn't the best kind of armour but it does afford some protection with an armour rating of 1. Nefarius' bow deals three dice of damage, on which he rolls a 1, a 2 and a 6. The 1 doesn't exceed Bronthar's armour of 1 and so does nothing. The other two dice breach his armour however, causing two points of damage. Since this is mortal combat, Bronthar must cross off two boxes on his wounds line. He's a strong lad though, and has another five boxes to cross before he passes out.

A new round dawns and Bronthar is only (22 – 18 = 4) metres away. That's less than his free movement range of 6, so he can get within stabbing range of his foe and still have an attack. This doesn't mean that he will automatically act first however, the two must roll for initiative. Bronthar rolls a 5, to which he adds his Grace of 3 for a total of 8. Nefarius has a Grace level of 4, but he lucks out and rolls a 1 for a total of 5. Bronthar gets to act first. He takes a deep breath and bellows 'Now the bleak winds of the frozen deserts shall scorch the flesh from your bones, betrayer!' and brings his magical sword around in a sweeping arc. The Guide is suitably impressed with this speech and grants him a +1 stunt bonus to the attack roll, which succeeds easily.

Poor Nefarius is only wearing ordinary clothing which doesn't provide any protection against the barbarian's sword. Every die of damage will hit automatically. What's worse, being magical, the sword has an abominably high damage rating of five! Nefarius only has four boxes of wounds, so he must cross them all off and is KO'd. The final point of damage is taken from his critical line, leaving two uncrossed criticals. If he takes two more points of damage, Nefarius will die. Fortunately Bronthar is not interested in killing his foe. He is a hero after all. Instead he settles for taking the archer captive and dragging him off to the nearest town to face judgement for his evil deeds.

An Extended Example of Social Combat

Gigaton Man, as so often happens to superheroes, has been hauled up in front of a tribunal mask, cape and all to stand trial on the crime of causing criminal damage to city hall. The prosecution doesn't seem to care that this damage was caused while preventing the sinister Mister E. Guest, a super villain of some note, from poisoning the entire city's water supply. The superhero and the lawyer must engage in social combat to see whether the hero can defend his heavy-handed tactics, or if he will be slapped with another long sentence of community service.

The two roll for initiative using their Spirit, as this is the defensive statistic for social combat, and the council for the defence wins. The lawyer must now come up with a good quote to start the debate off. Shuffling his notes into order, he smugly begins his opening spiel with the classic, 'Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the man before you may be known to you as a hero of this city, but today he stands before you a criminal, yes a criminal just as guilty as the felons he professes to protect us from!' He makes a social attack roll, pitting his Intellect /Persuasion against Gigaton Man's Spirit / Persuasion. The lawyer wins, so evidently the jury was suitably impressed by this grandiose statement. However the quote wasn't very memorable so it only does 1 point of damage to the superhero's resolve.

Now it's the defendant's turn. 'The damage was caused in the name of bringing a far greater threat to justice!' he cries (to the tune of banging gavels and cries for order.) He makes his own social attack roll and also succeeds. However the Guide has decided already that Gigaton Man has a very strong case for his defence. To represent this he grants the attack two points of damage, which the lawyer crosses off his own resolve line.

The next round, and this time it is the defendant who wins the initiative. 'With respect your Honour,' he continues, 'the whole city would be enjoying a cool, refreshing drink of cyanide right now if I hadn't struck Mister E. Guest with that… er… priceless statue of the founding fathers of the city." The Guide finds this rather amusing, giving not only a bonus point of damage, but a bonus of +1 to the attack roll too. Gigaton Man wins the opposed roll with ease. The lawyer only had two points of resolve left, and losing them has broken his concentration. Defeated, he cannot continue to champion his cause effectively any longer. He mumbles and stutters his way through the rest of the case and makes a total shambles of it. Gigaton Man is free to go and save the city from evil once more.

There's no reason why you have to stick to just the two examples of conflict given here. For example maybe you want to write an RPG where the focus is romance. You could use the same rules to adjudicate a 'conflict' wherein a hopeful suitor is trying to win the love of a particularly eligible lady, or where two girls are competing for the attentions of one man. Just use your imagination, select the appropriate attack, defence and health statistics, maybe insert a few special SFX or 'damage' ratings for a bunch of flowers or box of chocolates and away you go.

Healing and Recovery

Many types of damage (i.e. resolve damage taken in social combat) come back very quickly indeed once the conflict is over. It's easiest to assume that all resolve damage vanishes the instant that one side or the other has won the conflict. Physical damage such as wounds on the other hand usually takes a lot longer to heal. Characters recover one wound box every time they get a good night's sleep, and one critical box for every three times they get a good night's sleep. It is only possible to gain this bonus once per day, you can't just sleep non-stop until you're better. For example, if a character is suffering the effects of three crossed wound boxes and two crossed critical boxes, he will have regained all wound boxes and one critical after three days and be right as rain in six provided he sleeps well every night.

It is also possible to heal physical damage by medical means. All a doctor need do is make an Intellect / Medic test against a TN equal to 12 minus the number of wound and/or critical boxes the patient has left. For example if the patient had three critical boxes and one wound box left, the TN would be 9. If the Guide agrees, this can even be tried on characters who are technically dead (no critical boxes left at all) provided they haven't been dead for longer than ten minutes. If the test succeeds then a number of boxes equal to one plus the amount the roll succeeded by are restored. Critical boxes are always cured before wound boxes. Giving proper medical attention takes time though. You can't just stop in the middle of combat to stitch someone up. On average, making a healing test takes about half an hour of undisturbed activity.

What you have seen up until this point are the basic components of the Myriad system, the raw materials from which you can construct your game. You could run a game of Myriad with just these two chapters and make up the details that you needed as you went along. However it is wise when creating your own modules to think about how the rules you offer and the situations you present will affect the way in which other people play your game.

Focus Elements

Most settings will have a focal point, that is a concept that the game centres around more than anything else. When deciding on what rules to include in your module, you should consider its focus first of all. It is vitally important that the rules of the game should support the atmosphere of the setting to which they are being applied. Rules that are directly related to the focus should be emphasised more than others, and should probably include more detail than those which are not central to the concept. Think about what you WANT the player characters to do, and find ways to reward them for doing it.

If your game is going to be an action-thriller, then you're probably going to want to concentrate on the combat resolution system. Do you want it to be a cinematic game, where infeasible actions are openly rewarded? Then include the rule for stunts and emphasise how over-the-top and impossible they can be with a few key examples. Conversely you might want to create a gritty, realistic setting where combat is especially deadly. In this case you could maybe tone down the amount of resilience available in mortal combat, and portray stunts as extravagant ways of describing otherwise ordinary actions, rather than ludicrous displays of choreography.

Alternatively you might have a game in which combat is rare and the drama centres around a completely different kind of conflict. In such a case you will probably want to tone down the amount of mortal combat rules and SFX in favour of social combat, or shift the balance to a non-violent kind of conflict. The Samples chapter provides several different ways of balancing a game towards other kinds of drama, including romance and the effects of fear. You could even base an entire game around formula 1 Grand Prix racing and introduce complex rules systems and fancy SFX based around winning races. Just remember, play to the focus of your game.

Non-Focus Elements

Once you have the focus elements in place, you should consider what else might feasibly happen and include minimal rules for those situations too. Whereas focus elements are those things that you want the player characters to do, non-focus elements should include the kind of things that the characters are likely to try and do whether you want them to or not. For instance, in all but the most benign of settings you will probably need some kind of mortal combat even if it's toned down to the level where players are never actually killed and no deadly weapons are available. Just be careful that the rules pertaining to non-focus elements do not overpower those that are associated with the focal point of your setting.

Some Things Don't Need Rules!

You don't need rules for everything, and you shouldn't try and include rules for everything. Cover the bases first. If your setting is about regency romance, the only real mortal combat you are likely to need is formalised duelling between jealous suitors. If you want to stress the importance of a character's freedom to do and say what he or she pleases, maybe social combat rules (which could restrict both) are not the best idea. If you want to thoroughly discourage a particular practice then don't give rules for it at all, or include rules that make it extremely difficult or dangerous. It's usually best not to openly ban any particular action, as this impacts upon the freedom of the player characters to do as their personalities dictate, but don't feel obliged to model every possible action. Concern yourself mostly with the probable ones.

Sample Modules

The following chapter presents examples of additional rules that can be added in and fiddled with to create a variety of effects. Herein you will find optional rules for advanced forms of combat, a sample system for weaving magic in high fantasy settings, information on how equipment can assist characters in various ways, and a whole bunch of sample SFX to furnish your games with should you so desire. We've done our best to include as many useful additional rules as possible to the manual so that you don't have to come up with them yourself. Now it's up to you to select the ones you wish to use and tailor them to your own needs. Before we start with the examples though, here are some helpful tips on customising your game.

Building Your Own SFX

You don't need to provide SFX with a module at all if you don't want to, but they do spice things up very nicely and introduce an element of strategy to the game. SFX don't even have to be supernatural in origin. They could represent special battle tactics, signature wrestling moves or bonuses granted by special equipment. Usually though what defines an SFX is that it is either supernatural in nature or it requires the user to burn sixes before it can be activated. There are many different ways that SFX can work, but here are the most common types:

Added Bonus: any sixes burnt while using a particular skill grant a +2 bonus instead of the usual +1 for leftover unburnt dice. It is not recommended that this type of SFX be applied to combat skills of any sort (mortal, social or custom) as this could unbalance conflict situations. Instead this bonus usually applies to skills like Science, Mechanics and so forth. This SFX is frequently granted to characters by specialist equipment.

Ignore Modifiers: when the player burns a six, he may ignore a particular kind of negative modifier as specified in the SFX description for the purposes of the current roll. For example a character with the ability to sense vibrations might be able to burn a six in order to ignore negative modifiers for not being able to see. Usually this is a total negation of the modifier, but it could also refer to only a partial negation, i.e. reduce all modifiers due to poor visibility by 1.

Ignore the Rules: if this SFX is activated, the character can ignore a particular game rule to a certain extent. For instance, Scathing Glance might be an SFX that allows the character to make a social attack without having to produce a suitable quote. The user doesn't need to speak because the filthy look he casts at his opponent is more than enough. This relieves the player of the necessity of coming up with a pithy quote to underline his point.

Added Effect: the action gains an additional bonus effect, such as sending the target to sleep or affecting targets within a radius. This is most commonly applied to combat SFX. For example it might grant a second attack action in the same round of combat, or cause damage directly to the Critical line instead of the wound line. This is the most diverse form of SFX and can encompass anything your imagination can come up with.

Buff / Restore: the SFX either restores points that have been lost from an attribute up to its usual maximum, i.e. healing lost wound boxes, or temporarily increases an attribute above its usual limits, normally for the extent of either one action or one round of conflict per die burnt. Magical healing is a form of Restore SFX, as is an SFX like Berzerk Rage which temporarily increases the Power of the character by two for one combat round per six burnt.

It's important when creating your own SFX that their cost, both to purchase and to use, is commensurate with how useful they are. This is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of creating your own rules: making certain that everyone is on an even footing. Unfortunately there are very few hints that we can give you to help you price your SFX fairly. This is the kind of situation that can only be resolved by thorough, repeated play testing. Don't be afraid to make changes if something seems a little too powerful.

Mortal Combat Options

The simplistic combat system presented in the Rules chapter is there for quick and easy combat resolution. It's perfect for games that don't want to get bogged down in conflict so that they can concentrate more on the storyline or character interaction. If however you want to take a more strategic view of conflict, there are many things you can do to enhance it. The following optional rules detail some more complex ways of defeating your foes in mortal combat, and are rounded out by a few common SFX suitable to mortal combat.

All-In Wrestling

Sometimes it's advantageous to grab hold of someone instead of punching, stabbing or shooting them. For one thing you might want to take the enemy alive, may use this as a prelude to throwing them bodily off a skyscraper, or may simply want to gain the advantage because the enemy isn't very good at defending against this particular type of attack. In Myriad we call any attempt at wrestling an enemy 'grappling'.

To grab hold of an enemy you need only make a normal attack roll against them using a suitable skill (close combat, or wrestling if your module supports it.) Should you succeed then no damage is caused, but the opponent is pinned and may attempt no actions other than close combat attacks or trying to escape from the grapple. She also suffers a -2 penalty to all actions while forcibly restrained and may not move without physically lifting the grappler. Grabbing an opponent takes up your action for the current round of combat.

Attempting to escape from a grapple also takes up your action for the current round. The restrained character makes an attack against the grappler using an appropriate skill (close combat, wrestling, or even escapology if such is available) and if she succeeds then the hold is broken. Escaping, like grappling, does not cause any damage to either party unless other rules come into play. Alternatively the character can attempt to lift or drag the grappler around at her normal walking speed by making an opposed Power roll against her foe.

Tripping, Pushing and Throwing

Any one of these actions can be attempted against a grappled enemy (who, don't forget, will be suffering from the usual -2 modifier as a result of being grappled) but pushing and tripping can be attempted without grappling first. Tripping, pushing and throwing are all done by making an appropriate close combat attack roll against the target, although throwing may only be attempted with an enemy that you are grappling. If successful, the attack has the following effects:

Tripping an enemy causes him to fall prone on the floor. He must spend an action to get to his feet again, but this does not usually require an ability test. While prone the character is at a -1 penalty to close combat actions, but counts as a small target for ranged attackers who will suffer a -1 penalty when shooting at him. If you are unexpectedly attacked by enemies whilst escorting a fragile companion, it may be prudent to 'trip' your ally to get him out of the firing line. Tripping causes no damage unless the enemy trips onto a hazardous surface, i.e. a carpet of broken glass.

Pushing an enemy causes her to stagger a short distance in the direction she is pushed. The distance is equal to one metre per point that the attacker's roll exceeded the defender's roll, plus one for the success. If this would cause the target to step backwards over a significant drop (one foot would be enough) then he is also tripped as listed above unless he can make an immediate Grace / Acrobatics (or similar) roll against TN7. The pushing attack causes no damage unless, like tripping above, the victim encounters a hazardous surface such as a wall of spikes or a meat grinder. It is however perfect for knocking people off cliffs or into swimming pools.

Throwing may only be attempted once you have your intended target in a grapple. The procedure and result is exactly the same as Pushing above but depending on the type of throw, either the target staggers twice as far *or* is automatically tripped as described above *or* takes two dice of damage from the attack. Only one additional effect can be chosen per throw.

Autofire Weaponry

Machine guns are a particularly deadly form of armament capable of taking down large groups of people at a time. To help simulate the effect of these devastating weapons, use this special rule. A character with an autofire weapon may wave the barrel around while firing in order to fill a wide area with bullets. This rule allows the character to attack several targets in one round rather than being restricted to attacking only one target. Spraying bullets in all directions does however mean that the weapon doesn't pack as much of a punch as it could. For every die you drop from the weapon's damage rating, you may attack an additional target. The attacker makes only one roll against which the defence rolls of all targets are pitted.

The problem with hosing an area in this fashion is that it is very indiscriminate. As a result targets are not chosen by the player but instead are randomly selected by the Guide from those that are within the sprayed area. The easiest method is to assign each potential target a number then roll a die for each target attacked. Consider this to be a roughly 90 degree arc in the direction that the character is firing. If allies or innocents are within the arc of fire as well as enemies, then they are viable targets too regardless of whether the firer wishes them to be.

Note that 'target' can apply to any important object in the area, not just people. If there are canisters of explosive gas lying around, those are potential targets too. So are vehicles that the PC's or NPC's might later want to make their escape in, computer systems holding critical information, and electronic locks that might fuse when damaged, causing the associated door to inexplicably close and lock itself. Anything that might have a marked effect on the game when shot is a viable target for hosing attacks.

Area Effects

Explosives are useful weapons for clearing out enclosed spaces, and especially for dealing with vehicles. Things like grenades and rocket launchers don't just hurt the person they strike, they deal damage to a wide area. It's not just bombs that cover an area though. High-tech EMP devices and massive boulders flung by catapult can also cause widespread destruction. The same rules can even be applied to protective devices such as energy shields too. Area effects come in two basic types, and use the following special rules.

Decay Effects are the most common type of area effect. With this type, the damage (or armour value for protective shields and so on) lessens the further away it gets from ground zero, forming a spherical area of effect around the source. A target standing ten metres away from where a grenade lands is probably not going to be in so much trouble as someone standing three metres away. The mechanics are simple: the effect, whether it is damage dice, armour rating or whatever else, is reduced by one for every increment of a given distance (called the decay range) that the target is from ground zero.

Example: let's say that a grenade has a damage rating of 5D, with a decay range of two metres. A target standing right on top of the projectile is going to take all five dice of damage. A target standing two metres away however is outside of the initial 2 metre radius and will therefore only take four dice of damage. Targets at four, six and eight metres distant when the grenade explodes will take three, two and one dice of damage respectively. Anyone standing ten or more metres away from the grenade is outside of its range and will not be harmed by the explosion.

Uniform Effects do not vary in strength. Every character that falls wholly or partially within the area covered gains the full benefit or suffers the pull detriment of the effect. Most uniform effects are circular or spherical in shape, being defined by a centre point and a radius. Unlike decay effects though, they can be any shape at all depending on the equipment used. A common example would be the science fiction shield generator, three tall poles that generate an energy barrier between and over them, forming a triangular area of protection. The exact shape could be varied by moving the poles around, or indeed adding more poles to make square, pentagonal or even star-shaped force fields if so desired.

Weapons of Mass Destruction and Hardened Targets

Some devices, most notably heavy bombs, rockets and missiles, cause such a vast amount of damage that if you rolled dice for all of them you'd be there counting successful wounds for several minutes. These weapons have a 'WMD Rating' of usually between two and five. Instead of rolling hundreds of dice, a smaller number of dice are rolled and the number of wounds caused by the attack is multiplied by the damage multiplier. The target's armour is also reduced by the weapon's WMD rating, making it possible to breach targets with massively thick armour.

Conversely, some targets are so large and tough that they couldn't be significantly harmed by anything less than a direct missile strike. Subsequently these targets have a 'Hardened Target Rating', usually between one and three. Normal weapons have no effect on hardened targets, and even weapons of mass destruction have their WMD rating reduced by the target's Hardened Target Rating for purposes of attacking it.

Example: a surface-to-surface missile with a damage rating of 5D × 5 is fired at a military bunker. We'll ignore the missile's decay effect for the time being to make the example simpler and concentrate on what it does to the bunker for the time being. The bunker has a Hardened Target rating of 2 and an armour value of 6, which is fairly typical for reinforced buildings. This reduces the missile's usual WMD rating of five to a more survivable multiplier of 3. This means that the building's own armour is reduced to 3 for the purposes of this attack only.

Five dice are rolled, resulting in a 1, 1, 4, 5 and 6. Three of those dice have struck home to wound the bunker. However, the attack still has a WMD rating of three after reductions, so the amount of damage taken by the building must also be multiplied by three for a total of nine wounds. That's probably not going to be enough to reduce the entire structure to rubble, but it may be enough to crack a sizeable hole in the wall. A human target would certainly have been vaporised by the attack.

WMD	Damage
Anti-Vehicle Machinegun	4D×2, 10m decay
Demolitions pack	4D×3, 20m decay
Military AS/SS Missile	5D×4, 50m decay
Bunker buster bomb	5D×5, 100m decay
Small nuclear bomb	5D×10, 200m decay

Hardened Target	HT
Small brick outhouse	1
Average family home	1
Aircraft carrier	2
Military bunker	2
Immense spacecraft	3

Hit Locations

While it is not wholly necessary, some people prefer to know not just how they have been struck but where. Hit locations can be used if you want to randomly determine what part of the body the character has been hit in. The use of hit locations is not openly encouraged however since it overcomplicates matters. It also cuts down on the player's freedom to make interesting stunts. However if you really must have absolute realism, roll two dice, total the result and look it up on one of the following tables to see where the target is struck.

Humanoid	
Roll	Hit Location
1-2	Head
3-5	Arm
6-8	Torso
9-10	Leg
11-12	Groin

Bat, Bird	
Roll	Hit Location
1	Head
2-4	Torso
5-9	Wing
10	Leg
11-12	Tail

Dragon, Insect	
Roll	Hit Location
1-2	Head
3-4	Torso
5-7	Wing
8-9	Foreleg
10-12	Rear Leg

Four-Legged Animal	
Roll	Hit Location
1-2	Head
3-7	Torso
8-12	Leg

Snake, Worm	
Roll	Hit Location
1-2	Head
4-6	Torso
7-12	Tail

Centipede, Millipede	
Roll	Hit Location
1-2	Head
3-6	Torso
7-12	Leg

Damage Effects for Specific Body Parts

If you're going to use Hit Locations in your game, then to be totally accurate apply the following rules to a character hit in a specific part of the body. These optional rules can really get in the way of a mass battle and so are not recommended in general, but have been included anyway for the enjoyment of all the simulationists out there. Always remember, all of the rules in this chapter are optional. Only use the ones that you think will enhance the game without getting in the way.

The listings below also give negative penalties that should be applied to attack rolls if a character specifically wants to strike a particular part of the body for the benefits it yields. These are given as for a human however, and may need to be adjusted for non-human species with odd proportions.

Head (-2 penalty to hit) PC's and important NPC's struck in the head take twice as many wounds as are rolled on the dice. Unimportant NPC's die or are knocked out immediately depending on the type of weapon employed.

Arm / Foreleg (-1 penalty to hit) Flip a coin to decide if it's the left or right arm. Target drops anything being held in that hand and will suffer a -1 penalty to any actions involving that arm until healed. This penalty does not increase with further damage to either arm. For four-legged animals, movement will also be reduced by 1 for every wound caused by the attack as described in Leg below, but the target is not tripped.

Leg / Rear Leg (-1 penalty to hit) Target trips as described on page 30 and must spend an action standing up. In addition his movement range is reduced by 1 for each wound caused during the attack. The movement penalty is cumulative with further damage to the legs, and it is possible to cripple the character with continued leg shots. Characters with six or more legs (or no legs at all) are immune to the tripping aspect but not the movement range reduction.

Torso / Tail (no penalty) No particular effect on most targets. For snakes or creatures comparable to snakes that use their tail to move around, read as 'leg' above.

Groin (-1 penalty to hit) Target is stunned temporarily and loses his next combat action. In the interests of fairness, this effect works equally well on women but with less amusing grimacing and clutching of the privates.

Wing (no penalty) Target's flying speed is reduced by 10% for every wound caused. A target that runs out of airspeed will crash, taking extra damage in the process, if it is in the air when the final wound is caused. If it is already on the floor then it is grounded and may not take off.

Dealing with Flying Creatures

All this talk of creatures with wings raises the question 'how do you cope with characters who can fly during a typical round of combat?' Fortunately this is pretty easy to answer. Firstly we can assume that anyone capable of flight can attack anyone in the area in close combat due to the speed that they move at. However if the character remains in the air rather than landing to fight, then ground-based enemies may not attack her in close combat unless they do so on the same initiative that she attacks them, or at least a target close to them. It is quite permissible for them to withhold their actions until she does so if they act earlier in the turn than she does. Treat flying enemies as being 200m away (-1 penalty to hit) for purposes of ranged combat.

Example: an eagle is circling a group of muggers looking for a target. The muggers are only armed with baseball bats so they can't attack the eagle unless it attacks them. It on the other hand can make an attack against any of them it pleases. Its initiative is 5, and the muggers act on 2, 4 and 6. The eagle decides to go for the mugger acting on initiative 4 because it knows that he won't be ready to strike then. However it hasn't noticed that the initiative 6 mugger is standing pretty close to its chosen target. The mugger withholds his action to coincide with the eagle's and manages to get an attack in as it swoops down on his friend.

Advanced Types of Damage

There are plenty of ways to hurt someone other than hitting them, shooting them or stabbing them. A character might for instance be set on fire, or become exposed to potentially lethal radiation. Here are a few common sources of damage that you might want to include in your game setting, and any special rules that apply to them.

Drowning and **Asphyxiation** are caused by either being strangled, submerged in liquid or exposed to a vacuum. 1 point of damage is automatically dealt to the target at the end of each round of combat. This damage is unaffected by any kind of armour. Wearing a device with its own oxygen supply, such as an aqualung or a spacesuit, renders you immune from this effect unless of course it is the result of having someone's hands wrapped around your neck! You can automatically strangle an opponent for one point of damage if you can keep them grappled for one entire round of combat without them breaking free. Asphyxiation wounds heal quickly at a rate of one every five minutes.

Electricity has a standard damage rating of 3 dice per combat round of exposure for mains voltage, although electrical weapons such as tazors may have different damage ratings of their own. Only armour types that specifically state they are grounded or insulated will protect you from electric damage. Any other forms of armour are ignored.

Extreme Cold is a slow way to die, and causes one point of automatic damage per half hour of exposure regardless of armour rating. These wounds cannot be healed by medical means but can be warded off indefinitely by wearing thick winter clothing of some description or by building a large fire to huddle around.

Falling long distances is a common source of damage. You can fall up to three metres without difficulty, but every three metres after that causes one die of automatic damage that is unaffected by any kind of armour. A falling body does however reach a maximum – or terminal – velocity after a while. Therefore the maximum damage caused by falling is 10 points regardless of the distance fallen.

Fire is a dangerous yet beautiful phenomenon that many players and characters show a distressing affinity for. A character that is set on fire by some means takes one die of damage at the end of each round of combat until extinguished. Only armour that specifically says it is fire retardant is effective against damage taken from burning. Rolling on the floor to extinguishing a fire takes up your action for the current round of combat and puts you prone, but automatically stops the burning. Other characters can also try and put out a burning character utilising a tripping attack, or can douse the unfortunate with a fire extinguisher or similar.

Poisons and **Diseases** are very specialised and vary a great deal from one to the next. In many cases they are treated in a similar manner to radiation (below) causing a certain amount of damage every so often. Both poisons and diseases will usually wear off after a certain amount of time as the body's defence mechanisms kick in, assuming that the character doesn't die first. Alternatively they can be cured with medicine. It may also be possible to resist the effects of weaker poisons and diseases if the sufferer is particularly healthy. If this is the case, the character's Power statistic is normally used in place of an armour rating versus any damage dice inflicted by the condition.

Radiation is a rare form of damage that nevertheless could prove hazardous if the PC's find themselves in the vicinity of a nuclear testing site or unshielded reactor. Radiation does one point of automatic damage per half hour of exposure regardless of armour worn. Symptoms include hair loss and bleeding gums, and in severe cases sterility and cancer. It can be shielded against using anti-radiation drugs, or by wearing a hazardous environment suit, both of which offer complete protection from the terrors of radiation poisoning.

Starvation is a very slow way to die indeed. Every two days without food causes one wound, and every day without water causes two wounds. Naturally enough neither starvation nor dehydration is affected by armour. Wounds caused by either cannot be healed until the character has had at least one full meal and/or a good drink, after which they will heal at the normal rate.

Example SFX for Mortal Combat

The following SFX can be integrated into any game setting that makes use of mortal combat, although some (such as Autofire Master) may require certain equipment as well. This is just a brief sample, there are plenty of other ways that you can tweak combat using SFX. Remember, unless otherwise stated in the description, any ability tests associated with the SFX must succeed in order for it to activate. Each of the following costs 1 SFX point to buy at character creation time.

Artery Strike

Activation: Burn 1 six on an attack involving an edged weapon

The character slashes at a major artery, causing the target to bleed copiously. The victim will automatically take one die of damage at the end of each round of combat. Normal armour is ineffective against this damage, but natural armour works just fine. Add 2 to the victim's natural armour for the purposes of bleeding damage rolls, so that even characters with no natural armour have an armour rating of 2. The bleeding can be stopped by taking one action to tie a bandage. This does not require an ability test, but neither the wounded character nor the person tying the bandage may attack or dodge attacks on the round that they do so. Further uses of this SFX on a character that is already bleeding have no effect.

Autofire Master

Activation: Burn 1 six per additional target struck instead of reducing damage on a hosing attack roll

The character has an affinity with autofire weapons and can wield them to maximum effect. When hosing an area with a fully automatic weapon, he may elect to burn a six obtained from the attack roll instead of dropping a die of damage in order to attack an additional target. You may make use of this SFX as many times during a single attack as you have spare sixes free to burn.

Crippling Blow

Activation: Burn 1 six per 2 metre reduction in movement on a close combat attack roll

The character strikes at her target's legs aiming to cripple them. For every six burnt during the attack roll, the target loses 2 metres of movement allowance down to a minimum of zero. This returns to normal after proper medical attention has been sought. A character reduced to a movement allowance of zero falls prone on the floor and cannot stand up.

Guns Akimbo

Activation: Burn 1 six per die to be used on the second attack on a ranged attack roll

A character using this SFX is adept at firing a gun in each hand, either both at the same target or at two separate ones. The character gains a second ranged attack with a statistic rating equal to the number of sixes burnt on the previous one. If the two guns being used are different models, one attack must be made with each gun. Only pistols may be wielded in one hand. The character may not use this SFX on the same round as any other SFX that also generates extra actions, nor may it be used to generate more than one extra action per round. However, the second attack may be used even if the first attack proves unsuccessful.

Example: Joe has a pistol in each hand, and is firing them off at targets left, right and centre. He has a Power statistic of 4, and rolls 6, 6, 4 and 3. He decides to burn both of his sixes to activate his Guns Akimbo SFX giving him a second attack during the current round of combat with two dice to roll, one for each six burnt. The first attack fails, but this doesn't affect the use of this SFX so he can still make his second attack. He rolls again and gets a 6 and a 2. However he cannot burn that six to activate this SFX or any other SFX that would have the effect of granting him another combat action. Instead he elects to keep it and gain the +1 bonus for unburnt sixes. His second attack turns out to be a success. Sadly his second gun is also slightly less powerful than the first, so the second attack does not do as much damage as the first one would have, had it succeeded.

M Additional actions per combat round is a common effect for many SFX. However it is a standard rule that only one such action can be used per round of combat, and most extra action generating SFX may only be used to gain one extra action per round. Otherwise a character with several SFX of this nature could use them to wipe out half an army in one turn. If you want to change this standard rule for your setting then go ahead, but you have been warned!

Hard as Nails

Activation: burn 1 six per -1 to the damage of the attack on any defence roll

Some people can simply shrug off damage that would put a lesser man down for good. If the character generates any sixes on her defence roll, she may elect to burn them to reduce the damage rating of the incoming attack by one point per six burnt. If this reduces the damage to zero then no damage is caused at all. This SFX is most useful when engaged in hand-to-hand combat which normally causes only 1 die of damage.

Hawkeye

Activation: burn 1 six per automatic damage die success on an attack roll

A skilled marksman knows precisely where to drop an arrow to get it past even the best plate armour. This SFX works equally well with other kinds of firearm or even thrown weapons. Every six burnt on a successful attack roll means that one of the damage dice for the attack need not be rolled. Instead, that die causes an automatic wound. You may not burn more sixes on this SFX than the attack has damage dice.

Example: a standard arrow does three dice of damage. If the archer burns two dice to activate Hawkeye and successfully hits the target, then only one die is rolled but two additional wounds are caused automatically.

Knockback

Activation: burn 1 six per three metres of knockback caused on a close combat attack roll

Powerful attacks, especially from blunt weapons like maces and sledgehammers, can send an opponent reeling. For every six burnt on this SFX, the target is sent staggering three metres in the direction of the blow. As with the rules for pushing, if this carries the target backwards over a drop of more than one foot, the character must pass an immediate Grace / Acrobatics (or similar) roll against TN7 to avoid falling over. If the victim encounters a solid surface while staggering, the attack does an additional die of damage.

M Try playing around with the amount of knockback granted per six burnt to achieve over-the-top effects. This is particularly appropriate for superhero style games, where characters are wont to be smashed across entire rooms by a single powerful strike. For extreme settings such as these, you can also assume that the character breaks through one normal strength wall for every two sixes burnt, if of course any walls are in their flight path.

Multiple Strike

Activation: burn 1 six per additional target struck in an unarmed attack roll

A trained martial artist can lash out in several directions at once, hitting multiple opponents with a single attack. This SFX may only applied to unarmed attacks or those made with knuckledusters and cesti. The player makes only one attack roll and burns one six for every target after the first that he wishes to strike. All targets must be within easy reach. Each target then makes an individual defence roll against the attack. Those who fail are struck.

M This is another method of dealing with multiple attacks, and a great way to even the odds for unarmed combat specialists. Normally a fist fighter is at a real disadvantage compared to others with weapons, but this SFX (coupled maybe with Powerful Blow below) can allow them to hold their own even in a group of mad axe men.

Power Strike

Activation: burn 1 six per additional die of damage caused on an unarmed attack roll

Normally unarmed combat has a damage potential of only one die. It can take quite a long time to kill an enemy with your fists. A highly-trained martial artist or a big brawler with muscles to spare can do a whole lot more damage. Every six burnt on activating this SFX adds an additional die to the damage of the attack. This SFX can only be applied to unarmed attacks, or attacks made with knuckledusters or cesti.

Superior Throw

Activation: burn 1 six per additional throw effect on an attack roll

A popular SFX amongst all-in wrestlers and martial artists specialising in combat styles such as Judo that make heavy use of throws, Superior Throw allows you to gain one additional throw effect per six burnt when throwing a grappled opponent. The full rules for throwing are on page 30, but for your reference the three effects are as follows: target staggers twice as far as usual; target takes two dice of damage; or target is automatically tripped. As a final bonus, you may burn one die to throw an opponent who you are not currently grappling with. You may use each of these bonuses only once per throw attempt, but can have as many different bonuses as you have spare sixes to burn.

Example: Annette makes an attack roll against her opponent and burns two sixes on this SFX. Since she wasn't already grappling her foe, the first burnt die must be spent to allow her to perform a throw in the first place. This does at least mean that the victim is flung a number of metres equal to the amount her roll succeeded by, since this is a standard part of any throw. She may also pick one other effect for free as this is also a standard part of any throw. She elects to cause two dice of damage to the victim. The other six she burnt entitles her to one more effect from the list, but she can't cause more damage because she already used that effect on this attack. Instead she elects to automatically trip her opponent up. Her opponent is flung several metres by the attack, rendered prone on the floor, and also suffers two dice of damage.

Social Combat Options

Mortal combat isn't the only kind of conflict that can be tweaked to great effect. There's also plenty you can do to make social combat that little bit more interesting. Traditionally very little attempt is made to formalise the character interaction side of role playing and there are lots of fun little tricks you can use to make a battle of wits just as absorbing as a battle of steel. Here are a few ideas on how you can customise this aspect of the game.

Psychological Warfare

Mortal combat and social combat run along the same tracks so to speak, so there's no reason why you can't blend the two into one. Certainly the time scale differs a fair amount, with one round of social combat being almost three times as long as mortal combat, but in the name of playability little problems like this can easily be ignored. If one PC wants to stand back from the fight and try and talk some sense into the enemy while the battle rages, or even talk his allies into surrendering, then let him make social attacks against them. A combatant whose resolve has been utterly sapped must concede and give up the fight, either by surrendering or fleeing.

This rule allows non-combat orientated characters to lend a useful hand in mortal combat. Any enemy with very low resolve or poor social skills could be quickly overcome by a charismatic leader, maybe even to the point of switching sides. It can however lead to unnecessary complications too, such as keeping track of yet another line of boxes for each enemy in the confrontation. If the enemy also has very low resolve it could make things a little too easy on the players. The Guide is therefore fully at liberty to say that the fighters don't have time to concentrate on anything other than fighting, or simply that the battle is too noisy to hear, rendering persuasion useless in the middle of a large melee.

Romance and Seduction

If you would like to include a little romance in your game, then the social combat rules can easily be adapted to the purpose. A romantic attack can be made in the same manner as a social attack using an appropriate quote. However it can also be made by setting the atmosphere, for instance by taking the subject of your affection to an expensive restaurant, or for a boat trip, or a walk in the moonlight. The point is that the seducer is doing or saying something romantic. For her part, the subject of affection makes one attack in response to each romantic attack on her. She doesn't need to do or say anything, this is merely a measure of her resistance to his wiles. Romantic attacks of either type, just like social attacks, cause one point of damage as standard.

If you like you can use the social combat statistics Intellect and Spirit for romantic attack and defence, or you can make up new ones. Charisma and Shrewdness spring to mind. You might also like to have a custom resilience line instead of Resolve. Cynicism would make a good name. The odd thing about Cynicism in this case is that it means different things for the two parties. For the seducer, as cynicism runs out he becomes more cynical and starts to wonder if this really is the girl for him. To the subject of affection it is precisely the other way around. Note that these terms are independent of gender. It's quite possible for the female to be the seducer.

To make things a bit more interesting though, use the following rules. Every potential partner available for seduction should have four minor and two major 'buttons', that is things that they find especially romantic. Minor buttons are usually quite common things such as boxes of chocolates or bunches of flowers. Major buttons are harder to guess or more dangerous to mention, for instance fast cars or kinky fetishes. If during a romantic attack a minor button is utilised or mentioned, then the attack does two points of damage instead of one. Using a major button results in three points of damage. Each button may be used only once per date.

To balance things up, each potential partner should have at least three turn-offs, things that they find utterly unromantic. If one of these crops up or is mentioned during a romantic attack, the target takes no damage at all even if the attack succeeds, and actually regains two points of resilience if the attack should fail.

Example Romantic Interest: Leanne

Minor Buttons: Moonlight, Flowers, Classical Music, Shoulder Massage
Major Buttons: Thunderstorms, Canada
Turn-Offs: Sport, Action Movies

Example: Arthur is desperately trying to attract the attention of his new next door neighbour, a rather pretty lady by the name of Leanne whose dating statistics are detailed in the example above. Arthur is taking her out for a romantic meal at a local restaurant. This actually counts as an attack in romantic conflict. He's hoping that classy restaurants will be one of her buttons, but he's out of luck there. Fortunately the restaurant happens to have a string quartet playing in the background, and classical music is one of Leanne's minor buttons. If this first romantic attack is successful, Leanne will take two points of Cynicism damage instead of one as her heart starts to melt.

Those rules are great in a one-on-one situation, but what if several suitors are vying for the affections of one eligible young lady or man? You could merely say that the last suitor left with any Cynicism is the winner, but that would mean having a very confused date involving far too many people to be called intimate. The easiest thing to do is allow each to date the subject of affection in turn and, instead of causing damage to the Cynicism line, fix a maximum number of attacks. When all attacks are spent, total up how much damage would have been caused during the date. Whichever suitor has the highest score when the last date is over will win the girl / guy.

Depending on the skill and statistics owned by both parties, a date can go on for an awfully long time, especially if you're using the above option for multiple suitors. If the seducer is particularly good at what he does, then the date might never end at all! Because of this it is usually best to assign an absolute maximum to the length of the date, say around seven rounds, after which time the lucky lady or gent will have to be taken home.

Terror Effects and Insanity

Another aspect of social combat is the effect that intense, protracted fear can have on the psyche. Horror-based games, particularly those where the players are normal people pitted against the supernatural with little or no chance of survival, make great use of the effects of fear. Encountering a particularly terrifying creature or event could have devastating results. If you intend to make use of this to any extent, introduce a new Resilience line to the character sheet called Nerve, and give it an associated Critical line.

Attacks upon a character's Nerve are caused when she experiences fear. This could be as mundane as being menaced by a hoodlum with a knife, or as bizarre as facing down hideous entities from eldritch dimensions that man was not meant to encounter™. Appropriate attack and defence attributes for this kind of conflict might be Horror Rating and Courage, the former being an indication of just how inhumanly terrifying the individual is. Normal human PC's should not normally have a horror rating at all, although insane human NPC's may.

Terror attacks usually have a damage rating determined by the Guide that defines how scary the situation is. This is based on several factors, including the number and nature of any creatures involved, the atmosphere of the scene and any other factors that the Guide deems relevant. Encountering a pack of werewolves in the dark woods at midnight in the middle of a raging thunderstorm is a whole lot more unnerving than meeting one werewolf on a pleasant midday stroll through the park. Most people have a Fear Armour Rating against terror attacks of 2, although special boons could be provided that increase this value to 3 or 4 for people who are sensitised to such terrors, such as paranormal investigators, police officers, soldiers or madmen.

Base Fear for encountering…	Dam.
Dangerous Animals (lions, bears, snakes)	0D
Dangerous Humans (criminals, madmen)	0D
Humanoid Entities (vampires, ghosts)	1D
Inhuman Entities (werewolves, aliens)	2D
Monstrosities (Lovecraftian Horrors)	3D
Things that man should not look upon™	4D

Miscellaneous Modifiers	Dam.
Darkness or bad weather	+1D
Far from civilisation	+1D
Victim is all alone	+1D
Victim is subject to a phobia	+1D
Facing three or more foes	+1D
Excessive blood and guts	+2D

A character who runs out of Nerve through repeated exposure to terror is stricken with overwhelming terror and must either flee the scene as fast as she can or become paralysed with fear. In either case she may take no further part in the story until she calms down. A character who runs out of Nerve critical boxes has gone permanently insane. The Guide may rule that the character must be removed from play as if she were dead, or may allow the player to continue portraying the character's insanity for the rest of the game. Nerve returns at a rate of 1 box per hour when in calm, unthreatening surroundings, and 1 critical point for every full uninterrupted night's sleep. Insanity can only be cured by extensive therapy or controlled with medication.

To list all possible forms of insanity in this manual would take too long. If you want to make a really good job of playing a mad character, we suggest researching into post-traumatic syndromes and forms of insanity such as DID, schizophrenia and the various forms of psychosis and neurosis. Alternatively, the works of H. P. Lovecraft are an excellent resource for anyone wishing to portray insanity effectively.

Example SFX for Social Combat

Having provided a short selection of example SFX for use in mortal combat, it seems only fair that a likewise brief selection should be given for use in social combat. The SFX that follow have uses ranging from normal social combat arguments to the advanced rules given above for romantic situations and the use of terror. Feel free to implement whichever seem the most useful to the gaming experience that you have in mind.

Aura of Terror

Activation: burn 1 six per die of terror damage caused on a social attack roll

There is something strangely sinister about the character that sends a shiver down even the stoutest of spines. Every six that the character burns on a successful social attack causes one die of Nerve damage in addition to any Resolve damage the attack would normally cause. Nerve damage dice must be rolled against the character's terror armour as usual, but any damage caused to the Nerve line cannot be healed while the victim remains in the character's presence.

Change the Subject

Activation: burn 1 six on a social defence roll

Sometimes the safest thing to do is avoid certain topics altogether. If the character thinks that a particular topic is getting too dangerous, she may burn one six on a social defence roll to change it. The defence roll must be successful in order for this SFX to function. When activated, nobody may make use of quotes that refer to the taboo subject for the rest of the round, or the round that follows it. The barred subject must be related to the quote that the defence roll was made against.

Example: Lisa is pleading for her life. The townspeople think she is an evil witch. In fact she's a good witch, but witches in general aren't kindly looked upon here and admitting to any witchcraft is a bad idea. Unfortunately there are a lot of witnesses who have seen her performing spells. The witch finder, as his attack, says "Do you deny that, on the fourteenth of June, you were seen to make a calf that had been pronounced dead spring back to its feet?" Lisa wants to get right off the subject of magic, so when she rolls her defence she burns a resulting six to activate this SFX. "Helping people? Is that what evil witches usually do?" she retorts angrily. As a result, for the rest of the round and the following one, nobody may site examples of her use of magic as a reason for a social attack.

Husky Tones

Activation: burn 1 six per +2 bonus to the result on a romantic attack roll

The character has a deeply sensual voice that she uses to startling effect. When using an appropriately sexy quote as a romantic attack, the character may burn sixes to gain a +2 bonus to the result rather than the usual +1 bonus she would usually receive for unburnt sixes. The Guide must agree that the quote used was alluring enough to warrant the bonus. This SFX has no effect if the quote also hits one of the target's turn-offs.

The Perfect Lie

Activation: burn 1 six on a social attack or defence roll

You can't fool all of the people all of the time, but once in a while you can fool nearly anyone. If the character tells a bare-faced lie and burns a six then, whether the attack or defence associated with it is successful or not, nobody can ascertain that a lie was told. This SFX can even be used to fool 'infallible' technology such as FBI lie detectors. If modifiers are being applied to the roll based on the presence of such devices, then these are negated. To all intents and purposes, it appears that your character believes wholeheartedly that she is telling the truth. The Guide may veto the use of this SFX on obvious lies such as 'the sky is bright purple today!'

Witticism

Activation: burn 1 six on a social attack roll

Laughter is the best medicine, but it can also make a handy weapon. If you can get the crowd laughing at your opponent, they will lose respect for him and be easier to sway to your way of thinking. You may burn one six only on a social attack roll to do an extra point of Resolve damage, but only if you make someone in the room laugh with your quote. At the Guide's discretion, two bonus points of Resolve damage may be given if the entire group erupts into spontaneous laughter. The quote must, as usual, be appropriate to the discussion.

Probably the most common factor of play that will require its own special rules set is the governing of magical and mystical powers. Practically every high fantasy setting has some kind of magic associated with it, and many modern or futuristic games have an equivalent in the shape of psychic powers. This part of the chapter outlines an example of one way in which magic could be used within a standard fantasy setting. Feel free to adopt and adapt it as you wish.

Weaving a Spell

Magic spells are constructed by weaving together various SFX from the magical components list. As with other SFX this requires the burning of sixes. The player makes a straight Intellect roll and any sixes generated are spent on purchasing bonuses. The roll's result is immaterial; we are only interested in how many sixes are rolled. A particularly powerful spell could require a huge number of sixes to pay for its various component parts. Because of this, the wizard does not have to cast the spell straight way. Instead she can continue to make Intellect rolls on subsequent rounds until she has enough. She may not however perform any action other than weaving the spell or dodging attacks in combat or she will lose concentration and have to start again from scratch.

Once all of the various components of the spell are bought the wizard can cast it. If the target is willing to allow the spell to be cast upon him then this is automatic. It doesn't require an action in combat or even a roll of the dice. If however the spell is aimed at an enemy or someone else who might want to try and avoid it, it is treated as an attack. The wizard rolls her Intellect / Spell Casting against the target's Grace / Ranged Combat or Grace / Close Combat depending on how close the two are to one another.

Although the sixes are technically 'saved' for later use when the spell is finally cast, the SFX they are to be used to activate must be selected straight after each weaving roll is made. This is to stop the wizard from changing his mind halfway through the spell. You can't just chop and change when you are pulling on the very threads of destiny. Once a component has been woven into the fabric of the spell, it's an immovable fixture. The only way to remove an SFX that was activated on a previous weaving roll is to abandon the whole spell and start again.

- It can take a long time to pull together the components for even a simple attack spell. If you want to make it a little easier on the wizard, use this rule: a default 'zap' attack doing 1 die of damage with a maximum range of 100 metres can be cast without needing to prepare it. When using this rule, all spells should gain a +1 damage die component. The wizard can automatically remove this component for free if he does not wish to harm the target.

- If you want to make it even easier to pull together the components for a magical spell, use this rule. Make the 'weaving' roll an Intellect/Spell Casting roll instead. Allow the wizard to save sixes as usual towards the final spell effect, but also grant a bonus six if the total of the roll exceeds an average (6) TN. You could even grant additional sixes to burn for every two points that target was exceeded by, so two bonus sixes if it beats TN8, three if it beats TN10 and so on.

Personal Touches

All wizards have their own style, and should decide what this style is going to be at character creation time. Where one might hurl bolts of fire at enemies, another might draw icicles from the air, or summon daggers of pure darkness. A wizard should pick a particular theme, such as one of the classical elements (air, fire, earth, water) or something a little more esoteric (light, darkness, bones, blood, music). Any spells cast by that wizard will in some way include that theme.

The wizard's theme should not be allowed to interfere with which spells he is allowed to cast. If a fire mage wants to cast a telekinesis spell, there's no reason why a pair of fiery hands can't be called into being to manipulate the object in question. The object won't be burnt to a crisp because it's magical cold fire. In game terms this means that the wizard simply didn't bother to add a damage component to the spell. The wizard's theme is purely a stylistic effect.

Cantrips

Some spell effects are so minor that they are hardly spells at all. A mighty wizard wouldn't think twice before using magic to light his pipe, nor would it take a great amount of concentration to create a globe of light to read by. If, in the Guide's opinion, a spell would have little effect on the current story then it can be classified as a cantrip. Cantrips do not need to be woven or cast, they just happen automatically. Examples of common cantrips include:

- Creating a candle flame on a fingertip to light a pipe, campfire or similar
- Calling up a faint light about as bright as a smuggler's lantern
- Cleaning the clothing, teeth or skin and freshening the breath
- Sobering up a drunkard with a click of the fingers
- Pinching a tavern wench's bottom from across the room
- Forming pipe smoke into interesting shapes such as boats or dragons
- Waking up at precisely the time you mean to in the morning

Maximum SFX in a Spell

It's no good letting a magician weave a spell on and on and on, adding more and more components. Eventually, after several weeks of work, he could cast a spell capable of rendering himself utterly invincible simply by layering duration and shield components in huge amounts. In the interests of preventing such flagrant misuse of the rules, a magic user may never cast a spell containing more than five plus his Intellect of individual component SFX.

Imbuing Items with Spells

It is possible to imbue a spell into an item for later use. Spells stored in this manner are usually used reflexively when the time is right, or are used consciously by manipulating the object in a specific manner. Either way, one does not have to be a wizard to accomplish this so long as one knows how the object is meant to be used. The commonest type of imbued item is the talisman of protection, a medallion containing a powerful counter-spell that automatically casts itself when the wearer is targeted by hostile magic. Wands and staffs containing various kinds of offensive spell are also common.

Imbuing a spell into an item is a costly process. The mage must burn twice as many dice per SFX in the spell in order to imbue it. In addition to this, every time a mage imbues an object with a spell he temporarily loses one point of Intellect. This lost point will return the instant that the spell is used up. A wizard may not imbue spells that contain more component SFX than his own Intellect plus 2. For example, a wizard with Intellect 5 could craft and imbue a spell involving up to seven component parts into an amulet, but no more.

An imbued spell can only be used once, after which the item it is stored in becomes just a normal item once more. In fact, more fragile items such as scrolls of parchment often disintegrate once the stored magic has been used. This is still a substantial advantage however, since normally a prepared spell may not be kept in mind. The mage either continues to weave more components into the spell, which of course requires more time, or he casts it.

M A good boon to make available in a high-magic game would be Puissance. This boon might cost one point per additional component that the player is allowed to weave into a single spell or imbue into an object. A mage with an Intellect of 4 and three levels of Puissance could craft a spell containing (5 + 4 + 3 = 12) individual component SFX, or imbue an object with a spell containing up to (4 + 2 + 3 = 9) components. This allows particularly gifted wizards to weave mightier spells than their intelligence would otherwise allow.

Spell Component SFX

The following SFX may only be activated as part of a magic spell using the rules above. They are slightly more powerful than normal SFX since they take more time to prepare, plus of course if the final casting goes awry all that time and effort will be wasted. Keep this in mind should you decide to design your own magic SFX. A magician must still purchase all of the SFX he intends to use at character creation time. The suggested cost is 1 SFX point each for the following.

N Unless altered by spell components, the standard spell has a range of 10 metres, can only be aimed at targets that the wizard can see or touch, and has no appreciable effect.

Area Effect

Activation: burn 1 six per foot of decay range (or per two cubic metres area) on a spell weaving roll

The spell affects all targets within a predefined area. If you wish the effect to decrease the further away from the epicentre each target is, for instance in the case of an explosive spell, then each six burnt gives the spell one foot of decay range. If the effect is uniform over its entire area of effect, for instance a shielding spell, then each six burnt gives the effect two cubic metres of size.

Aspect

Activation: burn 1 six per aspect added on a spell weaving roll

Some creatures are particularly susceptible or resistant to certain kinds of damage. It makes sense to blast an ice golem with fire in an attempt to melt it, but you wouldn't want to try the same kind of attack on a fire elemental. Most magic attacks do 'magic' damage regardless of their form. A creature that takes double damage from fire doesn't take double damage from magical fire. That is, unless you also give it the aspect of fire using this SFX. At the Guide's discretion there may be other minor advantages too. A fire-aspect attack might set flammable items alight; a water-aspect attack would certainly get things wet and so on. Example aspects might include fire, water, earth, air, poison, darkness, light, evil, good, life, death, and acid.

O If a magician's theme corresponds with an aspect, for instance a fire mage, then all his damaging spells are aspected toward that theme unless he opts to burn one six on the weaving roll to remove that aspect. This allows the aforementioned fire mage to remove the fiery aspect of his spells when dealing with creatures that are resistant to or even healed by fire attacks.

Counter-Spell

Activation: burn 1 six per 2 SFX dice negated

Wizards aren't just there for casting spells. A skilled magician is also adept at countering spells cast at him. This component is almost always woven into a protective amulet using the rules for imbuing items on page 42, but it can also be cast on the same initiative phase as an enemy spell to cancel it out. Every six burnt on activating Counter-Spell negates two dice worth of SFX from the incoming spell, but if it does not negate the spell entirely then it has no effect at all. Counter-Spells are frequently mixed with area effect and duration components to make anti-magic shields.

O The ability to cast counter-spells is vital in games where magic is common. You might want to allow mages to burn sixes generated from defence rolls versus spells in order to activate Counter-Spell. If the number of sixes burnt is more than half the number of sixes burnt to generate the spell in the first place, then the Counter-Spell cancels it out before it does any harm.

O If you are using the 'easy counter' rule above, you might also want to allow the following rule: if a mage does not take an action during a round of combat, he may use counter-spell to deflect magical attacks made against his allies as well as himself. As above, he makes a defence roll and burns sixes to hopefully defuse the incoming spell before it strikes. If the mage fails, the intended target may still be allowed to attempt to dodge the spell as usual. The mage may make as many defensive uses of Counter-Spell as he needs to provided that he performs no action himself.

Damage

Activation: burn 1 six per 2 dice of damage added on a magic weaving roll

One of the most common types of spell is the type that causes damage. This is a very simple effect to adjudicate. The spell causes two dice of damage for every six burnt on this component. With area effect spells that work on a decay range basis, this is the damage at ground zero.

Duration

Activation: burn 1 six to double the duration

By default, spells either have an instantaneous effect or last for the rest of the current round and the entire following round of combat. Sometimes though there is a pressing need to keep a spell going for an extended period of time. The method for this is simple: each six burnt on Duration doubles the amount of time it lasts for.

As you can see it is possible to wind out spells for a very long time. However the effects are stretched out thin. A spell that causes six dice of damage in one round won't cause the same amount every round for three rounds. The rule goes like this: for every Duration component added, then any quantifiable effect involved in the spell is reduced by 1. Damage goes down by one die per additional Duration component, as does the armour rating of a shield spell and so on.

Duration	Lasts for…
0	1 round
1	2 rounds
2	4 rounds
3	1.5 minutes
4	3 minutes

Duration	Lasts for…
5	6 minutes
6	12 minutes
7	24 minutes
8	48 minutes
9	1.5 hours

Duration	Lasts for…
10	3 hours
11	6 hours
12	12 hours
13	1 day
14	2 days

Heal

Activation: burn 1 six per two wound or one critical box healed on a magic weaving roll

Magical healing is always the preferred method in a fantasy setting. Normal healing takes far too long and its success is not guaranteed. For every six burnt on this SFX, the resulting spell heals either two wound boxes or one critical box. As with natural healing, critical boxes must be healed before wounds boxes. This component cannot be combined with a spell that also causes damage as the two effects simply cancel each other out.

Illusion

Activation: burn 1 six per level of realism and 1 six per additional degree of size on a magic weaving roll

Illusions come in all shapes and sizes, from simple moving pictures used by magical storytellers to illustrate their tales up to grand illusions of rampaging dragons used to scare away lesser foes. There are two parts to any illusion, these being its realism and its size. A large illusion that fools many senses is a lot harder to create than a tiny one that is obviously faked. All characters witnessing an illusion may make Spirit / Perception rolls to see through it the first time it is encountered. The TN of these rolls is determined by the realism as given in the following tables.

Dice	Realism	TN
0	Transparent and ethereal, obviously fake	-
1	Intangible, Casts no shadow and makes no sound	6
2	Makes appropriate noises but is still intangible	8
3	Minor flaws (i.e. wrong texture, doesn't breathe)	10
4	Is near-indistinguishable from the real thing	12

Dice	Size
1	Dog-sized
2	Man-sized
3	Horse-sized
4	Elephant-sized
5	Dragon-sized

Illusions cannot directly cause actual harm to the target. Even if a tangible illusion of a dragon struck out at a man, it couldn't actually kill him. The best it could hope to do is knock him over, or scare him witless. Anyone who is attacked by an illusory beast, or for that matter who witnesses the illusion doing something suspiciously out-of-character, may be allowed a second attempt to see through the illusion at the same TN as last time.

Incapacitate

Activation: Burn 1 six per 3 dice of incapacitation damage on a magic weaving roll

Sometimes you don't want to kill your enemy, but merely knock her out of the conflict. There are many spells that might have this effect, from magically-induced sleep to conjured ropes that tie up your opponent. All use these rules. For every six burnt on this component the target takes three dice of incapacitation damage. These are rolled separately from and after any normal damage caused by the spell. If the incapacitation damage would be enough to knock the target out, then she is incapacitated, sent to sleep, petrified, tied up in magical bonds or whatever. If it is not enough, then nothing happens. Regardless of whether the target is incapacitated by the attack or not, she takes no actual damage from this spell component.

Example: Joe is hit by a spell that causes two dice of damage and six dice of incapacitation. He has an armour rating of two and five wound boxes. The standard damage is rolled and applied first. The dice roll 1 and 4, so one point of damage is caused leaving him with four wound boxes. Now for the six incapacitation dice which roll 1, 2, 3, 4, 4 and 6. The one and the two are less than his armour value and so are discounted, but the remainder add up to four incapacitation wounds. Were these normal wounds, Joe would have had to cross out all his remaining wound boxes and be knocked unconscious, so he has been incapacitated by the spell. Because this component of the spell causes no lasting damage itself, he doesn't have to cross out any more wound boxes. He is however out of the fight.

Motion

Activation: consult the charts below for the number of sixes required to move objects

Moving things with the power of the mind is a common element of magic. This component can also be used to make a spell knock your enemy backward. By burning one six on the weaving roll, you can cause the spell to have the same effect as pushing (see page 30). If you need to move things around more delicately, or wish to manipulate very large objects, consult the tables below. You must select one element from each table to represent the weight of the item you are trying to move and how delicately you need to move it.

Dice	Refinement
1	Move slowly about, flip a switch
2	Hurl at an enemy (see right for damage)
3	Make an attack with a melee weapon
4	Make an attack with a ranged weapon
5	Make a puppet move realistically

Dice	Example Objects	Damage
0	Mouse	1D
1	Large Dog	2D
2	Human	3D
3	Horse	4D
4	Elephant	5D

Range

Activation: burn 1 six for each range increment on a magic weaving roll – see chart below

The basic maximum range of any magic spell is 10 metres. That's not a huge distance, especially if you're hurling a spell with a blast radius and don't want to be caught in the ensuing mayhem. Fortunately you can use this SFX component to increase the range of your spells. Remember that regardless of range you must have a direct line of sight to the target.

Dice Burnt	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Range	50m	100m	200m	400m	800m	1 mile	2 miles	5 miles

Rapid Fire

Activation: burn 2 sixes on a magic weaving roll

A spell with this SFX attached to it may make use of the optional rules for automatic weaponry, in other words you may target two individuals for every die that you drop from the effect. This can be equally applied to shielding spells and the like (drop one from the armour class for each additional target). If a spell has multiple quantifiable SFX attached to it, then all quantifiable factors lose one point per additional target. You must burn two sixes in order to activate this spell component SFX.

Seeking

Activation: burn 1 six per +1 bonus to the attack on a magic weaving roll

Magic spells are notoriously difficult to avoid. A spell with this SFX homes in on its target like a radar-guided missile. Enough of this type of component and you need never miss the mark. The +1 bonus applies to the eventual magic casting roll made to attack the enemy, not to any magic weaving rolls that might be required to complete the spell.

Shield

Activation: burn 1 six per point of armour class on a magic weaving roll

The classical protection spell, this component encapsulates the target in an aura of magic that shields her from harm. It is frequently combined with area effects to create larger shields capable of covering larger subjects. The default size is just large enough to protect one human-sized target. The effect is simple enough: for every six burnt, the shield has one point of armour. When attacking a shielded target, damage dice must first penetrate the shield then any armour worn by the target in order to cause damage. Roll dice equal to the damage of the weapon as usual. Pick up any that roll higher than the shield's armour class and roll them again. Any dice that exceed the character's worn armour class cause one wound each.

There are plenty of other different spell component SFX you could create, for instance spells for foretelling the future or watching over distant places, spells for summoning creatures and creating quantities of certain material, and let's not forget the absolute classic 'turn your enemy into something nasty'. This is however only a brief example, there being only so much space in the book. The rest we will leave to your own imagination, and move on to other important subjects.

Vehicular Combat

One of the trickiest things to deal with adequately in an RPG is chase scenes. There are so many advanced tactics that the participants could employ. They could simply try and outrun one another, or ram each other off the road, take shortcuts, use fancy manoeuvres to get the upper hand, or open fire with weapons mounted on their vehicle of choice. In Myriad, vehicular combat is dealt with in much the same way as normal combat but with one or two slight alterations. This section of the manual outlines how to deal with such matters. There is also a small selection of different vehicles in the Resources chapter on page 67.

A vehicle doesn't necessarily need to be a car or motorbike either. There are boats, submarines, jet aircraft, helicopters, spacecraft and all manner of other vehicles to take into account. In a medieval setting there are at least carts, stagecoaches and of course riding animals which fall into roughly the same category as vehicles and use the same basic rules given here. If you're planning on including any form of personal transportation in your RPG, you might want to give some thought as to how you're going to include them in the rules. Under the right circumstances, a car chase through crowded streets can be easily as tension-packed as a fight scene.

Vehicle Statistics

When making skill rolls that involve vehicles, the character uses whatever skills are appropriate to the vehicle in question. However she does not use her own statistics. Instead, the statistics come from the vehicle she is steering. Vehicles have their own wound boxes and associated critical boxes just like a normal player as well as an armour rating that is usually quite high, but they also have statistics called Speed and Manoeuvre which are used instead of the driver's statistics when taking tests to steer the vehicle.

Note that the term 'Speed' here is a relative value. A horse with a speed of 3 is nowhere near as fast as, for instance, a family car with a speed of 3. This is because riding animals and land vehicles are in different Velocity Classes. The car, being in a higher velocity class, will certainly outdistance the horse eventually, as it has a large effect upon tests made to outrun ones' enemies. However that is not to say that it won't be able to keep up at least for a while, especially if it is a particularly fast and agile horse.

Velocity Class		Examples
1	Pedestrian	Human or similarly sized humanoid creature on foot
2	Riding Animal *or* Rider-propelled Vehicle	Horse, horse-drawn carriage or similar riding animals Bicycle, rowing boat, skateboard, surfboard
3	Flying Animal *or* Motorised Vehicle	Dragon, giant eagle or other flying fantasy mount Family car, HGV, motorboat, most sea vessels
4	Performance Vehicle	Sports car, dragster, rocket-propelled car
5	Propeller Aircraft	Spitfire, Cessna light aircraft, B17 flying fortress
6	Jet Aircraft	F17, tomcat, eurofighter, stealth bomber, jumbo jet
7	Interplanetary	Apollo class spacecraft, most modern spacecraft
8	Interstellar	Futuristic craft capable of travelling between solar systems

Outrunning an Opponent

Often in vehicle chases the issue will not be who can destroy the other person, but whether the lead car can escape. Here is a simple rule to govern that. For each pursuer, keep a tally. Each round of combat, add the Velocity Class of the escapee and subtract that of the pursuer from the pursuing vehicle's tally. You can of course forgo this step if all vehicles involved in the chase are in the same class since the values would simply cancel each other out. The driver of the escaping vehicle should then make an opposed Speed / Driving test against the pursuer. If this is successful then add another point to the tally. The escapee need make only one roll and compare it against the Speed / Driving rolls of all pursuers in a multi-car chase. When a vehicle's tally reaches a preset amount (we suggest 3) then it has been lost and cannot continue the chase.

You can combine running away from your enemies with other forms of vehicular combat using the following rules. Enemy cars with a tally of zero are close enough to the lead car to ram it, and to use ranged weapons without a range penalty. Cars with a tally of 1 or 2 suffer an equal penalty to ranged combat attacks. Cars with a tally of 3 have lost sight of the enemy and can take no further part in the chase. Characters that are driving cars are not allowed to make other actions also, for instance firing weapons.

A race can be coped with in a similar manner. Keep a tally for each car and add each vehicle's velocity class to it at the beginning of each round. Once per round, have every driver make a Vehicle Speed / Drive roll. The lowest scoring roll gets one point towards its car's tally. The second lowest roll gets two points, the third gets three and so on. The first car to reach a preset amount has won the race. You will want to vary the target amount with the number of cars taking part in the race. The recommended value is the number of participants multiplied by five, so for instance in a race containing six cars the target would be 30. This makes for a medium length race lasting between five and ten individual rolls. If you want a quick resolution, use the number of cars multiplied by 2 or 3 instead.

Example: Joseph is attempting to escape in an experimental sports car. Unfortunately he has been spotted making his getaway and two assailants are after him, one in another sports car and the other in a more normal family estate. The two sports cars are both Performance Vehicles with a velocity class of 4. The family estate however is merely a Motorised Vehicle with a velocity class of 3. At the beginning of the chase, both of Joseph's pursuers are right behind him with a tally of 0.

On the first round of the chase Joseph attempts to make a getaway. This takes up his action for the round, but allows him to add his velocity class to the tallies of both enemy vehicles. The classes of those vehicles are then subtracted from their tallies, leaving the sports car still at zero and the family car already lagging behind at a range of 1. Now Joseph makes his Speed / Driving roll, using his car's Speed statistic of 3 and his own skill of driving +2. The result is a respectable 7, which both foes must now oppose. The sports car's driver only manages a 5, and so his tally increases to 1. The family car's driver however rolls an 8. By sheer driving skill, he regains the point he lost due to his lower velocity class and is managing to keep up.

From this example it is possible to see that, while a car that is only one velocity class behind can never hope to catch up with a foe that is already outdistancing it, it can nevertheless keep up long enough to exchange a few bullets if the driver is adept enough.

Vehicle Weaponry and Armour

There are two kinds of weapon system fitted to vehicles, these being fixed weapons and turrets. A fixed weapon is riveted in place and always shoots in the same direction relative to the vehicle, usually forwards. Such weapons must be aimed and fired using the vehicle's Manoeuvre statistic and the pilot's relevant vehicular skill (i.e. Drive or Pilot) to make the attack. Turrets however can be swivelled around to aim in different directions. They cannot usually be operated by the driver, who has enough to cope with steering the vehicle. Instead they are either automated (having both Power and Skill ratings of their own) or are operated by passengers using the passenger's own Power and appropriate weapon skill (Ranged Combat, or Vehicular Weapons if it exists).

Vehicular armour on most craft also protects the passengers, and must be breached before those inside can be hit. When an attacker aims for passengers inside a vehicle, roll the damage dice against the vehicle's armour first and apply damage to it as usual, then re-roll any dice that succeeded against the passenger's personal armour to see if they are injured too. Note that vehicles that do not enclose the passengers (such as motorbikes or horses) do not confer this extra armour roll. Also, by taking the usual penalty for aiming at small targets, an attacker might aim for the weak points (windows, open doors) in the vehicle's armour to circumvent it.

Ramming Attacks

Because of the size, speed and weight of most vehicles, ramming a target can cause a significant amount of damage. A ramming attack is made by pitting your vehicle's Speed and driver's Drive skill against the target vehicle's Manoeuvre and its driver's Drive skill. If it succeeds, consult the speed chart below to determine the base damage caused by the attack, and the comparative size chart for a modifier based on how large it is compared to the target. Note that the ramming speed is relative; a car ramming another car in the rear would subtract the target's speed from its own before determining damage, while a head-on collision would add both speeds together. A car ramming another car directly in the side would only count its own speed.

The RD column stands for Return Damage. This is the proportion of the unmodified damage that is inflicted upon the ramming vehicle should the attack be successful. You can't smack a motorbike into an oil tanker and expect it to come away unharmed. This is expressed as either a fraction of the damage caused to the rammed vehicle, or as a multiplier.

Example: A family car rather foolishly tries to ram an oil tanker, which is at least four times larger than it. The car is travelling at around 90mph, which the Guide judges to be worth around 10D of damage. However since the rammer is roughly one quarter the mass of the target, the attack does only half damage and the rammer also takes the full amount in return damage. Therefore the truck takes a hit of 5D damage and the car takes the full 10D.

Dam.	Relative Ramming Speed
3D	15 mph (top athlete)
5D	30 mph (street speed limit)
8D	60 mph (motorway average)
12D	120 mph (sports car)
17D	240 mph (prop plane, cruise)
25D	580 mph (prop plane, max)
30D	750 mph (jet aircraft)

Dam.	Relative Mass Ratio	RD
×4	Target ⅛ the mass of rammer	-
×3	Target ¼ the mass of rammer	-
×2	Target ½ the mass of rammer	⅛
×1	Rammer and target same mass	¼
¾	Rammer ½ the mass of target	½
½	Rammer ¼ the mass of target	×1
¼	Rammer ⅛ the mass of target	×2

It's hard to keep control of a car when some lunatic seems intent on ramming you off the road. As an optional rule, a driver whose vehicle is subject to a successful ramming attack must instantly make a Manoeuvre / Drive roll against a TN of 6 or lose control. If his car is one quarter the size of the ramming vehicle, he suffers a -1 penalty. If his car is one eighth the size of the ramming vehicle, the penalty is -2. Should the roll fail, then the car goes out of control. If there are any nearby sturdy obstacles it will crash, causing damage as if it had been rammed by a car of the same size moving at its present speed. If there are no sturdy obstacles to crash into, the driver instead suffers a -1 penalty to all vehicular rolls on the following round of combat.

Example SFX for Vehicular Combat

The following SFX are designed for use in advanced vehicular combat. In order to purchase them, it is suggested that the character should also have at least two levels in an appropriate Drive or Pilot skill. As with all other example SFX, they cost one point each to purchase.

City Driver

Activation: burn 1 six to add 1 to the outrun tally of any one car on an outrun roll

Dodging a pursuer in a featureless wasteland is pretty difficult, but in the complex web of roads that make up the transit network of any major city it's a lot easier. An experienced driver, especially one who knows the city in question well, can dodge left and right down narrow alleys to throw off his pursuers. This SFX requires the driver to be in an urban environment. It doesn't work if there are no tall buildings to block the view from one road to another. When making a roll to outrun pursuers, the driver may burn a six to add one to the outrun tally of any one opposing car. This is in addition to any tally points caused by the roll itself. If the driver has more than one six he can add one to the tally of more than one car, but he cannot add more than one extra point to any one car in the same round using this SFX.

Head 'Em Off

Activation: burn 3 sixes total on any combination of Driving rolls whilst chasing an opponent

A driver doesn't necessarily have to see his opponent to chase them down. If he can work out where they are going from the route they are taking, or has a good idea of where they are going anyway, he can sometimes shortcut ahead of their route and 'head them off at the pass'. The player must burn three sixes during the course of the chase to activate this SFX. He need not burn all three at once, he can burn one each on three separate rolls or two on one roll and one on another, but he must have burnt all three before his target manages to outrun him and he may not burn sixes on any other SFX while saving up to activate this one.

When the last required six has been burnt, the character's car veers off from the chase, appearing to have given up or taken a wrong turning. It will be out of contact with the rest of the vehicles during the following round of combat and can take no part in any conflict that goes on between them during that round. However, the round of combat after that the player's car re-appears from a side road a hundred metres or so ahead of the target vehicle, and his chase tally is automatically reset to zero regardless of what it was before the SFX was used.

Mighty Leap

Activation: burn 1 six per additional (Manoeuvre + 2) metres of jump on any driving roll

Leaping through the air is not a naturally tenable situation for most vehicles. They have an alarming tendency to roll in the air, and it ruins the suspension when they do manage to land on their wheels. A driver with this SFX need never worry about rolling or otherwise causing damage to her vehicle when jumping. Riding animals with the right kind of locomotion (i.e. good strong legs) can jump any time they like, but inanimate vehicles must be driven over a steep ramp at high speed or equipped with some kind of special equipment. Whatever the case, the rules are simple. A vehicle can jump its own Manoeuvre rating in metres even without this SFX. Each six burnt adds its grace again plus a further two metres to the distance travelled whilst in the air.

Peel Out

Activation: automatically win the first outrun roll of the race versus stationary cars

The driver is adept at squealing off from the starting grid to the smell of burning rubber before any of the other cars even have chance to rev their engines. This is one of those rare SFX that does not require the player to burn any sixes. Instead, the driver automatically wins the first outrun roll of the race against any car that is stationary, provided that his own car is also stationary. This does not work versus drivers who also have the Peel Out SFX, who must be rolled against as usual.

Ram Master

Activation: burn 1 six to reduce the return damage to your own vehicle by 3 dice on a ramming attack roll

With careful angling and preparation it is possible to smash clean into an enemy vehicle without more than light cosmetic damage to your own ride, even when ramming targets several times its size. For every six burnt on the ramming attack roll, the amount of return damage done to your own car is reduced by three dice. This damage is deducted from the damage rating of the attack before the dice are rolled, not from the number of wounds caused.

Strafing Attack

Activation: burn 1 six per additional target struck on a vehicular attack roll

Although it is aircraft mounted with machineguns that are most famous for their strafing attacks against ground targets, this SFX can in fact be used in conjunction with any weapon and any vehicle. For every six that you burn on the attack roll, the attack targets one additional victim who must be in the near vicinity of the previous target. Only one attack roll is made, and all targets must compare their defence rolls to it to see if they have successfully avoided harm. A vehicle equipped with a fully automatic weapon such as a machine gun may also make use of the standard automatic weaponry rule and attack one additional target per die of damage dropped.

Two Wheeler

Activation: burn 1 six on a vehicle driving roll

By angling one set of wheels towards a short ramp, the driver pops the car up onto two wheels and balances it there by careful steering and distribution of body weight. The ramp may not even be totally necessary when driving extremely light vehicles. In any case it's usually easiest to assume that the player can perform this tricky manoeuvre at any time rather than worrying about the availability of suitable ramps, provided the vehicle isn't a tank or similar. This is a flashy trick that is bound to impress any onlookers, but that's not the only benefit. It also allows the vehicle to squeeze down alleyways that would otherwise have been far too narrow to accommodate it, dodge through closely-spaced rows of bollards and so on. Foes on either side of the car will also be unable to shoot through the windows of the vehicle and thus bypass its armour.

Dealing with Massive Vehicles

Some vehicles are so truly immense that causing damage to them with pifflingly small weapons such as handguns or swords is preposterous. You couldn't shoot down a spaceship with a handgun, or chop a hole through the hull of a battleship with a fire axe. For these purposes we suggest that the rules for Hardened Targets (see page 32) be applied to large vessels, making it impossible to harm them with anything less than a Weapon of Mass Destruction.

Deck Plans

When dealing with especially large craft, in particular the larger spaceships in a science fiction setting, it is often wise to draw out a deck plan to show players how the interior of the ship is laid out. This can be especially useful if they are called upon to repel a boarding action. When designing your spacecraft you will want to make sure that you include on its blueprint all the essential areas that a ship of its size would need. These might include the bridge, sleeping quarters, an armoury, sick bay, the brig (aka prison cells), rest and relaxation areas, dining areas, main engineering, energy generation (i.e. a reactor), engines, fuel tanks, flight decks for storing smaller fighter craft and planetary landing shuttles, gun turrets, life support systems and escape pods.

Critical Locations

With immense craft it is unlikely that the whole ship will crumple and explode if shot repeatedly in one location. It is far more likely that critical systems will fail before there is any permanent damage to the vessel as a whole. A good way of simulating this is to provide spacecraft above a certain size with a number of critical locations. Each of these locations on the ship should be responsible for a particular ship-wide system, and should have its own wound boxes. There is no need to give these locations critical wound boxes as well, but the ship itself should have a critical wound line to represent the strength of its superstructure.

When a particular critical location runs out of wounds, any further damage to it rolls over onto the ship's critical boxes damaging its superstructure. It also ceases to function properly, which could have any number of consequences to the ship's crew. A few examples of critical locations are given below, along with suggestions for how their loss might affect the crew. In the case of a spaceship, that area will also be depressurised and any crew in the immediate area are in danger of being sucked out into space. Once the ship's critical boxes run out it will explode or fall apart, usually taking all crew left on board with it.

If you intend to use these rules, you should draw up a Hit Location Chart for your craft, following the same rules as given on page 32 for human targets. Don't forget to include negative penalties for aiming at specific systems. See also the example starship on page 69. An example hit location chart for a large carrier-type spacecraft might look something like this:

D100	System Hit	Penalty
1-5	Bridge	-2
6-20	Cargo Bay	None
21-25	Communications	-2
26-35	Engineering	-1
36-50	Fighter Bay	None

D100	System hit	Penalty
51-60	Life Support	-1
61-75	Main Engines	None
76-85	Reactor	-1
86-95	Shielding	-1
95-100	Sickbay	-2

Example: a small space freighter is attacked by space pirates. The freighter has three critical locations, the bridge, the main engines and the cargo hold. A roll on the freighter's hit location chart indicates a hit to the bridge. Let's say that the Bridge has five wounds, the freighter as a whole has ten critical wounds and that the attack causes a total of six wounds. This is bad news for the crew, who are all on the bridge, since that location is instantly wiped out by the first five points of damage, killing them all. The remaining point of damage rolls over onto the freighter's critical line, leaving it with nine critical boxes unchecked. In one swift strike the space pirates have obliterated the crew without destroying the freighter, and can now tow their booty back to base.

Just like hit locations on a humanoid, if a starship loses a critical location to excessive damage it will find itself impeded in some way. The location must lose all of its wound boxes before it is lost. What penalties are applied to the stricken ship when a critical location is destroyed varies depending on the location. Here are a few examples that you might find useful:

Bridge: a critical location, if destroyed the ship is likely to lose most of its command staff unless they have already evacuated to a safer spot. It will certainly lose its main piloting controls and go out of control, unless some backup system is in place to prevent this from happening.

Cargo Bay: if this area is destroyed, any cargo held inside is likely to be destroyed also. You can roll dice to decide how much of the ship's stocks are destroyed if you like. Any cargo that isn't blown to smithereens by the destruction of the cargo hold will be sucked out into space where a pirate ship with the right equipment could salvage it.

Communications: the ship can no longer call for help, or give commands to any fighter craft that it may have fielded in the vicinity.

Engineering: although a ship does not require a working engineering section for its engineers to repair it, having to fix a broken starship without the assistance of computer diagnostics is a real trial. As a result, any attempts at repairs suffer a -1 penalty if the ship loses its engineering section.

Fighter Bay: no more fighters may launch or land until the bays have been repaired. In addition, any vessels inside the fighter bays take 5D×3 WMD damage from the explosion. The fighter bays themselves must be repaired before repairs can be conducted on any fighters lodged there.

Life Support: the destruction of a ship's life support systems prevents it from recycling its oxygen, food and water supplies. Though this will become a big problem if it cannot be quickly repaired, it poses no immediate danger since a large spaceship can hold enough air to support its crew members for at least 12 to 24 hours before anyone starts becoming short of breath.

Main Engines: if destroyed, the ship cannot move and hence cannot attempt to outrun its pursuers. It is also incapable of dodging, but that said most ships large enough to need critical locations are so large anyway that dodging isn't really an option.

Reactor: if this area is destroyed then it will likely go critical. If there are no fail-safe measures in place to eject the reactor from the ship it will explode taking the rest of the vessel with it. If it can be ejected in time then the ship will be left intact, but helpless without power.

Shielding: a ship that makes use of energy shields as part or all of its armour can be left very vulnerable if its shielding unit should cease to function. If this location is destroyed, the armour rating for the entire ship and/or even its Hardened Target rating is likely to drop dramatically.

Sickbay: all major spacecraft should have their own sickbay to take care of the wounded. If this vital area is destroyed, medics will have to make do without proper facilities for treating serious injuries and sickness and may suffer penalties set by the Guide as a result. Minor injuries don't usually require hospital facilities to treat, but critical wounds always do.

Weapon Turrets: in actual fact, it's best not to treat weapon turrets as a critical location because they could be destroyed individually, and you don't want too many critical locations jamming up your table. The game will run more smoothly if they are treated in the same manner as star fighters with their own manoeuvre rating for attacking and the parent vessel's for dodging.

Repairing Vehicles

It is possible to repair a vehicle in much the same way as a medic can heal a human. The only difference is that the mechanic makes an Intellect / Mechanics roll instead of Intellect / Medic. See page 27 for more details. Critical locations in massive vessels must be repaired separately, and critical boxes are treated as a location of their own called 'Superstructure'. The time it takes for the mechanic to complete a single roll will depend on the size of the vehicle, from around 15 minutes for a car to three hours for a starship.

Additional Resources

There's a lot of work in creating your own game, so to help you out here is a collection of resources that you can adopt or adapt as you see fit. Herein you will find sample skill sets for several different genres of RPG, a few example boons and flaws, equipment from the length and breadth of the space-time continuum, a fully equipped armoury of weapons modern, futuristic and archaic, plus a bundle of exotic races from the familiar to the bizarre for you to enjoy.

Skill Sets By Genre

To save you a little time and effort, we have compiled a selection of short skill lists for some of the most common genres of RPG below. Simply take the selection of General Skills, match it with one or more Historical Period and Genre sets and away you go. You can use the lists presented here as is in your own projects, add new skills, remove existing ones and/or split them into more specific groupings. There's nothing to stop you writing your own lists of skills either. The skill lists have been kept intentionally compact for the purposes of simplicity.

General Skills Suitable to Any Genre		
Arts & Crafts	Athletics	Close Combat
Deceit	Geography	History
Linguistics	Medic	Perception
Persuasion	Ranged Combat	Stealth

Medieval
Alchemy
Engineering
Falconry
Ride Land Animals

Modern
Computing
Drive (cars, boats)
Electronics
Pilot (aircraft)
Science

Futuristic
Astronavigation
Cybernetics
Pilot (spacecraft)
Robotics

Fantasy
Magical Lore
Ride Flying Animals
Spell Casting

Science Fiction
Invent Hi-Tech Gizmo
Psychic Powers

Horror
Faith (any religion)
Occult Lore
Ritualistic Magic

N There is a slight difference between the ritualistic magic used in horror settings and the magic commonly seen in fantasy. While the latter can be performed by a single practitioner and produces spells near-instantly, the former may require 30 minutes to several hours of solemn ceremony, often performed by several individuals. Ritualistic magic is slower but allows several people to contribute, while wizardly magic relies on the skills of one person but can be woven in seconds. As with any aspect of the game, feel free to change these definitions if it suits you.

M The commonest way of customising a game setting is by personalising the skill lists. The lists given here are very compact. Each skill has a huge number of uses, and the Guide will have to use her initiative when deciding which skills are applicable to which tasks. In some cases you might feel that certain tasks are not covered by any of them. Blowing up a building for instance would have to be a Science ability test since there is no Demolitions skill. If you think the players are likely to do a lot of a particular action, it might be wise to give it its own skill.

General Boons and Flaws

Although doubtless there will be boons and flaws specific to at least the more specialised settings, the following are examples of the kind of thing that make good boons and flaws and the number of points they might be worth.

Rich / Poor (1 general point per level, max 3 levels)

If you intend to allow your players to purchase equipment from a starting pool of cash using the rules given on page 62, then a good boon/flaw combination to include is Rich/Poor. Characters with the Rich boon gain one additional resource point (or an equivalent amount of spending cash) for every general point that they spend. Alternatively, players can shed one resource point to earn themselves the Poor flaw, and one additional general point to spend.

Depending on the amount of resource points you intend to give on average, you may want to adjust these standard values up or down a little. If each player only gets one or two resource points anyway, then Rich/Poor probably deserves to be worth 2 general points. On the other hand, if every character starts play with ten or twenty resource points, that single general point might be worth plus or minus three or four resource points instead of just one.

Famous / Notorious (2 general points per level, max 3 levels)

This boon/flaw makes the character who owns it particularly well-known. The only difference is that if the character is Famous, then they are known for something good, whereas a Notorious character is an infamous cad. Once per session, a player with a Famous character may claim a +1 bonus on any social test (in or out of conflict) due to being well-known. The roll could be anything, from buying a firearm on the black market to taking command of a military unit. A Notorious character on the other hand can expect the Guide to lavish him with a -1 penalty on any social roll at some point during the session, once for each level of this flaw. In both cases, the maximum bonus or penalty per roll is +1 or -1 respectively.

Lucky / Unlucky (2 general points per level, max 3 levels)

The character is either particularly fortunate, or suspiciously unlucky. A lucky player may, once per session per level in Lucky, elect to roll an unsuccessful test again. The new result is treated as the final result for the test. If the roll she is taking a second attempt at is an opposed roll then her opponent also has the option of rolling again or of keeping his original score. The player must be able to describe how her good fortune comes to the rescue, for instance telling how an incoming bullet that she failed to dodge pings off her police badge.

Conversely, an Unlucky player is at the mercy of the Guide's capricious whim. Once per session per flaw level, he may be required to re-roll a successful test and take the new result instead. As with Lucky, any opponents featured in an opposed roll may also re-roll if they wish, and the Guide is obliged to describe how ill fortune contributes to the player's fate. In a game where religion is considered especially important, for instance a Biblical fantasy game where the players are soldiers of God, this boon/flaw could be alternatively named blessed/cursed.

Ally / Enemy (1 – 5 general points)

Your character has either picked up a useful ally, or acquired a deadly enemy. The details of who this person is should be worked out in collaboration with the Guide. The number of points that this boon/flaw is worth depends upon how useful the ally is, or how powerful the enemy is. A few examples of varying levels of ally and enemy are given below.

- 1 gp Ally – a crippled beggar who hears all the latest gossip around town
- 3gp Ally – an expert martial artist who can occasionally be called upon for backup
- 5gp Ally – a politician with extensive powers who owes the PC his life
- 1 gp Enemy – a policeman who is sure the PC is up to no good, but won't falsify evidence
- 3gp Enemy – a skilled sorceror who enjoys hindering – but not killing – the PC.
- 5gp Enemy – a rich villain with hordes of followers who wishes to kill the PC

Affiliation / Barred (1 – 5 general points)

The character is either affiliated with a select company or club, or is barred from making use of the facilities at a particular public convenience for some reason. The number of points this boon/flaw is worth should depend on how useful the associated company could be to the character, and how often he might be expected to make use of their services. The Guide is the final arbiter, but a few good examples are given below.

- 1 gp Affiliate – member of a gym or gun club where the PC can go to train abilities
- 3 gp Affiliate – member of a gun club that will happily loan firearms and ammunition
- 5 gp Affiliate – employee of the FBI with all the perks that entails
- 1 gp Barred – banned from all local inns and taverns for barroom brawling
- 3 gp Barred – banned from carrying a gun due to a firearms offence
- 5 gp Barred – wanted criminal, cannot visit hospitals or police stations

M Affiliations are a good way of expanding the background of a detailed RPG setting book. Why not provide the players with a nice long list of different organisations that are central to the setting so that they can, if they so wish, spend the necessary general points to become members of these organisations?

Example Racial Templates

One of the primary concerns of most high fantasy, a lot of science fiction and even a few horror style RPG's is how to cope with characters from non-human races. The easiest way to deal with this in the Myriad system, and indeed a common method in RPG's in general, is by the use of Templates. If a character wants all of the advantages associated with a particular race, they have to purchase the whole kit in one go including any nasty side-effects too. This prevents players from picking out the nice aspects of the race and leaving out the nasty. For more information on how to use templates in your RPG, see page 12.

Racial SFX, Boons and Flaws

Before we move on to the templates themselves, let's examine some common racial attributes in the form of racial SFX, boons and flaws. These abilities have been chosen for the regularity that they occur in popular non-human species in various genres. You can use these as-is in your own templates, or invent your own to supplement this list. All prices here are in general points to help you calculate the overall cost of your finished template.

Acute/Bad Hearing (1 general point)

The species has particularly sharp hearing, and maybe very large ears to match. Any characters with this racial template may add a +1 bonus to any Perception tests they make that involve the sense of hearing more than anything else. Examples might include hearing an assassin sneaking up, or listening in to a distant conversation. You can easily reverse this boon to a -1 penalty to perception tests involving hearing.

Acute/Bad Scent/Taste (1 general point)

Like Acute Hearing above, this racial boon grants a +1 bonus to Perception tests, but this time only when the sense of smell or taste is directly involved. Examples of such tests are tasting a nasty poison in your caviar, or sniffing the scent of knockout gas before it becomes powerful enough to overcome you. As with its brothers, you can reverse Acute Scent to Bad Scent and treat it as a -1 penalty to turn this boon into a flaw.

Acute/Bad Vision (2 general points)

As with the preceding boons, Acute Vision grants a +1 bonus to Perception rolls when using a specific sense, in this case sight. It is more expensive than the previous two boons because vision is tested more often than any other sense. If you're searching a room for clues, trying to see through an enemy's disguise, tracking a wild animal through the bush or just trying to find your friends in a packed concert hall, that +1 bonus is going to be invaluable. As with Hearing and Scent, this boon can be reversed to become a -1 penalty flaw instead.

Cold Blooded (3 general points, flaw)

The species is reptilian in nature, and as such is cold blooded. They have a tendency to slow down in extremes of heat. If the ambient temperature is particularly cold or very hot, the character slows right down and has difficulty concentrating. Under such circumstances she must subtract 1 from all Initiative rolls during any form of conflict and suffers a -1 penalty on all tests of any type. Fortunately it has to be very hot (a baking day in the desert) or very cold (snow on the ground) to have such a significant effect, and wearing appropriate clothing may help a great deal.

Deadly Weakness (2 or 5 general points per level, flaw – see below)

The species has a whole can be potentially injured by some relatively common means. If the species also has the Immunity: Total boon then this flaw is only worth two general points, is in addition to the mandatory weakness they already have, and can optionally be a condition that would normally harm a human such as being splashed with acid, taking a stake through the heart and so on. If the species does not possess Immunity: Total, this boon is worth five general points but the condition named must be something that would be quite harmless to a normal human, such as sunlight or the touch of cold iron. The weakness must be fairly common, and in addition no matter how secretive the species is there will be some way for people to discover and exploit their deadly weakness, even if it is not common knowledge.

There are two basic types of Deadly Weakness; material and conditional. A material weakness means that weapons crafted of a particular substance, or weapons of a specific type or shape, have double their usual damage rating for purposes of attacking the character. Silver bullets for werewolves are a good example of this. A conditional weakness is when a particular condition causes damage to the species, for instance direct sunlight or entering holy ground. When subjected to the condition named, the character automatically takes one critical wound of damage for every combat round she is exposed to it. Armour has no effect upon this damage unless it protects from the condition somehow, for instance totally covering a Vampire in opaque black cloth will protect it from the glare of the sun provided that not a scrap of skin is exposed.

Fast / Slow (1 general point per level, max 3 levels)

Some creatures, by dint of terrific energy, exotic bone structure in the legs, or just plain athleticism, are naturally faster than average. Others, for more or less opposite reasons, are slower than they could be. This boon/flaw allows you to simulate that with your own races. Each level of Fast increases the amount of free movement per round of conflict by one unit, while Slow does the opposite. At the Guide's option, a race with 3 levels in this boon/flaw also receive a 1 point bonus/penalty when making tests to move swiftly, including initiative rolls in mortal combat.

Flight (6 general points for gliding, 10 general points for true flight)

Some species of animal are capable of flying, and you may want to include winged races that are also capable of this feat. Being able to fly is however a very large advantage that allows the character to circumvent obstacles that would otherwise prove a considerable hindrance. That is why this racial boon is so expensive. This boon comes in two types, gliding and true flight.

A character capable of gliding must launch herself from a high perch in order to fly, and is limited in the distance that she can move while airborne. A gliding character can usually fly only a given distance in any direction, equal to about ten times the height she started from, compared to the height she lands at. For example if she jumped off a cliff that was 300 metres tall aiming to land on an opposite cliff only 100 metres tall, she would me able to glide a total of (300 – 100 x 10 =) 2,000 metres. This distance can be increased if the character makes use of thermals, that is flies over sources of intense heat in order to catch the updraught. In contrast to this, a character with the ten-point variation of true flight can take off from anywhere and is only limited in the range he can fly by his own endurance. In terms of speed, you can usually consider characters using either mode of flight to be travelling at 25 mph.

In combat in particular, a character in the air has two major advantages over one on the ground. Firstly she may attack whoever she likes in melee combat without having to worry about how far away the target is. She swoops down on her prey, gets a quick strike in and swoops off again. Secondly close combat attacks may not be made against a flying character unless they occur on exactly the same initiative as an attack made by that PC, provided that attack is against the person attacking the flying character or someone nearby. In other words, to hit a flying creature with a melee attack, that creature must be attacking you or someone close to you on the same initiative as your attack. Ranged attacks work just fine.

Example: a giant eagle is circling a group of soldiers. The soldiers are only armed with swords so they can't attack it unless it attacks them. The eagle on the other hand can make an attack against any of them. Its initiative is 5, and the soldiers act on 2, 4 and 6. The eagle decides to go for the soldier acting on initiative 4 because it knows he won't be ready to strike back. What it hasn't spotted is that the initiative 6 soldier is standing next to its target. That soldier withholds his action to coincide with the eagle's and manages to get an attack in as it swoops down on his friend.

Immunity: Partial (3 to 7 general points)

The species is utterly immune to one specific type of damage. The more common the damage type, the more points it costs. Examples include (3 points) radiation, asphyxiation, cold, starvation, (5 points) fire, falling damage, explosions, electricity, (7 points) magic, bullets, edged weapons, blunt weapons, and energy weapons. If targeted by an effect that can charitably be categorised under the chosen type of damage then the player doesn't even have to roll damage dice as the attack does precisely nothing. Note that even if a creature is immune to the damage of an attack, he may not be immune to its side effects such as non-damaging magic spell components or being thrown around by a heavy explosion.

Immunity: Total (30 general points)

The species is utterly immune to all forms of damage, save one. The species always has one weakness that can be exploited to hurt them. In effect, they have one level of Deadly Weakness (above) that comes as part and parcel of this boon. It's usually not a difficult task for a vengeful enemy to research such weaknesses either, as occult lore is brimming with ways of disposing of troublesome supernatural creatures. See the description of Deadly Weakness above for more information on how to pick one for your creature.

Longevity (1 general point)

The species lives for an especially long time, at least ten times as long on average as a human. This boon has very little effect on the game rules hence its relatively low cost. The only tangible effect is that when targeted by an attack that causes damage by aging the target this species takes only one tenth of the final damage they should have received, rounding all fractions to the nearest whole number. Naturally this kind of damage is exceedingly rare. If it is never encountered in the module at all, this boon can be considered free instead of costing one general point.

Magic Resistant/Susceptible (5 general points)

The race is particularly resistant to magic, perhaps being magical in origin itself. As a result, hostile spells have more difficulty in affecting characters of this race. Should a magical spell strike the PC, then the player may elect to nullify the effects of a single SFX spell component. For instance, if the spell had three sixes burnt on extra damage, the player could choose to reduce this to two sixes spent on damage. The player may not remove components that affect the range or area effect of the spell, but any other components are fair game. Also, if the spell targets multiple other characters as well, then they do not benefit from the same reductions as the magically resistant PC. The spell's effectiveness is reduced only for the character with Magic Resistant.

This boon can also be a flaw (Magic Susceptible). If a spell strikes a character with this flaw, the wizard who cast it gains a bonus six to burn on any magical component SFX he likes. This bonus component only applies to the character(s) with the Magic Susceptible flaw, not any other characters who the spell may also have hit.

Magic Resistant: Partial (2 general points)

The race is particularly resistant to a very specific type of magic. Maybe they have a knack of seeing through illusions, or can shrug off magical damage easier than most. This boon works in the same manner as regular Magic Resistant (above) but only in relation to a single specific magic component. If for instance the species was resistant to the Motion SFX, the enemy spell would lose one six related to that component. The type of spell that the species is resistant to is set and cannot be changed. A species cannot be resistant to either range or area of effect components, and as with normal magic resistance the reductions in power only benefit the owner of this boon, not any other targets who are also hit by the same spell.

Metamorphic (2 general points per level)

The species has more than one distinct form that they can transform between at will. For each level of this boon, the PC has one additional body shape that they can morph into. Certain boons such as natural weapons and armour may only be available in certain forms, while others will be available regardless of the shape the character currently is. By default, any other species boons may only be used when the character is in a particular form. You may however spend one additional general point on a boon when creating the species in order to make it available to one additional form, and boons can be stitched into as many different forms as you are willing to spend the points on. Changing between forms takes up your action for the round when performed in combat, but does not require a test of any sort.

Example: This particular racial boon is common in contemporary horror RPGs so we'll give a suitable example. A werewolf has two basic forms, that of a human and that of a wolf. This costs only two general points. In wolf form, his ferocious jaws give him a level two Natural Attack. This costs four general points, and since it is only available in wolf form no extra cost is incurred. On the other hand a werewolf is immune to all damage except that caused by silver weapons. This is Immunity: Total and is available whether the character is in human form or wolf form. It therefore costs one point more than usual for a whopping total of 31 general points.

Natural Armour (3 general points per level, max 3 levels)

Some species of animal have thick hides or armour plating that offers some protection against incoming attacks. The protection value of this armour is equal to the level of this boon, so level 2 Natural Armour will protect the owner from any wounds dice that roll 2 or less. There is an absolute maximum of three levels of Natural Armour, but the amount of protection can be extended further using the far more expensive Natural Armour: Heavy boon below. Don't forget that any armour worn in addition to Natural Armour is not cumulative. You only count the highest armour rating out of all your natural and worn armour. The main advantage of this boon is that the armour cannot be removed by enemies should the PC be captured.

Natural Armour: Heavy (4 general points per level, max 2 levels, requires Natural Armour 3)

A species with armour plating as tough as medieval plate mail or modern tank armour would likely benefit from this boon, but note that in order to add it to the template the species must also have Natural Armour at level 3. Levels of Natural Armour: Heavy are cumulative with levels of Natural Armour for purposes of calculating your armour rating, so Natural Armour 3 and Natural Armour: Heavy 1 gives a total rating of 4.

Natural Weapon (3 general points per level, max 2 levels)

The species is equipped with deadly claws, a lethal bite or some other form of built-in melee weaponry that increases its hand-to-hand damage. Normal bare-fisted attacks cause only one die of damage. For each level of Natural Weapon the character has, this base damage is increased by one additional die. The race can in fact have as many natural weapons as desired and need only purchase this boon once, but its level dictates the damage caused by the most deadly weapon in the creature's arsenal.

Natural Weapon: Heavy (4 general points per level, max 2 levels, requires Natural Weapon 2)

As with Natural Armour: Heavy, levels in Natural Weapon: Heavy add to those of Natural Weapon when determining how much additional damage the character causes with unarmed attacks. The species must have Natural Weapons at level 2 in order to have any levels in this racial boon. Note that natural weapons that cause more than three dice of damage are very rare indeed, and should be saved for especially dangerous races with monumentally huge teeth or claws at least as long as a human forearm.

Natural Weapon: Ranged (4 general points per level, max 3 levels)

The species has a built-in weapon suitable for ranged combat. The most obvious example of this boon is a dragon's fiery breath, although it could also be used to represent sharp quills fired from the character's back or a spray of deadly venom. For each level of this boon, the ranged attack does one die of damage. Ranged natural weapons only operate at short range, that is they can only target enemies that are less than 200 metres away.

Night Vision (2 general points per level, max 2 levels)

A playable race with this boon can see particularly well in the dark. It is most commonly gifted to races that are either nocturnal or live underground for the vast majority of the time. The level of this boon is therefore subtracted from any negative penalties incurred due to poor lighting, reducing them to a minimum of zero. Additionally, a character with level 2 Night Vision can see in full colour even when very little lighting is available. Normal humans see in black and white under such circumstances.

Prejudice (3 general points, flaw)

The race as a whole has a bad reputation, whether it is deserved or not. People might think of them as barbarians or murderous thieves for instance. Player characters need not pander to this stereotype if they do not wish to of course. By default, people from other races respond negatively towards any members of the race with this flaw. Any social tests made against members of species other than the PC's own suffer a -1 penalty unless the character in question has a good reason not to mistrust the character or her race in general. An NPC who has adventured with the character for a while and found him to be loyal and honest would not suffer from prejudice, nor would (for instance) an NPC who had spent most of her life in the company of the race in question. It is up to the Guide exactly which NPC's present this penalty.

Example Racial Templates

To get you started, here is a short selection of racial templates for a number of odd creatures, some familiar and some less so. They can easily be adapted to any genre, so if you really want elves and dwarves flying around the universe in starships, or even bizarre races hunting through the primordial swamps in a fantasy-themed world, go ahead and do it! It's an overused maxim, but the great thing about Role Playing is that the only limit really is your imagination.

Dwarf (30 general points)

Sometimes considered to be an offshoot of the human race, Dwarves look like humans in all ways except one: their height. They typically grow to be around four feet tall on average. The males in particular are very proud of their beards which they plait and decorate in elaborate fashions. In some settings the females have beards too, and may be near-indistinguishable from the men when clad from top to toe in the chain mail and plate armour that passes for Dwarven national dress. They are a hardy folk, used to if not fond of fighting.

Dwarves are miners by nature. They live underground in vast cavern cities. They are also master artisans and craftsmen, producing the very best weapons and armour not to mention jewellery and gems. It is perhaps this latter trade that has earned them their reputation for being greedy, although in many cases this is a vile slur. They simply have a love for all things beautiful, and of creating wondrous artefacts.

Power: 3	Grace: 2	Intellect: 2	Spirit: 2
Other Notes: Night Vision 2 (reduces all negative penalties for darkness by 2) Slow 1 (basic movement allowance in combat is reduced by 1)			

Elf (30 general points)

The elves are probably the most prevalent of all the typically fantastical races. Elves are tall, willowy humanoids with long pointed ears. Many species of elves cannot grow beards, and even their strongest warriors look vaguely effeminate. They do not tend to be obviously muscular, and very few ever become overweight. Elves live to a far greater age than humans or even dwarves. They have an ethereal nature that some take for pride, although this has more to do with the fact that elves are more closely connected to magic than any other race.

Though there are some plains-dwelling and even subterranean species of elves, the vast majority of them live in the deep forests in tree house villages. They prefer to live at one with nature far away from human and dwarfish settlements, and eschew industry of any sort. Elves tend to be very protective of nature in general and their forest homes in particular. They are masters of enchantment, and practically everything they make is magical in some way.

Power: 1	Grace: 3	Intellect: 3	Spirit: 3
Other Notes: Longevity 1 (damage from aging effects is divided by ten) Magic Resistant: Partial (remove one die of Illusion SFX from incoming magic spells)			

Ogre (27 general points)

Lumpy and disfigured, ogres are as ugly as they are stong. They tend to have large, bloated bellies and irregular features. Though basically human, they are so prone to deformity that it can often be difficult to see this. They stand around 7 feet tall and are well-muscled despite their flabby bodies. Most ogres are uncivilised brutes with abysmal manners and even worse personal grooming habits. To put it bluntly, they stink. Though not inherently evil, ogres are often forced into criminal ways by other races who cannot bear their foul presence.

Ogres are mostly uncivilised, living in natural caves or simple tents at best. A few of the more enterprising and pleasant are allowed to live in human settlements. Though the humans are as sensitive to the ogres' stench and manners as any other race, they do at least realise that the ogres' immense strength and ferocity can be turned to their own advantage. Ogres do not make anything more complicated than a tree branch club, and often find it difficult stringing together a sentence. However they are very tough and can easily take a sword stroke without flinching.

Power: 4	Grace: 1	Intellect: 1	Spirit: 1

Other Notes:
Natural Weapon 1 (ogres have an unarmed damage rating of 2 dice)
Natural Armour 2 (damage dice that roll 2 or less do not wound the creature)
Prejudice (-1 to any social tests when dealing with other species)

Magma Dweller (35 general points)

This strange race live deep in the boiling hearts of volcanoes in small villages built from the tough rock of the volcano itself. They are accustomed to heat and quite resistant to even the hottest conditions to such an extent that they regularly bathe in molten lava. They are basically humanoid, but their skin is tough and rocky, cracked in places so that their joints can function. Some are rough and craggy, while others polish their carapace to a shine and look like gleaming brownish-black statues. Though they are not harmed by being away from their lava-filled villages, they rarely venture forth since they are not comfortable in the outside world.

Magma dwellers are reasonably intelligent, but do not make much in the way of goods since most normal equipment would not survive in their steamy volcanic homes. Instead they trade gems and notably the volcanic glass obsidian with other races in exchange for food supplies to save them having to leave the comfort of their crater to farm. They have a rich oral tradition, and are particularly fond of song and theatre. Their deep, rumbling voices can be heard for miles around when a major celebration is underway.

Power: 2	Grace: 2	Intellect: 2	Spirit: 2

Other Notes:
Natural Armour 2 (damage dice that roll 2 or less do not wound the creature)
Immunity: Partial (fire and heat-based attacks cause no damage)

Naga (30 general points)

Nagas are a reptilian race whose humanoid upper body terminates in a long, snake-like tail in place of more conventional legs. Some are more or less human from the waist up, but most species of Naga have scaly skin extending over their upper body and a snake-like head rather than a human one. Their long tail makes them startlingly fast over land and is also well-adapted to swimming though they prefer arid climates to marine life. Sadly it also makes it very hard for them to ride most usual riding animals.

These snake-like creatures have a deep and ancient culture based around a rigid caste system of warriors who protect the community, scholars who direct it and workers who develop it and provide its goods and services. Nagas are avid creators of new technologies and fascinating devices, being especially fond of fireworks and clockwork. They are both fierce in battle and scholarly in peace time, though their penchant for cut-throat politics puts some of the other races on their guard when dealing with the Naga. Even so they have a reputation for being intelligent, cultured creatures who attack only in self-defence.

Power: 2	Grace: 3	Intellect: 3	Spirit: 2

Other Notes:
Fast 3 (+3 to basic movement allowance, +1 to tests that involve speed)
Cold Blooded (-1 penalty to all tests when in an extremely hot or cold environment)

Dragon Folk (38 general points)

The dragon folk are thought to be kin to the noble dragons, immense creatures of awesome power and intellect. They possess the scaly skin and the draconic snout, wings and tail of the true dragon, but walk upright like humans and are about the same size too. Most species of dragon folk have some kind of ranged natural weapon, usually fiery breath although other types have been reported also. As for colouration, these elegant reptiles can be anything from midnight black to sunset red to gleaming white or gold.

Dragon folk are perhaps justifiably proud of their heritage, and tend to be haughty and distant. They are too few and far between to form communities of their own, but they frequently rise to become important members of the communities of other races. They are fond of arts and crafts, but collect more than they create.

Power: 2	Grace: 2	Intellect: 2	Spirit: 2
Other Notes:			
Natural Weapon: Ranged 2 (8 fiery breath that inflicts 2 dice of damage on a successful hit)			
Flight: Gliding (can glide for a range equal to ten times the height they jump from)			

General Equipment

Carrying the proper equipment can be vital to a character's survival. Where would a warrior be without his sword? Would a spy be complete without a whole array of odd little gadgets? Equipment is quite setting-specific so many modules will have an equipment section detailing what kind of gear is to be found within its setting. A limited selection of equipment is given below to get you started, of which the weapons damage scale may prove particularly useful. To help design your own equipment, use the following pointers.

Resource Points vs. Real Money

One thing that wasn't touched upon in the character creation system is how much equipment should a starting character be allowed to carry? As with any aspect of the game this will vary a great deal from one setting to the next. The usual practice is to allow each player a small amount of cash to buy stuff with. The Myriad System advocates the use of an abstract unit of currency called the Resource Point, rather than more conventional money. There are several reasons for this simplification.

Firstly, it makes the mathematics of working out what you can afford a whole lot simpler if items are graded on a smaller scale than usual. Secondly, since one resource point equals the average daily wage rather than a set-in-stone amount, it can be applied to any country rather than being specific to any one setting. 1 resource point is roughly equivalent to £30 in British money, or around $50 in American. It could also correspond to 1 gold piece, 20 Republic Credits, 1,000 Uranian Ploks, or whatever happens to be the local currency. You can introduce whatever complex exchange rates you like to add flavour to the setting, and it won't confuse the players because it's all represented in one easy-to-handle figure: the resource point.

If you want to use real money values in your own modules to price equipment, then go right ahead and do it. The resource points system is here to simplify matters, but only if you feel that they need simplifying.

Zero Cost Items

Some equipment has a cost of zero. This is the kind of stuff that pretty much anyone can pick up in the street with pocket change. You don't have to spend resource points on zero cost items, but to keep characters from loading themselves down with stupid amounts of free stuff that they will probably never use anyway, all beginning characters should be restricted to purchasing no more than three zero cost items.

What Does Equipment Do?

Equipment itself falls into one or several of the following categories. When making your own equipment, consider first the standard bonuses below and which of them the equipment you are thinking of implementing should grant to the user.

Weapons are the commonest form of equipment in an action-based game. Though not particularly common in real life, weaponry crops up in RPG's with alarming regularity and most PC's will want some method of defending themselves. The basic Myriad System only requires a few details for its weaponry, these being Damage (usually between 1 and 5) and Maximum Range. You might also like to add ammunition capacity for guns, and explosives will also need to be given a decay range as per the rules on page 31.

Armour is another common form of equipment. Given the number of weapons that float around in RPG's, it's not surprising that players typically want to kit their characters out in the heaviest protection available. Most armour will require only one piece of information: armour rating. This value, typically between 1 and 4 though it can go as high as 5, measures how effective the armour is at protecting its wearer. The rules pertaining to how it does so are on page 25.

Accessories are items that have no use on their own, but combine with other kinds of equipment to grant additional bonuses. Some accessories require a very specific item, while others can be installed into a wide variety of devices. Different types of ammunition (i.e. dum-dums or armour piercing rounds) are examples of accessories. They're not much use without a gun, but can be loaded into any firearm designed to use that calibre of ammunition.

Essentials represent the tools of the trade, the bits and bobs that a practitioner of a particular skill simply cannot do without. A professional wood carver couldn't do much without at least a small selection of chisels and a hammer. A computer programmer is stuck without a computer. A car mechanic won't get far without his toolbox. Essential equipment doesn't necessarily grant any kind of bonus, but without it certain types of skill roll will be utterly impossible.

Enhancers are items of equipment that add a bonus to a particular attribute or skill roll when used. Bonuses larger than +1 are highly discouraged except in the case of very advanced equipment or very mundane activities. A set of crampons for instance might add a +1 bonus to climbing rolls, while a suit of futuristic powered armour might add +1 to the wearer's Power. It is common for an item to be an Enhancer in addition to any other form of equipment, for instance a box of advanced tools might be Essential to mechanical tests and also be a +1 Enhancer.

SFX Items are those useful knick-knacks that allow the bearer to make use of a particular SFX even if they do not possess it. Armour-piercing bullets are a common example of this. Loading your firearm with a magazine of these Teflon-coated rounds allows you to make use of the Armour Piercing SFX. Some SFX items allow players to use SFX from the repertoire available to all characters at creation time, while others may grant access to unique ones only available through that item of equipment.

Suggested Costs for Equipment

Weapons:	1 rp per die of damage that the weapon causes +1 rp if it is a ranged weapon such as a gun or throwing weapon +1 rp for explosives and/or weapons capable of autofire -2 rp's if the weapon can only be used once, such as a grenade
Armour:	1 rp per point of armour up to 3, then 2 rps for each point above that.
Essentials:	usually around 3 to 5 rp's depending on the versatility of the skill.
Enhancers:	3 rp's for each all-purpose skill that the +1 bonus applies to. Reduce to 1 or 2 rp's if the bonus only applies in specific cases.
SFX Items:	1 rp for each SFX the item enables. Higher costs may be levied for particularly useful SFX

Example Weaponry

Melee Weapons	Dam	Range
Unarmed combat (no natural weapons)	1D	Melee
Short claws, knife, blackjack, knuckledusters	2D	Melee
Long claws, short sword, machete, wooden baseball bat, staff	3D	Melee
Fire axe, long sword, katana, aluminium baseball bat, poleaxe	4D	Melee
Battleaxe, claymore, laser sword	5D	Melee

Ranged Weapons	Dam	Range
Small stones thrown by hand	1D	Short
Throwing knife, derringer, hand catapult, thrown house brick	2D	Short
Throwing axe, pistol, hunting rifle, automatic pistol (full auto)	3D	Medium
Very heavy pistol (Magnum), assault rifle (full auto), shotgun	4D	Medium*
High velocity sniper rifle, heavy calibre machine gun (full auto)	5D	Long

*Shotguns are usually considered short-range weapons, excepting advanced modern combat shotguns

Weapon Ranges are very simple in Myriad. Up to 5 metres away is point blank range, also sometimes called melee range. Anything between 5 and 200 metres distant is short range. Medium range extends from 200 to 500 metres, and long range is anything greater than that. Weapons cannot usually be used to attack targets that are further away than their range rating.

Example Armour

Archaic Armour	Rating
Soft leather, heavy cloth	1
Hardened Leather, thick hide	2
Chain mail, dragon hide	3
Full plate mail, mithril chain	4
Mithril plate mail	5

Modern Armour	Rating
Leather Jacket	1
Bullet-Proof Vest	2
SWAT Tactical Armour	3
Advanced Military Armour	4
Sci-Fi Powered Battle Armour	5

Archaic armour such as plate mail and to a lesser extent chain mail is pretty heavy and restricts the wearer's movements to a degree. In most fantasy-themed games you can largely ignore this. Legendary heroes aren't often portrayed as being encumbered by their own armour; they're used to the weight and restrictive joints. If however you want a more realistic medieval setting, place a penalty of -1 to the wearer's Power on archaic armour) with an armour rating of 4 or higher.

Example Essentials

Archaic Essentials	Used For…	Cost*
Locksmith's picks	Opening locks without using the key	2
Camping equipment	Setting up camp for the night, starting a campfire, etc.	2
Animal traps and snares	Hunting game animals for food in the wilds	3
Blacksmithing supplies	Smelting ore, making equipment from raw metal	3
Alchemical vessels	Creating potions of all kinds using primitive chemistry	4

Modern Essentials	Used For…	Cost*
Electrician's toolkit	Making, mending or sabotaging electrical appliances	3
Mechanic's toolkit	Making, mending or sabotaging mechanical goods	3
Field surgery kit	Healing nasty injuries without hospital facilities	3
Basic tabletop computer	Most basic forms of computing (non-portable)	4
Hacker's laptop computer	Hacking into advanced computer systems (portable)	6

*all costs are in Resource points

Example Enhancers

Archaic Enhancers	Bonus	Situation
Climbing gear (ropes, crampons, karabiners etc)	+1	Climbing solid rock faces
Disguise or theatrical make-up kit	+1	Avoiding being recognised
Telescope or Spyglass	+2	Noticing details a long way off

Modern Enhancers	Bonus	Situation
Advanced security bypass software	+1	Hacking computer systems
Sniper's telescopic gun sights	+1	Aiming at long-range targets
FBI portable lie-detector machine	+1	Interrogation of suspects

Futuristic Enhancers	Bonus	Situation
Sci-fi auto-diagnostic medical scanner	+1	Diagnosing and treating illness
Automated mechanical repair droid	+2	Repairing broken equipment
Hand-held multi-functional element scanner	+2	Finding specified substances

Example SFX Items

These items merit a little more than just a faceless table of bits and bobs, since each SFX item has its own attached game rules. Like normal SFX, sixes must be burnt in order to achieve the listed effects granted by these items. Since SFX are most widely used in combat, most of these items are in the form of weapons upgrades or ammunition of some sort.

Armour Piercing Bullets (2 resource points)
Burn 1 six per point that the target's armour is reduced on an attack roll

This magazine of bullets can be loaded into any firearm that accepts standard 9mm parabellum rounds. Each bullet has a heavy iron core surrounded in a Teflon jacket. In fact the Teflon adds nothing to their armour penetration and is often stripped away by the bullet's passage through the gun. It is there purely to protect the gun barrel from friction. Whatever the ballistic science behind them, these bullets pack a real punch. For every six burnt on this special effect, the target's armour is reduced by one for the purposes of the current attack only.

Burning Blade (3 resource points)
Burn 1 six for each round that the target suffers burning damage on an attack roll

The magical weapon that this upgrade is attached to burns brightly with magical fire as soon as it is drawn from the scabbard, yet never burns the wielder, or in fact anything that the wielder does not wish it to burn. It can be used to light dark places, giving the same benefit as a birch torch, or for mundane purposes such as lighting campfires. In combat, upon a successful attack roll on which sixes have been burnt, the target will be ignited and continue to burn for a number of combat rounds equal to the number of sixes burnt. The fire, though magical in nature, can still be extinguished by normal means. The target must be at least marginally flammable for this to work.

Dum Dums (1 resource point)
Burn 1 six for each bonus damage die on an attack roll, increase target's armour by 1 if it is 2 or more

These vicious bullets are hollow-tipped rather than being pointed, and expand rapidly upon striking the target causing horrendous damage. Their armour penetration is poor, but when they do hit flesh the wounds are big and ugly. For every six burnt on a successful attack roll, the user may add one damage die. However, whether this SFX is activated or not, the target gets a +1 bonus to her armour rating. This bonus only applies if the target has an armour rating of 2 or more. Because of this, dum dums are best employed against soft targets with little or no armour.

Energy Redirection Shield (4 resource points)
Burn 1 six per wound negated and per 3 metres knockback on a defence roll

This ingenious technological device absorbs the energy of incoming attacks and converts it to another form, thus reducing the damage dealt to the wearer. Unfortunately the technology is still rather erratic. The incoming energy is always converted to kinetic energy and applied to the wearer. For every six burnt on a defence roll, the wearer of this belt can ignore one wound caused by the attack. However, for each wound nullified, the wearer is also flung backwards by three metres as a result of the kinetic energy unleashed.

Glyph of Retribution (5 resource points)
Burn 1 six per die of damage returned, up to a maximum equal to the amount of damage taken on a defence roll

This rare rune may only be applied to personal armour with a rating of 3 or more. When the wearer is struck and his armour breached, the glyph glows blood red and magically returns some of the damage caused to the originator. For every six burnt on a defence roll the attacker takes one die of damage, up to a maximum equal to the amount of damage taken by the bearer of the glyph. This damage is affected by armour as usual, and can be negated by any SFX that specifically states it protects against magical damage.

Example: Barney is wearing a glyph of retribution, and is struck by an ogre wielding a great sword. The attack has a damage rating of 5 and Barney's armour rating is 3. The damage roll is 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 and so two points of damage are caused. However Barney took the precaution of burning one six on his defence roll to activate the glyph, so his attacker must also take one die of damage. The ogre's armour rating is 2 and Barney rolls a 4, so the ogre takes one point of retribution damage. Note that even if Barney had burnt three sixes on this SFX, he could only have returned two dice of damage to the ogre since he only took two points of damage himself.

Laser Painter (3 resource points)
Burn 1 six per +1 bonus to a radio-guided missile attack on an attack roll

This clever piece of military technology projects a laser beam onto a target, pinpointing its exact location for aerial bombardment. The laser itself does no damage, but makes it a lot easier for long-range missiles to hit the target. For every six burnt on the laser painter's attack roll, radio-guided missiles aimed at the target get a +1 bonus to their own attack roll. Bonuses gained from following rounds are not cumulative, but you can continue to fire in the hope that the next round's bonus will be an improvement without fear of losing the bonus accrued in the previous round. In other words, only the bonus gained from a single attack counts but you may make as many attacks as you like before launching the missiles in an attempt to get the best possible result.

Pheromone Spray (3 resource points)
Burn 1 six only for a bonus point of resolve damage on a social attack roll involving seduction

This handy spray can contains a powerful pheromone that inclines people of a particular gender to be attracted toward you. It comes in two different types, one for attracting men and one for attracting women. When wearing the pheromone you may burn sixes on any social attack or defence roll to gain +1 resolve damage against a target that you are attempting to seduce. You may not claim more than +1 resolve damage on any one attack roll.

Rune of Death (5 resource points)
Burn 1 six per die of damage caused directly to the critical line on an attack roll

This rune is widely regarded as the most evil magic that a warrior can place upon his sword. If the target takes damage from the weapon, he also takes an amount of critical damage equal to the number of sixes burnt on the attack roll. These must be rolled against armour just like normal damage, but are applied directly to the critical line no matter how many wounds the target has left.

Vehicles and Riding Animals

For the purposes of simplicity, riding animals and vehicles are treated in more or less the same manner in these rules. As discussed in the optional vehicle rules on page 46, all vehicles have their own attributes in the form of Speed and Manoeuvre statistics, representing respectively the power of the engine and how easily and quickly they can be turned. Speed is most often used to outrun pursuers and tow heavy weights, while Manoeuvre is for dodging incoming fire, performing fancy stunts and aiming fixed vehicle weapons. Vehicles also have their own wound and critical ratings and many have built-in armour too. Military vehicles may even count as hardened targets as per the rules on page 32.

Horse				**Velocity Class**		**2: Riding Animal**	
Speed	3	Manoeuvre	3	Armour	1*	Hardened:	No
Wounds				Critical Wounds			
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐			

*does not protect the rider

The staple mount of any high or low fantasy setting not to mention westerns, the humble horse has been used by man since time immemorial as a mode of transport. It is reasonably fast and manoeuvrable as riding animals go, and can be gaily caparisoned for tournament riding or heavily armoured for war. Note that a horse can be equipped with either leather or specially-fitted plate mail armour just like its rider can, which will naturally alter its armour rating also.

Four-Horse Carriage				**Velocity Class**		**2: Riding Animal**	
Speed	4	Manoeuvre	1	Armour	2	Hardened:	No
Wounds				Critical			
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐			

Though a horse is sturdy and reliable, it can only carry one or at most two riders at a time. The four-horse carriage is a common sight in both fantasy and western settings, and is often used for the transportation of goods and paying passengers. It is faster and more comfortable than a riding horse, and can seat up to six passengers inside with space for one additional passenger up front with the driver and plenty of room for luggage on top. It is however quiet difficult to steer, and is not well suited to dodging attacks.

Riding Snake				**Velocity Class**		**2: Riding Animal**	
Speed	5	Manoeuvre	4	Armour	2*	Hardened:	No
Wounds				Critical			
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐			

*does not protect the rider

The riding snake is an immense serpent over ten metres long that is large enough to saddle and ride. It is particularly fast and agile when compared to the more common horse, although the rider might find it particularly disorientating being swished from side to side as the beast moves forward. Particularly skilled riders can even order this mount to climb trees that are thick enough to support its weight. Though it is not as practical to armour a snake as it is to armour a horse, the creature's tough scales provide it with a little natural protection from attack.

Despite its ferocious appearance, riding snakes are not often taken to war. Though they do have a fearsome bite (3 dice of damage, attack with Maneouvre plus the beast's own skill of +2) they are not so practical for fighting from the back of. The side-to-side motion makes using a lance impossible, and the length of the beast makes it difficult to get close enough to one's enemy to swing a sword. Their speed does however make riding snakes an excellent choice for mounted archers, since the slower horses of other cavalry units have difficulty keeping up.

Motorbike				**Velocity Class**		**3: Motorised Vehicle**	
Speed	3	Manoeuvre	4	Armour	2*	Hardened:	No
Wounds				Critical			
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐			

*does not protect the rider

One might almost call the motorbike the horse of the twentieth century. More manoeuvrable than a car, motorbikes are wonderful for detouring down narrow alleyways in order to shake pursuers and can weave back and forth nimbly to avoid incoming weapons fire. This vehicle is beloved of the biker, the action hero and the courier alike. Its only real disadvantage is that it can only carry one passenger at a time, making it impractical for large groups of adventurers, unless of course there are enough to go around and everyone knows how to ride one.

Sports Car				**Velocity Class**		**4: Performance Vehicle**	
Speed	4	Manoeuvre	3	Armour	3	Hardened:	No
Wounds				Critical			
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐			

Flashy and fast, the sports car loses a little on manoeuvrability over the standard motorbike, but more than makes up for it with sheer speed. These aren't your average family sedan, these are the sleek metal beasts of the racetrack, the designer rides beloved of the illicit midnight street racer and the international playboy or movie star. Though by no means immune to the effects of personal firearms, as any lucky shot might hit the petrol tank and blow the beautiful machine sky-high, the sports car does have a little more armour than the motorbike, and as a bonus this armour protects the passengers too.

Jet Fighter				**Velocity Class**		**6: Jet Aircraft**	
Speed	5	Manoeuvre	2	Armour	3	Hardened:	HT 1
Wounds				Critical			
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐				☐ ☐ ☐			

From the knights of the highway we move on to the knights of the sky. Modern war films are replete with jet fighters of one sort or another, from the trusty old F17 to the Harrier to the stealth fighter. Other vehicles struggle in vain to keep up with these rocket-powered hawks. Though as fast as lightning and pretty darn hard to hit without the assistance of guided missiles, the jet fighter can easily be knocked out of the air with the right weapon. Their hardened target status has almost as much to do with the tremendous speed they travel at as it does to do with actual physical armour.

Star Fighter				**Velocity Class**		**7: Interplanetary**	
Speed	3	Manoeuvre	3	Armour	2	Hardened:	HT 1
Wounds				Critical			
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐			

The next step up from the jet fighter, the star fighter is capable of travel through the cold vastness of space. Though most star fighters are incapable of leaving or entering the atmosphere of a planet unaided, all of them are at least fast enough to travel across a solar system in a week or so. Though most are carried from one system to the next on the gargantuan space carriers, some small-time traders use star fighters as cargo ships for ferrying small precious goods such as gemstones from place to place. The average star fighter doesn't have much room for more than one passenger and a small crate of supplies, but it's surprising how easy it is to modify them into more capacious trading vessels.

Cargo Vessel				Velocity Class		8: Interstellar	
Speed	1	Manoeuvre	1	Armour	3	Hardened:	HT 1
Wounds				Critical			
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐				☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐			

The next step up from the star fighter, cargo vessels are designed for mass haulage over the vast gulfs of interstellar space. Few of them are armed at all, and those which do sport weapons usually mount turrets of one sort or another. Relying on the ship's abysmal manoeuvrability for aiming a fixed weapon would be pure suicide. It usually takes a crew of three or four to successfully fly a cargo vessel, but a skeleton crew of two will do in some of the smaller examples. These are the spaceships that fly the important cargoes, such as medical and food supplies or hi-tech equipment. A space trader hasn't really arrived until he can afford a cargo vessel.

Heavy Carrier				Velocity Class		8: Interstellar	
Speed	4	Manoeuvre	1	Armour	4	Hardened:	HT 2
Wounds				Critical			
(See Hit Location Chart)				(See Hit Location Chart)			

The heavy carriers are marvels of military science, vessels often approaching a kilometre in length capable of hauling several smaller star fighters around the galaxy. They form the backbone of the space navy since smaller craft are incapable of travelling beyond the boundaries of the solar system alone. A military carrier requires a large crew to operate for any length of time, often in excess of 50 to 100 personnel. Most are protected not only by the fighter craft they carry but also by a barrage of strategically-placed turrets. Heavy carriers operate using the rules for massive vehicles given on page 51. An example Hit Location Chart is detailed below, and deck plans for the Terran Naval Services vessel TNS Marauder are shown opposite by way of example. Unless otherwise stated, the consequences of losing a particular critical location are given on page 52.

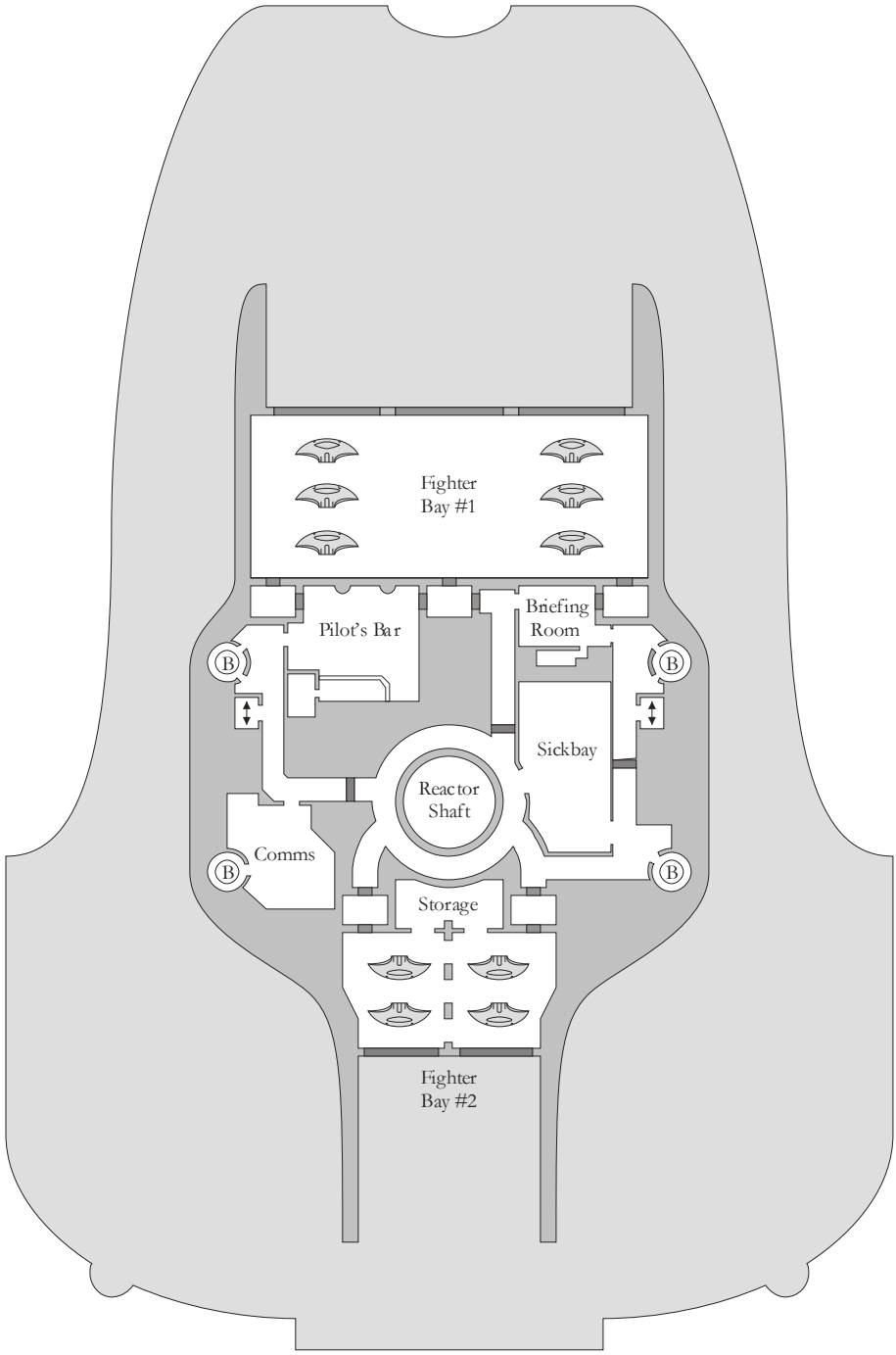
D100	System Hit	Penalty	Wounds
1-5	Bridge	-2	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
6-20	Cargo Bay	None	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
21-25	Communications	-2	☐ ☐ ☐
26-35	Engineering	-1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
36-50	Fighter Bay	None	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
51-60	Life Support	-1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (24 hours oxygen remains if lost)
61-75	Main Engines	None	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
76-85	Reactor	-1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (loss non-critical)
86-95	Shielding	-1	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ (loss reduces HT to 1)
95-100	Sickbay	-2	☐ ☐ ☐
N/A	Superstructure	N/A	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Notes on Critical Locations

- The Marauder has two fighter bays, and carries a complement of ten star fighters (see above.) It also sports 10 defence turrets, each of which has a Power rating of 3, a damage rating of 3D×2 and 4 wounds. They rely on the skill of a gunner to operate (NPC gunners have a skill of +2.)
- There is a safety release mechanism for the reactor. Should it be damaged to the point of destruction, it will be automatically ejected from the vessel. Backup power will keep most shipboard systems operational for a while, but is not sufficient to power the weapons systems.
- If the ship's energy shielding section is lost, its Hardened Target rating will drop to 1 instead of its usual 2 due to the loss of its shields.

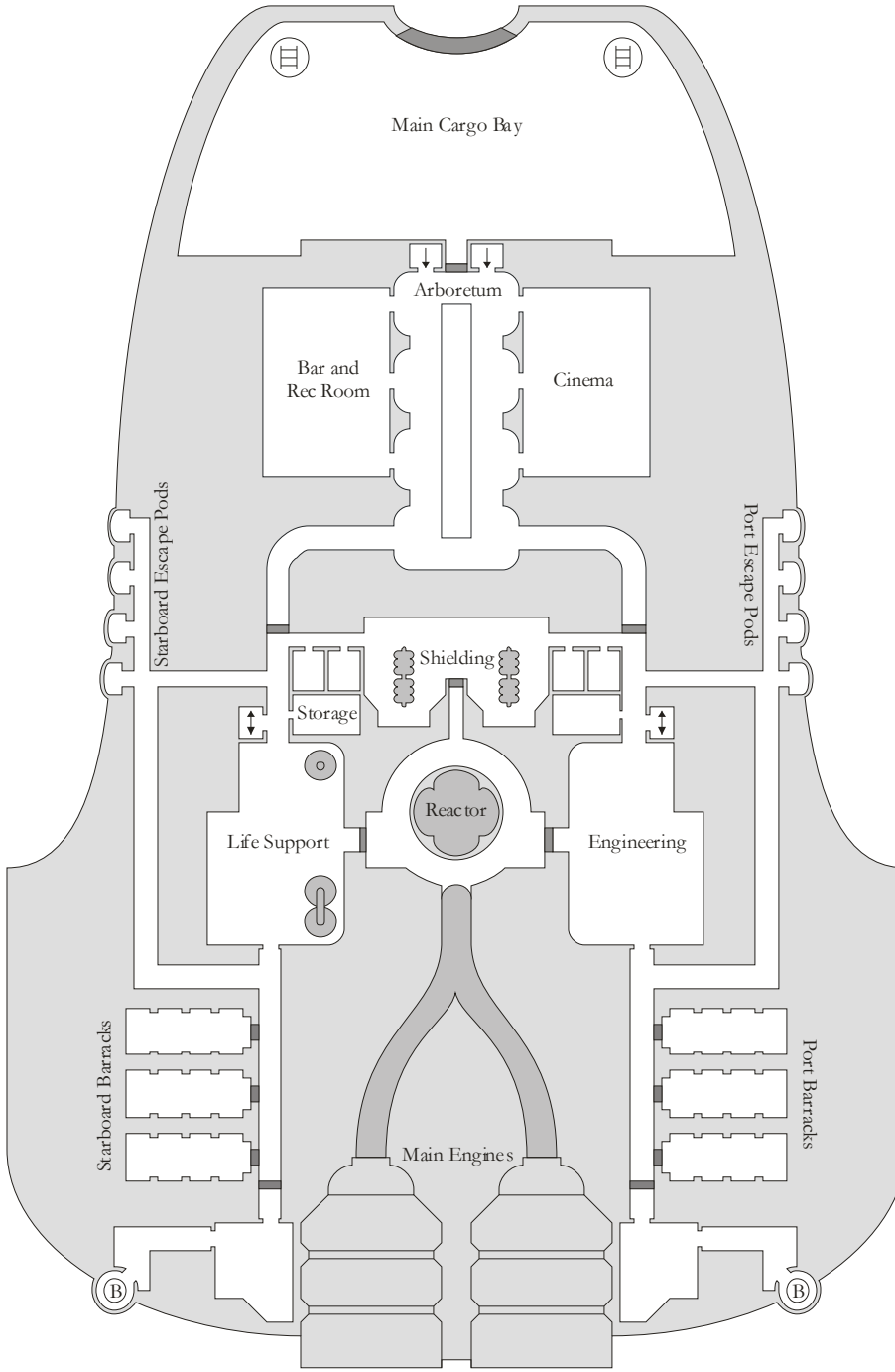
TNS Marauder Deck Plans
Upper Deck

Ⓑ Laser Battery



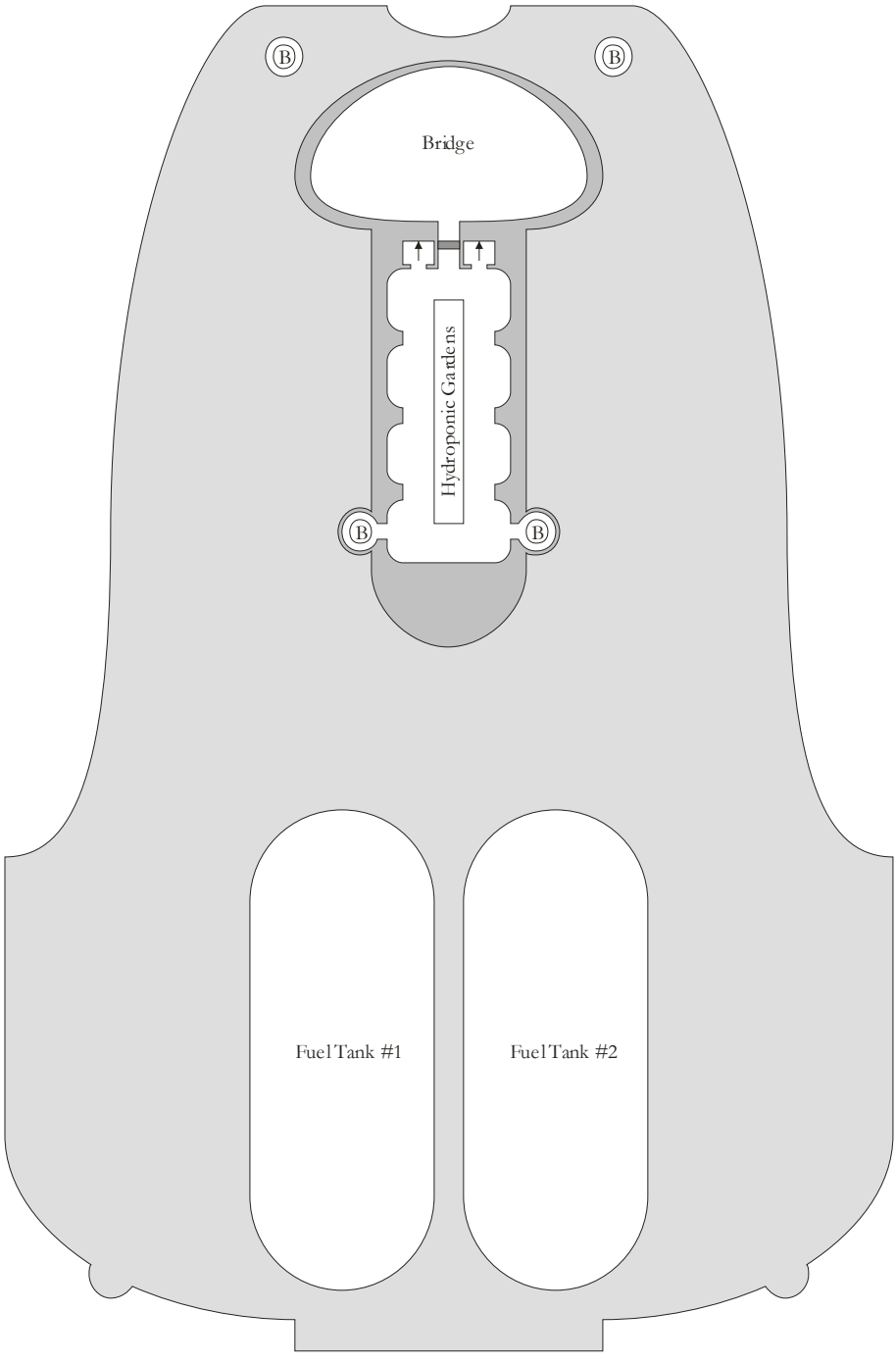
TNS Marauder Deck Plans
Middle Deck

Ⓑ Laser Battery



TNS Marauder Deck Plans
Lower Deck

Ⓑ Laser Battery



Myriad

Basic Record Sheet

Player _____

Character _____

Power	___	Intellect	___
Grace	___	Spirit	___

Skills	Lvl	Skills	Lvl

SFX	Equipment

Wounds ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Critical ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Resolve ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Role Playing for Everyone!

Ever wanted to write your own RPG but not known how to start? Myriad is a rules-light modular role-playing system that can be readily adapted to any genre and setting.

Myriad is not an RPG in its own right, moreover it is a toolbox with which to construct the game of your dreams. Inside you will find a complete simple system that, in its purest form, can be picked up and played in a matter of minutes and a whole host of tips and tricks to help you twist it to your own evil schemes.

You will also find a veritable cornucopia of optional rules, resources and modules to slot in as you require them, from romance to vehicle chases, from fist fighting to fear effects, from magic to political wrangling. Just select the ingredients you like and discard the ones you don't. Myriad can be as complex or as simple as you want it to be.

But best of all, Myriad is totally free usage! No permission is required for you to use the rules contained herein for your own games. You can sell, swap and distribute the books you make to your heart's content. You can even transplant large portions of the text into your own books if you want to. If you send us a PDF copy of the book and we like it, we'll even provide a link on the company website at www.sanestudios.co.uk!

All we ask is that the contents page include a brief sentence along the lines of "This product uses the Myriad system, developed by Ashok Desai" in clear, easy-to-read script. Placing the Myriad logo on the book's cover, and a mention of the website address would also be most appreciated.

SANE STUDIOS
www.sanestudios.co.uk

MYRIAD