



## **Just a Game – Playtest Packet**

*Campaign rules for being stuck in an MMO universe*

*Using Fate Core, GUMSHOE and Powered by the Apocalypse systems.*

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This is a playtest package for the Just a Game campaign guide for Fate Core, Powered by the Apocalypse and GUMSHOE.

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"This work is based on the GUMSHOE SRD (found at <http://www.pelgranepress.com/?p=12466>), a product of Pelgrane Press, developed, written, and edited by Robin D. Laws with additional material by Kenneth Hite, and licensed for our use under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)."

## What this packet is:

- This packet is a collection of rules for playtesting aimed at players and GMs familiar with the systems involved.
- It includes some discussion of the key elements in the genre of “trapped in the game” style stories.
- It provides character creation rules and some rules for specific MMO-related circumstances like raids and grinding.
- It is an attempt to gauge interest in this project and garner feedback. It is provided as “Pay What You Want” so that people can make a donation to my self-publishing efforts as desired, but that is neither required nor expected.
- This was written by someone who has:
  - 7 years' experience in designing, running and playing Fate.
  - 1 year's experience in running Powered by the Apocalypse game.
  - 0 experience in running GUMSHOE. This is my second GUMSHOE experiment. My first was developing a convention scenario for a friend to use.

## What this packet isn't:

- This packet is not even one complete game.
- This packet has not gone through an editorial or formatting process.
- This packet does not provide specific game settings to use but does provide general commentary on the type of setting.
- This packet does not deal with stories where characters switch between the “real” world and the “game” world. For the sake of simplicity, I have focused on games where the characters are trapped in the other world and cannot return to their home for some reason or another. I do plan to add rules for mixing digital and meat space in the future.

## What you need to play:

- In order to play the Fate rules you will need to have the Fate Core rules. If you do not have Fate Core, Evil Hat provides an SRD at the site below:
  - <http://www.faterpg.com/licensing/licensing-fate-cc-by/>
- In order to play the GUMSHOE rules you will need access to the GUMSHOE rules. If you do not have a GUMSHOE system game, Pelgrane Press provides a free SRD available at the site listed below:
  - GUMSHOE SRD: <http://www.pelgranepress.com/?p=13319>
- The Powered by the Apocalypse rules do not appear to have an SRD. I am aiming this playtest at individuals already familiar with the systems so I'm assuming you already have an Apocalypse hack game somewhere if you are interested in that version of these rules.
  - If you are new to PbtA then the rules are very simple:
    - Sometimes when the players ask you for questions about the world, you have them provide the answer instead:
      - Player: "What sort of monsters are in this zone?"
      - GM: "I don't know, why don't you tell me?"
    - The GM never rolls. You present situations and ask how the players deal with it. If it is something where success or failure is interesting, have them roll 2d6 and add one of their traits.
      - 10+ is a full success. Most moves have guidelines as to what this means.
      - 7-9 is a partial success. Most moves have guidelines as to what this means.
      - 6 or lower is a failure. The player gains XP. Most moves have further guidelines as to what this means.
  - Even though the rules are simple, I would recommend purchasing Monster of the Week if you are new to PbtA. It is the version that I most used for an example in creating these rules and it has very useful guidelines for GMing PbtA games in general.
- I strongly recommend purchasing games from all of these companies or Systems:
  - Evil Hat: Dresden Files RPG, Atomic Robo RPG, Fate Core, Gods and Monsters, Secret of Cats, Eagle Eyes, Fate Accelerated
  - Pelgrane Press: Trail of Cthulhu, Mutant City Blues, Night's Black Agents, Esoterrorists
  - PbtA: Apocalypse World, Dungeon World, Magical Force, Monster of the Week, Urban Shadows, Spirit of 77

## Feedback:

- Please send feedback to [Thrythlind@gmail.com](mailto:Thrythlind@gmail.com) and make sure to include the subject line "Just a Game Playtest Feedback."
  - There is now a G+ community here:
    - <https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/115941458668112699213>
- Priority Feedback Desired
  - Reports of how the suggestions worked, or didn't work, in actual play.
  - Reports on your own modifications to the rules and the purpose of those mods.
  - Opinion on whether to produce this as one book with three rules system or as three separate books, one for each rule system.
- Secondary Feedback Desired
  - Suggestions for more aspects of the genre.
  - Reports of created campaigns and game play. These may get used as examples.
  - Actual play recordings. If this project goes through to kickstarter-ready, I'd like permission to use such in that kickstarter.
- Tertiary Feedback Concerns
  - More Persona and Avatar suggestions for the PbtA version. I already have some in mind, but always interested in more. However, this doesn't help the core of this project so much.
  - Grammatical edits. In all likelihood much of what is currently here will be rewritten in part or in whole. As such, doing a full grammatical edit here is a waste of time and effort until a complete edition is ready to go to the editors. I try to keep my grammar decent at all times, but there are likely mistakes. Also, I tend to speak and write in a conversational tone so that narrative voice might also get altered.

# Nature of the Game

## Death

One of the most important questions that needs to be handled in the genre of characters being trapped in a game is how to handle death. This is more than just how individual games handle death, but how your setting will handle death for the players trapped in the game. There are two major positions for this genre. The first is that the characters die and respawn just as if they were video game characters so that death is cheap. The second is that death is real and when the characters die, then the person dies for real. There are some other variations of these main ones.

### Death is Cheap

Beyond anything else, even their huge levels of physical power, the ability of an MMO character to come back from the dead is the one thing that most thoroughly sets them apart from being normal. If a setting works the same way an MMO does, then the players are functionally immortal physical Gods with very human minds. Any problem that involves physical combat will eventually be overcome since players will come back with more resources and different strategies until they win.

The primary issues in such a situation are ones where being able to fight is not enough to actually resolve the issue. Even as immortals, morale will be an issue as they have no idea about how to get home. There may be worries that the computers holding their minds will be shut off and delete them. Some might worry that they've actually died and are in some sort of afterlife. Others might become power hungry and act on whatever they want to do. Some might feel free to act on a sadistic streak and do what they can to dominate other players and non-players alike just for the sheer joy of it. Even if a character adapts well to the idea of being immortal, they may have loved ones that react poorly. This will almost certainly produce some level of emotional conflict for the character. Finally, if someone can figure out reliable ways to incapacitate a player and control or learn where they respawn, then the player could easily find themselves in a cycle of torture, death and resurrection.

There is also the matter of a society. Even if they believe it to be a temporary measure, some attempt at creating a society or culture for the trapped players will likely occur. This could be anything from a single arrogant player trying to set himself up as a dictator in one location to a group trying to create a stable and healthy area to live while they adjust to the new world. The problem is, how do you enforce the rules of a society when the malcontents can't be killed and are also extremely powerful? Containment can be escaped by suicide and respawning. Banishment might be doable but there is always the chance of them trying to get their way back.

If the setting is one where the players have actually been transplanted to an alternate world where there are already natives then the lack of death on the part of the players might further muddy the situation. Many of the trapped or shifted players will come to the belief that their inability to die is further proof that the entire world around them is fake. This conclusion could then leave them not caring what happens to what they think are programmed puppets rather than people.

The trials involved in a setting where death is cheap have been explored before in settings like the Riverworld by Philip Jose Farmer. In that setting, the humans and pre-humans of all history are brought back to life in a huge world and, when killed, simply come back to life again. The question of immortal

players of an MMO have also been explored in the Log Horizon light novels by Mamare Touno as well as the anime based on those novels.

**Fate Core:** When death is cheap, treat it as a Mild Consequence and can likely be removed before the end of the scene by a revival skill.

**GUMSHOE:** In GUMSHOE, treat failing a Consciousness Test as dying. If someone with the proper skills will be able to revive them if they get there in time. Otherwise, they will respawn at the nearest spawn point.

**Powered by the Apocalypse:** Nothing much needs to be changed here. When their Health runs out, the character dies and has a limited time which they can be revived before respawning.

### **Death is Real**

The other end of the spectrum is one where death is real. Dying in the game means dying in real life too making it not too different from a lot of other fantasy settings with the exception that for most part, the people involved are just gamers and never asked or expected to be part of a death game. In this case, the incredible levels of power and capability that the players have are downplayed because while they could easily walk through entire armies of low level people, the raid zones and other major adversaries in an MMO are monstrous and capable of obliterating players since, when it was designed as a game it was assumed the players would simply respawn.

In this case there will have to be a very good reason for any player to risk their lives to take on the quests. For example, if the only way for them to escape the game is for somebody to clear the main storyline, as is the case in the first season of Sword Art Online. More than just the obvious risk of death, the potential mental trauma being suffered by players in settings where death is real is going to be much more obvious than in a setting where death is cheap. Suicide, combat fatigue, depression and addictions of various kinds will begin to creep up.

If the players are just dumped into a situation where death is real without even being given a clear objective, the matter will be even worse. Many players will wander about and scatter. There will be nothing solid to unite efforts over initially. Most would find that even trying to figure out how to investigate the situation is too broad and nebulous for them to have any idea about how to start to approach the problem.

If the players have been brought to an alternate world where they had previously been known to take on world saving quests, then a new surge of cowardice in these heroes will cause the local populace to become frustrated and angry. If it becomes known that these players are mortal somehow, then some of the locals may even start trying to take revenge for past wrongs (most likely unrelated to the players being targeted.)

**Fate Core:** Death is back to being a Defeated Consequence here. However, characters who are Taken Out and “dead” might have timer during which time someone else can revive them. Of course, some death games remove all revival abilities.

**GUMSHOE:** If you want to be especially cruel, then the mechanic where failing a Consciousness Test means dying can remain. This makes characters both a bit more powerful than average GUMSHOE characters (given how large their General Ability pools are intended to get) and much more fragile.

**Powered by the Apocalypse:** Nothing changes for the Apocalypse hack in this case. Decide whether or not you're allowing revival skills to work and assume players have a timer before things fail.

### **Death has Hidden Fees**

This is a variation of the games where death is cheap. Every game has some form of death penalty ranging from losing experience and levels to experience debt and temporary stat debuffs. However, when the characters are trapped in the game, there might be penalties or consequences that are not immediately obvious. For one example, it could be that every death and resurrection results in the player losing some small amount of memories. It might also be that the more often a character dies, the more... real, whatever backstory they'd previously written for their character becomes eventually getting to the point that the player begins to think that the "real" world is a delusion and the game is their real life. There are any number of potential consequences that can be accrued over time.

### **Death is Real?**

This is obviously a variation of the settings where death is real and it might show up as an excuse by player-killers justifying their actions. Roughly put, nobody knows for sure that someone who dies in game really dies in real life. For all they know when someone dies they just wake up in the real world. The problem is, there really is no way for the players to know if death is real or if that player has simply not come back. Of course, a more sinister possibility is that all of those who die in the game are then filtered on to some other simulation or world for some other unknown purpose. In this case, it might actually be impossible to escape until the characters realize that the first game is just one layer of a system. Dying might actually be the first major hurdle they have to get through. The question there, of course, is how can they know it?

### **Death Comes Due**

This is a variation of the death is cheap set up. The basic idea is that the normal situation is that players can respawn and thus usually don't have to worry about actually dying. Unfortunately, the thing that keeps them respawning is a known mechanism and thus there are some situations where death is actually very real. For example, in a setting involving many different games, a character might die permanently if they die outside of their native game. In another case, if the respawn points are destroyed, that might prevent a player from resurrecting. Or someone could purchase ownership rights of the respawn point and bar certain players from entering it, basically blacklisting specific people from respawning. There might also be some creatures that can interrupt the respawning process. Regardless, somewhere in the world there is a place where death is a real risk. In this case, the PCs should get some sense that this is the case via foreshadowing or seeing an NPC die and not come back. Alternately, you might all come to the agreement that you want that to be the case when the setting is being put together.

### **Death is Useful**

The Secret World stands out recently for being a game where some quests cannot be completed without dying since some things need to be done in the spirit world in order to complete the quest. In a MMO made up for a trapped in the game style setting this might show up. This seems to be an obvious variation of a death is cheap world, but if you add a resurrection timer then it becomes appropriate for a death is real game as well. It may be that one or more PCs has to let themselves die and try to



accomplish the task in the spirit world (or at least the spirit world simulation) while other members of the party try to hold off as long as possible before casting a resurrection. It could even be that the PC completes his task and the resurrection is cast on time but he doesn't hit the acceptance box until too late.

### **Death is a Bargain**

Maybe the first time the players die they end up facing a choice: to return back to their own world or else to return back to the alternate world to continue adventuring. Perhaps death or some other entity has reached out to gather the souls of gamers to help address some imbalance or evil in this alternate world. It might even be that the people being chosen for this were ones taken from just before a fatal accident or event with the players not having any memory past the last time they played the game. In this case, they may have to continue to return to the game world until they find a way back to their own realm that doesn't result in their death. This is similar in some ways to the way the characters in the Gantz anime are recruited.

### **World Setting**

Another major setting choice involves the question of just what the world the characters are trapped in is. There are two major choices again here. The first is that they are literally in the game somehow. The second is that they are in an alternate reality that is very close to being the game.

#### **Virtual World**

If the characters are trapped in a literal game, then the physics and rules of existence are exactly as they were before the game sucked them up. In this case there's very little ability for the characters to perform tasks that the game wasn't programmed to handle. For example, a player who found himself trapped in his wizard avatar might be able to pick up and hold a sword, but he would not be able to equip it to attack with. He couldn't even just swing it to try and use it like a club. He simply couldn't do it because the game isn't programmed to let wizards use swords. Likewise, if there is a door that was designed just as scenery backdrop without any ability to open it existing, then it will remain a scenery back drop for the characters stuck in the game. On the other hand, there might still be things that you can work out your character doing which weren't programmed for in the original game. Glitches, bugs and oversights can allow characters to gain an advantage in this way by using what are generally called exploits.

A trapped in the game setting is less likely to involve native sentient beings than an alternate universe. Most of the townsfolk, monsters and the like will simply be programmed functions rather than actual living and breathing entities with their own will. This could mean that the players are the only actual living, thinking beings in the campaign. That is a potentially interesting storyline but also problematic for any player that wants to do much in the way of social interaction. If you plan for other sentient beings to be rare then warn your players so that they can build appropriately. That said, it is likely that the players are not the only people that got trapped in the game and there should at least be a sizeable population of other players around for the characters to interact with. On the other hand, the players might be the only humans or "users" in a world of computer programs that are, each of them, intelligent and capable of their own decisions. As examples, Tron is a world with one trapped character in hidden in with a bunch of sentient AIs while Sword Art Online is a world with numerous trapped players in a world full of almost entirely programs with limited responses and where actual sentient AIs are rare or even unique.

Getting trapped in a virtual world requires some level of technology beyond the current level of technology. You need something like a digitizing laser repurposed by a malevolent AI to transport interfering hackers into the mainframe or a virtual reality system that actually feeds direct impulses to the brain and cuts off information

coming from the body. As such, this is usually a near future sort setting. The characters could have been part of a group testing out a new product when something went wrong. It could be a confluence of the aforementioned malevolent AI with access to experimental technology. It could also be due to a sociopathic computer programmer and game designer. Technically, you could opt for a blatantly supernatural option of getting the players caught in the game world, digitizing super lasers isn't really that far from magic anyway, but when you are talking about being stuck in a virtual world, the flavor is expected to be one regarding super technology so tread on mixing the virtual world with magic carefully.

### **Alternate World**

If the players actually physically end up in an alternate world similar to the setting of the game they were playing then there is either magic going on or there is a level of technology that might as well be magic for all the relationship it has with real world knowledge of physics and technology. In this case, there possibilities of how the world work can be a lot broader. For one thing, the question as to how there is an alternate reality almost exactly like a particular video game comes up. Maybe it's just a coincidence of cosmic proportions, or maybe the game was directly based on that other world. That's certainly a mystery worth considering.

The implications of a world where the video game abilities are some sort of extension of a set of physics are profound. In essence, the skills, classes, respawning and other such easily observable things would be the outward, shallow results of a highly complex process. In this case, a lot could be done by players trying to uncover the principles and laws that function at the heart of the visible processes and thus alter those outward results in potentially tremendous manners.

Traveling to alternate worlds most likely means that the players will encounter native residents who are people in their own rights. This includes both the monsters and the hub-type NPCs. They might actually find that the setting is much more complex than they figured. Clear cut matters of good vs evil from the game might turn out to be muddled matters of geopolitics once the players start looking closely. On the other hand, it could be that the monsters themselves aren't really anything more than programmed beasts themselves. It could be that the monsters or other enemies popped up at about the same time that the players did, in fact. Another option might find that a war of factions is being driven by unintelligent programmed opponents blended in with the cultures of both sides and then the situation is one of trying to root out the spawns from the people and get the sentients to meet face to face to discuss this infiltration of their society. Not to mention the reason why this infiltration is going on.

Another option is that the creation of the game somehow created this alternate world. It could be that all of the residents' myths and legends are related to the developers and well-known gamers that have played the game for who knows how long. This concept is pretty much what a virtual world is by default but the difference here is that this second world doesn't merely exist in the database of a computer, it actually truthfully exists on its own. Players who have written extensive back stories for their characters might even find that the people they created in their story are real. Imagine not only being pulled into your game, but discovering that the wife and children you made up for your character are real.

### **Powers of the Natives**

In MMOs, the native characters of the setting are generally far less powerful than the players. In some cases they might respawn just like the players do, but in other cases, especially alternate worlds, it is entirely possible that the ability to respawn is something only the players and the monsters are able to do.

If death is real and respawn doesn't happen, then there is less of a difference between the powers of natives and those of players. This is because the ability to respawn is largely the reason why players are

able to get to such high levels. MMO characters mostly have died at least once in their existence, much to their players' chagrin, but they just respawn and continue on. If natives, other than spawns, cannot respawn, then when they die, that's it. Most natives would never get past the low levels of a game and only a very rare few would get very deep into the middle levels. Assuming a difference in aging rate as well, then they might die of old age before they get too high in level. Players, unchecked by age or violent death, keep going on and on and on well into the demi-god level powers of the high levels.

That said, natives of the game often become major characters in these sorts of stories. If the majority of the natives of the world are lower powered than players, then any PC natives likely somehow acquired the powers of a player. For example they might have signed a magical contract granting them player status. Or they might be a core function of the game AI itself trying to fix the game that has gone off the rails of its intended purpose. Of course, there is nothing stopping a player from deciding to play a weaker native who is trying to help out.

### **Designing Weaker Natives as PCs**

**Fate Core:** If a player wants to play a native that is not equal in power to a player, it is easy enough to do that by using Aspects, especially the Trouble, to represent things like *Can't Respawn*. Also make sure to build with the Physique, Mana and Tactics skills rather low.

**GUMSHOE:** A potentially good way for representing a mechanically weaker native character, besides making them unable to respawn, is to use the ability to trade points and have the native player trade General Ability points away in order to get a greater number of Investigative Ability points which would be used to add to things like Game Lore, Bestiary or Faction Politics.

**Powered by the Apocalypse:** Aside from removing the ability to respawn, if a player wants to play a weaker native, you might give them the option of taking three Persona moves and only one "get" Avatar move instead of the normal 2 and 2 arrangement that is there currently.

## **Variant Worlds**

### **Alternating Meat and Cyber Space**

In order to ease matters, this playtesting packet has focused on reproducing stories that occur entirely within a world that is either the game itself or a place the game might have been based on. There are several stories related to virtual gaming that alternate between the real world and the virtual. Novels like Ready, Player One, web originals like Video Game High School or anime and games like the dot/Hack franchise. The latter story arcs of Sword Art Online also tend to run parallel stories in the physical and digital worlds. In this case, there will need to be some additional mechanics for dealing with the physical world as well as the digital. Also, there is the matter of those native PCs and the question of whether or not it is even possible for them to travel to the "real" world.

**Fate Core:** Allow the characters two separate pyramid structures representing their abilities in the digital world and those in the real world. If it seems odd that things like Will, Provoke, Rapport and other personality type things would go up or down between the two, then reflect on the fact that people often display differing levels of ability in different environments due to confidence and other mental issues. Someone could very well be more confident and charismatic online than they are in real life.

**GUMSHOE:** Almost all of the General Abilities for the game here are written with the digital world in mind. Also, many of the physical sciences were compacted into one Investigative Ability and things like Trivia were split out into numerous abilities. You might decide to have characters create a second character for the physical world using the default rules for GUMSHOE, or by borrowing from the rules of one of the other games in the system. Most Investigative Abilities, Shrink and Stability will likely be the same across, but some things, like Vault and the like, which are of no use in the physical world might be replaced with things like Medicine, Credit Rating and so on. Crafting could be of use on both sides of the setting, but someone who is a brilliant Crafter in real life might have no Crafting skill in the game.

**Powered by the Apocalypse:** Allow them to take a separate Attribute arrangement representing their real world abilities. Some of the moves will be equally useful in the real world as in the digital world though you might need to add more real world moves if you plan to switch between the two.

### **Going Native**

Another variant of this genre is focusing on the lives of entities in the game without often involving the humans using the computers. At least not directly. [Wreck it, Ralph](#), [Reboot](#), the [8-Bit](#) webcomic and the Fate Core world of Adventure [Save Game](#) are all examples of this storyline. In this case, the Persona options for the Apocalypse hack might have to be renamed and refluffed and the dangers and threats of the world will have to be re-examined, but it is otherwise very much the same as a trapped in the game scenario.

### **Real World Gamers**

This is a little bit more unusual, but in this case the players don't move into a game world or an alternate setting that works like a game. Instead the players pick up powers that work just like video game abilities work. This is the premise to the Korean comic [The Gamer](#). This doesn't require much if any alteration to the suggested mechanics for players since, for some reason, are living with the rules of some game now. The people around them, however, will likely be built more similarly to a more normal character for the setting.

### **Not an RPG**

The rules presented here are primarily modeling RPGs and, specifically, MMORPGS. If you want something representing side scroller style games then you might want to take a look at the [Save Game](#) world of adventure by Evil Hat since the premise of that is a bunch of video game characters fighting something called "The Glitch."

### **Real World Physics**

This game assumes that the world the players end up in by and large operates under laws of nature that duplicate the procedures and programming of a computer game. However, if you travel to an alternate dimension you could easily find a world that has a culture and history similar to the game the character was just playing but in where the rules are not following the systems of the game.

**Fate Core:** Health and the Physical Stress Track revert to the default manner of handling those.

**GUMSHOE:** Use the default Health system and rearrange the Investigative Abilities and General Abilities in order to cull those that aren't really useful. Possibly reduce the number of General Build Points and rearrange the Investigative Abilities. The Exploits general ability will be useless.

**Powered by the Apocalypse:** Not much needs to change, simply remove the ability to respawn and make sure the players understand that trying to narrate their actions to take advantage of loop holes in the game rules will not work. Trying to find loop holes in physics, however, will still be possible.

## Paper and Pencil Game

Instead of being trapped in an online game or MMO, the players have somehow ended up trapped in a game world based on a paper and pencil game. This is similar to the Dungeons and Dragons cartoon of the eighties where several teenagers found themselves stuck in a D&D world. This might also be used to represent something like Order of the Stick where the characters and all the residents are perfectly aware of things like flanking bonuses, classes, leveling up and the like.

In either case, tabletop RPGs have significant play-style differences. First off, death in a tabletop game is not as easy to recover from as in an MMO. Resurrections are most often not automatic and require the acquisition of rare or expensive materials. Some tabletop games have no option for a dead character to come back at all. This doesn't mean you can't do a death and return scenario, Order of the Stick handled it quite well, but it is something to consider.

Also, questlines in an MMO are often compacted and accelerated versions of similar things in a tabletop game. For example, an entire campaign which could take months of sessions might be written based on reproducing the Clockwork King task force from City of Heroes which could be completed in few hours when the game was still running. This means that while official quest lines and such will often take on the flavor of background things that your character does while grinding and the focus is on trying to survive in this new world or else learn how to escape it, if your characters are stuck in a tabletop game, the official questlines will often be extensive and interwoven with the efforts to uncover the secret of how they came to be there.

**Fate Core:** Return to the basic Health system with the possibility of making death an Extreme Consequence rather than a Defeated one, mostly to represent the very real possibility of a resurrection spell.

**GUMSHOE:** Return to the default Health system for GUMSHOE. Alter some of the Investigative and General Abilities to better represent a tabletop game rather than a video one.

**Powered by the Apocalypse:** You might consider running the game using an appropriate other PbtA game rather than Just a Game. If you decide to use just a game, then your characters will have unstable injuries after they take their 5<sup>th</sup> point of Damage.

## Gender Issues

There is an acronym that used to be quite common with regards to people you met online who were introduced themselves as female: GIRL, meaning Guy In Real Life. Once female gamers became much more common and proved they were just as likely to play against gender, there was an attempt to make it into Girl In Real Life as well, but that somewhat lacked creativity. In any case, there are a substantial

number of people who play as the other gender for one reason or another. For some it's because if they have to be staring at some character's rear end for over an hour it might as well be an attractive rear end. For others it is because they are playing the gender that they actually identify as. Some do it because they think playing as male or female causes people around them to react in a particular way such as to treat them with respect or to give them free things. For others there really isn't a reason, they just like to play the other gender occasionally.

Once the characters get drawn into the game world, this can have ramifications. In some of the fiction along these lines, some mechanism appears to put people back into their "proper" appearances and genders so that there are no masks between anybody. In other pieces of fiction the assumed form slowly becomes more real. This can have a lot of story relevant ramifications on a campaign. In many cases, this might be limited to a single PCs subplot but it is entirely possible for an entire party to be made of players who were playing cross gender for some reason.

When you set the campaign, you're going to have to decide how real gender is in the game world. In a literal virtual world, gender is simply an appearance and the characters really don't have anything like a legitimate anatomy within the virtual world at all, it's just appearance. On the other hand, if the characters have transported to an alternate universe, they could end up literally becoming the other gender. This could be a great boon for someone who lived in the other world as the wrong gender, but it can become a terrible thing for someone that was playing other than their birth gender for some other reason.

This will also get into matters of romance and the like. In a virtual world, most games do not have the programming available to simulate a sexual encounter. Likewise, there is probably not any program designed to stimulate arousal. In this case, romances might be fairly frustrated or they might appear rather platonic with the potential for becoming more after they escape the game. In an alternate world, on the other hand, the characters might very well be fully capable of sexual activity and even children. If the characters are able to have children, then the question comes up just what is the child of a native and a player going to be like? What happens if the players do escape to their homeworld? Can the children come with them? This would certainly add a layer of complexity.

### **Sexualized and Impractical Costumes**

MMOs are rather infamous for their bizarre, impractical and very often over-sexualized costume pieces for their character. In an alternate world setting, those impractical armors might actually turn out to be worthless and as vulnerable as they look. Or they could operate on weird game logic and retain their effectiveness. Certainly one or more party members might have frequent complaints about the things they are required to wear.

If custom made armors are available, consider whether or not the system allows the crafter to set the look or whether the system just applies the same sort of male-gaze centric logic to the appearance of every item made. For one amusing possibility, if you desire, it might be such that one character can't seem to craft anything that looks modest no matter how hard they try while some other party member can make stuff look as modest or licentious as they want, but doesn't really care either way.

## Mechanics Discussion and Special Circumstances

### Abilities and Levels

There are two layers of mechanics within a setting focused on people trapped within a game world. On one layer you have the mechanics of the game that the characters are part of or trapped in. On the second layer you have the mechanics being used to represent the story of the characters trapped within in the game. For the most part, the exact mechanics of the game-in-a-game are unimportant and can be treated as simple flavor. That might sound a little counter-intuitive, because certainly the levels and ability arrangement of each character is vitally important to how they perform, but it is more or less true.

Taking a look at [Sword Art Online](#), how much do we really know about the game? We know there are stats and levels. We know that individual skills have ratings that can be built up to unlock special moves called “arts”. We know that there aren’t any classes but that people can create builds that correspond to player-made classes. In the later episodes, there aren’t even any levels, just the skill ratings. However, we do not know how those elements interact. We don’t know how much damage each art does or what the names of all the arts are. We don’t know how increasing strength, dexterity or intelligence affects secondary stats or the performance of specific actions. We don’t know any of this because it is largely unimportant to the story.

One major difference between online MMOs and tabletop RPGs is in the nature of the statistics used. Because all the math in a computer game is being done by the computer it is possible to have a more complex or detailed equations and numbers. Rather frequently you can see cases where adding a particular item or trait might result in an increase measured as a fraction of a percent. Paper and pencil games cannot easily get away with this, but cause using such math will cause the game to bog down as people grab their calculators and check their work. Since MMO players mostly deal with build issues in between playing sessions and often make use of build calculators in order to see the implications of their choices calculated for them, there’s no real bogging down of game play. However, cluttering tabletop play with book-keeping matters of a 0.05% increase in mana is not regularly useful. Now, if a player starts to go off on an excited rant for his character discussing such an increase, that’s fine. That’s them roleplaying their character’s excitement, let them run with it and see if you can glean any useful story points while they’re making up stuff about their build.

I also have not created an exhaustive list of skills, powers or abilities for players to take as their own. This is partially because I do not have any particular genre or setting in mind for use with these rules. These systems work just as well for a reproducing characters stuck in something like an MMO version of X—Com as they do with reproducing the setting of [Sword Art Online](#) or [Log Horizon](#). PCs should be able to make up their skills as they go along just fine using the systems provided.

This ability of players to create their abilities on the fly might present some matter of concern because what’s to prevent a PC from just making up a super-effective ability on the fly as they need it? The answer is that the GM can veto any such suggestion, however they should not need to. If the players want to make up a new uber skill as you need it, you might as well let them. Reckless use of powerful skills are as likely to cause more trouble in the long run than more practical abilities or attacks. That said, write down new skills as the players make them and use those skills for NPC players with similar builds.

These skills should have names, while there are definitely trapped in the game shows where almost no ability is named and the only thing shown is the visual effects of the battle, it is certainly very flavorful to have a growing glossary of skills.

For flavor reasons, you might want to limit the number of active and passive skills that a character can have at one time. The Secret World, for example, allows every player the ability to purchase every power in the game over time, but there can only be 7 active and 7 passive powers available on a player at any given time (later updates allowed slotting an 8<sup>th</sup> skill based around a supplemental weapon like a rocket launcher or whip.) In general, many MMO players generally find a select group of powers that are their bread and butter despite the fact that they have dozens of available powers to use. As such, it in general makes sense for players to reuse the same skills they have already named in the past rather than always just be making new skills each time. That said, you can make it easy for them to open up the opportunity for creating new skills by allowing them to alter their loadout if they want. In that case, the player could say something along the lines of “I want to be using X skill coming up, but I’m not going to use Y and Z skills. I’ll figure out what skills are in there as I need them.”

Likewise, levels are very rarely a matter of concern in most of the fiction these systems are aiming to reproduce. When the story requires the players to be low level, they are low level. When the story needs level to be important, level is important. When the story doesn’t care about level, then level is not important. For an example, assume a situation where the primary antagonists are so far below a swordsman character’s level that he could stand in the middle of them doing nothing while they attack like crazy and they aren’t even able to surpass his natural regeneration. In this case, the difference in levels is important and the story makes a point to highlight that. The player then uses it as a way of intimidating the player killers into surrendering so he doesn’t have to kill them. The problem was never defeating them, it was defeating them without either killing them or letting them get away.

Then move on to compare a particular situation in Log Horizon where there is a raid group that is comprised of players who range from around level 50 to around level 93 and yet they work together quite smoothly with the low level players even making substantial contributions. In this case, the low level characters are pointed out mostly as a way to highlight the rag-tag nature of the group and the unlikelihood of success, but the story doesn’t actually consider level important and proceeds to ignore it for the actual fighting scenes.

Classes, in those settings that use them, as well as races are a little bit more important. In general, when there is a game that uses classes each class is meant to play at least slightly differently. Each class will also have powers that unique to itself. Beyond this, there might be general skill pools that any player can tap into to supplement their base class’s abilities. You do not have to set up all the classes in your world setting right away if you don’t want to, but it is probably a good idea to at least get a general idea of the sort of classes available. When creating a class, consider its primary role, its flavor and its gameplay focus and try to avoid too much overlap. Log Horizon has three “warrior” or “tank” classes: guardian, samurai and monk. Guardian has the highest defense and some of the best damage mitigation abilities but do somewhat mediocre damage; samurai can dual wield and have several high-burst damage abilities on long cool downs; and the monk has the highest hit points and good evasion abilities with a lot of fast recharging attack skills that can be easily chained. They are all three good tanks, but they all have very different flavors and go about their role in differing ways.



Also realize that classes in an MMO are more akin to a species or race than to a profession. The rules of the game make it so that certain skills are samurai skills and other skills are monk skills. In real life, a samurai would be able to learn a few skills from a monk and even a wizard could pick up a few skills from a warrior. In table top RPGs this is also possible via multi-classing. In most MMOs however, one can't pick up the skills of an alternate class. There may be commonly available pools of skills that anybody can grab and which present similar but weaker abilities to main classes, but those main class abilities are pretty much an innate potential of a class, just like the ability to see is normally an innate trait of humanity.

Some MMOs do not use a class system, however. Sword Art Online used a level and skill tree based system rather than classes. Level increased things like hit points and provided stat points that could be placed in different attributes, but the characters' skills came from opening and ranking up various skills. One-handed sword skills eventually unlocked two-handed sword skills and specific sword skills like Katana, Rapier or Claymore. In these cases, players still built themselves to specific roles such as tank and support by being careful about which skill trees they opened up. Similarly, as mentioned earlier, the Secret World MMO has a classless system where every character can eventually learn every ability in the game if they work at it long enough. There are specific "decks" of abilities that come with a free awarded costume piece for getting all the pieces of the build, but these decks aren't any more effective than any other well designed build in the game.

One thing to note is that MMO characters are often highly specialized. Tank style characters will often twice the Health of support characters and sometimes the difference is even greater than that. This basic, inherent level of health and defense is often further boosted by healing and defensive buffs. A properly supported tank in most MMOs is all but unkillable. However, if that tank loses aggro then the rest of the party becomes at risk. Against particularly dangerous opponents, it only takes a moment of the tank losing aggro to cause the death of someone else.

Another danger is that the tank having the focus of all the aggro also means that they are often the central point whenever an enemy uses an area of effect. This creates an area around the tank which acts as a sort of death zone. One personal story from City of Heroes was when we had a tank decide to throw a taunt at an archvillain class enemy while standing in the middle of the rest of the team rather than running out to the villain. As a result, the villain promptly turned around and blasted him with her biggest AoE attack causing the deaths of several of the support characters, myself included. Tanks also have to try to keep the boss faced away from the rest of the team in order to keep cone attacks directed behind him.

## **Fate Core**

Skills and Abilities in Fate Core are easily represented by the four actions: Overcome, Attack, Defense and Create an Advantage. Most buffs, debuffs and controls would be represented by the Create an Advantage action. Dispel and cleanses would be represented by an Overcome action to remove an aspect placed by an advantage. Attacks or Defenses that succeed with style granting a Boost may be a simple beneficial coincidence or working of skill similar to what Boosts are in the average Fate Core game, or they might represent actual mechanical effects within the game-in-the-game. Maybe the player's weapon has a proc-effect that occasionally debuffs enemies it has injured. Maybe the player's armor casts a short duration stun on enemies that strike him. Or it could just be that the defender knows how long the animation time of a particular attack is and thus knows they have two seconds of time in which the enemy can't defend themselves.

Every character will have a Mana stress track (this can be easily renamed to fit the flavor of the game's setting). When a character is activating a skill such as with Overcome or Create an Advantage and they fail the roll, allow them to suffer Stress to their Mana track equal to the amount by which they failed the roll. Do this instead of the normal consequences for failure. What has occurred is that they've not been watching their mana very well and thus have just noticed that they're much lower in mana than they thought they were. It wasn't that one skill that spent all that mana, instead this failure represents several minutes worth of neglect just now becoming obvious. Of course, if they use Overcome or Create an Advantage for doing something other than triggering a skill, they have the normal failure results.

Healing and mana recovery abilities in the Fate Core version should be able to recover the Health or Mana Stress Track of any targeted ally with no problem. However, since Consequences primarily represent equipment failure, healing abilities will not clear Consequences. The players will need a shopkeeper or crafter for that. If you wish, you can deny the ability to use crafting or shopping while in combat so as to prevent anybody from using actions to clear Consequences within the same combat where they first occurred. The only exception is in games where death is cheap and resurrection powers are available. In this case *Death* could be considered a Mild Consequence that can be cleared by either respawning to the nearest revival point and making haste back to the fight or having a healer cast a revival ability. Of course, this will likely just mean changing *Death* into *Revival Sickness*.

Differences in levels are only going to come up as it is important to the story. In the prior example, the GM simply decides to declare that the swordsman is far too high level for this to be a problem and, thus, doesn't bother with having a conflict. He just tells the player that the player-killers can't hurt him. He still has to try to convince them to go to jail and he'd prefer not to kill them, so he decides to let them attack him for ten seconds to show that they flat can't beat him and use that as a factor of intimidation to make them surrender. In cases where the players are far too low in level, you also will want to avoid a conflict and instead have something like a contest where the goal is for them to get away from this overpowered lunatic whom they can't even really damage much at all. Treat the high leveled enemy as a hazard rather than a monster. In cases where the level difference is much more minor, then simply increase or decrease the comparative skill bonuses or Stress Tracks of the opponents or obstacles in question to account for how the PCs are higher or lower than the encounter is designed for.

Classes in the Fate Core system are going to be defined by Aspects, specifically the Avatar Aspect extra. It is set up as an extra so that the character's High Concept, Trouble and other three base Aspects are not forced to be tied up in defining the character's Avatar. If the player wants an Aspect representing a really impressive sword they earned on a raid way back when, that's fine. However, the design philosophy was that if I was going to require at least one Aspect defining the characters class-race combo or general build description that it would not take up any of the first five Aspects.

An alternate way to deal with classes and races is to use the mode system of skills and separate various classes' abilities out into their own skills. For example, you could have Healing, Buff, Debuff, Area, Aggro and other such skills split between various Modes such as warrior, support, caster or so on. Approaches are another viable way of handling things, however, the set-up of the Fate Core skill pyramid handles the nature of MMO character builds fairly well.

The Fate Core build works best for when you want to give your players as much freedom as possible to define their characters and for settings where the bizarre nature of the game-world's rules is much more in focus rather than a background element. There is a lot room for the plot to go in various unexpected

ways. Of the three systems, this is the most likely to focus on the personal growth of the characters involved rather than the mystery or the action, however, it does both quite well.

## **GUMSHOE**

The GUMSHOE character generation here separates out Abilities based on general types of abilities. They were also designed with the idea that even if the character ran out of pool points they could still attempt to attack, heal or buff and have a potential of having an impact. It's just that by that point they are low on mana and have to lose very light heals, attacks, buffs and so on. For an example, if a player with Buff sets aside 0 points before making his roll, then his target receives 1 additional Pool Point to the buffed Ability. This means that they will continue to be able to buff players even when they've run out of pool points themselves. Note that buffing themselves to repair their buff at this point becomes a matter of treading water.

Each round of a contest or fight can represent a single exchange of blows or a long period of exchanging attacks as desired, but the reduction in pools represents the character just becoming aware of how much effort they are expending on this battle. To best represent the nature of classes, it is sometimes best to encourage characters to have a small number of pools with very large ratings as compared to most GUMSHOE games where characters are encouraged to purchase a wide variety of General skills with lower ratings. For example, a Tank style character with 20 Health, 12 Aggro Control and 8 Melee would fit right in with the way players in MMOs specialize. The remaining General Ability points would be used to round things out such as adding to Stability.

Health is expected to go up and down frequently between the high damage of enemies and the healing capabilities of players. Likewise, the individual combat related abilities are also expected to get used frequently. By comparison it will appear that Stability does not get touched very often and the natural tendency of most players will be to keep Stability to around 8 or lower. This is deliberate. MMO characters are physical monsters but their minds are still fragile human minds. To further drive the point home, you might even decide to hard cap Stability at 10 or lower. If you have decided to include Sanity from Trail of Cthulhu, then that will likewise probably have a hard ceiling for its rating.

If you come to a scene where level differential is important, reduce or increase the enemy's ratings in various abilities or else the Difficult Numbers on traps or challenges. For very extreme level differences such as the previous example with the overleveled swordsman, then reframe the encounter such that combat will not achieve the PC's goals (in the case of overleveled PCs) or such that there are ways for the PCs to avoid direct combat such as negotiation or by escaping with the high level enemy used as an obstacle or hazard rather than an enemy creature.

Personality in the GUMSHOE build is primarily defined by the character's Investigative Abilities. General Abilities certainly give some impact on personality since they show what sort of character this person built, but the Investigative Abilities show a lot more of the character's interests, attitudes and ways of thinking than General Abilities do. Gear has been largely folded into the General Abilities for this build. If your character ends up gaining a very impressive gun, powerful new psychic ability or legendary sword that can be a good way to explain the fact that you just spent your advancement points by putting some build points into Ranged, Debuff or Melee.

The focus on the GUMSHOE system is on making sure players get the information that they need to move the plot along. Unnecessary but helpful information requires the players to spend Investigative Pool points to acquire, as well as some creativity, but the key clues that they absolutely need come just as a matter of them asking and narrating how they find it. As such, GUMSHOE is most appropriate for a game where the focus is on the mystery of the setting. For example, why are they stuck in the game or? If that is obvious, how do they go about escaping. This is also useful for settings like Log Horizon which highly emphasize the need for information in formulating strategies or policies as well as investigating the changing nature of the world they live in.

Other GUMSHOE settings involve characters that are largely very mortal and where death is close by. Night's Black Agents, Esoterrorists and Trail of Cthulhu usually involves basically human beings competing against much more powerful paranormal beings. Mutant City Blues deals with low level superbeings that are mostly still vulnerable to the common dangers humans face. This is very different from characters in an MMO setting where the characters are quite often among the most powerful things in the surrounding world with only a handful of extremely powerful entities like raid bosses to stand above them.

For comparison, a character in Trail of Cthulhu would be expected to stop a bunch of human cultists and a handful of Deep Ones from awakening Cthulhu. A character in Just a Game would be expected to raid R'lyeh and destroy Cthulhu after a protracted and complex battle. Even worse than facing and expecting to beat Cthulhu, the possible reason for taking on such a raid could be that leadership of the stranded players set it up as a way to keep people occupied and distract them from the fact that they haven't found the way home yet. Yes, when playing MMO characters, Cthulhu could be reduced to the level of being a distraction from "real problems."

However, things like Stability, or Sanity, as stated, are suggested at remaining in human levels. It could even be that operating at such huge levels of capability can be a stress on the human psyche itself. Look to Sword Art Online and the player-killers who become addicted to killing and move on to being serial killers once the game is escaped. Just a Game is expected to have characters of monstrous physical ability but still very human minds, at least to begin with.

### **Powered by the Apocalypse**

The character generation rules for the Apocalypse hack are focused on matching a Persona, featuring mostly roleplaying or interaction related moves, with an Avatar, featuring mostly combat related moves, several of which give new options to the **Tap a Skill** basic move. The Avatars are focused around role rather than a specific class. For example, the Boss-Killer Avatar could represent a sniper, a blasting sorcerer, an assassin, a psychic with powerful mental attacks or any of a number of other things.

Health is set at 10 points based to make it easy for players to state their health in general percentages, which is a common MMO practice. Moves and gear that increase maximum health will confuse this somewhat, but shouldn't take much time for a player to note down the percentages for each of his dots so that he can use them when calling out in combat. By comparison, Mana and Resources are kept rather low. There are no implemented restrictions on what gear or armor each Avatar can use because there are games where the use of weapons or armor is unrestricted.

GMs need to handle the **Tap a Skill** move with some care. In order to encourage characters to take gear suited to high Mana or Resources, the GM should make sure to apply Mana and Resources costs most frequently to those character concepts for which it makes sense. On the other hand, a character who is building a heavy tank will likely require flaws such as undesirable side effects or even a loss of health instead of costing Mana frequently.

One flaw that GMs should be aware of is the long cool-down. Technically it is possible to get around that by performing the **Tap a Skill** move again, choose the same two effects and just be considering it as a different skill entirely and prompting you to add a new flaw. At the start of the game, you should make clear what you expect the long cool-down flaw to mean. The first suggestion is to make the ruling that if a skill has a “long cool down” that that player can’t use that particular combination of effects again until the GM says they can. Basically disallowing the argument of “it’s a new skill, it’s just got identical effects”.

Note that Fate Core can simulate special gear via Aspects with the rest of the character’s gear represented by their skill bonuses, stunts and Stress Tracks. The GUMSHOE build simply ignores the question of gear and includes it all within the Ability Pools. By comparison, the Apocalypse Hack allows the players to build their own gear which can have a rather hefty impact on their stats.

The Apocalypse Hack here was based on Monster of the Week, Spirit of 77 and Dungeon Hack. The focus is very much on the action of the setting. There is some ability to represent a fraying sense of sanity in the form of the **Keep your Cool** roll being called for to suggest that the character behave in various ways. Despite the action focus, the Powered by the Apocalypse set up here is still fairly strong in both investigative and social ability. Unlike the other two systems, characters are built to a much more focused archetype in the combination of Persona and Avatar. For this playtest set-up, it was decided to limit the available Personas and Avatars to seven each, but there are certainly other potential templates that could be added in.

In this system, is assumed that each session will see the beginning and ending of a specific event. This doesn’t mean that you can’t have extended scenarios or situations such as spending several sessions trying to defeat a major raid. However, each session should be intended to begin and end as a story in and of itself. For example, the first session of the raid arc could be spent trying to get the raid together or get accepted to the raid. The second session would be the story about the first zone exploration push. The third session would deal with the first raid boss and so on until it is time to defeat the raid as a whole (or accomplish whatever other goal the PCs had). Open the session with a situation and a specific zoomed in goal and aim for the players meeting that goal (or failing to) by the end of the session. Try to avoid “to be continued” endings as much as possible.

## Aggro Management

Of particular importance to the MMO world is how to control how much attention you are getting from enemies. It is generally preferred for the tank to make first contact and use his taunts to raise his aggro level to a high amount so that other players do not attract attention from the monsters. Tanks, with their huge Health levels, can endure the attention of many enemies that would kill other players in a single blow.

Damage is the primary method of judging aggro levels. The more damage a person does, the higher their aggro rises. However it is not the only way to increase aggro. Inflicting status effects on an enemy will

draw their attention, as will the use of control powers. In some games, healers and buffers also attract extra aggro as well. Some character builds have ways to lower their aggro such as by using smoke bombs or mind control abilities.

Aggro might be useless against sentient enemies, or it might cause an impulse in the targeted to pay aa

**Fate Core:** Aggro management in Fate Core is handled by using Create an Advantage and Overcome actions. A tank would Create an Advantage to place an Aspect of *Aggroed* on a target which might then try to use Overcome in order to remove that target. If a character has a failed roll and chooses to succeed with cost during a battle, that cost might be them acquiring unwanted aggro.

**GUMSHOE:** Characters enter battle with a base aggro level of 0 with each enemy. They can use Aggro Management to increase or decrease their aggro level with different targets. If the GM desires, he can declare that some behaviors might cause one character to raise his aggro level. If the aggro level with a particular creature is higher than that of the tank's then the character is suddenly attacked by the creature in question.

**Powered by the Apocalypse:** Drawing aggro is handled with the **Tap a Skill** move primarily. There are glitches that can be used to increase the user's aggro and there are effects that can be used to remove or add aggro deliberately.

## Grinding

### Fate Core

Consider grinding to be a down time activity that functions as a challenge. Choose three skills for the player to attend to and have them roll against a basic difficulty of about 3. If you want your setting to be one that underscores a situation of danger or unfamiliarity then you might increase the Difficulty to 4, 5 or even 6.

The result of the challenge shows how much effort they got out of their attempts. Someone who succeeds at all three rolls of the challenge comes out of their grinding between adventures with appropriate gear upgrades, hitting the right level and so on. Someone who succeeds with style on one or more challenge rolls might come out *Overleveled* or perhaps having *Primo Gear*. These, and any other Aspects acquired this way last for the adventure after which they go away and the character has to go grinding again.

Of course, it isn't all roses, someone who rolls poorly on the challenge is going to come out *Underleveled* and with *Outdated Gear* or similar such Aspects.

### GUMSHOE

Twice per adventure, a character in a GUMSHOE version of these rules can choose to give a description on what sort of things they did to go grinding in between the last adventure and this one. If they do so, they can immediately regain 3 points to General Abilities. If the GM and other players are especially impressed with the player's monologue, then they can gain 4 pool points to their General Abilities.

Alternately, they can talk about how they applied that time to investigating the mystery of how they are stuck in the game and thus regain 3 or 4 Investigative Ability pool points instead. Of course, what this

means is that the character took time away from his grinding and thus he doesn't have as much chance to regain points in General Abilities over the course of this Adventure.

### Powered by the Apocalypse

To represent the background effort made by players to keep up their capabilities at the same level as the challenges in front of them, the GM can call for them to **Grind**. In this case, the player describes how they are approaching their grinding and the GM decides on a Rating to have them roll against. Examples of explanations and appropriate ratings are below:

- I'm going to go out hunting for drops and experience. Roll **+Build**.
- I'm going to spend some time crafting and taking the most efficient quests. Roll **+Lore**.
- I'm going to try to talk some people into grouping with me. Roll **+Presence**.
- I'm going to build my skill masteries by beefing up this new skill. Roll **+System**.
- I'm going to spend as much time as possible pushing through and getting things done. Roll **+Will**.

The results will be as follows:

- On a 10+ you maintain your capabilities just fine and even get a little ahead of the game. You'll get to choose one benefit to have until the next time you have to grind.
  - You have +1 Weapon damage.
  - You have +1 Maximum Health.
  - You have +1 Armor.
  - You have +1 Maximum Mana.
  - You have +1 Maximum Resources.
  - You gain a +1 ongoing to the use of one Skill (which skill can be determined later and can include newly created skills, but after it is applied it only applies to that skill)
  - You have an exceptional item, the GM will tell you what it is. You gain a +1 ongoing whenever an action involves that item.
- On a 7-9 you maintain your capabilities.
- On a failure, you out leveled your gear, over used some resources, or else didn't gather as much experience or resources as you thought you would. The GM will apply one of the following negatives until the next time you grind.
  - You have -1 Weapon damage.
  - You have -1 Maximum Health.
  - You have -1 Armor.(Minimum 0)

- You have -1 Maximum Mana.
- You have -1 Maximum Resources
- You gain a -1 ongoing to the use of on Skill of the GMs choice.
- One of you weren't able to replace one of your items, you have a -1 ongoing whenever an action involves that item.

## Health and Healing

Most games try to use various methods to reproduce the effect of real world injuries on a person when they suffer attacks in the game. However, in this setting, we're reproducing the way other games handle injury. Specifically, we're reproducing the sort of way that health is represented in online multiplayer games.

One of the characteristics of most MMO health tracking systems is the fact that reduced health does result in lost performance. Some very few video games do affect your performance while injured, but these are largely in the minority. Some other MMOs use status effects, inflicted by specific skills or enemy abilities, to represent injuries while health represents some nebulous quality such as morale trying to explain why lowered health does not lower performance by basically saying "you're not actually injured, you're just losing the will to fight." This isn't all that much better since that would affect your performance as well.

In addition, MMOs, and video games in general, have some of the quickest and most effective healing abilities out of most games. The abilities range from instant heals to quick resurrections. In addition, many MMO characters have a health regeneration rate that allows them to go from nearly defeated to fully healthy in very short order, often in less than ten minutes. Various sorts of equipment, passive abilities, badges, healing potions and the like also have an impact on a character's practical health.

Toward that end, Health in this playtest pack assumes the impact of the possession of those skills, potions, items and regeneration rate. This seems to double dip in a couple of places since a Fate Core character could have, for instance, a high Physical Stress Track as well as an Aspect of *Potions Galore* and possibly use actions as a way to recover from Health loss. GUMSHOE and the Powered by Apocalypse rules also both present the ability to self-heal. Powered by Apocalypse rules also allow players to have gear that increases their maximum Health level. This is deliberate. MMO characters are designed to have a large number of methods of extending their life. Of course, raids and most other major encounters in these games are designed to make even such measures seem inadequate. Players should have that feeling that "man, nothing could kill me," in most average encounters followed feelings of "it's not enough" as soon as they hit an actual elite or raid boss.

That said, mental damage and stress is unaffected by this game. Things like charm, fear and calm spells in the game actually don't directly touch the characters' minds (unless, in your setting, they do...up to you, but that still doesn't affect the mental damage situation) but just cause the avatar to behave in various ways.

As to how the various systems are tweaked to handle Health and consequences of health loss, see below for some suggestions. As stated, the main goal is to simulate the fact that the longer the players go



before returning to town, the less resources they have to recover Health or Mana in an emergency. This is represented by various things like reducing the maximum levels of some traits, application of consequences or statuses and so on. The attrition aspect on players is more to do with this dwindling of supplies than an accumulation of injuries. The first fight you have on leaving the town might be incredibly easy, but by the tenth fight you might be running out of potions or have used a lot of long-cool down recovery powers and at that point things might be getting a little dicey.

## **Fate Core**

The physical stress track is largely unchanged by the decision to replicate video game health rather than real life. The only major difference is in the sort of consequences suffered by taking too much stress. While you may certainly decide that consequences like broken bones occur, in most settings, the consequences caused by suffering physical stress relate more to equipment than physical health.

If your setting operates on a mix of real-world physics and biology with bizarre game rules, then physical injuries at various levels are still acceptable. The higher degree of consequence you allow physical injuries to fill, the further you get from video game world and the closer you get to fantasy world. That's perfectly fine, but the consequences I'm focusing on are those to heighten the sense of either being trapped in a game or having traveled to a dimension where the physics work like a video game. In some of these games, even *Dead* would be a Mild Consequence.

Note that the Mana Stress track would work in similar ways, with consequences representing equipment failures and, rarely, system glitches rather than actual fatigue.

**Mild Consequences** – These represent issues that will be fixed at the end of the scene. Situations that could be relate by minor consequences are minor equipment issues that can be fixed by taking a few minutes at the end of the scene. *Dropped Arrows*, *Mixed Up Inventory*, *Accidentally Altered UI* and other such things could all be Mild Consequences. Finally, you might decide that your character died and was resurrected but now is suffering *Grave Illness* representing the short-duration debuff recently revived characters receive.

**Moderate Consequences** – These are a bit more serious and represent issues that would take some time to recover and address. *Running Low on Heal Potions* would be a good Consequence here. You might also decide that some of your equipment is having *Durability Issues* or *Low Ammo*. Basically anything that could be fixed by spending ten to fifteen minutes at the shopkeeper's or by handing over your gear to a crafter with repair skills would be represented by Moderate Consequences. Other Moderate Consequences might include *Experience Point Debt* or *Lost Experience*.

**Severe Consequences** – These consequences represent a more extreme and hard to correct lost. These will take some time finding a way to repair the damage done. For example, if you go from *Durability Issues* to *Shattered Breastplate* then you have major problems. In addition, while repairing Durability in most games is a matter of a minute or two to find the proper shop or repair station, replacing an entire piece of armor takes a fair amount more effort, especially if it was high level armor. Other good Aspects might be such things as *Broken Sword* or even *Slashed Tome*. *Lost Skill* or *Lost Level* might be another Severe consequence.

For the next two levels, unless the game is one where death is real, most players will likely Concede and allow themselves to die and respawn before risking getting the next to

**Extreme Consequences** – Extreme consequences should represent the loss of a significant item such as one referenced by an Aspect. Perhaps, after a particular difficult raid, the party tank took an Extreme Consequence and instead of bearing the *Legendary Sword Of the High Peaks Raid* he is now wielding a *Disappointing Fill-In Weapon* because his signature sword broke during the battle. Consequences of this sort will require a quest in and of themselves to replace.

**Defeated Consequences** – Defeated Consequences, assuming that death is not a real thing in this game, will mean you likely somehow lost the vast majority of your gear and then most of your money so that you could replace it with filler gear. Getting *Pauper's Gear* replaced will take far longer than just replacing one admittedly rare sword either repaired or replaced.

**Controls and Status Effects** – Unless you've ruled that the mental abilities are really affected the target's mind and not just forcing their body to behave a certain way, then these are predominantly going to be made using Create an Advantage rather than an actual attack. On the other hand, these can certainly be used to indirectly make a mental attack. After all, if you suddenly find yourself a passenger in your own body as it flees from the battlefield or, worse, jumps around attacking your friends, how would your mental state be?

## GUMSHOE

**Hurt (Rename "Running Low")** – In this case, you've experienced damage to a number of pieces of gear or expended a lot of ammunition or other resources. Unless the setting is one in which players feel real pain from their simulated injuries, this level does not affect their ability to use Investigative abilities at all. The increase to Difficulty Numbers remains the same however. This can be fixed with just a little bit of restocking.

**Seriously Injured (Rename "Broken Gear")** – In this case, you've lost a significant amount of equipment and are no longer able to credibly fight on the battle. You might still be able to try to run and use some skills to escape (since there might not be any actual pain), but your defense and attack is crippled. If you stay in battle, you will continue losing Health as stated because you are catching stray rounds, but once you leave battle, you will stabilize. The stated recovery time represents how long it will take for your character to recoup the equipment lost.

**Consciousness Test** – If you fail your consciousness test, then the enemy managed to get a last blow in and you die. If this is a setting where death is cheap, you then wait to be revived or else respawn at the nearest revival point and suffer whatever death penalty there was. If this is a setting where death is real, then failing the Consciousness Test means your character is gone, dead. This is an extreme change and makes PCs almost as frail as NPCs (in reality, a PC should have a lot more resources to prevent this from happening). Regardless, in GUMSHOE system Just a Game campaigns where death is real, life is very cheap.

**Healing** – Health Points should recover in full pretty quickly. If the party uses the Healing ability allow them to test to recover fully. However, they can also simply assume that they recover full health. Every time they do this, lower the maximum level that healing can restore a character. The lowered cap represents lost expendables that are no longer available to be quickly used in the course of the battle. How quickly you lower the cap depends on how much fighting the GM and PC want to do. If they want

to do a lot of fighting for a session, then reduce the maximum recoverable Health by 1 each time they choose to just full heal without testing. If the desire is to keep the number of battles low, then reduce the maximum recoverable health by a quarter each time, meaning that after three times just using the fast-forward option, the maximum healing will allow them to recover is 25% their normal maximum. At which point they will likely want to return to town or hub in order to restock their expendables and completely recover their Health Pool Points.

Recovering Health Pool Points does not immediately recover the Running Low or Broken Gear statuses. Once a character reaches one of those Statuses, then they have to take the normal measures to recover. If there is someone on hand with Crafting or Preparedness then that person might be able to reduce a Broken Gear status to Running Low or remove a Running Low status completely.

A status can only be reduced once before the character has to return to a fixed location such as a shop, vault or crafting facility in order to completely recover their gear. The full recovery takes as long as it usually would if the character had not reduced the level. That means someone using Preparedness to reduce Broken Gear to Running Low would still take several days to craft or purchase things allowing them to recover completely.

**Recovering** – Treat the recovery of most General Abilities the same way you treat Healing. The Buff Ability can be used to recover various pools using tests, for example by casting mana recovery spells. However, if the party uses a speed-time option to avoid repeated testing, then reduce the maximum recoverable Pool Points the same as with Health above.

**Exploit, Preparedness, Shrink and Stability Recovery** – All three of these General Abilities recover as normal for default GUMSHOE as they do not represent in game stats or equipment. To some extent, Preparedness does actually reflect equipment, but as it is used, you have progressively less equipment to draw on so it would generally only recover when presented with a shop or crafter so that the character can restock.

**Investigation Abilities** – Recover as normally for GUMSHOE. They recover at the end of each scenario or mission or through the use of grinding monologues.

**Does this Seem Too Easy?** – Just a reminder for people who are expecting GUMSHOE to be heavily realistic have a slow bleed away of Health and Pool points. That is not the way the trapped in the game genre typically works.

As with MMOs, battles range from ones meant to be easily defeated so that players can slowly build up XP all the way to battles that are expected to kill multiple parties of players several times over before they are defeated. Most General Pools should disappear quickly within major encounters and reappear just as quickly in between them. In games where death is real, any significant encounter should bear a very real risk of the character dying in that one battle and yet have them be perfectly ready to take on a new battle less than thirty minutes later in game.

The slow bleed away in this Genre is on the mental side of things. If desired, you might even decide to use the Sanity mechanic from Trail of Cthulhu along with the standard Stability mechanic to differentiate those people that are clearly freaking out from those that are cracking and changing how they view reality in a much more subtle and dangerous manner.

## Powered by the Apocalypse

The characters created for Just a Game using the Apocalypse World System are modeled mostly off the games Spirit of 77 and Monster of the Week. However, armor and health is able to get much higher than it is in either of those two games.

For example, a character might be able to get up to 5 armor and reduce the damage dealt by all attacks by 1. This might get improved by buffs to 6 or more armor. If the enemy attacking the player is also debuffed, this might go even higher. Meanwhile Health starts at 10 and can get to higher maximums than that.

Note, however, that boss monsters are going to be suggested to have Damage ratings that start out at about 8 and go up from there. Raid bosses should be able to almost one-shot heavily armored characters unless they are also heavily buffed or protected. This is again to re-affirm the nature of fighting in an MMO. Most common encounters will seem incredibly easy. As soon as you hit something significant, you always seem to be on the verge of death.

**Healing** – After the first battle, the characters return to full maximum Health and Mana after about ten minutes rest. However, after that, the character's maximum Health reduces by 1 for each additional battle and maximum Mana is reduced by 1 for each two additional battles.

This stops when the Maximum Health hits 5 and the Maximum Mana hits 2, but most sessions won't reach that point. Recovery skills cannot restore beyond these maximums.

This is representing a slow degradation of equipment and use of expendables such as mana and health potions. Once the character returns to a vault, shop or crafting facility and spends some time restocking, they return to full Maximum Health and can recover fully.

If they want to, a character can spend 1 Resources in order to prevent their max Health and Mana from degrading. However, Resources cannot normally be recovered at all outside a town, so this is a temporary measure. There is one Crafter move that allows Resources to be recovered without returning to a town.

**Harm Moves** – The harm moves can still be used as described but will often represent characters panicking or otherwise being distracted by their increasingly desperate situation. In settings where video game health mixes oddly with realistic biology, pain may occur.

**Unstable** – Character wounds do not become unstable automatically however the DoT tag applies the same effect as having an Unstable Wound in Monster of the Week, meaning the GM can simply declare anyone currently suffering a DoT takes +1 Damage.

## Monsters, Hazards and Other Adversaries

When deciding on the difficulties and stat levels of various threats in the game, first consider the nature and intention of the creature. In general there are four scales of hostile entities in an MMO.

### Grind Dangers

Grind dangers are the common monsters, traps and hazards the players will see in the regular zones. For the most part they are meant to be easy to kill while causing enough damage to present an illusion of

risk. A grind danger will only present a threat to an even level player if they run from spawn to spawn to spawn without paying attention to their health and mana. For the most part these will be background and relegated to player narratives about what they were doing between adventures.

This level of threat might appear in a legitimate combat right when the players first get stuck in the game and are testing things out. Otherwise they're flavor for other sort of indirect contests and tests. For example, a contest to see who can kill the most fire geckos in five minutes, or trying to get a specific ingredient to drop.

If you're not careful against grind dangers you'll...lose track of time? Eh go crazy.

### **Bleed Dangers**

Bleed dangers are meant to cause a serious depletion in the resources of a player. It shouldn't be a surprise for a solo player to be down to about a quarter of their health and mana at the end of a fight with one, especially if they were reckless. Death just from a bleed danger would be rare however.

Bleed dangers include named monsters that appear in the world map, higher than normal monsters wandering in from nearby zones, any traps above the basic "this is a trap to practice trap-breaking against" and large numbers of grind dangers.

If you're not careful against bleed dangers you'll end the battle low on health, mana and resources.

### **Death Dangers**

Death dangers are expected to kill players if that player is reckless or doesn't go in with a plan. Even a careful and experienced player will end a fight with one of these close to death. Once these sorts are recognized and learned, then most players will figure out the necessary strategies for them, but one appearing by surprise is always going to be a close thing.

Death dangers include elite monsters, raid zone monsters, monsters that have been lured in from much higher level zones, raid traps, large numbers of bleed dangers and huge numbers of grind dangers.

If you're not careful against death dangers you'll likely die.

### **Wipe Dangers**

Wipe dangers represent a threat of wiping out entire parties of players. These are hugely dangerous circumstances and the sort of things that only show up due to special events or raid zones. It takes a lot of very specific timing and strategy in order to be able to defeat this level of foe. This type of foe might even have to have their health depleted multiple times and go through several stages in order to final destroy them. See the section on Raid Bosses below.

Wipe Dangers can include death-trap filled rooms, raid bosses, event monsters, large numbers of death dangers, huge numbers of bleed dangers or vast numbers of grind dangers.

If you're not careful against wipe dangers you're entire team will die.

### **Fate-Core**

Fate-Core dangers will be represented in the same way as players, by Aspects, Skills and Stunts. However, dangers should not be built with the skills that the players use, but rather built with skills to represent strategies and tactics that the danger is good at. This is building rather similarly to the way Fate Accelerated enemies are built. The Fate-Core section on building monsters is the most extensive due to having specific suggestions on how to model creatures in that system.

## Aspects

Every danger will have at least one Aspect describing it such as *Novice Level Blade Trap*, *Goblin Shaman*, *Illuminati Sniper* or even *Great Kilamnaal's Opening Sonnet Form* (for a stage one raid boss, for instance). More powerful dangers will have additional Aspects, likewise including a Trouble that implies a particular strategy or method that they are weak against such as *Deactivated By The Answer of a Riddle*.

Other Aspects should represent special characteristics, natures or the effect of the danger on the surrounding environment. For example *Miasmic Fog* or *Summoned Rain of Burning Weasels*.

## Attack Skills

The majority of dangers do damage of some kind. Some rare dangers will act as pure healers or buffers for other monsters or debuffers and control against the party, but most do at least some damage. However, do not simply give them an attack skill, instead separate out their attacks by the types of targets. For a simple example, a weak enemy might have Attack Magic Class +2, Attack Skirmisher Class +1, and Attack Warrior Class +0.

You might alternately set it by gear such as Attack Light Armor +2, Attack Medium Armor +1 and Attack Heavy Armor +0. The problem here is that some characters will likely be envisioned as having light armor but high evasion. Since the Fate rules for Just a Game are not using Weapon Rating or Armor Ratings, Attacks represent a combination of accuracy and power while Defenses represent a combination of avoidance and reduction. As such, you might instead set the attacks and defense like this: Attack Light Armor/Low Evasion +2, Attack Medium Armor/Moderate Evasion +1 and Attack Heavy Armor/High Evasion +0.

A third set of qualifiers representing magical defenses could be added as well if you desired, but this wouldn't be necessary since such defenses would be represented by Aspect granting the enchanted person the equivalent of either armor or evasion.

Then, if the monster is attacking something with Aspects that cause them to match two separate situations, use the weaker skill. For example a monk character with high evasion but light armor would face a +0 attack while a ranger with moderate evasion and light armor would face a +1 attack and a healer in robes with low evasion would face a +2 attack.

Generally, you only want to take three separate Attack skills so that you can differentiate between targets they are good at fighting and targets they are bad at fighting. Most of the time the lowest attack skill will be targeted at a tank style character, but occasionally an enemy will arise that has an easier time attacking most tanks but has a harder time with other builds. For example, in an alien invasion style game, most enemies will have trouble against the heavy front line soldiers but an easier time hitting the psychic support characters, but a psychic enemy would have the reverse situation.

The reasoning for these different attack skills targeted at different types of players is to allow further differentiation between classes or builds without having to spend a Fate Point to invoke their Avatar Aspect. There is now already a built in +2 difference between what is attacking a tank and what is attacking a mage. This will be further broadened by the fact that a tank is likely to have a higher Athletics and thus a better defense roll than the mage.

Attack skills work for both creatures and traps. For example, a trap might have the following attack skills: Attack Slow Characters +2, Attack Average Characters +1 and Attack Fast Characters +0 for a traditional arrow or slicing blade trap. A sonic disruption trap might have a different priority scheme.

Also, while it says “Average” above, you might also write it as Attack Slow Characters +2, Attack +1, Attack Fast Characters +0. In this case if a character has an Aspect that means they match the description of slow use the +2 Attack, but if they have something that would make them fast, use the +0 Attack and if they have neither use the +1. This is somewhat different from the Armor/Evasion example from before, but both follow from common sense.

Also, as with Fate Accelerated, feel free to give them more descriptive skill names as well such as Hitting Annoyingly Agile Opponents +0, Opening Walking Tin Cans +1 and Ruining Players’ Days +2. In this case, the last one is a generic attack attacking most players while the other two attacks indicate that this enemy has a hard time with evasive enemies but finds armored enemies a little bit easier to fight.

### **Defense Skills**

Once again, use three different priorities to represent attacks it is strong against, attacks it is average against and attacks it is weak against. It is probably best to separate this by damage type. Since a particular game might have tons of separate damage types you might have one skill that is just “Defense” representing its defense levels against most attacks and then two attacks it performs differently against.

For example, a weak creature like a skeleton might have Defense Edged +2, Defense +1, Defense Blunt/Holy +0. This would mean that anybody using arrows, swords or daggers against the skeleton would find themselves facing the best defense the creature had while someone using holy attacks or a club would face the weakest defense.

For traps, it might be better to separate this by methods of disarming. A particularly complex but delicate trap might have Defense Mechanical Disarming +2, Defense Identifying Latch +1, Defense Brute Force +0. In this case a rogue would have a lot of difficulty trying to use picks and tools to disarm the trap, have a little bit less trouble looking around to find a safety latch hidden somewhere and find the easiest possible way to deal with the trap is to just kick the mechanism really hard.

Feel free to give these skill descriptive names as well like, Just Try to Find the Safety +2, Sturdy Construction +1 and What Are You Doing With That Pin? +0. Or Fleshless Undead +2, Breakable Bones +1, Fear Heaven’s Wrath +0.

### **Other Skills**

In addition to having attacks and defenses, dangers should have other appropriate skills like Concealment for traps or ambush creatures or Healing for enemy healers. Weak dangers might only have

one or two such other skills while more powerful enemies would have more. Another potential skill might be Teleport Heal and Run +3 representing something like the Tsoo Sorcerers in City of Heroes.

### **Stunts**

Sometimes you'll want a danger to have an ability that isn't easily handled by skills and is a bit more focused and specific than an Aspect. For example, an especially tough danger might have a Stunt that gives it an extra Mild Consequence. Another enemy might have a stunt allowing it to ignore aggro once each fight.

Or you might want a particular skill to be better in a limited circumstance beyond the target or attacker centric skills assigned to it. For example, a monster that does extra damage on the first attack of a combat might get a stunt of Ambusher giving them a +2 to that first attack.

These are built the same way as they are for players.

### **Some Possible Set-Ups**

Below are some possible ways you could set up the different levels of threat, but in general you should design them based on the characters when you can. Consider the intended level danger for each designation.

**Grind Dangers** – High Aspect, 0-1 other Aspects, Attacks/Defenses (+2, +1, +0). One skill +2, one skill +1. Stress Track OO. 0-1 Stunts. No Consequences.

**Bleed Dangers** – High Aspect, Trouble Aspect, 0-1 other Aspects, Attacks/Defenses (+4, +3, +2). Two skills +2, two skills +1. Stress Track OOOO, 1-2 Stunts, Mild Consequence.

**Death Dangers** – High Aspect, Trouble Aspect, 1-2 other Aspects, Attacks/Defenses (+6, +5, +4). One skill +3, two skills +2, three skills +1. Stress Track OOOOOO, 2-3 Stunts, Mild/Moderate Consequence.

**Wipe Dangers** – Full set of Aspects, Attacks/Defenses (+10, +8, +6), One Skill +4, two skills +3, three skills +2, four skills +1. Stress Track OOOOOOOO, 3-4 Stunts, Mild/Moderate/Severe Consequences. – Also, some wipe dangers will have to be faced through several monstrous stages like this.

### **GUMSHOE**

GUMSHOE dangers will mostly be given stats when they're creatures. Traps will have Difficulty Numbers for use against Infiltration rolls. Though it is conceivable that a particular complex and deadly trap room could be statted as something like a construct or robot.

### **Vulnerabilities**

When modeling vulnerabilities to particular styles of damage assign the danger armor that is situationally applicable. For example, if a particular monster is weak against most attacks, but particularly strong against fire then it might have Armor vs Fire 3. If a particular monster is strong against most attacks but is vulnerable to poison attacks, it might have Armor 2 – Not vs Poison.

### **Some Possible Set-Ups**



Below are some possible ways you could set up the different levels of threat, but in general you should design them based on the characters when you can. Consider the intended level danger for each designation. In addition, consider creating special rules, situations and attacks for more stand out dangers, especially Wipe Dangers.

**Grind Dangers** – Health 3-5, one major General Ability 3-5, one secondary General Ability 2-4, 3-4 other General Ability points. Weapon Bonus -2 to -1.

**Bleed Dangers** – Health 7-10, one major General Ability 7-10, one secondary General Ability 4-6, 5-9 other General Ability points. Weapon Bonus -1 to +1. Possibly one special ability.

**Death Dangers** – Health 11-16, one major General Ability 9-16, one secondary General Ability 8-12, 10-14 other General Ability points. Weapon Bonus +0 to +2. Possibly one to three special abilities.

**Wipe Dangers** – Health 20-40, one major General Ability 17-22, one secondary General Ability 13-18, 15-20 other General Ability points, Weapon Bonus +3 or higher. At least two special abilities, likely more than that. Also, many wipe dangers might have to be defeated in several stages each of which has a similarly monstrous set up.

## Powered by the Apocalypse

When designing dangers for Powered by the Apocalypse, again, most traps will be simple challenge situations that the GM sets for the players to describe how they respond to. However, more intricate ones that seem to react to players might as well be stat'd as monsters. Also, in Monster of the Week and some other Powered by the Apocalypse games, places themselves are given a motivation to describe their nature and pitfalls.

## Motivation

Every danger could use a motivation that gives the GM a shorthand description of how the danger will likely behave or what its programmed actions are likely to be. It hasn't been decided whether to use motivations or not, but they present a useful build and play guide.

Motivations from another Apocalypse Powered game, Monster of the Week (excellent for reproducing action horror and urban fantasy), are listed below. I've including motivations for monsters, minions, bystanders and locations. Some of these are more appropriate to basic non-hostile NPCs or sentient enemies, but for this playtest document they will all go here for now. Also, these are only samples, they aren't the end all of motivations. Remember, these mostly just act as a reminder of how these things behave, rather like an Aspect.

- Monsters – Good motivations for leader monsters
  - Beast – it seeks to run wild and destroy
  - Breeder – it seeks to give birth to, bring forth or create evil
  - Collector – it seeks to steal specific things (this could be abstract things like love or memories)
  - Destroyer – it seeks to bring about the end of the world

- Devourer – it seeks to consume people
- Executioner – it seeks to punish the guilty
- Parasite – it seeks to infest, control and devour
- Queen – it seeks to possess and control
- Sorcerer – it seeks to usurp unnatural power
- Tempter – it seeks to lure people to evil
- Trickster – it seeks to spread chaos
- Minions – Good motivations for any underlings
  - Assassin – it seeks to kill the players
  - Brute – it seeks to intimidate and attack
  - Cultist – it seeks to save its own skin at any cost
  - Guardian – it seeks to bar the way or protect something
  - Right Hand – it seeks to back up the monster
  - Plague – it seeks to swarm and destroy
  - Renfield – it seeks to push victims to the monster
  - Scout – it seeks to stalk and watch
  - Thief – it seeks to steal things and return them to the monster
  - Traitor – it seeks to betray people
- Locations – Good motivations for places and areas
  - Crossroads – to bring people together.
  - Deathtrap – to harm intruders
  - Den – to harbor monsters
  - Fortress – to deny entry
  - Hellgate – to create evil
  - Hub – to reveal information
  - Lab – to create weirdness
  - Maze – to confuse and separate
  - Prison – to constrain and prevent exit

- Wilds – to contain hidden things
- Bystanders – motivations for assorted NPCs (these are especially appropriate to sentients)
  - Busybody – to interfere in other people’s plans
  - Detective – to rule out explanations
  - Gossip – to pass on rumors
  - Helper – to join the party
  - Innocent – to do the right thing
  - Official – to be suspicious
  - Skeptic – to deny unusual explanations
  - Victim – to put themselves in danger
  - Witness – to reveal information.

Note that these are not necessarily a conscious motivation. A Victim might put themselves in danger by constantly trying to help and not being careful. Or they might be greedy and get themselves in a bad position. Also a Wilds might represent a large warehouse in the game that used to belong to a player that went missing and is loaded with all sorts of useful and dangerous objects.

## Weapon Damage and Armor

As a note, given the character generation set-up, the maximum unbuffed Armor and Weapon ratings for players are around 6 but that represents a heavy focus on those ratings.

## Special Moves

Most dangers will have at least one custom move representing a power or attack that the players have to deal with. Sometimes this represents a special movement ability.

**Bloody Rabbit** – This creature is capable of quickly moving out of sight by flight, teleportation or some other method and uses hit and run tactics.

Sometimes this resistance to specific attacks.

**Fleshless** – The skeletons take -1 damage from edged weapons.

In other cases a move can be a weakness of the monster’s.

Continuing the earlier example: **Breakable Abomination** - Skeletons take +1 damage from blunt or holy items.

Also, some moves will require that the players respond to them or resist them with a roll of some kind. In which case you will want to create a rubric for what the results of a success, partial success or failure will be.

**Torrent** – The water elemental releases a torrent of water that causes everyone near it to have to try and keep their footing and thus requires everyone to make a +Build roll.

- On a 10+ the character successful keeps their footing and can act as normal.
- On a 7-9 the character can either keep their feet or be knocked down but able to take an action
- On a failure the character is knocked down and loses their next action.

### **Some Possible Set-Ups**

Below are some possible ways you could set up the different levels of threat, but in general you should design them based on the characters when you can. Consider the intended level danger for each designation. In addition, consider creating special rules, situations and attacks for more stand out dangers, especially Wipe Dangers.

**Grind Dangers** – Motivation, Health 3-5, Weapon Damage 1-3, Armor 0-1, 1-3 custom moves

**Bleed Dangers** – Motivation, Health 6-9, Weapon Damage 4-6, Armor 2-3, 2-4 custom moves

**Death Dangers** – Motivation, Health 10-14, Weapon Damage 7-9, Armor 4-6, 3-5 custom moves

**Wipe Dangers** – Motivation, Health 15-22, Weapon Damage 10-16, Armor 7-9, 4-6 custom moves.

### **Raiding**

Another major aspect of MMOs is the practice of raiding. Raids are attacks carried out by several cooperating parties including raid bosses that take several hours to defeat on their own. Some major raids can take multiple days to overcome and some parties end up giving up a raid as impossible with their current resources and leave to try again later. In settings where death is real, raids are the most likely events to cause massive casualties in the player population and they are also the most likely obstacles to be placed in the way of solving the problem of any such death game.

In addition to Raid Bosses, the average monsters in raids are much more powerful than normal and serve to drain the raid's resources and thus making each raid boss that much more difficult to defeat. Raids are characterized by long periods of time when the raid is procedurally pushing through an obstacle or chipping away at a Raid Bosses health. These long spaces of mostly procedural battles are punctuated by moments when the enemies in a raid present a sudden and profound shift in strategies requiring the raid to react to the changing nature of the battle quickly enough not to be overwhelmed. In games where death is cheap and respawning is a thing, then raids will expect to have to retreat from several such battles and regroup for a new push. Even in such cases, a full raid wipe is likely to cause a heavy morale failure.

Always consider the story purpose of a raid. Is there something the players need from the raid that they can't get anywhere else? Is it just to gain equipment and experience they need for something else? Are they trying to impress the guild running the raid and get recruited? Do the PCs just want to do a raid? Think about these reasons so you can decide whether the raid is a full arc or a simple adventure.

Below are a set of suggested stages to a raid that can be used and shuffled in various orders. Feel free to intersperse these suggested situations with other scenes. Especially interactions between the PCs and

the rest of the raid can be highlighted. An especially long raid can represent an entire story arc and take several sessions to complete. Doing nothing but the same sort of scene over and over again would get tiresome. You might even decide to reduce some Boss Fights that don't sound that interesting to the players down to a single Contest. Or you could sum up several days of raiding action as a single challenge or contest followed by social interactions during regroup periods.

At this point NPCs might start challenging the established raid leader over perceived incompetence. Some might start thinking of giving up the whole thing. Or else a particular raid leader might start presenting a good imitation of Captain Ahab. PCs might find themselves cooperating with old enemies and finding some common ground.

### **Recruiting for the Raid**

The first step in any raid is in getting it put together and organized. This is more than a matter of just getting people together. Successful raids require people that can work together very well. This is especially true if this is a setting where death is real and the characters are not going to be able die and respawn and slowly collect information on the way the raid works.

There are two general ways for a raid to be put together, not including people just gathering at random and going off to try it. You can first create a strategy and then recruit people with the abilities and skills necessary to pull it off, or you can recruit the people you need and then come up with a strategy after the fact based on what you got. Either way is doable, though each has its pitfalls.

Once the members are recruited, they have to be organized. An overall commander is needed as well as leaders for each individual squad. Responsibilities have to be allocated to each squad and every member needs to be aware of what they are expected to handle during the raid. Everyone will be expected to gather materials, expendables and other such things for the raid, but some individuals with greater inventory space will likely be expected to carry a greater amount of materials.

If the PCs are trying to join the raid instead of running it, a better focus would be on the challenges of convincing the people running the raid to add you to the raid party. There may be entire player-run tournaments and other challenges related to choosing the best people for a particular raid. In other cases, the use of guild contacts and reputation can be used to get a place on the team.

Note that in a setting where death is real, it is highly likely that any raid being attempted is being done so for reasons that seem to be absolutely necessary. In such a setting, people will die on the raid. To reduce this, it is also likely for many raid teams to attempt to take raids at the highest possible level. If the game allows it, they may even try to go into a raid at higher levels than the raid was meant for. This would be considered cowardly by raid guilds in settings where death is cheap, but it would be seen as a matter of survival in death is real settings.

Fate Core: This section can easily be done with challenges and contests. If you have some player vs player duels or challenges then some conflicts might also be possible. The end results of these contests will be Aspects related to the amount of supplies you're going into the raid with as well as the quality of the raid members and how well they work together. You might also give the party a collective and temporary Stress Track representing their supply status. The size of this Stress Track would depend on the PC's level of success in preparing for the raid.

If the PCs are among the recruits instead of the leaders, then the Aspects will generally only refer to their own level of preparedness for the coming raid as well as their reputation and relationships with the other members of the raid.

Another option might be to use either the squad action or mass combat rules from the Fate Toolkit.

GUMSHOE: This section is mostly going to be used with Investigative abilities. Getting onto the raid should be treated like a clue. If it is imperative to following the plot, then it shouldn't cost the characters anything other than some narration about how they select recruits or convince the raid leaders to accept them in.

That said, the expenditure of some Investigative pool points could be used to set up some advantages for the raid. For example, use of Vault pool points may allow for getting a pool of dedicated points related to supplies for the raid. A use of Optimization points might allow one to better judge the builds of various people and better decide which characters to place on which teams to make use of that synergy. If the PCs are among the rank and file rather than the leadership these benefits will tend to be limited in scale to their own immediate benefit.

You should stat important members of the raid, but for the most part consider the raid itself as a backdrop for the character's story even if they are the leaders. If the players are leading the raid, allow the success and failure of it to be on their own merits. If the players are rank and file, then the success and failure might not be important to the story and if you have a particular direction you want to go with that, do so. Of course, the PCs being rank and file and somehow managing to save the success of the raid is a good story.

Powered by the Apocalypse: Of the basic moves, **Read the Story** and **Chat** are of the most obvious use in this instance, but **Look for Trouble** can also be used to some degree to judge the potential recruits or find ways to prove that you're worthy to join the raid. Several of the Persona moves are also well suited to this sort of situation. In some cases, such as contests to earn a place on the raid, some limited fights and other challenges might arise. In addition, there is a special move that can be made with regard to preparing for the raid: **Stocking Up**.

The player needs to describe how they are gathering supplies for the coming raid. Based on their narration, the GM will call on them to roll +an attribute. Some examples are below.

- Depending on one's build to avoid needing large amounts of supplies means rolling +Build.
- Understanding what sort of resources are likely to be most needed and knowing the cheapest shops would be +Lore.
- Getting help from friends or guild mates, or conning supplies out of random people would be +Presence.
- Knowing which resources your skills most use and shopping on that, or crafting supplies yourself ahead of time would be +System.
- Working exhaustively to make sure you use every potential method to improve your supplies rather than resting would be +Will.

For the results of the roll, on a 10+ add 2 Holds to the party. On a 7-9, add 1 Hold to the party. On a failure, you add no holds to the party and run across some sort of complication in your attempts to stock up.

These holds are shared across the whole party and any member of the party can use the move assuming they take the time. These holds are used when the raid regroups between battle periods in order represent renewing equipment and inventories. The GM may allow for future use of this move within the raid if situations warrant it, such as getting loot from enemies or finding a secret area where crafting materials or natural occurring expendables appear.

### **Raid Zone Exploration**

The raid zones are filled with traps, obstacles, twists and turns and monsters far more dangerous than the average monster found around the world maps and normal instances. The first stage of a raid is always going to be progressing through the initial areas of the raid in order to find a safe area or the first raid boss. The primary purpose of this is to bleed the raid dry of supplies and weaken them when for when they hit the raid boss.

The exact dangers of a raid should be unique to the zone. One might be filled with all manner of traps and designed to split the raid up and making it difficult to advance through the area as a cohesive unit so that they hit the raid boss in piecemeal. Another raid zone might be a place where monsters are constantly assaulting the members of the raid. Others might require some sort cooperative tactics to be taken in order to open up each area.

If the players are the leaders of the raid, then their successes and failures will impact the raid as a whole. In that case, the focus is on the strategic level of the raid rather than the tactical level. If they are just members, then the focus is on the PCs trying to survive the raid and will be much more likely to zoom in on particular fights or obstacles. In this case, their successes and failures will mostly impact themselves and the NPCs around them.

In general, you will want to encapsulate this process in a small number of actions or rolls rather than drawing out each corridor, room and encounter. However, you might want to zoom in on one or two fights or obstacle rooms to give a taste of the things you are summarizing or montaging past. This is especially appropriate when either the world is one where death is real or where the players are members of the rank and file rather than the leadership. The encounters should at least appear to be more difficult than the average, but given the large numbers of players in the area, there might actually be less danger.

Fate Core: While the presence of monsters implies that there will be some fights, this doesn't necessarily need to happen. While the monsters in raid zones are dangerous and death could happen, the main purpose of the raid zones is bleeding resources. As such it might be best to treat each period of zone exploration as a contest against the defenses of the raid and a challenge to find the next important location. Losing the contest will mean suffering some manner of Aspect relating to the use of expendables, ammunition and degrading durability on the weapons. In fact, even succeeding at the contest might only mean a less severe Aspect. A failure on the challenge might mean stumbling into the wrong area or having to regroup having failed to reach the next area. If desired, a player might instead

use the challenge to stumble on some piece of information that is important either to the raid or their own purposes, but doing so might mean being in a disadvantage when the PCs reach the next area.

GUMSHOE: The main purpose in Zone Exploration is to find the next important area of the raid zone. That certainly means a use of Investigative Abilities. As usual, finding an area that advances the plot and the designs of the party (which are not necessarily the designs of the raid) should cost no pool points just as if you were discovering the main clue of a scene. Spending Investigative Points might still allow you to do things like find an alternate route that will allow a brief advantage over the raid boss, use much less supplies in the exploration or even find some secret area that presents an unlooked for advantage to the PCs specifically or the raid as a whole.

Powered by the Apocalypse: The zone exploration as a whole counts as a battle and thus starts the process of max Health and Mana degrading. With PbtA's general focus on action, you might want to consider the entire thing an extended battle with the enemies mostly being defined as entire encounter spawns for situations where the party is the leader. With information gathering moves allow the players to find the next major area. If things get sticky, moves might be used to allow the raid to retreat back to a field command. When the PCs are party leaders, then the zone exploration ends when the raid reaches either some new area or returns to their safe zone to regroup.

When the players are rank and file, keep throwing enemies and traps at them one after another. The focus in this case is their survival. If the players decide to try to be the group that successfully finds the new path, let them do so. If that wasn't their assigned path they could end up as heroes, or they could end up making a big mess and dooming the raid. Either might be interesting storylines. They could also end up separated from the rest of the raid somehow. If the PCs do not press for discovering the next major area, then move the raid along after a set number of enemies or obstacles are defeated. Any remaining enemies and obstacles can be narrated away by the players.

## **Raid Boss**

Raid bosses are the major threat in raids. Each raid boss has a hideous amount of health and attacks that can conceivably wipe out entire raid groups. Typically the raid will want to wait a few minutes at the edge of a raid boss area in order to recover from the ordeal of searching it out. Sometimes they may go so far as to return to a safe area to regroup and then travel the cleared path as quickly as possible before it's dangers return.

Assuming the raid as whole is able to form up and start the attack on the raid boss with the timing that they desire, then a lot of raid boss battles will tend to be characterized by long periods where the raid is procedurally chipping away at the raid boss's hit points and is pacing themselves to recover their own hit points and mana while making sure that the enemy's continues to drop. These are punctuated by short stretches where the raid boss changes its behavior, location, strategy, abilities and stats. In these periods, the raid struggles to adapt to the new behavior of the raid boss and find a tactic or strategy that allows them to get back to the long period of procedural dropping of the enemy's health while recovering from the last strategy shift.

Raid bosses are more like forces of nature than enemies, battling Godzilla would be similar. They have attacks that will almost kill even a tank and will simply flatten anything else. Their armor is often high enough that only highly specialized damage dealers are able to do significant damage while most other



members of the raid are simply battling the boss's regeneration to keep him from recovering from the damage dealers' attacks. Buffers and debuffers, of course can remedy some of this situation.

Beyond simple stats, raid bosses all have unique and dangerous quirks about their status. There are instant death abilities, massive AoEs, abilities that cause them to be more powerful the more enemies are close to them, abilities to cause more damage to those further away and less to those closer, summoning of minions, abilities to force the raid to lose its formation and scatter around, abilities to occasionally ignore aggro and many other things. Sometimes their various body parts are each stated as a separate creature.

Teamwork is of paramount importance in dealing with raid bosses. While some bosses often have abilities to ignore aggro, most of the time aggro works as normal and tanks need to make sure to keep as much aggro on the boss as possible. Every so often, the current tank will need to switch out and take some time to recover. Buffers need to keep the tank's armor raised to absurd levels while debuffers need to reduce the boss's abilities as much as possible. Secondary tanks might be needed to handle additional monsters. Damage dealers need to pile on the damage without overrunning the tank's aggro. Controllers need to time their effects, often very shortened in duration against bosses, to get the utmost use out of them.

This isn't really any different at a basic level from a normal encounter, what is different is the scale of what could happen if the teamwork is not perfect. The margin for error is razor thin. This is even more telling in worlds where death is real.

A particularly serious failure of a Zone Exploration segment is to blunder into the raid boss area and trigger the raid boss early. Sometimes when such a zone is activated people outside the room or area are locked out of it, leaving the unlucky early birds to face a monster worm all on their own. If the raid boss is limited to remaining in that area this will almost certainly mean at least that part of the raid will be obliterated. If the raid boss is able to wander freely then it could mean the wipe of the entire raid as the boss moves through the corridors and takes on the raid piecemeal. Also, however, if the rules of the game have changed enough, it might be possible for a small group of trapped PCs to defeat the raid boss all on their own somehow.

Once again, the focus of this sequence will be different dependent on the position of the PCs. If the PCs are the leaders, the focus is on the raid boss as a whole and directing the entire raid toward victory. Things like additional monsters and the like will be mostly backdrop or basic effects of the boss's attacks. If the PCs are rank and file, then the focus shifts back towards those additional monsters while the boss's attacks are rather like hazards similar to a tornado or earthquake. If there are no monsters besides the raid boss, then the focus of rank and file PCs will be on the zoomed in challenges they've been assigned to deal with. When dealing with rank and file PCs be sure to downplay the drama of the overall conflict while underling the drama of their own actions. If the PCs later on lead their own raid, be sure to have a moment of them noticing a group of first-time raiders coming into their own as a bit of a callback for when that was them.

Try to end the raid boss battle as the players are getting the most excited, don't just keep cycling back and forth between fight and pacing the way a real raid boss in a real MMO would. That would take forever. In some cases, you may even want to montage past an entire raid boss or two. Let the way you handle these things match the flow of the story you're telling.

Sometimes, the attack on the raid boss may fail and require retreating. This may be a failure on the part of the PCs, or it might be completely unrelated to them depending on whether they are leaders or rank and file. If the players are rank and file and you intend the raid to have to retreat, give them foreshadowing that it is possible so they don't feel cheated. If they try to change the coming defeat, then maybe those rank and file characters start shifting into ad hoc leaders.

As an alternate to a raid boss consider a near endless flood of minor enemies or a massive deathtrap of some kind. Another thing might be a room that sets players against illusions of themselves with their own power sets.

Fate Core: The short periods of time when the raid is first attacking the boss or just after it has changed tactics could easily be done as a conflict. If the PCs are the leaders, assign the raid boss a set amount of health and consequences. This would not actually represent its full health, but also how quickly the raid is able to get used to the new tactics and back into a holding pattern. If there are any additional monsters still active when the raid boss is "taken out", they simply become part of the background of the next stage of the fight.

In the pacing stage, the raid will face a contest against the raid boss. Mechanically speaking, this is a new enemy entirely, but within the story it is the same raid boss. A success against this contest should allow for everyone to recover Mild Consequences and Stress as expendables are shared out or buffs are created to fill the lack for now. A failed contest would mean that the players only recover Stress, or perhaps not even that. Or it could affect the power of the raid boss in the next fight stage.

If the players want to, they have the option also taking on a challenge to set themselves up advantageously for the next change in tactics. They might actually know what the next change is, they might have only guessed based on investigations or clues discovered earlier or they might be taking preparations that are generally useful. In this case, the success of the challenge could be used to set up Aspects going into the next fight stage that give them an advantage.

If the PCs are rank and file, have separate entities appear representing either elements of the raid boss or else added monsters aiding the raid boss rather than the boss as a whole. For example, if the raid is dealing with a massive octopus then the players might be focused on individual small tentacles and the occasional large lieutenant tentacle rather than on focusing on the main body. Or perhaps they're focused on holding off the wave of soldiers while the raid as a whole deals with the tank superweapon. Set a number of lieutenant and troop monsters needed to be defeated and when that number is defeated, move on to the pacing stage.

Pacing stage for rank and file PCs operates largely the same as for leader PCs. Simply leave the focus on their limited area of responsibility rather than the raid as a whole.

GUMSHOE: The basic format is similar to the Fate Core suggestion above: assign a set amount of health to the raid boss, or set a certain number of enemies that need to be beaten and when that is done move on to the pacing stage. In this case the primary difference is in the pacing period.

During the pacing period, assume that the PCs will recover all of their Health and various Ability Pools. Abilities such as Preparedness during this time can allow a player to temporarily reduce a Running Low or Broken Gear status so that they can still fight. Investigation Abilities such as Negotiation might also allow the player to get some loaner gear.

Investigation Abilities might also be spent to set up advantages of various types moving into the next fight stage. Do not simply let them do as much as they want. Set them a limit on how many actions you are allowing them to take. You might tell them outright, or you might keep it a secret. After those actions are used or it looks like no one wants to spend any more Investigation Pool Points, then move to the next fight stage.

Powered by the Apocalypse: As with the other two systems, you are interspersing moments of extreme danger with long stretches of relatively unexciting pacing battles meant to allow the party to recover. Each of the fight stage is a battle, meaning that maximum Health and Mana will degrade with each time you cycle into a pacing stage. This means that one raid boss can be the equivalent of multiple regular battles as regards dropping resources. Other than that there isn't much need for additional rules other than following the same basic guidelines as the other two sessions: fight stages threaten survival and focus on battle; pacing stages focus on recovery and trying to set up for the next fight stage.

### **Regroup**

Between raid boss battles, zone explorations and the like, the raid will move on to a safe hour to sit down and recover somewhat from the fighting so far. The raid will not reset as long as someone in the raid party remains in the instance. In the real world, this would mean making sure that at least a few members of the raid party remain online while others take a couple of hours to eat or sleep before continuing the raid. Now that players are stuck in the game, the raid will simply camp out in a safe zone.

Raid parties bring with them crafters and materials enough for their field command base to double as a city or adventurer's hub for as long as their supplies last. This is a period of time for social interaction, checking on morale, strategizing and recovering. If the previous raid boss or the monsters defeated in the zone exploration dropped items, this may even be a time when they are able to upgrade.

When PCs are the leaders, the supply situation in question is that of the raid as a whole. When the PCs are rank and file, the supply situation mechanics represent only their own, personal supply situation.

As a final note, once the players got caught in the game, the rules may have changed. Who knows if safe zones really are safe, but if you choose to attack one of these periods, then do so with a small force first as a warning. After that, the players will have to consider guards on their field commands.

Fate Core: Regrouping will allow the players to recover Moderate Consequences. If the raid has been going on for long enough, this might even be a good time to recover from a Severe Consequence by equipping the shiny new loot that you recently picked up from another battle in this raid.

There will be at least one challenge during this stage representing how efficiently the raid makes use of the supplies they brought. If you gave the party Aspects representing their supply situation, then success or failure of this challenge will affect how much the Aspects change during this regroup. A good success could mean only the loss of a few tags that were probably spent to reach the success. A bad failure could see a good Aspect becoming a middling one or even a negative one.

If the supply situation is instead being represented by a Stress Track, then the Challenge will decide how much stress the Supply Track suffers.

Regardless of whether you are using simple Aspects or a full Stress Track, the supply situation cannot normally improve as long as the raid remains in the raid zone, and they cannot leave the raid zone

without the full raid resetting. Eventually, a raid party may have to declare a raid a failure and retreat even in a world where death is cheap. This is because, eventually, they will reach a point where they cannot completely recover. However, the raid monsters do drop materials and it is possible that the raid might find a hidden room with resources allowing for a brief healing of the supply situation, but this should be of limited use.

**GUMSHOE:** Each regrouping period will count as returning to a town and restocking completely thus allowing for full recovery of General Pool points. However, there is a cost. At the recruiting phase, it is likely that one or more PCs used Investigative Abilities lie Vault to prepare supplies for the raid, likely by creating a dedicated pool of Supply Points. Every time the raid regroups, spend one of those dedicated pool points. Once that pool is gone, then the raid (or at least the PCs) have run out of extra supplies to fall back on. As with the Fate Core system, chances to refill that Pool should be rare. Eventually the raid will run out of resources and have to retreat if they do not succeed.

**Powered by the Apocalypse:** As with Fate Core and GUMSHOE systems, regrouping counts as going back to a town or other major hub type area. Health, Mana and Resources all rise to their normal maximum levels. However, each time they regroup the party loses one of the holds they acquired from using the **Stocking Up** move in the recruitment phase. As with above, in rare instances, the GM may allow another use of the **Stocking Up** move, however, the use of this move would only be allowed to the whole party in the recruitment stage. Afterwards only one PC can try it when it is allowed. Once there are no longer any holds available from **Stocking Up** then regrouping stops acting as a return to a full town.

## **Climax**

The end of the raid should not be simply the end of the last raid boss. That might be fine for the first time a party does a raid, it is even more appropriate for the first time that the party leads a raid, but after that you need to vary it up. As in the section above, consider the actual climax to be one related to interactions with NPC players. For a real twist, you might have a raid battle that ends with the party discovering and negotiating with a sentient raid boss. Also, do not be afraid to let the players' raid be defeated with the characters conceding defeat for the time being and leaving to rethink their plan to take on the raid. For that matter, in a game where death is real, imagine the amount of story that come out of the PCs being the only survivors of a particularly infamous raid.

Also note that the parts of most importance to the myth-arc of the campaign might not be in the boss rooms or at the end of the raid. The part most important to the PCs about most might be in a particular side room that no one has ever really thought much about at all. Depending on whether you want that room, encounter, discussion, discovery or what not to be a moment of subtle foreshadowing or if you want it to be the actual climax of the story arc, then it may be such that the rest of the raid events past dealing with that are merely summarized out rather than zoomed in on.

The PCs do not have to be the deciding factor of whether a raid succeeds or fails, however, the focus of the campaign is on the PCs. As such, if the PCs are not in a position to have much of an impact on the success of the raid, it is best if the raid elements as a whole are not the primary focus of the scenario or arc. For example, if it is the party's first raid ever, the focus would be less on the intricate battle strategies and more on the players' efforts to survive, contribute and learn about how things work.

## **Variant Raids**

This is not the only model of raid that exists in MMOs. The supply situation and vast enemy infested raids were mostly chosen in this description as they presented one of the more problematic and potentially dramatic models available. Other modes of raids are much more forgiving and several MMOs have types of missions similar to this that are meant for a single normal sized party. There are also occasional events that temporarily turn other zones in similarly dangerous situations. Also, given that the world they are trapped in might not entirely be a game world, these ideas can also be used to represent any of number of things that could go wrong, such as an insane native with power armor and a cursed sword killing any player he can find.

# Fate Core

## Aspects

**High Concept:** The first thought for a High Concept one might have is to choose based on the class and race or similar selection that their character is playing in the game, however, remember that the concept of this game is about the people playing the games more than it is about their avatars. One character might have an Aspect along the lines of ***First Time Gamer***, someone else might have the concept ***Full Immersion Roleplayer*** and a third might have the Aspect ***Greatest Gamer of the Generation***.

**Trouble:** Just like the High Concept is more about the persona than the avatar, the Trouble should likewise represent the issues that hound the character rather than focusing on flaws in their build. That newbie might be ***Lost in the System*** representing a confusion for how to work the game. The roleplayer might have the Aspect ***Who am I really?*** while that 1337 gamer might have the Aspect ***Arrogant to the Core***.

**Phase Trio:** The Phase Trio are not much affected by the setting. The suggestions from Core still hold true. These will often represent relationships with other people in the party or possibly some signature piece of gear that you have acquired somewhere.

## Skills

It is possible to use most of the skills in the default list in Fate Core to reproduce the abilities of characters and their avatars in the game. There are some differences here and there.

- **Athletics** – Would represent a combination of the avatar's physical capabilities and the ability of the persona to make use of them.
- **Burglary** – This is another combination of avatar capabilities, meta-knowledge and personal instinct for using them.
- **Contacts\*** – This would represent the character's connections, whether other players or game entities that are more than just bits of data.
- **Crafts** – This represents a combination of the character's understanding of the crafting rules, their willingness to spend time on it and their in-game crafting skills.
- **Deceive\*** – This skill represents the character's ability to fool those around them.
- **Drive** – This skill would represent a combination of whatever powers the avatar has related to vehicle or mount control, their instinct for that type of gameplay and their interest in it.
- **Empathy\*** – This skill measures your ability to understand and read the emotions and thoughts of people around you.
- **Investigate** – A combination of avatar abilities that might reveal past events, knowledge of the game's methods and real life investigation skills.
- **Lore** – This represents knowledge and education and how relevant their knowledge is to the situation they find themselves in. High Lore typically means lots of knowledge about the game, its systems and its fluff.
- **Notice** – This represents the combination of the avatar's sensory abilities and the amount of attention the player pays to those abilities.

- **Physique** – This primarily represents how well built the avatar’s physical resilience and health are. Since most of these are passive, this is one of the few skills that is almost entirely representative of the avatar’s build. However, a high rank in this stat indicates the person puts a lot of concern into building a resilient character.
- **Provoke\*** – This represents the character’s ability to rouse the anger or fear of people around them.
- **Rapport\*** – This represents your ability to charm and befriend the people around you.
- **Resources** – This skill represents the character’s inventory, any abilities they have for improving bartering, knowledge of which items have the best value and anything else related to the purchase, sale or availability of items.
- **Stealth** – This represents a combination of avatar abilities and the player knowledge of how the game works to avoid being seen. Someone without any stealth abilities might still have a high stealth skill because of their understanding of the way the game works.
- **Tactics** – This replaces Fight and Shoot and represents both the player’s in-game abilities and their timing at using those abilities in the most efficient manner possible. If desired, this can be split up between Melee and Ranged (perhaps a third time for Special Tactics representing the supernatural/super-science element of various games). It all depends on how much you want to differentiate people
- **Will** – This represents the character’s ability to remain cool and collected, resist taunts and other such things. Whereas an avatar or monster ability to induce some in-game status effect relating to anger or the like is more of a physical assault resisted by Tactics, Will deals with resisting things that actually try the mind of the person within the avatar.

**\* These interaction skills are primarily meant to represent the character’s ability to deal with other entities that have real emotions or even intelligence. Most games you’ll leave in-game abilities to fool, charm or aggro programmed NPCs as uses of Tactics. However, if the game features a large number of pure programs and only a handful actual beings, then you may choose to allow this to represent in-game bluffing, aggro and intimidation skills as well as abilities with other intelligent beings.**

## Stunts

Stunts should follow the same guidelines as seen in the Fate Core real book: add a new action to a skill, add a bonus to an action or add a rules exception. So the advice here will not be on mechanics but on concept.

The immediate thought is to design Stunts to represent powerful spells, powers or so on. This overlooks the idea of using Stunts to represent the character’s abilities to deal with the game. For example:

- **Metagame** – Your understanding of narrative flow, the game systems and the game fluff allows you to make accurate predictions and form strategies based on that knowledge. When you use Lore to Create an Advantage based on your knowledge of the game’s workings, add +2 to the roll.
- **Exploit Taker** – You know a number of work-arounds and loopholes in the game systems that you can use to your advantage. When you invoke an Aspect representing such an exploit to get a reroll and the second roll is less than the original roll, you may take a +1 bonus to the original total instead of accepting the second roll. Doing so causes the situation to change in a way that clears the Aspect from the board until it can be set up again.

- **Fresh Perspective** – You are relatively new gamer. This may have even been your first game ever. Because you don't take the game systems for granted, when you Succeed with Style on Overcome rolls to analyze the way things work, you notice some discrepancy between how everybody assumes some mechanic works and how it really works.
- **Gone Native** – You are such a consummate roleplayer that it is sometimes difficult to tell you apart from the natives of the game. You gain a +2 to Create an Advantage actions when using Lore to interact with or pass as one of the natives of the game.

Stunts can still represent particularly potent avatar abilities of course.

- **Tanker's Resilience** – You have built this character to take a beating. You have an extra Mild Consequence for your Physical Stress Track.
- **Jousting** – You have developed a fighting style to take advantage over your mobility advantages in almost unique ways. You can use your Athletics skill to make Physical attacks.

Or they can represent your cleverness with social interactions.

- **False Face** – You are adept at hiding your true self and presenting the image you want. This could mean a kind person presenting an intimidating demeanor or a cruel person presenting a kind one. Your Social Stress Track is modified by your Deception instead of your Rapport.
- **Guild Politics** – You are practiced in reading between the lines of what each of the guilds and their members want out of any particular situation. When you are in a Social Conflict involving one or more guilds, you get a +2 to Create an Advantage rolls with Empathy that are meant to uncover the motivations of those involved.

## The Avatar Aspect

A selection of skills can represent any of a number of passive, active, click or toggle abilities and powers. One use of Tactics might represent a fireball spell while another might represent a tank's taunt ability. Identifying what sort of abilities and powers one player could reasonably possess is the job of the Avatar Aspect. This is an extra that every character will have and, like any Aspect, serves as a general guideline for the sort of powers a particular character might have what sort of powers the character is unlikely to have.

### Naming the Aspect

Most MMOs tend to operate on the model set by the Dungeons and Dragons table-top RPG and create characters as a combination of a race and a class. You might have an ***Orcish Hunter***, a ***Mutant Scrapper*** or a ***Centauri Pilot***. Other games might replace race with a faction or nation, in which case you might have an ***American Assault Trooper***, ***Illuminati Troubleshooter*** or a ***Templar Healer***. Of course, some MMOs might have faction, race and class such as having a ***Federation Ganymedan Bounty Hunter*** or a ***Free-League Troll Shaman***.

In many such games each class has two or three separate directions you can take which can be represented by the Aspect. A ***Squadsight Sniper*** would operate differently from a ***Snap Shot Sniper***, for instance.

Some MMOs don't use a distinct class system and instead allow the players to build their character by training in particular abilities along a skill tree or skill wheel and allowing such skills to be mixed and matched within a set limit. These sorts of systems rarely have pre-set names for the builds, but common builds are often known to the players so the Avatar Aspect might be built out of the build labels used by the players. An example of this would be someone with the Avatar Aspect of ***Chaos and Blood Tank*** or ***Rocketeer Build***.



Another option is that their currently available abilities might be limited by what sort of equipment load out they currently have. For example, a character might be a **SMG Specialist** and have lots of skills related to using sub-machine guns.

The last possibility is that a person has access to every skill in the game and also can use them all at the same time. Again, focus on the main thrust of what the character has learned whether they've collected a little bit of everything becoming something of a **Jack of All Trades** or if they've specialized in a particular grouping of skills to be a **Tanking Specialist**.

### Changing the Aspect

In most games, once you choose a race and class for a character, you are stuck that way. You might be able to rearrange (or respec) the choices you made within that combination of race and class, but you can't change the basics. In such cases, the ability to change a character's Avatar Aspect would be rare or nearly impossible. The most likely change to Aspect will come when the character cashes in their abilities in order to reassign any talent points or the like. That **Orcish Rage Warrior** might shift to an **Orcish Disciplined Warrior** if the character decided that the Discipline tree would work better for them. In some cases, there might be an advanced class that the character might be able to slip into. Perhaps that **Elven Monk** graduates to being an **Elven Ninja** for one example.

In some cases, it might be impossible within the game's rules to respec at all, in which case the ability to change the Avatar Aspect would be similarly rare and limited to the times in the setting when an advancement occurs. For example, when they choose one or another significant class ability or when they earn the requirements for an advanced class. Alternately, someone with a skill at hacking might be able to convince the game that they are a different race/class combination entirely.

Games based on a skill wheel or with abilities unlocked by current equipment load out are capable of being changed much more frequently. For example, equipping a soldier with a sniper rifle and light armor might produce a much different set of abilities than heavy armor with a shotgun. In this case, changing the Aspect might be as easy as making a Lore (**for classless skill wheel style builds**) or Resources (**for equipment triggered abilities**). There would likely be some limits. Perhaps the build can only be changed in a particular place or kind of place in the game. Perhaps it can't be changed while in the middle of combat.

## Stress Tracks

Characters should have four Stress Tracks.

- **Health** – Modified by the Physique skill, this represents a combination of the avatar's defensive abilities, armor, hit points, stores of health potions and other such things to combine into their Health Stress Track. Lasting consequences to the Health Stress Track represent damaged gear or depleted stores of expendables rather than actual injuries.
- **Mana** – Modified by the Tactics skill, this represents the character's mana discipline, size of their mana pool and other such things. Various games might call this something different. It might be Ammo in an MMO based on World War II, for example, or one class might call it Endurance or Rage, but whatever it is, this is the fuel for the avatar's powers. As with the Health Stress Track, lasting Consequences represent damaged gear, expended mana potions (or ammo clips) and the like.
- **Mental** – Modified by Will. This represents the persona's state of mind and mental health. While most games have powers to inflict rage, fear or other such emotions. Those are represented by Advantages placed on your character by the enemies, or vice versa. They are not actually mental attacks and can only

indirectly affect one's state of mind. This Stress Track is meant to trace the mental health of the person behind the avatar.

- **Social** – Modified by Rapport. This represents the persona's reputation with the other people in the games around them. Consequences to this Stress track represent gossip and bad reputations. For example, if a particular person is known as a player-killer it may affect the way other people treat them.

## **Advancement**

Advancement for Fate Core is standard milestone advancement.

# GUMSHOE Character Creation

## Character Creation Steps

1. **Consider your player type.** This has no direct mechanical effect, but some are placed as suggestions for the type of characters that would appear in these stories.
2. **Allocate your Investigative Points**
3. **Allocate 80 General Points**

**Trading points:** If desired, a player can give 1 of their own Investigative Build Points to another player in exchange for 3 General Build Points. This means that a thoughtful strategist or guild master type character can give 6 of his General Build Points to the teams Boss-Killer in exchange for 2 Investigative points.

A character cannot shift these points around in his own character, this trade must be made between two separate players.

This heightens the level of specialization between the armchair strategists putting together all the pieces and the keyboard raiders that are focused mostly on kicking ass, which fits the fiction very well.

## Player Types

### Collector

It might be badges, deeds, item sets, accomplishments or any of a number of things, but you're the sort of player that wants to catch them all. They typically know a lot about the game's lore, creatures and locations since their collections are often gained from far flung places in the game. If the game has brought you to a full universe with a far flung variety of items, you might even start finding something to collect that was not in the original game at all.

### Crafter

Sometimes the best items in the game are the ones crafted by the players. Many games have a select set of recipes allowing one to make specific items. Other games have a longer list of recipes allowing one to add capabilities to their items based on what materials they use and how they're combined. In a near future sort of setting, the games might even allow the characters to create their own recipes. Then there are those instances where the world around may have natural laws that seem to copy a game but is still a full and real world of its own. Regardless of the nature of the game you're stuck in, you're most comfortable gathering materials and crafting items for people around you.

### Developer

Before you got stuck here, you were one of the people working for the company that made the game. Maybe you were a low level quality assurance tester or maybe you were one of the lead coders. Regardless of who were originally, you are now stuck in the game with everybody else. You do have a bit more insider knowledge than other people in the game and that has proven useful so far. Maybe you're keeping your identity a secret for fear of being blamed, or maybe you've let everybody know.

### Elite

You are one of that rare breed of gamers that seems to dedicate their lives to mastering the game. You might be the helpful veteran who's always willing to take some time and help out a newbie or two learn the ropes. Or perhaps you're the self-righteous type who has to let everybody know about your prowess. Now that you're stuck in the game with everybody else, one thing you're certain of. The rules have stayed the same. The stakes may have gotten higher, but everything still works the same, and that means you are well-prepared to come out on top.

### **Explorer**

You are driven by the need to explore. You live for finding new places and encountering new sights. You track down rumors and gossip and pick out all manner of trails. You know secret places that nobody else has seen and paths through zones that aren't on any walkthrough. Unlike the collector, you have no desire to show off your discoveries or collect a visual sign of what you've accomplished. You are satisfied simply in knowing that you have seen something which no one else has.

### **Hacker**

Whether you were a harmless client-side modder or a more malicious hacker, you spent your time altering the code of the games you played in order to make things more enjoyable for you. You find yourself hammered by a lack of access now, but you do know that it is still a computer game, just a very realistic one, and every once in a while you find a way to access the code again and make some slight changes. Maybe, eventually, you'll be able to hack yourself a way out of this crazy world. On the other hand, in some campaigns, you might just find that you aren't in the computer at all and your ability to hack the code has much more disturbing implications.

### **Guilder**

Many players are part of a guild for one reason or another. It might be because their friends are there, or maybe because it gives them access to some cool missions and gear. Regardless of the reason, there is a difference between you and the common guild member. You aren't just a member of the guild, you almost live for the guild. Whether you are a tyrant who expects everything to be done your way or a caring leader who is always trying to protect the other guild members, you spend most of your effort on the guild. Fortunately, this means that guild is often ready to act on your commands.

### **Merchant**

Your skills are focused on acquiring profit. It could be that you were using games to turn a profit in the real world, or maybe you limited yourself to building up an in-game fortune. It might be possible that your real life occupation related to business in some way. Regardless, you have a way with the auction, the shops and trade in general that most other players lack. The fact that you're stuck here now has not changed that.

### **Native**

You're not a player. You were born in this world and have somehow managed to join the player society. It could be that they don't know you're a native. Or maybe they treat you like a clever pet, thinking you some sort of programmed automaton. It might even be that you are the only real part of the game that is sentient. Or maybe you are one of many who has somehow managed to acquire the powers and limitations of a player. You might know more about what's going on than almost anybody, or you might no less even than the players do. Regardless, you have a unique perspective of the world around you.

### **Newbie**

Depending on the nature of the setting, everybody might be new to this game which has stuck you in the game world, but you are beyond that. You are new even to gaming. The fact that the first game you tried out managed to get you stuck in the game world does not leave you hopeful with regards to your future enjoyment of any such games. But that's sometime in the future, right now you just have to try not to get anyone killed.

## Player Killer

Before you got stuck in the game, player-killing was just another part of the game, a chance to try out your abilities and build against other players from around the world. You were always one of the best PvP participants. Back then it was harmless enough, aside from some rather vicious trolls and braggarts who didn't know a thing about manners. Now, death has a consequence of some sort. Perhaps you lose a trace of your memories when you die, or maybe you actually die, for real, in the game and at home. Regardless, player-killing isn't consequence free any longer, but it is still what you are best at.

## Power Gamer

You have read the walkthroughs and the build guides. You've actually written some of the build guides. Your entire focus in this game, or any game, is in having the most powerful character. You've identified a particular playstyle which you feel to be superior, either in general or for yourself, and you have specialized your build to leverage that playstyle to the hilt.

## Professional

You have found that your skills from your real world occupation have been useful in your game playing. What exactly those skills are could be different from character to character. Maybe your expertise in the sciences has allowed you to figure out the systems better than most. Maybe your understanding of finance and economy has helped you build a fair amount of money. Maybe your military training has helped you run raids. Now that you're stuck in the game, perhaps you're finding even more ways that background is useful.

## Roleplayer

You have always gotten deep into character and tried to make the game world as real to you as possible. You've stuck to that since getting stuck here. Holding to your character may seem a bit crazy from an outsider perspective, but it's kept you going so far. In some ways, you've never felt more comfortable and free, but maybe that's just denial speaking.

## Soloist

You know that it limits what sort of loot you can get or what you can accomplish, but for various reasons you just don't work with other people as much as some do. Maybe it's because of some trauma in your past and an attempt to keep yourself walled off from others. Maybe you just don't like dealing other people. Or it might be possible that you like people just fine, you just don't think about the matter very often. For some reason you're working with the rest of the party now, but sometimes your solo habits create a little friction.

## Strategist

You are careful and calculating about all things. You move cautiously and prefer to have as much information as possible about whatever situation you find yourself in. You may be a callous individual seeking your own goals, or you may be a well-intentioned individual out to protect those you care about. Either way, you are likely perceived as something of a chessmaster and some of the more battle-centric players might even think you take things too seriously. At least until you all got stuck in the game.

## Investigative Abilities

The number of Investigative Ability points each player gets depends on how many players are regularly able to attend sessions.

Number	of	Number	of
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Regular Players	Investigative Points
2	32
3	25
4	23
5+	21

Players who can only attend every once in a while should get the same number of points as other players but should not count as a regular player.

Every player should have the Vault Investigative Ability at rating 1 for free.

If, as a GM, you feel that one or more of these Investigative Abilities are not applicable to your campaign, feel free to switch them out with something else. The number of points given to each player is based on an assumption of there being 41 Investigative Abilities however.

### Academic

- Accounting
- Archaeology
- Architecture
- Art History
- Bestiary
- Game Lore
- Game Geography
- History
- Languages
- Narrative Theory
- Mythology
- Pop Culture
- Psychology
- Research
- Riddles and Puzzles
- Urban Legend

### *Accounting*

You are trained in reading accounts and understanding transactions. While this doesn't sound like it would be very useful while trapped in a video game, there are some uses. You can:

- Trace activity on the auctions.
- Make accurate guesses on the income a person has based on their game activities.
- Make note of unusual activity within the game's economy.

### *Archaeology*

A lot of dungeon or adventure designs are based on knowledge, basic or advanced, of real world ancient ruins. As a result, knowledge of archaeology can be useful. You can:

- Identify whether the design is accurate, inaccurate or a blend of two styles allowing you to predict the design of future rooms.
- Note discrepancies that may indicate a hidden feature.
- Identify whether a building is a legitimate ruin or if it is just a programmed feature. (important if your game placed in an alternate universe rather than just trapped you in a digital world)

### *Architecture*

You have legitimate training in designing buildings. You can:

- Determine whether a structure is possible in real world physics.
- Identify major architectural styles.
- Predict floor plan based on the building's stated purpose.
- Identify whether the floor plan makes sense for the building's stated purpose.

### *Art History*

Game designers draw inspiration from a wide range of sources and frequently try to make references to especially interesting or unique stories or pieces of art and music. You can:

- Identify major artistic influences.
- Identify potential dangers or benefits based on referenced themes.
- Identify objects of related themes.

### *Bestiary*

You have an extensive knowledge of the game's dangerous creatures. You can:

- Identify the major dangers of any particular zone.
- Predict presence of some creatures based on local zone appearance.
- Identify the major abilities and weaknesses of enemies.
- Identify normal tactics for each enemy.
- Identify loot-drops provided by each enemy.

- Identify unique spawns.

### *Game Lore*

You have delved into the lore and flavor text of the game to an extensive degree. You can:

- Remember flavor text and story pieces relevant to the current situation.
- Recognize when something is out of sync with the game lore.

### *Game Geography*

You know the layout of most of the zones and instances in the game. You can:

- Identify the best routes in and out of zones.
- Identify the most efficient travel methods to get to any particular place.
- Identify when a region has been changed.
- Identify the most dangerous areas of a zone or instance.

### *History*

Just as with other academic skills, games draw from history to design their stories. You can:

- Recognize historical influences.
- Predict events based on historic sources that are being referenced.
- Recognize historical inaccuracies and the implications of such mistakes.

### *Languages*

Games often end up hiding secrets in plain sight by using background text in alternate languages as a sort of flavor. For each rating, you gain another language and this can include languages unique to the game. You can also:

- Identify whether a language developed naturally or was artificially created.
- Identify languages related to ones you know.

### *Narrative Theory*

You are an expert in storytelling and the structures and methods used in stories. You can:

- Identify whether events are following a narrative structure or are occurring naturally.
- Predict events based on dramatic necessity.
- Recognize thematic similarities and differences between various quest lines.

### *Mythology*

You have a broad knowledge of various mythological stories. You can:

- Recognize mythological influences in current story lines.
- Identify abilities and weaknesses of monsters based on the myths they're based on.



- Predict events based on mythological knowledge.
- Tell the difference between naturally developed mythology and created world history.

### *Pop Culture*

You were very interested in a number of different pop culture points in the real world. You can:

- Recognize pop culture references.
- Predict events based on referenced bits of culture.
- Identify pop cultures of new societies you encounter.

### *Psychology*

Your understanding of the human mind allows you to have some insight into the actions of other people as well as the design of the game. You can:

- Identify motivations the subject might not be consciously aware of.
- Predict actions based on psychological needs.
- Profile someone based on the evidence collected about them.
- Identify how many personalities were involved in any particular project.
- Tell the difference between a limited program and a sentient entity.

### *Research*

You know how to acquire information from various sources ranging from books to online. You can also recognize whether a particular source or facility is useful or else filled with simple game fluff.

### *Riddles and Puzzles*

You have played numerous games that make heavy use of various puzzles and can recognize many different patterns. You can:

- Identify the objective of puzzles.
- Notice trick wording in riddles.
- Identify loopholes in puzzles and riddles.

### *Urban Legend*

This is the modern equivalent to the Mythology Ability. You are familiar with all sorts of tall tales and stories that have arisen in recent generations. You can:

- Recognize when an urban legend is being referenced in the game.
- Make prediction or form strategies based on knowledge of the urban legends.
- Identify urban legends of communities you are in.
- Tell the difference between stories that are just stories and those that might have a grain of truth.

## **Interpersonal**

1. Bullshit Detector
2. Chat
3. Faction Politics
4. Flattery
5. Flirting
6. Gamer Etiquette
7. Guild Politics
8. Inspiration
9. Interrogation
10. Intimidation
11. Lexicon
12. Negotiation
13. Reassurance
14. Streetwise
15. Vault
16. Who's Who

### *Bullshit Detector*

You are exceptionally talented at telling whether or not someone is lying. Unfortunately, it doesn't tell you what they are lying about, just whether or not they are lying. This ability extends to being able to tell when someone is trying to present a false impression via body language rather than simply lying verbally.

Some individuals might be so skilled at lying that they do not set off your instincts. They could believe what they are saying. They might be a sociopath who lacks the sort of quirks that you use to identify a lie. Some might have programmed a disconnect between their Avatar and their mind to prevent themselves from giving away the lie.

### *Chat*

You are able to lull someone off their guard with casual conversation and steer the topic toward the one you wish to discuss. You can:

- Get people to reveal information.
- Plant rumors or misinformation.
- Distract someone from noticing other things.

### *Faction Politics*

You are well versed in the various factions amongst the natives within the game. You can:

- Identify faction membership.
- Use etiquette appropriate to the faction you are dealing with.
- Predict how any two NPCs might react to each other.
- Identify faction motivations.

### *Flattery*

You are good at manipulating people by complimenting them either subtly or blatantly. You can get them to:

- Reveal information.
- Perform minor favors.
- Regard you as trustworthy.

### *Flirting*

You are adept at manipulating people who find you sexually attractive. You can get them to:

- Reveal information.
- Help you in small ways.
- Date you.

### *Gamer Etiquette*

You are familiar with the unwritten codes of behavior that exist between players of various games. You can use this to:

- Organize a pick-up group.
- Identify potential conflict between any two players.
- Request aid from other players.

### *Guild Politics*

Similar to the Factions ability, you are very aware of the various player made factions that exist within the game. You can use this to:

- Identify the guild of any particular avatar.
- Identify rivalries between guilds.
- Recognize shady guild practices.
- Identify motivations behind guild actions.
- Identify guilds that may have an interest in helping or stopping you.

### *Inspiration*

By appealing to someone's better nature and conscience, you can rouse people to some sort of action: You can:

- Get people to reveal information.
- Get people to give you aid.
- Identify the virtues they hold dear.

### *Interrogation*

You are adept at getting information out of people. The subject must be confined or you must have some level of authority to levy punishments they are concerned about.

### *Intimidation*

You are skilled at using threats, veiled or blatant, to get people to do what you want. You can get them to:

- Reveal information.
- Leave the area.
- Quell their desire to fight you.

### *Lexicon*

You are very proficient in understanding the terms used by gamers in general and this game in specific. You can:

- Establish yourself as an expert gamer by showing you understand obscure terms.
- Understand conversations steeped in gamer lexicon.

### *Negotiation*

You are adept at making deals between various parties. You can:

- Haggle for goods and services.
- Mediate a hostage situation or standoff.
- Swap favors or information with others.

### *Reassurance*

You can put people at ease and calm them down. You can:

- Gain information and small favors.
- Allay fear or panic in others.
- Instill a sense of calm into a crisis.

### *Streetwise*

You are familiar with the shadier populations in the game and know how to behave around them. You can:

- Use criminal etiquette to avoid a fight.
- Identify unsafe locations or people.
- Gather rumors from the shadier players.

- Recognize common criminal or scammer ploys including player-killer tactics.

### *Vault*

You have an especially large inventory and probably a great deal of coin. You can:

- Bribe someone with resources.
- Acquire useful items or crafting materials.
- Acquire and maintain a guild or personal house if the game allows it.

### *Who's Who*

You know a lot about the top players. If some or all the NPCs are also sentient, your knowledge extends to the influential NPCs as well. You can:

- Recognize an influential or well-known person by sight.
- Distinguish between rumor and fact regarding important people.
- Identify methods of operation and personalities associated with specific VIPs.

## **Technical**

- Crafting
- Coding
- Dialogue Deciphering
- Digital Image Manipulation
- Game Design
- Optimization
- Probability
- Scientific Method
- Zone Design

### *Crafting*

You have a good understanding of the crafting system within the game. You can:

- Craft unique items.
- Repair gear.
- Identify item quality.
- Harvest materials from the game's material spawn points.

- Breakdown items into crafting materials.
- Identify who crafted any particular object.
- Create new recipes (if setting allows)

### *Coding*

You have a working understanding of computer programming. You can:

- Rule out actions that the game will not be able to process.
- Make temporary alterations to the code if they find a way to gain access.
- Identify patterns in events in order to identify a programmed sequence.
- Recognize whether or not a code is working as intended.

### *Dialogue Deciphering*

You are skilled at navigating the dialogue mini-game with programmed NPC entities. You can:

- Identify the most beneficial dialogue options when interacting with a particular programmed entity.
- Identify whether an entity is using intelligent, thoughtful responses or is just a program.
- Identify foreshadowing and hints in dialogue.

### *Digital Image Manipulation*

You pay attention to the graphics of the world around you. You can:

- Tell when an image has been altered from its original form.
- Notice clipping elements in the graphics.
- Tell the difference between a graphical design and a natural image. (for settings where digital and physical mix)

### *Game Design*

You are an expert in game design in general. You can:

- Identify the purposes behind system design choices.
- Identify the easiest methods to power level or farm.
- Identify strategies the game is likely to severely punish.
- Determine the odds of success for any particular action based on the game's resolution methods.

### *Optimization*

You know better how to get the most out of your character than most other people. You can:

- Identify a person's general build based off watching their performance in a fight.
- Identify builds that would be necessary for someone to accomplish a particular feat.

- Give suggestions on how to best tweak gear or ability load out for a particular quest-line.

### *Scientific Method*

For most digital worlds, real world laws of physics pretty much do not exist and the normal scientific knowledges are not very useful. However, someone trained in the scientific method may, through observation identify the laws which the world they are now in operates under. The precise source of their knowledge of the scientific process varies. They could be a biologist or a physicist. Either provides training in the scientific method. You can:

- Determine how accurately the world you are in is designed to replicate real natural laws and processes.
- Analyze the nature of a phenomenon.
- Note anomalies in the world around you.

### *Zone Design*

You are an expert in designing zones and instances. You can:

- Predict the location of secret locations and easter eggs.
- Find blindspots in the mobs' patrols.
- Predict the location of instance bosses.
- Predict the general nature of surprises and dangers related to the instance.
- Find the most likely places for there to be shopkeepers, trainers or other such NPCs
- Identify things that are meant to lull you into a false sense of security.

## **General Abilities**

Characters have 80 points to spend on General Abilities. All characters begin with a Health of 1 and a Stability of 4 at no cost to them.

The second highest General Ability must be at least half the number of points as the highest General Ability. This means that if you want to have a 30 Health that you must also have a second Ability with at least a rating 15.

Given the specialized and extremely powerful nature of many MMO characters, it may be advisable to spend around half your points on getting three specific areas of specialty to a very high level and then use the remaining half to add in other abilities to color the character's build.

<b>The Ability Rating</b>	<b>Level of Focus</b>
1-3	You have one or two skills related to this ability. Or you have a piece of minor gear that you use for this.
4-7	Your build has some significant support for using this ability but it is not your major focus.
8-14	This ability is related to the major focus of your build and is important to your basic role in a party.
15+	This is your primary specialty, the one thing that your

	build is meant to do better than any other thing.
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Note that Exploits, Preparedness, Sanity (if used), Shrink and Stability primarily represent a character trait or skill. Of those five, Preparedness and Exploits are the only ones that have any game-play related facets. Having built toward increased inventory size would figure into preparedness and exploits primarily makes use of flaws in the game. However, someone with high preparedness is mostly defined by their ability to predict what will be needed, not simply the ability to carry a lot of stuff and exploits are not intentionally built into the game.

If you have a 0 rating Ability, this doesn't necessarily mean that you can't do it at all. However, without points you will not be able to insure success as well. The GM is free to say that some Abilities can't be used at all at 0 Rating. For example, someone with Rating 0 in Healing might be forbidden from trying to use Healing at all, or they might just be limited to self-healing attempts only. The GM might also give such limited uses an increased Difficulty Number.

### **General Ability List**

- Athletics
- Casting
- Exploits
- Fleeing
- Health
- Infiltration
- Mana
- Melee
- Pilot
- Preparedness
- Ranged
- Sense Trouble
- Shrink
- Stability

### ***Aggro Management***

This represents skills in dealing with aggro. You could have a number of taunts, or powers meant to reduce your aggro, or you might just have exceptional skills at managing your aggro so that you either always have it or never gain it. You can make an Aggro Management test in order to either increase or lower your own level of Aggro by 1.



If you have 8 or more points in Aggro Management, then before the roll is made you can spend Pool Points to target additional enemies at a rate of 1 Pool Point in order to target an additional 2 enemies. These spent Pool Points do not add to your roll.

If you have 15 or more points in Aggro Management then you can start every battle with a base level of Aggro of either 1 (if you want to have a lot aggro) or -1 (if you want to avoid aggro).

If Buff is used to give you 3 or more temporary Aggro Management points, then you can reduce or increase your base Aggro by 1.

### *Athletics*

This represents a combination of the avatar's movement rate and abilities and the persona's skill at manipulating those abilities and the environment. Athletic tests are made for climbing objects, jumping and conducting chases.

If you have an Athletics of 8 or higher then your Hit Threshold is 4, otherwise it is 3.

If you have an Athletics of 15 or higher then you can spend Athletics Pool Points to increase your Hit Threshold temporarily. For every 2 Pool Points you spend, your Hit Threshold is increased by 1. This lasts until the end of your next action and represents short time major evasion powers.

If Buff is used to give you 3 or more temporary Athletics points, then you gain a +1 to your Hit Threshold.

### *Buff*

This is your ability to place enhancements and buffs on other people. You can use it to give temporary rating points to other players. Choose a General Ability other than Exploit, Preparedness, Shrink or Stability and set aside zero or more pool points, if you make a successful Buff Test then that player gains the points you set aside +1 until they are depleted or the end of the scene, whichever comes first. Pool points spent to make the test successful are not granted to the subject of the buff.

If you have a Buff rating of 8 or higher, you can set aside points to increase the number of affected targets in addition to increasing how many points are granted. For each 1 point you spend, you can target an additional 2 targets.

If you have a Buff rating of 15 or higher, then you grant Pool Points equal to the number of points you set aside +2 instead of plus one. Note that at this level it is possible for a buffer to slowly buff themselves from 0 to max, but trying to do so will still take them out of affecting the fight.

### *Control*

This represents a character's crowd control abilities and their tactics with using them. This is an opposed test against the target's Status Protection. If the character is successful, then the target is somehow immobilized or neutralized for this round. Each round following, the test is made again but the character does not spend new points to make the test. Instead, take the number of points they spent on the first test and reduce those by two and roll the opposed test as if that were the number of points spent.

If the control you are casting only limits one facet of the target's actions, then you get an extra 2 points to spend on for a bonus to the roll (or extra targets if your rating is high enough). For example, if the target's movement will be locked but they will still be able to act as they want; or if the target's actions are limited, but they can still move how they want.

If a character has a Control Rating of 8 or more then you can set aside points before the roll to target additional targets. Each 1 point set aside results in targeting 2 additional targets.

If a character has a Control Rating of 15 or more then their controls degrade by 1 each round instead of by 2.

### *Debuff*

This represents a character's debuff powers and their skill with using them. First, the character can choose to set aside a number of Pool Points and then they target a General Ability other than Exploit, Shrink or Stability. This is an opposed test against the target's Status Protection. If the test is successful then the target loses access to a number of Pool Points equal to the points initially set aside +1 for a number of turns equal to the amount by which the caster defeated the defender's roll. Once the duration wears off, the subject recovers those Pool Points.

If a character has a Debuff rating of 8 or more then they can set aside points in order to affect extra targets as well as increase how many pool points they lose. For every 1 Pool Point spent toward multiple targets the controller can target 2 additional targets.

If a character has a Debuff rating of 15 or more then his targets only recover half their pool points rounded up when the duration runs out.

### *Exploits*

This represents your character's skill at finding and making use of loop-holes in the system allowing you to set up for a big success. For each one Pool Point of Exploits spent, you can recover two Pool Points in any combination of other General Abilities, not including Shrink or Stability. These points can exceed the target ability's normal rating but will go away at the end of the scene.

However, since Exploits make use of an error in the system, using them comes at a risk. Each time you spend Exploit pool points, at the end of the round you have to make a test using a General Ability of the GM's choice based on some glitch that occurs because of how you narrated your exploit. The Threshold of this test is equal to the number of Exploit Pool Points you have spent so far this scene. The consequences of failing this test are up to the GM.

If you have an Exploits rating of 8 or more then the test you have to succeed at the end of the round is a threshold equal to half the number of Exploit points you've spent so far, rounded up.

If you have an Exploits rating of 15 or more then you do not have to test against a glitch until the end of the scene.

### *Filch*

This represents your character's abilities to steal small objects. This can both represent actual game design pick-pocketing abilities and clever abuses of trade systems designed to quietly steal objects from other people.

If you have a Filch of 8 or higher then you can use Filch to defend against Filch attempts on your items.

If you have a Filch of 15 or more then the other person makes their roll first and you will know the number you have to beat before rolling or spending any pool points. In cases of 15+ Filch versus 15+ Filch rolls, whoever has a higher rating rolls second. If ratings are the same, whoever has the highest pool rolls second. If ratings and pools are exactly the same, then neither gets the benefit of seeing their opponent's result before making their roll.

### *Fleeing*

This represents your skills at escaping from enemies that you are not certain about fighting. It is used in chases when you are the one trying to get away.

If you buy your Fleeing ability up to double the Rating of your Athletics ability, then any further Fleeing points are half cost. For example, if you have Athletics 3 then Fleeing 8 would cost you 7 Build Points: 6 for the first 6 levels of Fleeing and 1 for the next two levels. If you have Athletics 0, then Fleeing costs half-price.

### *Gambling*

This represents both your ability to gamble in a more traditional way and to use various mini-games in the system. You would use it for various things such as trophy fishing (material fishing, such as for a cook recipe, would fall under Crafting), poker, dancing mini-games and any of a number of other things. Thresholds for Gambling tests are not told to the player beforehand (see below).

If your Gambling rating is 8 or higher, then you are allowed to know the target Threshold before making your roll if the challenge isn't against a sentient opponent.

If your Gambling rating is 15 or higher then when you are competing against a sentient target, they roll first and tell you what the result is before you roll or choose how many points to spend. In cases of 15+ Gambling vs 15+ Gambling then the highest rating gets to roll second, after seeing his opponent's roll. If ratings are the same then the highest pool gets to roll second. If both ratings and pools are the same then neither side gets to use this benefit and must decide on points and roll as normal.

### *Healing*

This represents your character's ability to heal the health levels of other avatars and how to time those heals. First you set aside a number of points equal to zero or higher. These points will not add to your roll and will simply determine how much is healed. Then you roll against a difficulty of 4. If you are successful, then you increase the target's Health by the number of points you set aside +1.

If you have a Healing of 8 or more, then you can target multiple people for healing. Before rolling, you can set aside Healing points in order to target multiple targets. For each 1 point set aside for this, you target 2 additional targets. These points do not add to the success of the roll and do not add to the amount of healing given.

If you have a Healing of 15 or more, then you heal an amount equal to your set aside points +2.

### *Health*

This represents a combination of the avatar's hit points, regeneration rate, armor and other passive abilities. As long as the character has a positive Health pool value, then their defensive measures are outpacing the attacks against them. If their health starts dropping below 0, then their equipment begins to suffer potentially permanent damage.

All players start with a Health of 1 for Free.

If you have a Health of 8 or more then you receive +1 extra Health every time you are Healed.

If you have a Health of 15 or more then you have an Armor of 1 and reduce all damage by 1.

### *Infiltration*

This represents your ability to get in and out of secured places in the game. This includes traps and challenges that are meant to be defeated and also measures put in place that are meant to insure that no player gets to a certain area. It combines character powers and player tactics and ability to find unexpected routes. You are only able to get yourself safely through, however, traps and other security measures remain in place for other players. You may mark any traps you circumvent giving other players a better chance to get through however (lowering the difficulty by 1).

This ability also represents skill at being stealthy through a combination of avatar powers, persona understanding of sight radii or ability to blend in to the surroundings.

If you have an Infiltration rating of 8 or higher, then you can temporarily disable security measures allowing other characters to follow you safely if they move quickly.

If you have an Infiltration rating of 15 or higher, then you can use infiltration to hide in plain sight such as by turning invisible.

### *Melee*

This represents your characters abilities and skills fighting in melee. Martial arts, claws, swords, touch spells and anything else that can do damage and requires one to be incredibly close is represented by this. Both the powers of the avatar and their gear and the character's own skill at chaining powers in the most efficient way are part of this.

Before you roll, decide on the damage bonus of your attack ranging from -2 to +2.

If you choose a negative number you get a free number of Pool Points equal to the absolute value added to that attack roll. In other words, if you make an attack at -2 then you get a free +2 to your roll to hit. This represents using low damage, high accuracy attack skills.

If you choose a positive number, you must spend that many Pool Points without getting a bonus to the attack roll. For example, if you want to make a +2 damage attack then you immediately spend 2 Pool Points and then have to decide whether to enhance your chances to hit. This represents using endurance or mana intensive high damage attacks.

If you have a Melee rating of 8 or higher then you can use the Extra Attacks or Martial Arts options.

**Extra Attacks:** After successfully hitting a target, you may immediately spend 3 Melee and 2 Stability in order to launch a second attack. The Melee spend allows the second attack attempt and does not add to the second roll or the damage dealt by it. The 2 Stability represents the focus of will you must maintain in order to let yourself be vulnerable by going into so many attacks.

**Martial Arts:** Once per fight the player may give a narrative description of the appearance of the skill or highlighting their expertise in choosing which skills they chained together. Doing so allows them to recover 3 Melee Pool Points. If the description is especially Evocative then they regain 4 pool points.

If you have a Melee rating of 15 or higher then you get a free +1 to your damage after you've rolled.

### *Preparedness*

While most of the General Abilities partially represent having a number of expendables and equipment on hand, this represents a level of preparedness that goes beyond the normal. If you find yourself with a need for a specific item or piece of equipment, then you make a test to have it on hand. The more rare the item, the less likely it is for you to have it and the higher the threshold.

Some things, like healing and mana potions (or ammo clips), are assumed to be part of your ability ratings, but more specific things like a poison antidote or a disease vaccine, would be something you could get with this ability. More rare pieces of equipment would be an extra key for a locked door in the dungeon that you had acquired from earlier runs through this same dungeon and just never used, making it unnecessary to spend much time hunting for one.

The sort of items you can produce are based on narrative credibility rather than on your rating or pool. If the GM decides that it doesn't make sense for you to have such an item, they can simply say no and not give you the chance to roll. Granted, with the range of unusual and or joke items in MMOs there will be a lot of items that make

sense that a character could have. But if you, for instance, try to use this to just produce the unique Macguffin the GM just mentioned in conversation, he's well in his rights to tell you know.

If you have Preparedness rating of 8 or higher, you can also use rolls to represent retroactively prepared specific timely actions, such as: timely reinforcements, triggering a pre-set trap or some other such effect, a dramatic late entry by an allied guild master to a negotiation.

### *Ranged*

This represents your powers and abilities with using ranged weapons as well as your ability to position yourself and time their use for the best possible effect. This can represent fire-blasts, psychic attacks, guns, bows, breath weapons and anything else that does damage at a range.

Before you roll, decide on the damage bonus of your attack ranging from -2 to +2.

If you choose a negative number you get a free number of Pool Points equal to the absolute value added to that attack roll. In other words, if you make an attack at -2 then you get a free +2 to your roll to hit. This represents using low damage, high accuracy attack skills.

If you choose a positive number, you must spend that many Pool Points without getting a bonus to the attack roll. For example, if you want to make a +2 damage attack then you immediately spend 2 Pool Points and then have to decide whether to enhance your chances to hit. This represents using endurance or mana intensive high damage attacks.

If you have a Ranged rating of 8 or higher then you can use the Extra Attacks or Focus Monologue options.

**Extra Attacks:** After successfully hitting a target, you may immediately spend 4 Ranged and 1 Stability in order to launch a second attack. The Melee spend allows the second attack attempt and does not add to the second roll or the damage dealt by it. The 1 Stability represents the will it takes to stay focused and also be willing to go immediately into a new animation which makes you vulnerable to attack.

**Focus Monologue:** Once per fight the player may give a narrative description of the appearance of the skill or highlighting their expertise in choosing which skills they chained together. Doing so allows them to recover 3 Melee Pool Points. If the description is especially Evocative then they regain 4 pool points.

If you have a Ranged rating of 15 or higher then you get a free +1 to your damage after you've rolled.

### *Sense Trouble*

This is your ability to sense trouble on the way. It could represent an avatar ability to detect stealthy opponents, or it could just be that you pay attention to your surroundings so well that you don't need an ability. It might even be a combination of the two. In any case, you would use this to note the distinct pixilation of a character in stealth revealing the player-killer around the corner, note the red doubt on your HUD's mini-map that just started speeding up and following you, recognize a change in the pattern of the floor tiles implying a trap coming up or any of a number of other things.

While some game masters will tell you the Difficulty numbers of other tests before you attempt them, the Difficulty of a Sense Trouble test is always unknown before you try it. This means you may end up spending too little on a very hard test while overspending on a very easy one.

One thing to note is that as soon as the GM asks you to make a Sense Trouble test, your character knows that there's something wrong. A successful test just gives you a specific clue as the direction of the coming trouble. As soon as that Sense Trouble test is called for, you are completely justified in suddenly acting extremely cautious. The

characters portrayed by the players are just have much better instincts than most of the people in the world around them.

If you have a Sense Trouble rating of 8 or higher then you may use your Sense Trouble rating in place of the rating you will be using to act with in the first round.

If you have a Sense Trouble rating of 15 or higher then you may choose to make a Sense Trouble rating test in order to determine what attack your target is going to make next.

### *Shrink*

You can provide comfort, perspective and solace to the mentally troubled. You might be a trained counselor such as a psychiatrist or clergy of some sort, or you just might have a comforting manner to yourself. This skill is not based on your avatar at all, though you might use some of your abilities as description to amuse and entertain the person you're comforting. This ability is entirely about the persona.

If you have a Shrink rating of 8 or higher, you get 1 free point in your choice of Bullshit Detector, Chat, Flattery, Inspiration, Interrogation, Psychology, or Reassurance.

### *Stability*

This represents your state of mind as well as your emotional and mental health. This does not relate to abilities in the game which inflict fear, charm, rage or other such effects as those simply affect the avatar and not the persona operating it. This represents the actual mind running this digital creation, unable to escape out to the real world.

That said, it can be mentally traumatic to be stuck in your body while it pantomimes cowering as your friends are attacked. Worse, being trapped in the body and watching as it attacks your friends under the effect of a charm power.

All players start with a Stability of 4 for free.

### *Status Protection*

There are a number of effects in MMOs that don't act as pure damage. There are debuffs, poisons, diseases, fear powers, stuns, holds, roots, charms and any of a number of things. Avatars generally have some ability to resist these effects. Those defenses are represented by this Ability.

If you have a Status Protection rating of 8 or higher then you can designate one status effect to which you are completely immune. This is not going to be "Debuffs" or "Controls" but something specific like "Sleeps" or "Poison"

If you have a Status Protection rating of 15 or higher then you reduce the duration of all success debuffs by half and controls on you degrade twice as fast.

## **Drives**

Drives represent the motivations of the characters and what drives them to take the forefront and push forward now that they are stuck in the game. Following a drive will often get a person in trouble but it can also be an anchor for them to hold on to.

If the GM decides to plan out a situation intended to tempt your Drive it is called a **Hard Driver**. You can choose to resist a hard driver but the cost of turning your back on your basic motivation in this way is 4 Stability.

If something comes up in play that was not planned but would naturally cause your character's drive to impel them to action it is called a **Soft Driver**. You can choose to resist a soft driver by spending 2 Stability points.

However, if you follow your Drive, then you feel yourself get back in connection with your core self. Following a hard driver causes you to recover 2 Stability. Following a soft driver causes you to recover 1 Stability.

These are the way Drives are used in Trail of Cthulhu, given the emphasis on the mental trauma involved in being trapped in a game (especially if death is cheap), this harsher method of pushing characters to obey according to their Drive seemed appropriate.

### Sample Drives

**Acceptance** – You are looking to be accepted by someone or something. You could be a native looking to be accepted by adventurers or a new player looking to be accepted by the elites. You might have come to the game originally seeking to find acceptance that you couldn't find in the real world.

**Adventure** – You just want to have an exciting life. You don't want to sit around and do nothing like some of these other stranded players who've just given up. You don't particularly care about getting out of the game or returning home, but pursuing that is at least interesting.

**Altruism** – You want to do the right thing. You want to help these other trapped players and you want to protect the natives of this world. It doesn't matter what the specific subject is, you are motivated by your will to do what is right.

**Ambition** – You want power and influence. On its own, this trait is neither bad nor good, it simply depends on what methods you decide to use in your quest for power. If you could be an ambitious but otherwise decent person, or you could be a supervillain in the making.

**Collection** – You are driven by your need to have a complete set of something. This could be a desire to earn every badge or deed in the game. Or maybe you want to collect every piece of an extremely rare never before completed set of powerful items. Maybe you collect something more nebulous like secrets. You might have several things you want to collect. Whatever it is you collect, that desire is what drives you.

**Curiosity** – Everything about this situation makes you excited. You want to know how it happened and why it happened. Maybe this is your way of distracting yourself from the worse implications of the situation, or maybe you just flat haven't thought about it. Regardless, this mystery and other, similar mysteries urge you forward to solve them.

**Escapism** – Some people turn to games in an effort to find something they haven't found elsewhere. That isn't you though. No, you've turned to game as a way of escaping something in the old world that is too much for you to bear. Maybe you were crippled or maybe you were in an abusive situation or

terminally ill. Now that you're stuck here it seems that drive is over, but old habits still drive hard and sometimes you'll find a situation or meet someone who reminds you of the thing you sought to escape.

**Loyalty** – You are loyal to something or someone. This might be a guild, a city, a cause or a single person. Whatever or whoever it is, your primary goal in life is to be useful to that person, cause or organization. Each of your choices is made with the idea of making yourself more useful to the subject of your loyalty.

**Responsibility** – Somehow, you think you are responsible for the current situation. You might be wrong or you might be right. At this point you don't care if you really are at fault, you feel like there was something you could have done to stop this and now you feel you have to fix it.

**Return** – You want to go back home. This game was just a past time, it wasn't supposed to be your life. You never even played it very often. If it is a brand new game then you were just trying it out for curiosity's sake. There's something you left in that other world, something that is worth the world to you.

**Thrill-Seeker** – You want to have excitement, but your desire is much more specific and focused than the adventurer who just wants not to be bored. You are an adrenaline junkie. You want to face the toughest this world has to offer and laugh in its face.

## **Advancement**

Advancement for GUMSHOE is standard at 2 build points per session attended awarded at the end of each investigation.



# Powered by the Apocalypse

## Steps

- Choose a concept (this step may be done at any time, it does not affect mechanics too much.)
  - Choose a look
- Choose a Persona – who you are behind the game
  - Choose moves
  - Choose a history with each other player
    - Each persona has some sample histories but feel free to come up with your own.
    - The sample histories each include:
      - Two friendships
      - Two rivalries
      - One romance
      - One general relationship
      - One RL relationship
      - One guild relationship
      - One case of mutual benefit
- Choose an Avatar – what sort of build you play
  - Choose moves
- Choose an Attribute Array – where your focus is
- Determine Pools – these pools can be renamed to match the feel of the game the players are trapped in. For example, in one particular MMO, Health is referred to as Morale and Mana is referred to as Endurance.
  - Health – representing a combination of regen, damage mitigation and hit points.
    - Base Level Health is 10.
  - Mana – representing a combination of recovery, cost mitigation and mana pool.
    - Base Level Mana is 3.
  - Resources – representing expendables, ammunition and currency.
    - Base Level Resources is 3.

- Choose Gear

## Persona

17. **Crafter** – You are most focused on creating things.
18. **Elite** – You are most interested in perfecting your skill with the game.
19. **Guildier** – You put most of your effort into maintaining your guild.
20. **Native** – You are an entity native to the game.
21. **Newbie** – You are new to this game and new to gaming in general, actually.
22. **Strategist** – You are focused on getting a party or raid group to work together smoothly.
23. **Soloist** – You prefer to work alone, but have found yourself in this group somehow.

## Avatar

- **Boss Killer** – You focus on eliminating single powerful targets with a powerful stream of focused damage.
- **Controller** – You focus on controlling the pace of the battle by controlling the actions of the enemy.
- **Mob Clearer** – You focus on eliminating large numbers of weaker targets with lots of AoE.
- **Sapper** – You focus on weakening your enemies to make it easier for your allies to finish things.
- **Summoner** – You focus on summoning pets to carry out your plans.
- **Support** – You focus on enhancing your allies and healing your enemies.
- **Tank** – You focus on drawing most of the attention and acting as an obstacle between the enemy and the other players.

## Attributes

- **Build** – This represents the combined effect of your various passive effects and is used when you use **Exchange Blows**.
- **Lore** – This represents your knowledge in general. It is primarily meant to focus on knowledge of the game world but also includes meta-knowledge of stuff outside the game. It is used when you **Look for Trouble** or **Read the Story**.
- **Presence** – This represents your ability to interact with other sentient beings whether they are computer programs, other trapped players or denizens of this world you find yourself stuck in. It is used when you use the **Chat** move.

- **System** – This represents your understanding of the system and ability to use active powers and skills in the most efficient manner possible. It is used when you **Shield Other** or **Tap a Skill**.
- **Will** – This represents your ability to stay calm and focused on the task at hand, as well as your ability to keep patient and wait an opportunity to present itself. It is used when you use **Teamwork** or try **Keep your Cool**.

## Attribute Arrays

- **Broad Competence** - +1, +1, +1, +1, +1
- **Task Oriented** – +2, +1, +1, +0, +0 arranged as desired
- **Dump Stat** – +2, +1, +1, +1, -1 arranged as desired
- **Specialized** – +2, +2, +0, +0, -1 arranged as desired
- **Min-Maxer** – +2, +2, +1, -1, -1 arranged as desired

## Basic Moves

**Chat** – Merely talking with people with no particular goal in mind doesn't require a move, but when you want those people to behave a certain way, then you need to use the chat move. This acts differently dependent on whether it is being used with PC or NPC entities: Roll **+Presence**:

- Against NPCs
  - On a 10+ if it is at all within character for them to do so, they will behave the way you want them to. If it is out of character for them to do so, then the conversation will still reveal to the PCs a solution to their problem.
  - On a 7-9 the NPC will require some convincing. This can be letting them attack you for several seconds to show that you are too high level for them to beat, bribing them or any other action that is necessary to prove "I am serious."
  - On a failure you completely misjudge the situation somehow: perhaps the enemies are concealing their actual levels, or maybe a diplomatic attempt is taken for a bribe and offends the person you are chatting with.
  - **Advanced Upgrade:** On a 12+ not only do they do what you want right away, they also become your ally for the rest of the quest. If you treat them well enough, they become your ally permanently.
- Against PCs
  - On a 10+, the other PC can choose whether or not to do what you want them to, but if they do behave as you want, they mark 1 experience and gain a +1 forward while pursuing that course of action.
  - On a 7-9, the other PC can choose whether or not to do what you want them to. If they do, they mark 1 experience.

- On a failure, the other PC can choose whether or not to do what you want them to. If they choose not to do what you want, they mark 1 experience.
- **Advanced Upgrade:** The other PC must **Keep Their Cool** to resist doing what you want. If they do what you want, they mark 1 Experience and take a +1 ongoing as long as they are doing what you asked them to.

**Exchange Blows** – When you have the enemy’s aggro and can’t lose it before the enemy attacks, you are going to **Exchange Blows** with them. This represents more of an extend round of blows rather than one single attack and counter attack. Roll +Build:

- On a success you deal your harm and suffer harm from the attacker. On a 10+ choose 2 other effect. On a 7-9 choose 1 other effect.
  - You create an advantage. Take +1 Forward or give +1 Forward to another party member.
  - You deal a critical strike for +1 damage.
  - You fought defensively. Take -1 damage.
  - You force your opponent to go where you want them to go.
  - You keep aggro.
  - You lose aggro.
- On a failure, you suffer harm and choose one of the following:
  - The enemy does not lay a critical hit. (you don’t suffer +1 damage)
  - The enemy does suffers some damage. (you deal -2 damage)
  - You don’t lose desired aggro.
  - You don’t keep unwanted aggro.
  - You are not at a disadvantage. (you don’t suffer -1 forward)
  - You do not lose your position.
- **Advanced Upgrade:** On a 12+ choose one of the following additional effects.
  - You completely hold the advantage. All party-members gain a +1 forward.
  - You take no damage at all.
  - You deal double your normal damage.
  - Minion, normal and sentient enemies are driven away in a rout.

**Keep your Cool** – Being stuck in the game is very stressful. Even when it was just a game some people just didn’t know how to handle it when things start popping out of the woodwork. Now that everything is so real, that frustration can easily turn to panic. For example, the first time you realize the game is real,

your character might have to keep his cool to avoid panicking or having some other extreme reaction. **Keep your Cool** lets you stay calm and get out of a bad situation. Whenever you need patience, calm or willpower, roll +Will:

- On a 10+ you accomplish your desired task with no problem.
- On a 7-9 you will have a worse than desired outcome, a hard choice or a price to pay to accomplish your goal.
- On a failure..... LEEEEEROOOOOYYY JENNNNNKINNNNS!!!!
- **Advanced Upgrade:** On a 12+ either you do what you want and do something extra or else you do what you want to do to utmost perfection. For example, never even breaking a sweat while staring down Cthulhu.

**Look for Trouble** – When you check your immediate area for danger in some way, roll +Lore:

- On a 10+ hold 3, on a 7-9 hold 1. Use the holds to ask one of the following questions:
  - What's my best way in?
  - What's my best way out?
  - What's the biggest threat?
  - Who's most vulnerable to me?
  - What's the best position?
  - What haven't we noticed yet?
- On a failure you complete misread the situation or give information to the enemy.
- **Advanced Upgrade:** On a 12+ you can ask the GM any question you want, not just those above.

**If you act on the answers**, you get a +1 ongoing while the information is relevant. For example, if you note the enemy witch doctors as the biggest threat, you get a +1 while dealing with them directly but once you start dealing with something else, you lose that +1.

**Read the Story** – There are a large number of players who steamroll through the content without ever stopping to read the flavor text. This was fine when this was all just a game, but now that the game is real, such behavior can be dangerous. Whether you're digging for gossip among the players and natives or reading through dusty tomes of lore, when you **Read the Story** roll +Lore:

- On a 10+ hold 2, on a 7-9 hold 1. Holds may be used during the course of the adventure to ask the following questions:
  - What sort of quest is this?
  - What place is this?
  - What sort of enemies will be here?

- What can they do?
- What vulnerabilities do they have?
- Are there any bugs to deal with?
- What is being concealed here?
- What sort of loot can be found here?
- Where do we need to go?
- What do we need to do?
- On a failure, you have dangerous misinformation or reveal information to the enemy somehow.
- **Advanced Upgrade:** On a 12+ you can ask any question you want, not just those listed above.

The methods of **Reading the Story** and the resultant answers must be plausible with the methods used and the mechanics of the game. If you are playing a campaign where the game had been running for a while before sucking people into it and the quests remain the same, then it's feasible for a veteran player to remember playing a particular quest before. If, on the other hand, the game was brand new, drew the players into an actual alternate reality or else none of the quests are the same, then remembering playing won't help to remember some details, but might still be useful to remember some general information.

If you don't have a good answer to the question "How do you know that?" when the Keeper asks, then you need to pick another answer. On the other hand, this is a good way to set some of the world's mechanics as well. If you have not yet established how the quests work in the game, then having a player say "I've run this quest before" as an explanation suddenly gives a bit more information about the campaign world.

**Resist a Skill** – When you are resisting the effects of in-game powers or events rather than dealing with real emotions, patience or willpower, you are resisting a Skill. For example, being terrified of the game becoming real and getting in a real fight is a matter where you need to **Keep your Cool** but being hit with a fear spell is resisting a skill. Any attribute may be used to resist a skill as determined below:

- Use Build to resist with the innate survivability of your Avatar.
- Use Presence to distract an enemy (assuming sentient) and cause them to fumble their action.
- Use Lore to understand the attack coming in and think of a loophole.
- Use System to resist with an active defensive skill.
- Use Will to try to force your avatar to ignore the effects of the skill.

Roll +chosen Attribute:

- On a 10+ you are completely unaffected by the skill or event.
- On a 7-9 you are only partially affected by the skill or event.

- On a failure, you suffer the full impact of the skill or event.
- **Advanced Upgrade:** On a 12+ you are immune to that effect for the remainder of the scene and gain a +1 forward against the person who used it against you.

**Shield Other** – Several powers and skills exist to help shield an ally from an incoming attack, often at a cost to themselves. When you are acting somehow to protect someone else from incoming damage, roll +System:

- On a success, you protect the other person. On a 10+ you choose 2, on a 7-9 choose 1:
  - You draw aggro.
  - You can choose to lose 1 Mana or 1 Resources instead of suffer damage.
  - You can suffer less damage (-1 to damage).
  - You do not draw aggro.
  - You deal some damage to the enemy (deal damage -2).
  - You create an advantage. Gain +1 Forward or give +1 forward to an ally.
- On a failure, choose one:
  - You protect your ally but lose a combination of Mana and Resources equal to 3. You cannot choose this if you cannot spend that cost.
  - You and your ally each suffer half the damage.
  - All allies are damaged, distribute as evenly as possible between all of your allies. If anyone needs to suffer more damage than someone else, choose your original ally first and yourself second. If there is not enough damage to damage everyone, then deal 1 Damage to everyone.
  - Your ally suffers the attack as normal.
- **Advanced Upgrade:** On a 12+ both you and the person you were protecting are unharmed and out of danger. If you were protecting a non-combatant they become your ally.

**Tap a Skill** – While many character powers and skills can be represented by the other basic moves, but sometimes you want to do something a little bit out of the line of the others. This is mostly the case when you want to make a particularly potent attack or spell; or perhaps you want to place a buff or debuff in advance or want it to last longer. Regardless, for the variety of other skills, you have have this move. Roll +System:

- On a 10+, you can use one of the following effects. Or you can have two effects if you let the GM add a flaw to the skill.
- On a 7-9, you can choose one effect or two effects and a flaw as normal; but you will also suffer a glitch chosen by you. This can be a literal glitch or it can be a standard result of a poor skill use.

- On a failure your choice of skill is horribly inappropriate, you use the wrong skill or some other terrible thing happens as defined by the GM.
- **Advanced Upgrade:** On a 12+ the GM will offer you some added benefit.

*Possible Effects:*

- Deal your weapon damage +1.
- Add one of the following tags and deal Weapon Damage -1. You may choose to deal 0 damage if you wish, such as to create an Area Sleep spell.
  - Area
  - DoT
  - Ignore-Armor
  - Life Drain
  - Mana Drain
  - Slow Movement
  - Add an Energy Tag appropriate to description.
  - Add one range: Intimate, Hand, Close, Far (otherwise, the range is the same as the user's current weapon)
- Buff an ally. They get one of the following benefits for the scene:
  - +1 Damage
  - +1 Ongoing to a particular task
  - +1 Armor
  - +2 Armor vs a specific type of damage
  - +2 Forward. (only lasts one action)
- Debuff an enemy. Choose one of the buff effects. Every ally gets that bonus when attacking, being attacked or otherwise affecting that enemy in particular. (For example, a debuff on a dragon's fire breath could cause it to do 2 less damage with fire while debuffed)
- Root an Enemy preventing all movement.
- Box a target (enemy, ally or self). The target can neither affect nor be affected by others for a moderate time.
- Incapacitate an enemy for a short time.
- Incapacitate an enemy for a long time, but they recover immediately after suffering damage.



- Heal 1 Health
- Recover 1 Mana
- Dispel an Effect
- Draw aggro
- Lose aggro
- Acquire a utility ability such as additional movement options.

*Possible Flaws for Skills with two effects:*

- The GM picks from the glitches on partial success which always happens. On a 7-9 you also suffer another glitch or can suffer double the set glitch.
  - A skill meant to recover one's own Mana should not cost Mana.
  - A skill meant to recover one's own Health should not cost Health.
- The skill requires a particular focus or item to be on hand. The item is not consumed by skill use but can be stolen.
  - The first time this skill is used, the player needs to spend 3 Resources in order to already have the necessary focus on hand.
- The skill requires extra time for you to use it.
- The skill has a problematic side-effect.
- The skill has a long cool down.

*Possible Glitches for partial success:*

- The effect is weakened.
- The effect is of short duration
- You take 1 Damage, ignoring armor.
- You spend 1 additional Mana
- You spend 1 additional Resources
- You draw aggro.

**Teamwork** – You can only go so far as a solo player. Short duration and quick cast buffs and debuffs as well as simple cooperation allows you to help out another player. When you use Teamwork, roll +Will:

- On a 10+ your ally gains a +1 Forward.
- On a 7-9 your ally gains a +1 Forward, but choose one of the following:
  - You lose 1 Mana

- You lose 1 Resources
- You lose 1 Health
- You draw aggro.
- On a failure choose one of the following:
  - You draw aggro and suffer one other cost from the above list but your ally gains a +1 Forward.
  - You draw aggro and your ally gains nothing.
- **Advanced Upgrade:** On a 12+ the person you helped doesn't roll. They simply act as though they rolled a 12.

## Look

There are a nearly endless number of possible looks available to characters based on whatever genre game they are stuck in. In settings where characters can travel from game to game, there might even be a bizarre mix. Consider what sort of MMO character your character is playing and describe that possibly with little quirks like having a male voice on a female body due to having been a male playing a female character. In general follow some of these guidelines:

- Choose a race. In games where everyone is human or something else, ignore this.
- Choose a gender. This can be male, female, androgynous, unknown, genderless or anything else.
- Describe gear. Do you just display your equipped outfits or do you use a cosmetic overlay? Do you have a reasonable appearance or is it over the top?
- Describe expression and personality.
- Describe a quirk.

## Personas

### Crafter

- *You get:* **Masterwork** – Once between each grinding session, when you **Tap a Skill** to grant a bonus to another player, you can either grant a +2 bonus or state that the +1 bonus will last until the next grinding session.
- *You Choose 1:*
  - **Deep Pockets** – +1 Resources
  - **MacGuyverism** – You can attempt to create some useful item out of the resources available. Roll **+System**
    - On a 10+ choose 2 of the following. On a 7-9 choose 1 of the following.
      - The item will not malfunction.
      - The item is directly useful to the current situation.
      - The item will not use up 1 Resource.
    - On a failure, choose 1 of the following:
      - The item will not catastrophically malfunction.
      - The item will use 1 Resource instead of 2.
      - The item will be indirectly useful to the current situation.
  - **At the Grindstone** – You can do a lot of your grinding from the safety of your crafting facility. When grinding, you never suffer reduced Health as a potential failure cost.
  - **Quality Expendables** – The first time each person in the party **Taps a Skill** where spending Resources is required, they get one of the following benefits:
    - +1 Damage
    - +1 Health or Mana recovery
    - +1 Forward on that **Tap a Skill** use
    - Non-mechanical special benefit suggested by user.
  - **Crafter's Pride** – Whenever you convince your party to let you address a challenge to your craft, mark 1 experience.
  - **Personal Work** – Add one more gear option
  - **Appraisal** – You have an eye for the value of gear and materials and can recognize the work of other crafters (in settings where each crafter's creation is unique). Roll **+Lore**
    - On a 10+ Hold 2. On a 7-9 Hold 1. Spend a Hold to ask one of the following questions:
      - *How rare is this?*

- *How useful is this?*
  - *What is the source of this? / Who crafted this? (Essentially the same question)*
  - *Are there any flaws or dangers?*
- On a failure, you can choose one of the following:
  - *My misinformation is only embarrassing.*
  - *I realize I don't know anything about this.*
- **Histories**
  - Choose one for each other player:
    - \_\_\_\_\_ is your guinea pig for trying out new designs. Ask them what they think of that.
    - \_\_\_\_\_ tends to suggest ideas for new items. Ask them if their suggestions are reasonable.
    - \_\_\_\_\_ always seem to be gathering the same materials or using the same facilities at the same time as you. Sometimes they get in the way. Ask them if it's intentional. Tell them whether you've said anything yet.
    - \_\_\_\_\_ always seems to outdo your crafted items either through clever use of skills, loot or their own crafting. Tell them how you've responded to this.
    - You think about \_\_\_\_\_ a lot while you're working. You may be getting a crush. Ask them if they've noticed.
    - You have had an online business arrangement with \_\_\_\_\_ for a while. Ask them what it is. Tell them whether you've been happy with it.
    - You worked at the same place in RL as \_\_\_\_\_. Decide between you what the business was. Tell them your position. Ask them what their position was.
    - You and \_\_\_\_\_ were both pledging to the same guild but ended up not joining. Ask them why you didn't join that guild. Tell them what the name of the guild was.
    - You and \_\_\_\_\_ both want to show up or defeat the same NPC (player or native is fine). Ask them who it is. Tell them why you want to show that person up.

## Elite

- **You get: Intimate Knowledge** – You gain +1 System (max 3)
- **You Choose 1:**

- **Chain Supremacy** – When you successfully **Tap a Skill** you may take a +1 Forward on your next action.
- **Know it All** – Use System instead of Persona when using **Chat** if the subject of game play is appropriate.
- **Mana Conservation** – +1 Mana
- **Mentor** – If you give advice to another player on how to use their skills, they get a +1 forward when following your advice.
- **Reputation Precedes** – You can use +System for **Chat** if you are speaking to someone who recognizes you and knows your reputation.
- **That's New** – Whenever something familiar to you changes significantly, mark 1 experience.
- **Raid Veteran** – Due to your past history in raiding, you have an exceptional item. *Choose One:*
  - Rare mount or vehicle.
  - Legendary weapon.
  - Legendary armor.
  - Exceptional accessory.
  - Unique or rare Vanity Pet or other Vanity Item
  - Renowned Title

- **Histories**

- Choose one for each other player:
  - You and \_\_\_\_\_ talk about optimization all the time. Ask them if you have the same theories on what's best.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ make you more powerful when they're around. Ask them how you first became a team.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ has outshone you regularly in the past. Ask them how they've managed this.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ ganked you once in PvP. Ask them what the specifics were. Tell them whether you have forgiven the incident.
  - You are inspired to show-off in order to impress \_\_\_\_\_. Ask them what they think of that.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ has made or sold you most of your equipment. Ask them where they got it.

- You were in the same gaming group as \_\_\_\_\_ in RL. Ask them what sort of tabletop game you two used to play.
- Your guild and \_\_\_\_\_'s are allied and have been for a while now. Tell them what the specifics of the alliance are.
- You and \_\_\_\_\_ both want to find the same rumored game location. Name the location and why you're looking for it. Ask them why they want to find it.

## Guilder

- *You get:*
  - **People Person** – You have +1 Presence (max 3).
  - **Heart of the Guild** – You are either the official or unofficial leader of a guild. Choose two positive features of the guild and two negative features.
    - **Positive Features:** Disciplined, Friendly, Large, Loyal, Wealthy, Skilled, Popular, Respected, Easy Going
    - **Negative Features:** Undisciplined, Judgmental, Small, Fractitious, Unpopular, Laughing Stock, Poor, Incompetent, Strict
- *You choose 0: (You don't get one of these to start, but may choose them on advances.)*
  - **A Little Help From My Friends** – When dealing with your Guild you can get their help on matters. Roll **+Presence**
    - On a 10+ the Guild is willing and able to give you whatever help they are capable of in the current situation.
    - On a 7-9 the Guild is either willing to help or able to help, but needs some coaxing on the other. You may need to bribe the guild to get them motivated or seek something else out so that they can help.
    - On a failure, the Guild is either entirely unwilling to help or else entirely unable. The end result is a loss of either your reputation in the guild or guild morale. The GM will determine the exact consequences.
  - **Instant Raid Party** – You gain a +1 anytime you try to recruit extra help for a major raid or other task requiring a large number of people.
  - **Vengeance is Swift and Sure** – You gain a +1 forward on any roll involving your Guild when the roll involves getting payback on someone or something that hurt a guild member.
  - **Join the Family** – Whenever you convince someone significant to join your guild or make a permanent alliance between your guild and another organization, mark 1 experience.

- **Growing Together** – Change any two Features plus you may remove one Negative Feature OR add one Positive Feature.
- **Guild Hall** – Your guild acquires a guild hall. Choose three features:
  - **Personal Rooms** – Every guild member has their own private room with an inventory only accessible by them.
  - **Crafting Facilities** – The Guild Hall has basic crafting facilities for all crafting types as well as all common materials and some uncommon or even rare materials.
  - **War Room** – The Guild Hall has a versatile war room for planning major undertakings.
  - **Great Hall** – The Guild Hall has a massive hall suitable for hosting major social events.
  - **Copious Vaults** – The Guild Hall has vaults that include common gear of all types and a handful of rare items.
  - **Training Room** – The Guild Hall has a room allowing for safe combat simulations.
  - **Defenses** – The Guild Hall has defensive measures in place in case of enemy assault.
  - **Civilian Shelters** – The Guild Hall can act as a shelter for a large number of the local natives in the case of an emergency.

- **Histories**

- Choose one for each other player:
  - People erroneously think \_\_\_\_\_ is in your guild because he's friends with them and you especially. Ask them why they aren't in the guild.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ originally sponsored you to get into your guild. You were hesitant at first ask them how they convinced you to try it.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ are or were in a rival guild. Ask them whether your guilds are friendly rivals or not.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ used to have a higher position in the guild. Ask them why their character thinks they were demoted.
  - A romantic relationship between you and \_\_\_\_\_ would not be taken well by your guilds but at least one of you is pursuing one. Decide who is pursuing who and whether or not anything has come of it.
  - You and \_\_\_\_\_ have a mutually beneficial relationship. Each of you decide how the other benefits from the connection.

- You went to or used to go to the same school as \_\_\_\_\_ but your online relationship is drastically different. Decide whether or not either of you have realized who each other are and why the relationship is different online.
- Your guild has asked you to recruit \_\_\_\_\_. Tell them your approach. Ask them how they've responded to your attempts.
- You both want to form a UN of Guilds or something similar. Tell them what your motivations are. Ask them what their motivations are. Decide on what is making it difficult.

## Native

- *You get:* **Born and Raised** – You get +1 Lore (max 3).
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Signature Character** – You are a well-known character whose appearance was used in the trailers or on the box. You gain a +1 ongoing to use **Chat** with players.
  - **Faction Member** – You are a member of a game native faction. While you are part of the party non-sentient entities of that faction will not aggro on the party unless the party starts it.
  - **Quest Giver** – At the beginning of each session you get a vision of a quest that is needed to be performed roll **+System**
    - On a 10+ hold 2, on a 7-9 hold 1. Spend a hold to choose the following:
      - The quest will provide information related to the party's goals.
      - The quest is local to the party's location.
      - The quest will provide warnings of major threats to come.
      - The quest will provide excellent loot or resources.
      - The quest is very popular and draws a crowd.
      - The quest will end quickly meaning the visions will stop.
    - On a failure, the quest visions are not particularly useful to the party, but the visions persist in tormenting you until you get something done about it.
  - **Innocuous** – You gain a +1 ongoing anytime you **Tap a Skill** in order to reduce your aggro.
  - **Shopkeeper** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to restore your or an ally's Resources by 1 as an effect. If you take this effect twice, it would restore Resources by 2.
  - **One of the People** – You get a +1 ongoing to use **Chat** with non-players.



- **Do We Not Pixelate?** – Whenever you convince a player of the sentience of some or all natives, mark 1 experience.
- **Histories**
  - Choose one for each other player:
    - \_\_\_\_\_ has always enjoyed talking to you and thought you were the best part of the game. Tell them how you respond to compliments on your programming.
    - \_\_\_\_\_ can relate to you in several ways that the others can't. Explain between you what those are.
    - \_\_\_\_\_ tends to ignore you most of the time or treat you like a non-sentient when they do notice you. Tell them how you've responded.
    - Whether \_\_\_\_\_ knows it or not, they are often working counter to one of your goals. Tell them what they're doing. Ask them whether it is deliberate.
    - You and \_\_\_\_\_ are literally from different worlds, but they seem to be the only person that you really want to settle down with. Ask them if they feel the same.
    - The system has set a relationship between you and \_\_\_\_\_ that neither of you agreed to nor act according to. Ask them what sort of relationship it is.
    - \_\_\_\_\_'s RL body is the actual model that your look was based on. Ask them how they've reacted to this.
    - \_\_\_\_\_'s guild has reacted in a specific manner as regards the sentient natives of the game. Ask them whether the Guild sees the natives as sentient beings or just part of the game.
    - You and \_\_\_\_\_ both want to know how someone could travel back to the "real world." Tell them what your motivation is.

## Newbies

- *You get:* **Fresh Perspective** – Whenever you correctly point out something of significance about the nature of the world that helps your party's plans, mark 1 experience.
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Teachable Moments** – If you ask someone to explain something about the game or the world to you, they will gain a +1 Forward the next time that adventure they use the discussed skills or deal with the discussed world issue due to having a moment of inspiration. (This also gives a chance to add to the mythology of the game.)

- **Breaking Character** – When you use **Chat** to try and confuse natives or annoy players by refusing to act in character, you gain a +1 ongoing.
- **Know a Heart** – You can tell the difference between sentient and non-sentient entities in the game without any difficulty.
- **Mashing Buttons** – While not literally mashing buttons since you’re actually in the game, but when you panic and just act out of instinct you can roll +System.
  - On a success, the GM chooses a target, two Effects and a Flaw from the Tap a Skill list: On a 10+ you choose 3. On a 7-9 you choose 1:
    - One of the effects the GM chooses is very appropriate to the situation.
    - None of the effects the GM chooses are useless to the situation.
    - The GM does not choose the flaw that would hurt your party the most right now.
    - All of the effects are at least somewhat appropriate to the situation.
    - The target chosen is the best of the available targets to choose for your needs.
    - The targeting will not benefit the enemy.
- **The Sheltered** – When someone uses **Shield Other** to protect you, they gain a +1 Forward to the roll.
- **Do What You Can** – When you use **Teamwork** you don’t roll. You automatically assume that you roll a 10+.
- **New Life** – Something about this new life has given you something you didn’t have in the “real” world. Maybe you were blind, the wrong gender, crippled, mute or terminally ill. Whatever it was is now gone. Once per adventure you can take an action along with an inner monologue about your new lease on life to gain a +2 Forward on the roll. (It doesn’t have to be a great inner monologue, just some sort of attempt at waxing philosophic)

- **Histories**

- Choose one for each other player:
  - You and \_\_\_\_\_ joined a party together pretty soon after the game became real. Ask them how you got together.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ is always a real comfort to you. Tell them how you met.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ thinks you’re too new to be trusted with anything important. Tell them how you’ve responded.

- \_\_\_\_\_ seems to think you get all the attention. Ask them how they've reacted to this. Tell them whether you've noticed the attention or not.
- You are developing quite the crush on \_\_\_\_\_. Tell them how this started and ask them if they've noticed yet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is trying to teach you the ropes of the game. Tell them how well you've listened. Ask them how well they've taught.
- \_\_\_\_\_ convinced you to try the game out. Ask them how you know each other in real life. Tell them whether you've verbally blamed them for being stuck here.
- \_\_\_\_\_ has invited you to join their guild to provide you with some safety in numbers. Tell them whether or not you've said yes
- You and \_\_\_\_\_ share an appreciation for the same sort of thing. Ask them what it is. Tell them whether or not you get along outside of that interest.

## Soloist

- *You get:* **Keep it Simple** – You gain a +1 Build.
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Work Better Alone** – Whenever you get into danger because you went off on your own, mark 1 Experience.
  - **Survivability** – You gain +1 Health.
  - **Outside the Box** – Due to often being solo, you have found alternative ways to complete some tasks. At the beginning of each adventure roll +Lore:
    - On a 10+ hold 3, on a 7-9 hold 1. Spend holds at any time during the adventure to ask the following questions:
      - Is there an easier way to get past this obstacle or challenge?
      - Is there something we can do here to make the next challenge easier?
      - Is there something that can happen which will make the next challenge harder?
      - Where will the next danger come from?
  - **That's Interesting** – Once per adventure while on your own, you can request to stumble across something important. The GM will decide what. It might not relate directly to your current adventure.

- **Disengage** – You are particularly skilled at getting out of danger. Describe how you're escaping and roll +Build
  - On a 10+ you are out of the situation no problem.
  - On a 7-9 you either fail to escape or else something follows you.
  - On a failure you're caught half-way out.
- **Underestimated** – You gain +1 Forward on the first action you take against any opponent who has not faced you before.
- **Anonymity** – Most people don't know who you are. When there is an encounter, social or physical, with other players, you can roll +Will:
  - On a 10+ you're regarded as unthreatening and unimportant.
  - On a 7-9 choose one: unthreatening or unimportant.
  - On a failure, someone who has encountered you before is present.

- **Histories**

- Choose one for each other player:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the few people that you've teamed with regularly. Tell them why you enjoy teaming with them.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ often chats with you while online even if you aren't in the same party. Ask them what you chat about.
  - Something about \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the chief reasons that you're uncomfortable in a team. Ask them what it is. Tell them why you're willing to team with them now.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ has constantly beaten you to the punch and ruined hours of preparation for various goals. Ask them if they're aware of this. Give one or two examples of such events.
  - You love \_\_\_\_\_ from afar and try to keep your feelings quiet. Ask them if there's any hope there.
  - You and \_\_\_\_\_ both depend on each other for trading needed items that are hard for each other to get. Ask them what those items are.
  - You had a relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ in RL. Decide between you what that relationship was. Ask them how that relationship ended or if it ended.
  - \_\_\_\_\_'s guild tried to recruit you once. Ask them what tactics were used and tell them how you responded.
  - You and \_\_\_\_\_ keep each other's emotional state stable. Decide between you how this works.

## Strategist

- *You get:* **Analytic Calm** – You get +1 Will (max 3).
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Full Control Encounter** – If you have any unused **Look for Trouble** holds, you gain a +1 ongoing to **Teamwork** rolls.
  - **Empty Fortress** – People are very used to your plotting. You can make a point of your involvement to provoke their reactions. Roll +Will:
    - On a 10+ choose 2, On a 7-9 choose 1
      - Your presence causes your opponents to be hesitant and paranoid.
      - Your presence causes your opponents to jump to a desired conclusion.
      - Your presence causes your opponents to overlook something.
      - Your presence causes your opponents to rush their plans.
    - On a failure, choose 1 of the following:
      - Your opponents do not hasten their plans efficiently.
      - Your opponents do not become more careful.
      - Your opponents do not realize your goal.
      - Your opponents do not find a weakness.
  - **Optimized HUD** – Your game UI is optimized in a way to make it easy for you to keep track of your teammates and your opponents. When you successfully use **Teamwork** you grant a +2 forward instead of a +1.
  - **Chessmaster** – Your insight into the wider politics is just as sharp as your insight on the battlefield. You gain +1 Hold whenever you **Read the Story**. If you failed the move, you can ask two questions as if you had 2 Hold. One answer will be accurate but one will be wrong.
  - **Predictive Insight** – Once per adventure, you may sit and analyze what is going on around you. Roll +Will:
    - On a 10+ hold 3, on a 7-9 hold 1. Throughout that adventure you may spend 1 hold to:
      - Have a useful object ready

- Retroactively cancel one source of harm by warning the player the attack or accident was coming.
- Take a +1 forward or give a +1 forward to another player.
- Allow yourself or another player to be where they are needed at exactly the right time.
- On a failure, choose 1:
  - Your incorrect prediction does not result in a dangerous battle.
  - Your incorrect prediction does not result in a major social gaff.
  - Your incorrect prediction does not result in the destruction of a major item.
  - Your incorrect prediction does not result in a loss of resources.
  - Your incorrect prediction does not result in the loss of a close ally.
- **Two Birds with One Stone** – Whenever you find a way to solve two major problems in one action, mark 1 experience.
- **Links in the Chain** – At the beginning of each adventure, you can consider the reports of your allies and the events you have witnessed and how they interconnect. Roll +Will:
  - On a 10+ hold 3, on a 7-9 hold 1. At any time in the adventure, you may spend 1 hold to ask one of the following questions:
    - Is this person connected to the greater events more than they're saying?
    - What is the next critical event that will happen?
    - How is this connected to our previous adventures?
    - What does the enemy want from this person/object/place?
    - What are the potential wider consequences of this adventure?
- **Histories**
  - Choose one for each other player:
    - \_\_\_\_\_ keeps you down to Earth and reminds you to take care of your own needs. Ask them why they hang out with you.
    - \_\_\_\_\_ has worked with you many times in the past and trusts you completely. Tell them if you think you deserve that trust.
    - \_\_\_\_\_ has been caught up in your plans before and though they even profited from it, it has left them distrustful of you. Ask them what happened.

- \_\_\_\_\_ has tried to outwit you once or twice. Decide between you how successful that's been.
- You have seemingly missed all of \_\_\_\_\_'s attempts to attract your attention. Tell them whether you are simply unaware or just unsure how to proceed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ have often gone to you for your expertise. Ask them what sort of personal relationship you have.
- You and \_\_\_\_\_ traveled in the same RL intellectual circles. Tell them what sort of intellectual pursuit you share. Ask them what they think of you.
- You helped \_\_\_\_\_'s guild survive a hostile takeover planned by a much larger guild. Ask them for details and tell them what your solution was.
- You and \_\_\_\_\_ both have questions as to the reasons behind the event that brought you into the game. Ask them how you've collaborated on finding answers so far.

## Avatars

### Boss-Killer

- *You get 1:*
  - **Double Strike** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to deal Weapon Damage-1 twice as an effect. If you choose this effect twice, you deal Weapon Damage -2 four times.
  - **One Shot, One Kill** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to do nothing this action but your next attack will deal +2 Weapon Damage in addition to any other effect you chose when **Tapping the Skill**. If you have to defend yourself before then, the skill is ruined.
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Vital Blow** – You deal +2 damage whenever you attack without being in danger of counterattack.
  - **Vicious Criticals** – You deal +2 damage when you roll 10+ on Exchange Blows and choose Critical Hit.
  - **Sunder** – When you roll 10+ on Exchange Blows, you can choose to reduce the opponent Armor or Damage by 1 as an extra effect.
  - **Skilled Flanker** – You gain a +1 ongoing to Teamwork or Shield Other rolls to help someone who is using the Exchange Blows move.
  - **Tools of the Trade** – You gain an extra Weapon tag for your gear.

### Controller

- *You get 1:*
  - **Locationals** – When you **Tap a Skill** to incapacitate, box, slow or root an enemy and also take the Area tag you can choose to attach the skill to a particular piece of terrain. If you do so, it will wear out if the scene lasts too long, but will snag any new enemies that enter the area.
  - **Charms** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to charm an enemy for a short time to fight for you. If you choose this effect twice, then the charm lasts longer and is harder to break.
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Economy of Hate** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to move all aggro in the party to one ally, including yourself if desired.
  - **Defensive Control** – When you **Exchange Blows** or **Shield Other** and roll 10+ you can choose to inflict a Control effect instead of one of the normal effects.
  - **Soothe** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to remove all of a target enemy's aggro. He will not regain aggro for a short time unless attacked or otherwise affected with hostility.
  - **Specialized Equipment** – You gain another gear tag related to control effects.
  - **Staged Effect** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to add an effect with the flaw that it only activates once the initial effects are dispelled or their duration ends. This can be a third effect but it must be tied with a skill that has a duration, not an instant damage effect.

## Mob Clearer

- *You get 1:*
  - **Reaper** – You gain a +1 Damage against a troop of enemies. (an enemy entity that uses one set of stats to represent a full squad)
  - **Battery** – You gain a +1 ongoing when using skills with the Area tag.
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Friendly Fire Is** – Your Area attacks do not target allies or non-combatants.
  - **Menacing Presence** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to inflict a fear state on nearby enemies.
  - **Collateral Damage** – You can add the Area tag to any damaging move but if you do so, you will add the Devastated tag to the surrounding terrain.
  - **Death Zone** – When you **Tap a Skill** you may designate an area as a death zone. Any enemy entering that area (if your weapon is intimate or hand range, then it is



centered on you) takes 1 Damage which ignores armor. This counts as two effects and will have a flaw.

- **Person of Mass Destruction** – You deal +1 Damage to terrain, structures and constructs.

## Sapper

- *You get 1:*
  - **Traveling Curses** – When you **Tap a Skill** to debuff an enemy, as an extra effect, if the enemy dies before the debuff's duration is over, it travels to the nearest other enemy. It can still be dispelled, however.
  - **Supply Problems** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to make it so that every skill the target takes costs them 1 Mana.
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Damage Shield** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to give an ally or yourself a damage shield. Every enemy who hits them will take 1 Damage which ignores armor.
  - **Rob From the Rich** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to drain a target's Resources. As an extra effect, you can give the stolen resources to an ally instead of yourself.
  - **Contagious Debuffs** – Whenever you apply a debuff effect, you can choose for that effect will infect nearby enemies as long as its duration lasts. If you do so, you will suffer a flaw from the Tap a Skill list.
  - **Poison Application** – When you **Exchange Blows** or **Shield Other** and roll 10+ you can choose to inflict a debuff on the enemy instead of one of the normal effects.
  - **Counter Measures** – When you **Tap a Skill** to dispel a buff from an enemy, you gain a +1 ongoing.

## Summoner

- *You get 1:*
  - **Contract Bearer** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to summon a creature out of a general theme. You can have one summon out at a time. Summons have 5 Health, 3 Mana and a Base Weapon Damage of 2 with a range of Hand. You choose 2 of the summon options each time you summon.
  - **Minion Master** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to summon a creature out of a general theme. You can have several summons at a time. Summons have 3 Health, 2 Mana and a Base Weapon Damage of 1 with a range of Hand. You choose 1 of the summon options each time you summon.
  - **Summons Generalities:**

- Your **Tap a Skill**, **Shield Other**, and **Teamwork** moves can be performed via the summon instead of you. The summon suffers the costs and consequences of such moves when it is the source. (You're basically using your action to direct the summon).
- You cannot **Shield Other** and target yourself via a summon, but if the summon is near you, it can take the damage for you during **Exchange Blows**.
- If you and your summon work together on the same move that requires an action, you get an automatic +1 bonus to that roll.
- If you don't give direct orders to the summon, the GM will have it act according to your last orders and/or the nature of the summon.
- **Summon Options**
  - +1 Weapon Damage
  - Additional Weapon Range: Intimate, Close or Far
  - 1 Armor
  - +1 Health
  - +1 Mana
  - Choose an effect from the **Tap a Skill** list for the Summon to use
    - Example, the summon might have the ability to Heal 1 Health on allies.
  - Troop, the summon has the Troop tag and this single summon spell actually summons a large group of creatures.
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Primary Summon** – One of your summons is more powerful than the others and has 1 extra summon option. Requires **Contract Bearer** or **Minion Master**. However, it is a quirky summon: choose 1 Positive Quality and 1 Negative Quality:
    - **Positive Qualities:** Courageous, Hyper, Protective, Patient, Cunning, Observant, Insightful
    - **Negative Qualities:** Frenzied, Cowardly, Violent, Stupid, Literal, Mischievous, Random
  - **Assist Command** – You use the **Teamwork** move through a summon, the ally you are aiding can choose between taking a +2 Forward or a +1 ongoing for as long as the summon is assigned to them. Requires **Contract Bearer** or **Minion Master**.

- **Your People** – Your summons are sentient. Choose 2 positive qualities and 2 negative qualities to describe their general attitude. Requires **Contract Bearer** or **Minion Master**.
  - **Positive Qualities:** Loyal, Understanding, Discrete, Cohesive, Friendly, Wise, Honest
  - **Negative Qualities:** Plotting, Mischievous, Alien Behavior, Gossips, Raucous, High Expectations, Secretive
- **Autonomy** – You can choose to add the Autonomous tag to any piece of gear as a gear option.
- **Decoy Summons** – You can summon decoys to imitate yourself or an ally. Roll +System
  - On a 10+ hold 2, on a 7-9 hold 1. On a failure, you create decoys of the enemy.
  - You can spend a hold to negate one attack on the person being imitated.

## Support

- *You get 1:*
  - **Healing Techniques** – When you **Tap a Skill** that includes recovering Health or Mana, the Skill heals 1 more Health and/or Mana than it would normally. (Thus, if you took the Heal effect twice, you would heal 3 Health. If you took both the Heal and Mana Recover effect, you would heal 2 Health and recover 2 Mana to the target)
  - **Revive** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can choose to Revive an ally that has fallen to 0 Health provided you can reach them in time. They revive with 4 Health and 2 Mana.
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Bolstering Health** – When you **Tap a Skill** to increase a target's Health, you can give them Health more than their maximum. This can represent ablative barriers, extra regeneration or even temporary health. Any extra Health goes away at the end of the scene.
  - **Recall Friend** – When you **Tap a Skill** you can use it to teleport an ally within the same zone to your current location.
  - **Pacifism** – As long as a skill does not affect an enemy, the GM cannot choose "You Draw Aggro" as a flaw when you take an extra effect.
  - **Karmic Reversal** – When you **Shield Other** and roll 10+, you can change the enemy's damage into recovering any combination of Health or Mana up to its Weapon

Damage as an option rather than choosing one of the normal options. If you choose this option, you spend 1 Mana.

- **Cleansing** – When you use **Tap a Skill** to Dispel a negative status, you receive a +1 Forward to the roll.

## Tank

- *You get 1:*
  - **Mitigation Build** – You always reduce damage suffered by 1 even if the attack normally ignores armor. This may be due to innate resistances, a high regeneration level or something else.
  - **Desperation Defense** – Once per session, you can ignore all damage done to you for a short period of time. You spend either 2 Mana or 2 Resource when you do this.
- *You choose 1:*
  - **Grudge Keeper** – Whenever you lose aggro, you can immediately deal Weapon Damage to the creature you lost aggro with.
  - **Iron Skin** – You gain one extra gear option for armor.
  - **Gauntlet** – You can choose to reduce Weapon Damage by 1 in order to draw aggro from the target or targets anytime you deal Weapon Damage. You do not need to **Tap a Skill** to do this.
  - **Status Protection** – You have a +1 Ongoing to Resist Control and Debuff skills when you use Build to resist.
  - **Guardian** – When you use **Shield Other** you gain a +1 Forward to the roll.

## Gear

Note that while the options and bases are stated as if they were actual gear, this can also represent such things as innate powers in a superhero game. In the case of Summoners with autonomous weapons or armor, that represents a constant pet that fulfills the role of shield or weapon.

## Weapons

- **Choose one base:**
  - Light Melee – Weapon Damage 1, Hand, Fast
  - Melee – Weapon Damage 2, Hand
  - Heavy Melee – Weapon Damage 3, Hand, Heavy
  - Short Ranged – Weapon Damage 1, Close, Fast
  - Long Ranged – Weapon Damage 2, Far

- **Choose two options:**
  - One additional Range: Intimate, Hand, Close, Far
  - +1 Weapon Damage
  - +1 Weapon Damage
  - Accurate
  - Ignore Armor
  - Energy Tag
  - Maneuverable
  - Area

## **Armor**

- **Choose one base:**
  - Robes – Armor 0, Mana +1
  - Light Armor – Armor 1, Stealthy
  - Medium Armor – Armor 2
  - Heavy Armor – Armor 3, Heavy
- **Choose two options:**
  - +1 Armor
  - +1 Armor
  - +1 Mana
  - +1 Health
  - Hardened (Ignore Armor becomes Half-Armor instead)
  - Enhanced Movement Mode
  - Controls or debuffs have reduced duration
  - +2 Armor vs specific Damage type

## **Accessories**

- **Choose two:**
  - +1 Mana
  - +1 Mana

- +1 Resources
- +1 Resources
- Detect one thing: poison, traps, undead, magic, explosives, etc
- Sensory Option: Nightvision, X-Ray vision, Enhanced Hearing, etc
- Pretty +1 to Chat when your appearance is a concern.
- Vanity Pet
- Vanity Item: Fireworks, Microphone, Yo-Yo, etc
- +1 Ongoing when **Tapping a Skill** that uses a specific effect
- Teleport to specific location
- Basic Mount or Vehicle. (choose twice for an advanced mount or vehicle. Three times for a legendary/unique mount or vehicle)

## Advancement

Whenever a character fails a roll or when a move says to, the player marks 1 experience.

Also, at the end of each session the GM should ask the characters the following questions.

- Did we complete the current mission?
- Did we clear any major dungeon, raid or event from the game?
- Did we learn anything new and important about the world?
- Did we learn anything new and important about one of the characters?

If the answer to one or two of these questions is “Yes” then the party gains 1 XP.

If the answer to two or three of these questions is “Yes” then the party gains 2 XP.

Whenever a character has marked 7 experience, they erase all their experience and then choose an Advance from the list below. Each Advance can be taken once.

- Build +1 (Maximum 3)
- Lore +1 (Maximum 3)
- Presence +1 (Maximum 3)
- System +1 (Maximum 3)
- Will +1 (Maximum 3)
- Choose another move from your Persona
- Choose another move from your Persona

- Choose another move from your Role
- Choose another move from your Role
- Add one gear option
- Add one gear option

After you have taken five advancements, you can start to take from the following list:

- Attribute +1 (Max 4)
- Choose a move from another Persona or Role. (Cannot choose “get” moves)
- Choose a move from another Persona or Role. (Cannot choose “get” moves)
- Choose a “get” move from any other Persona or Role.
- Choose two Basic Moves to become Advanced.
- Choose two more Basic Moves to become Advanced.
- Add one gear option, including taking an already chosen option a second time.
- Exchange any one Move with any other Move, this includes taking the same Move with different options.
- Start a new character to play alongside this one.
- Retire the character to safety.