4 Hyperspace Messenger

SKILLS

DWD STUDIOS

WHITE STAR COMPATIBLE

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The Hyperspace Messenger™ is a series of very short supplements for the White Star™ role-playing game. The goal is to create quality usable content which can be completely explored within the scope of only six-to-twelve pages. Although this is only the first supplement in the series, we at DwD Studios hope to release additional supplements in the years to come.

Although this supplement is designed to integrate to your White Star™ game, its concepts are fairly universal and you can, with very little effort, modify it for use in other games as well.

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DWD STUDIOS

WHITE STAR COMPATIBLE

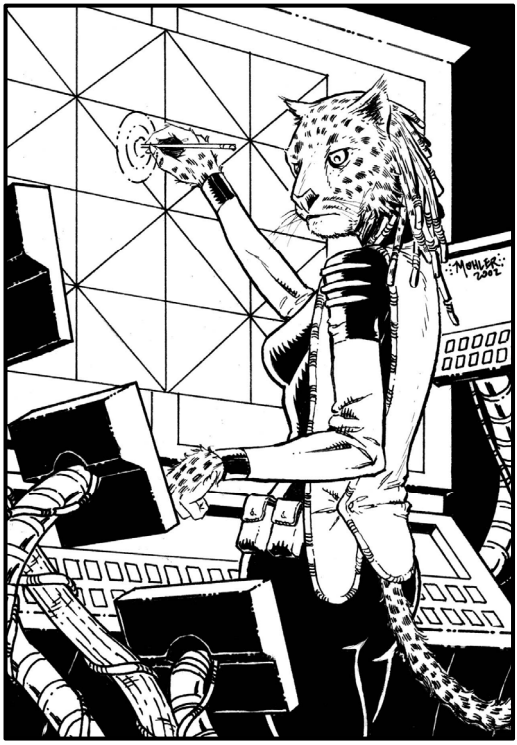
Players are a skillful lot, able to do just about anything with the right die roll. But what dice to roll? The White Star RPG is a fantastic tool kit, but intentionally doesn't tell individual Referees how to adjudicate simple skill checks. So what happens when a character needs to repair a communications array, reprogram a captured robot, or bypass a security system? Surely this isn't beyond the capability of characters. Are skill checks supposed to be resolved with ability checks? Well… ability checks aren't even a thing in White Star; not a single rule ever tells you how to test your character's strength, dexterity, etc.

Are skill checks supposed to be rolled with a simple d6 roll? In some old school games, some skill checks were resolved with a "2 in 6 chance of success" or a "4 in 6 chance of success." There is precedence for this concept even within the pages of White Star, for instance the alien mystic's ability to sense secret and concealed doors. While this is a simplistic rule, it's different and awkward… relying on rolling low and uses a die type unused for other types of checks. It also lacks resolution, and we all like to see our chances of success get better with level.

Should skill checks be resolved with a Saving Throw? This certainly seems to be a popular concept online, and it's great that Saving Throws scale with level. This isn't a bad idea. However, Saving Throws have a specific use in the game – to save the character's neck against a dangerous threat. Maybe we should leave Saving Throws alone.

SKILLS

This system presents one possible way to manage skills within your White Star game. This system includes 34 individual skills. All characters can attempt actions related to all of these skills. Yes, player characters are a creative and capable lot. Therefore, this skill system describes which areas a character has expertise, and how to make skill checks.



SKILL EXPERTISE

Starting characters normally have expertise in two skills at +1. One skill is determined by your character class and the other is rolled randomly.

SKILL IMPROVEMENT

Each time you raise your level, you may either choose to add another +1 expertise to one of your skills, or you may add another skill to your list and place a +1 expertise in that new skill. You may not raise expertise in any skill beyond +5, regardless of level.

SKILL CHECKS

A skill is performed with a d20 roll. Your GM will tell you which skill and ability apply to the roll. For instance, "Give me an Intelligence + Perception check" if searching for complex clues. You roll d20, add your intelligence modifier and your Perception expertise (if any). You must total equal to or higher than the target number set by the Referee (normally 10 for most actions, but can be higher for more challenging uses of the skill).

DIFFICULTY	TARGET NUMBER
5	Easy
10	Normal
15	Hard
20	Highly Improbable
25	Never Tell Me the Odds!

Automatic Success and Failure

Any skill check which has a reasonable chance of succeeding (no matter how slim) should automatically succeed on a natural roll of 20, regardless of the skill check total. Additionally, any skill check which has a reasonable chance of failing (no matter how slim) should automatically fail on a natural roll of 1, regardless of the skill check total. So yes, you have to roll even if your expertise is +5 and you're attempting an Easy action with a target number of 5.

Skill Contests

If two players are acting in opposition to one another then each rolls d20 and adds his appropriate ability modifier and skill expertise. Whoever rolls higher wins the contest. For example, to pick someone's pocket a Referee might request a Dexterity + Sleight of Hand check versus the target's Wisdom + Perception.

In other situations, a Referee can feel free to use an opponent's ability score as the target number for an action. For instance, if the guards in your adventure have a Wisdom score of 12 and your Referee doesn't feel like making everything a rolled skill contest, he might just say your attempt at Charisma + Disguise will have a target number of 12.

Skills Not Listed

The skill list is fairly comprehensive, but is not exhaustive by any means. Referees may fill in any gaps with ideas of his own in reaction to the ideas of his players. For instance, although it's not specifically listed, if a player wants his character to be good at doing impressions of famous people, go ahead and allow him to list "impressions" as a skill even though he could have taken "entertainment" instead and had a broader application of his expertise. It's his character and his concept.

Another common type of new skill are those meant to represent specific professions. For instance, a player who worked for a mining company before starting a life of adventure might want to list "mining" as a skill rather than taking expertise in "science."

Some skills are rather broad and others are more narrowly focused. Individual Referees may wish to alter the skill list to give more resolution to certain types of skills. For instance, the "science" skill is very broad indeed, allowing skill checks for all types of science, whether environmental, geological, physical, astrophysical, biological, xenobiological, etc. in nature. Some Referees may want to make individual entries for these or require a character to choose a field of specialization when he takes expertise in one of these broad skills.

STARTING SKILLS

After choosing your character class, roll the appropriate table below. Note your expertise on your character sheet with a +1 next to it.

ARISTOCRAT

1D8	SKILL
1	Bureaucracy
2	Business
3	Cultures
4	Haggling
5	History
6	Persuasion
7	Religion
8	Choose one

MERCENARY

1D8	SKILL
1	Athletics
2	Demolitions
3	Drive
4	Martial Arts
5	Medic
6	Perception
7	Survival
8	Choose one

PILOT

1D8	SKILL
1	Astrogation
2	Computers
3	Drive
4	Navigation
5	Starpilot
6	Technician
7	Zero-G
8	Choose one

STAR KNIGHT

1D8	SKILL
1	Athletics
2	History
3	Martial Arts
4	Medic
5	Perception
6	Persuasion
7	Religion
8	Choose one

ALIEN BRUTE

1D8	SKILL
1	Agronomy
2	Animals
3	Athletics
4	Perception
5	Stealth
6	Survival
7	Technician
8	Choose one

ALIEN MYSTIC

1D8	SKILL
1	Cultures
2	History
3	Language
4	Medic
5	Religion
6	Science
7	Zero-G
8	Choose one

ROBOT

1D8	SKILL
1	Computers
2	History
3	Language
4	Robotics
5	Perception
6	Science
7	Technician
8	Choose one

ADDITIONAL SKILLS

In addition to the skill gained by character class, players will also start play with expertise in one more skill chosen or determined randomly (Referee's choice) from the table on the next page. If a character's Intelligence modifier is +1, he may begin play with +1 expertise in a third skill. Reroll duplicates; no skill will begin with more than +1 expertise at the start of play.

D100	SKILL	NOTES
01-02	Agronomy	*farming in challenging environments of other worlds*
03-05	Animals	*breeding, training, riding, and handling animals*
06-07	Artist	*painting, sculpting, drawing, composing, etc.*
08-10	Astrogation	*plotting interstellar jumps, operating FTL drive*
11-13	Athletics	*running, jumping, climbing, swimming, acrobatics, etc.*
14-16	Bureaucracy	*run a political position, town, outpost, etc.*
17-19	Business	*run a business, manage finances, etc.*
20-22	Computers	*operation, programming, repairing, interfacing, etc.*
23-25	Cultures	*alien, criminal, spacer, or other specific culture*
26-28	Demolitions	*setting or defusing demolition charges*
29-31	Disguise	*change appearance to appear differently to onlookers*
32-34	Drive	*driving or piloting hover, ground, water, or air vehicles*
35-37	Entertainment	*singing, dancing, musical instruments, storytelling, etc.*
38-40	Forgery	*create convincing documents to fool authorities*
41-43	Gambling	*games of chance, estimating the odds, etc.*
44-46	Haggling	*negotiating a fair exchange or one in your favor*
47-49	History	*ancient or recent history*
50-52	Language	*adds to the number of languages the character knows*
53-55	Martial Arts*	*acquisition of martial maneuvers*
56-58	Medic	*diagnosing, treating with medicine, surgery, etc.*
59-61	Navigation	*direction sense, following a map, trail blazing, etc.*
62-64	Perception	*use of the five senses to notice details, or gut-instincts.*
65-67	Persuasion	*seduction, charm, wit, leadership, con, deception, etc.*
68-70	Psychology	*understanding and helping/manipulating minds*
71-73	Religion	*knowledge of theology and philosophy*
74-76	Robotics	*repairing, engineering, modifying robots*
77-79	Science	*research, classification and discovery, etc.*
80-82	Security	*bypass modern security systems or mechanical locks*
83-85	Sleight of Hand	*pickpocket, stage magic, misdirection, palming, etc.*
86-88	Starpilot	*piloting a starship, starfighter, transport, etc.*
89-91	Stealth	*sneaking or remaining unseen*
92-94	Survival	*foraging, tracking, shelter, fires, filtering toxins, etc.*
95-97	Technician	*repairing mechanical/electrical devices, vehicles, etc.*
98-00	Zero-G	*maneuver around in no gravity*

** Martial Arts is handled specially in these rules.*

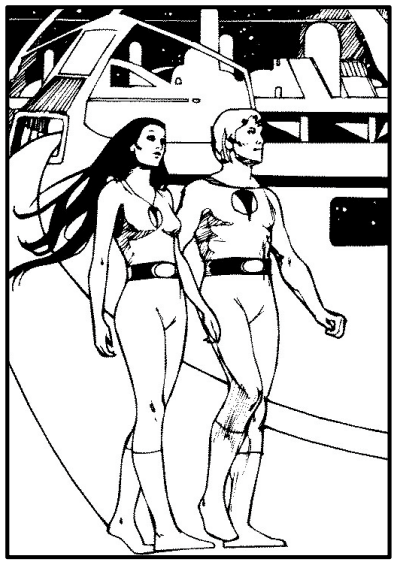
MARTIAL MANEUVERS

The Martial Arts skill is the only combat-related skill in this system. There is never a "martial arts" skill check rolled. Instead, players receive one of the following Martial Maneuvers for each level of expertise. The player must roll to see which maneuver he receives (reroll duplicate results).

D20	MANEUVER
1	Accuracy – Receive +1 To Hit opponents while unarmed. This doesn't apply if holding anything in your hands.
2	Aggressive Fighting – Receive a +1 bonus to unarmed combat damage.
3	Awareness – Character is surprised only on a 1 in 6.
4	Blind Fighting – Receive no penalties when fighting against enemies you cannot see, as long as you can at least hear.
5	Block – This allows a Saving Throw against the martial maneuvers of others to avoid disarms, find weakness, hold, nerve strike, or take down.
6	Defensive Fighting – Receive a bonus to Armor Class equal to -1 [+1] as long as you're wearing Light Armor or no armor.
7	Disarm – This attack causes no damage but if successful the victim must drop whatever is in his hand.
8	Find Weakness – This attack causes no damage but uncovers a weakness; next attack (only) will cause an additional +1d6 damage. Usable 1/day.
9	Hold – This attack causes no damage but places victim in a restraining hold. He may break free in subsequent rounds on a 2 in 6.
10	Improved Landing – Reduces by half any damage caused by falls.
11	Leap Attack – Leap at foe up to 10 ft and make an attack against him (using any attack based maneuvers, if desired), end adjacent.
12	Meditation – Enter trance for 1 hour and recover 1d6 hit points, 1/day.
13	Nerve Strike – This attack causes no damage, but if successful paralyzes one limb for 1d6 rounds.
14	Rapid Strike – One extra unarmed attack per round (no martial maneuvers).
15	Runner – Add +2 to your movement rate while in combat.
16	Swiftness – Receive +1 to initiative rolls while unarmed.
17	Take Down – This attack causes no damage but if successful knocks opponent prone on ground next to you.
18	Toughness – You receive +2 to your hit point total.
19	Whirlwind – Make one attack roll to damage all foes in melee range 1/day. You may not add maneuvers to this, only a normal unarmed attack.
20	Choose one

EXPERT

Some characters make their way in life by piloting stunt fighters, shooting things, or talking. The expert accomplishes his successes through application of talent and training.



LEVEL	XP	HD	BHB	ST
1	0	1	+0	15
2	1,250	1+1	+0	14
3	2,500	2	+1	13
4	5,000	2+1	+1	12
5	10,000	3	+2	11
6	20,000	3+1	+2	10
7	40,000	4	+3	9
8	80,000	4+1	+3	8
9	160,000	5	+4	7
10	320,000	5+1	+4	6

WEAPON/ARMOR RESTRICTIONS – Experts may use clubs, daggers, firearms, grenades, laser pistols, mono-daggers, mono-swords, staffs, and swords. They can wear Light Armor, but do not use shields.

SAVING THROW – Experts receive a +1 bonus to Saving Throws against anything that occurs as a direct result of a failure of one of their own skill checks, as long as they have some level of expertise in that skill.

XP BONUS FOR INTELLIGENCE – Experts with an Intelligence of 13 or 14 receive a 5% bonus to earned XP, while those with 15 or higher receive a 10% bonus.

TALENT – When the Expert is made, roll 4 skills in which he has natural talent. Begin play with +1 expertise in each of these skills. This takes place of the class skill all players get. The player may then receive his additional skill (or two if Intelligence is high enough) normally.

TRAINING – Experts are masters of skill. Each level, in addition to the +1 expertise in a skill all characters receive, the Expert repeats that and gains a second +1 expertise in a different skill. Experts are still limited to the maximum +5 expertise in any skill, but should acquire a broad array of skills.

APPRENTICE – At 8th level the Expert gains a 1st level apprentice Expert eager to learn his trade. He will adventure with the Expert and will be loyal to him.

SKILL SOFT IMPLANT

Some characters eager to gain knowledge and expertise purchase Skill Soft Implants. They go under the scalp, protected by a flap of artificial synth-flesh grafted to the character's skin, complete with its own length of naturally growing hair. The implant provides a slot into which the character may load purchased Skill Soft Chips. A character installs the chip and must spend 24 hours getting over a bad headache as the chip aligns to his neural patterns (exception: Robot characters immediately gain use of the chip). After this, the character gains access to the knowledge in the chip. A character might own several chips, but may only have one implant which can receive only one chip at a time.

The expertise bonus provided by the chip varies based on whether the skill in question is purely knowledge-based or requires talent or muscle memory (which the chip cannot provide). The expertise bonus does not stack with any expertise the character himself possesses; players use whichever is greater. The implant itself costs 600 Credits, but the chip costs vary. See the table below.

SKILL SOFT CHIP	EXPERTISE	COST*	SKILL SOFT CHIP	EXPERTISE	COST*
Agronomy	+1 to +4	25	Language	+1 to +4	25
Animals	+1 to +3	50	Martial Arts	n/a	--
Artist	+1 to +2	50	Medic	+1 to +2	50
Astrogation	+1 to +4	50	Navigation	+1 to +3	25
Athletics	+1 to +2	50	Perception	+1 to +2	50
Bureaucracy	+1 to +3	25	Persuasion	+1 to +2	50
Business	+1 to +3	25	Psychology	+1 to +3	50
Computers	+1 to +4	25	Religion	+1 to +3	20
Cultures	+1 to +4	20	Robotics	+1 to +4	25
Demolitions	+1 to +3	50	Science	+1 to +4	50
Disguise	+1 to +3	50	Security	+1 to +3	50
Drive	+1 to +2	25	Sleight of Hand	+1 to +2	50
Entertainment	+1 to +2	50	Starpilot	+1 to +3	50
Forgery	+1 to +2	50	Stealth	+1 to +3	25
Gambling	+1 to +2	25	Survival	+1 to +3	25
Haggling	+1 to +2	50	Technician	+1 to +4	25
History	+1 to +4	20	Zero-G	+1 to +2	50

* Cost is a multiple of the expertise bonus from the specific Skill Soft Chip.

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REFEREES LOOKING TO ADD A LITTLE MORE FLAVOR TO THEIR PLAYERS' EXPERIENCE OR PLAYERS WANTING TO DIFFERENTIATE THEIR MERCENARY FROM THE OTHER MERCENARIES IN THE GROUP MAY ENJOY THIS SYSTEM.

THE HYPERSPACE MESSENGER IS A SERIES OF SHORT SUPPLEMENTS DESIGNED FOR USE WITH THE WHITE STAR ROLE-PLAYING GAME, THOUGH IT USES SIMPLE CONCEPTS WHICH CAN EASILY BE INTEGRATED INTO ANY OSR-STYLE SCIENCE FICTION GAME. THE GOAL IS TO DELIVER QUALITY SUPPLEMENTS EXPLORING A SINGLE NEW CONCEPT ALL WITHIN THE SPAN OF ONLY SIX-TO-TWELVE PAGES.