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ALTERNITY®

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game Accessory

MINDWALKING [A GUIDE TO PSIONICS]



JD Wiker



ALTERNITY®

MINDWALKING | A GUIDE TO PSIONICS |

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	3	New Flaw Descriptions	41
The Psionic Paradigm	3	Mental Combat	43
Psionics in the Real World	3	Chapter 3: Psionic Campaigns	46
Psionics in Alternity	4	Psionic Consciousness	46
Chapter 2: Revised Rules	8	Campaign Tone	51
Mindwalker Heroes	8	Chapter 4: Gamemaster Tools	69
Using Mental Abilities	9	Psionic Equipment	69
Psionic Skill Description	11	Supporting Cast	73
Constitution Skills	11	Creatures	77
Intelligence Skills	15	Other Manifestations	81
Will Skills	20	Psionic Phenomena and Artifacts	84
Personality Skills	28	Customizing the Campaign Model	90
Alien Psionic Skills	35	Troubleshooting Psionics	92
New Non-Psionic Skills	39	Mind Games	95
New Perk Descriptions	40		

FOREWORD

by JD Wiker

Want to play with my toys?

About halfway through this project I realized that it could never include everything necessary to match the image every gamer has in his or her head of what psionics should be able to do. Some people want Professor X of the X-Men. Some want Luke Skywalker. Some want the Amazing Kreskin.

So I decided that, rather than creating a "complete book of psionics"—which would, in time, prove to be a misnomer anyway—that I would create a sort of "psionic toybox" for gamers.

When we play with toys, we get ideas about all the things that we could do with them. They spark our creativity. If we ever saw the design specs—what the toys were *supposed* to be able to do—we'd

probably laugh. And we'd go right ahead and play with the toys however we liked.

So these toys, these psionic toys, are meant to be played with in any way that sparks your personal creativity.

You may not like all the toys. You may wish the toybox had more in it. But there is nothing stopping you from adding new toys, disassembling the old ones, throwing away the parts you don't want, and putting the rest together however you like.

Anyway, these toys are yours now. Whatever you do with them, there is no wrong way to play with them. Take away what you feel is too much. Add whatever you feel is missing.

And above all, have fun.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This book is about how the world would change if some people could read minds, or see the future, or move objects just by thinking. This is a book about "psionics," the ability to do things using skills ordinary people either do not have, or haven't yet realized the potential to use. The point of this book is not to address whether or not psi ability actually exists—because in the ALTERNITY® game, it can. The point of this book is to explain what players can do with it, and how Gamemasters can develop it in their campaign settings.

The astute reader will quickly notice that this book is not aimed at either the STAR*DRIVE® or DARK*MATTER™ campaign settings. Gamemasters and players can use *Mindwalking* in any ALTERNITY setting—not just the published ones. By extension, then, this book is also not a handbook of the fraal—though of course, players of fraal heroes will find much of this information useful. Gamemasters and players should easily be able to adapt the concepts in here to any campaign setting they choose.

Some Definitions

The best place to start is with an understanding of the terms used to describe psionics.

- **Psi, Psionics:** the phenomenon of psionic ability
- **Psion:** a person possessing psionic ability
- **Psionic:** of or pertaining to psionic ability
- **Psychic:** a real-world term for a person possessing psionic ability
- **Mindwalker:** a psion possessing unlimited psionic ability
- **Talent:** a psion with limited psionic ability

THE PSIONIC PARADIGM

Psionic people are very much like non-psionic people in two major respects. First, they want to provide food, clothing, and shelter for themselves and their loved ones. Second, they want to prosper, if at all possible, so that they needn't rush around so much trying to accomplish that first goal.

Other than that, someone who can read minds is very much like any ordinary skilled worker. Both engage in a form of barter, trading applications of their ability for goods, services, or just old-fashioned cash. The better they are at what they do, the more goods, services, or cash they can get—and the better they can fulfill their goals of survival and prosperity.

But psions have a couple of advantages over those not gifted with such a talent. First, psions can do what they do without any physical evidence. Reading minds and seeing faraway places or future events is essentially invisible. Moving objects or starting fires with one's mind leaves no fingerprints, no chemical residue. So the psion enjoys a certain degree of anonymity.

Second, a psion can do things faster. Given the right tools, anyone can learn someone else's secrets, see into high-security installations, and even move objects at a distance. But it can take a long time—sometimes years. A psion can do these things in minutes, or even seconds.

PSIONICS IN THE REAL WORLD

Psi ability has been noted on the planet Earth in one form or another since the dawn of history. But serious study has only begun relatively recently, for a variety of reasons. Until the last several decades, psi was still considered a manifestation of the paranormal—along with ghosts and magic—and treated with the same skepticism or, worse, suspicion. And in some of humanity's less advanced cultures, suspicion could prove fatal, which of course had a discouraging effect on potential psi research.

Scientific study of psi still suffers from a lack of support. Despite a large number of institutes participating in psi research—including government and military agencies—the scientific community at large dismisses the possibility of the existence of psychic phenomena. Detailed tests are labeled "inconclusive" or "flawed," the results "flukes" or "hoaxes."

Still, human beings have proven exceptionally eager to believe in unseen forces at work, influencing their lives and—in special cases—able to be manipulated by people with the right training, a certain genetic gift, or good old-fashioned luck. "Psychic hotlines" offer advice on decisions, approbation of lifestyles, and even glimpses into the future. Science, business, military, and government leaders occasionally admit to relying on "intuitive flashes," which in some cases prove correct.

Psi is still largely in what can be called a "skepticism" stage of

awareness. In other words, despite over a century of research with positive findings, a large percentage of the scientific community refuses to accept the idea that psi is an observable, measurable, and repeatable phenomenon. And despite over a century of such research, a significant percentage of the scientific community refuses to believe that it *isn't*.

History of Psychic Research

Though the currently accepted term, "psi," was not coined until 1946, it is clear that it can be applied to a wide variety of mysterious events since the dawn of humankind. Mysticism, prophecy, miracles, and paranormal experi-

ences all can be explained at least partially by psi.

Current standards of scientific observation, measurement, and repetition have been used to study psychic phenomena since the late 19th century, to varying degrees of commitment and success.

Some highlights of research into psi include:

PSIONICS IN ALTERNITY

Regardless of whether humanity as a whole believes in current psi theories or not, psionics exist in the ALTERNITY game. And any focus on psionics will affect an ALTERNITY campaign, even if only for a single game. The better the Gamemaster is prepared for that,

the more interesting and entertaining the game will be for everyone. Likewise, the better prepared the players are to encounter or use psionics, the more they will appreciate the Gamemaster's preparation.

Types of Psionic Characters

Psionic characters come in three main varieties. The first are talents, who are ordinary Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, or Tech Op characters who also happen to possess a psionic broad skill and one or two psionic specialty skills. Talents pay 1 more point than the listed cost to purchase these skills, and can improve them at the normal cost—though one of the specialty

- 1840 Physiology professor Joseph Buchanan conducts experiments in psychometry.
- 1876 Physicist William Barrett experiments with paranormal phenomena, culminating in the founding of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882.
- 1884 Professor Charles Richet tests clairvoyance by asking subjects to guess cards hidden in sealed envelopes.
- 1885 American Society for Psychical Research studies telepathy.
- 1901 Academics visiting Versailles describe postcognitive experiences in which they saw the city as it was in the 1770s, and interacted with the people they met.
- 1919–22 Researcher Gustav Pagenstecher conducts experiments in psychometry.
- 1920–22 University of Groningen, the Netherlands, performs a series of tests involving clairvoyance.
- 1930 Parapsychologist J. B. Rhine continues Charles Richet's work, conducting thousands of tests for clairvoyance and telepathy.
- 1934 Rhine begins studying psychokinesis in controlled conditions.
- 1940s Electrician Semyon Kirlian invents technique for photographing high-frequency, high-voltage, low-amperage electrical fields believed to be biofields.
- 1951 Medium Eileen Garret founds the Parapsychology Foundation.
- 1957 Parapsychological Association founded.
- 1960s Physicist Helmut Schmidt devises "electronic coin-tosser" to test theory of micro-psychokinesis (the ability to effect minute changes in processes not normally visible to the eye).
- 1962 Researchers at the Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York test for telepathic ability by attempting to transmit mental images to dreaming subjects.
- 1962 Radio and television executive Robert Monroe creates a research and development group to study out-of-body experiences.
- 1966 Over 200 people experience premonitions and precognitive flashes of a coal landslide in Aberfan, Wales. The disaster claims 144 lives.
- 1968 Housewife Nina Kulagina demonstrates ability to move objects, impress images on undeveloped film, and "will" a frog's heart to stop.
- 1970s Physicists Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff conduct hundreds of experiments in remote viewing at Stanford Research Institute.
- 1971 Psychic Uri Geller demonstrates ESP abilities to scientists at Stanford Research Institute.
- 1979 The Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) group uses modern engineering science techniques to study psi phenomena, including remote viewing.

Suggested Reading

The Conscious Universe, by Dean Radin
Mind Over Matter, by Loyd Auerbach
More Than Human, by Theodore Sturgeon (fiction)
Stranger in a Strange Land, by Robert Heinlein (fiction)
Firestarter, Carrie, and The Dead Zone, by Stephen King (fiction)
Dark Genesis, by J. Gregory Keyes (fiction)

Suggested Viewing

The Haunting
The Fury
Akira
The Star Wars Trilogy
Millennium
The X-Files
Babylon 5 (especially "Mind War," "Ship of Tears," and "A Tragedy of Telepaths")

skills can rise no higher than rank 6, and the other can rise no higher than rank 3. A talent also receives psionic energy points—used to power psionic skills—equal to one-half his or her Will score, rounded up.

The second kind of psionic character is the Mindwalker. Mindwalker is a profession, like Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, or Tech Op. Just like those other careers, the Mindwalker has special training and abilities. Unlike those careers, though, Mindwalkers are possessed of mental powers that set them apart not only from characters of those careers, but from psionic talents as well. Mindwalkers are not limited in the number or rank of psionic broad and specialty skills they can buy. In essence, the difference between talents and Mindwalkers is that talents are limited in their psionic ability, while true Mindwalkers are not.

Technically speaking, a third variety exists: the Diplomat-Mindwalker. As Diplomat characters also have a secondary career, the character could also be a Mindwalker. Diplomat-Mindwalkers may purchase psionic skills, and function exactly the same as ordinary Mindwalkers. They just happen to be Diplomats

as well. Of course, this option is only possible in campaigns where Mindwalkers are allowed.

The difference in actual play is also very clear. Talents will have a decidedly small range of psionic "tools" from which to choose, while Mindwalkers will have a much larger pool of abilities. As an analogy, a talent is like a Tech Op with a gun. A Mindwalker is like a Combat Spec, with a lot of guns. Big ones.

Examples of talents, Mindwalkers, and Diplomat-Mindwalkers can be found in *Chapter 3: Psionic Campaigns*.

Psionics in STAR*DRIVE

In the future, psions are an accepted part of everyday life. Psionic individuals live, eat, and work alongside non-psions. The fraal are the best-known psionic race, and have expended time, resources, and energy in their efforts to encourage development in races displaying psionic ability.

A psionic character in the STAR*DRIVE setting is a valuable commodity. Psions are not required to display any special identification, and so can move largely unmolested among the stars. While they must abide by

the laws of the societies with which they interact, psion laws are fairly relaxed.

Several mindwalking careers are detailed in the *Player's Handbook*, and psionics in STAR*DRIVE is explained a bit more thoroughly in the STAR*DRIVE campaign setting book. In addition, some career packages, supporting cast characters, creatures, skills, and items in this book are aimed at STAR*DRIVE campaigns—though they can be adapted to nearly any setting.

Psionics in DARK*MATTER

In the DARK*MATTER setting, psionics is an unknown factor. While it is certain that psionic individuals exist, a skeptical populace largely discounts them as "fakes" or "kooks." Psions learn to use their abilities on their own, or with the occasional mentor—and nearly always in secrecy. Psions who reveal their abilities run the risk of capture, study, and enforced servitude—or worse.

Psionic characters in the DARK*MATTER setting are not so powerful as they could be, largely due to the fact that psionics is an art in its infancy, and there are no true Mindwalkers yet among the general populace. Talents exist, but suffer from a lack of advanced training. But each has the potential to expand his or her abilities, sometimes to frightening extremes. Most psionic phenomena are unexplained, or simply misunderstood. Those with the resources to investigate usually have selfish motives, and rarely share their information.

The skills and careers available to DARK*MATTER psions are covered in the DARK*MATTER campaign setting book. Also, Gamemasters wishing to add a bit more mystery to their campaigns will find that the career packages, characters, creatures, skills, and items in this book can be used in DARK*MATTER

campaigns with little adjustment. After all, discovering things that modern science doesn't quite explain is a major focus of a DARK•MATTER campaign.

How Psionics Affects ALTERNITY Heroes

Psionic characters are effectively the "wizards" of the setting. They can see things no one else can see, and do things no one else can do. A psion can tell what an opponent is thinking, communicate that information to his or her companions, and stun the opponent into unconsciousness. While other kinds of characters can do much the same things, psions can do so without any visible or audible sign. Effectively, they are working magic. In less psionically aware cultures, in fact, a psionic talent would be taken for a mystic or shaman, while a Mindwalker would be considered a powerful sorcerer.



How does having a "wizard" in the mix affect the game? Gamemasters will want to review the player's skill choices, for one—some psionic skills, if used heavily, can easily deconstruct a Gamemaster's carefully planned adventure. For example, think of mysteries or thrillers like *The Maltese Falcon* or *Seven*. The mystery and thrill disappear pretty quickly if one hero knows where the priceless treasure can be found or who the killer is, right? Furthermore, players of psionic heroes should be aware that psionic abilities can make non-psions seem extraneous. The players and Gamemaster should be ready to adjust the psion's abilities in order to compensate.

To some players, knowing all the answers up front is an attractive proposition; not everyone likes solving mysteries the hard way. Players should remember that psionics is of limited use in physical situations, however, and despite a broad range of psychic powers they must still expend psionic energy points to use their abilities. In many ways, these points are like bullets in a Combat Spec's gun—except that it takes much, much longer to "reload."

How Psionics Affects Supporting Cast Characters

Psionic supporting cast characters have the same advantages in an adventure that the heroes do. If a psionic hero can mentally determine who people are and how they are involved in the scenario, so too can their psionic opponents discover who the heroes are and how much they know. The villains can use *clairvoyance* and *precognition*, levitate or morph themselves, create mental illusions or start physical fires. Players armed with these abilities will certainly take every advantage—so Gamemasters should feel completely justified in using the same tactics against the heroes!

On the other side of the coin, psionics used against the heroes can be extremely frustrating for the players. An opponent who can implant mental suggestions to let him go free is going to be no fun at all. Their heroes are liable to shoot that character on sight when next they meet, rather than let him pull the same trick twice. Consequently Gamemasters will have to take some precautions to keep such an irritating character alive, if the character is important to the adventure. (This book will explore some pitfalls of psionic characters, and how the Gamemaster can avoid them, in *Chapter 4: Gamemaster Tools*.)

How Psionics Affects Creatures and Aliens

The STAR*DRIVE setting prominently features psionic aliens (the fraal) and includes others somewhat less prominently (evrem and gardhyi). It also includes a few psionic creatures of a purely bestial nature (sirens and Moore's sharks). On the surface, these creatures and aliens would seem to make an interesting curve to throw at the players occasionally, but with a little imagination, they can be so much more—in any ALTERNITY setting.

Psionic aliens are occasionally challenging to the heroes because they don't necessarily follow the same social guidelines about the use of psionics as do the heroes. They might read minds or plant suggestions as casually as a human might shoplift or wear a swimsuit. When confronted with their antisocial behavior, they can often escape punishment by claiming ignorance of "alien" laws.

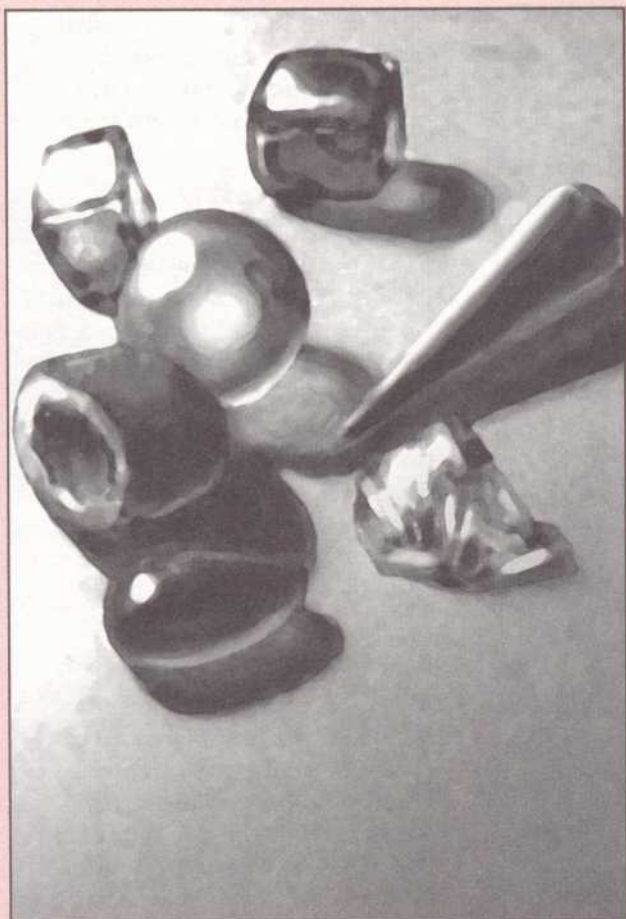
Creatures behave even more enigmatically than sentient species. Modern human science cannot explain all the behavior patterns of Earth's various fauna. So how much more mystifying are the behavior patterns of telepathic insects? Or electrokinetic birds?

How do they make use of their psionics when they hunt or defend their territory?

Also, in some settings these creatures will be cataloged in the planet's environmental index—thus warning the wise visitor (while not discouraging tourism). But there are usually hundreds of thousands of different animal species on a planet, not including the ones that have yet to be discovered. And what if by some unusual coincidence the creature appears on a different planet, perhaps carried unwittingly in cargo or luggage? What effect would a psionic creature have on an unprotected ecosystem?

Psionic Powers, Phenomena, and Artifacts

Psionic ability need not necessarily stop at the animal kingdom. Psionic power could collect or reside in vegetable or mineral



matter, waiting for a specific kind of stimulus—or a Mindwalker—to draw it forth.

In *ALTERNITY* campaigns featuring psionics, it is possible that certain kinds of fruit or vegetables could temporarily instill psionic power in a non-psion, that certain places enhance or inhibit psionic ability, or that artifacts made of a specific kind of stone could possess strange psionic powers—perhaps even a kind of sentience.

With all but the most capable of characters, such psionic phenomena should be a chimera that they can glimpse but rarely understand. Psionic artifacts should be every bit as enigmatic as Stonehenge or the Great Pyramids. And psionic powers—even those possessed by the heroes—should always seem just a little deeper than they appear, like a computer without an instruction manual.

A New Dimension in Science Fiction Gaming

For some players, the consensual reality aspect of roleplaying is easy to visualize. They fully grasp that psionic ability makes their hero not necessarily better, but decidedly different. They see psionics as another way to accomplish what their hero might be able to do physically anyway, and play accordingly. They don't rely on their psionic skills—or ignore them—any more than they do their other skills.

Other players see psionics as a way to "turbo-charge" their hero, to make him



or her more versatile, able to handle any emergency. This is perfectly acceptable—provided the player doesn't use that hero's "super-capability" to steal the limelight from the rest of the group. Even extremely powerful heroes should continue to be team players.

Players who wish to use these rules to create high-powered heroes should be prepared for the Gamemaster to also use these rules to provide high-powered opponents. The other players may find this frustrating—especially if their heroes aren't of a comparable power level.

If a player doesn't understand why it has to be this way, the Gamemaster should point out the following "design specifications" for using psionics in an *ALTERNITY* campaign:

1. Psionics exist in *ALTERNITY* to give players new worlds to explore.
2. Psionics should help players finish adventures with style. But they should still have to try.
3. Psionics should help the Gamemaster tell interesting stories—not crush the heroes.

The rest of *Mindwalking: A Guide to Psionics* is about understanding and applying these ideas.

CHAPTER 2: REVISED RULES

Not all of the psionic skills listed below are meant for every campaign setting. A player who wishes to create a psionic hero should first consult with the Gamemaster—both for approval, and to find out which rules the Gamemaster wishes to use, which to watch, and which to avoid.

MINDWALKER HEROES

The rules for generating Mindwalker heroes use the basic rules presented in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation* in the *Player's Handbook*. This supplement adds to those rules and, in some cases, updates them. Though many of the rules remain the same, players and Gamemaster will wish to review even the old skills, as some have changed slightly, and others have acquired new rank benefits.

A new supplemental hero sheet, designed specifically for psionic heroes, is printed at the back of this book. Future *ALTERNITY* products may contain even more new psionic skills, so a blank line is provided at the end of each group.

Species

As long as your Gamemaster agrees, a hero of any species can choose to be a Mindwalker, Diplomat-Mindwalker, or talent. Fraal receive special bonuses related to the Mindwalker profession; see their description in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation* in the *Player's Handbook* for details.

Career

Mindwalker careers focus on different ways to utilize mental powers. Some possible Mindwalker careers are listed in the *Player's Handbook*, and there are several more in Chapter 3 of this book.

Profession

Mindwalker is a profession, just as Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, and Tech Op are. Mindwalkers are a select group of characters who are gifted with great mental powers and trained to use them. These individuals may be extremely rare, depending on the setting, and some may be trained in a particular tradition.

Mindwalkers must have the following minimum scores in these Abilities: Will 11, Intelligence 9, Constitution 9.

Mindwalkers have these benefits:

Action Check Score Increase: A Mindwalker's action check score is increased by 1 point.

Situation Bonus: Choose one psionic broad skill. This broad skill and all of its specialty skills receive a situation die improvement of 1 step. The broad skill now has a base situation die of +d0, and all of its specialty skills have a base situation die of -d4.

Note: Diplomats in a campaign that allows Mindwalkers can use this profession as their secondary profession (see *Chapter 2: Hero Creation* in the *Player's Handbook*).

Broad Skills

Psionic broad skills provide a Mindwalker with a basic knowledge of and proficiency in the use of mental abilities.

The psionic broad skills are Biokinesis (Constitution), ESP (Intelligence), Telekinesis (Will), and Telepathy (Personality). This book also presents one new broad skill—Psychoportation—which is based on Will. No psionic broad skill can be used untrained.

Specialty Skills

Psionic specialty skills provide a Mindwalker with detailed knowledge and training in the use of a specific aspect of the broad skills they're associated with. Only a character who possesses the broad skill can use its associated psionic specialty skills, although some specialty skills can't be used untrained. Each rank purchased in a specialty skill increases the potency of that skill, making it easier to use and generally more powerful.

Rank Benefits

Several psionic specialty skills provide special benefits to characters who achieve higher ranks. However, none of these rank benefits can be purchased ahead of time, as indicated by the ⊗ symbol preceding their descriptions. (See "Purchasing Rank Benefits" in *Chapter 4: Skills* in the *Player's Handbook* for more information.)

Purchasing Psionic Skills

A player must use his or her Mindwalker hero's starting allocation of skill points to purchase psionic broad and specialty skills, as well as any other skills desired. The Mindwalker must make some hard choices between

skills that will be helpful in the physical world and those that will take advantage of his or her mental abilities.

The "Cost" column on the table on page 10 gives the full price a Mindwalker must pay to acquire a certain skill. The player must follow all other rules concerning the purchase of skills, as detailed in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation* in the *Player's Handbook*, when creating his or her hero.

Psionic Energy

Because the use of psionic skills requires a lot of mental energy, a psionic character is not able to use these all the time. This limitation is reflected in the number of psionic energy points a character has.

Each Mindwalker starts with psionic energy points equal to his or her Will score. A talent or a Diplomat with the Mindwalker secondary profession has psionic energy points equal to one-half his or her Will score (rounded up). There's a place to mark this information on the supplemental hero sheet printed in the back of this book.

Psionic Energy Points

Talent	.5 × Will
Diplomat (Mindwalker)	.5 × Will
Mindwalker	1 × Will
Fraal	1.5 × Will

Achievement Benefit: Increasing Psionic Energy Points

Characters with psionic abilities may, over time, improve the number of energy points they have to power those abilities. The following table provides the guidelines to adjudicate this:

Career	Cost	Max	Lvl
Mindwalker	3	6	3rd
Diplomat (Mindwalker)	4	3	5th
Talent	6	3	6th

A character may add only 1 point at any given level. A Mindwalker, for example, may add 1 point at third level, another at fourth, another at fifth, and so on until reaching the maximum of 6 additional points.

Talents

If your Gamemaster doesn't have a place for Mindwalkers in his or her campaign setting but doesn't object to some use of psionic abilities, or if you want to create a psionic hero who isn't a Mindwalker, your hero can be a talent.

In most respects, a talent is created the same way as any other non-Mindwalker hero: Begin by selecting a species, a career, and a profession from among those available in the campaign setting, exactly as outlined in *Chapter 2* of the *Player's Handbook*.

Skill selection takes a slightly different course, because a talent is entitled to purchase one psionic broad skill in addition to any of the other skills described in *Chapter 4: Skills of the Player's Handbook*.

The talent is allowed to purchase as many as two psionic specialty skills, either during hero creation or at any later point. He or she may improve one of those specialty skills to as high as rank 6, and the other one to rank 3.

A talent pays 1 point more than the listed cost to purchase a psionic skill and has a number of psionic energy points equal to one-half of the talent's Will score, rounded up.

USING MENTAL ABILITIES

Psionic skills work just like other skills in the game. A player's hero can use a psionic skill in place of any other action (assuming he or she has psionic energy points available).

Whether a psionic skill check succeeds or not, the character suffers a loss of psionic energy points with every attempted mental action:

Action Energy Lost

Critical Failure result	3
Broad skill, success or failure	2
Specialty skill, success or failure	1

A character who runs out of psionic energy points can't use psionic abilities before recovering at least some points. (See "Psionic Energy Recovery" below.)

If a character uses a psionic ability and loses more points than are available (for instance, getting a Critical Failure result when the character only had 1 point left), he or she suffers 1 point of fatigue damage for each point that wasn't available to spend.

A character must have 2 points available to attempt the use of a broad skill.

Extended Duration

Many psionic skills remain in effect for a time after they are activated, without the need for the character to make more skill checks to keep the power "on." In the descriptions that follow, these skills are identified by the line "Extended duration."

If a character attempting to use one of these skills makes a

successful skill check, the power or benefit of the skill goes into effect at the start of the phase immediately following the skill check. It remains in effect automatically for the remainder of the current round and throughout all of the next round.

The effect of the skill can be further extended if the character is willing and able to spend psionic energy points to keep it going. This decision to keep the skill active or to let the power lapse must be made at the start of a round—before any action checks are rolled. The time unit increase is based upon the skill rank the character has achieved in the appropriate specialty skill.

Rank	Time Interval
1-3	One round
4-7	One minute
8-11	Ten minutes
12	One hour

Note that these benefits are in addition to any other rank benefits associated with a given specialty skill. They apply only to specialty skills that benefit from extended duration.

Visual Range

A number of psionic skills are listed as having a visual range. For these skills, the psionics-user must have a direct line of

sight to the intended target, and be able to perceive the target clearly. Extrapolation of the target's position is not allowed. A character can use binoculars or other such devices to establish a clear line of sight.

In cases where it is unclear whether or not the psion can see the target, the Gamemaster should call for an Awareness-perception skill check. This does not require an action.

For detection distances and modifiers to a character's Awareness check, see TABLES G7: DETECTION MODIFIERS and G8: VISUAL DETECTION RANGES in Chapter 3: Gamemasters in Action in the Gamemaster Guide.

PSIONIC SKILLS

Constitution Skills

Skill Name	Cost
<i>Biokinesis</i>	6
Bio-armor	3
Bioweapon	3
<u>Clamber</u>	2
Control metabolism	2
Heal	4
Intangibility	4
Morph	4
Rejuvenate	3
<u>Shatter</u>	3
Transfer damage	2

Intelligence Skills

Skill Name	Cost
ESP	5
<i>Battle mind</i>	4
Clairaudience	2
Clairvoyance	2
<u>Dream Hunt</u>	3
Empathy	1
Mind reading	3
Navcognition	3
Postcognition	3
Precognition	4
Psychometry	3
Sensitivity	2

Will Skills

Skill Name	Cost
<i>Psychoportation</i>	7
Alter speed	4
Apportation	6
<i>Dimension walk*</i>	6
Duplicate	6
Teleportation	5
Timeslip	6
Telekinesis	6
<i>Cryokinetics</i>	3
<i>Electrokinetics</i>	3
<i>Kinetic blow</i>	3
<i>Kinetic shield</i>	2
Levitation	2
Photokinetics	1
Psychokinetics	3
<i>Pyrokinetics</i>	4
<u>Sheya's Clutch</u>	5

Personality Skills

Skill Name	Cost
<i>Telepathy</i>	5
Contact	3
<i>Datalink</i>	4
<i>Drain</i>	4
Empathic projection	3
<u>Guidance</u>	4
Illusion	3
<i>Mind blast</i>	4
Mind shield	2
<i>Mind wipe</i>	4
Psychic armor	2
Psychic projection	3
<u>Subdual</u>	3
Suggest	3
Tire	3
<u>Undo</u>	3

* The *dimension walk* skill is detailed fully in the *Tangents* sourcebook (TSR 11352). Note that in *Tangents*, *dimension walk* is listed as a Telekinesis skill; it should instead be considered a Psychoportation skill, with the costs listed in the table above.

Skills printed in *italics* can't be used untrained.

Underlined skills are restricted to alien species. See the description for details.

Psionic Energy Recovery

A character can attempt to recover psionic energy points at the end of any hour in which he or she did not use a psionic skill. The outcome of the attempt depends on the result of a Will feat check or a Resolve-*mental* resolve skill check: Critical Failure, the character loses 1 point (suffering fatigue damage if none are left); Failure, no points recovered; Ordinary, 1 point recovered; Good, 2 points; Amazing, 3 points. If a character spends eight hours resting and not attempting to use mental abilities, all psionic energy points are recovered (no check necessary).

Resisting Mental Abilities

If a mental ability—including ESP-*empathy*, ESP-*mind reading*, or any Telepathy skill—is directed at another character, that character's Will resistance modifier is figured into the psionic-user's skill check. Also, a target's skill in Resolve-*mental* resolve can provide additional modifiers, as detailed in the skill description in *Chapter 4: Skills of the Player's Handbook*.

PSIONIC SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

The five psionic broad skills are Biokinesis, ESP, Psychoportation, Telekinesis, and Telepathy. Each broad skill has a number of psionic specialty skills associated with it. No psionic broad skill can be used untrained.

CONSTITUTION SKILLS

The following psionic broad skill and its specialty skills are connected to a character's Constitu-

tion score. The broad skill has a base situation die of +d4; each of the specialty skills has a base situation die of +d0.

Biokinesis

This skill can't be used untrained.

Using this skill allows a character to harness the power of the mind to enhance his or her performance.

With just the broad skill, a character can attempt to use any of the related specialty skills except those that can't be used untrained. The difficulty of such an action is reflected in the increased psionic energy cost and the higher base situation die for using just the broad skill.

Bio-armor

Extended duration.

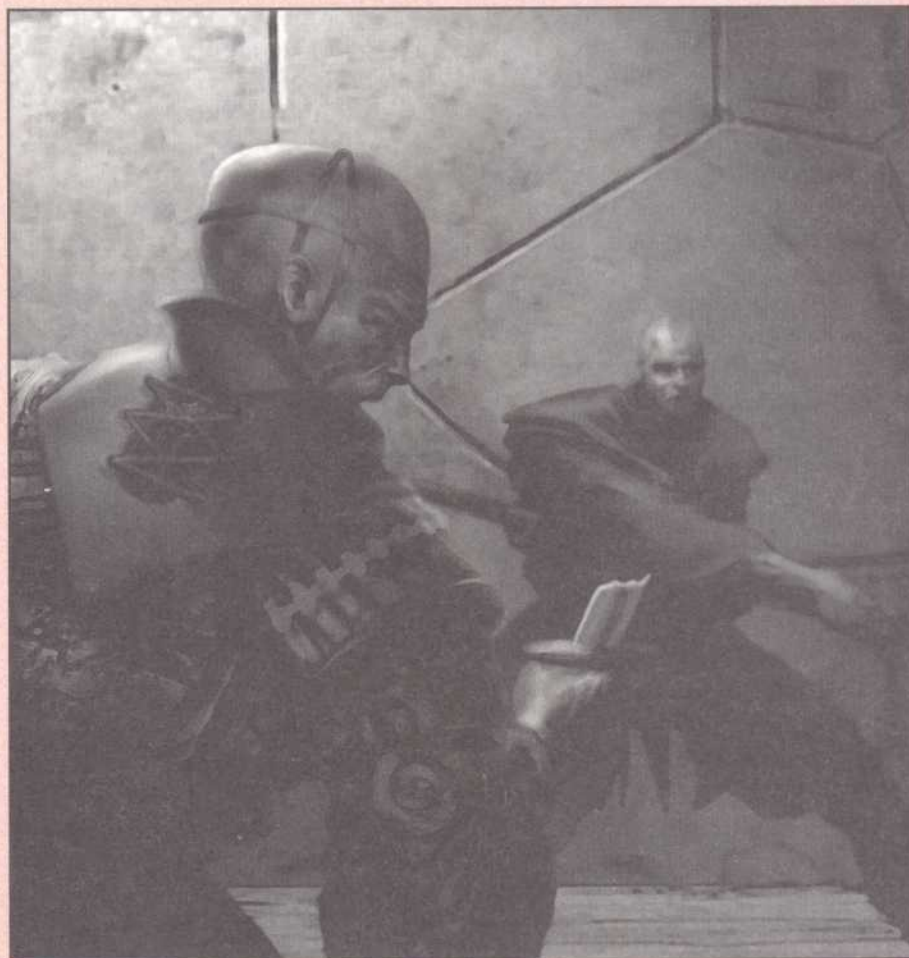
This skill psionically reinforces a character's skin, helping to pro-

tect from damage. This "body armor" provides protection against physical and energy damage, but does not protect against psionic attacks. (See Telepathy for ways to avoid psionic attacks.)

The protection afforded by *bio-armor* is based on the user's skill check:

Result	LI	HI	En
Ordinary	d4	d4-1	d4-1
Good	d6	d6-1	d6-1
Amazing	d6+1	d6	d6

⊗ **Increased Effect:** At rank 3, the protection afforded by *bio-armor* increases by 1 point (add 1 to whatever is rolled on the table above). At rank 6, this value further increases by 1 point (a total of +2). At rank 9, the armor is treated as being of Good tough-



ness. At rank 12, the armor value increases again by 1 point (a total of +3).

Bioweapon

Extended duration.

The following description of the bioweapon skill changes the one in the Player's Handbook.

When employing this skill, a character generates a field of bio-kinetic energy emanating from his or her hands. This energy manifests one of two ways, to be chosen by the player at the time the character makes a successful skill check: a staff or a sword. The player may alter the shape of the staff to a club, and the sword to a particular type of sword (katana, saber, broadsword, and so on). These changes neither have an effect on the type of damage the bioweapon will do, nor do they grant any special properties to the weapon; they are cosmetic only.

The principal difference in the two forms is in the sort of damage they do. A character who wishes just to knock out an opponent would be best served creating a staff; those who mean to inflict more serious harm on an opponent will likely create the sword.

The character uses one of two skills to wield the bioweapon: *Melee Weapons-bludgeon* for the staff or *Melee Weapons-blade* for the sword. The result of the bioweapon skill check may add a bonus to the appropriate *Melee Weapon* skill check as follows: Ordinary, no bonus; Good, -1 step bonus; Amazing, -2 step bonus. This lasts until the character chooses not to maintain the bioweapon. The form of the bioweapon may not be changed once the character creates it. A character who wishes to switch from one form to the other must "drop" the first form (along with any *Melee Weapon* skill check bonuses it may have granted) and make a

new bioweapon skill check, adopting the new form.

The base damage for the two forms of bioweapon is as follows:

Staff	d8s/d8+2s/d12+2s	LI/O
Sword	d6w/d6+2w/d6m	LI/O

This damage is modified by Strength (as applicable) and by the result of a rank benefit (see below).

⊗ **Increased Damage:** At rank 3, the damage of the bioweapon increases by +1. At rank 6, it increases again (to a total of +2). At rank 9, it increases by another +1 (to a total of +3). At rank 12, all attacks made with the bioweapon are considered to deliver Good damage.

Control Metabolism

Extended duration.

Through the use of this skill, a character can regulate his or her metabolic processes. This allows longer survival without food and water, in extreme climates, and in other hostile conditions. The character can also slow bodily functions to the point of pretending to be dead, should he or she need to fool others in some situation.

A check is made when a character enters a hostile environment or otherwise wants to employ this skill.

In the case of a hostile environment, the result of a skill check determines the type of protection a character can simulate: Ordinary, vacuum mask; Good, jumpsuit; Amazing, soft e-suit. (See the *Player's Handbook, Chapter 9: Goods & Services* for descriptions of these items.) After the initial use of the skill, the level of protection can be maintained thereafter at a cost of 1 psionic energy point per hour.

⊗ **Rank Benefits:** At rank 6, and again at rank 12, the character can select one of these benefits:

Adrenal boost: The character can mentally boost adrenaline output, giving an action check bonus. On an Ordinary success, the character's action check score increases by 1. On a Good success, the character's action check score increases by 2, and on an Amazing success, the action check increases by 3. This bonus lasts for the duration of the round in which the power is activated and through all of the next round. A character may extend the duration 1 round for every psionic energy point spent to do so.

Endorphin release: The character can mentally stimulate the production of endorphins, increasing his or her resistance to pain and fatigue. An Ordinary success gives the character a -1 step bonus to Stamina checks; a Good success gives the character a -2 step bonus; and an Amazing success gives the character a -3 step bonus. This bonus lasts for one hour; the duration may be extended by one hour per psionic energy point spent to do so.

Heal

This skill can't be used untrained.

By concentrating, a character using this skill can heal wound damage or disease.

How much damage can be healed depends on the result of a skill check: Ordinary, 1 wound point; Good, 2 points; Amazing, 3 points.

For disease, the following results apply: Ordinary, reduce the degree of illness by one grade (from Good to Ordinary, for instance); Good, reduce by two grades; Amazing, reduce by three grades. (*Chapter 3: Gamemasters in Action* in the *Gamemaster Guide* has full information on diseases and their grades of severity.) Diseases reduced below Marginal are considered cured.

Psionic healing requires time. The results are immediate, but the body's reaction to the use of the skill lasts 1 hour. For this reason,

the *heal* skill can't be attempted more than once per hour, even if the check result is a Failure.

► **Treating Poison:** At rank 4, a character may counteract the effect of poisons or drugs in his or her system before the end of their onset time, reducing the effect they may have. The degree of success acts as a bonus to the Constitution feat check required when determining the effect of the poison: Ordinary, -2 step bonus; Good, -3 step bonus; Amazing, -4 step bonus.

⊗ **Healing Mortal Damage:** At rank 6, a character becomes able to heal mortal damage. Skill check results change to: Ordinary, 2 wounds; Good, 3 wounds or 1 mortal; Amazing, 4 wounds or 2 mortals. At rank 12, a character's ability to heal improves further: Ordinary, 3 wounds or 1 mortal; Good, 4 wounds or 2 mortals; Amazing, 6 wounds or 3 mortals.

⊗ **Laying On Hands:** At rank 8, a character becomes able to heal damage in others. The subject to be healed must be in physical contact with the character using this ability.

Intangibility

Extended duration.

This skill can't be used untrained.

By mentally reordering the molecules of his or her body, the character can concentrate and become immaterial and thus pass through solid objects. This ability affects the character's clothing (including light armor—any armor that does not require the Armor Operation skill) and up to one kilogram per skill rank of additional equipment carried in the hands.

Intangibility lasts for one phase, plus one additional phase per psionic energy point spent to maintain it.

An intangible character appears as a slightly less vivid, three-dimensional image of him-

self or herself, which others can see but not otherwise perceive. The character can move about as normal, though passing through solid objects slows the character to the "easy swim" rate. The character cannot pass through living matter (although he may pass through organic matter—the wood of a door, for example).

While intangible, the character falls at a greatly reduced rate: roughly three meters per phase. A character could leap off a building and land as if he were a feather. Falling 20 meters while intangible requires eight psionic energy points: one to activate it, and one more per three meters of distance fallen.

⊗ **Movement Bonus:** At rank 4, the character can move through solid objects at the walk rate. At rank 8, the character can move through solid objects at the run rate.

► **Dodge:** At rank 6, the character can "dodge attacks" by becoming intangible. This is accomplished in the same fashion as a reaction parry, as described in *Chapter 4: Skills*, in the *Player's Handbook*.

⊗ **Selective Intangibility:** At rank 12, the character can choose to render only part of his or her body

intangible. Doing so adds a +2 step penalty to the skill check, and if the character attempts to touch or otherwise manipulate a solid object while only partially tangible, this modifier increases to +4.

◆ **Example:** Xing wants to enter a room locked from the outside with a deadbolt. Concentrating, he puts his arm through the door, then lets his hand become solid. His Biokinesis-Intangibility skill check is made with +2 step penalty, but he gets a Good success. He begins feeling around until he finds the deadbolt. If releasing the deadbolt turns out to be more complicated than merely pulling it aside, his attempt to do so will be made at a +4 step penalty.

Morph

This skill can't be used untrained.

By using this skill, a character can alter his or her physical features so as to be disguised or to accomplish something otherwise impossible, such as squeeze into a small hole, reach higher than his or her height or arm length normally allows, or slip loose of bonds.

Morphing requires an entire round (4 phases) to complete, from the moment the skill is activated to the moment the alteration is finished. The character can do nothing else while this process is taking place.

The initial skill check determines how long the morphed form lasts: Ordinary, 1 round; Good, 2 rounds; Amazing, 3 rounds. Thereafter, a character can extend the duration by spending 1 psionic energy point per round (or other time unit as designated by the Gamemaster).

Morphing doesn't allow a character to alter body mass, but can change the apparent volume by compressing or expanding the space between molecules.

A morphed body part retains its original characteristics; no game statistics change, except



for those directly related to the morphing. For example, a character with elongated fingers might get a -1 step bonus to Manipulation-pickpocket skill checks.

Morphing has no effect on a character's clothing or possessions.

A character can only accomplish certain types of form changes, depending on skill rank and the chosen special forms. These changes can't be used in combination unless otherwise noted; one change must be undone before a different one can be activated.

⊗ **Rank Benefits:** At rank 1 and again at rank 3, select one of these forms:

- Elongate fingers, adding one-half meter to reach.
- Elongate arms, adding 1 meter to reach.
- Elongate legs, adding 1 meter to height.

At skill ranks 5 and 7, choose one of these forms:

- Disguise, altering one's facial features to hide identity (+2 step penalty to Awareness checks involving an attempt to recognize the character).
- Elongate arms and legs simultaneously.
- Elongate entire body and alter bone construction to allow passage through small openings (as small as one-half meter wide).

At skill ranks 10 and 12, choose one of these forms:

- Improved disguise, altering one's facial and body features to resemble a specific person (+2 step penalty to Awareness checks), or to completely hide identity (+4 step penalty to Awareness checks).
- Lessen damage, becoming so flexible and malleable as to reduce the effects of low-impact damage. A skill check is made (at no psionic energy cost) to determine how much damage is reduced: Ordinary, d4; Good, d4+2; Amazing, d6+2.

Note that this benefit isn't received if the character is wearing armor.

- Morph control, activating any two forms simultaneously.

Rejuvenate

When using this skill, a character can offset fatigue or stun damage, or some of each, that he or she has suffered. The skill does nothing to alleviate psionic energy loss.

A successful skill check provides the character with a certain number of "rejuvenation points." It costs 2 of these points to restore 1 point of fatigue damage, and 1 of these points to restore 1 point of stun damage. On an Ordinary success, the character receives 2 "rejuvenation points"; on a Good success, 4 points; and on an Amazing success, 6 points. The character can use these points in any combination to restore stun points, fatigue points, or some of each. "Rejuvenation points" that can't be used immediately are lost.

Psionic rejuvenation requires time. The results are immediate, but the body's reaction to the use of the skill lasts one hour. For this reason, the *rejuvenate* skill can't be attempted more than once per hour.

⊗ **Improved Effect:** At rank 4, the effect of a successful skill roll improves as follows: Ordinary, 4 "rejuvenation points;" Good, 6 points; Amazing, 8 points.

⊗ **Laying On Hands:** At rank 8, a character becomes able to heal fatigue or stun damage in others. The subject to be healed must be in physical contact with the character using this ability.

⊗ **Two Recipients:** At rank 12, a character using rejuvenation may affect two individuals with a single use of the skill. This can be on two other people or on the character and one other person. Each gains whatever benefit is determined by the Biokinesis-*rejuvenate* skill check.

Transfer Damage

By laying hands upon another character and making a successful skill check, the psion alleviates that character's damage or disease by absorbing it.

The damage that can be absorbed is tied to the result of a skill check: Critical Failure, character suffers 1 wound; Failure, no effect; Ordinary, character absorbs 1 wound; Good, character absorbs 2 wounds; Amazing, character absorbs 3 wounds or 1 mortal.

An Ordinary result reduces the patient's illness by one grade (from Amazing to Good, for instance), simultaneously infecting the psion with that one grade of disease. A Good result reduces the patient's disease by two grades, transferring the ailment into the psion; and an Amazing result transfers any illness from the patient into the psion (*Chapter 3: Gamemasters in Action* in the *Gamemaster Guide* has full information on diseases and their grades of severity.)

Once the character absorbs the damage or disease, he or she must either use the Biokinesis-heal specialty skill, heal naturally, or receive medical or psionic attention to alleviate the damage or cure the disease.

⊗ **Displace Damage:** At rank 6, the psionic character can transfer the damage to a different character, who must also be in physical contact with the psion, and who must be willing to take the damage. Any attempt to transfer the damage to a creature that does not consciously desire to accept the damage (such as a hostile character, or an unconscious one) results in the psion receiving the damage, as normal. At rank 12, the character can transfer the damage to an unwilling character. The psion must be touching both characters. Both characters must be alive when the skill is activated. The "donor" character will be healed of a number of damage

points determined by the skill check, even if that number exceeds the total remaining number of points that the recipient can take before expiring.

INTELLIGENCE SKILLS

The following psionic broad skill and its specialty skills are connected to a character's Intelligence score. The broad skill has a base situation die of +d4; each of the specialty skills has a base situation die of +d0.

ESP and most of its specialty skills, while generally receptive in nature, are not passive. When a character uses an ESP skill (or any other psionic broad or specialty skill), another character able to detect psionic activity, either through a perk, a mutation, or the ESP-sensitivity skill, may notice the psionic activity (depending on the result of the relevant skill roll). Exceptions are noted in the individual skill descriptions.

Extrasensory Perception (ESP)

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to experience the environment through an agency beyond the normal senses, using the power of the mind.

With just the broad skill, a character can attempt to use any of the related specialty skills except those that can't be used untrained. The difficulty of such an action is reflected in the increased psionic energy cost and the higher base situation die for using just the broad skill.

Battle Mind

Extended duration.

This skill can't be used untrained.

To use this skill, a psion focuses on the battle at hand and makes a skill check. The success

achieved indicates the benefit while the current application of the skill remains active.

A successful skill check gives the user a bonus to his or her action checks: Ordinary, -1 step; Good, -2 steps; Amazing, -3 steps.

For purposes of using this skill, "battle" is defined as any situation in which the character has made an action check in the same round he or she uses the *battle mind* skill.

⊗ **Increased Effect:** At rank 4, the bonus to action checks improves, as follows: Ordinary, -2 steps; Good, -3 steps; Amazing, -4 steps.

⊗ **Move Like Water:** At rank 8, the character employing this ability gains a temporary last resort point, which he or she must use before the ability's duration ends or lose it. This point can only be used to offset damage. The psion cannot spend this last resort point and an ordinary last resort point to alter the same skill check. *Exception:* DARK•MATTER Free Agent heroes who have achieved a sufficiently high rank in this skill may combine this point with one of their normal last resort points.

⊗ **Unerring Accuracy:** At rank 12, the character gains a temporary last resort point, which must be used before the ability's duration ends or it becomes lost. This point can only be used to increase the success of an attack made by the character using this ability. The psion cannot spend this point and an ordinary last resort point to alter the same skill check. *Exception:* DARK•MATTER Free Agent heroes who have achieved a sufficiently high rank in this skill may combine this point with one of their normal last resort points.

Clairaudience

Extended duration.

With this skill, a character selects a location and projects his or her mind to that spot, hearing

sounds as though physically present.

Clairaudience doesn't screen out ambient noise, so the user might have trouble discerning particular sounds. It provides no help in interpreting unknown languages or recognizing unfamiliar sounds, and the mental ear can't move from the location it's projected to. The location itself may be moving (a vehicle, for example), but such a target necessitates additional skill checks if the range to the target increases.

The user remains conscious within his or her body and is aware of what's happening around it.

The better the result of the skill check, the longer the ability lasts: Ordinary, 1 round; Good, 2 rounds; Amazing, 3 rounds. This duration can be extended by spending 1 psionic energy point for every additional round. Situation modifiers for the familiarity of the location and the distance at which *clairaudience* is being used are as follows:

Situation/distance	Modifier
Familiar location	-1
Unfamiliar location	none
1-10 meters	-1
11-100 meters	none
101 m-1 km	+1
2-10 km	+2
11-100 km	+3
101-1,000 km (low orbit)	+4
1,001-10,000 km (high orbit)	+5

⊗ **Increased Duration:** At rank 4, the time increment for a successful use of the skill increases to minutes (Ordinary, 1 minute; Good, 2 minutes; Amazing, 3 minutes). Each additional psionic energy point used to extend the duration adds 1 minute to the duration. At rank 8, that increment becomes 5 minutes (Ordinary, 5 minutes; Good, 10 minutes; Amazing, 15 minutes;

each additional psionic energy point adds 5 minutes). At rank 12, the increment becomes 30 minutes (Ordinary, 30 minutes; Good 60 minutes; Amazing, 90 minutes; each additional psionic energy point adds 30 minutes).

► **Change of Perspective:** At rank 6, the character can attempt another ESP-*clairaudience* skill check to shift the location to which the mental ear has been projected. The new check is modified by the distance *from the current location* that the psion is listening to, rather than the physical distance the psion is from the target area.

◆ **Example:** Mike is listening in on a meeting of a corporation's board of directors, about 100 km away. Partway through the meeting, they move to the room next door. Mike focuses, following the sounds of their voices, and makes another ESP-*clairaudience* check, this time at a -1 step bonus.

Clairvoyance

Extended duration.

To employ this skill, a character selects a location and projects his or her mind to that spot, seeing everything going on around that spot as though physically there. This projection must be to an unobstructed location, not (for instance) to a place inside a solid object.

The use of the skill doesn't block normal vision, so the user sees double images unless his or her eyes are closed. It also provides no help in seeing through obscuring elements, such as walls, closed doors, or darkness, and the mental eye can't move from the selected spot. The location itself may be moving (a vehicle, for example), but such a target necessitates additional skill checks if the range to the target increases.

The user remains conscious within his or her body and is aware of what's happening around it.

The better the result of the skill check, the longer the ability lasts:

Ordinary, 1 round; Good, 2 rounds; Amazing, 3 rounds. This duration can be extended by spending 1 psionic energy point for every additional round. Situation modifiers for the familiarity of the location and the distance at which the psion is using *clairvoyance* are the same as for *clairaudience*, given in the description above.

⊗ **Increased Duration:** At rank 4, the time increment for a successful use of the skill increases to minutes (Ordinary, 1 minute; Good, 2 minutes, Amazing, 3 minutes). Each additional psionic energy point used to extend the duration adds 1 minute to the duration. At rank 8, that increment becomes 5 minutes (Ordinary, 5 minutes; Good, 10 minutes; Amazing, 15 minutes; each additional psionic energy point adds 5 minutes). At rank 12, the increment becomes 30 minutes (Ordinary, 30 minutes; Good 60 minutes; Amazing, 90 minutes; each additional psionic energy point adds 30 minutes).

⊗ **Change of Perspective:** At rank 6, the character can attempt another ESP-*clairvoyance* skill check to shift the location to which the mental eye has been projected. The new check is modified by the distance *from the current location* that the psion is viewing, rather than the physical distance the psion is from the target area. See the example in the description of ESP-*clairaudience*.

Empathy

This skill allows a psion to "read" the surface emotions of another character. This ability assists the user in encounter situations. (See TABLE P25: ENCOUNTER SKILL EFFECTS in the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 4: Skills.) The target must be within visual range of the psionics-user.

A successful use of *empathy* provides a character with an understanding of the target's emotional state (Combative, Hos-

tile, Neutral, Friendly, Charmed, or Fanatic) and provides a bonus when using encounter skills upon that target character (-1, -2, or -3 steps, depending on the degree of success achieved).

⊗ **Relationship:** At rank 4, the empath can sense the surface emotions of two other characters—specifically, how they feel toward each other. This allows the empath to apply the encounter skill bonus to both characters. At rank 8, the empath can apply this skill to three other characters, and at rank 12, the empath can apply this skill to four other characters.

► **Aura Reading:** At rank 6, the user gains the ability to see the body's bioelectric field and thus to evaluate a person's overall health and mental state. An Ordinary success allows the user to sense the target's state of health (healthy, injured, sick, diseased, dying, insane, and so on). While it can't diagnose a specific illness, a Good success provides valuable hints as to the nature (biological, chemical, psychological) of an illness. An Amazing success suggests additional factors as determined by the Gamemaster, such as approximate time of infection, spread of illness, and approximate recovery time. In addition, the result of the skill check (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing) grants a -1, -2, or -3 step bonus to any Medical Science, Knowledge-*first aid*, or Biokinesis-*transfer damage* (or *heal* if at rank 8+) specialty skill checks used to treat the target. Attempts to read the aura of a species different than the user of this ability suffer a +1 step penalty.

⊗ **Connection:** At rank 9, an empath may develop a connection with another individual. He or she will then be able to use the *empathy* skill in relation to that individual whenever desired, merely by making a skill check. This check may be performed even when the individual is not

within visual range of the empath, though there is a maximum distance at which this ability will function, equal to 1 mile per rank of *empathy*.

Mind Reading

This skill enables a psion to "read" the surface thoughts of another character. The target must be within 500 meters (100m/200m/500m) of the psionics-user. The mental contact remains in effect for a limited time and can't be extended by the use of psionic energy points. The better the degree of success achieved, the longer the contact lasts and the clearer the impressions of the thoughts being read:

On an Ordinary success, the contact lasts for 1 phase after the skill check is made. Only random and disjointed thoughts are perceived, such as the target's name or the identity of someone or

something he or she is thinking about or looking at.

On a Good success, the contact lasts for 2 phases after the skill check is made. In addition to random thoughts of the sort described above, more detail and more coherence is received, such as why the target is thinking about someone or something, or why the target is in his or her present location.

On an Amazing success, the contact lasts for 3 phases after the skill check is made. Complete surface thoughts can be read—the sort of information that's recovered on an Ordinary or Good success, plus some key fact that's related to what the psionics-user hoped to discover.

⊗ **Extra Time:** At rank 3, the character may add an additional phase to the duration listed for each level of success: Ordinary, 2 phases; Good, 3 phases; Amazing, 4 phases. At rank 9, the dura-

tion increases as follows: Ordinary, 1 round; Good, 2 rounds; Amazing, 3 rounds. At rank 12, it increases again: Ordinary, 1 minute; Good, 2 minutes; Amazing, 3 minutes.

⊗ **Probe:** At rank 6, this focused form of *mind reading* allows an individual to search through a target's mind for a specific piece of information. Attempting a probe on an alien species inflicts a +2 step penalty on the attempt. Will resistance modifiers also apply if the target is actively resisting the attempt.

On an Ordinary success, the Mindwalker gains the information desired. On a Good success, the Mindwalker also gains some context for the information, such as its source. On an Amazing success, the Mindwalker gains not just the information's source but also the target's opinion of the information, such as whether it is credible, dangerous, or valuable. Note that the probe rank benefit has the same duration as the basic *mind reading* ability, assuming a sufficiently high rank in *ESP-mind reading*.

Navcognition

This skill can't be used untrained.

A character who uses this skill can instinctively determine his or her present location and mentally plot a course to a distant location. This can be accomplished on a planetary surface, in normal space, and even through drive-space, depending on how the character applies this skill.

This mental ability replaces the use of the Navigation skill (assuming the character has it) if the character decides to spend psionic energy points to activate it. All the modifiers that pertain to the use of the Navigation skill apply (see the "Navcognition Situation Modifiers" sidebar on this page), except the character doesn't make use of charts, instruments, or computers to determine location and plot courses.



Navcognition

Situation Modifiers

Combat conditions	+4
Hostile conditions	+2
Calm conditions	0
Unexplored territory	+4
Partially explored territory	+2
Known territory	0
Familiar territory	-2
Less than 5 minutes	+1/min.
More than 5 minutes	-1/min.

For surface navigation only:

Darkness	+3
Inclement weather	+2
Rough terrain/turbulence	+2

At rank 1, the character selects one specialty of the Navigation skill to which to apply this mental ability, either *surface navigation*, *system astrogation*, or *drivespace astrogation*.

⊗ **Extra Specialty Skills:** At rank 5, a second Navigation specialty can be selected. At rank 9, the remaining specialty becomes available.

⊗ **Travel Time:** The character becomes able to determine the clearest way to the destination upon achieving rank 4 (for the first specialty), rank 8 (for the next specialty), and rank 12 (for the final specialty).

For surface navigation and system astrogation, this cuts travel time by an amount based on the result of the *navcognition* skill check:

Travel Time Modifier

Result	Modifier
Critical Failure	× 1.5
Failure	× 1
Ordinary	× .9
Good	× .75
Amazing	× .5

Drivespace astrogation works somewhat differently, because all trips through drivespace last the same amount of time (121 hours):

Travel Distance

Result	Modifier
Critical Failure	× .5
Failure	× 1
Ordinary	× 1.25
Good	× 1.5
Amazing	× 2

▶ **Clarity of Mind:** At rank 6, the character can apply this skill toward navigating under extreme conditions, seeing the best route from point A to point B through even the chaos of battle. This allows the character a -4 step bonus to the appropriate *navcognition* skill checks during chases, races, or vehicle combat for the purpose of reducing situational penalties. It will not provide a bonus in the absence of those penalties. This modifier only applies if the character using the skill is the one responsible for plotting and/or executing the chosen course.

⊗ **Tracking:** At rank 12, a character may use *navcognition* to attempt to track the most likely destination of a target subject. This ability may even be attempted through drivespace.

Using this ability requires that the character begin at a location where the target was last seen, either by the character, or by a witness. The character must attempt a *navcognition* skill check, with a +2 step penalty if he or she witnessed the subject, or a +4 step penalty if the subject was witnessed by someone else, or merely recorded. These penalties are cumulative with other *navcognition* situation modifiers.

◆ **Example:** Just as Eh'Tel realizes she's been double-crossed by the crew of the merchant ship, they enter drivespace and escape. But she won't give in quite that easily. Expanding her mental field of view to include drivespace, Eh'Tel watches their ship making for Aleer.

"I have you," she says.

Postcognition

With this skill, a character can sense the mood of an area and even "see" events that happened there in the recent past. What a character senses depends on the result of a skill check:

On an Ordinary success, the character senses general emotions that have been left in an area.

On a Good success, the psion also receives brief flashes of events that may or may not make sense.

On an Amazing success, the character actually experiences a brief encounter as though at the scene when the events occurred.

One successful skill check can be made in an area, and the character must be in the actual area to sense psychic resonance. In general, a character can see a number of days into the past equal to his or her skill rank. (With just the broad skill, less than one time unit is available to the character.)

Players can use this skill to gain clues for their heroes, or the Gamemaster can use it to direct story elements in a certain direction. The Gamemaster can automatically activate this skill (no psionic energy point cost) to provide clues.

⊗ **Extended Reach:** At rank 3, the character can see a number of weeks into the past equal to his skill rank. At rank 6, this increases to months; at rank 9, years; and at rank 12, decades.

Precognition

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill is the ability to receive impressions about possible future events—what the psion sees will probably happen if no one takes action to change it. A character usually doesn't consciously employ this skill.

Instead, the Gamemaster calls for a character to make a skill check whenever a precognitive flash might occur (or even makes the

roll without revealing the results to the player). If the character is not willing to spend psionic energy points to make the skill check, nothing happens and the scene continues.

In general, a character can see a number of hours into the future equal to his or her skill rank. (With the broad skill, less than one hour is available to the character.)

On a successful skill check, the character gains information about the event as well as a free last resort point, which can only be used to modify a single skill or feat check during the scene. This last resort point is lost if it is not used by the end of the scene, but otherwise follows the rules for usage as explained in the *Player's Handbook, Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.

The results of the skill check give the following information:

On an Ordinary success, the character perceives vague images of the event. These might include seeing a flash of light from a window in a crowded city (the Gamemaster knows that the hero's enemies are sending a sniper after him). The character also receives a last resort point. The last resort point can only be used to modify a check which directly affects the psion. The character could reduce an opponent's attack roll (thereby reducing the damage category), an encounter skill check, an opposed complex skill check, or other such roll.

On a Good success, the character receives brief flashes of coming events that may or may not make sense. (The hero may see a well-dressed woman carrying a long thin designer suitcase up a flight of stairs in an expensive hotel. Another image might be of her opening the wide French doors out onto a balcony and looking out over the city. This may be followed by the image of the flash of light described above, under Ordinary success.) In addition to the clearer images,

the character gains a last resort point which may be used to modify the result of any action made against or by him or her during the scene.

On an Amazing success, the precognitive character mentally experiences a brief encounter as though seeing the events transpire, and can further actually foresee how the encounter will play out, based on decisions made at crucial points. (The character may see the well-dressed woman described under the Good success entry above completing a negotiation with someone the character recognizes as an enemy. Later, the psion may see her setting up a sniper rifle inside a posh hotel room. Finally, the psion sees himself as if looking through the scope in her rifle.) The character also gets a last resort point, which can be applied to any skill check made by any character involved in the scene in question.

◆ **Example:** With a Good success in precognition, Zan has foreseen a battle between her teammates and a gang of thugs. During the battle, the gang leader pulls out a mass pistol and fires at her, getting an Ordinary success. Zan uses the precognitive last resort point to modify the gang leader's skill check down to a Failure; he misses, and she takes no damage. If Zan's ESP-precognition skill check had yielded an Amazing result, she could have used that last resort point, regardless of whom the gang leader had fired at.

On a Critical Failure, the foreseen event will be decided by an outside influence over which the character has no control—a malfunctioning device, or inclement weather, for example. Instead of the character gaining a last resort point, an opposing character does. This last resort point may be spent to modify a result of any character at the scene.

If a character wants to force a precognitive flash, the cost in

psionic energy points is doubled—2 points to use the specialty skill, 4 points for only the broad skill, and 6 points if the check results in a Critical Failure. In addition, a +3 step penalty is applied to the attempt, and whether the check succeeds or not, the skill can't be used again consciously for 2d6 days.

⊗ **Increased Time:** At rank 3, the psion can extend the precognitive ability to a number of days equal to his or skill rank; at rank 6, weeks; at rank 9, months; and at rank 12, years.

Psychometry

This skill gives its user the ability to read psychic impressions from inanimate objects. The character must touch the object to gain insight into who has used it and in what context. What a character senses depends on the result of a skill check:

On an Ordinary success, the character receives simple emotions associated with the object.

On a Good success, he or she receives simple images associated with the object.

On an Amazing success, the character experiences a brief encounter as though he or she is the person using the object or its owner.

To be affected by this skill, an object must be an item that the character can hold and manipulate to pick up psionic impressions. Tools, weapons, clothing, jewelry, books, other personal items, and even dead bodies can be studied using *psychometry*. Living people and creatures can't be studied with this skill.

Dirt, the ground, dust, or other casually encountered objects aren't affected because people don't make the sorts of connections with these objects that result in psionic residue being left behind (though *postcognition* picks up impressions left in an area).

The Gamemaster can automatically activate this skill (no

psionic energy point cost) to provide a clue or otherwise direct a story.

⊗ **Rank Benefits:** At rank 1 in this skill, the item in question must be something special to the owner (an item he or she treasured, such as a wedding ring). At rank 4, the item can be merely something the owner used regularly (such as a watch, or spectacles). At rank 8, the item can be something the owner merely used frequently (such as a pen, or keys). At rank 12, the item can be nearly anything belonging to the owner, as long as he or she used for it at least an hour in total (such as a weapon, or a book).

Sensitivity

Extended duration.

This skill enables a character to realize when a psionic skill is being used in his or her vicinity. Unlike the Psionic Awareness perk, the *sensitivity* specialty is consciously invoked by the character whenever he or she desires to do so, and the check to determine success is made by the player of the psion, not by the Gamemaster (unless the psion is a supporting cast character).

Activating the skill requires the character to use 2 psionic energy points. *Sensitivity* persists for 1 minute, and can be kept active in subsequent minutes by expending 1 psionic energy point per minute thereafter.

Unlike most psionic skills, *sensitivity* is a passive skill. It is not possible for another psion to detect the use of *sensitivity*.

The skill check made when the specialty is first invoked determines the extent of what the psionics-user learns during all the time when the specialty remains in use:

On an Ordinary success, the psion becomes aware that one or more psionic skills are being employed within a range of 20 meters, and can tell which character(s) the psionic energy is

emanating from (if within visual line of sight). A Good success also enables the character to identify the broad skill(s) being used, and an Amazing success tells the character the exact specialty skill(s) being used. (The use of *sensitivity* can itself be detected by another character who successfully employs the skill.)

⊗ **Automatic Trigger:** When a character reaches rank 3, any use of psionic activity within range may automatically trigger *sensitivity*. This should be treated in a similar fashion to *precognition*: The Gamemaster asks the player to make a skill check (or secretly rolls the skill check him- or herself); on a successful skill check, the Gamemaster informs the player that the hero detects psionic activity in the vicinity. If the player wishes to have the hero spend the appropriate 2 psionic energy points, the Gamemaster reveals the results of the skill roll.

⊗ **Increased Range:** At rank 6, and again at rank 12, the range at which *sensitivity* can detect psionic activity increases. At rank 6, the range increases to 50 meters; at rank 12, it increases to 150 meters.

⊗ **Triangulation:** At rank 9, the character using this skill can locate who or what is using the psionic skill that has been detected. This can be used even if the person or creature using the psionic skill is not within line of sight. The character attempts a second ESP-*sensitivity* skill check, with a -1 step bonus if the original check resulted in an Ordinary success, -2 steps if the check resulted in a Good success, and -3 steps if the check resulted in an Amazing success. If this second check is successful, the character knows from where the psionic energy originated.

Will Skills

The following psionic broad skill and its specialty skills are connected to a character's Will score. The broad skill has a base situation die of +d4; each of the specialty skills has a base situation die of +d0.

Psychoportation

This skill can't be used untrained.

The character can manipulate physical reality, creating localized distortions that enable objects or creatures to be transported through space or even time.

With just the broad skill, a character can attempt to use any of the related specialty skills except those that can't be used untrained. The difficulty of such an action is reflected in the increased psionic energy cost and the higher base situation die for using just the broad skill.

Alter Speed

Extended duration.

With this skill, the character or another living target within 8 meters (range 2/4/8) can move at a higher or lower rate of speed than everything else in the vicinity. For as long as this ability is in effect, the target either gains a bonus to his or her action check based on the psion's skill check or suffers a penalty. The psion must decide on the desired effect before attempting the skill check.

Skill Check Result	Modifier to Action Check
Ordinary	-1 or +1
Good	-2 or +2
Amazing	-3 or +3

◆ **Example:** Mon jil Sohar sees the much faster t'sa warrior approaching him, blades ready to strike. Reaching out with his

mind, Mon slows the t'sa's local time envelope. He receives an Amazing success, and the warrior's next action check will suffer a +3 step penalty.

⊗ **Action Points:** At rank 6, the target of this ability either gains or loses one action—depending on whether the desired overall effect was speeding or slowing, respectively—for as long as the ability is in effect. At rank 12, the target gains or loses another action, again depending on whether the desired effect is speeding or slowing. Note that the successful use of this skill cannot increase the number of actions a character can take to more than four. In addition, it cannot reduce a character's actions below zero (in other words, it cannot carry over the effect into the next round).

Apportation

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows the character to cause an object to either appear out of nowhere, or disap-

pear to nowhere. In actuality, the character is "reaching" into the past to retrieve the item, in the case of materializing the object, or "moving" it to the future, in the case of dematerializing it. An object to be dematerialized must be within the character's line of sight, and no more than 4 meters away (range 1/2/4). Apply a +1 step penalty at medium range (2 meters) and a +3 step penalty at long range (4 meters). Objects the psion sends into the future will appear at the same location, relative to known local coordinates; only the point in time varies. "Relative to known local coordinates" means that an item sent forward in time at the corner of 12th and Elm Streets will arrive at the corner of 12th and Elm Streets some time later, even though the point in space will actually be different when using an astronomical coordinate system.

This ability is limited by the mass of the target item, and living material is not affected by this skill. For each point of the

psion's Will, he can move 1 kilogram of material through time. How quickly this occurs is based on the result of the skill check. With an Ordinary success, the effect takes two additional actions beyond the action taken to activate the ability. With a Good success, the effect requires one additional action. With an Amazing success, the effect occurs as soon as the skill check is made.

When attempting to materialize items, the psion may target specific items (for example, "a gold coin from the Spanish galleon that sank in 1505"), though doing so imposes a +3 step penalty on the action. Targeting an item of a general description (such as "a gold coin from a Spanish galleon") imposes a +2 step penalty. Items that the character has never seen create a penalty of +1 step, which may be cumulative with other penalties.

Clever characters will want to use dematerialization to disarm opponents, or to remove vital portions of their equipment (such as



the helmet of a person in space). Since *apportation* relies on the target being more or less stationary, the target receives a Dexterity resistance modifier if he or she is conscious and mobile.

⊗ **Increased Effect:** At rank 4, the psion can affect up to 2 kilograms per point of Will. At rank 8, this increases to 5 kilograms per point of Will. At rank 12, this increases again to 10 kilograms per point of Will.

⊗ **Timed Return:** At rank 6, the psion can cause a dematerialized object to reappear at a location at a particular time. The psion need not be within 4 meters to effect the dematerialization. At rank 6, the object must be set to dematerialize within a number of minutes equal to the psion's Will score. At rank 9, the unit of time extends to hours, and at rank 12, it extends again to days.

Seeing Your Own Future

Players who use this skill will inevitably try to learn what they can about the future—which can open up a tremendous can of worms. However, the Gamemaster should remember that the “future self” may not be from the character's own future; information about his or her past may be accurate—but not for the heroes.

There is also a possibility that the future version of the character may be a very different person. The future self may lie to the past self, for reasons of his or her own. He or she may even resent being pulled out of a critical moment to aid an earlier self in something considerably less important (to him or her).

The Gamemaster should always be aware that the purpose of *duplicate* is not to allow players to “cash in.” If players begin abusing this skill, the Gamemaster should react accordingly.

Duplicate

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill grants the character the ability to move a future version of him- or herself backward in time, from somewhere in the future to the present moment and location. This “future self” can then aid the character or allies for a short time before being drawn back to the future.

This particular ability raises a great many questions about the nature of causality, and the possibility of “alternate timelines” in which a character in the present lives out his or her life in such a way that the future version can never actually exist.

(Gamemasters who wish to explore those possibilities further should pick up *Tangents* (TSR 11352), which contains a great deal of advice on how to tackle causality in an *ALTERNITY* game. Gamemasters who do not wish to explore this possibility at all should disallow *duplicate* in their games.)

For purposes of this psionic ability, *duplicate* allows the character to “summon” a more experienced version for a short time. The future self arrives at the very end of the current round (too late to take an action), and will disappear again at the end of the next round. While this character is in the present, the Gamemaster controls him or her.

On an Ordinary success, the future self is from sometime in the relatively near future (the next year or so) and is an exact copy of the character, but with the addition of an additional rank in any one skill, chosen by the player. This future version of the character remains in the present for 1 round, then vanishes.

◆ **Example:** Mon jil Sohar is in trouble again, and needs someone to watch his back while he accesses the computer. Concentrating on the stream of probabilities, he reaches upstream and calls to his own consciousness.

Another Mon jil Sohar suddenly appears. Mon's player

decides that this one has one extra rank in Computer Science—hacking. “Watch my back while—” he begins to say, but his future self cuts him off.

“No, I will access the computer. You watch my back.”

On a Good success, the future self is from slightly farther in the future (the next few years), and is an exact copy, with two additional ranks in skills, divided however the player chooses. The player also may choose one of the following achievement benefits that the future character has: a -1 step action check bonus, one extra action, or a 1-point Ability Score increase. This version remains in the present for 2 rounds before vanishing.

On an Amazing success, the future self is from a somewhat more distant future and it remains for 3 rounds before disappearing. This future version of the character has three additional ranks in skills, divided however the player chooses, and two of the following (including taking the same one more than once): a -1 step action check bonus, one extra action, a 1-point Ability Score increase, or a last resort point.

◆ **Example:** Mon's future self vanishes just as he accesses the data Mon needs. Suddenly, an alarm goes off. Mon concentrates again, and another version of himself steps downstream. This time Mon gets an Amazing success: His future self has three more ranks in Modern Ranged Weapon—pistol, and also a -1 step action check bonus and an extra action.

“Let me guess,” his future self says. “You want me to stand here and cover your escape.”

On a Failure result, the future self materializes and vanishes again before being able to take an action. On a Critical Failure, though, the character vanishes—pulled into the past (or an alternate timeline) by another self! When the character returns in d4-1 rounds, he or

she will be somewhat the worse for wear, having suffered through exactly the same kind of punishment he himself inflicts on his own future selves. The Gamemaster should decide exactly what has occurred, though it should be something sufficiently daunting. (It was a Critical Failure, after all!)

Some examples would include the character returning having sustained d4 wounds, d4+1 stun, d4 fatigue, a completely empty ammo clip, or a crucial piece of equipment missing or depleted. Gamemasters could even use a Critical Failure with this skill as a springboard for an adventure involving time travel or alternate timelines.

◆ **Example:** Mon flees, leaving his somewhat more combat-ready future self to hold off the security guards. Halfway to his transport, though, he is stopped by more guards. Thinking quickly, he tries to summon another future self to create a distraction. But this time he rolls a Critical Failure, and vanishes from sight.

Moments later, the guards are stunned to see Mon reappear, scorched and riddled with bullets. "Oh, just arrest me," he gasps. "It's better than what happened to me a year ago just now."

Teleportation

This skill can't be used untrained.

The character can disappear from one location and instantaneously reappear in another. The character need not see the location to which he or she intends to teleport, but must at least know it with some familiarity (either through personal experience, viewing it through ESP-clairvoyance, or even through carefully studying plans or blueprints). The target location must be within 100 meters (range 25/50/100). The greater the distance, the more difficult the *teleportation*: At medium range, the skill check carries a +1 step penalty, and at long range, the penalty is +3 steps.

Everything the character is physically wearing or carrying—including any living "passengers"—goes with the character when he or she teleports. This additional matter may not mass more (in kilograms) than the character's Will score.

When activating this ability, the character determines a target location in which to reappear, and the result of the skill check determines how close he or she comes to the chosen target. On an Amazing success, the character is dead on target. On a Good success, the character has missed the target by d4 meters. On an Ordinary success, the character has missed the target by d4+2 meters. On a Failure, the character has missed the target by d4+4 meters. Missing the target can have serious consequences depending on the situation, and the Gamemaster should consider the ramifications before the player attempts the skill check.

On a Critical Failure, the character has missed the target so badly as to experience a catastrophic rematerialization. In this event, the character must make another *Psychoportation-teleportation* skill check, with the same modifiers as the original skill check. The results are as follows:

Amazing	d4+2s to character and any passengers
Good	d4w to character and any passengers
Ordinary	d4+2w to character and any passengers
Failure	d4m to character and any passengers
Critical Failure	d4+2m to character and any passengers

⊗ **Increased Distance:** At rank 4, the character's maximum teleportation distance changes to 1 kilometer (range 250m/500m/1km). At rank 8, the maximum distance becomes 100 kilometers (range 25km/50km/100km). At rank 12, the character can teleport up to 1000 kilometers (range 250km/500km/1000km).

⊗ **Increased Mass:** At rank 3, the character may teleport additional mass equal to twice his or her Will score. At rank 6, this increases to five times Will; at rank 9, it becomes ten times Will; and at rank 12, it increases to twenty times Will.

Timeslip

This skill can't be used untrained.

Perhaps most prized of all the abilities that manipulate time is the ability to move through it. Chronal distortion—also known as "timeslipping"—allows a character to "jump ahead" in time by a few moments, or even a few hours. The character vanishes from all perception, then reappears later, in the very same location, relative to local coordinates. In effect, this means that a character who *timeslips* forward a few moments in seat 23-B of a moving plane will return moments later to that same seat, as the "local coordinates" are determined by the character's location within the aircraft.

A character who wishes to *timeslip* makes a skill check to determine how far forward he or she can go—though the psion can always choose not to go that far. A character must decide how far forward to go when the power activates. Timeslipping does not allow the character to view events that occur in that location in the intervening time, so he or she cannot simply wait and return at an opportune time.

The character may not take any actions while timeslipping. Relative to the character, only a moment passes between exit into the timestream and reentry into



reality. For those left behind, time passes normally.

The basic unit of time a character can travel is one round; that time unit increases with rank benefits. Regardless of the result of the skill check, the character can always choose to travel a shorter period of time.

The character may travel one, two, or three such time units ahead in time, depending on the result of the skill check (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing). On a Failure, the character's trip is so brief as to be insignificant. On a Critical Failure, however, the character only reappears at the Gamemaster's discretion (though no longer than twice the maximum length of time the character could choose).

◆ **Example:** Mon jil Sohar has been arrested and placed in detention. Once he has recovered, he decides to try playing with time and space. This time, he wants the guard to think he's escaped. He dives headlong into the time stream, planning to "surface" again after the guard has made his next check in just a few seconds. He rolls a Good success, and vanishes for the next two rounds.

When he reappears, the guard is just leaving to report that the

prisoner has escaped—but has foolishly left the door open.

Should a solid object of some kind be placed where the character is due to return in time, the character will appear near it, rather than in it. However, the character must make a second skill check: on a Failure, the character loses d4s; on a Critical Failure, the character loses d6s.

⊗ **Dodge:** At rank 6, the character can "dodge attacks" by timeslipping. This is accomplished in the same fashion as a reaction parry, as described in *Chapter 4: Skills*, in the *Player's Handbook*.

⊗ **Extended Slip:** At rank 4, the character's basic unit of time is 1 minute. At rank 8, the basic unit of time is 1 hour. At rank 12, the basic unit of time is 1 day.

Telekinesis

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a psion to manipulate the physical environment with only the power of the mind.

With just the broad skill, a character can attempt to use any of the related specialty skills except those that can't be used untrained. The difficulty of such an action is reflected in the increased psionic energy cost and the higher base situation die for using just the broad skill.

Cryokinetics

This skill can't be used untrained.

By concentrating, the character can generate fields of intense cold, freezing most liquids and damaging living tissue. The effective range is 24 meters (range 6/12/24), and the cold affects all materials within a 2 meter diameter.

The energy damage inflicted to living beings by this power depends on the result of the skill check. When a character first acquires this skill, he or she is able to cause damage of d4s/d4+2s/d4w.

⊗ **Increased Damage:** At rank 5, damage becomes d4+2s/d6+2s/d4+2w. At rank 9, the damage increases to d6+2s/d4+2w/d6+2w.

⊗ **Encasement:** At rank 6, the character is able to generate cold so quickly that objects or creatures in a moist or wet environment become unable to move. The character's skill check has a -2 step bonus if the target is actually in a completely wet environment (immersed in water, for example). The skill check determines the difficulty of the Strength feat required to break free.

⊗ **Cryogenic Suspension:** At rank 9, the character can freeze living beings so quickly and completely that they effectively enter a temporary state of suspended animation. The target is allowed its Dexterity resistance modifier to avoid being targeted by this ability.

The overall effect is the same as a life support pack (see the *Player's Handbook*, *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*). The effect lasts for d4 time units, with the time unit being determined by the success of the character using *cryokinetics*: Ordinary, hours; Good, days; Amazing, weeks.

Electrokinetics

This skill can't be used untrained.

With this skill, a character can cause an electrical charge to build up in the surrounding air, and direct that charge up to 16 meters away (range 4/8/16), delivering a shock to a single target.

During the phase in which the character makes a successful skill check, the charge builds up. It can be released (for no added point cost) in any phase after that during the current round or the next one, but discharging the energy requires an additional skill check. If the charge is not released, it simply dissipates. The character can't initiate any other psionic skill while the charge is present around his or her body.

The amount of energy damage caused by the shock depends on the result of the skill check made in the phase when it is discharged and the character's rank in the skill.

When a character first acquires this skill, he or she is able to cause damage of $d4+2s/d6+2s/d4w$.

⊗ **Increased Damage:** At rank 5, damage becomes $d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w$. At rank 9, the damage caused by the skill goes to $d4+2w/d6+2w/d8+2w$.

▶ **Datawipe:** At rank 3, the character becomes able to bulk-erase all data from any electromagnetic recording medium, such as videotapes, or computer diskettes or hard drives. Note that this ability cannot be used to erase particular sectors of data—it's all or nothing. The character's skill check affects the modifier to attempts to recover the data: Ordinary, +1; Good, +2; Amazing, +3.

⊗ **Tamper:** At rank 6, the character can use this skill to tamper with electronic sensors and recording devices. An Ordinary success blurs electronic images taken by security cameras or other surveillance devices, fool electric eye or motion detection systems, and even trick x-ray machines or metal detectors. The quality of the device (Marginal, Ordinary, Good, or Amazing) applies a modifier to the use of this skill (0, +1, +2, or +3 step penalty, respectively).

⊗ **Bypass:** At rank 9, the character can use this skill to bypass or override electronic locks and similar devices. A successful Security–security devices skill check grants a –1, –2, or –3 step bonus (for an Ordinary, Good, or Amazing success) to any *electrokinetics* skill check used in this fashion.

⊗ **Jamming:** At rank 12, a character can attempt to jam any electromagnetic signal (such as radio, television, microwave, or similar devices) within a range of 20 meters, plus 20 meters for each

additional psionic energy point spent. Each successful skill check jams all signals for 5 rounds (1 minute); note that the psion must maintain full concentration when jamming and cannot take any other actions other than simple conversation.

Kinetic Blow

This skill can't be used untrained.

The character may attempt to use air molecules to attack. The maximum range for such an attack is 60 meters (range 15/30/60), and the damage is considered low impact. When a character first acquires this skill, he or she can inflict $d4s/d4+1s/d4w$.

Though this inflicts less damage than hurling a physical object as described under *psychokinetics* (see below), it has the benefit of being an unseen attack form, giving the character a –1 step bonus on the skill check.

⊗ **Increased Damage:** This damage increases to $d4+1s/d4+3s/d4+1w$ at rank 5, and $d4+3s/d4+1w/d6+2w$ at rank 9.

Kinetic Shield

Extended duration.

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to create an invisible defensive barrier that moves with him or her and provides protection from physical attacks (high impact or low impact damage) by manipulating the surrounding air molecules; as the character's *kinetic shield* skill increases, this extends to direct energy attacks as well. The barrier is so close to his or her body that it doesn't hinder other actions the character might take.

The quality of the shield depends on the result of a skill check: Ordinary, LI +2/ HI +1; Good, LI +3/ HI +2; Amazing, LI +4/ HI +3. If the shielded character wants to perform other actions while maintaining the shield, those actions receive a +1 step

penalty due to the character's need to concentrate on maintaining the shield.

⊗ **No Concentration:** At rank 3, the kinetic shield can be maintained without concentration, eliminating the +1 step penalty to other actions taken while the shield is in effect.

▶ **Parry:** At rank 6, the character can attempt to telekinetically parry physical attacks directed at him or her. The parry attempt uses up the character's next available action, but if the *Telekinesis–kinetic shield* skill check is successful, the attack automatically fails. The parry attempt can be made outside of the character's normal phases. Further, on an Amazing success using this ability, the parry attempt costs the character no psionic energy points.

⊗ **Energy Deflection:** At rank 9, the kinetic shield can affect direct energy attacks (area energy attacks, such as an explosion of fire, are not affected). Apply the following results: Ordinary, LI +2/ HI +1/ En +1; Good, LI +3/ HI +2/ En +2; Amazing, LI +4/ HI +3/ En +3.

▶ **Defend Others:** At rank 12, the character becomes able to project the kinetic shield around nearby objects or people. The target must be within a number of meters equal to half the user's rank in *Telekinesis–kinetic shield*. The amount of protection afforded is the same as for a kinetic shield applied to the psion.

Levitation

Extended duration.

This skill allows a character, with only the power of the mind, to rise into the air and propel him- or herself as though flying.

How high and how fast a character can move while levitating depends on the result of a skill check, as shown below. The first entry is how many meters the character can ascend or descend per phase, the second is the

speed of flight. These figures are doubled in gravity conditions lighter than Earth normal and halved in gravity conditions heavier than Earth normal.

The *levitation* skill has a duration of 1 round, which may be extended by spending additional psionic energy points at a rate of 1 point for each additional round.

Ordinary 2 meters/walk × 1
Good 4 meters/walk × 1.5
Amazing 6 meters/walk × 2

If a character chooses to stop levitating or runs out of psionic energy points while out of touch with the ground, he or she suffers damage from a fall as indicated on TABLE P15: IMPACT DAMAGE (see the *Player's Handbook, Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*).

Performing an additional action while levitating provides a +1 step penalty to that action.

⊗ **No Concentration:** At rank 3, a character no longer must take a +1 step penalty to actions taken while maintaining *levitation*.

⊗ **Extended Duration:** At rank 6, the duration of a single use of *levitation* is extended to 1 minute. It may be extended at a rate of 1 minute per psionic energy point expended to do so. At rank 9, the duration increases to 5 minutes, with 5 minute increases for each additional psionic energy point spent. At rank 12, the duration becomes 30 minutes, with 30 minute increases.

Photokinetics

With this skill, a character can excite the molecules in an object so that they give off illumination.

It takes 1 phase for the object to reach maximum luminosity, and the molecules remain excited for the rest of the current round and all of the next round.

The object provides Ordinary light (roughly the same as normal

daylight) that illuminates an area of up to 6 meters in diameter, depending on the result of a skill check: Ordinary, 2 meters; Good, 4 meters; Amazing, 6 meters.

A character can also reduce the level of light in an area. This reduction has the same parameters that increasing light does (see above).

▶ **Extended Duration:** At rank 4, the character can extend the duration of *photokinetics*. The basic duration becomes 1 minute, which extends by an additional minute for each psionic energy point spent to do so. At rank 8, the interval extends to 5 minutes, and at rank 12, it extends to 30 minutes.

▶ **Illusion:** The character is actually able to manipulate light to form visual illusions (they possess no auditory, thermal, or other element). These illusions differ from those created by the *Telepathy-illusion* skill in that they are visible to any within view.

At rank 3, the character can create only simple illusions, such as common geometrical shapes, a coin, and so on. These illusions can be no larger than what could fit in the psion's hand. A viewer gets an *Awareness-perception* skill check to recognize the illusion, modified by the character's *photokinetics* skill check. An Ordinary result on the *photokinetics* check results in a +1 step penalty to the viewer's skill roll, a Good imposes a +2 step penalty, and an Amazing a +3 step penalty.

At rank 9, the character can actually create larger illusions. These illusions may be no larger than a cube 2 meters on a side for each rank in *photokinetics* the character has. These illusions may serve as entertainment, a distraction, or even camouflage. The result of the *photokinetics* skill check imposes the following penalty to a viewer's *Awareness-perception* skill check: Ordinary, +1

step; Good, +2 steps; Amazing, +3 steps. At rank 12, the character is able to create even more convincing illusions. Apply the following penalties: Ordinary, +2 steps; Good, +3 steps; Amazing, +4 steps.

▶ **Flash:** At rank 6, the character is able to generate a flash of light that temporarily blinds those who see it. On an Ordinary success, the blindness lasts for d4 phases. On a Good success, it lasts d4+1 phases. On an Amazing success, it lasts d6+1 phases. During this period, the affected character takes a +3 step penalty to any actions involving sight.

In complete darkness, the skill check to activate this ability gains a -1 step bonus. In bright light, such as sunlight, the skill check receives a +1 step penalty.

Characters who anticipate this power being used against them may shield their eyes, losing their next action during the phase, but they can make a *Resolve-physical resolve* skill check to reduce the duration by 1 (Ordinary), 2 (Good), or 3 (Amazing) phases. A character whose eyes are protected in some fashion—or who does not perceive light—cannot be affected by this ability.

Psychokinetics

Extended duration.

This skill is the ability to move objects using the power of the mind. The target must be within visual contact of the user and up to 50 meters away (range 10/20/50).

A character can lift objects that weigh a number of kilograms equal to his or her Will score × 10, or push objects that weigh no more than Will score × 20 in kilograms. So, a character with a Will score of 14 can lift an object that weighs as much as 140 kg or can push an object that weighs as much as 280 kg.

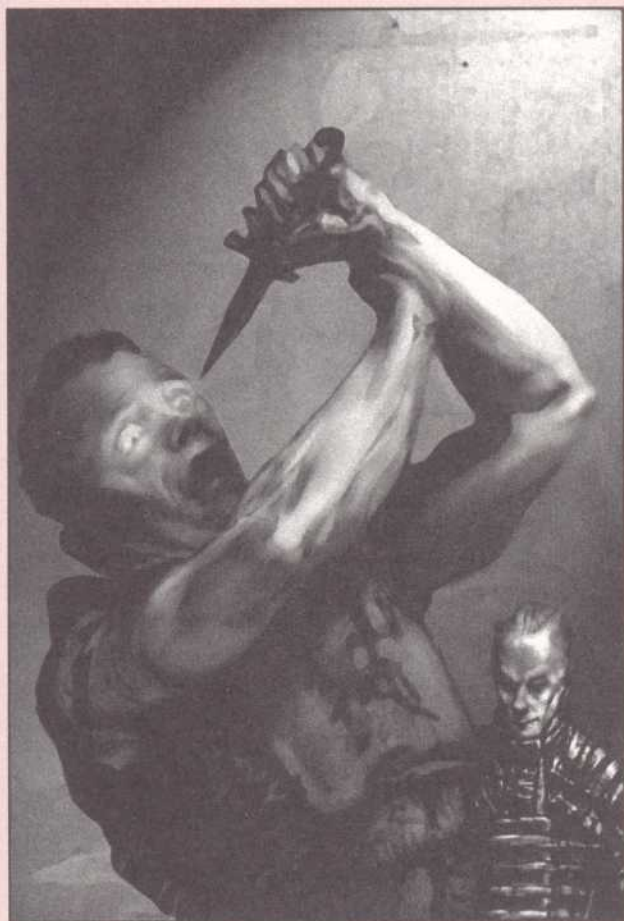
How high and how fast an object can move while being

influenced by *psychokinetics* depends on the result of a skill check, and how much the character can lift or push. As objects become lighter, they become easier to both lift and push.

The figures for lift describe how many meters the object can be lifted in one phase. The figures for push describe how far the object can be pushed in one phase, again in meters. These figures are doubled in gravity conditions lighter than Earth normal and halved in gravity conditions heavier than Earth normal.

Weight of Object				
Action	Compared to User's Max			
	1x	.75x	.5x	.25x
Lift	1/2/3	2/4/6	3/6/9	4/8/12
Push	2/4/6	3/6/9	4/8/12	5/10/20

◆ **Example:** Skurj wants to drop a toolbox on his opponent's head.



He can lift 100 kg psychokinetically, and the tool box weighs about half that. On an Ordinary success, he will be able to lift it 3 meters in a single phase, 6 meters on a Good success, or 9 meters on an Amazing success.

If a character chooses to stop using *psychokinetics* or runs out of psionic energy points while the object is out of touch with the ground, the object immediately falls and suffers damage (as indicated on TABLE P15: IMPACT DAMAGE, in the *Player's Handbook, Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*). The *Gamemaster Guide* has detailed information on the durability of various types of objects, which has a bearing on how seriously they are affected by impact damage.

A psychokinetic character will most likely wish to use this ability to fling objects at targets in combat. Only solid objects can be used to inflict damage, and the weight of the object (in kilograms) modifies the skill check. If the object weighs as much as the character can psychokinetically lift, the skill check is made at a +3 step penalty. If the object weighs three-quarters of that amount, the skill check receives a +2 step penalty. If the object weighs half what the character can lift, the skill check receives a +1 step penalty. If the object weighs one-quarter of what the character can psychokinetically lift, the skill check receives no modifier.

The psion's Telekinesis-*psychokinetics* skill check is also opposed by the target's Dexterity

resistance modifier. If a psion tries to yank an object from the grasp of another character, apply a Strength resistance modifier as well. An attack inflicts low impact damage, and has a maximum range of 60 meters (range 10/20/60). The damage inflicted by the hurtling object is $d4+2s/d4w/d4+1w$. This damage increases to $d4w/d4+1w/d6w$ at rank 5, and $d4+1w/d6w/d4m$ at rank 9.

► **Manipulate:** At rank 3, a character may attempt to operate small mechanisms—such as locks, firearms, computers, and such—psychokinetically. The character may substitute his or her Telekinesis-*psychokinetics* score for the appropriate skill if he or she has the appropriate skill already. Otherwise, the character can only attempt the action untrained, if the skill in question can be used untrained. Regardless, the attempt carries a +2 step penalty. At rank 6, this penalty drops to +1 step, and at rank 9, there is no penalty. At rank 12, the character gains a -1 step bonus. Note that if the character is attempting to manipulate a small mechanism which is currently actively controlled by someone else, the attempt is opposed by the other character's Strength resistance modifier.

► **Batter:** A psychokinetic character who has achieved rank 6 can seize living beings and shake them about so violently as to physically damage them. The range of this ability is only 20 meters (range 5/10/20), and the damage is initially $d4s/d6s/d4w$. At rank 9, the damage increases to $d4+2s/d6+2s/d6w$. The damage is low impact, and is resisted by the victim's armor, if any.

⊗ **Puppeteering:** At rank 8, the psychokinetic character can attempt to seize control of another character or creature. The psion may attempt to force the target to move or operate equipment as directed for the duration of the effect. The psion

must attempt a Telekinesis–psychokinetics skill check, opposed by the target’s Strength. (See the *Player’s Handbook, Chapter 4: Skills* for rules on character-versus-character actions.)

The psion’s success determines the success of the action taken. For example, a psychokinetic character forces an enemy to fire his 9mm pistol at a police officer. The psion’s skill check results in an Ordinary success, so the attack deals $d4+1w$ to the police officer.

For purposes of causing the target to walk, swim, or fly, assume that the target will move as directed for its full allowed distance on an Amazing success, half that on a Good success, and one-quarter the distance on an Ordinary success.

Pyrokinetics

This skill can’t be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to excite molecules within an object or even in the air until enough heat is generated to cause the object or area to burst into flame.

In the phase following a successful skill check, the target catches fire and sustains energy damage. It may continue to burn in later phases. Armor provides protection against this attack form.

The target must be within visual contact of the user and up to 30 meters away (range 10/20/30). The skill check carries a +1 step penalty if *pyrokinetics* is used at medium range, and a +3 step penalty at long range.

If the user targets the air around a character or object, the result is a flash firestorm that has an effect similar to that of an incendiary grenade. Objects and characters up to 6 meters away from the blast can be hurt, but the fire is less intense. The primary and secondary damage from this use of *pyrokinetics*, as

indicated by the psionics-user’s rank and skill check, is reduced by 2 points for targets within 2 meters of the blast, by 3 points for targets out to 4 meters away, and by 4 points for targets out to 6 meters away. (It is possible for this reduction to cause a target to suffer no damage at all.)

If a character or object is targeted, the result is an intense burn from the initial damage and the possibility of the character or object catching fire and taking more damage in every phase thereafter until the fire goes out or is extinguished.

The *Gamemaster Guide, in Chapter 3: Gamemasters in Action*, has detailed information on the durability and flammability of various types of objects, which are the major factors in determining whether something is capable of catching fire.

The intensity of the fire depends on the result of a skill check and the character’s rank in the skill.

When a character first acquires this skill, he or she is able to cause damage of $d4+2w/d6+2w/d8+2w$.

⊗ **Increased Damage:** At rank 5, damage becomes $d6+2w/d8+2w/d4m$. At rank 9, the damage caused by the skill goes to $d8+2w/d4m/d4+2m$.

PERSONALITY SKILLS

The following psionic broad skill and its specialty skills are connected to a character’s Personality score. The broad skill has a base situation die of +d4; each of the specialty skills has a base situation die of +d0.

Telepathy

This skill can’t be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to open his or her mind to the thoughts of others or send

thoughts into the minds of others.

With just the broad skill, a character can attempt to use any of the related specialty skills except those that can’t be used untrained. The difficulty of such an action is reflected in the increased psionic energy cost and the higher base situation die for using just the broad skill.

Contact

Extended duration.

With this skill, a character can send and receive thoughts to and from another character, usually for the purpose of exchanging information. Modifiers may apply, depending on the range, familiarity, and willingness of the target mind to be contacted.

The type of thoughts that can be exchanged depends on the result of a skill check:

On an Ordinary success, simple concepts (brief questions and one-word answers) can be exchanged.

On a Good success, moderate discussion (pass notes back and forth, one note per 2 phases) can occur.

On an Amazing success, the communicating characters can have a detailed discussion, as though they were conversing vocally.

If the psionics-user’s intended target isn’t willing to communicate, the target’s Will resistance modifier is applied as a penalty to the skill check, in addition to any other situation modifiers. If contact is established anyway, an unwilling mind can expel the user by making a successful Will feat check or a *Resolvental resolve* skill check, with a penalty (+1, +2, or +3 steps) depending on the psionics-user’s degree of success.

Situation/distance Modifier

Familiar mind	-1
Unfamiliar mind	none
Combative mind	+2
Hostile mind	+1
1-10 meters	-1
11-100 meters	none
101 m -1 km	+1
2-10 km	+2
11-100 km	+3
101-1,000 km (low orbit)	+4
1,001-10,000 km (high orbit)	+5

⊗ **Increased Duration:** At rank 4, the unit of duration is 1 minute, plus an additional minute per psionic energy point spent to extend it. At rank 8, this duration becomes 5 minutes, and at rank 12, the base unit of duration becomes 30 minutes.

► **Language:** At rank 6, a telepath learns to comprehend the meaning underlying ideas expressed even in languages he or she does not understand. The character may attempt an Intelligence feat check to understand the gist of the concept being communicated, or to make his or her own thoughts clearer to the target. At the Gamemaster's discretion, a +2 step penalty applies to attempting to communicate with alien minds.

⊗ **Switch:** A telepath who reaches rank 12 in *contact* can attempt to switch his or her consciousness with that of the target—effectively trading bodies. While in another person's body, a character retains his or her own memories and skill ranks, but uses the Ability Scores for the occupied body.

For example, a character with a 12 Intelligence and 3 ranks in *Computer Science—programming* switches minds with a person who has only an 8 Intelligence. The character's score in *Computer Science—programming* is now 11, rather than 15.

If the form is not of the same species, but still of the same basic

form as the character (bipedal, arthropod, whatever), a +2 step penalty applies to all physical actions the character attempts. If the form is of a different species and form, the penalty is +4 steps.

If the target is willing, the transfer is automatic with a successful *Telepathy—contact* skill check. If the target resists, the target's Will resistance modifier is applied as a penalty to the skill check, in addition to any other situation modifiers. Switching back, regardless of the willingness of the target, requires another *Telepathy—contact* skill check. The difficulty of this skill check is based on how long the character's and target's minds have been switched: 1 minute or less, Ordinary; 1 hour or less, Good; 1 day or less, Amazing. Switching back after 1 day is not possible. Note that a character who is killed while his or her mind is in the other person's body can never switch back.

Datalink

Extended duration.

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill is the ability to link one's mind with a computer (or a cybernetic machine, if the optional rules for cybertech are being used) without using a physical connection of any kind.

The *datalink* skill can be used to operate computers or cybernetic machinery with mental commands, to project one's mind into the datastream without using a neural interface jack (NIJack) or gridcaster, or to examine computer data by mentally scanning the storage unit.

In game terms, the character is able to use the same functions provided by a computer operating system (as described in the *Player's Handbook, Chapter 10: Computers*): *copy, delete, error recognition, file management, protection, protocol, and save.*

Datalink versus Cybergear

A clever telepath with the *datalink* skill might try to hack another character's cybergear and use it against him or her. To do so, the telepath must first gain access to the gear's nanocomputer using *Telepathy—datalink*. If the gear does not include a nanocomputer, telepathic hacking is not possible. (TABLE P53: CYBERNETIC GEAR in the *Player's Handbook* indicates which cybergear requires a nanocomputer.) Using this sort of "attack" is considered an outrageous violation by the mechalus.

The telepath can then operate the cybergear as its user, by making *Telepathy—datalink* skill checks for each action he or she wishes to cause the cybergear to take. There is a penalty to this check based on the actual owner's Will resistance modifier, if the actual owner is consciously resisting the external control of his or her cybernetic parts. Further, there are modifiers based on the sort of action the psion wishes to force the cybergear to take:

Action	Modifier
Power on/off	-1
Hinder user (+1 to user's skill checks)	none
Debate user (+3 to user's skill checks)	+2
Attack user (only possible with cyber weaponry)	+4

Penalties to the cybergear user's skill checks only apply to skill checks that employ the cybergear.

Once inside the datastream, a cyberlinked mind can travel throughout a networked computer system. To initiate the link,

however, the user must be only a short distance away from the computer, interface port, or other piece of machinery that serves as a point of entry. If this location is more than 2 meters away, the user's skill check is made with a +1 step penalty. The penalty goes up to +2 steps if the location is more than 4 meters away, and the skill can't be used if no point of entry is within 6 meters of the character.

A computer's normal defenses protect it against a datalink, providing a penalty to the psionics-user's skill check. Computers with a completely alien interface (operated through pheromones, for example) confer a +2 step penalty to the *datalink* skill check, but alien computers with a familiar interface (such as a keyboard, or a NIJack) actually confer a -1 bonus, due to the psionics-user's ability to interact directly with the operating system. Otherwise, *datalink* can accomplish any task that can be performed with the use of any computer.

⊗ **Increased Duration:** At rank 4, the base unit of duration increases to 1 minute, plus an additional minute per psionic energy point spent to maintain it. At rank 8, this unit of duration becomes 5 minutes, and at rank 12, it increases to 30 minutes.

⊗ **Increased Distance:** At rank 3, the distance at which the character can use the *datalink* skill increases to 4 (no penalty)/ 8 (+1 step penalty)/ 12 (+2 step penalty) meters. At rank 6, this becomes 8/16/25 meters. At rank 9, it increases again to 15/30/50 meters, and at rank 12, it improves to 30/60/100 meters.

⊗ **Memory Slots:** With enough experience, the character eventually learns how to set aside part of his or her brain to act as a sort of "memory slot." These slots can be used to store data or programs, just like a computer. The slots can only be filled by using *datalink* to download the appro-

priate files, or through a NIJack, if the character has one.

At rank 3, the character effectively has 1 slot of active memory, which can be used as described in the *Player's Handbook, Chapter 10: Computers*. At rank 6, the active memory increases to 2 slots, to 3 slots at rank 9, and 4 slots at rank 12.

If a character becomes dazed or unconscious while carrying data in "active memory," he or she loses the data, and will need to download it again—if that's still an option.

⊗ **Edit:** At rank 4, the character can edit information stored on computers, deleting, resequencing, or otherwise changing the appearance of the data. New data cannot be created, however, though it can be "spliced in" from another source. The success of the skill check determines the modifier for attempts to spot the editing: Ordinary, +1; Good, +2; Amazing, +3.

⊗ **Robolink:** At rank 6, the character can temporarily seize control of robots. On a successful skill check, the character can implant commands in a single robot, which then behaves as though it had been affected by *Telepathy-suggest* (see below). Unlike that skill, however, the character must maintain the link to the robot in order to extend the effect of the suggestion. The suggestion will last for the applicable time period (for a character with rank 8 in *Telepathy-datalink*, for example, the suggestion will last 5 minutes, plus 5 additional minutes for each psionic energy point used to maintain the connection). A new skill check is not necessary.

◆ **Example:** Ng turns a corner and comes face-to-face with a Horatio-series point defender robot. It demands that he give it the passcode or be detained, so Ng infiltrates its core programming to find the proper code. But while he's in there, he changes the passcode, and adds a bit of

programming telling the robot to open fire on anyone who gives the old passcode, rather than to merely detain them.

Drain

This skill can't be used untrained.

The character becomes able to draw energy from another living being, draining it away. With a successful skill check, the character drains 1 point of Strength, Constitution, Dexterity, Intelligence, or Will. The target must be within 4 meters of the psion for this ability to work (range 1/2/4).

Drained energy returns to the victim with rest. After eight hours of rest, the victim may recover 1 lost point and may recover another by making either a *Resolve-physical resolve* (for Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity) or *Resolve-mental resolve* (for Intelligence and Will) skill check. Note that while a character's energy is drained, some feat and skill checks will be affected, making it harder to recover in some cases. A character reduced to 0 in one of these attributes is rendered helpless, as appropriate to the affected attribute. A character whose Strength is 0 cannot even stand, one whose Intelligence is 0 cannot understand the simplest statements, and so on. It is possible by using *drain* repeatedly on someone to maintain such a state for an indefinite duration.

⊗ **Rank Benefits:** At rank 1 and again at rank 4, rank 8, and rank 12, the character should select an ability to *drain*. Whenever the character attempts to *drain* energy from a victim, he or she must nominate which of the available "options" will be targeted before making the skill check.

▶ **Transference:** At rank 6, the character can take the energy points drained from the target and use them. The points remain until such time as the victim recovers them, or until 24 hours have passed, whichever comes first.

Empathic Projection

With this skill, a character may alter the mood of other beings—even those with whom the character does not share a language, such as foreigners, aliens, or animals. In game terms, this shifts the emotional state of the target (Combative, Hostile, Neutral, Friendly, Charmed, or Fanatic) by one, two, or three steps, depending on the success (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing). In the event of a Critical Failure, the target's emotional state shifts two steps in the direction opposite of what was desired.

The target must be within visual range of the psion. The Gamemaster should assign a modifier to the user's skill check, based on the preexisting temperament of the target. The more extreme the current emotion, the more difficult it is to alter it:

Attitude	Modifiers
Combative	+3
Hostile	+2
Neutral	0
Friendly	+1
Charmed	+2
Fanatic	+3

Multiple targets can be selected to receive an *empathic projection*, but each additional target beyond the first one provides a cumulative +1 step penalty to the psionics-user's skill check. Each target is entitled to make an *Awareness-intuition* skill check to see if it realizes that its emotional state has been artificially altered. The attitude modifier for multiple targets is based on the most extreme emotion among the targets.

With just the broad skill, the effect lasts for d4 phases; add an additional number of phases equal to the user's skill rank. At rank 4, the duration is in rounds (modified by an additional

number of rounds equal to the user's skill rank). At rank 8, the duration increases to minutes (the skill rank modifier extends to minutes as well). Finally, at rank 12, the duration is in 5-minute intervals (each rank adding an additional 5 minutes, for a total of 1 additional hour).

⊗ **Rank Benefit:** At rank 4, the user can ignore one penalty step for either the target's current emotional state, or the number of intended targets. At rank 8, the character can ignore two such penalty steps, and at rank 12, the character can ignore three.

Illusion

Extended duration.

This skill enables a character to fool a target's mind by projecting an *illusion* into it. An *illusion* can be a sight or a sound, but no other senses can be affected. An *illusion* is not capable of directly causing damage, but might do so indirectly—for instance, if the target is fooled into believing that the terrain up ahead is smooth, when actually a deep crevasse splits the ground only a few paces away. The skill is usable only against targets the character can see, and it has a maximum range of 5 meters per skill rank of the user. Any actions the user attempts while maintaining an *illusion* receive a +1 step penalty.

The result of the character's skill check determines how powerful the *illusion* is, which provides a penalty to the target's *Awareness-intuition* skill check to recognize the *illusion*: Ordinary, +1 step; Good, +2 steps; Amazing, +3 steps.

Multiple targets can be selected to receive a single *illusion*, but each additional target beyond the first one provides a cumulative +1 step penalty to the psionics-user's skill check. Each target is entitled to make an *Awareness-intuition* check to see if the *illusion* is effective against

Illusion or Suggestion?

Players and Gamemasters might become confused over whether a given application of Telepathy is an *illusion* or a *suggestion*. After all, both distort the target's perceptions in some fashion. *Illusions* create the sensation of tangible stimulus (things that can be seen, felt, heard, tasted, and smelled) while *suggestions* create the sensation of intangible ideas (freedom, satisfaction, sadness, and so on) or ideas that lead to actions (close the door, give me money, or even shoot your colleague).

that individual.

⊗ **Vanish:** A character who reaches rank 5 can mask his or her presence, effectively becoming invisible. The ability affects a number of observers equal to the psionics-user's rank in *illusion* without a penalty to the skill check; each additional target provides a cumulative +1 step penalty to the user's skill check.

⊗ **Delusion:** At rank 9, the *illusion* created is so convincing that the target mentally supplies nonsensory details, such as emotion, and intangibles, such as a sense of freedom or peace. With a successful *illusion* skill check, the psion can include a suggestion in the *illusion*, as per the Telepathy specialty skill suggest.

◆ **Example:** Dreamsmith creates an *illusion* in the scientists' minds that he is Dr. Prompataya, the colleague they have been expecting. For good measure, he also implants the suggestion that they were going to hand their notes and samples over to him for study. Minutes later, he walks out of the lab with two years' worth of research in his briefcase.

Mind Blast

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows the user to direct a powerful blast of pure mental energy at another mind. The target must be within visual contact and no more than 40 meters away (range 10/20/40). Penalties for medium and long range are +1 and +2, respectively.

Damage depends on the result of a skill check and the user's rank in the skill. Armor doesn't protect against a *mind blast*.

When a character first acquires this skill, he or she is able to cause damage of $d4+1s/d4+2s/d6+2s$.

⊗ **Increased Damage:** At rank 5, damage becomes $d4+2s/d6+2s/d8+2s$. At rank 9, the damage caused by the skill goes to $2d4+2s/2d6+2s/2d8+2s$.

⊗ **Additional Targets:** At rank 12, the telepath can affect an additional target, who must also be within range. The range modifier for the skill use is based on the range to the farthest target.

Mind Shield

This skill allows a character to establish a mental defense against psionic powers.

Mind shield protects against these psionic skills: *contact*, *drain*, *empathy*, *illusion*, *mind reading*, *mind blast*, *mind wipe*, *suggest*, and *tire*.

Mind shield provides a penalty to the skill check of another psionic character who's attempting to use any of the above-mentioned skills. The amount of the penalty depends on the result of the user's skill check: Ordinary, +1 step; Good, +2 steps; Amazing, +3 steps. These penalties are cumulative with any other resistances or protections a character might have (Will resistance modifier, *Resolve-mental resolve*, and so on).

The shield created by this skill remains in place for 5–8 hours ($d4+4$) or until it fails to stop a psionic power directed against it, at which point it collapses.

► **Parry:** When a character reaches rank 4 in *mind shield*, he or she can attempt to mentally parry the use of *contact*, *illusion*, *mind reading*, *mind blast*, *mind wipe*, *suggest*, or *tire* against him or her. The parry attempt uses up the character's next available action, but if the *Telepathy-mind shield* skill check is successful, the opposing skill automatically fails. The parry attempt can be made outside of the character's normal phases. Further, on an Amazing success using this ability, the parry attempt costs the character no psionic energy points.

► **Defend:** At rank 8, the character may extend the *mind shield* to protect others within 10 meters. For each additional person, the psion must expend 1 psionic energy point, in exchange for which he or she can apply his own *mind shield* modifier to *contact*, *drain*, *empathy*, *illusion*, *mind blast*, *mind wipe*, *suggest*, and *tire* attacks directed at the subject. The protection lasts until the end of the scene. At rank 12, the psion can also attempt to parry such attacks directed at any of the subjects being protected.

⊗ **Redirect:** At rank 12, the character can use *mind shield* to redirect an attack back on an attacker. Such redirection applies only to the attack forms affected by the skill. The defender must make a *mind shield* skill check (modified by the attacker's Will resistance modifier) to determine the effect of the redirection. Note that it is possible for the redirected attack to have a greater effect than the original attack. This use of *mind shield* requires the user to spend 1 psionic energy point; like the parry rank benefit described above, an Amazing result eliminates the need to spend the psionic energy point. A psion cannot use this ability to redirect an attack directed at another character.

Mind Wipe

This skill can't be used untrained.

With this skill, a psionic character can erase memories from a target's mind. One minute's memories can be erased for every rank the character has in *mind wipe*. The target must be within visual range, and no more than 10 meters away (range 2/5/10). The memories must be no older than 1 day per rank of the psionics-user.

The character's skill check determines how difficult it is for the target to recall events during the "erased" time. On an Ordinary success, the target receives a +1 step penalty on Intelligence feat checks to recall anything that happened during that time. On a Good success, the target receives a +2 step penalty. And on an Amazing success, the target receives a +3 step penalty.

In any case, characters with erased memories will definitely know that something is wrong, assuming they are aware of the passage of time or of changes to themselves or their environment (such as damage). They simply will not quite remember how these things happened.

◆ **Example:** Olivia has blown the deal big time, and the smuggler pulls his pistol, demanding to know who she really is. She touches his mind, removing the last few minutes' conversation from his head. She gets an Ordinary success, meaning he'll have a +1 step penalty to his Intelligence feat check to remember that she doesn't really know the "mutual friend" who set up the meeting.

The smuggler suddenly becomes aware that he is holding his gun on her for no apparent reason—though he knows something is amiss. Suspecting she might be a telepath, he tries to remember why he pulled his weapon. He rolls his Intelligence feat check, but with a d6 situation die (+d4 for a feat check, bumped up to a d6 for Olivia's *Telepathy-mind wipe* attempt); he succeeds,

so Olivia's attempt isn't enough to make him forget what happened in the last few minutes. The smuggler is now certain she has done something to his mind.

⊗ **Extended Reach:** At rank 3, the character can "see" a number of weeks into the past equal to his or her skill rank. At rank 6, this becomes months; at rank 9, it becomes years; and at rank 12, it increases to decades.

⊗ **Edit:** At rank 6, the character can supply false memories to fill in the gaps in the target's mind. The success of the skill check determines the modifier for attempts to spot the false memories: Ordinary, +1, Good, +2, Amazing, +3.

⊗ **Unlearn:** A character who reaches rank 12 with this skill can remove specific knowledge from the target's mind. A successful skill check—resisted by the target's Will modifier—removes 1, 2, or 3 skill ranks (with an Ordinary, Good, or Amazing success) from the target's mind. The character using this ability chooses the skills from which to remove ranks. The target can recover these lost skill ranks as explained under "Resolving Traps", in the "Mental Combat" section of this chapter.

Psychic Armor

This skill creates a psychic "buffer zone" around the character, which helps to lessen the effect of *drain*, *mind blast*, and *tire* attacks directed at him or her.

Psychic armor provides the character with a number of "psionic defense points". An Ordinary success gives the character d6 defense points; a Good success gives him d6+2 defense points; and an Amazing success gives the character d8+2 defense points. Defense points remain for d4+4 hours, or until they are used. A character cannot use this skill to gain more defense points until any previous defense points are lost.

These points are used to reduce the amount of damage suffered from *mind blast* (on a one-for-one basis) or to give the character another option for resisting *tire*, *drain*, or *empathic projection* attacks. Two defense points reduce one point of fatigue loss caused by *Telepathy-tire*, and three defense points reduce one point of attribute loss caused by *Telepathy-drain*. Four defense points reduce by one degree the extent to which a character's emotional state has been altered by *Telepathy-empathic projection*. (See *Mental Combat*, later in this chapter, for details.)

⊗ **Increased Effect:** At rank 4, the character gains d6+2 defense points on an Ordinary success, d8+2 on a Good success, and d8+4 on an Amazing success. At rank 8, the character gains d8+2 defense points on an Ordinary success, d8+4 on a Good success, and d12+4 on an Amazing success. At rank 12, the character gains d8+4 defense points on an Ordinary success, d12+4 on a Good success, and d12+6 on an Amazing success.

Psychic Projection

With this skill, a character can separate mind from body and travel wherever desired, leaving his or her physical form behind. The psion's consciousness is able to fly and to pass through solid objects. The character's mental form is invisible and intangible, though his or her physical body is still vulnerable, making psychic "joyriding" a less intriguing prospect. Many psions endowed with this ability make use of a bodyguard (literally).

While travelling psychically, the character's movement rate is equal to $(INT + WIL) \times 2$. The character is effectively naked—being unable to bring physical objects such as clothing or weapons along—though he or she can appear however desired. Only

other psychically projected beings can perceive the character in any fashion, though he or she can perceive the real world via sight and sound. Other senses are effectively inactive—except for perceiving contact with other psychically projected beings as a sort of tingling sensation, which is either pleasant or unpleasant, depending on the reaction of the other being toward the character.

While projected individuals can pass through solid real-world objects, they cannot pass through one another. This makes it possible for such characters to attack one another, though they will ordinarily only be able to do so with unarmed combat techniques, or with psionic abilities. See "Mental Combat", later in this chapter, for more information.

A projected individual can return to his or her physical body at any time desired, simply by traveling back to it and successfully performing another *Telepathy-psychic projection* skill check. A character who runs out of psionic energy points while attempting to return becomes trapped in non-corporeal form until such time as he or she is able to recover enough psionic energy to try again. In the meantime, the body is effectively comatose, and will begin to deteriorate unless care is somehow provided.

The major danger of psychic projection is that one will return to one's corporeal form only to find it already inhabited by someone else. In such dire circumstances, the character will be unable to reenter his or her body, and must find another physical body to occupy. The alternative is living forever after as a kind of ghost, able to perceive the real world, but unable to affect it in any way.

Characters can enter any "unoccupied" living being they encounter, by the same means they reenter their own bodies. However, a character occupying

an unfamiliar form will be unable to "operate" it as well as his or her own. While in another person's body, a character retains his or her own memories and skill ranks, but uses the Ability Scores for the occupied body. (See the description of ESP-contact for more information.)

◆ **Example:** While psychically searching for a missing child, Drew's body is hijacked by black-market organ merchants. Unless he stops them, they're going to cut his body up for spare parts!

Drew psychically follows them to the hospital morgue. While they prepare, he goes looking in the emergency room upstairs, and finds a young woman who's just died in a boating accident. He makes his psychic projection skill check, and to everyone's shock, she suddenly sits up, gasping for air. "They're going to kill me!" she blurts out, stumbling off the table. As the shaken ER staff try to restrain her, Drew uses the girl's Strength, coupled with his own martial arts training, to break free. Sadly, her body isn't as strong as his own, and he can feel the seconds ticking away for his real body while he wastes time trying to convince the ER personnel that he's not just hysterical.

► **Body-Riding:** At rank 12, the character can attempt to seize control of a body that is already occupied, by making a Telepathy-psychic projection skill check, modified by the target's Will resistance modifier. The result determines how much control the character has over the new form, if any. On an Amazing result, the character has complete control of the target's body, and the target's consciousness is effectively "shut off."

On a Good success, the character can only partially operate the body, as described above under entering unoccupied bodies. On an Ordinary success, the character can control the target's body only when the target is unconscious, or otherwise voluntarily relinquishes "control."

On a Failure, the character merely remains noncorporeal. With a Critical Failure, the character enters the body, but becomes buried in the target's subconscious, unable to influence the target's body or mind (except perhaps as a sort of vague nagging sensation). The character can attempt to "escape" once per day, by making another Telepathy-psychic projection skill check.

Suggest

This specialty skill allows a character to mesmerize another person. If successful, *suggest* plants a thought into another person's mind and convinces that person that the thought is his or her own. The target must be within visual range of the psion.

No suggestion can have a permanent or immediately detrimental effect on the character it's directed at. A suggestion lasts for as long as 1, 2, or 3 hours, depending on the degree of success of the user's skill check (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing). It could expire before its time limit is reached, but it can't be extended beyond its limit without another successful application of the skill at precisely the time when the original suggestion is due to run out.

The Gamemaster will assign a bonus or a penalty to the user's skill check to reflect how extreme the suggestion is. Enticing someone to perform an act he or she would be inclined to do anyway might carry a -1 or -2 step bonus, while a suggestion to do something entirely opposed to the character's nature would provide a severe penalty of +3 steps or more.

If the Gamemaster allows it, the target character is entitled to a Will feat check after the suggestion has worn off, to realize that he or she was the victim of a suggestion. This feat check carries a bonus or a penalty that is the reverse of the situation die

modifier used for the skill check. For example, if a suggestion was successfully implanted despite a +3 step penalty, the victim of that suggestion receives a -3 step bonus to the feat check. Or, if the nature of the suggestion provided a -2 step bonus to the user's skill check, then the victim's feat check is made with a +2 step penalty.

⊗ **Programmed Suggestion:** At rank 6, the character can implant a suggestion that does not immediately take effect. Instead, when the subject experiences some kind of sensory cue (hearing a code phrase, seeing a particular person, etc.), the subject acts upon the suggestion. The triggering event can be as long as 1 hour, 1 day, or 1 month later, depending on the result of the user's skill check (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing), and the subject is allowed to make a Will feat check as described above to determine if he or she remembers being "programmed." At rank 12, the suggestion will remain implanted for a longer duration before being triggered. The programming will last one week on an Ordinary success, one month on a Good success, and one year on an Amazing success.

◆ **Example:** Droma, who has achieved rank 7 in Telepathy-suggest, is trying to arrange an ambassador's assassination. Latching onto the mind of a passing security guard, he implants a suggestion that when she next sees the ambassador, she must kill the man.

If Droma manages an Ordinary success, the guard will execute the plan only if she happens to see the ambassador in the next hour. On a Good success, the suggestion will last for up to a day, and on an Amazing success, the guard will wait for up to a month before trying to kill the ambassador.

► **Delusion:** At rank 9, the suggestion is so strong that the target mentally fills in sensory details, effectively creating an

illusion. The target then responds as though to physical stimuli. With a successful *suggest* skill check, the psion can include sensory details in the suggestion, as per the Telepathy specialty skill *illusion*.

Tire

This skill inflicts fatigue damage upon a target, perhaps prompting that character to decide that he or she is in need of rest. The target must be within visual contact and no more than 30 meters away (range 10/20/30). Penalties for medium and long range are +1 and +2 respectively.

The amount of damage inflicted depends on the result of a skill check: Ordinary, 1 fatigue point; Good, 2 points; Amazing, 3 points.

⊗ **Increased Effect:** At rank 4, the range increases to 15/30/50 meters. At rank 8, an Ordinary result inflicts 2 points of fatigue damage, a Good inflicts 3 points, and an Amazing 4 points. At rank 12, the range increases again to 20/40/60 meters.

⊗ **Transference:** At rank 9, the character can take fatigue points drained from the target and use them. The fatigue points can exceed the character's normal fatigue point total, and remain until lost through normal activity, or until 24 hours have passed—whichever occurs first.

ALIEN PSIONIC SKILLS

Roughly half of the intelligent species in the STAR*DRIVE setting are psi-capable, and all of the species in the *Player's Handbook* are able to pursue Mindwalker professions. Many of them have developed their own psionic skills, which they teach only to psions of their own species.

This rule will vary based on the campaign and the wishes of the players, but the basic guide-

line is that unless a character is of the proper species, he or she cannot acquire any of the following psionic skills during hero creation. However, Gamemasters may decide to be a bit more lenient and allow heroes to take them at a higher cost, or perhaps only if they also take three ranks in the language of the species in question (and even three ranks in *Culture-etiquette* for the appropriate species). Players who wish to learn these psionic skills should discuss this with their Gamemaster first.

Fraal Psionics

Undo

New Telepathy Skill

Every fraal child is born with psionic ability. Until they begin formal training, however, they frequently use their nascent skills indiscriminately, in much the same way as toddlers of every intelligent species: They do whatever they like, unless an adult stops them. Most such uses of psionic skills by children are clumsy and weak, but occasionally a particularly strong psionic child will wreak havoc. Rather than "clipping their wings" with a telepathic mental block, the fraal have learned to literally *undo* some of the more lasting effects that a psionic child can create.

With this skill, a fraal (or fraal-trained) telepath can reverse the effects of a successful use of *Telepathy-illusion*, *mind wipe*, or *suggest*. The telepath must achieve a better result than the user of the original telepathic skill, with a +1 step modifier per rank of difference if the original user's rank is higher, or a -1 step modifier per rank of difference if the original user's rank is lower. Only one attempt is allowed each day.

◆ **Example:** Miro Heth realizes that his prize pupil has no recollection of the day's lesson, and suspects that a rival student has

wiped the memory from his mind. He delves into the younger fraal's head, and discovers a "blank spot" where the memories used to be—with a quick and clumsy "filler memory" thrown in to cover up the missing part.

Miro decides to try reversing the effect. Because the rival achieved a Good success on his *Telepathy-mind wipe* check, Miro must achieve an Amazing success. Fortunately, the rival's rank in *mind wipe* is four ranks less than Miro's rank in *undo*, so Miro receives a -4 step bonus to his attempt.

Guidance

New Telepathy Skill

Extended duration.

This skill can't be used untrained.

The fraal long ago realized that telepathy was an excellent way of putting the right skills in the right place. Often, fraal workers would hit a stumbling block on some project and require the expertise of a supervisor—who unfortunately was too far away to be helpful. *Telepathy-contact* somewhat overcame the problem, but the supervisor could only advise, and even then had to rely



on the worker's understanding of the situation. So the fraal developed a way of temporarily granting a worker the skill needed to do the job right.

With a successful skill check, the telepath can implant one of his or her non-psionic skills in the mind of a subject for as long as he or she continues to expend psionic energy points. The attempt carries the same situational modifiers as the contact skill. The target must be within visual range of the psion using this skill.

The subject gains access to the appropriate broad skill on an Ordinary success, half the telepath's rank (rounded down) in the appropriate specialty skill on a Good success, or the telepath's rank -1 on an Amazing success. Obviously, the telepath cannot use *guidance* to confer skills he or she does not possess—and cannot confer skills learned via another telepath using *guidance*!

If the skill to be learned is a specialty skill and the subject did not already have the appropriate broad skill, any attempt to use the specialty skill carries a +1 step penalty, in addition to any other penalties that may apply. A further +1 step penalty applies if the skill is based on Strength, Constitution, or Dexterity.

◆ **Example:** Mon jil Sohar can "loan" his skills to his companion, Hieo jil Esoam. On an Ordinary success, Hieo can use Mon's Life Science broad skill, half of Mon's ranks in Life Science—genetics on a Good success, or all but one of his ranks in the skill on an Amazing success. When Hieo attempts to use these skills, though, he suffers a +1 step penalty because he didn't already have the Life Science broad skill.

If Mon tries to guide Hieo in the use of his Vehicle Operation—land vehicle skill, though, Hieo will suffer a +2 step penalty; +1 because he didn't already have the broad skill, and another +1 because it's based on Dexterity.

► **Extended Time:** At rank 6, the user only needs to expend psionic energy points every 5 rounds in order to continue granting the skill to the subject.

⊗ **Conduit:** At rank 12, the user can transfer a non-psionic skill he or she does not possess by taking it from the mind of a willing "donor."

Link

New Telepathy—*contact* Rank Benefit

⊗ **Link:** When a fraal (or fraal-trained) telepath reaches rank 3 in the *contact* skill, he or she may "tie in" more people to the telepathic conversation. The psion can include a number of minds in the link equal to his rank in *contact*, and may add in further minds at a +1 step penalty to the skill check for each additional mind beyond that rank. Each of the linked minds may communicate equally well with the others; the skill check determines the quality of the connection for everyone involved.

Mechalus Psionics

Subdual

New Telepathy Skill

As the Aleerins overcame their more violent emotions, they suffered periodic lapses when exposed to situations of extreme stress. These events were not only unpleasant for the victims, but also painfully embarrassing for the Aleerin who had temporarily lost control. Aleerin Mindwalkers stepped forward with a solution: psionic *subdual* of the unfortunate individual.

This Aleerin skill allows the user to engender feelings of calm, or even detachment, in any intelligent species—though it is much more effective against other Aleerins. When used against an Aleerin by an Aleerin, the skill

check for Telepathy—*subdual* receives a -1 step bonus. The target must be within visual range.

With an Ordinary result, the target becomes less violent, suffering a +1 step penalty to combat skill checks, including action checks. On a Good success, the reaction is even stronger, conferring a +3 step penalty to combat skill checks and action checks. And on an Amazing success, the subject becomes incapable of launching an attack against another living being, and will hesitate for a phase before attacking objects, structures, or other nonliving things.

◆ **Example:** Droma sees his companions being assaulted by a blood-mad weren. Thinking quickly, he employs the Aleerin psionic art of *subdual*, trying to calm the weren. He achieves a Good success, and the weren slows down a bit, hesitating before it attacks.

Most Aleerins, incidentally, would never dream of using this ability to take advantage of another being. To do so requires that the Aleerin succeed at a Resolve—*mental resolve* check.

⊗ **Increased Effect:** At rank 4, the user can affect two targets with the same skill check. At rank 8, he or she can affect four targets, and eight targets at rank 12.

Sesheyan Psionics

Dream Hunt

New ESP Skill

This skill cannot be used untrained.

Mindwalkers take the role of mystics and shamans in sesheyan society, and are called upon for a wide variety of tasks. The most common is their ability to find suitable quarry for the tribe in times of sparse hunting. Because sesheyans tend to hunt



from the air, their tactics often rely on knowing where the prey is likely to be. Sesheyan shamans participate in the *Dream Hunt* to discover where that place is.

Though originally developed for hunting animals, the technique works on any living being. The sesheyan (or sesheyan-trained) psion concentrates on the subject and mentally engages in a hunt. The better the subject's habits are known, the easier the hunt. If the skill check is successful, the psion determines the place where the quarry will be at any single locale in the next 24 hours, though not when the prey will be there. This information is usually relayed to the hunters, who can then watch the location.

The ability to find the right location is modified by how well the psion knows the target's habits.

Dream Hunt ***Situation Modifiers***

Familiar target	-2
Familiar territory	-1
Described target	+1
Described territory	0
Unknown target	+2
Unknown territory	+1

The degree of success determines how accurately the psion can pinpoint the location where the target will turn up. On an Ordinary success, he or she only knows the rough vicinity, generally within 1000 meters (for instance "the fields beside the big lake"). On a Good success, the location is known to within 500 meters ("the unplowed field between the big lake and the forest"). On an Amazing success, the location is known to within 100 meters ("at the edge of the forest, directly across the unplowed field from the pier on the lake").

Characters who receive this information can make Awareness-perception checks with a -1, -2, or -3 step bonus not to be surprised by the appearance of the quarry (depending on the result of the ESP-Dream Hunt check). Alternately, they can receive a similar bonus on Investigate-search checks to locate the quarry. Obviously, characters only get the bonus if they are in the right place.

⊗ **Improved Accuracy:** At rank 3, the psion is able to narrow down the time the prey will be at a given locale to within 3 hours. At rank 6, an Ordinary success narrows the location to within 500 meters, a Good success narrows it to within 100 meters, and an Amazing success narrows it to within 50 meters. At rank 9, the psion can determine when the prey will be at a particular location to within 30 minutes. At rank 12, an Ordinary success locates the prey to within 100 meters, a Good success narrows it to within 50 meters, and an Amazing success locates it to within 10 meters.

Sheya's Clutch

New Telekinesis Skill

This skill cannot be used untrained.

Sesheyan history tells of a time when they were plagued by a vicious, winged predator nearly three times the size of the average

sesheyan. Also nocturnal, these beasts would swoop down on groups and snatch one sesheyan up in its razor-sharp claws, carrying it away. Its hide was all but impervious to the stone knives and spearheads the sesheyan warriors tried to use against it. But sesheyan Mindwalkers developed a psionic weapon against the depredations of the beast, a "killing thought" they named *Sheya's Clutch*. Though the beast that prompted the telekinetic skill became extinct a century and a half ago, a few sesheyan Mindwalkers still study the technique for use against particularly powerful enemies.

Sheya's Clutch literally squeezes the heart of the victim psychokinetically. The target can be no more than 40 meters away (range 10/20/40), and must actually rely on a circulatory system with a central pumping organ; this ability will not work on machines, or life-forms without hearts. Armor is ineffective against this skill, as are defenses that rely on deflecting physical energy, such as *kinetic shield*.

When the psion first acquires this skill, *Sheya's Clutch* inflicts d8s/d6w/d4-1m, but it also inflicts d6s/d8s/d4w on the user. (The act





of stopping a victim's heart is physically taxing to the user.)

⊗ **Increased Damage:** At rank 5, the damage increases: $d4+1w/d6w/d4m$ to the victim, and $d8s/d4w/d6w$ to the user. At rank 9, the damage increases again: $d6w/d6+2w/d4+1m$ to the victim, and $d4w/d6w/d4m$ to the user.

T'sa Psionics

Clamber

New Biokinesis Skill
Extended duration.

In the distant past, certain t'sa psions developed the *clamber* skill—usually those who dwelled in the mountainous regions of the t'sa homeworld. With it, the psionic t'sa (or a psion trained by t'sa) generates thousands of tiny suckers on the palms of his hands and the soles of his or her feet. The character can then move up and down nearly vertical surfaces with ease, and can

even move across inverted surfaces for short distances. In the steep mountains of the t'sa homeworld, this often meant survival.

The degree of success with this skill determines the modifier to a psion's Athletics—*climb* attempt. The psion gains a -1, -2, or -3 step bonus, depending on the degree of success (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing). Further, if the distance is within the user's walk rate, the character can dash across inverted surfaces, effectively running across the ceiling. The character cannot stop or change direction before traveling the

full distance without falling. The same will happen if the character has nothing to hold onto on reaching his or her destination.

⊗ **Increased Distance:** At rank 4, the distance the user can travel while climbing or running across inverted surfaces is doubled. At rank 8, the distance is three times the base rate, and four times the base rate at rank 12.

Weren Psionics

Shatter

New Biokinesis Skill

Weren history tells of a clan that used armor to conquer the other clans. Having fashioned plates of crude armor from boiled marrizhe hide, this clan was despised by the other clans—but they were also unstoppable. Then came a great hero—posthumously claimed by every other clan—who duelled the warlord of the armored

clan for all his land, herds, and wives. In the midst of the duel, the mystery weren suddenly brought both fists down on his opponent's armored chest, and the leather plates *shattered*. At best an average fighter without his armor, the warlord quickly succumbed, and the weren warrior mysteriously vanished—though not, of course, without claiming his prizes.

Weren warriors have attempted to emulate that legend for centuries, though the only successes have been by psionic weren gifted with Biokinesis. They are able to direct bio-energy at solid surfaces—usually armor—in such a way that the surface breaks. To use this ability, the weren psion must first attempt a Biokinesis—*shatter* skill check. If the check is successful, the next bare-fisted blow the weren lands inflicts damage to the opponent's armor, if any, rather than to the opponent. If the weren fails to strike armor before the end of the next round, the effect dissipates, though the character can try again.

If the *shatter* skill check yielded an Ordinary result, the armor he strikes absorbs 1 fewer point of damage. On a Good result, the armor absorbs 2 fewer points of



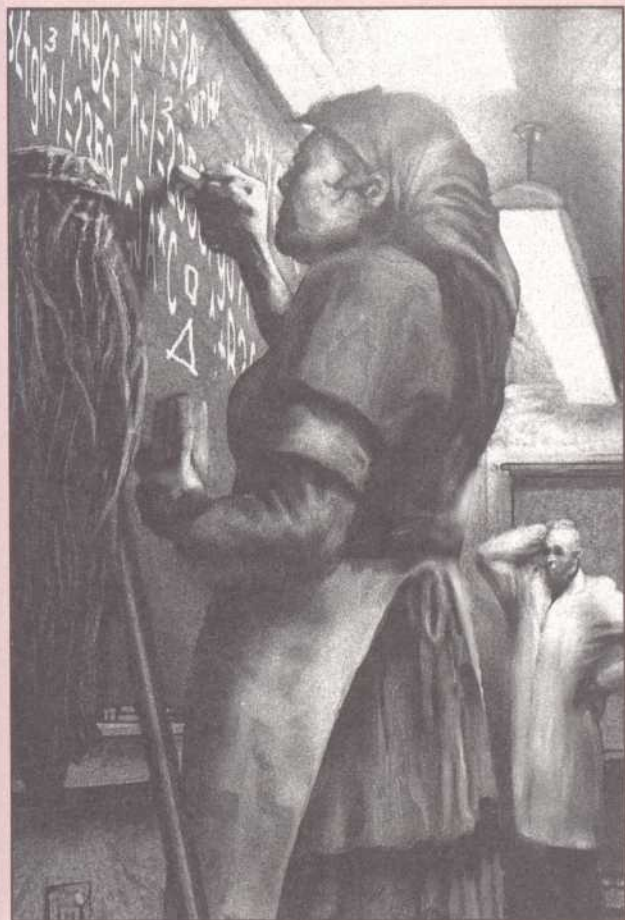
damage. And on an Amazing result, the armor absorbs 3 fewer points of damage.

See TABLE G13: OBJECT ARMOR in the *Gamemaster Guide* for information on how well non-armor objects absorb damage.

⊗ **Increased Effect:** Ordinarily, this skill can only affect armor or objects of Ordinary toughness. At rank 4, the psion can affect armor or objects of Good toughness. At rank 8 the armor absorbs 2 fewer points of damage on an Ordinary success. On a Good result, the armor absorbs 3 fewer points of damage. On an Amazing result, the armor absorbs 4 fewer points of damage. At rank 12, the user can affect objects of Amazing toughness.

Designing New Psionic Skills

Individual tastes and campaigns differ, so no single book will be able to cover every possible psionic skill.



Those who wish to design new psionic skills should use these guidelines:

- Try to fit new skills into existing broad skills before creating a new broad skill. But new broad skills should include four or more specialty skills to be worth the cost.
- If a new skill could conceivably be covered by an existing one, it might be best just to make it a rank benefit of that skill.
- If the skill wouldn't logically trigger spontaneously, and requires concentration to use, it should probably not be usable untrained.
- Similarly, if a new skill can be maintained for at least a round, then it should have an extended duration.
- If the new skill inflicts damage, try to keep it commensurate with existing damage-dealing psionic skills (*electrokinetics*, *pyrokinetics*, and so on).
- When designing rank benefits for the skill, first consider those that extend the damage, range, or duration, or reduce penalties. If the skill has a fairly powerful rank benefit, place it around rank 9 or 12. (This helps keep players from "cherry-picking" a wide range of unrelated psionic skills with quick payoffs).
- Don't be afraid to adjust the power level of a new skill if it's too weak or too strong. And don't be afraid to do it again, and again, until everyone feels it's right.

NEW Non-Psionic Skills

In addition to those skills which enable ALTERNITY heroes to perform amazing feats of psionic ability, there are skills which help characters better understand and cope with psionics. The following skills are available to any career, though Mindwalkers and Diplomat-Mindwalkers may purchase them for cost -1.

INT Skill	Cost
Knowledge	3
<i>Psionics</i>	2
Law	5
<i>Psionic Law</i>	1
Life Science	7
<i>Psionics</i>	3

Knowledge

Psionics

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill gives a character a working knowledge of psionic abilities, perhaps even beyond what the character's culture understands as a whole.

The degree of success achieved on a skill check relates to the quality or quantity of the information that is available to or understood by the character.

Law

Psionic Law

This skill can't be used untrained.

Lawyers, judges, and others use this skill to interact in courtrooms and in legislative meetings. This aspect of the Law broad skill is used to argue a case or a point of view in an official proceeding.

Life Science

Psionics

This skill can't be used untrained.

Like biology, botany, genetics, and zoology, this skill is useful for characters who are explorers, scientists, or doctors. In some cultures, those who study this science are known as "psientists."

Psionics is the study of psionic phenomena, including its origins and applications, as well as its presence in alien forms of life, and its impact on the environment.

The rank benefits for Life Science-psionics are the same as for other Life Science specialties, as listed in Chapter 4: Skills, in the *Player's Handbook*.

NEW PERK DESCRIPTIONS

Fast Recovery

Cost 3/5/7, CON, Active

The character recovers all of his or her psionic energy points after 2, 4, or 6 hours of rest, rather than the usual 8 hours. The character can still make Resolve-mental resolve or Will feat checks to recover at the end of any hour in which he or she did not use psionic skills.

If the character recovers psionic energy after 6 hours of rest, this perk costs 3 skill points. If recovery occurs after 4 hours, the cost of the perk is 5 skill points, and if after only two hours of rest, this perk costs 7 skill points.

Increased Energy

Cost 5, Special, Active

Through some fluke, the character has more psionic energy points than normal. A character who purchases this perk has 3 additional psionic energy points.

Latent Psi

Cost 5/10, Special, Active

The character is a borderline psion, with an unconscious ability to tap the powers of his or her mind. This manifests as an increased proficiency in one or more skills, granting the character a -1 step bonus. For 5 points, the character receives this bonus when using a single specialty skill. For 10 points, the character receives this bonus when using any single broad skill, and all its associated specialty skills. The character loses this bonus in psi-dampening conditions, such as neural interference circuits (see Psionic Equipment, later in this chapter).

Mnemonic Chameleon

Cost 4, PER, Active

This perk can only be taken by characters with the ESP broad skill.

An unusual but documented condition among ESPers is the tendency to pick up memories from those around them so unconsciously that they mistake the memories for their own. These people are known as "mnemonic chameleons," and they are often deeply troubled individuals, not knowing which memories are their own, and which came from someone nearby.

When a mnemonic chameleon is in any one person's company for more hours than the chameleon's Personality score, the character "imprints," on the other person, picking up information as though it were the chameleon's own. The chameleon gains the subject's highest-ranked Intelligence-based skill and any associated rank benefits; he or she also gains any psychological flaws the character has (specifically, Clueless, Code of Honor, Forgetful, Oblivious, Obsessed, Phobia, Primitive, Spineless, and Temper).

Chameleons also believe that they have any non-psychological flaws or perks the subject has, but may be extremely confused by their inability to demonstrate it. For example, if asked about his Alien Artifact, a chameleon character can describe it in detail, and might firmly believe that it is in his hotel room, in a suitcase. But then he would be unable to produce either the item, or the suitcase—or even the key to the hotel room!

This condition lasts until such time as the chameleon has not been in the subject's company for more than four hours, at which point the memories, perks, flaws, and skills fade.

Psion's License

Cost 1/2/3, PER, Conscious

The character's psionic abilities are registered with the proper authorities, and he or she is allowed to use them in business transactions within strictly regulated parameters. The psion is often summoned to account for the use of his or her powers, and can be punished with fines or a revoked license. Characters practicing psionics without a proper license are subject to stiff penalties.

A 1-point license allows the character to use one psionic specialty skill. A 2-point license allows him to use a single broad skill and its associated specialty skills. A 3-point license allows the character to use all of his or her psionic skills.

Psion's licenses are only required in settings where certain cultures regulate psionic activity, such as heroic campaigns where psionic abilities are commercialized or exploited. See Chapter 3 for more information on the various types of psionic campaigns.

Sanctuary-Taught

Cost 1, Special, Conscious

The character has received formal psionic training at a fraal Mindwalker sanctuary, and consequently has both a greater understanding of the laws of psionics, and his own potential. The character gains a last resort point, which is only usable to alter a check for a psionic skill. The point cannot be spent to alter a skill check for a psionic skill in which the character is not trained.

Gamemasters should only allow this perk in campaigns that include fraal Mindwalker sanctuaries, such as the STAR*DRIVE setting. The player must come up with a suitable backstory for his or her hero to explain how and where the psionic sanctuary training occurred.

Subtle

Cost 2/4/6, Special, Active

A character with this talent is more skilled in using psionic abilities with finesse, making it more difficult for others to pick up on his or her psionic energies. A character who takes this perk as a 2-point ability causes anyone using the Psionic Awareness perk, the Psi Sensitivity mutation, ESP-sensitivity, or technological psi detection gear to take a +2 step penalty to their skill check. A character who takes this as a 4-point perk applies a +3 step penalty to such attempts, and a character who takes the 6-point perk applies a +4 step penalty to the appropriate skill check.

Superior Talent

Cost 5, Special, Active

There are two versions of this perk. The first allows a psionic talent to purchase up to four psionic specialty skills of a

single broad skill, rather than only up to two. The second allows the talent to purchase two psionic broad skills and up to two specialty skills from each of those broad skills. A character may not select both versions of this perk.

NEW FLAW DESCRIPTIONS

Exhausting Psi

+6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

A genetic anomaly has blessed the character with extraordinary mental power—but cursed him or her with no mental power source. The character begins the game with zero psionic energy points. Though allowed to ignore the requirement of having two energy points to attempt the use of a psionic broad skill, all attempted psionic actions cost the character Fatigue points.

Hobbled

+4/+6/+8 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

By means of drugs, cybergear, or hypnotic or psionic conditioning, one or more of the character's psionic skills have been artificially inhibited. The character suffers a +1 step penalty whenever attempting to activate the affected skill or skills.

For +4 bonus skill points, the penalty only applies to a single psionic specialty skill. For +6 skill points, the penalty is applied to one broad skill, and all of its specialty skills. For +8 skill points, the penalty applies to all but one of the psion's broad and specialty psionic skills. Which skills are affected are up to the player, but the Gamemaster has the right to ask the player to choose a different skill if the choice does not particularly limit the hero.

Limited Skill

Special

One of the character's psionic skills is limited in some fashion, such as telepathy that only works on animals, or *psychokinetics* that can only attract ferrous metals. This flaw is worth one-half the cost of the skill it affects. (Round fractions down.) The Gamemaster has final authority on whether or not the restriction chosen by the player is limiting enough to warrant taking this flaw. For example, Telepathy that only works on sea-creatures isn't very limited if the character is surrounded all day by sea-creatures. By the same token, *postcognition* that only lets a character see 5 minutes into his or her own past, while it may prove useful under some circumstances, is probably *too* limited.

Mental Block

+2/+4/+6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

The character has had a psionic mental block placed on one of his or her psionic specialty skills. For +2 skill points, the block provides a +1 step penalty to the use of that skill. For +4 skill points, the block provides a +2 step penalty, and for +6 skill points, the block provides a +3 step penalty.

The character can only remove this flaw through roleplaying, or by acquiring the *Telepathy-mental block* skill (see Chapter Three). The character cannot take this flaw if he or she already has the skill.

Neural Disease

+5 Bonus Skill Points, CON

This flaw may be taken by non-psionic characters.

The character is "NCS-positive," susceptible to Neural Corruption Syndrome, which is fully described in Chapter 4. Whenever the character is exposed to NCS—either via Telepathy or by using *ESP-mind reading* on an infected

individual—the NCS-positive character must make a Constitution feat check to avoid the disease at a +4 step penalty, rather than the usual +2 step penalty.

Heroes with this flaw should only be allowed in campaign settings in which Neural Corruption Syndrome is a possibility. The determination of this is entirely up to the Gamemaster, but it is strongly recommended that if NCS is used, that it be a major concern to the psionic population.

Painful Psi

+4 Bonus Skill Points, CON

The character is physiologically unprepared for psionic ability. Perhaps he or she gained his psi talent through chemical or technological implants, and the brain's neural pathways are not equipped to handle the additional strain. Whatever the reason, using psionics is extraordinarily painful to the character.

A character with this flaw who uses a psionic skill must afterward make a Stamina-resist pain skill check. On a Critical Failure, the character suffers d6+1s. On a Failure, the damage is d4+1s. An Ordinary success deals the character d6-1s, and a Good success deals the character d4-1s. On an Amazing success, the character loses only a single stun point.

Reduced Energy

+5 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

Perhaps because of some neurological imbalance, the character has fewer psionic energy points than normal. A character who takes this flaw has 3 fewer psionic energy points, though this flaw cannot leave him or her with fewer than one.

Reluctant Psi

+3/+5 Bonus Skill Points, INT

The character is from a culture with a lower level of psionic consciousness (see Chapter 3) than the

one in which the campaign takes place. The character may feel that his or her psionic gift is more of a curse, or that it derives from a completely different source—thereby making it something beyond his or her control. In any case, the character feels a surge of negative emotions (shame, remorse, fear, and such) whenever he using psionic abilities.

For 3 bonus skill points, the character is from a slightly backward culture, and only suffers a +1 step penalty on attempts to use psionic skills. For 5 bonus points, the character is from an extremely psionically backward culture, and suffers a +2 step penalty.

This flaw is especially effective for roleplaying purposes when it is combined with Untrained Talent (see below) and with Code of Honor. (The character's code could revolve around not using psionic ability, or not using it in anger, or against living beings, for example.)

Representative Gestures

+2 Bonus Skill Points, DEX

Consciously or subconsciously, the character thinks of psi as a kind of magic—one that requires expressive gestures to wield. When using any psionic skills, the character makes expressive gestures or movements meant to represent the action being taking. This has no effect on his skill check, but makes the source of a psionic effect extremely obvious to anyone who is observing.

Slow Recovery

+2/+4 Bonus Skill Points, CON

The character recovers psionic energy points slower than normal. The character can attempt to recover psionic energy with a Resolve-mental resolve or Will feat check only after two hours have passed

since last using psionic skills.

For 4 bonus skill points, the character must rest a full day to recover all psionic energy points, rather than the usual 8 hours.

Gamemasters allowing this flaw should take note that it will not particularly hinder characters who have plenty of time to rest between scenes.

Unreliable Psi

+3 /+6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

The character has difficulty activating psionic abilities; they just don't perform "on demand." This makes it difficult to use psionics when needed—or to even prove that he or she has them.

The character must take an action to make a Resolve-mental resolve check before attempting to use a psionic skill. The result of the mental resolve check determines how easily the character can activate a psionic skill. On an Ordinary success, the character suffers a +1 step penalty to the psionic skill check. On a Good or Amazing success, the character receives no modifier. A Failure result means the character suffers a +3 step penalty to any psionic skill check, and a Critical Failure means the character loses 2 psionic energy points before ever attempting the psionic skill check.

The effect of the mental resolve check lasts for one attempt of the psionic skill for +3 bonus skill points, or for the rest of the scene for +6 bonus skill points. Characters who buy off this flaw gain normal command of their power.

Untrained Talent

+3 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

The character has no training whatsoever in psionic skills and may not begin the game with

Assaults
contact
empathy
mind blast
mind reading
mind shred

Subversion
drain
tire
empathic
projection

Traps
illusion
mind wipe
suggest

Defenses
mind shield
psychic armor

psionic specialty skills. This particular flaw is well suited to realistic campaigns that feature a theme of skepticism.

Wild Talent

+6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

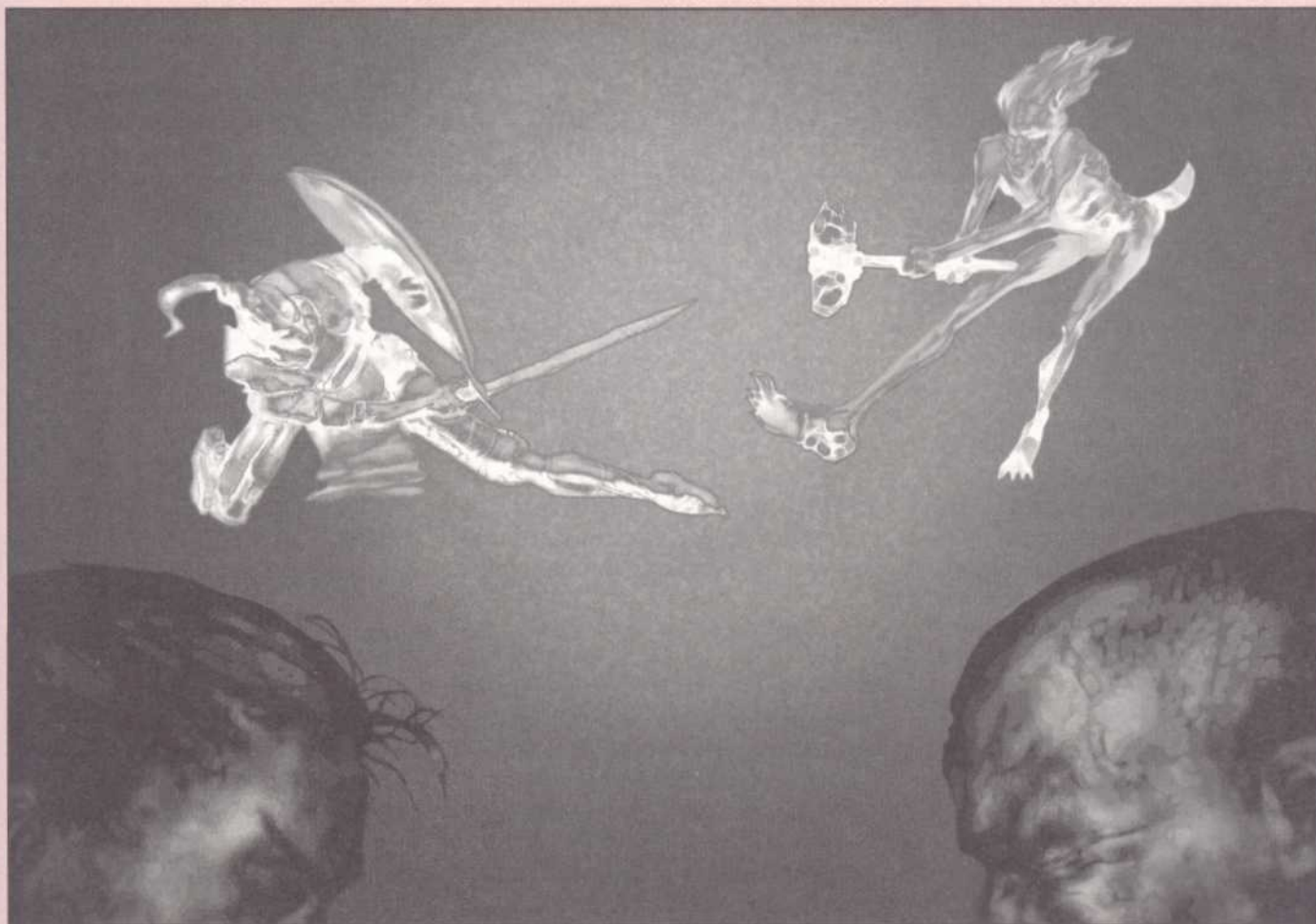
The character has very limited control over mindwalking powers—they frequently act up when least wanted. The character must make a Will feat check immediately when becoming dazed (see *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* in the *Player's Handbook*) or when failing a Stamina–endurance or any Resolve skill check. If the check fails, the character's highest-ranked power is unleashed uncontrolably for d6+2 phases. This could be dangerous (in the case of Telekinesis skills) or distracting (as with ESP skills), but should

always make the situation more difficult for the character. The Gamemaster must carefully adjudicate the use of this flaw; it should be significant, but not completely debilitating. Characters who buy off the flaw gain normal control over their power.

MENTAL COMBAT

Not all psions get along.

This section details what happens when one character psionically attacks another: the thrusts, feints, parries, and ripostes of mental fencing. For players who are content merely to make a skill check opposed by the target's Will, the descriptions of the skills earlier in this chapter should suffice. But for those who want mental combat



to feel a bit more "real," we present the following rules.

Basic Psionic Combat

Psionic combat takes two forms: physical and mental. The physical varieties are easy to identify. They are the skills that cause a physical effect of some kinds, such as *psychokinetics*, *electrokinetics*, *bioweapon*, and so forth. For these, the effect on play is no different from an attack with a fist, firearm, blade, or blunt weapon. The attacker attempts a skill check, and the defender either dodges or suffers the effects.

Mental combat, on the other hand, generally involves directly attacking the consciousness of a foe, with the intent of altering it, trapping it, or outright assaulting it.

For an untrained, unguarded mind, the success of such an attack depends solely on the skill of the attacker, and the luck of the victim. In some cases, the sheer willpower of the target can make the difference, and *ALTERNITY* reflects this possibility with a character's Will resistance modifier. In fact, this system is not dissimilar from the system for physical combat. But when one psion attacks another, whose mind is prepared for the assault, the nature of the combat means that some aspects will be very different.

Three terms describe the kind of tactics a psion can use in mental combat. *Assaults* employ direct psionic bludgeoning of the target's mind. *Subversions* sneak inside the target's mind to undermine the target's ability to resist. And *traps* put information in the target's head that causes the psion to misperceive reality. Psionic skills fall into these categories based on how they affect the target.

Visualizing Mental Combat

Psions in combat cannot mentally "see" one another's minds.

Rather, they have an innate sense of the direction and distance of the minds around them, almost on a subconscious level. The sensation is similar to knowing, without looking, when someone is standing quietly behind you.

Minds come in different "flavors" as well, which allows a psion to determine whether a given mind is an animal, a human, an alien, or something else entirely. The intensity of the flavor tells the psion the relative strength of the mind, from weak (low Will score) to strong (high Will score).

The degree of resistance—how "solid" a mind seems to psionic contact—tells a psionic whether or not the mind is itself psionic. "Soft" minds are unprotected; "hard" minds are psionically defended.

A mental attack, then, is reaching out with one's mind to another mind, and either looking for a soft spot, attempting to create one, or simply pounding the hard parts until they become soft. Mental defenses, therefore, attempt to divert or evade such probes, or to fortify against them.

Mental combat always uses one of the skills listed below. The maneuvers—assault, subversion, and trap—indicate which of three combat systems to use. The defenses are used in specific ways, which apply to specific attacks, and are explained in the description of the maneuvers.

Initiating Mental Combat

Mental combat begins the same way physical combat does—with an action check. The better the result of the action check, the sooner the character can act, as normal. Note that there is no reason that a character cannot

switch from a mental action to a physical one at will. Each requires a single action, and uses the same action check to determine when it can occur.

A character can make a mental attack and a physical attack at the same time, however. The rules for taking two actions at once, assisting another action, and postponing an action all apply. These are all detailed in the *Player's Handbook, Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.

Once the character has chosen to attack, apply penalties to the attacker's skill check based upon the target's defenses. Before the attacker attempts his check, the target should total up the modifiers applied by any applicable Will resistance modifier, then add in the modifier from any currently active mind shield. If the target also has achieved rank 4 or higher in *Resolve-mental resolve*, a further modifier may apply. Certain mutations also affect such a check.

Once all of the modifiers have been totaled, the attacker should make a skill check. Before any results are applied, however, the target has an opportunity to use *Telepathy-mind shield* to parry, if the skill is at a high enough rank (see the description of *mind shield* earlier in this chapter). If the parry attempt is successful, the attack simply fails, though the attacker must still pay the psionic energy point cost.

If the intended target does not have *mind shield*, or has not learned how to use it to parry, or the parry attempt fails, the attacker resolves the effect of the attack.

Resolving Assaults

The most common form of psionic attack is an assault. This is the psionic equivalent of hammering a foe with a weapon, and so is very straightforward in its resolution.

If the psionic assault has not been parried, or otherwise resisted, the full effect of the attack is

applied. In the case of *contact*, *empathy*, and *mind reading*, there is no other defense; the skill resolves as normal.

But in the case of *mind blast*, the character can use psionic "defense points," which are gained through the use of *Telepathy-psychic armor*. For each such point the character spends, he or she can prevent one point of damage suffered by the *mind blast*. Apply normally any damage not prevented in this fashion.

◆ **Example:** Since Li failed to parry, he suffers d4+2 stun from Dinh's *mind blast*. Unfortunately, he has no psychic armor in place, and takes 4 stun damage.

Resolving Subversions

Subversion attacks are somewhat more rare, in that they slip past the target's normal defenses and attempt to destroy the foundation of his abilities. They literally weaken the target's ability to defend, while leaving his defenses intact.

If the psionic subversion has not been parried or otherwise resisted, the full effect of the *Telepathy-drain*, *tire*, or *empathic projection* attack is applied. However, a character with *Telepathy-psychic armor* can use defense points to reduce the effect of the attack. The target can reduce the loss of one point of fatigue (in the case of *tire*) for two psionic defense points, one point of Ability Score (in the case of *drain*) for three psionic defense points, or one degree of change in emotional state (in the case of *empathic projection*) for four points.

For example, if a *Telepathy-drain* attack attempts to drain a point of the target's Constitution, the target can expend three psychic armor defense points to nullify the attack. Or if a *Telepathy-tire* attack inflicts 3 points of fatigue damage, the target can expend 2, 4, or 6 psychic armor points to reduce the damage by 1, 2, or 3, respectively.

Any fatigue damage or ability loss not prevented in this fashion resolves normally.

◆ **Example:** Dinh is not yet finished with Li, and decides to make life a little tougher. For his next action, he hits Li with a subversion attack, using *Telepathy-tire* to wear him down.

Li's mind shield and Will resistance modifier still apply, so Dinh has a +4 step penalty to his attempt. This time he fails his roll, but elects to spend a last resort point to bump the result up to an Ordinary success.

Hoping to land a pretty devastating psychic blow against Dinh in the Marginal phase, Li elects not to parry. He loses 1 fatigue point, and now has a +1 step penalty to his die rolls.

Resolving Traps

Ordinarily, *illusions*, *mind wipes*, and *suggestions* can be overcome with instinct, diligence, or a bit of luck. However, the minds of psionic characters are trained well enough that such methods are only last resorts. They can often counter the effects of these skills by sheer force of will.

Illusion, *mind wipe*, and *suggest* all use a sort of psionic "trap" maneuver, by convincing the target's mind to believe something that isn't true. Like assaults and subversions, the target can attempt to avoid the trap outright. But unlike those maneuvers, traps innately include a way out for a trained mind. Note that non-psionics with *Resolve-mental resolve* may also employ this tactic to avoid the effects of *Telepathy-illusion*, *mind wipe*, and *suggest*.

Once a psionic trap attack succeeds against its target—meaning it has not been parried or otherwise resisted—the result of the attacker's skill check determines how many successes, using *Resolve-mental resolve*, are necessary to "escape" the false reality, to undo the memory editing, or

to ignore the external influence. The attacker's success defines how complex the mental trap is.

An Ordinary *illusion*, *mind wipe*, or *suggest* result requires 3 successes to overcome; a Good result requires 6 successes; and an Amazing result requires 9 successes. (For more information on complex skill checks, see the *Player's Handbook, Chapter 4: Skills*.) A character attempting to fight the effect of *suggest* may make a *Resolve-mental resolve* skill check every action. A character attempting to overcome the effect of an illusion may attempt the skill check at the end of every round. And a character attempting to recover lost memories may attempt the skill check once every hour.

Once the target has achieved enough successes to overcome the psionic trap, it no longer has any effect. However, Critical Failures on the *mental resolve* check serve to reinforce the trap, as the victim begins to question his conviction. For each Critical Failure the character generates while attempting to fight the effect, the number of success required increases by one.

◆ **Example:** Dinh later begins to hear rumors that Li is still up and around, and he starts to suspect that he has been tricked. He finds a quiet place to review the mental combat, searching for the moment when it began to get "too easy."

Because Li achieved a Good success on his *Telepathy-illusion* attack, Dinh must achieve 6 successes using *Resolve-mental resolve* to discard the illusory information in his mind. Things are going well and he has accumulated four successes when he rolls a Critical Failure. He begins to wonder if the rumors are the illusion, and if he was in fact victorious.

He is still ruminating when Li launches another mental attack—this time with a potent *mind blast* of his own.

CHAPTER 3: PSIONIC CHAMPIONS

For psionic campaigns to work, they must have an internal consistency that takes into account where psi ability comes from, how people apply it, how non-psions react to it, and how its existence changes the world.

Where Does Psi Come From?

Where psi comes from is a mystery in both the STAR*DRIVE and DARK•MATTER campaign settings. In the former, the fraal—who certainly have a better idea than anyone else—claim not to know for certain. In the latter, psi is barely recognized, let alone understood. But theories abound in both settings, ranging from “bio-energy that anyone can control (with training)” to “genetic engineering perpetrated by unknown parties with unknown goals.” No one can say whether a given theory is accurate.

The source of psi ability might be unimportant or a major plot thread in an ALTERNITY campaign, as the Gamemaster chooses. Whatever the case, the heroes (and the players) should be kept guessing and exploring theories until the Gamemaster decides it's time for them to learn the truth.

PSIONIC CONSCIOUSNESS

The technological advancement of a world is usually described in terms of Progress Levels, Civilization Levels, and so on. In the same way, psionic advancement is measured by the degree of acceptance a given society affords its psionically endowed members. This is dubbed “psionic

consciousness” (PC). Awareness of psions and the issues facing them depends only on the maturity of the culture in question; the ability to construct gravity induction engines has no bearing on the ability to mindwalk. Scattered across the known galaxy could be both high-tech/low-psi and low-tech/high-psi cultures.

As with other cultural descriptors, there are several categories of psionic consciousness, as outlined in the table below. These describe both the “theme” of psionics in an ALTERNITY cam-

campaign and sociopolitical ratings of cultures within it.

A PC rating measures how the majority of a society views psi phenomena. Psionic awareness follows a bell curve; despite the general public's attitude toward psionic ability, there will always be those who consider it an elaborate hoax, as well as those who know better than most.

Psionic consciousness is generally culture-specific and only remotely related to Progress Level. A given society might have achieved normalization of its

Campaign Architecture

Gamemasters creating civilizations using the rules in *Chapter 14: Campaign Architecture* in the *Gamemaster Guide* may use the following PC ratings to reflect the culture's psionic consciousness.

PC 0: No Psionic Activity

Psionic ability is not present in any member of the culture.

PC 1: Unrealized Psionic Potential

Psionic ability is present in some individuals, but no member of the culture is aware of this.

PC 2: Skepticism

A portion of the culture displays psionic ability, but the manifestations are disregarded or distrusted by the bulk of the society.

PC 3: Acceptance

A portion of the culture displays psionic ability, and the culture as a whole acknowledges the validity of psionic phenomena.

PC 4: Commercialization

A portion of the culture displays psionic ability, and these people use it to further their own goals.

PC 5: Exploitation

A portion of the culture displays psionic ability, and those so gifted are used to further the goals of others.

PC 6: Normalization

A portion of the culture displays psionic ability, but psions are not discriminated against.

PC 7: Evolution

A portion of the culture considers psionic ability a step toward a higher stage of evolution.

PC 8: Parallelism

The entire population displays psionic ability to the exclusion of technology. Such cultures may have developed “psionic technology” or may have evolved beyond the need for physicality.

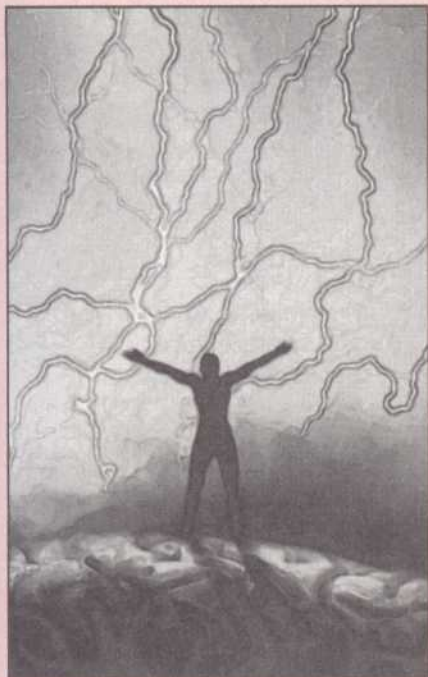
psionic population, while a nearby culture—despite a similar Progress Level with shared languages, commerce, and religious beliefs—may feel that the entire phenomenon is nothing but a fairy tale.

Generally, the only effect of a culture's Progress Level is the rate at which it progresses from one stage of psionic consciousness to the next. Technology enables reliable scientific testing and better distribution of more accurate information, but it does not guarantee social integration. On the other hand, many cultures without significant technology completely embrace their psionic members.

The next section deals with the various PC ratings in more depth.

Low-Psionic Campaigns

Conditions in societies of PC 0 and 1 need little explanation. The majority of known species are without psionic ability of any kind. A very small percentage of a species' population possess the potential for psionic ability, but it goes unrecognized both within and without the culture. In most cases, the society either lacks the



technology to detect these latent abilities or does not yet understand that the source of paranormal occurrences is psionic activity. In a few cases, the populace recognizes the nature of the phenomena but misidentifies their source as something culturally unacceptable—perhaps even "evil." Psionic individuals in these cultures are either driven out or destroyed immediately when found.

Skepticism

Unless verifiable psionic activities are a part of a society from its inception, a healthy measure of disbelief dominates the culture's attitudes.

In such a campaign, the common assumption is that all species developed psionic ability in the course of their evolution, accompanied by a period of disbelief and denial. In some, this period might have a relatively short duration—perhaps only a few generations. But in most, acceptance of psionic abilities never progresses past this stage, though the abilities may in fact exist. Humanity, at the end of the twentieth century, falls into this category.

As psionic phenomena become more and more prevalent, skepticism gives way to a sort of denial, which is eventually dispelled by reproducible data on psionic phenomena and the passage of time. Within a few generations, outmoded attitudes are forgotten, giving way to general acceptance.

Acceptance

After a species has collectively given in to the notion that at least some members of its culture possess psionics, there comes a time of exploration, gathering hard data to catalog specific abilities and to assess the extent of their power. This stage is also characterized by a certain amount of

naïveté regarding the impact of psionically endowed individuals on society. This is something of a holdover from the skepticism stage: While the average person has come to believe that psionic powers exist, he or she maintains a conviction that they are "something that happens to other people." Most feel they will never encounter any psionic phenomena, let alone develop such talents themselves.

Despite this pattern, species can exist at the other end of the spectrum. They appear to have developed psionic ability within the first few generations, effectively bypassing the issue of denial. The deepfallen of Bluefall in the *Ægis* system are an example from the *STAR'DRIVE* campaign setting. (See the *Alien Compendium* supplement *Creatures of the Verge*.) The fraal may be another, though their lack of early records leaves room for doubt.

The overall mood of exploration and investigation involves the psions themselves, who make greater efforts to develop their skills. Perhaps they are heartened by widespread acceptance of their unusual abilities—and the lack of derision common to the skepticism stage. Crude individual experimentation (the only option in less enlightened societies) gives way to research grants, government subsidies, and even "scholarships" for especially gifted students. These are all of course geared toward providing plenty of test subjects for researchers, but at this point few parties are interested in taking advantage of psionic individuals—at least, not in any concerted fashion. Harassment and abuse still occur at this stage, however. And in societies where population growth is out of control or where individual freedoms are repressed, those displaying psionic aptitude are frequently "examined" without their consent or any real concern for their well-being.



Nevertheless, this stage is a fertile one for the psionically endowed. The threats are limited, support is available to those who seek it, and perhaps most importantly, there is credibility—something virtually unknown at the skepticism stage. Though a few of the psionic population suffer, they are martyrs to the greater cause of advancing psionic awareness.

Commercialization and Exploitation

Once a culture has accepted the existence of psionic power and associated phenomena, it begins to address the most important issue: how to make the most use of its psionic members. For the psions, this often translates to "How can I use my own abilities to enrich myself?" For entrepreneurs, the question is, "How can I use psions' abilities to enrich myself?" The less scrupulous ask, "How can I exploit psions to *really* enrich myself?" Psions often usher in this stage themselves once they realize that others will pay to know what people are thinking, to overcome enemies, or to glimpse the future.

By far the safest and most reliable way to earn a living is catering to the wealthy, whose primary concern is how to continue being wealthy or become more so. "Psychic readings" are virtually risk-free, and those psions with the best-developed abilities can command the highest fees from clients obsessed with gaining any new advantage over competitors. Psions whose abilities lend themselves to physical (most often military) endeavors can earn huge incomes by engaging in various mercenary roles. Unlike the more "tame" careers, though, these flare up quickly, burn brightly for a time, and then are abruptly extinguished—along with the psions themselves.

Exploitation, the darker side of psionic commercialization, occurs in societies where psions are deemed "lesser citizens," either by cultural belief or convenient rationalization, and treated as such. Psionic slaves draw a high price, and depending on the culture's Progress Level, can even be genetically engineered to fit a specific need. Sadly, if previously enslaved psions eventually win their freedom, they tend to turn the tables on their erstwhile masters rather than seek equality. Thus they gain freedom and self-determination but have not truly progressed beyond this stage; instead it is the non-psions who are being exploited.

Normalization

Cultures that can boast full normalization of their psionic contingent should be rare. In the STAR^{DRIVE} campaign setting, the fraal and the deepfallen are outstanding exceptions; no other known species has a significant population of psions or has progressed past commercialization. In those examples, psions are treated with no more fear or respect than any other member of their society. They are judged

by the same criteria. They are accepted as a matter of course. Psions hold positions of authority or subservience, just as do non-psions, and no one questions the social order on the basis of psionics or the lack thereof. Such equality is rare even among non-psions, so it's no wonder that true normalization of psions is largely unheard-of.

Curiously, this stage of psionic consciousness does not require psions to form a significant portion of the population. In the fraal and deepfallen examples, the entire species is psionic (with occasional genetic anomalies) and 20% of the population are Mindwalkers; in other settings, a species might have as few as one psion per thousand members, yet have achieved at least a measure of normalization.

Even more curiously, normalization may arise from a social contract in which psions agree to limit the use of their abilities, either by consensus or by legislation. At the same time, though, non-psions also agree to respect the right of psions to determine under what circumstances to use their abilities. While abuses of the system occur, they are the exception rather than the norm.

Evolution

Once a culture as a whole has accepted its psionic constituency, there may develop a philosophical (and occasionally religious) belief that psionic ability is just part of a journey toward an as-yet-unrealized ideal of physical or spiritual evolution. Some feel that psionic ability is a step toward leaving corporeal form permanently behind, while others see it as vindication that their way of life is elevating them nearer to the divine.

While neither of these assertions has been proved, neither has been successfully disproved—largely because in this

sort of campaign cultures that hold this belief are extremely uncommon. There might be a few examples known to researchers, but now are long vanished (even though there may be a handful of believers still).

Parallelism

If psionic evolutionism is rare, the phenomenon of parallel development is all but nonexistent in any

setting. Such societies are considered purely theoretical; in these, technology either never developed or died out, being replaced by counterparts such as psionic power sources, psionic utilities—even psionic travel. Such parallel cultures could develop equivalents to any technology, real or as-yet-unrealized. They might ultimately be capable of spontaneously creating matter—even life—from nothingness.

Psionics and the Law

Once a society begins to accept that psionic abilities exist, only one of two things can happen: social restructure or new laws governing the use—or more commonly, misuse—of psionic abilities. With luck, the psionically endowed participate in the creation and implementation of these laws.

At the skepticism stage, such laws are nonexistent; why govern

Campaign Recommendations

The following are suggestions for tuning a campaign to the desired PC rating. Gamemasters who wish to keep skill costs compatible with published material might prefer instead to adjust the psionic energy points available to characters rather than the costs of skills.

Low-Psionic

In campaigns involving no or unrealized psionic potential, the only psionic characters should be those with the Latent Psi perk.

Skepticism

This is the baseline for realistic campaigns. (See "Campaign Tone" below.) The only psions should be talents—and most of those should have the Wild Talent flaw. Psionic skills may be purchased at list price +1.

Recommended perks and flaws include Latent Psi, Exhausting Psi, Painful Psi, Untrained Talent, and Wild Talent.

Acceptance

A society of PC 3 pushes the envelope of realistic campaigns. Mindwalkers have just appeared, so the majority of psions should still be talents. Psionic skill costs and energy points are calculated as normal.

Recommended perks and flaws include Latent Psi, Psion's License, Superior Talent, Exhausting Psi, Neural Disease, Reduced Energy, and Wild Talent.

Commercialization/Exploitation

PC 4 and 5 cultures define psionics for heroic campaigns. Mindwalkers exist, but talents are still more common by far. Psionic skills may be purchased at the listed cost. Mindwalkers may purchase psionic broad skills at list price -1.

Recommended perks and flaws include Increased Energy, Mnemonic Chameleon, Psion's License, Sanctuary-Taught, Exhausting Psi, Hobbled, Neural Disease, Painful Psi, and Reluctant Psi.

Normalization

This marks the apex of heroic campaigns or the lowest level of superheroic campaigns. Characters of any profession may purchase psionic broad skills at list price -1. Mindwalkers may also purchase psionic specialty skills at list price -1. In addition, psionic talents receive psionic energy points equal to their Will score -1.

Recommended perks and flaws include Fast Recovery, Increased Energy, Mnemonic Chameleon, Sanctuary-Taught, and Slow Recovery.

Evolution

This Psionic Consciousness stage marks the leading edge of superheroic campaigns. Characters of any profession may purchase any psionic skills at list price -1. Mindwalkers may purchase psionic broad skills at list price -2. In addition, psionic characters other than Mindwalkers receive psionic energy points equal to their Will score. Mindwalkers receive psionic energy points equal to their Will score x 1.5.

Recommended perks include Fast Recovery, Increased Energy, and Sanctuary-Taught.

Parallelism

At this level, psionic characters are the norm. All professions may purchase psionic skills at list price -2. All psions receive psionic energy points equal to their Will x 1.5 and may assign a -d4 base situation die to any one psionic broad skill.

Recommended perks include Fast Recovery and Increased Energy.

what does not exist? But seminal laws appear at the acceptance stage, though they are tentative and riddled with vague terms. As with any new social phenomenon, fear and misunderstanding mark the first legal responses to psionics. Laws often include text to the following effect:

- Any crime committed with the use of psionic abilities will be treated as a crime committed with a deadly weapon.

Such an ill-informed approach leads to misinterpretation and paradox. Do these laws even apply in some situations? Conversely, does using psionics at all constitute a crime? The issue turns on the difficult proposition of proving the use of psionic abilities; most produce no visible effect and leave behind no physical evidence.

Continuing research into psionic abilities eventually reveals useful information. At the same time, investigation of mysterious cases builds up a body of common factors that can serve as evidence, such as abnormal behavior and conspicuous aberrations in the laws of physics. Armed with this knowledge, even non-psionic investigators become more effective in bringing psionic criminals to justice. Meanwhile, precedents established through court challenges revise laws governing psionics to more precise and less paranoid language.

At PC 4 and 5, laws regarding psions have matured somewhat and cover a wider variety of situations, once psionic abilities are more easily identified and quantified. Generally speaking, crimes committed psionically are punished no differently than others. Nevertheless, the laws retain a certain amount of fear and distrust.

- A psion bears the guilt for any crime committed by someone under his or her mental control.
- No one may read another's thoughts without prior and duly notarized consent.

- No one may use psionics to observe another without prior and duly notarized consent.
- No one may use psionics to influence another's thoughts or actions.

Also at this stage, officers of the court may use psionic interrogation. (Often this doesn't require the consent of the subject.) However, psionically obtained evidence is admissible in court only on authentication by a neutral third party.

General rulings like these may continue into the normalization stage, as they protect both the victim and, to a lesser extent, the suspect. By this time, laws regarding the use and abuse of psionic abilities are as much a part of a society's rules as laws regarding the use and abuse of weapons or information. Unfortunately, they don't protect psions against harassment or false accusation by non-psions.

Psionics on Trial

The use of psionic abilities in courtrooms usually begins during the late skepticism stage, with legal counsels relying on the advice of "psychics" in selecting juries, conferring with clients, and so on. And during the commercialization stage, psionic testimony becomes admissible—though often only after a great deal of bitter argument. In all PC stages, psions might be employed for or against witnesses, lawyers, and officers of the court, or be put on trial themselves.

In court and in pretrial discovery, psions uncover evidence, confirm testimony, corroborate alibis, and sometimes get directly to the truth. But their use is tightly controlled in early stages of psionic consciousness, because many legal bodies cannot bring themselves to completely trust the skill or integrity of psions. In more mature societies, though, psionic activity in legal proceedings is a given—if not a requirement.

A psion attempting to influence the outcome of a trial should exercise extreme caution; punishment for interfering with the proceedings is strict. However, until psi-detection becomes common, such interference can go completely unnoticed. Usually only behavioral clues or advance knowledge will give the psion away. Still, psionic "sensitives" may notice and report the activity. Other psions may oppose the interference and take matters into their own minds.



ESP and Telepathy skills are the only really useful way to *subtly* influence a trial's outcome. Being mostly passive, the effects of ESP are difficult to detect non-psionically, requiring four successes on a complex Knowledge-*behavior* or Awareness-*intuition* skill check with a -3 step penalty. Telepathy is more interactive and thus somewhat easier to detect, requiring the same complex skill check using either of the above skills, but at only a -2 step penalty.

CAMPAIGN TONE

This section discusses how PC ratings interact with the rules covering tone in *Chapter 13: Campaign Design* in the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Campaign tone and PC rating are not necessarily related. Tone is a mechanic for world-building, governing such things as points available for heroes' Ability scores; PC ratings are merely guidelines. Psionic consciousness is cultural, so it is quite possible to have normalized psions in a realistic campaign, or people in a superheroic campaign who are skeptical about the existence of psionic phenomena.

Realistic

Realistic-level campaigns fall into the skepticism or early acceptance stage (PC 2 or 3). Psionics is an unknown quantity, or at best, a recently discovered phenomenon. Psionic researchers and practitioners are treated seriously only by their closest associates and a few fringe groups.

Society tends to influence psions more than the reverse. Most psions are talents rather than true Mindwalkers. They are the mystics, shamans, and soothsayers, using a handful of psionic skills to impose their will, perform miracles, or simply make their

way through life. They are often ridiculed, except by those few who know how powerful psions truly are. The few psions of superior ability are feared and perhaps hunted, rarely finding a place in their society. Since psionic abilities are still new to the culture as a whole, these individuals can sometimes slip through the cracks and escape into the welcoming arms of fringe groups, where they are often treated with reverence.

The theme of a realistic psionic campaign should be discovery—of one's abilities, limitations, and place in the natural order. Players have a chance to explore these rules, roleplay the discovery of their new abilities, and learn how these affect otherwise normal lives.

Though realistic campaigns using psionics are not necessarily going to be human-oriented, players will be most familiar and comfortable with that assumption. Television, movies, and books provide fans of the paranormal with a wealth of modern-day settings and source material that a Gamemaster can draw on for a wide variety of exciting adventures.

Sample Careers

In addition to the typical careers presented in the *Player's Handbook* and the *Gamemaster Guide*, the presence of psionic powers in the campaign world opens up new possibilities for employment.

Campaign Tone Benchmarks

Knowing which tone best fits the campaign model helps the Gamemaster determine how many skill points starting characters can have. *Chapter 13: Campaign Design* in the *Gamemaster Guide* describes how to distinguish campaign tones mechanically, and this section elaborates on this for psionic campaigns. Below are some benchmark statements by which the Gamemaster can measure his or her campaign and judge its tone.

A simple rule of thumb is to decide whether each statement is true or false about the campaign. Whichever tone has the most true statements (even if some are still false) best fits the campaign model. If there is a tie, assume that the campaign is in transition.

Realistic

Psionic individuals are rare and of low power.
The public is generally unaware or skeptical of psionic ability.
Psionic artifacts are rare and psionic equipment all but nonexistent.
Psi phenomena are mistaken for other things and "rationality."

Heroic

Psionic individuals are rare but moderately powerful.
The public is aware of psionic activity, but it has little impact on most people's lives.
Psionic artifacts and equipment are unusual.
Psi phenomena are recognized but not understood.

Superheroic

Psionic individuals are unusual and of great power.
The public is aware of psionic activity, which has considerable impact on people's lives.
Psionic artifacts are unusual, but psionic equipment is common.
Psi phenomena are unusual but mostly understood.

Sample Organizations

In a realistic campaign, psionics are virtually unheard of, so few organizations exist to deal with them. Those that do tend to be on the fringes of "normal" society or secret bureaus within government or industry.

Secret Societies

Secret societies will almost certainly play a large role in a psionics-oriented realistic campaign. Psions are important people and will attract followers—or be indoctrinated as followers of someone else. Secret societies might manipulate and fight over psions, but they also take them more seriously than anyone else.

Psionic heroes in a secret society would have access to strange artifacts and occult knowledge that might boost their skills, but they'd be at the center of internal and external power struggles. Non-psionic heroes could be behind those power struggles. Alternatively, they could be hired muscle to protect the mystics; psionic researchers helping them to realize their potential; or initiates using their diplomatic skills to fill the secret society's coffers.

Research Organizations

Certain groups have a more altruistic approach to psionics than others—or at least appear to. They believe wholeheartedly in psionic abilities, and for whatever reason, feel these can better society. Such organizations mount expeditions to out-of-the-way places, seeking to investigate and better understand psionic phenomena. And they always need new investigators.

Groups like this tend to have names that end with "Psychic Research" and include the words "Institute" or "Center." Psionic heroes with such a group might be investigators or research scientists whose ESP or Telepathy abilities would be highly prized. Non-psions could be investigators or research assistants, likely providing support for the psions.

Government "Fringe" Agencies

Government agencies are also interested in using psionics for the good of the people—starting with their own people. Though not above lending their resources to the betterment of the species, governments are nationalistically inclined. Some extend this reasoning further, ignoring the rights of their research subjects "for the greater good." Regardless of their methods, government agencies that delve into mysticism and the supernatural are universally considered "a waste of taxpayer money" in a campaign with a realistic tone.

Psionic heroes in a government agency spend most of their time performing "tricks" for research scientists, but would become involved in espionage directed at understanding—or stealing—their abilities. Non-psionic heroes would probably be intelligence operatives, assigned to protect the valuable psionic "assets" or assist them in research. They could also serve as deep-cover operatives of another branch of the government, or even a foreign government.

DIPLOMAT CAREERS

Interaction with psionic characters, or just being able to handle oneself safely, demands the special abilities of the Diplomat. These are the heroes who can potentially increase public

acceptance and awareness of the psionically gifted among them.

Empath

Diplomat (Free Agent) talent

The empath uses extrasensory perception to learn about the

people all around. The hero's friends probably think of him or her as a "people person," someone easy to talk to. Empaths tend to work as counselors, psychologists, or psychiatrists, complementing their "people skills" with psionic powers.

Empaths should consider learning additional ESP specialty skills to broaden their mental powers. Those who end up working as field agents should look into Investigate specialty skills (particularly *interrogate*) and develop their Resolve-*mental resolve*. Culture-*diplomacy* and Interaction-*charm* are also useful in many situations.

Ability Recommendations:

Since empaths are often in a medical or related profession, Intelligence is important to the associated skills—as well as the essential ESP. High Personality scores help out with the important social skills in such a career.

Perks & Flaws: Being in touch with people's emotions usually produces a Danger Sense, helping the empath recognize when a client's—or his or her own—life is at risk. Being Observant is critical to any sort of social work, psionic or not, and Psionic Awareness lets the empath know when emotional distress might not be entirely internal. Empaths are driven to help those around them, which can land them in Bad Luck situations. Since they're wont to help regardless of reward, many end up Dirt Poor, working in clinics or volunteering for overseas relief work.

Signature Equipment: Self-help books, New Age paraphernalia, cell phone.

Skill Package: Medical-psychology; Awareness-*intuition 2, perception*; Interaction-*interview 3*; ESP-*empathy 2, sensitivity 2*. Cost: 39 points.

Psychic

Diplomat (Free Agent) talent

The psychic has only limited psionic powers but supplements

them with deft Interaction and Deception skills. Of course, there are plenty of frauds in the field, but these heroes have real power—though not as much as a full-fledged Mindwalker. To the average observer, such an individual would appear no different from the majority of so-called psychics.

A psychic begins the game with limited ESP ability; picking up additional ranks in ESP specialty skills is a good idea. But there are only a limited number of psionic energy points to spend, so relying too heavily on mind-walking skills could be dangerous. Therefore, improvement of Personality-based skills is also advised—all the better to talk one's way out of a fight when psionic skills fail. Smart psychics learn when to hide their gifts.

Picking up a contact is also worthwhile for a new psychic hero; this might be a learned fol-

lower of the paranormal met on the Internet, a fellow psychic, or even just a researcher with some helpful information and the ability to foster the hero's talents.

Ability Recommendations: ESP is a psychic's bread and butter, requiring a high Intelligence. But nearly as important is a good Personality score.

Perks & Flaws: Celebrity and Reputation are part of the package in the psychic business, whether that be through hotlines, infomercials, or an important police case. Psionic Awareness can let the psychic know whether another "sensitive" is the real deal. But it's often beyond the hero's control what impressions he or she receives; the "gift" is a Wild Talent. Even if the hero's personal Code of Honor forbids taking advantage of the gullible, the Infamy of those sharing this title is a continual burden.

Signature Equipment: Tarot cards, runes, crystals.

Skill Package: Knowledge-psionics; Lore-occult 2; Deception-bluff 2; Interaction-bargain, interview; ESP-empathy 2, precognition 2. Cost: 46 points.

FREE AGENT CAREERS

In a realistic campaign, most of those involved with the paranormal will be Free Agents: spies, investigators, shamans, and the like. Such heroes will always be "out there" in the eyes of everyday people.

Astral Explorer

Astral explorers are talents, ordinary heroes who happen to have an unusual—and oftentimes handy—pastime. Those who have learned how to project their consciousness become almost addicted to the freedom out-of-body experiences provide. They take every reason-



“Energy Crystals”

Long thought by humans to have mystical properties, crystals and gems have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity. Through study born of increased psionic consciousness, crystals have been proven to store psionic energy, much as a battery stores electricity. A psion can withdraw the energy stored in a crystal when using a psionic skill instead of drawing on his or her own reserves.

The psion can attune a crystal to imbue it with 1 psionic energy point. This requires three successes on a complex *Resolve-mental* resolve skill check, making only one attempt per day. If the psion successfully charges the crystal in a single day, he or she can place up to 3 psionic energy points into it; in two days, 2 energy points. On a Critical Failure, the hero loses 2 psionic energy points, and the crystal cracks, unable to store any energy. The hero can recover lost or spent points normally. Optionally, crystals may hold a variable number of energy points, with their capacity unknown until the psion attempts to charge them. A crystal so charged can hold no more energy until it has been drained.

A Gamemaster who wishes to add a New Age flavor to a realistic campaign can assign “sympathies” to different types of crystal. For example, aquamarine is thought to enhance communication, so energy stored there might be used only for ESP or Telepathy skills; tiger eye assists “manifestation” and could store energy for Biokinesis or Telekinesis skills. The Gamemaster can even make up crystals and gems with special abilities as befits the campaign—perhaps pearls from Atlantis in a Dark•Matter setting or Glassmaker beads in Star•Drive adventures.

able opportunity to temporarily leave their physical shell and wander the world, going to places they could never reach physically (or financially). They might use this time to “check in” on friends and loved ones but may just as often go exploring. Occasionally, such a traveler runs across something interesting, mystifying—or terrifying.

Astral explorers might improve their ability to travel psionically by increasing ranks in *Telepathy-psyhic projection*, or focus on the mundane skills necessary to their “secondary” careers.

Ability Recommendations:

Given the importance of being able to return to one’s body successfully, a high Personality score is vital. Good Will and Constitution are also helpful.

Perks & Flaws: Concentration is vitally important to keep the traveler from being trapped outside his or her body. A measure of Good Luck and Psionic Awareness keeps the hero aware of

threats to that empty shell. On the other hand, indulging in extended psychic jaunts without attending to physical needs will result in a Delicate constitution and even Exhausting Psi. Continual worrying about the safety of one’s empty body reaches the level of a Phobia.

Signature Equipment: Guard animal, padlock, surveillance gear.

Skill Package: Knowledge-psionics 2; *Resolve-mental* 2; *Telepathy-psyhic projection* 3. Cost: 34 points.

Debunker

As long as there are some who believe in psi phenomena, there will be others who take advantage of that belief. The debunker locates those unscrupulous people and exposes their deception. With all those so-called psychics defrauding the gullible, the debunker has a pretty full schedule. Debunkers

often begin as con artists or at least know all the tricks—even if they’re too scrupulous to use them.

A debunker needs to recognize all the tricks of hoaxers and scam artists, so Awareness specialty skills are extremely valuable, as is Knowledge-deduce. Picking up Business-illicit business helps spot con jobs, and learning more about parapsychology (as a new Knowledge specialty skill) or Lore-occult (in the DARK•MATTER campaign setting) allows the debunker to better test the validity of “evidence.”

Ability Recommendations: Both Intelligence and Will are of prime importance to successful debunkers, and a good Personality score makes their arguments more convincing.

Perks & Flaws: Seeing through the tricks of con artists and prestidigitators requires intense Concentration, and only the Observant can catch the tricksters in the act. Debunkers tend to be Obsessed with their mission, though, sometimes to the point where they will not believe real evidence.

Signature Equipment: Tape measure, camera, flashlight, tape recorder, spool of thread.

Skill Package: Manipulation-prestidigitation; Knowledge-deduce; Lore-occult; Awareness-intuition, perception 2; Investigate-search 2; Street Smart; Deception-bluff; Interaction-charm. Cost: 52 points.

Field Agent

Theoretical parapsychology is all very well, but someone still has to leave the lab every now and again to see how psionics perform in practical applications. These are the field agents, trained investigators who track down reports of paranormal phenomena, document the activity, and return with fresh data for the scientists to study. They are afforded considerable latitude in

how they gather intelligence, though after every excursion they have to account to their superiors for their actions. Field agents who don't want to spend the rest of their careers photographing crop circles quickly learn the drawbacks of impulsive actions.

A field agent should learn Administration-*bureaucracy* quickly to deal with the deskbound side of the job, and should expand into the other Investigate specialty skills (*interrogate* and *track*), as well as Knowledge-*deduce*. Depending on how much time an operative spends trailing suspects, Vehicle Operation-*land* and *air* or Stealth-*shadow* may be worthwhile.

Ability Recommendations: This career emphasizes both the bureaucratic and the investigative, so high scores in both Intelligence and Will are vital. Agents facing more dangerous assignments would do well with a good Dexterity score.

Perks & Flaws: The field agent benefits from having a Powerful Ally, whether it be a "black" government agency or a powerful multinational corporation. By the same token, though, agents are opposed by a Powerful Enemy—perhaps a hostile foreign power, or simply an industrial competitor.

Signature Equipment: 9mm pistol, rental car, camera, cell phone, flashlight.

Skill Package: Modern-*pistol*; Knowledge-*computer operation, deduce*; Law-*enforcement 2*; Administration-*bureaucracy*; Investigate-*interrogate, search*. Cost: 41 points.

"Housecleaner"

Troubled spirits need someone with special training to direct them to their final rest. Paranormal researchers are too interested in documenting the phenomena, while debunkers

are too interested in proving the researchers wrong. Fortunately, there are those whose psionic talent and belief in a higher power call them to aid those poor souls who have become trapped just outside of life—and the other, living souls who have to put up with them. These people come to be known as "housecleaners," and they act out of a sense of duty and pity. In other words, they don't collect a paycheck for chasing ghosts out of a house.

Housecleaners focus primarily on their ability to detect manifestations that they term "poltergeists," "restless spirits," and so forth. Whether these phenomena are in fact "ghosts" is open to question; Gamemasters running a more supernatural campaign (such as the DARK•MATTER setting) may decide that "hauntings" literally exist, while in a more hard-science setting they can be explained by other means (for example, they could be disembodied astral explorers). Whatever the case, it's important for housecleaners to increase their ranks in Awareness-*intuition*. However, since much of their job revolves around guiding these spirits to their final reward—or at least, out of the house—they also will find Leadership-*inspire* valuable, as well as additional ranks in Knowledge-*deduce* (to uncover the anchor that binds the spirit to this world), and Resolve-*mental* resolve (some of the "ghosts" resist moving on). And, as the cleansing cannot begin until

the residents are calm and cooperative, additional ranks in Interaction-*charm* and *interview* are vital.

Ability Recommendations: Since Knowledge and ESP are basic to this career, a high Intelligence is key. A good Personality also makes the job easier.

Perks & Flaws: Word of mouth is the best advertising in this business, and a good housecleaner quickly becomes a Celebrity. Faith is a common feature for anyone who believes in the soul and its salvation; Psionic Awareness is a more practical way to detect an infestation. But evicting a reluctant spirit can be a trial (Exhausting Psi), and such a Limited Skill restricts one's career choices.

Signature Equipment: Religious trappings, pseudoscientific gizmos.

Skill Package: Knowledge-*deduce 2*; Awareness-*intuition 2*; Investigate; Resolve-*mental*;



Interaction—charm, interview 2; ESP—precognition, sensitivity 2. Cost: 48 points.

Paranormal Investigator

Paranormal investigators are amateurs who explore the fringes of scientific theory to learn about unexplained phenomena. Many have a journalistic sideline (usually writing for supermarket rags), which brings in just enough money to fund the next excursion in search of the unknown. Most ordinary folks think of them as gullible. The people they seek regard them as mildly dangerous.

Paranormal investigators who expect to make a living should improve their Knowledge—psionics and Awareness specialty skills to track down leads. Acquiring the Knowledge—deduce skill will let an investigator uncover valuable clues in an innocuous-looking story.

Ability Recommendations: High scores in both Will and Personality are desirable both to improve success in their related skills and to deal effectively with often-reticent witnesses and sources.

Perks & Flaws: Being Observant and having Photo Memory or Psionic Awareness are useful in tracking down and recording paranormal phenomena. But the investigator is often plagued with Bad Luck—things “go missing” at the most inconvenient moments. Writing for the *National Evening Star* and the like doesn’t pay well, so the hero is usually Dirt Poor. Being Obsessed with finding the truth is what keeps these heroes going.

Signature Equipment: Binoculars, audio and video recorders, camera, journals (filled with cryptic and extensive notes), .32 revolver pistol.

Skill Package: Modern—pistol; Stealth—shadow, sneak; Knowledge—psionics; Awareness—

perception; Investigate—search; Deception—bluff, bribe; Interaction—interview 2. Cost: 49 points.

TECH OP CAREERS

There are any number of skilled professions that benefit from “a little something extra.” Below is just one suggestion.

Firestarter

Firestarters are pyrokineticists who like to burn things, often out of repressed hostility. While most have little control over their ability, some are relatively advanced and find employment with entrepreneurial individuals to engineer “accidents” for insurance purposes. Once the fire is set, more prosaic means such as fuel-filled balloons stapled to the ceiling help spread it, but the real value is in being able to start it without using accelerant—or even being in the building.

The firestarter’s primary concern should be getting his or her power under control, generally by removing the Temper or Wild Talent flaw. It’s also important to improve ability in Knowledge—first aid (accidents do happen!). If the hero is a firestarting “freelancer,” then Business—illicit business and Street Smart—street knowledge will also prove useful.

Ability Recommendations: Intelligence and Will are both important to the firestarter’s suite of skills, but to be on the safe side, a high Constitution can’t hurt.

Perks & Flaws: Increased Energy gets the flames going and keep them hot. Vigor is useful—especially if the pyrokinetic talent is uncontrollable. Those gifted with this ability soon earn a Reputation of one sort or another (often Infamy). Temper and Wild Talent are a frequent and deadly combination; fires often break out in these psions’ adolescence. Occasionally this can result in a

Phobia, either of fire itself or of the violent emotions that lead to it.

Signature Equipment: Matches, gasoline, kerosene, balloons, staple gun, candles, first aid kit.

Skill Package: Athletics—throw; Demolitions—set explosives; Knowledge—first aid 2; Street—criminal; Telekinesis—pyrokinetics 3. Cost: 43 points.

Heroic

Campaigns with a heroic tone accord psionic phenomena a greater degree of legitimacy. The STAR*DRIVE setting is an example of such a campaign. If the heroes are not themselves psionic, they should believe in psionic ability or at least acknowledge that there could be something to it. Their attitude reflects that of society at large, where acceptance is at least established, if not prevalent.

At this stage, society has not yet decided how it feels about adding psionic ability to its cultural melting pot. Psions are seen by some as a force for good and by others, evil. If psionic acceptance is fairly recent, ordinary folk are still reeling; a “quiet hysteria” develops, blaming society’s ills on a nebulous conspiracy of psions.

This tone of campaign might focus on coping with the changes that psionic ability brings to a culture rather than an individual. How does society adapt to essentially a new segment of the population? Are children tested for psionic aptitude when they enter school? At birth? Before? Are they sent to state-sponsored schools to learn how to handle their abilities? Or are psions weeded out as soon as possible and lobotomized “for the good of society”? Are the heroes involved? The answers to these questions depend on how dark a campaign the Gamemaster wants to run.

“The Psion Conspiracy”

As with new religions, new styles of music, and even role-playing games, the first appearance of psionic ability leads to a surge of paranoia. Because the phenomenon and its ramifications on society are still largely misunderstood, ordinary citizens ascribe an imagined agenda to it—no less than the destruction of the existing social order. The story passes from person to person, city to city, augmented and altered as necessary to lend it more credence.

Anti-psionic activists quote “experts,” who usually cite one another as sources. The media present “special reports” in which “victims” come forth to describe their experiences. Psions “confess” to their involvement in subversive activities. Yet investigators never find any shred of corroborating evidence or testimony. Of course, the so-called experts claim this proves the efficacy of the conspiracy’s concealment.

It may be decades or even centuries before this rumor burns itself out; in the meantime, psions are regularly jailed, occasionally executed—and in some cases, lynched. Society vilifies them at the time, though history may recognize them as martyrs.

Legislation Regarding Psionics

In campaigns of this tone, governments may ramrod legislation to strip psions of their rights and thus assert control over them. This sort of legislation is usually passed without the participation—or even input—of psions, who soon find themselves in the same legal position as convicted criminals, though they may have otherwise been good citizens.

Such repressive laws can force psions to assume state-sanctioned government posts where they have no choice about how to use their abilities. Resistance leads to imprisonment or artificial restraint of psionic abilities—sometimes both. Sometimes the reduction of abilities is permanent. Sometimes it is fatal.

Sample Careers

COMBAT SPEC CAREERS

Once psionic activity begins to spread through a culture, it doesn’t take long for someone to recognize its usefulness in war—or sports (nearly the same thing). Combat Specs with a psionic bent can find lucrative employment in a heroic campaign.

“Bloodhound”

Some psions work willingly with psi-hunters to escape punishment for rogue activities. Others are forced into servitude. Either way, their lot is hard: They suffer the harshest of treatment and are forced to betray their own kind for their keep. These are the “bloodhounds,” talents who specialize in tracking down other psions.

Some bloodhounds escape their masters and “go feral,” living in constant fear of being captured again and made to suffer even more terrible punishments. A very few are lucky enough to encounter sympathetic souls who help them regain their dignity and independence.

Bloodhounds who work as part of response teams should hone their combat effectiveness with more ranks in Awareness specialty skills, Unarmed Attack, and ESP-sensitivity. Athletics and Stealth skills are good to develop as well. Those bloodhounds who are trying to slip their former shackles should pick up Resolve-mental resolve and some Personality skills to help them get along in normal society.

Ability Recommendations:

Strength and Will are both prime requisites for this career, to aid combat skills and evasion abilities, as the hero prefers.

Perks & Flaws: Concentration keeps a bloodhound on the trail regardless of distracting events, though Danger Sense is a good way to know when a distraction is life-threatening. A bloodhound will almost certainly be Hobbled. Phobia about recapture and punishment keeps most bloodhounds Spineless, unwilling to resist their masters.



Sample Organizations

Heroic campaigns allow more leeway in dealing with psions. Unless tightly controlled, though, contact with psionic aliens such as the fraal is going to catapult the society's psionic consciousness to a much higher level. (Campaigns stressing the theme of coping with psionics in the culture should introduce such figures carefully, if at all.) The majority of organizations dealing with psionic phenomena, however, are concerned only with the heroes' culture.

Psionic Phenomena Response Agencies

As governments scramble to develop plans for dealing with psionics, the formation of "response teams" becomes unavoidable. Whether government operatives or contracted freelancers, such groups employ weaponry and tactics geared toward the location, capture, and containment of "rogue" psions.

Agencies of this sort often act in secret, either to gain an edge over targets who can read minds or to conceal their less-than-ethical methods. This secrecy lends itself to a lot of apocrypha, though a few groups have achieved notoriety. A good example is the rabidly anti-psi Cole Tiptoe, a Supporting Cast member written up more fully in *Chapter 4: Gamemaster Tools*.

Institutes for the Study of Psionic Phenomena

The fringe research organizations of realistic campaigns become legitimate enterprises in a heroic campaign. Their stated mission is along the lines of "to further the species by collecting and analyzing data on psionic manifestations." Some are on the front lines of research, uncovering hitherto unknown connections between psionic ability and environmental factors. Others are the equivalent of death camps, the final destination for captured rogues.

The most famous in the Star*Drive setting are a series of psionic institutes called "sanctuaries," operated by the fraal on worlds where one or more species are developing psionic potential. Their policy is to offer aid and training to all.

Signature Equipment: Command link, utility harness.

Skill Package: Unarmed Attack; Stamina—endurance; Tactics; Awareness—intuition, perception; Resolve—physical; ESP—clairvoyance 3, sensitivity 2. Cost: 45 points.

Psionic heroes may come to a research facility to increase their abilities or to assist others in the same endeavor. Non-psions might be researchers or technicians, or perhaps orderlies who respond to the special kinds of emergencies that nascent psions create.

The "Psion Railroad"

In less receptive societies, psions may have to go "underground" to seek training. Organized groups of sympathizers may smuggle psions into secret training facilities, or even into cloistered communities outside the reach of hostile governments. Graduates of these programs may in turn assist the next generation of refugees, as trainers or "conductors."

Despite the overall acceptance of psionics in the Star*Drive setting, there are a few corners of the galaxy where anti-psi organizations still exist. Psions born into these situations usually make a bid for freedom, heading for more enlightened cultures—ideally, one with a fraal sanctuary. With psi-friendly governments able only to investigate or at most impose economic sanctions on such organizations, though, the mistreatment of psions isn't likely to end any time soon. For a while yet, there's a need for the smugglers.

Psi-Control and Anti-Psi Organizations

Not everyone readily accepts the idea of developing abilities that set a few individuals above the rest of society—especially, as in the Star*Drive setting, when the main proponents of such a system are aliens. Acting usually in secret, organizations of like-minded activists try to influence lawmakers and law enforcers to implement anti-psi practices. The less secret varieties take matters into their own hands.

Such hate groups exist almost from the moment psionic ability is verified. Almost invariably they grow from, and thrive on, the collective paranoia of ordinary people whose lives are affected by the advent of psionic ability, or at least its incursions into their everyday lives.

"Teke Boxer"

The world of sports is one of the first to take advantage of psions, creating new events just for them. The most common, and the most enduring, is telekinetic martial arts, commonly known as "teke boxing."

Teke boxers use their psionic talent alongside their martial-arts prowess to pummel each other senseless for the enjoyment of the masses and the fortune of the gamblers. They train obsessively in both skills, honing their minds and bodies to the sharpest fighting edge. The best ones have a

manager, trainers, assistants, even press agents—but the vast majority are at best gifted amateurs or palookas who serve as living punching bags for the real talent. Often those who aren't prizefighter material supplement their meager income with a little strong-arm work for the local crime figure.

Increasing their telekinetic ability is a tremendous boost to these heroes' careers, as is learning to take a punch. Telekinesis specialty skills should be the first to improve, followed by Unarmed Attack—*power martial arts* and Stamina—*endurance*.

Ability Recommendations: Strength and Constitution are essential to this very physical pursuit, but Will is important both for improved "teke" ability and Resolve skills.

Perks & Flaws: A teke-boxing Celebrity has a fearsome Reputation, backed up with Fast Recovery, Fortitude, or Reflexes. A true professional follows a Code of

Honor, though that can degenerate into being Obsessed. A bad Temper can quickly end a career, though, especially if one has the Bad Luck to accidentally kill or maim an opponent. The other side of the coin is that after a few blows to the head, one grows Forgetful.

Signature Equipment: Boxing gloves and gear.

Skill Package: Unarmed—*power 2*; Stamina—*endurance 2*; Resolve—*physical*; Interaction—*intimidate*; Telekinesis—*kinetic blow 2, kinetic shield*. Cost: 46 points.

DIPLOMAT CAREERS

In a society that accepts at least the existence of psionic abilities, creative thinkers recognize that the psionically gifted have skills useful to business and politics.

Psionic Facilitator

Diplomat (Mindwalker)

Whenever opposing sides come together, someone needs to ensure that everyone plays fair. If that someone can also see to it that everyone communicates clearly and sticks to the agenda, so much the better. Such people are facilitators, and psionic facilitators are especially good at their jobs. With their ability to translate the garbled mutterings of otherwise brilliant people into sensible, coherent plans, they make any organization that much more effective. And because facilitators who can read minds are privy to the secrets of everyone present, they are thoroughly screened, carefully neutral, and extremely well paid.

Corporations can afford to hire entire negotiating teams of specialists. A psionic facilitator who is part of such a team should focus on marketable skills: ESP—*mind reading* and Telepathy—*contact*. Those in business for themselves may also want to pick up Business—*small business, Administration—management*, and more ranks in Interaction specialties. Psionic facilitators who deal with international corporations will also find additional languages extremely useful.

Ability Recommendations: Intelligence and Personality both figure highly in such a career, given the need for business knowledge and people skills, as well as the related psionic abilities.

Perks & Flaws: Whichever corporation employs the hero will be a Powerful Ally boosting his or her Reputation. Of course, that means the rival corp that didn't hire that facilitator will be a Powerful Enemy. Such high-level politics can keep one Obsessed.

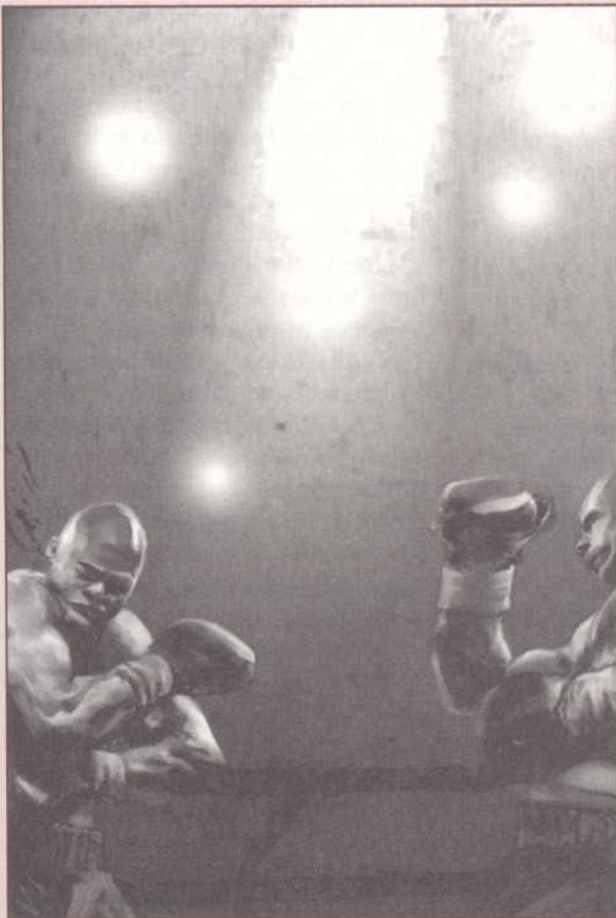
Signature Equipment: Briefcase, cell phone, laptop computer.

Skill Package: Business—*corporate*; Law; Administration; Resolve—*mental*; Deception—*bluff*; Interaction—*bargain*; ESP—*empathy, mind reading, sensitivity*; Telepathy—*contact, mind shield 2*. Cost: 52 points.

Sanctioned Telepath

Diplomat (Free Agent) talent

Sanctioned telepaths make a living lending their psionic talent to official purposes. In law enforcement, they help police question suspects. In court cases, they determine when a lawyer's client is being honest, help select the jury, and point out when a witness commits perjury. In business, they help negotiate contracts, settle disputes, and perform internal investigations. Their talent keeps them well fed and well clothed,



though not necessarily well liked.

A sanctioned telepath in a law-enforcement role should acquire *Law-law enforcement* and *Investigate-interrogate*, while one serving the courts will benefit from *Law-court procedures* and *Law-psionic law* to know what can and can't be done. In the business world, the best bet is one or more of the Business specialty skills and increased ranks in *Interaction-bargain*. And of course, increased ranks in the Telepathy specialty skills will make the hero a better consultant—which makes for larger paychecks.

Ability Recommendations:

Personality is the key Ability for any Diplomat, and doubly so for those specializing in Telepathy. As well, Intelligence is useful for the technical background appropriate to the psion's field.

Perks & Flaws: A Psion's

License is likely to be required (so as to protect against fraud and/or mistrial). Danger Sense, Psionic Awareness, and Willpower are all desirable traits, depending on the psion's line of work.

In the business world, though, a sanctioned telepath will likely earn a Powerful Enemy in the form of an industrial spy or the hired telepath of a commercial rival. Sadly, he or she is often Oblivious to the danger, and becomes quite Fragile from a deskbound life.

Signature Equipment:

Telepath's license, laptop computer, cell phone.

Skill Package: Knowledge-computer operation, language (additional); Awareness-intuition, perception; Resolve-mental 2; Culture-diplomacy; Interaction-bargain, charm, interview; Telepathy-contact 2, suggest. Cost: 46 points.

FREE AGENT CAREERS

When psionics are no longer a fringe domain, more careers become possible for the gifted amateur.

Mindfighter

What teke boxers are to Telekinesis, mindfighters are to Telepathy. These duelists rely on their talent to launch psionic assaults while simultaneously fending off opponents' attacks. Most mindfighters travel from place to place seeking new opponents, though some settle down as local champions. Occasionally several gather for a tournament, and the inevitable fringe-group fans and "sportsmen" flock to place wagers.

The competition itself is not spectacular (though it is occasionally fatal). To compensate, a cult of personality has developed, with warriors donning outlandish costumes (always including masks) and assuming stage names. The best-known figures may even endorse a variety of consumer products. The event itself is typically preceded by days of buildup, including strutting, posing, and trash-talking. The winners walk away with considerable sums of cash. The losers walk away with brain damage.

Improving Telepathy-*mind blast* and *mind shield* are obvious first concerns when buying skill ranks. Street Smart specialties give the mindfighter an idea of who can be trusted to set up fair contests that won't be raided by the authorities. And a few ranks in Modern Ranged Weapons-*pistol* can save a mindfighter's skin when a sore loser tries a more physical approach.

Ability Recommendations: Next to the Personality so essential both to Telepathy skills and pleasing the crowd, a good Constitution and/or Will help reduce the ill effects of this dangerous trade.

Perks & Flaws: Fortitude and Willpower are common advantages for the dedicated mindfighter. Reputation is the best way to find opponents and be well paid for the trouble. The flamboyant world of mindfighting does have its restrictive Code of Honor, though. A veteran usually

bears the physical or mental scars of some Old Injury, and it's all too easy to become Obsessed with taking down a persistent nemesis.

Signature Equipment:

Painkillers, costume and mask, 9mm pistol.

Skill Package: Modern-*pistol*; Stamina-*endurance*; Resolve-*mental 2*; Street Smart; Interaction-*intimidate*; Telepathy-*mind shield*, *mind blast 2*. Cost: 52 points.

TECH OP CAREERS

Increased research possibilities and the beginnings of psionic technology put Tech Ops on the cutting edge of psionic awareness in a heroic campaign.

Hobbled Psion

Once a powerful Mindwalker, this psion was surgically or chemically "hobbled," restricting his or her ability to the level of a mere talent. This procedure is usually performed only on psionic criminals, or in societies where non-psions fear such powerful individuals operating freely in their midst. Now the former Mindwalker can only relive lost glories and occasionally touch the kind of power he or she once wielded effortlessly. In the meantime, the hobbled psion strives to be a useful member of society. Typically these individuals specialize in *Law-psionic law* or *Medical Science-treatment*, skills acquired as a result of the hobbling process.

A hobbled psion's primary motivation is to regain that lost existence. Acquiring psionic specialty skills should be a major concern—even if they're not immediately usable. Of more practical importance is gaining the various skills needed to survive without psionics. This may mean increasing the rank in *Law-psionic law* or *Medical Science-treatment* if the hero wants to help other psions avoid a similar fate.

Ability Recommendations:

Without access to psionic powers, Intelligence is important to such heroes, but high scores in Will and Personality are needed to regain lost abilities.

Perks & Flaws: In such an environment, a Psion's License is necessary to survival. Through Psionic Awareness, the hero finds other psions (and perhaps helps them out). Being a psion in an anti-psi culture, Hobbled or not, inevitably leads to Infamy. There are few honest employment possibilities, so the hero is usually Dirt Poor. It helps to be Forgetful of what one had.

Signature Equipment: Psion's license.

Skill Package: Law-psionic; Life Science-biology; Medical-knowledge, treatment; Resolve-mental; Telekinesis; Telepathy. Cost: 45 points.

Research Scientist

Although research scientists study psionic phenomena in all stages of psionic awareness, they are most prolific at PC 3 and 4. They are not psionically gifted themselves but document manifestations, study artifacts, test psions, and form hypotheses about how mental energy translates into measurable physical effect. Some study ways to stimulate the process; others, ways to inhibit it. A few try to reproduce it artificially, while an even smaller number attempt to bio-engineer it.

A lucky few get the opportunity to study psi firsthand, by accompanying and observing an actual psion. These researchers thus acquire higher ranks in scientific skills related to the abilities of the psion being studied (such as Life Science-biology for Biokinesis, or Physical Science-physics for Telekinesis). Depending on the situations the test subject gets into, the research scientist may find Modern Ranged Weapons, Law, Street Smart, or

Deception important broad skills to acquire as well.

Ability Recommendations:

Intelligence is the prime requisite for the scientific discipline in which the researcher specializes.

Perks & Flaws: Having a Photo Memory is invaluable for documenting transient phenomena, and needed funding usually comes from a Powerful Ally such as a research firm or government agency. A researcher may start by analyzing an Alien Artifact possessing psionic properties. (Of course, its *hidden* properties can quickly convert this perk into a flaw.) More than one researcher has become Obsessed with his or her field of study—"mad scientist" is an unkind but appropriate epithet.

Signature Equipment: Medical diploma, laboratory and equipment, library containing cutting-edge studies of psionic ability.

Skill Package: Knowledge-computer operation, deduce 2, psionics 2; Life Science-biology 2, genetics 2; Medical-knowledge 2, psychology; Physical-physics 2. Cost: 51 points.

MINDWALKER CAREERS

In this type of campaign, most societies at least recognize the existence of the mindwalking specialist, even if not all of them approve. Heroes of this profession face exciting opportunities—and unparalleled hostility.

Clairvoyant

Clairvoyants are psions specializing in ESP who gather information by concentrating on objects and places. Despite their obvious value to the intelligence community, many find such work morally distasteful and instead pursue activities that do not challenge their sense of right and wrong. Many drift into security or rescue roles, while some become consultants on missing-persons cases.

A clairvoyant with a security focus should supplement his or her psionic ability with Security-protection protocols and security devices, as well as Law-law enforcement. Search-and-rescue specialists develop Awareness-perception, Investigate-search, and greater ranks in Knowledge-first aid. A private investigator who searches for missing persons should focus on Investigate-search, Street Smart-street knowledge, and Interaction-interview.

Ability Recommendations:

Intelligence is a prime requisite both for the ESP skills a clairvoyant depends on and the technical and investigative knowledge that supplement these.

Perks & Flaws: Danger Sense and Psionic Awareness are useful complements to the clairvoyant's psionic suite. Most clairvoyants follow a strict Code of Honor (no spying on innocents), which tends to keep them out of the private investigator business. The trauma of encountering objects with negative psionic impressions leads to Phobia in many clairvoyants.

Signature Equipment: Medical or legal certificate, briefcase, notepad, first aid kit.

Skill Package: ESP-clairaudience 2, clairvoyance 3, postcognition 2. Cost: 26 points.

Healer

Some psions find themselves thrust into roles that make heroes of them; healers are such people. Gifted with the ability to relieve the suffering of others, healers' services are in high demand in medical facilities everywhere. Their presence in a hospital emergency room can make the difference between life and death; in surgery, they can sustain a patient in the event of complications. Their unique skills let them absorb damage or disease, then heal it in their own bodies. Of course, conventional healing is still the first option.

Healers keep themselves in peak physical condition: exercising daily, eating only the most nutritious foods, and avoiding vices that might harm their ability to help others. A healer most likely has an Athletics specialty skill to reflect this exercise regimen, usually a sport or aerobics program. Acquiring ranks in both Stamina—*endurance* and resist *pain* is a high priority, though Medical Science—*treatment* will also make for a more effective healer. If he or she works in an emergency room, higher ranks in Biokinesis—*transfer damage* are probably of the utmost importance, and increased ranks in *rejuvenate* will certainly decrease “downtime” for recovery.

Ability Recommendations: A good Constitution can only help someone with this particular Biokinesis career. A good Intelligence score is also helpful for learning medical techniques.

Perks & Flaws: Fortitude and Vigor add more ability to absorb damage. Those with the gift of healing will have a Powerful Ally in the medical community, whether or not psions are generally accepted by the culture. Healers usually follow a Code of Honor similar to the Hippocratic Oath and often bear the scars of an Old Injury in the line of duty.

Signature Equipment: Medical license, first aid kit.

Skill Package: Knowledge—*first aid 2*; Medical—*knowledge, surgery*; Biokinesis—*heal 2, rejuvenate, transfer damage 2*. Cost: 43 points.

“Teke”

Telekineticists, or “tekes,” are to Telekinesis what telepaths are to Telepathy. Their abilities usually manifest at an early age, creating an almost complete reliance on the mind to move things rather than the body. This causes a few accidents before the teke learns to overcome the mental habit of “thinking equals doing,” and

relapses do happen. That risk means tekes don’t usually receive sanctioning to use their skills professionally. Nevertheless, their abilities are in high demand—especially for handling hazardous materials.

Because higher ranks in Telekinesis—*levitation* and *psychokinetics* only increase the speed at which they can move themselves or objects, tekes may find honing control more important. Increasing the Dexterity score is useful, though it must wait until the teke reaches 6th level. In the meantime, it’s a good idea to work on Acrobatics or Manipulation specialty skills.

Ability Recommendations: Telekinesis demands a high Will score, but effectively using it makes Dexterity just as important.

Perks & Flaws: Reflexes and Willpower can only help the teke with his or her primary skills. However, physical strength is unimportant to these mental movers, making them Delicate. Wild Talent combined with a Temper produces turbulent adolescences, and even in adulthood the teke is never completely trusted by others.

Signature Equipment: Medical or legal certificate, “teke toys” (see “Psionic Puzzles” in Chapter 4: *Gamemaster Tools*).

Skill Package: Acrobatics—*dodge*; Manipulation; Telekinesis—*kinetic shield, levitation 3, psychokinetics 3*. Cost: 46 points.

Superheroic

As the power level in a psionics-related ALTERNITY campaign rises, the PC rating must also rise. With even a handful of “over-the-top” psions present, a culture cannot fail to notice their ability or deliberately ignore it. And as attitudes toward psionics mature, the face of society indelibly changes.

By this time society has largely embraced its psionic members

and no longer imposes strict sanctions on them. Psions live, work, and worship as they choose, free from harassment and social stigma. They are even encouraged to develop their abilities for their own sake rather than to fulfill the agendas of others.

In the most advanced societies, psions—despite the actual percentage of the population they represent—are treated as commonplace. Psionic ability is no more or less remarkable than the color of one’s skin. Knowing a remarkable psion is no different from knowing a media personality.

On the low end of the scale in a superheroic campaign are talents, who are nevertheless powerful in their own right. At the high end are master Mindwalkers, some of whom scarcely require physical form any longer. Most neophyte psionic characters fall into the category of Mindwalker generalists, with three or more broad skills and several specialty skills.

Psion Self-Determination

Psions eventually achieve self-government, though the journey is never short, and psions themselves prefer the word “earn” to “achieve.” Legislators spend years drafting “equal rights” referendums and repealing earlier, less enlightened laws. And this time the psions themselves are voting. Indeed, by this stage they hold positions in government, paving the way for later generations to receive the same consideration as non-psions. Though no human government is ruled by a known psion, many have run for election.

Psions in a superheroic ALTERNITY campaign are free to master their abilities, which would most likely be the theme for psionic heroes. Few mysteries remain; most psionic phenomena are more of a challenge to overcome than a puzzle to solve. Untrained psions are rare, as

Sample Organizations

In superheroic campaigns, psionic organizations are considerably less sinister as a whole than in lower-powered ones, though many still have purely selfish motivations. Psions openly work for civilian and government agencies, or even form agencies of their own—all quite aboveboard. In fact, the only groups who operate in secret are those dedicated to the idea of a society without psionic interference.

Psi Forces

Imperative to peace between psions and non-psions is the establishment of psionic regulatory bodies. Themselves composed mainly of psions, such groups police the psi community for illegal use of abilities, and when called upon, participate in military actions, lending their powers to the defense of their society.

These psionic authorities take names like "Psi Police" and operate on much the same model as non-psionic law enforcement. They psionically investigate crimes, apprehend perpetrators, and keep the peace. Further, they maintain extreme vigilance over their own ranks, watching for signs of corruption, abuse, or insurrection. After all, a large group of well-trained, well-armed psions, even a civil defense force, could easily seize control of its own government.

Heroes "on the job" would be psi officers, Mindwalkers trained to serve and protect the civilian population with their abilities. Such an organization would include almost no non-psions, though there might be quite a few talents—officers psionically "wounded" in the line of duty.

Psi Schools

Along with structured testing for psionic potential in children, civilian authorities create programs of higher education and training. Since the alternative

is letting new psions learn by trial and error in an uncontrolled environment, policymakers usually have little resistance to funding psi schools.

The fraal sanctuaries exemplify these, though in a superheroic campaign they would be less concerned with protecting psions from the ignorant masses than protecting the masses from uncontrolled psions. Early training teaches basic psionic ethics (using one's abilities responsibly), with an advanced curriculum geared toward revealing everything there is to know about the psion's abilities and limitations. Higher learning addresses theoretical psionics or even research, with practical exercises to develop new skills.

An entirely fraal group of heroes might play the teaching staff of one such sanctuary. Or they could be students of any species, perhaps just entering a higher learning program to explore new applications of their abilities.

Anti-Psi Activists

Anti-psi groups are dying breeds in a superheroic campaign of this sort. As legislation clears away the obstacles to integration of psions and non-psions, organizations devoted to maintaining psi-free communities become smaller and smaller, and less and less powerful.

In this level of campaign, such activist groups suffer for professing an unpopular sentiment. Deemed "crackpots" and "extremists," they are denied even a voice in government and must conduct their activities in secret, if at all. In many ways, this reverses the situation in a heroic campaign.

Anyone involved with such an organization would of course be non-psionic, though they would likely be armed with at least homemade anti-psi devices, such as psi-shields (see "Psionic Equipment" in *Chapter 4: Gamemaster Tools*).

careful instruction by compassionate experts is available to anyone without question. Training focuses not on controlling one's abilities but expanding them, doing just a little more than the last generation could. Psions explore the stars from the comfort and safety of their own homes, develop new techniques and artifacts, and gather together in "astral space" to discuss the things they've done and seen.

Recognized Communities

In a setting where psions are free to do as they please, predominantly psionic communities are inevitable. Psions will naturally gather to pursue common goals and take advantage of shared knowledge. Aging psions may wish to "retire" to a place where they need not constantly guard against accidentally reading the thoughts of an unshielded person.

In the STAR*DRIVE setting, the fraal and the deepfallen have recognized psionic communities, but some exist even in predominantly non-psionic species. Only psions are permitted to join such "retreats." Heroes might be psions seeking admission or non-psions attempting to penetrate its secrets. Such a community is probably better used as the ultimate destination of retired psions, however.

Sample Careers

COMBAT SPEC CAREERS

At the superheroic level, the need for physical force is greatly reduced. Many careers that would be fulfilled by Combat Specs in lower-PC societies are now the province of full-fledged Mindwalkers. However, there is still work for the traditional soldier who doesn't mind hunting fellow sentients.

Psi-Hunter

Mindwalkers on both sides of the law occasionally make powerful enemies, who hire psi-hunters to track them down and (sometimes) make them pay. These contractors are not themselves psionic but are armed with the best anti-psi tech money can buy. About half slip up and are reduced to gibbering idiots—or worse—by their quarry, but the survivors manage to fulfill their contracts and bring home fair-sized paychecks. Unfortunately, most of the money goes toward medical services, or at least new and better anti-psi gear.

The psi hunter's long-term goal is to get better at finding psionic targets, so picking up Investigate and its specialty skills are always a good bet. But in the short term, he or she is primarily concerned with staying alive in the face of stiff resistance and so should focus on combat skills. Bigger paychecks come for stalking more slippery prey, but if the psi-hunter doesn't have what it takes to finish the job, he or she might as well never start.

Ability Recommendations: Survival in combat requires high scores in both Strength and Dexterity, so as to handle a variety of weapons. Constitution is important as well.

Perks & Flaws: Especially for the non-psionically gifted, having a Danger Sense makes all the difference. With Reflexes and Vigor, a psi-hunter can stand up to vicious physical attacks. These hunters of

people are not well liked, though, and are dogged by Infamy; the psionic community will always be a Powerful Enemy. Those hunters who are not incapacitated or outright killed on the job usually suffer from an Old Injury.

Signature Equipment: 9mm pistol, handcuffs, battle vest, psi-scanner, anti-psi drugs, psi-shield (see "Psionic Equipment" in *Chapter 4: Gamemaster Tools*).

Skill Package: Unarmed-power; Modern-pistol, rifle, SMG; Stealth; Knowledge-first aid; Security; Resolve-mental; Street Smart. Cost: 49 points.

DIPLOMAT CAREERS

The fine arts of negotiation and espionage both benefit from psionic enhancement. Here are a couple of ideas for Diplomats in a superheroic campaign.

Psi Spy

Diplomat (Mindwalker)

Psions make excellent espionage agents. A psi spy is trained in establishing and maintaining a cover, using psionic skills to gather intelligence, and conveying that information back to his or her contacts. ESPers are highly valued for passive information-gathering, and biokineticists who specialize in *morph* can create instant disguises (if only for a short period). The price for failure is high, but an agent who maintains his or her cover can get extremely close to a target and stay there for years, becoming a part of the target's everyday life and therefore above suspicion.

The first concern of a psi spy is to establish a cover and stick to it, so during hero creation the player should choose a Knowledge specialty, as well as the Culture-etiquette skill, relating to the place from which the hero claims to have come. Once the hero's cover is established, he or she should acquire ranks in Deception-bluff. A psi spy should put some skill points toward

ESP-psychometry, as it makes any object effectively a "bug."

But it can actually be better *not* to concentrate on developing psionic skills. Getting close enough to the target to gather information a little at a time is far preferable to the greater risk of trying to psionically learn everything at once. Telepathy-*mind shield* is desirable only for posing as a psion. Otherwise, the ability to block *mind reading* attempts will be a major clue that the psi spy is hiding something. Posing as a psion isn't best choice for an agent trying to keep a low profile, since psions in sensitive positions are always under suspicion.

Ability Recommendations:

Awareness and Interaction specialty skills make a psi spy successful, even more than ESP. Such a hero should have high scores in both Will and Personality.

Perks & Flaws: In the espionage business, a bit of Good Luck is a survival trait. Those who are Observant, especially with a Photo Memory, excel at their careers. But a psi spy is Obsessed with maintaining cover. All around are Powerful Enemies in the form of counterespionage agencies.

Signature Equipment: False identification, cell phone, personal radio.

Skill Package: Security; Systems Operation; Awareness-perception; Investigate-search; Resolve-mental; Culture; Deception-bluff 3; Interaction-charm; ESP-clairaudience, clairvoyance, psychometry. Cost: 61 points.

Psionic Attorney

Diplomat (Mindwalker)

Like anyone else, Mindwalkers appear in court, sometimes as witnesses, sometimes as defendants—and sometimes as legal representation. Psionic attorneys have a unique understanding not only of psionic clients' needs, but also of psionic

manipulation of juries. In societies of PC 6 and higher, attorneys are allowed under certain circumstances to examine witnesses and defendants psionically. A good psi attorney needs to have this ability and also be able to detect an unscrupulous opponent's attempt to alter a witness's memories.

Psionic attorneys must develop both legal and psionic skills equally. More ranks in Law specialty skills are desirable, along with improved in *Interaction-charm* (for the juries) and *bargain* (when settling out of court). *Investigate-interrogate* might prove useful as well. But the hero should also remember to increase ranks in ESP and Telepathy specialty skills; ESP-*psychometry* or *empathy* are priceless for examining evidence or determining a witness's state of mind.

Ability Recommendations: Both the procedural and psionic requirements of this career depend on high scores in Intelligence and Personality.

Perks & Flaws: Any successful attorney is *Filthy Rich*—psionic ones even more so. Being *Observant*, especially with a *Photo Memory*, means an opposing counsel or reluctant witness won't get away with much. Despite popular disrespect for the legal profession, psionic attorneys do have a *Code of Honor*—respect for the legal process—and they can become *Obsessed* with a case. A criminal organization or a rival attorney makes a *Powerful Enemy*.

Signature Equipment: Legal licenses and diplomas, briefcase, laptop computer, cell phone, psi-damper (see "Psionic Equipment" in *Chapter 4: Gamemaster Tools*).

Skill Package: Knowledge-computer operation; Law-court 2, psionic; Resolve-mental; Deception; Interaction-bargain, charm, interview; ESP-mind reading, postcognition, sensitivity; Telepathy-contact, mind shield 2. Cost: 52 points.

TECH OP CAREERS

Though Mindwalkers fulfill many roles occupied by Tech Ops in less psionically advanced societies, the development of artificial-psi tech leaves room for technical careers in high-PL settings.

Psi Tech

Like the psientist (see below), the psi tech creates new psionic applications, but with science rather than existing powers. He or she most likely was not even born with psionic ability, having instead created it with implants, treatments, or psi-gear. The psi tech's life revolves around these inventions, which he or she usually sells to design firms—if the hero doesn't already work for one.

Learning how to use the inventions makes the psi tech a more effective designer. This depends on the psi tech's area of interest: Acquiring weapons- or vehicle-related broad skills would be helpful in arms research, while Intelligence-based broad skills (such as Physical Science or Security) would benefit those developing scientific equipment. Along those same lines, the psi tech might acquire Biokinesis and Telepathy, or focus on gaining higher ranks in ESP and Telekinesis specialty skills by "upgrading" existing psi-gear.

Ability Recommendations: This career focuses on technical research; that plus effective use of ESP specialty skills demands a high Intelligence score. Will is also important for effective Telekinesis use.

Perks & Flaws: A psi tech might well begin his or her career through the study of an Alien Artifact. In fact, attempting to unlock those secrets can make the hero quite *Obsessed*—not to mention of a perfectionist bent.

Signature Equipment: Cell phone, tool kit (or pharmaceuticals kit).

Skill Package: Computer Science-hardware; Knowledge-

psionics; Technical-invention 2, repair, knowledge; ESP-mind reading; Telekinesis-psychokinetics. Cost: 45 points.

MINDWALKER CAREERS

Every aspect of society is open to the full Mindwalker in a super-heroic campaign, even roles that would otherwise be filled by other professions.

Graduate Psi Student

When students at psi schools finish their training, their choices may be limited. A degree in theoretical psionics is no more a guarantee of employment than one in philosophy. Most end up in government posts or go into military service. The fortunate few enter graduate studies programs to prepare them for life as psi instructors. Part of such a program is "life experience," in which the fledgling psion leaves the hallowed halls of knowledge to see how the universe really functions. Students often get so wrapped up in this new form of education that they forget to return to the old one.

Graduate psi students are blank slates upon which can be recorded nearly any sort of data. This is an opportunity to enhance psionic skills—or at least learn how to undo the artificial restraints placed by the student's instructors (see the "Telepathy-mind block" sidebar)—and so picking up new psionic specialty skills should be a primary concern. On the other hand, psi students are extremely intelligent and may opt to apply their formidable intellects toward Business, Computer Science, Law, Life Sciences, Navigation, and Physical Science skills. Most of these choices will be determined during hero creation.

Ability Recommendations: Psi students have extremely high Intelligence scores in general. Telepathy skills also require a good Personality score.

Telepathy-Mind Block

New Telepathy Skill

Cost: 4

This skill can't be used untrained.

Occasionally, instructors encounter individuals who do not yet have the maturity or control to wield potentially dangerous psionic skills. The *mind block* skill allows a character to implant mental inhibitors in the subject's psyche, preventing him or her from activating those powers. While most commonly found in fraal sanctuaries, versions of this ability are also practiced by nonfraal psions—though not always for such altruistic purposes.

Imposing a block inhibits the use of any one psionic skill, though this can be repeated to inhibit others. Various conditions modify the Telepathy-*mind block* skill check:

Situation	Penalty
Target skill is:	
Broad skill	+2
Specialty skill	+1
Higher rank than user's rank in <i>mind block</i>	+1
Conditions:	
During combat	+3
Life-threatening	+2
Calm	-1
Controlled	-2
Subject is:	
Hostile	+1
Neutral	0
Receptive	-1

When the psion attempts to use the blocked skill, a penalty applies, which is established at the time the block is set. The penalty depends on the result of a skill check made by the character setting the block: Ordinary, +1; Good, +2; Amazing, +3. These penalties are cumulative with any other modifiers from the target's resistances or protections (such as *Resolve-mental resolve*).

These inhibitors can later be removed by anyone possessing the *mind block* skill. At the Gamemaster's discretion, a *mental block* can "wear off" after a number of months equal to the rank in Telepathy-*mind block* of the psion who established the block.

Perks & Flaws: The student has a Powerful Ally in his or her sponsoring school. Concentration and Increased Energy are advantages gained from the academic regime. Many psi-students have Psionic Awareness. The flip side, though, is that students can be Fragile and Oblivious—in other words, typical "nerds." They almost always have a Mental

Block imposed for their own—and society's—protection, especially if they are toting a dangerous Alien Artifact. Often they must also adhere to a Code of Honor to devote their abilities to learning.

Signature Equipment: Suitcase, notepad, audio or video recorder.

Skill Package: Knowledge-*first aid*; Life Science; Awareness-*intuition*; ESP-*mind reading 2*,

navcognition, sensitivity; Telepathy-*mind shield, psychic armor, suggest*. Cost: 41 points.

Psi Officer

Ordinary police officers are no match for the powerful Mind-walkers in a superheroic campaign. Psi officers are psions trained in law enforcement, with the authority to apprehend psionic criminals and bring them to justice. They also foster greater understanding and cooperation between psions and non-psions; despite the enlightened times there are occasional misunderstandings. Heroes with this career may be former psi officers currently working in security firms, as personal bodyguards, or in other related jobs.

Psi officers will find the Crowd Control rank benefit for Telepathy-*empathic projection* useful if they regularly deal with the public. (See the "Crowd Control" sidebar.) Those who travel frequently should consider picking up an appropriate Vehicle Operation specialty skill. Particularly skilled psi officers may be detectives, with ranks in Knowledge-*intuition* and perception, Investigate-*track*, or Street Smart and its specialty skills.

Ability Recommendations: Will is important for Investigate specialty skills and effective use of Telekinesis. Personality or Intelligence should be high as well, depending on the area of specialization.

Perks & Flaws: Psi officers with Increased Energy have a vital edge over the public; being extra Observant is part of a detective's job. And of course, a police force will be a Powerful Ally. Conversely, organized crime and previous "collars" are likely to be Powerful Enemies. And like most cops, the psi officer has probably sustained an Old Injury.

Signature Equipment: Police nightstick (club), 9mm pistol, handcuffs, battle vest, psi-restraint device (see "Psionic

Crowd Control

New Telepathy-*empathic projection* Rank Benefit

X Rank Benefit: At rank 5, a psi officer learns how to calm crowds more effectively. The hero may affect five targets per rank in *empathic projection* without suffering the usual penalty for multiple targets. However, this can shift the targets' emotional state only to Neutral. In other words, the crowd becomes more reasonable and open to suggestions to disperse. Use of this skill will not cause sentient beings to ignore brutality: Violent actions against anyone in a calmed crowd will immediately shift its mood to Combative.

Attempting this version of the skill is still subject to penalties for the crowd's emotional state, as explained in the skill description. (See *Chapter 2: Revised Rules*.) If the targets have no alternative (plague victims being denied medical attention, for example) an additional +2 step penalty applies. However, a sufficient distraction (say, food to a hungry mob) might confer a -1 step bonus to the skill check.

There is nothing to stop a crowd from re-forming when the effect has worn off. However, the intent is not to permanently disperse the crowd, but buy time to prepare ordinary crowd-control measures—or ideally, solve the underlying problem.

Equipment" in *Chapter 4: Gamemaster Tools*).

Skill Package: Melee Weapons; Modern-pistol; Law; Investigate; ESP-clairvoyance; Telekinesis-kinetic shield 2; Telepathy-contact, *empathic projection*, *psychic armor*. Cost: 59 points.

Psi Trooper

There will always be conflicts, and Mindwalkers will inevitably be drawn into them. Psi troopers are elite psionic soldiers trained to use their skills in small-unit, covert operations. Squads of psionic commandos infiltrate enemy positions to gather intelligence, liberate hostages, or leave nothing and no one alive. Government agencies at first deny their existence, but as former psi troopers enter the civilian sector, the secret eventually comes out. Some try to leave the "psi wars" behind, but soon find they are good at little else. Such veterans can command exorbitant salaries as mercenaries and security specialists.

Psi troopers should focus on acquiring Heavy and Melee Weapons and Armor Operation, or increasing ranks in existing Unarmed Attack and Modern Ranged Weapons specialty skills. Those advancing through the ranks will eventually want to pick up Navigation-surface navigation and Leadership-command, and every psi trooper benefits from improving Biokinesis and Telekinesis specialty skills. ESP-battle mind will prove useful as well. Psi troopers are almost superstitiously averse to acquiring ESP-precognition, however, preferring not to foresee the mission from which they won't return.

Ability Recommendations: Constitution and Will are key for survival in battle and for the psionic specialties of these heroes.

Perks & Flaws: Even without precognitive abilities, a psi trooper lives longer with Danger Sense and Psionic Awareness. Reflexes help dodge that bullet, but Fast Recovery is a boon if it's not dodged. Psi troopers are often Obsessed with life on the battlefield, even if they hated it, and soon find "civvy street" isn't where they belong. An Old Injury or a Powerful Enemy is a legacy of a previous mission.

Signature Equipment: 9mm SMG, grenade launcher, assault gear.

Skill Package: Unarmed-power; Modern Ranged Weapons; Knowledge-first aid; Tactics; Resolve-mental; Biokinesis-heal; Telekinesis-kinetic blow, *psychokinetics*, *pyrokinetics*. Cost: 57 points.

Psientist

Unlike psi techs, psientists are psions who study psionic phenomena under scientific conditions. This includes learning about psionic manifestation and developing new psionic skills. Psientists occasionally perform "field tests" of their theories, though often the new skill proves to be a less than optimal application. This kind of hero is ideal for players who want to design new psionic skills, as it allows both player and Gamemaster to determine whether or not a skill unbalances the game.

A psientist hero will most likely want to train in any new skills he or she develops, rather than improving more mundane skills. But the hero should not neglect Knowledge specialty skills, and further ranks in existing psionic skills will make the psientist a more useful part of his or her team.

Ability Recommendations: Intelligence has obvious application to the psientist, but Will, Personality, or Constitution should not be neglected. The Ability score to choose depends on the hero's psionic specialty.

Perks & Flaws: Observant psientists make the great discoveries, but Willpower gets them published. The thrill of scientific discovery keeps these heroes Obsessed. An Old Injury from an earlier "lab accident" might Slow the psientist's reactions.

Signature Equipment: Medical diploma, testing lab, library containing various cutting-edge studies of psionic ability.



Skill Package: Knowledge—deduce, psionics; Life Science; Physical Science; Resolve—mental; Biokinesis—control metabolism; ESP—mind reading, sensitivity; Psychoportation—alter speed; Telepathy—contact, mind shield. Cost: 58 points.

Psionic Bodyguard

Bodyguards must be able to see what's about to happen and react fast enough to prevent it. While the average Combat Spec can be trained to do both, Mindwalkers have an advantage in the former category. Precognitive bodyguards are highly valued for their knack of judging when to jump in front of a client without hesitation—and without making him or her look like a paranoid fool. With the right combination of skills, psionic bodyguards can

expect not only to survive such a bold move, but to collect a hefty bonus along with their paycheck at the end of an assignment.

These heroes begin with most of the psionic skills they need, with the possible exception of ESP—battle mind or Telekinesis—psychokinetics (handy for pushing a client out of the path of danger). Being Mindwalkers, though, they have only a little training in the more physical aspects of their job; they must acquire specialty skills for Armor Operation, Unarmed Attack, and Vehicle Operation, and should also consider Tactics. Additional ranks in Modern Ranged Weapons and Awareness are most likely next on the list.

Ability Recommendations: Intelligence and especially Will are important to the psionic body-

guard, but Strength should not be neglected. Oftimes physical confrontation is necessary.

Perks & Flaws: Successful bodyguards are Observant and often have a talent for finding trouble, such as Danger Sense, Psionic Awareness, or Reflexes. The client's safety always comes first, and psionic bodyguards adhere to this Code of Honor to the point of being Obsessed. Getting in the way of trouble leaves many with an Old Injury, and being on edge all the time produces quite a Temper.

Signature Equipment: Battle jacket, 9mm charge pistol, command link.

Skill Package: Armor Operation; Unarmed Attack; Modern—pistol 2; Awareness—perception; ESP—mind reading; Telekinesis—kinetic shield 3. Cost: 52 points.

CHAPTER 4: GAMEMASTER TOOLS

Without being a psion oneself, it's difficult to know how to make a roleplaying game fun, fair, and engaging. If a Gamemaster misunderstands the players' desires or misjudges the implications and outcomes of events, the game can quickly break down and grind to a halt. Effectively running a game might seem to require either psionic ability or years of experience, but preparation, flexibility, and confidence serve well in lieu of those. Having—or faking—such qualities will make nearly any Gamemaster seem like an old pro. This chapter is a resource for ALTERNITY Gamemasters, a trick to create the illusion of preparedness.

Books and movies provide excellent inspirations for campaigns: The Vulcans of *Star Trek*, the Jedi knights of *Star Wars*, and the Psi Corps of *Babylon 5* are all excellent examples of how psions and non-psions relate and interact. Creative Gamemasters can use these as guidelines for their campaigns, and refer to this chapter for ideas about psions within the ALTERNITY rules. Here are examples that illustrate the concepts discussed in this book and assist those who wish to build their own worlds.

PSIONIC EQUIPMENT

A Gamemaster “toy box” should include gadgets and hooks to flesh out a story—or an entire campaign. Below are some ideas that can be springboards to unique concepts. Each device has an appropriate Progress Level for availability and a suggested cost.

Miscellaneous Equipment

Psi puzzles (PL 3, cost 100): Popular with psionic children, psi puzzles are word or picture games that can only be solved through the application of psionic skills. Every species that recognizes its psions eventually develops psi puzzles of one form or another, but they should exist only in a campaign where psionic training is an accepted part of life.

Used as a sort of learning game, psi puzzles push a psion's abilities just a little further. For example, a telepathic psi puzzle might instruct the child to note an object and think of something pleasant, then put both thoughts together in a friend's head; when the friend sees the object, he or she feels the pleasant thought as well. Many psions continue to play with these toys well past childhood, and more complex versions exist for adults. Versions exist for nearly every psionic

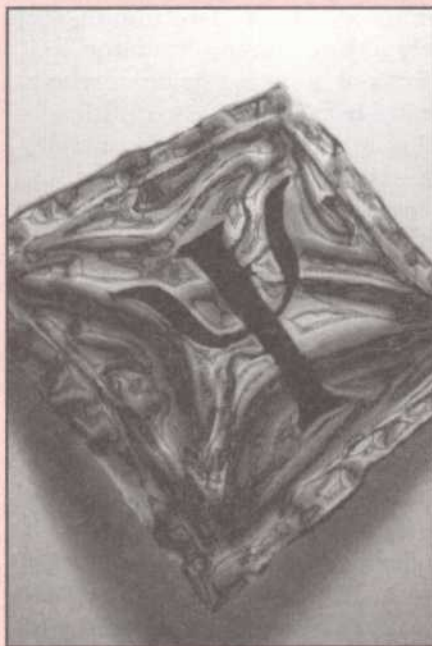
skill; “burn boxes,” for example, train pyrokinetic psions and “teke toys” are manipulation puzzles to develop telekinetic skills.

A psi puzzle provides the hero with 1 skill point toward the related psionic skill. The hero can use this skill point only to purchase new ranks or rank benefits in the skill. No psi puzzle can provide more than 1 skill point. Acquiring it requires a complex skill check with one attempt per day; the more advanced the puzzle, the more successes are required. If the hero already has more ranks in the skill than the number of required successes, he or she can learn nothing more. The Gamemaster should determine if there are situational modifiers to using a given psi puzzle.

Drugs

Psi-granting drugs (PL 5, cost 1000 [M]/2000 [O]/3000 [G]/4000 [A]): Known by various nicknames (such as “Nerve Tonic” or “Braino”) psi-granting drugs exist in all types of campaigns that include psionics, but because of the brutal toll they take on users, they are generally illegal where the rights of psions are protected. In some cultures, such drugs are wholly controlled by the military, who administer them to unsuspecting—or unwilling—test subjects. The fraal, on the other hand, take a very dim view of their use by or on fraal.

Psi-granting drugs grant temporary artificial ranks in a psionic skill. The effect generally lasts for d4 hours. Marginal-quality drugs grant 2 skill points—usually enough for a psion to acquire the first rank in a specialty skill for an existing broad skill. Ordinary-quality drugs



Psi Drug Interaction

The wide variety of psi-enhancing drugs creates a secondary problem: interaction. When heroes insist on using pharmaceuticals in combination, the Gamemaster should call for a Resolve-physical resolve skill check and refer to the following table. In general the interaction effect lasts d4 hours.

Result	Effect
Critical Failure	Psychotic episode
Failure	Convulsions/hallucinations
Ordinary	Shock
Good	Fatigue
Amazing	Safe interaction

Explanation of Effects

All of these effects are cumulative with those of the pharmaceuticals.

Psychotic episode: The user becomes violent, attacking anyone at the least provocation. During this time, the user's Strength and Constitution increase by d4, but Intelligence and Personality both decrease by d6; these can produce scores outside normal species limitations. If either Intelligence or Personality drop to 0 or less, the user becomes catatonic. The user suffers d6w damage when this effect ends, through extreme physical exertion.

Convulsions/hallucinations: The user suffers seizures interspersed with bouts of hallucination. Any actions he or she attempts to take are at a +3 step penalty. The convulsions cause the user to suffer d4w damage when the effect ends.

Shock: The interaction results in physical pain. The user suffers d6+2s damage immediately, and all skill checks incur an additional +2 step penalty when the effect ends.

Fatigue: The combination of drugs leaves the user sleepy and slow-witted. He or she loses d4-2 fatigue points immediately and suffers a +1 step penalty on all skill checks for the duration of the effect.

Safe interaction: The drugs mix relatively cleanly, but the user still loses d4-2 fatigue points at the onset of the interaction.

grant 4 skill points; Good, 8; and Amazing, 10. Amazing-quality psi-granting drugs can turn almost anyone into a psion for as long as the drug lasts.

The downside of using such drugs is that the user suffers from headaches and hallucinations for d4 days after the effect wears off, resulting in a +2 step penalty on all Intelligence, Will, or Personality skill checks. Anyone who uses psi-granting drugs more than once within 2d4 days must also make a Resolve-physical resolve skill check. Failure results in a permanent loss of 1 point of Intelligence, Will, or Personality (determined randomly).

Anti-psi drugs (PL 6, cost 300): In cultures where psi ability is

understood but discouraged, society has developed "humane" ways of allowing psions—who were born with these abilities through no fault of their own—to coexist with "proper citizens." The most common is drug therapy. Not "volunteering" for anti-psi drug treatments usually means the more extreme method: lobotomy. Few fail to volunteer.

Anti-psi drugs prevent psions from using their abilities by inhibiting their ability to expend psionic energy. A single dose, usually administered once per day, drains the psion of 2d4 psionic energy points. After a full two weeks' treatment, the subject is also less able to recover psionic energy and may make the attempt only once every 2

hours. Prolonged treatment of six months or more allows the psion to recover psionic energy points only once every 4 hours.

Of course, such drugs are useful in less legitimate applications. "Slipping a mickey" to a psion can neutralize the potential threat (assuming the psion doesn't read one's intentions first). Holding a psion hostage is a lot easier with anti-psi drugs as well. Known on the street as "Glitch," anti-psi drugs obtained illegally cost triple the listed price.

Psi-Booster Drugs (PL 7, cost 150): These substances help psions perform better by reducing psionic energy loss from the use of mental powers. One dose restores 2d4 lost psionic energy points—but also imposes on the user a +1 step penalty to all psionic skills for d6 hours after the drug is administered.

If a psion receives a second dose within 24 hours after the first one, the booster drug's effectiveness is reduced, restoring only 2d4-2 psionic energy points and the user suffers a +2 step penalty on all psionic skill checks for d6+1 hours after the second dose is administered.

Despite the reduced efficacy of subsequent doses, psi-enhancing drugs have a high addictive potential. The sense of refreshment and heightened ability is seductive. At the Gamemaster's option, Resolve-mental resolve skill checks may be required if a psion uses such drugs frequently.

Psi-Restraint Devices

Many governments, corporations, law enforcement agencies, and even crime gangs have access to some form of device designed to deprive psions of their mental powers. Only the most powerful Mindwalkers are able to fight the psi-restraint's effects. Three forms of psi-restraint are in use; all are expensive and difficult for a private citizen to acquire.

Optional Rule: Psionic Depression

"Humane" though anti-psi drugs may be, their long-term psychological effect on psions is severe. The longer the treatment period, the more likely the psion will slip into a depression whose bleakness the non-psionic can never imagine. Eventually the treated psion becomes suicidal. This unpleasant reality is conveniently ignored by the drugs' proponents.

The onset of psychological effects is a gradual process, building up with continued exposure to the drug. In effect, it resembles a complex Resolve-mental resolve feat check, but with failures accumulating instead of successes. The treated psion makes a check once per week after two weeks of continuous treatment. Depending on the quality of the drug, modifiers to the roll may apply: Marginal, +2 step penalty; Ordinary, +1; Good, none; Amazing, -1 step bonus.

The effects of failures are cumulative.

Number of Failures	Effect
1-2	None
3	Anxiety
4	Dread
5	Lethargy
6	Gloom
7	Despair

Accumulated failures beyond 12 produce the last-noted result. Successes reduce the accumulated failure total according to the degree of success (Ordinary, 1; Good, 2; Amazing, 3).

Anxiety: The psion feels nervous and edgy, suffering a +1 step penalty to all Resolve-mental resolve skill checks for the duration of treatment.

Dread: The psion feels rundown and unhappy, suffering a +1 step penalty to subsequent Will feat checks for the duration of treatment.

Lethargy: The psion feels uncomfortable and helpless, losing 1 fatigue point. The fatigue point loss persists for the duration of treatment. The

Gloom: The psion is overwhelmed by feelings of uselessness. Taking any action requires a successful Resolve-mental resolve skill check at a +2 step penalty. (See "Mental Resolve" in Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook*.)

Despair: The psion questions his or her very existence and is prone to suicidal despair. He or she is nearly incapable of action, requiring a successful Resolve-mental resolve skill check at a +3 step penalty to take any action beyond speech. In addition, for each week the condition persists, there is a chance the psion will simply give up on life. A Critical Failure result on the weekly Will feat check results in the psion's death.

Psi-restraint helmet (PL 6, cost 1200): The psi-restraint helmet is most often used in jails and corporate detention facilities. It has a blank faceplate to block vision and is fitted with a locking collar so that the prisoner can't remove it without assistance. Some are

made of flame-retardant materials, making them less susceptible to pyrokinetics. Without the correct electronic key or code, removing the helmet requires a successful Security-security devices skill check with a +2 step penalty. The helmet's neural

interference circuits (see the "Neural Interference Circuits" sidebar) add a +4 step penalty to the use of any psionic skills and a +1 step penalty to all Intelligence-based checks.

Variations of the standard psi-restraint helmet include an integrated psi-detector (see below), which sounds an alarm should the wearer attempt to use psionic abilities. Since this alarm also sounds inside the helmet, it is quite disconcerting to all but a hearing-impaired captive. Still others, based on explosive psi-restraint collars (see below), use lethal jolts of electricity or doses of nerve toxins. These can be triggered manually by a guard, but more often are connected to the onboard psi-detector.

Psi-restraint collar (PL 6, cost 1700): This is a simple-looking necklace composed of iron or some other dense metal. Psi-restraint collars are used by many advanced societies that disdain or restrict the use of psionic powers. The collar imposes the same penalties as the psi-restraint helmet but can be concealed beneath most forms of clothing. Removal of the collar without the correct key or code requires a successful Security-security devices skill check with a +2 step penalty. Failure to remove the collar or attempting to remove it forcefully activates a safety mechanism, causing the device to either explode or send out a radio signal.

Psi-restraint implant (PL 6, cost 3500): This device is a favorite of many organizations. It is available only in campaigns that use the optional cybertechnology rules (see Chapter 15: Cybertech in the *Player's Handbook*). Implanted at the base of the skull, it regulates the use of mental powers with a variable setting, imposing a step penalty anywhere from +5 to none at all. Adjusting the



level of the implant's neural interference without the proper key or code requires a successful Security-security devices skill check with a +2 step penalty. Removing the implant requires a successful Medical Science-surgery skill check.

Psi-Detection Devices

Psi-detector (PL 6, cost 2500): This device is concealable and portable, resembling a small radio. Its antenna is capable of detecting and pinpointing psionic activity within 100 meters.

Use of a psi-detector requires a successful System Operation-sensors skill check. An Ordinary success indicates whether mental powers are being used within the detection radius. A Good success further clarifies which of the four psionic broad skills is being used. An Amazing success allows the user to pinpoint the exact source of the mental emissions. A Critical Failure gives a false reading and may target the wrong individual.

Psi-scanner (PL 7, cost 3000): Unlike the psi-detector, the psi-scanner can detect *latent* psionic energy, pointing out Mindwalkers

Neural Interference Circuits

The Star*Drive setting would be a very different place without neural interference technology, which when combined with the earlier development of psi-detectors, allows non-psions some degree of confidence that their secrets are not being psionically stolen.

The fraal had learned through exposure to other species that non-psions were intimidated by Mindwalkers and somewhat reluctant to engage in negotiation. In response, the fraal granted their neural interference technology—created so long ago that no fraal can remember precisely why—to newly contacted species to expedite the diplomatic process.

The fraal had not taken into account the ingenuity of certain species (notably the t'sa, mechalus, and humans), who eagerly developed, miniaturized, and commercialized the neural interference circuit. Much to their surprise, the technology began appearing in all manner of devices aimed at law-enforcement and military roles. They are less than amused by this turn of events, as the technology that inhibits psionic ability is being used against members of their species. How the fraal are going to respond to the situation has not yet been disclosed.

even if they are not currently using their powers. The scanner does not reveal the nature of the psion, however—only direction and distance, and in high-end models, signal strength.

Use of a psi-scanner requires a successful System Operation-sensors skill check. An Ordinary success indicates whether there are any psions within 100 meters. A Good success indicates direction, and an Amazing success

indicates distance as well. A Critical Failure will generally alert psions to the use of the psi-scanner.

Psi-Defense Devices

Psi-shield (PL 6, cost 1500): Utilizing the same neural interference circuits as psi-restraint devices, psi-shields are helmetlike devices designed to protect the wearer from external psionics—specifically ESP and Telepathy. Like psi-restraints, these are largely used by law enforcement, corporate security, crime gangs, and government operatives. However, they are also heavily employed by various anti-psi organizations to enjoy the benefit of "psionic invisibility." Though often the wearer suffers a splitting headache for several hours after wearing the device (+2 to all actions for the next d4+2 hours), the benefit of imposing a +4 penalty to the use of ESP or Telepathy against the wearer more than makes up for the discomfort.

Anti-psi grenade (PL 6): This crude device confounds attempts to use psionic ability, by projecting a neural interference field centering on the grenade. Any psion within its area of effect suffers a step penalty to the use of psionic skills as set out in the sidebar below.

Anti-Psi Grenade

Availability/Cost: Military/\$400
Mass/Length: 0.5 kg/15 cm
Payload: Neural interference
Type/Firepower: Special
Damage: None
Area of Effect: 2m/4m/6m
Penalty to psionic use: +3/+2/+1

Psi-damper (PL 7, cost 8000): In some situations, total privacy is a must; important negotiations cannot afford psionic eavesdropping. The psi-damper is a short-

range neural interference field generator, designed for use by groups of no more than four at a time—all of whom must be within 3 meters of the device.

Resembling a small black box with a concave gold dish in the top, the psi-damper uses neural interference circuitry to block ESP and Telepathy use. It confers a +4 step penalty on any ESP or Telepathy skill check aimed at anyone inside its field of operation. Unlike less advanced devices, it causes no discomfort to the users—though it does require excessive amounts of power to operate.

Psi-shielded cybergear (PL 7, cost 1500): Psions using the Telepathy-*datalink* skill sometimes hack into cybergear requiring nanocomputers. Gear can be equipped with neural interference circuits, at triple the listed cost. However, because the body's bioelectric field is insufficient to power the modified unit, it requires additional power cells, which must be replaced every month. These power cells increase the nanocomputer's mass to 2.

Psi-Mask (PL 7, cost 5000): The inevitable response to psi-detectors and psi-scanners, the psi-mask uses a neural interference circuit to emit a constant drone of psionic "noise," concealing the psion's presence. It foils psi-scanners (see above), imposing a +3 step penalty on the opposing operator's skill check.

It is less effective against psi-detectors, which sense psionic activity—considerably more difficult to conceal. The penalty incurred against the psi-detector is based on which psionic skill is in use:

Broad Skill	Penalty
Biokinesis	+2
ESP	+2
Telekinesis	+1
Telepathy	+1

These devices are generally illegal in societies that don't entirely trust psions. Cultures at higher PC stages value psions' right to privacy as much as non-psions' and impose no restrictions on availability.

Artificial-Psi Devices

Psi-deck (PL 6, cost special): As human scientists began to decipher the secrets of psionic ability, military agencies around the globe began work on "artificial psionics" projects. Psi-decks are the dubious result of these experiments. In conjunction with an NIJack (see *Chapter 15: Cybertech* in the *Player's Handbook*), these computers allow users to send and receive neural signals to and from peripheral devices.

The earliest models could duplicate only one of the four psionic broad skills, depending on the connected peripheral. In addition to being inefficient, they were bulky and annoyingly delicate. But as technology improved, electronics wizards reinvented the psi-deck, with more impressive results. By the mid-23rd century, psi-helmets and psi-gauntlets had replaced the massive machines of bygone days. These devices can simulate not only a psionic broad skill, but a specialty skill as well. After several successful demonstrations in mercenary operations, governments without dedicated psionic operatives took notice.

Psi-decks provide a user with a single psionic broad skill, at a cost of \$1500 × the skill point cost. Psi-helmets and psi-gauntlets improve on decks both in cost and effectiveness, providing a

psionic broad skill and a single related specialty skill, at a cost of \$2500 × the skill point cost of the specialty skill.

Psi-grenade (PL 8): Artificial-psi technology has created weapons able to deliver psionic attacks even when no Mind-walker is available. The most common are psi-grenades, which generate potent bursts of artificial psionic energy, similar to the effect of Telepathy-*mind blast*.

Psi-Grenade

Availability/Cost: Military/\$800
 Mass/Length: 1.5 kg/35 cm
 Payload: Psionic energy
 Type/Firepower: Special
 Damage: d6+2s/d4+2s/d4+1s
 Area of Effect: 2m/4m/6m

Telepathy-*mind shield* protects a character against the psi-grenade's attack in the same way it protects against the *mind blast* skill.

Supporting Cast

Heroes in psionic campaigns certainly aren't the only creatures with powerful mental abilities. In every kind of campaign, there will be psionic characters who are as powerful as the heroes and who may not share their goals—or are decidedly opposed. The following are sample characters designed for campaigns of various tones and PC ratings. The Gamemaster should feel free to modify them as needed.

"Mister Sandman" Vigilante

Level 10 human Free Agent talent

STR	7 (0)	INT	11 (+1)
DEX	13 (+3)	WIL	10 (0)
CON	9	PER	10

Durability: 9/9/5/5
 Action check: 14+/13/6/3
 Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4
 #Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2
 Last resorts: 1
 Psionic energy points: 5
 Perks: Good Luck, Reflexes
 Flaws: Code of Honor, Powerful
 Enemy (secret societies)

Attacks

Unarmed—defensive
 9/4/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O
.32 revolver
 16/8/4 d4w/d6w/d4m HI/O

Defenses

Leather Coat:
 d6-3 (LI), d4-3 (HI), d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [7]—*climb* [8]; Unarmed [7]—*brawl* [9]; Acrobatics [13]—*daredevil* [14], *defensive* [15]; Modern [13]—*pistol* [16]; Stealth [13]—*shadow* [14], *sneak* [15]; Vehicle Op [13]; Stamina [9]—*endurance* [10]; Knowledge [11]—*deduce* [13], *first aid* [12]; Security [11]; Awareness [10]—*intuition* [11], *perception* [12]; Street [10]—*criminal* [13]; Interaction [10]—*intimidate* [12]; Telepathy [10]—*suggest* [12], *tire* [14].

Rank Benefits:

Defensive martial arts—block
Pistol—quick draw

Gear

.32 revolver, leather coat, mask

The black-garbed, masked vigilante known as "Mister Sandman"—so named for a mysterious ability to cause his foes to drift off to sleep—is an enigma in his motivations, his methods, and his identity. (Even his gender isn't certain.) First described by a girl rescued from a mob kidnapping, he was dismissed as a fantasy—until he reappeared a few months later. This time he presented evidence that a famous stage magician was planting posthypnotic suggestions in the minds of her audiences. Though the authorities claim that Mister Sandman was a mass hallucination, the

witnesses stick to their stories.

Mister Sandman's activities seem to target individuals or organizations with possible ties to a secret society known as the Order of the Hermetic Star, alleged to be a group of mystics engaged in a variety of criminal and subversive activities. Mister Sandman appears to have some inside information about the group, perhaps a personal grudge—even though the Order is thought to be an urban legend. Whatever the truth may be, the chief of detectives is a believer; he's received highly accurate tips—though he firmly denies finding them on his bedside table in the middle of the night.

Mister Sandman is geared toward realistic campaigns, an unaffiliated figure in the shadow wars between psionic secret societies. But with a little work this character could be adapted to a heroic campaign (such as a lone terrorist fighting anti-psi extremists) or a superheroic campaign (perhaps exposing a conspiracy within the Psi Force).

Commander Cole Tipton Contract Psi-Hunter

Level 15 human Combat Spec

STR 11 (+1) INT 11 (+1)
 DEX 10 (0) WIL 9 (+1)*
 CON 10 PER 9

Durability: 10/10/5/5

Action check: 14+/13/6/3

Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4

#Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2

Last resorts: 1

Perks: Danger Sense, Fists of Iron, Reputation

Flaws: Obsessed, Powerful

Enemy (psi community)

Attacks

Unarmed—power
 14/7/3 d6+2s/d6+4s/d4+2w LI/O
11mm ch pistol
 13/6/3 d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m HI/O

11mm ch rifle

12/6/3 d6+1w/d6+3w/d6+1m HI/O

9mm ch SMG

13/6/3 d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m HI/O

Concussion grenade

12/6/3 d6+2s/d4w/d4+1w LI/O

Stun grenade

12/6/3 d6s/d8s/d8+2s En/O

Defenses

CF long coat:

d4 (LI), d4 (HI), d6-2 (En)

Skills

Armor Operation [11]; Athletics [11]—*throw* [12]; Melee [11]; Unarmed [11]—*power* [14]; Acrobatics [10]—*defensive* [13]; Modern [10]—*pistol* [13], *rifle* [12], *SMG* [13]; Stealth [10]; Vehicle Op [10]; Movement [10]; Stamina [10]—*endurance* [12]; Survival [10]—*training* [12]; Demolitions [11]; Knowledge [11]—*computer operation* [12], *first aid* [12], *psionics* [12]; Law [11]; Security [11]—*protocols* [12]; System Operation [11]—*sensors* [12]; Tactics [11]—*infantry* [14]; Awareness [9]—*perception* [11]; Resolve [9]—*mental* [13]; Street Smart [9]—*criminal* [11], *knowledge* [11]; Deception [9]—*bluff* [10]; Interaction [9]—*bargain* [11], *intimidate* [13]; Leadership [9]—*command* [10].

Rank Benefits:

Pistol—quick draw

SMG—rock-n-roll

**Mental resolve*—resistance modifier

Gear

11mm charge pistol, 11mm charge rifle, 9mm charge SMG, CF long coat, concussion grenades, stun grenades, protective goggles

Commander Cole Tipton is as rabidly anti-psi as they come. A former special-forces operative captured during a mission, he was "interrogated" by an enemy telepath, and his knowledge used to ambush his unit as they prepared for evacuation. Though Tipton escaped, his troops had

already been killed—and he blames psions. Now he's a bounty hunter who specializes in locating and capturing rogue psions, then selling them to the highest bidder.

Tipton is an athletic human male, just under 6' tall, with close-cropped gray hair. With years of experience hunting rogue psions, he has become quite effective at hiding his true thoughts. Even under stress, his calm exterior disguises a burning hatred. Yet Tipton goes out of his way not to kill his psion targets, though he has reportedly left a few to grim fates. He runs his anti-psi "bounty squad" with military ruthlessness, but the most severe punishment he inflicts on his troops is canceling their contracts.

Tipton's team roster changes frequently; surprisingly, it includes at least one psionic talent—used mostly for identifying targets. Though this figure makes an excellent "bogyman" for psionic heroes, non-psions might wish to join one of Tipton's teams, earning large paychecks to hunt sentient prey. Someone might even want to play the team psion, though that hero would be firmly under Tipton's thumb.

Tipton and his bounty squad are probably best used in a heroic campaign. He can be adapted to a starfaring setting by adding Armor Operation–powered armor and gearing his weaponry toward a higher Progress Level. He will also tend to use anti-psi technology rather than relying on speed and determination.

**Ona jil Tiifri
 Psi Instructor**

Level 13 fraal Diplomat
 (Mindwalker)

STR 4 (-2) INT 15 (+3)
 DEX 4 (-2) WIL 16 (+4)*
 CON 6 PER 15

Durability: 6/6/3/3
 Action check: 11+/10/5/2

Move: sprint 8, run 6, walk 2
 #Actions: 2
 Reaction score: Marginal/1
 Last resorts: 4
 Psionic energy points: 16
 Perks: Celebrity, Concentration,
 Sanctuary-Taught
 Flaws: Delicate, Fragile,
 Obsessed

Attacks

Unarmed
 2/1/0 d4-2s/d4-1s/d4s LI/O

Defenses

None (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Vehicle Op [4]; Knowledge [15]—*computer operations* [16], *deduce* [17], *psionics* [18]; Life Science [15]—*psionics* [16]; Medical [15]—*psychology* [17]; Awareness [16]; Resolve [16]—*mental* [20]; Teach [16]—*Mindwalker* [22]; Culture [15]; Interaction [15]—*interview* [16]; Telekinesis [16]—*kinetic shield* [18], *photokinetics* [19]; Telepathy [15]—*contact* [19], *illusion* [18], *mind block* [17], *mind shield* [23].

Rank Benefits:

**Mental resolve*—resistance modifier
Contact—language
Illusion—vanish
Mind shield—parry, defend

Gear

Simple clothing, personal computer, sample case

Ona jil Tiifri is one of four psionics instructors at one of the fraal sanctuaries. It is his task to educate nonfraal in the use of their nascent psionic abilities. This is his fifth assignment to a sanctuary, and his record is exemplary. Many of Ona's students have become formidable Mindwalkers, especially fraal he taught before he began visiting sanctuaries. His students have been known to follow him from world to world and account for a significant portion of his staff.

Rather unremarkable physically, Ona is unusual only in that he appears even older than he actually is, with deep lines around his eyes and a deliberate, painful gait. He wears unadorned clothing in drab colors, contributing to his decrepit appearance.

Ona is gradually becoming an embarrassment to the fraal sanctuaries, however. Perhaps because of his great age, he is growing more and more intolerant of non-psions: "Why should Mindwalkers follow the rules of 'Matterwalkers'? Our needs are different, our limitations are different—our lives are different!" Ona's extreme views are creeping into his teachings, and many of his students are becoming devotees of this cult of personality.

The fraal are concerned that Ona's students might misunderstand his message—or worse, be guided by it—and one day set in motion a revolution to "free Mindwalkers from Matterwalker limitations." If violence broke out, the results would be terrible—not to mention the backlash. The fraal are debating the meaning of their precognitive visions on the subject, uncertain whether withdrawing Ona from active teaching would prevent the future they see or precipitate it.

Ona is best used in heroic campaigns where psionic abilities are well accepted. He is unsuited to realistic settings unless the arrival of the fraal is imminent. In superheroic campaigns, turn up the power by making him considerably more ancient, perhaps with his tour of worlds nearly done—and his army of devoted followers ready to strike.

Ivar Morten "Psi Champion"

Level 10 human Mindwalker
STR 10 (0) INT 10 (0)
DEX 10 (0) WIL 12* (+1)
CON 11 PER 8

Durability: 11/11/6/6
Action check: 12+/11/5/2
Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4
#Actions: 2
Reaction score: Ordinary/2
Last resorts: 1
Psionic energy points: 12
Perks: *Heightened Ability,
Powerful Ally (the Order), Alien
Artifact (psi-sword)
Flaws: Code of Honor

Attacks

Unarmed
12/6/3 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

Psi-sword
13/6/3 d4w/d6+1w/d6+3w LI/O
(See "Psionic Artifacts" below
for details of psi-swords.)

Defenses

CF softsuit:
d6 (LI), d6 (HI), d6-1 (En)

Skills

Armor Operation [10]; Athletics [10];
Melee [10]-*blade* [13]; Unarmed
[10]-*brawl* [12]; Acrobatics [10]-
dodge [12]; Vehicle Operation [10];
Stamina [11]-*endurance* [12];
Knowledge [10]-*computer opera-*
tion [11], *first aid* [12]; System
Operation [10]; Awareness [12]-
intuition [14]; Creativity [12]-*callig-*
raphy [15]; Resolve [12]-*mental* [13];
Culture [8]; Interaction [8];
Leadership [8]; ESP [10]-*battle*
mind [12], *sensitivity* [12];
Telekinesis [12]-*levitation* [13].

Gear

Tunic, robes, psi-sword, CF
softsuit, prayer book, calligraphy
materials and paper

Ivar Morten is one of perhaps a
thousand members of the Order of
the Quiet Mind, informally known
as "psi champions." These are
psionic warriors and mystics dedi-

cated to enforcing peace through-
out the stars. Ivar is a "questing
knight," charged with locating
artifacts of the "Lost Ones" and
bringing them back to the Order.

Ivar is a large man, his head
shaven except for a single long
braid, signifying his quest. He is
not allowed to cut it until he
returns. Though trained for com-
bat, he tends to solve problems
through tactics, where possible.
During periods of inactivity—such
as between starfalls—he prac-
tices swordplay as well as callig-
raphy, which he claims focuses
his mind. In his interactions with
others, Ivar looks for two things:
psions and psionic artifacts. If he
finds neither, he has no use for
that contact. But if someone he
meets is psionic or has a psionic
artifact, he is unrelenting in his
quest to bring the person back to
the Order—as member or as
prize. He has visited half a dozen
systems, but has only managed to
locate one item: a psi-sword.
Though he is under oath to return
with the sword immediately, he
believes that it is psionically
guiding him toward a cache of
more such weapons. Should he be
wrong, his order will be dis-
pleased (at the very least), and
that thought gnaws at his mind.

Psi champions best fit into
superheroic campaigns, where
organized groups of psions wan-
dering among the stars is not so
unusual, but they could also fit
into a heroic campaign with a
high level of technology. In a
realistic campaign, Ivar and the
rest of his Order would most like-
ly be a secret society consisting
of Combat Specs instead of
Mindwalkers, though they would
still be psionic talents.

"Bad Brain Brian" Carrier

Level 3 human Diplomat
(Free Agent) talent
STR 6 (-1) INT 10 (0)
DEX 8 (0) WIL 12 (+1)
CON 11 PER 13

Durability: 11/11/6/6
Action check: 11+/10/5/2
Move: sprint 14, run 10, walk 4
#Actions: 2
Reaction score: Ordinary/2
Last resorts: 3
Psionic energy points: 6
Perks: Good Luck, Great Looks
Flaws: Neural Disease, Wild
Talent

Attacks

Unarmed
3/1/0 d4-1s/d4s/d4+1s LI/O

Defenses

none

Skills

Athletics [6]; Stealth [8]-*hide* [9];
Vehicle Op [8]; Stamina [11];
Knowledge [10]-*computer opera-*
tion [11], *language: native* [13],
language: alien [12]; Law [10]-
alien [11]; Administration [12];
Awareness [12]; Culture [13]-
diplomacy [15], *etiquette* [14];
Deception [13]; Interaction
[13]-*bargain* [14]; Telepathy
[13]-*contact* [17], *mind blast* [14].

Rank Benefits:

Contact-language

Gear

Laptop computer, cell phone

"Bad Brain Brian" is the
media's slang term for the pri-
mary carrier of Neural Corrup-
tion Syndrome (NCS), much as
"Typhoid Mary" was applied to
the woman who caused repeated
outbreaks of typhoid fever on
Earth in the early 20th century.
The name, however, is a fanciful
fiction; no one knows who the
carrier is, let alone whether or
not his name really is Brian. (For
more information on NCS, see
"Psionic Phenomena" below.)

Most people have been
misled by this popular name
and would be surprised to know
that "Bad Brain Brian" is actu-
ally a woman. Rita Cuellar is a
translator for a diplomatic corps
that primarily deals with alien

cultures. Having acquired NCS from an alien servant, she carried it back to her embassy, where it quickly spread among the psionic personnel. After the second death, the embassy's medical staff quarantined the affected psions—except Rita, who had apparently recovered. She was given a clean bill of health by an inexperienced physician and reassigned to another embassy while the pathologists tried to determine what was going on.

When psions at her new assignment also contracted the disease, Rita cursed her luck for stumbling into another outbreak of what appeared to be an epidemic. She moved again, and NCS struck again. After the third such occurrence, she began to suspect that she was "Brian." But public outrage convinced her not to turn herself in to the authorities. Instead, she changed her name and resolved never to use her psionic abilities again. So far, this tactic has worked, though she accidentally used *mind blast* during a robbery a short time earlier. The lack of ill effects—so far—has begun to convince her that she is either not the carrier or has been miraculously cured. Rita is now considering trying her other psionic abilities to see if anyone will contract NCS as a result.

"Bad Brain Brian" fits best into campaigns of a heroic or superheroic tone. In the former, a society that is still growing accustomed to the idea of psionic powers is likely to be split in its reactions: The psionically gifted are desperate to stem the disease's spread, while those who are uncomfortable with psions might secretly welcome its "cleansing" effect. Cultures in superheroic campaigns with fully integrated psions will probably consider the spread of NCS a threat to society as a whole and devote

considerable resources to finding the "bad brain." In a realistic setting, where psions are virtually unknown and alien contact has not officially occurred, this character could instead deal with humans of other nations. Psions that she accidentally contacts and infects will be interested in stopping her, though the nickname will be whispered among the secret societies rather than broadcast on the newsnets.

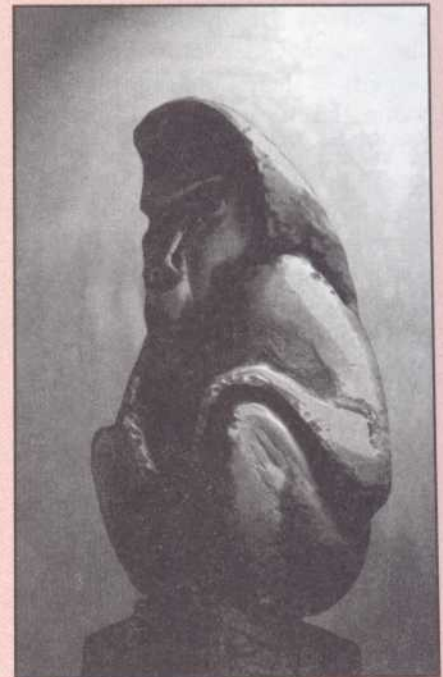
CREATURES

Nothing limits psionics use to sentient beings. Encountering a psionic animal can really shake heroes up, or even introduce a new storyline. Is the creature a vicious predator or an endangered species struggling to survive? Is there interstellar trade (legal or not) in the beast? Do sentient beings use it as a companion or even an industrial worker?

Each of these creatures includes a description and ecological data. Some are not native to Earth as written, but Gamemasters can ignore or alter that information to present interesting psionic challenges to their players, whatever the heroes' location.

Shaper Monkey

As research reveals more and more about psionic ability in humans, the same technology has detected some animal psions. One such is the shaper monkey, an Earth simian previously unknown to science due to its ability to morph its own body into innocuous, misleading forms. Much like the color-changing abilities of squid and octopi, this is a defense against predators.



Shaper Monkey Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 1
GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P3/H2
Biome: Tropical forest/jungle
Encounter Chance: Possible
Group Size: 4-7 (d4+3)
Organization: Troop
Niche: Small herbivore
Intelligence: High-order animal

Description: Related to the langur, or leaf monkey, the shaper monkey possesses dark "eyebrows," a long tail, and slender hands; details of their other physical characteristics (such as fur color) are difficult to determine due to their shifting appearance. Scientists studying shaper "families," however, suspect that family units have a common coloration.

Encounter: Like most wild monkeys, shapers are content to graze on leaves, nuts, and the occasional grub. But because they can change shape, their reaction to a predator is not to flee but to become something less appetizing—usually a rock. The shaper monkey has such

control over its biokinetic ability that can actually increase the density of its skin to simulate stone, though it retains its internal organs and even continues to breathe, after a fashion. (Individuals forced to assume this form for extended periods—such as those that have been collected by scientists for study—appear to enter a kind of hibernation, or perhaps a coma state. Scientists have been unable to stimulate the monkeys into resuming their normal form.)

Since scientists began studying them, shaper monkeys have become less fearful of contact with humans. Thus, encounters have become more frequent outside the observation areas. Like

Shaper Monkey Game Data

STR 8 (d6+5) INT 4 (Animal
10 or d4+8)
DEX 12 (d4+10) WIL8 (d6+5)
CON10 (d4+8) PER4 (Animal
10 or d4+8)
Durability: 10/10/5/5
Action check: 15+/14/7/3
Move: Run 28, walk 8
#Actions: 2
Reaction score: Ordinary/2
Psionic energy points: 8

Attacks

Bite 13/6/3 d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w LI/O

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs.
melee attacks
+1 resistance modifier vs.
ranged attacks
Armor:
d4-1 (LI), none (HI), d4-2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]-climb [14];
Acrobatics [12]; Stealth [12]-
hide [18]; Stamina [10]-
endurance [12]; Awareness [8]-
intuition [14], perception [16];
Resolve [8]; Biokinesis [10]-
morph [16].

other, non-psionic breeds of monkeys, shapers have begun to appear on the outskirts of human settlements—though they still quickly disappear if pursued. This growing fearlessness toward humans has led to some problems; the shapers are natural thieves who steal food, then vanish utterly into the landscape. Most “outside” encounters with shaper monkeys are brief glimpses of an animal snatching something from a table and bounding off. In areas where shapers are particularly numerous, humans may pursue one until it changes shape, then waste hours trying to determine which rock or tree branch it is—only to discover that the monkey’s family has cleaned them out while their backs were turned.

Habitat/Society: Shaper monkeys are at home in the tropical forests of southeast Asia and so far have not appeared—at least not in their natural form—anywhere else. But their growing comfort with humans and increased appearance in settled areas has sparked debate among scientists and naturalists. It is unclear whether human interference accidentally prompted the monkeys to abandon their natural habitat, or whether they have always been among humans, perhaps disguised as part of the urban landscape. Only more research can determine for certain, but if research is the cause of the monkeys’ urbanization, it can only add to the problem.

Harbinger Lizard

Harbinger lizards are reptilian scavengers that display an uncanny foreknowledge of the time and place of their next meal. Zoologists working in cooperation with psionic researchers have discovered that the vermin have an innate precognitive ability, which appears to be limited to locating the

dead and dying. Seeing a harbinger lizard is considered bad luck, and in many cultures they are exterminated with almost paranoid fervor. Originally found only in the tropical regions of their home planet, they are now showing up on other worlds. Researchers believe this is a result of the scavengers blindly boarding transports in search of meals, then becoming trapped aboard a vessel when it lifted off. Assuming it wasn’t a coming shipboard disaster that attracted them, the lizards would wander off when the transport arrived at its next port of call.

Harbinger Lizard Ecological Data

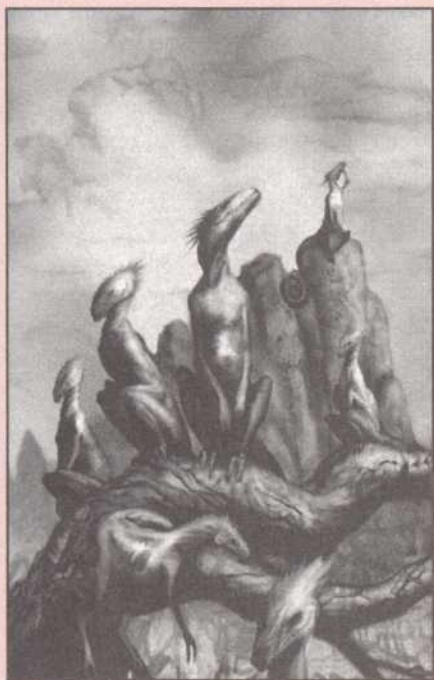
Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 1
GRAPH: G2/R2/A2/P2/H3
Biome: Jungle/desert
Encounter Chance: Possible
Group Size: 13-18 (d6+12)
Organization: Clutch
Niche: Small scavenger
Intelligence: Low-order animal

Description: Resembling geckos, harbinger lizards come in two varieties: the dark green, sucker-toed jungle dweller, and the brownish-gray desert dweller. Virtually silent, they emit only a low squeak when frightened. An average harbinger lizard measures between 20 and 50 centimeters in length and weighs 2-5 kilograms.

Encounter: Clutches of harbinger lizards often arrive at the scene of a battle or tragedy several minutes before anything has actually happened—a sure portent of disaster. Once “on location” they remain perfectly still, watching and waiting with unnerving, unblinking stares. As soon as a creature sustains mortal damage, or wound damage greater than half its

total, the lizards move in, attempting to devour as much of it—dead or not—as they can before being chased off by the victim, its companions, or larger scavengers. Someone who has survived a night fending off the implacable vermin often develops related mental disorders, such as phobias or psychotic rages.

Habitat/Society: Harbinger lizards cluster in roving clutches of at least a dozen animals, though no one has ever reported a group of more than thirty. This tendency, combined with their vulnerability to predators, leads animal behaviorists and psionic researchers to speculate that each lizard knows at least one of its clutch-mates is likely to become the clutch's next feast. A byproduct of their vulnerability to predators is that they reproduce very swiftly, which is proving to be a health hazard where they have been accidentally relocated beyond the reach of their natural enemies—usually birds of prey. The proliferation of harbinger lizards, along with the diseases carried by their bites, have on two occasions triggered lethal plagues, a darkly ironic corroboration of their precognitive abilities.



Ice-Eater

The solitary ice-eater is a menacing arctic carnivore named after its method of feeding. It lures a large creature away from heat and light sources, immobilizes it cryokinetically, then drags the resultant ice block back to its lair. Over the next several weeks, the ice-eater devours the perfectly preserved victim a little at a time, chiseling holes in the ice with its bony proboscis and extracting the meat within.

Ice-Eater Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 2
GRAPH: G2/R1/A2/P2/H1
Biome: Arctic terrain
Encounter Chance: Slim
Group Size: 1–2
Organization: Solitary
Niche: Large carnivore
Intelligence: High-order animal

Description: The ice-eater is a frosty white, werenlike creature covered in a thick coat of fur. Its distinguishing characteristic is an elongated, bony nose nearly a foot long and ending in a hard, sharp spike. Averaging 3 meters in height and 300 kilograms in weight, these solitary hunters blend easily into the snow and ice of their native habitat.

Encounter: It is said that the only people ever to see ice-eaters are their victims—but even that seems unlikely. In fact, no living specimen has been observed, though several ice-eater carcasses have been discovered over the years. Their unique hunting style has been inferred from examining the remains of their meals, and through accounts of the aboriginal hunter-gatherers who share the frozen wastes with them.

Ice-eaters have learned to mimic the sound of the herd beasts aborigines depend on, disguising their approach. Once

Harbinger Lizard Game Data

STR 4 (d4+2) INT 2 (Animal 6
or d6+3)
DEX 14 (d4+12) WIL 6 (d4+4)
CON 6 (d4+4) PER 1 (Animal 4
or d4+2)

Durability: 6/6/3/3
Action check: 12+/11/5/2
Move: Run 12, walk 4
#Actions: 2
Reaction score: Marginal/1
Psionic energy points: 3

Attacks

Bite 9/4/2 d4–1s/d4s/d4–1w LI/O
Disease special (see below)

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs.
ranged attacks
Armor: d4–1 (LI), d4–3 (HI), d4–2 (En)

Skills

Athletics [4]–climb [12]; Acrobatics [14]–dodge [18]; Stealth [14]–shadow [18]; Movement [6]–race [10]; Awareness [6]–perception [9]; ESP [2]–precognition [8].

The mouths of harbinger lizards are quite unsanitary, given their indifference toward the quality of a meal. There is a chance that the vermin's bite may carry an infectious disease (particularly if it has been feasting on plague victims). Treat this as an Ordinary disease with a Marginal incubation period. (See "Hazards" in Chapter 3: Gamemasters in Action in the Gamemaster Guide.)

within earshot of its intended prey, an ice-eater begins emitting the plaintive lowing that usually signifies that an immature member of the herd is in distress. When another member of the herd—or perhaps the herder—moves to investigate, the hidden ice-eater employs its cryokinetic ability to freeze the prey solid. If



more than one creature investigates, the ice-eater focuses on just one. To external observers, a victim moves away from the heat and light, then vanishes, leaving behind at best a patchy trail of footprints ending in characteristic drag marks.

The aborigines know from experience that tracking the ice-eater back to its lair is suicidal. Even if would-be rescuers manage to overcome the beast, the quest is fruitless: Its prey has already frozen to death. In fact, the aborigines speak of foolish activities as "feeding the ice."

Habitat/Society: Ice-eaters are fiercely solitary, judging from the tracks that have been found and the empty lairs that have been examined. The few dead ice-eaters discovered over the years were probably the result of chance encounters—or perhaps the aftermath of mating season. It is interesting to note that ice-eaters are not cannibals; they do not treat their own dead as they do other creatures, implying that they may be more intelligent than previously believed.

Sen Miil

Though fraal city-ships have tightly controlled environments,

the occasional pest manages to slip through. One of these is the *sen miil*, a flying parasite reminiscent of the Earth mosquito. Unlike that insect, however, the *sen miil* feeds off psionic energy. Since the fraal have begun visiting Earth, the *sen miil* have begun afflicting human psions as well.

Description: *Sen miil* are tiny insects, rarely more than 2 centimeters long, and so light as to be virtually undetectable by their weight alone. Possessing four

Ice-Eater Game Data

STR 13 (2d4+8) INT 4 (Animal 8
or d6+5)
DEX 8 (d8+4) WIL 10 (d4+8)
CON 14 (d8+10) PER 6 (Animal 9
or d8+5)

Durability: 14/14/7/7
Action Check: 14+/13/6/3
Move: Run 12, walk 4
#Actions: 3
Reaction Score: Good/3
Psionic Energy Points: 10

Attacks

Claws 16/8/4 d4w/d6w/d4m
LI/O
Spike 14/7/3
d6w/d6+1w/d4+1m LI/O
cryokinetics 18/9/4
d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w En/O

Rank Benefits

Telekinesis—cryokinetics:
encasement, suspension

Defenses

+2 resistance modifier vs.
melee attacks
+2 resistance modifier vs.
ranged attacks
Armor: d4+1 (LI), d4 (HI), d4 (En)

Skills

Athletics [13]—climb [14];
Stealth [8]—hide [14]; Stamina
[14]—endurance [20]; Awareness
[10]—perception [14]; Resolve
[12]; Telekinesis [10]—cryokinetics [19].

Sen Miil Ecological Data

Biochemistry: Series I
Environment: Class 1
GRAPH: G1/R1/A2/P3/H2
Biome: Any except arctic
Encounter Chance: Unlikely
Group Size: 1–4 (d4)
Organization: Nest
Niche: Small insect
Intelligence: None

legs, two nearly vestigial forelimbs, and long, delicate wings, *sen miil* characteristically fly in a erratic pattern. Unfortunately for their hapless victims, they are also extremely quiet.

Encounter: *Sen miil* are drawn to psionic energy. They are quite at home on the city-ships, much to the annoyance of the fraal, who spend considerable effort year after year in exterminating them. But outside the ships, the insects gravitate to large concentrations of sentient beings: arenas, markets, beaches, and so on. They flit through the crowds in search of any creatures with psionic energy (aside from other *sen miil*).

When a *sen miil* finds a psionic creature, it alights, attaching its legs to the victim, then begins to rub its forelimbs across the creature's skin. This excites neurons that form psionic pathways; the victim begins "bleeding" psionic energy, which the *sen miil* absorbs. Fortunately, a single *sen miil* can absorb no more than 1 psionic energy point every 12 hours. But where there is one, others will inevitably arrive. Fraal in poorly screened areas have awoken from a night's sleep to discover their psionic energy completely drained. But since *sen miil* do not swarm, such problems rarely occur. As well, the grip of a clinging *sen miil* produces an uncomfortable tingle, which while not painful, usually alerts the psion.

Habitat/Society: *Sen miil* can survive in nearly any climate,

creator (which could explain the phenomenon of bilocation, in which one person appears simultaneously in two different places). The more complex the thought-form, the greater the benefit to its creator.

A static message can convey a warning or instructions to another sentient being; the message can be in any form recognizable to both creator and recipient (spoken or written words). It can transmit up to 10 words for each 1 point of the creator's Intelligence score.

Remote percipient thought-forms effectively grant the creator both ESP—*clairaudience* and *clairvoyance*, but with a restriction: The information gathered is not available to the creator until the thought-form returns, after a preset duration. The thought-form appears as a duplicate of the creator (or at least, his or her self-image), and while it is separated it can react to external stimuli, such as a psion attempting to speak with it. If the creator has special instructions for such situations (such as avoiding contact

or returning to the creator), these must be specified at the time of creation.

A *tulpa* is a more complex thought-form, an independent entity designed to give its creator someone with whom to interact and share ideas. A tulpa provides a different perspective, watches the creator's back, guards him or her during sleep, and so on. It can take nearly any form that pleases its creator, though if the creation process is flawed, the tulpa might decide to alter its form. Poorly created tulpas can actually become physical and prove troublesome, even menacing, to their creators. Thus, only the most adept psions normally attempt this.

Once a thought-form has been created, it immediately sets about its appointed task—only psionic or supernatural barriers will impede it. None of these creations have a physical form, and they are visible only to the creator, though ESP—*sensitivity* or the Psionic Awareness perk can reveal the thought-form's presence (and appearance, in the case of ESP). The only possible interaction with them is psionic (or perhaps magic, if the campaign includes the optional FX rules).

Psi and the Supernatural

In certain situations, such as the DARK•MATTER campaign setting or a campaign that uses the optional FX rules, psionics and the supernatural seem to overlap. Magic can duplicate psi effects, and certain occult phenomena can be detected or influenced by psionic ability.

It's up to the Gamemaster to decide whether psionics has any effect on the supernatural—or vice versa. But the following rules of thumb can help when such interactions arise. Most importantly, psi should affect the supernatural when it is dramatically and logically appropriate.

- Using Telepathy or Telekinesis skills against supernatural entities should carry at least a +1 step penalty, to reflect the difficulty of affecting quasi-real manifestations. ESP use, on the other hand, does not suffer a penalty because it is largely perception. In fact, some supernatural phenomena might even confer a bonus on the use of ESP skills.
- Telepathy can contact the minds of supernatural creatures, and Telekinesis can manipulate physical objects of a supernatural origin. A supernatural creature is considered to have a mind or physical form if its game data includes the appropriate Ability scores. Examples of supernatural creatures that are not physical are noncorporeal manifestations or "programmed" hauntings in which the creature appears, executes a series of actions, and then vanishes, without reacting to outside stimuli in any way.
- Psionic skills will not create sensations that supernatural creatures cannot ordinarily experience. For example, Telepathy—*illusion* will most likely not fool a spirit, and Telepathy—*tire* will not make a demon sleepy. The Gamemaster should use judgement about what sensations supernatural creatures can experience; it may be helpful to make a short list of what a given creature specifically cannot experience. (See *Chapter Eight: Xenofoms* in the DARK•MATTER campaign setting for more information about supernatural beings.)
- Psionic skills cannot reveal the nature, origin, organization, or inner workings of the supernatural, any more than they can reveal such information about psionics itself. Reading a demon's mind—if that were possible—will not explain where it came from, how it arrived, or its connection to the infernal or divine. It will reveal only what the demon believes.

Creating a Thought-Form

Some thought-forms are created by occultists through meditation and ritual, and some arise spontaneously from ordinary people in times of extreme stress, but they can also be created by psions skilled in ESP. The process requires a complex skill check using only the ESP broad skill. ESP specialty skills are of no use; thought-forms are an exercise in mental discipline rather than skill.

The psion makes a skill check once per day; the number of successes required depends upon the intended function of the thought-form. A static message

Supernatural Contact

Each character should make a *Resolve-mental resolve* skill check for each occurrence of a supernatural manifestation. (See "Mental Resolve" in *Chapter 4: Skills in the Player's Handbook*.) If the Gamemaster feels it is appropriate, a psion may use *Telepathy-mind shield* to give a step bonus to this check. On an Ordinary result, the bonus is -1, on a Good result it is -2, and on an Amazing result, it is -3.

Situation Modifiers

Effect	Modifier
Protective (prevents harm)	-2
Beneficial (aids in some fashion)	-1
Not immediately apparent (only seems "spooky")	0
Violent (causes extreme physical motion)	+1
Menacing (perception of physical danger)	+1
Harmful (inflicts wound damage)	+2
Deadly (inflicts mortal damage)	+3

However, in addition to the normal penalties, Failure results accumulate, much like successes during complex skill checks. The result depends on the tactic used by the manifestation (revelation of events, direct communication, or fear). The effects persist until the character is separated from the source of the contact—leaving the haunted house, for example. Each Amazing success on a *Resolve-mental resolve* check restores a character's confidence, reducing the number of accumulated failures by two.

Supernatural Contact Results

Number of Failures	Result		
	Revelation	Communication	Fear
1			Anxiety
2		Anxiety	Dread
3	Anxiety	Anxiety	Hysteria
4	Anxiety	Dread	Panic
5	Dread	Dread	Terror
6	Dread	Hysteria	Terror

Accumulated failures past the sixth produce the last-noted result.

Anxiety: The character feels nervous and edgy, suffering a +1 step penalty to subsequent *Resolve-mental resolve* skill checks until he or she leaves the area.

Dread: The character feels uncomfortable and helpless, losing 1 fatigue point.

Hysteria: "Fight or flight" reflexes take over. The character gains a -1 step bonus to action checks but loses 1 fatigue point for each action check.

Panic: The character flees immediately, attacking anyone who attempts to stop him or her. Efforts to calm the panicked character are at a +2 step penalty.

Terror: The character suffers d6+2s damage from extreme physical distress. Additional failures past this point cause the further loss of d6s damage per occurrence. Normal defenses do not prevent this damage.

requires only five successes; a remote percipient, nine; and a tulpa, twelve. To keep the game from drifting into numerical abstraction, a Gamemaster can use a simple tool called a *results ladder*. A results ladder focuses on actions rather than numbers, leaving the precise details to the Gamemaster. The results ladder for creating a thought-form is set out below. Note that failures also accumulate, with consequences detailed in the results ladder.

◆ **Example:** Simon of the Order of the Hermetic Star is creating a thought-form to monitor activity in a mysterious forest. After accumulating three Ordinary successes and no failures, Simon has achieved the first three results listed under "Remote Percipient." He has given it a form (himself as a younger man, clad in a dark robe and a tall pointed hat), spent some time focusing his psionic energy for the task, and established its mission. It will take another six successes (about a week) to complete the form's "programming" and dispatch it to the forest.

Psionic Vampires

Legends of vampires, in one form or another, exist in every culture. While some are obvious romantic fantasy, others suggest a psionic origin. "Psionic vampirism" can occur in any level of campaign, though in cultures that have yet to accept psionic ability, the phenomena are dismissed even if well documented.

In the *ALTERNITY* game, most so-called vampires are likely to be psionic individuals with the *Telepathy-drain* specialty skill, whose powers have become greatly exaggerated through rumor. However, a peculiar form of psionic disease, transmitted much like Neural Corruption Syndrome (see "Psionic Phenomena" below), has arisen in some psionic beings, mutating their telepathic ability into a terrible hunger.

Infected psions develop a variant form of Telepathy—*drain* called *leech*. (See the sidebar on page 85) This skill allows them to drain their victims of all bio-energy—but it also requires them to do so regularly or begin to waste away themselves.

Psychic vampires can never have a Strength or Constitution more than 4 points above the maximum for their species, regardless of how much bio-energy they steal. They also lose the stolen energy over time, at a rate of 1 point of Strength and Constitution every 24 hours. Like a victim, when a psychic vampire reaches 0 in either score, he or she must make a successful Resolve—*physical resolve* skill check or perish. This check is repeated every 8 hours until the vampire either succumbs or acquires enough bio-energy to bring the Ability score back above 0.

Some may find the notion of playing psychic vampires attractive. It's the Gamemaster's choice

whether or not to allow such heroes, but remember that even in societies that embrace the psionic members of their population, the use of *leech* is still considered murder. Vampires will be pursued and punished accordingly if caught.

PSIONIC PHENOMENA & ARTIFACTS

Unexplained events and mysterious items add a lot to a campaign's flavor. But the Gamemaster should make sure these elements are appropriate to the tone and the power level of his or her campaign. When creating new psionic phenomena and artifacts, keep a couple of "design specifications" in mind.

First, does the item fit the campaign model? If challenges involving it have to be adjusted to ensure interesting, balanced encounters, then it probably

doesn't belong. For example, an alien device that instantly translates thoughts into physical form is far too powerful unless it is artificially restricted; one that produces unlimited hot tea is too trivial and needs "powering up" to be at all interesting.

Second, does the item fit the needs of the campaign model? If the heroes ignore it, it's either insignificant in comparison with their other abilities, or they do not have enough information to comprehend or value its importance. For example, in a super-heroic campaign, a secluded pond that doubles the recovery rate of psionic energy might prompt heroes to duplicate its effects, thus rendering it redundant. But heroes in a realistic campaign would wish to maintain the secret of psionic ability—and the only psions are talents with low psionic energy point totals. They might instead be motivated to cover up any record of the pond's existence or effects. If the heroes have overcome

THOUGHT-FORM CREATION RESULTS LADDER

Number of Successes

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

Static Message

- 1 Conceive form
- 2 Gather energy
- 3 Establish purpose
- 4 Establish recipient
- 5 Form created

Remote Percipient

- 1 Conceive form
- 2 Gather energy
- 3 Establish purpose
- 4 Establish control
- 5 Establish location
- 6 Establish duration
- 7 Establish hazards
- 8 Establish return conditions
- 9 Duplicate created

Tulpa

- 1 Conceive form
- 2 Gather energy
- 3 Establish purpose
- 4 Establish restrictions
- 5 Establish control
- 6 Establish personality
- 7 Establish hazards
- 8 Establish enemies
- 9 Establish friends
- 10 Gather energy
- 11 Establish individuality
- 12 Tulpa created

Failures

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Static Message

- 1 Energy disperses
- 2 Form dissipates

Remote Percipient

- 1 Energy disperses
- 2 Purpose lost
- 3 Form dissipates

Tulpa

- 1 Energy disperses
- 2 Purpose lost
- 3 Personality warped
- 4 Some restrictions lost
- 5 Tulpa becomes physical

Tulpa

STR 0/8* (-2) INT 12 (+1)
DEX 0/8* (-2) WIL 10 (0)
CON 0/8* PER 8

Durability: none (8/8/4/4)* Action Check: 13+/12/6/3
Move: sprint 16, run 10, walk 4, #Actions: 2
 swim 2, fly 32 Reaction Score: Ordinary/2
Last Resorts: 1
Psionic Energy Points: 5

Attacks

Unarmed* 8/4/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

Defenses

None

Skills

Unarmed Attack [8]*; Stamina [8]*; Stealth [8]*; Knowledge [12];
Awareness [10]—intuition [12], perception [12]; Resolve [10]—mental
[12]; Interaction [8].

* While in physical form only.

During the creation process, a tulpa's creator can imbue it with a further 40 skill points' worth of Intelligence-, Will-, or Personality-based skills. These must be skills the creator already knows, and a tulpa's specialty skill rank can be no higher than its creator's. As an individual, however, the tulpa can learn other skills later. It can also improve existing scores by acquiring achievement points, just as heroes do. A tulpa is considered to have the same profession as its creator.

A tulpa that has accidentally become physical can be discerned by any method that detects invisible but real objects. It is subject to normal physical laws and can (and often does) instigate interaction of its own.

If a tulpa has become physical, or has otherwise become inconvenient or perhaps dangerous, its creator can disperse it by effectively reversing the creation process. This requires another complex skill check with twelve successes. (Reverse the order of results on the results ladder.) However, failures are cumulative with any failures accrued during creation, so a nonphysical tulpa may actually become physical during the attempt to destroy it! A physical tulpa being destroyed will make every effort to avoid this fate, which can result in violent conflicts between it and its creator. If the tulpa is physically destroyed in a fight, it dissipates immediately. If the creator is killed, the tulpa is free to do as it wishes.

many obstacles to find it in the first place, the players are likely to be disappointed by the "payoff."

Within these guidelines, the "flavor" of the phenomenon or artifact should match the setting. Such things in a realistic cam-

paign should be mysterious, something the heroes cannot understand in full—and probably never will. Items in heroic campaigns would also be enigmatic, though the heroes should be thinking "What can we do with this?" rather than "What is this?"

New Psionic Skill: Leech

PER, Cost 4

Extended duration.

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill is available only to psionic vampires.

This is a specialty skill of the Telepathy broad skill. The psychic vampire can drain Strength or Constitution points from another living being. The victim must be within 4 meters of the psychic vampire (range 1/2/4). Drained energy automatically transfers to the psychic vampire, and the victim can never recover the lost points through simple bed rest.

Though the victim is not restrained from fleeing or fighting, many psychic vampires also possess other Telepathy specialty skills to weaken the victim's ability to resist.

A psychic vampire attempting to use this ability makes a Telepathy—leech skill check, opposed by the victim's Constitution resistance modifier. The amount of bio-energy drained depends on the degree of success.

Result	Amount Drained
Ordinary	1 point STR or CON
Good	1 point STR + 1 point CON
Amazing	1 point STR + 1 point CON + 1 point STR or CON

When either the victim's Strength or Constitution reaches 0, the victim will die unless he or she can make a successful Resolve—physical resolve skill check, with a -1 step bonus for every 2 points remaining in the other Ability score. If the skill check is successful, the victim survives—but is now infected with the psionic disease. The victim is now a psychic vampire, with 1 rank in Telepathy—leech.

And in super-heroic campaigns, high-powered phenomena and artifacts should not derail the campaign. With a little thought about the players' likely reactions, a Gamemaster can gauge the effect of new phenomena and artifacts on his or her campaign and plan accordingly.

Psionic Phenomena

Psionic phenomena can be any observable event, including "Fortean" occurrences that defy scientific explanation, such as strange lights in the sky or the psi-storm described below. The following are ideas to help Gamemasters tailor psionic phenomena to their campaigns. Since these can include so many different manifestations, the descriptions are general.

Collective Psions

Certain non-psionic individuals, when within a specified distance of one another, gain psionic ability. Each knows what the others are thinking and can anticipate their actions.

The collective is constantly aware that if one member goes away, the rest will lose their psionic ability. The constant threat of being separated would be a continuing theme for a collective of psionic heroes. Certainly this changes the group dynamics, especially if one of its members is someone the rest don't particularly like or have difficulty understanding (such as an alien). Perhaps the heroes each use different powers corresponding to body parts—telekinesis for "arms," ESP for "eyes," telepathy for "mouth," and so on—but without the "brain," they are incapacitated even by non-psionic standards. Alternatively, the threat to the rest of the world of a *united* and hostile collective might motivate the heroes to work against its members.

There is a danger of unbalancing the campaign if each member of the "psionic gestalt" can wield the abilities they all have—though this could be offset by a single pool of psionic energy points from which they all draw. Adding new members might change the group's psionic ability, perhaps increasing a skill's effectiveness—or completely nullifying it.

Collective psions are best suited to realistic or heroic campaigns; at the superheroic level psionic power is already nearly "off the scale."

Neural Corruption Syndrome

As psionics become more widespread, so too do psionic ailments. Some are ordinary diseases that have unusual effects on psions, some are carried only by psions, and others can be contracted only by psions. The worst variety is one that is transmitted through mental contact, known as Neural Corruption Syndrome (NCS).

NCS is more like a computer virus than a biological one, in that it is spread by sharing biological information across synapses. Appearing as an aberration in electrochemical impulses, the information becomes imprinted on the new mind as a native "thought," which propagates it across other synapses. After spreading the electrochemical message, the infected brain cells die. For this reason, NCS is often known as the "bad idea," and someone with NCS infection a "bad brain." Those who are susceptible to contracting NCS are said to have "impure thoughts."

The vector is almost entirely psionic in nature. Short of receiving brain cells from an infected donor, the only way to "catch" NCS is to psionically contact an infected mind (using ESP—*empathy* or *mind reading*, or Telepathy), or

to have an infected psion enter one's mind using Telepathy.

Once NCS has been contracted, the victim must make a Constitution feat check with a +2 step penalty due to the disease's potency. The incubation period is 2d4 days (Ordinary). For more information on diseases, see "Hazards" in *Chapter 3: Gamemasters in Action* in the *Gamemaster Guide*. The effects of NCS are unique because of the way the disease devours brain cells but leaves the victim otherwise unaffected.

Ill characters suffer a +1 step penalty to all actions, rather than the normal +2 resulting from disease. Each day, the psion must make a Constitution feat check: Critical Failure or Failure, worsen to extremely ill; Ordinary or Good, no change; Amazing, the psion recovers.

Extremely ill NCS victims are almost completely incapacitated. In desperate situations, extremely ill psions may attempt a *Resolve-mental resolve* skill check to force themselves to carry on, but all actions receive a +3 step penalty. Each day, the afflicted psion must make a Constitution feat check: Critical Failure or Failure, worsen to terminally ill; Ordinary or Good, no change; Amazing, recover to ill.

Terminally ill NCS victims are mental vegetables, effectively comatose, though they can manage a few words of conversation with a successful *Resolve-mental resolve* skill check. Every 6 hours, the psion must attempt a Constitution feat check: Critical Failure, lose 2 points of Intelligence; Failure, lose 1 point of Intelligence; Ordinary, no change; Good, improve to extremely ill; Amazing, improve to extremely ill and recover 1 point of Intelligence. When the Intelligence score drops to 0, the psion becomes catatonic and sustains 1 point of mortal damage each day until he or she is dead.

The only treatment effective at halting the progress of NCS has

been the use of neural interference devices, which block the neural impulses that carry NCS. For this reason, all physicians working with NCS victims wear psi-shields, where the technology is available. (See "Psionic Equipment" above.) The only known "cure" for NCS is lobotomy.

Where NCS has struck, hysteria and paranoia abound, and the price of psi-shields skyrockets. Anti-psi organizations call for the extermination of psions "for the safety of the species." As the disease spreads, their membership grows.

Psi-Storms

Periodically, every planet that hosts psionic life-forms experiences random bursts of psionic energy. These "psi-storms" appear in a variety of sizes and strengths, and they form without warning. Their effect on psionic individuals also varies widely, but there is always a change of some sort. It's not known whether psions themselves involuntarily produce the phenomenon, or if psionic energy is somehow influenced by outside factors.

Psi-storms are undetectable by ordinary means, but not so the accompanying sudden flurry of phenomena: lights flickering, objects falling, spontaneous human combustion, and so on. However, anyone with the Psionic Awareness perk, the ESP-sensitivity skill, or a psi-detector can recognize a psi-storm with a successful skill or feat check, as applicable. An "approaching" storm can be detected with a successful check at a +2 step penalty.

Psions exposed to psi-storms often experience headaches, blurred vision, or feelings of euphoria. The physical symptoms have little to do with the storm's effect, however. The psion makes a Resolve-*mental resolve* skill check: Critical Failure, the psion loses d6 psionic energy points and suffers a +2 step penalty to

all psionic actions for the next d4 hours; Failure, the psion loses 1d4 psionic energy points and suffers a +1 step penalty to all psionic actions for the next d4 hours; Ordinary success, no effect; Good success, the psion gains d4 psionic strength points; Amazing success, the psion gains d6 psionic energy points and enjoys a -1 step bonus to all psionic actions for the next d4 hours.

Further, the Gamemaster should make a secret Resolve-*mental resolve* skill check for each character exposed to the psi-storm; non-psionic characters receive a +2 step penalty. On a Critical Failure, psions permanently lose two psionic skill ranks (each determined randomly). Non-psionic characters, and psions who lose more skill ranks than they have, suffer d6s damage. On a Failure, the character loses one psionic skill rank or suffers d4s damage, as above. On an Ordinary success, there is no effect. On a Good success, psions permanently gain one random psionic skill rank; non-psions gain a random psionic broad skill. On an Amazing success, psions gain two psionic skill ranks, again determined randomly; non-psions gain a psionic broad skill and a related specialty skill, both determined randomly.

The Gamemaster can perform these two checks in any order—for example, characters could gain psionic abilities but not be able to use them for several hours. Additional penalties or bonuses might apply for storms of varying intensity. Regardless of how long the psi-storm lasts, each check is made only once per storm.

Psionic Artifacts

A vast array of mysterious artifacts potentially exist that bestow some degree of psionic ability to non-psions. Perhaps left behind by older cultures with a greater understanding of psionic phenom-

ena, or maybe "magical" artifacts from other realms of existence, these relics occasionally appear in art collections—or, in societies with a higher PC rating, in the hands of the authorities.

Scrimshaw Bones

Perhaps the most common psionic artifacts are these ancient bones decorated with intricate scrimshaw patterns. Archaeologists have been unable to decipher the meaning of the patterns, though they were startled to find identical ones on bones from widely disparate cultures and times.

Non-psions in possession of scrimshaw bones acquire psionic abilities within d4+1 weeks. Invariably, the character acquires a broad skill associated with his or her highest Ability score (Biokinesis for Constitution, ESP for Intelligence, and so on). Once separated from the bones, the character loses that psionic skill within d4+1 days.

However, the character gains psionic energy points based on understanding the bones rather than his or her Will score. The new psion makes a Knowledge-*archaeology* skill check (or Lore-*psychic lore* in the DARK-MATTER campaign setting). On a Critical Failure, the relic is accidentally destroyed. On a Failure, the character spends fatigue points rather than psionic energy points to use the new skill—but can use the skill only when at full fatigue points. An Ordinary success means the character gains d4 psionic energy points; on a Good success, d6 psionic energy points; on an Amazing success, psionic energy points equal to half the character's Will score.

The new psion can attempt to study the artifact further to improve his or her understanding of it (and consequently psionic energy), but can make no more than one attempt every d4+1 weeks and must abide by the

more recent result—even if it reduces psionic energy. No matter how many psionic energy points are gained, they are recovered in the normal way.

Scrimshaw bones are best suited to realistic or low-level heroic campaigns.

Portable Gates

Though legends persist of alien cultures that constructed star-spanning interdimensional gateways in antiquity, short-range teleportation seems a lesser concern. However, “portable gates” are curious relics fulfilling that very function.

These lightweight metallic ovals are appropriate to heroic and superheroic campaigns. Merely curiosities to most, they are highly sought-after by military and criminal elements, since owning a set allows travel to nearly anywhere that is not entirely enclosed. A user can

push one of the ovals through even a narrow crack, if sufficiently long.

The gate has a range of 20/50/100 meters and function psionically: The operator must expend 1, 2, or 3 psionic energy points to activate it (depending on the separation of the oval termini). Once it is activated, any number of individuals can pass through. The device shuts down if the operator again spends the same amount of psionic energy, or if either of the termini is destroyed. (Portable gates work only in pairs, so destroying one oval renders the other useless.) Destroying a gate is fairly simple, as the ovals are not particularly durable.

Destroying the gate while someone is passing through can be fatal to the traveler. If a gate is destroyed during the same phase someone is moving through, the user makes an Acrobatics-dodge skill check. On an Amazing

result, the traveler makes it through unscathed. On a Good result, the traveler must retreat through the entry terminus, suffering d4-2m damage in the process. On an Ordinary success, the traveler must retreat but suffers d4m damage doing so. On a Failure, the traveler retreats and suffers d4+2m damage. A Critical Failure means the traveler is trapped in interdimensional space, unable to return. Apocryphal tales of early tests relate horror stories of shriveled corpses falling out of a gate, or of “demons” stepping through and slaughtering all of the researchers.

A notorious experiment involved placing one gate inside the other while they were activated. It was attempted only once. The surrounding building vanished, along with everyone inside, and has never been seen again. However, some believe that the occasional glimpses of a



"Phantom Tower" reported in drivespace are in fact sightings of the ill-fated structure.

Psiphons

Designed by unknown parties, this crystalline implement has a clear purpose: destroying psionic ability. Perhaps intended as punishment, the psiphon has five pointed "arms" large enough to fit around most species' heads, with the points directed inward. Each arm inflicts 1 point of wound damage as it pierces the flesh of the victim's head; when all five are attached, the psiphon begins to glow bright green and smoke slightly. Each round it is in operation, the psiphon inflicts 1 point of stun damage and reduces one psionic specialty skill by one rank, starting with the highest-ranked skill (determined randomly if there are more than one). After draining away all of the victim's specialty skills, the device begins removing broad skills; it shuts off automatically when the victim has no more psionic skills of any kind or if it is removed before finishing.

The psiphon is suitable for heroic and superheroic campaigns. It has passed through many hands since its discovery, used for a variety of sinister purposes. One of its owners is reputed to have been a sadistic scientist who studied its effect and designed a way to transfer the siphoned psionic skills to a "recipient." Perhaps fortunately, the whereabouts of those design notes are unknown.

Psi-Swords

These weapons are thought to have been used by a spacefaring order of psionic warriors who vanished centuries past. Each sword is a meter-long blade of some blue crystalline material, with a hilt and crossguard made of intricately worked platinum. Intensive scans have revealed that the hilt contains advanced

microcircuitry, but not matching any of the known species' designs.

The swords are psychoreactive. When wielded by a psion, a psi-sword glows brightly enough to illuminate a 3-meter circle. The psion can also increase the weapon's damage by expending psionic energy. Each round the psion wishes to "power" the sword, he or she makes a *Resolve-mental resolve* skill check and consults the following table:

Result	Damage	Energy Cost
Critical Failure	d4w-1/d6w/d6+2w	3
Failure or Ordinary	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4-1m	2
Good	d6w/d6+4w/d4m	1
Amazing	d6+2w/2d6w/d4+2m	1

The result modifies only how much damage the sword can inflict; a successful attack still requires a *Melee Weapons-blade* skill check.

Psi-swords are best suited to heroic-level campaigns.

Prison of Dreams

Rumor has it that humanitarian psionists developed this mysterious vial of dark fluid as a non-lethal way to imprison hardened criminals. In popular legend, the prototype was stolen by a criminal cartel and the formula destroyed. The vial has passed from hand to hand over a long time, each owner taking a few drops before losing it to the next.

When the fluid is injected into the brain, the subject effectively experiences a virtual-reality world that he or she completely controls. Whatever the subject desires becomes "real"—or at least, produces the appropriate neural stimuli. In reality, he or she sits quiescently, neural pathways rerouted so that muscles do not respond to mental commands (though they seem to). The subject

is a vegetable—but a happy one.

This situation is a punishment, nevertheless: There is no "exit" from the Prison of Dreams. The subject cannot simply leave the virtual world without the appropriate counteragent—or tremendous mental discipline. As no counteragent is known to exist, only the strong-willed stand a chance of escaping.

Using mental effort, it's possible for the subject to set up an "escape scenario" of successfully navigating a maze, solving

a mystery, or undertaking some similar task to represent rerouting neural impulses from purely mental back to physical. This requires fifteen successes on a complex *Resolve-mental resolve* skill check, with one attempt per day. Each Critical Failure increases the number of successes required by one. Those who escape the Prison usually require a few months of



Psi-Sword

Skill: Melee-blade
 Acc: -1
 Range: Personal
 Type: LI/O
 Damage* (O/G/A):
 d4w/d6+1w/d6+3w
 Actions: 2
 Clip Size: —
 Clip Cost: —
 Hide: +1
 Mass: 4
 Avail: Res
 Cost: 8000

*Without psionic power

psychotherapy, to convince them that their escape wasn't just another illusion.

A psion can aid the escape attempt with a successful Telepathy-*illusion* skill check. In effect, the telepath is leading the subject to make the correct decisions for escaping the Prison's illusion. An Ordinary result reduces the number of needed successes by three; a Good result, by six; and an Amazing success, by nine. Unfortunately, if the telepath is the one so imprisoned, each Resolve-*mental resolve* skill check is at a +1 step penalty. Since the telepathic illusion and the Prison illusion both spring from the same mind, the subject can never be certain of not subconsciously working against his or her own efforts.

Gamemasters might use the Prison of Dreams as the pretext for an adventure. Actually playing out an escape attempt from the Prison is more involving to the players than merely making Resolve-*mental resolve* skill checks. The Prison also offers a chance to alter the tone of the campaign temporarily, perhaps even changing the setting. For example, a subject might envision herself in a medieval fantasy world, where her Combat Spec companions are warriors, Free Agents are rogues, Mindwalkers are sorcerers, and aliens

are monsters. The heroes can assist in the rescue only by playing along until she learns the truth.

The Prison of Dreams is appropriate to a superheroic campaign, but could be adapted to a high-tech heroic one.

CUSTOMIZING THE CAMPAIGN MODEL

Why is it that in some fictional settings psions need to touch the target of their abilities, while in others they need only concentrate for a moment to destroy an entire planet? Because some authors wanted psionics to be extremely weak, and others wanted it to be extremely powerful.

The ALTERNITY game need not be any different. If players and Gamemaster desire a psionic power level different from the norm presented in this book, they can alter the psionics rules to more closely match their own vision. This is a toybox, after all.

Adjusting Psionic Power Levels

Psionic skills have a number of common elements: range, duration, damage, area of effect, and "reach" (through unusual media, such as time). The following are guidelines for manipulating those elements to simulate weaker or stronger psionics.

Scaling Down

Reducing one or more of the common elements will reduce the power level of psionics to varying degrees; by reducing them all, the power level drops severely. Be prepared to tinker a bit before finding a comfortable level.

Range: Try reducing the listed ranges of a skill by 50%, 75%, or even 90%. Any given range

reduced to less than 1 meter becomes "touch" range.

For example, the ESP skill of *mind reading* has a range of 100/200/500 meters. Scaling this down by the suggested amounts results in a range of 50/100/250, 25/50/125, or 10/20/50 meters, respectively.

Duration: Duration is reduced by cutting the listed duration by one "step": Months become weeks, weeks become days, days become hours, hours become minutes, minutes become rounds, and rounds become phases. Phases scale down to "instantaneous."

For example, the Telepathy-*mind shield* skill has a duration of d4+4 hours. Scaled down, it would last for d4+4 minutes, d4+4 rounds, or even d4+4 phases.

Damage: Reducing damage drops the listed amount by one die step: d12 to d8, d8 to d6, and so on. Modifiers to the die roll still apply. Damage that starts at d4 drops to 1 point, and beyond that to 0. When mortal damage is scaled down to 0 points, it converts to d4w damage; 0 wound damage converts to d4s. Stun reduced to 0 points simply becomes 0 damage.

For example, Telekinesis-*electrokinetics* has a basic damage of d4+2s/d6+2s/d4w. With a single "step down," it would inflict 3s/d4+2s/lw damage. A two-step reduction would result in 2s/3s/d4s damage.

Area of Effect: Most psionic skills affect only a single individual. Scaling this down results in a skill that affects only the user. Likewise, where a skill or its rank benefits allow additional targets, these would instead permit targeting one person other than the psion.

For example, Psychoportation-*alter speed* allows a psion to adjust the speed of the user or another person within a few meters. Reducing the area of effect means that only the psion can speed up or slow down.

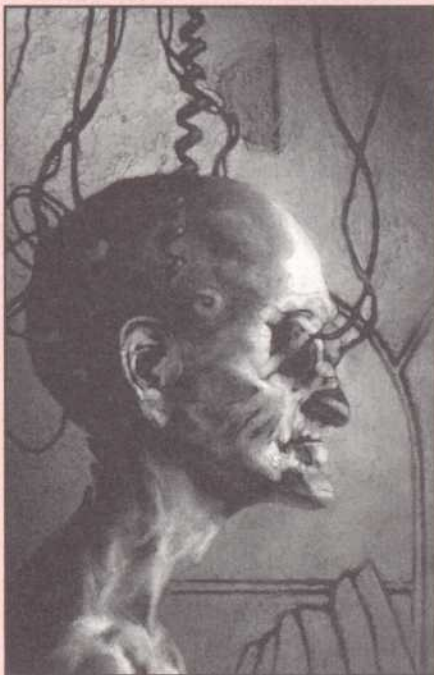
Reach: To reduce abstract "distance," the same guidelines apply as to duration. For example, ESP-precognition, when powered down, would allow the psion to see only minutes or seconds into the future, instead of hours.

Powering Up

Increasing one or more of the common elements lets the Gamemaster "power up" psionics. However, without doing the same to weapons and armor, psionics will become the ability to have for all heroes and supporting cast, which can seriously unbalance a campaign.

Range: To increase range, multiply the skill's listed values of a skill by 125%, 150%, 200%, or even more. Using the example of ESP-mind reading, this generate ranges of 125/250/625, 150/300/750, or 200/400/1000 meters, and so on.

Duration: Increasing duration is the inverse of reducing it, "ramping up" the listed value by one step. Thus, abilities that would last for a phase last instead for a round; those of a round, a full minute; and so on. Going back to the Telepathy-mind shield example, the listed duration could increase to d4+4



days, d4+4 weeks, and so on.

This one is dangerous to play with: If a skill normally deals damage, will the powered-up version continue to deal damage to the same target without another skill check? Can the target be changed? A good way to avoid these problems is to limit extended duration only to skills that are already expressed in those terms. Gamemasters who extend the duration of damage-dealing skills should strictly control them.

Damage: Like duration, increasing damage is simply the inverse of decreasing it, raising the listed rating by one die step: d4 to d6, d6 to d8, d8 to d12, and so on. A single point of damage becomes a d4; 1d20 of damage becomes 2d20, then 3d20, and so on. Modifiers to the die roll still apply. The class of wound can also be increased—though inflicting mortal damage on anything but an Amazing success is particularly brutal (especially if armor doesn't apply).

For example, Telekinesis-electrokinetics would inflict d6+2s/d8+2s/d6w damage at rank 1, with a single step up in power level. Alternatively, it could be increased to d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m by changing the damage classes.

Area of Effect: Each step up in area of effect doubles the number of targets affected. For example, Telekinesis-kinetic blow normally affects a single target; at higher levels it would hammer two, four, eight, or even more.

Reach: Increasing the abstract reach of a skill is the same as increasing its duration. So ESP-precognition would allow the psion to see days into the future, or longer, instead of hours.

Optional Rule: Pushing the Limits

Merely establishing that limits exist will encourage some players to test those limits. This is especially true of scaled-down

settings: Players may want their heroes to see further into the future or deal more than a single point of stun damage. But even in powered-up campaigns, players will occasionally dream of destroying worlds.

The simplest rule for pushing the limits is to let heroes spend additional psionic energy points to move the effect "up a notch" on the power scale. A player must decide whether to do so when he or she activates the ability, and each point spent increases only one of the five elements discussed above.

◆ **Example:** In a "hyperrealistic" campaign, Evan's ESP-mind reading has only a 50 meter maximum range (range 10/20/50), but he needs to read the thoughts of a man on the far side of a football stadium (300 meters away). Concentrating especially hard, he expends an additional psionic energy point to push his maximum range to 100 meters—but it's still not enough. The Gamemaster decides to let Evan continue spending psionic energy points until he reaches the distance he needs. Evan pushes again to 200 meters for another psionic energy point, and again to 400 for another. His total expenditure in psionic energy is 4 points (assuming his skill check is successful).

◆ **Example:** In a powered-up superheroic campaign, Master Quo wishes to destroy the approaching army with Telekinesis-electrokinetics. In this souped-up campaign, his ability can already affect sixteen different targets with a single use, but Quo decides to push this even farther, expending all of his 16 psionic energy points. Assuming that using the skill costs only 1 point, Quo doubles its area of effect fifteen times, from sixteen to 2^{15} —524,288 targets. Quo is drained, but the enemy is nothing more than a field of blackened corpses.

4 TROUBLESHOOTING PSIONICS

The problem that will inevitably face every psionics-oriented campaign is how to keep psions from ruining things by destroying every surprise, defeating every challenge, and revealing every secret. Without help, some Gamemasters might feel overwhelmed by heroes' actions.

Why Don't Psions Rule the World?

It seems logical that if someone with the ability to manipulate others gets control of the right people, he or she could set up a dictatorship or at least become the power behind the throne. Psionic methods could seize and maintain control of a government every bit as effectively as the

ordinary methods—assassination, blackmail, military coup, and so forth—and usually quite a bit faster.

The major problem with staging a psionic coup is that the faster the method, the clumsier it is—and the more easily detected. A psionic "puppeteer" can't simply walk into the office of the head of state and take control without being swiftly detected and neutralized. In fact, in campaigns with mature anti-psi technology, the offices of chief decision-makers are shielded with the latest neural interference circuitry, to prevent the unauthorized use of psionics anywhere near them.

Psionic infiltration of a government must be subtle—in game terms, a complex task requiring dozens of successes. But it can be accomplished, effecting a slow "change of heart" for the head of state (assuming that's what the psion wants). Some merely want

to partake of the ruler's secrets—or spoils. This slower rate doesn't differ much from that of a political- or intrigue-based campaign without psionic interference.

On the other hand, a group of psions may want to address injustices against their kind through revolution. They face the same problem as non-psionic revolutionaries who take power: the need for administration. Certainly they can enact laws that favor psions. But no applica-

tion of ESP will feed the hungry. Telepathy will not pay the military. Telekinesis will never balance the budget. Unless the new regime includes effective administrators, the erstwhile revolutionaries will themselves be the target of a coup shortly.

This is not to say that psions cannot hold positions of authority, covertly or overtly. Throughout history, Mindwalkers and even talents might have carved extremely influential niches for themselves, as rulers, advisors, military dictators, or "shadow ministers." In a campaign, they might be so effective that the people forget that members of their government are psionic—if they ever knew. But power gained psionically demands the same care and planning as power gained by ordinary means.

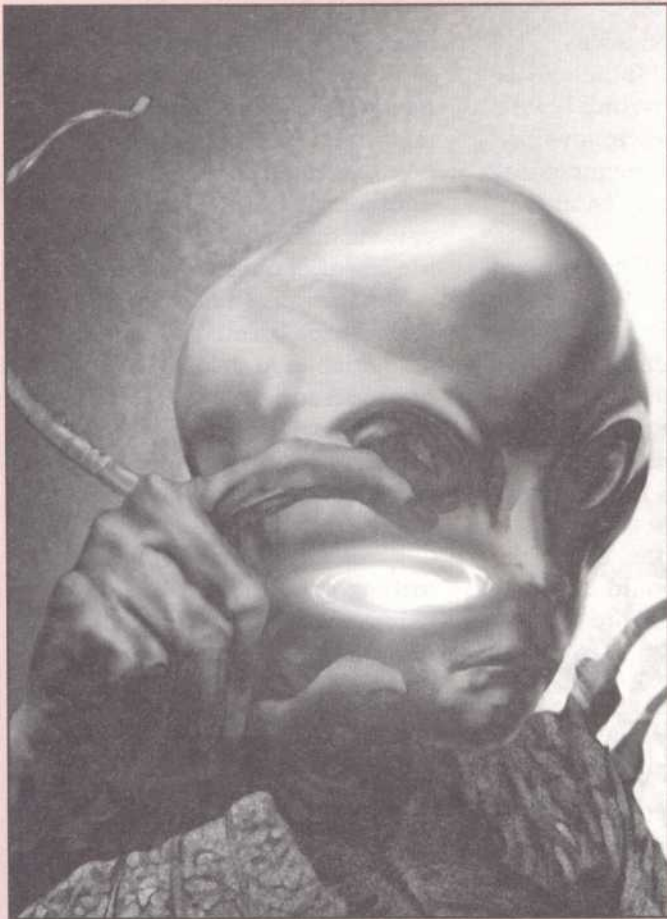
Troubleshooting Psionic Heroes

A Gamemaster might find that the psionic heroes in his or her campaign are progressing too quickly, or that there is no challenge they cannot overcome. Players may feel that their advancement is irritatingly slow, or that every challenge is insurmountable except without psionics. To find the proper balance calls for some "tweaking" of the rules.

Restrictions

Heroes who are advancing faster than others are a problem because threats that challenge them will decimate their less developed comrades. The easiest fix is to level a standard die-step penalty on the use of psionic skills.

A different way to restrict powerful heroes is to increase the psionic energy cost for their skills by 1 or even 2 points. Thus, a Critical Failure would cost the hero 4 or 5 energy points; using a broad skill, 3 or 4; and using a specialty skill, 2 or 3.



Along those same lines, increasing their purchase price (as described below) can effectively limit the effect of psionic skills—especially those causing problems. And occasionally confronting a psionic hero with an opponent who is immune to his or her best skill would be especially daunting.

If any one of these restrictions is not enough to solve the problem, try combining for a more effective “punch.”

Advantages

On the other hand, psionic heroes may suffer from an “inferiority complex,” especially when compared to Combat Spec or Free Agent characters. Psionic skills aren’t much use if the target is dead before the psion can act. Limiting the effectiveness of more powerful characters will seem like a punishment to their players, so the best thing to do is increase psionic effectiveness.

The easiest approach is the opposite of the restriction methods described above. A permanent -1 step bonus to psionic skills would be a tremendous help, for instance. Reducing the cost of skills or cutting back on the psionic energy cost would give struggling psionic heroes a solid boost. However, costs of buying or using skills should never be reduced below 1.

The Gamemaster might even go so far as to start a psionic hero out at one or even two levels above the others. A more elegant solution, however, is to give the psion more opportunities. For example, when the heroes have to get to a specific location, the Gamemaster might give the psionic hero a vision of an impending disaster that can be stopped only by going there. Perhaps the hero becomes drawn to the one item in the group’s possession that offers the clue needed to advance to the next stage of the adventure

Troubleshooting Psionic Skills

In practice, psionic skills may not be quite what they seemed at first. Some will alter the course of adventures. Others will seem a waste of skill points. The Gamemaster can prepare by being aware of either eventuality. It’s also helpful to have a copy of the player’s hero sheet handy when designing adventures, to take into account the potential effect of certain skills on the game.

Psionic Skills to Watch

The following skills have the potential to wreck a campaign if the Gamemaster isn’t prepared for them. If they are causing too many problems, it might be necessary to scale them down or adapt challenges accordingly.

Biokinesis Skills

Bio-armor protects a character from damage just like armor. Increasing weapon damage or “stepping down” bio-armor’s protection might be necessary. Remember, though, that “layering” armor only grants the protection of one type.

Bioweapon means a character is never completely disarmed; even a full search will not reveal that he still has a dangerous weapon. In heroic or superheroic campaigns, more extensive use of neural interference technology by security forces can counteract this. Ramping down the bioweapon’s damage is another option.

ESP Skills

Clairaudience, clairvoyance, and mind reading all remove the Gamemaster’s hiding places. Heroes with these skills can listen in on conversations behind locked doors, search for enemies without risk, or learn the villain’s master plan—in as little as a single phase, and for as little as a single psionic energy point. Psi-dampers or “counter-psions” in the enemy’s hands are possible ways around this problem.

Postcognition and psychometry also let heroes unravel mysteries simply by going to the scene of the crime or picking up an object that was involved. Gamemasters should expect ESPers to start with these skills and resort to mundane investigation only if the psionic kind fails. Villains might use “cutouts” or cell systems to make psionic tracing more difficult.



Psychoportation Skills

Apportation is an extremely tempting power, making inconvenient things “go away,” and at the highest rank, even banishing major opponents. Consider increasing the applicable step penalties to keep this from being a default action.

Telekinesis Skills

Levitation allows heroes to fly. Aside from providing air support in combat, they can leap high walls and wide chasms that would have otherwise been challenging. One solution is to make those barriers bigger; another is to use obstacles that can't be overcome through flight.

Psychokinetcs allows psionic heroes to make *others* fly. The average adult male human weighs about 90 kilograms; a “teke” with a 9 Will can lift him off the ground, perhaps foiling an escape or at least denying the mobility he needs to fight effectively. It might be necessary to increase the psionic energy cost or reduce the effectiveness of the skill by a step or two. On a smaller scale, *psychokinetcs* lets a hero push a button or pull a trigger that can wreak all sorts of havoc. Using software or sensors instead of physical devices on critical equipment is one way to foil this.

Telepathy Skills

Contact should not be confused with ESP-*mind reading*. It is essentially an invisible telephone; there's no requirement to communicate. The target may have to listen, but needn't provide any information—even if *contact* is maintained. Thus it's less of a problem than the similar ESP skills, but it should still be monitored closely.

Datalink works like ESP-*mind reading* for computers and requires the same attention. A telepath with this specialty skill who gets near the villain's com-

puter can scan the hard drive and read the secret plans, with the villain never the wiser.

Drain enables heroes to weaken the opposition—and makes the Gamemaster recalculate on the fly. Having “statted-up” versions of opponents ready ahead of time can reduce the inconvenience. Or increase the strength of opponents across the board to give the heroes more of a challenge.

Illusion is problematic: Even though it is only aural and visual, an *illusion* can be quite convincing (depending on the situation). For example, the illusion of an opponent can keep someone occupied for an entire combat, firing away at a “foe” who always just happens to dodge—and to miss. And because the defense for *illusions* is Awareness-*intuition*, which few heroes routinely purchase, such ruses are liable to be effective for a while. If heroes are overusing *illusions*, opponents with *intuition* can slow them down; if the heroes are being crushed through *illusion* use, try giving them hints with Psionic Awareness or ESP-*sensitivity* (which some of the heroes are likely to have).

Mind shred is a particularly vicious form of *mind blast*, causing physical damage that bypasses armor. It might require making opponents tougher or giving them psionic protection (through skills or tech); alternatively, across-the-board damage reduction for Telepathy-based attacks can mitigate the problem.

Mind wipe is insidious: At high levels it can remove skills entirely, which is devastating if used at the right time. Challenging opponents for heroes at this level of achievement will need strong *mind shield* skills of their own.

Psychic projection lets heroes “go for a walk” wherever they wish. Like the ESP detection skills, it makes information easily accessible, such as the layout of the villain's lair or the back door into a top-secret base. This could

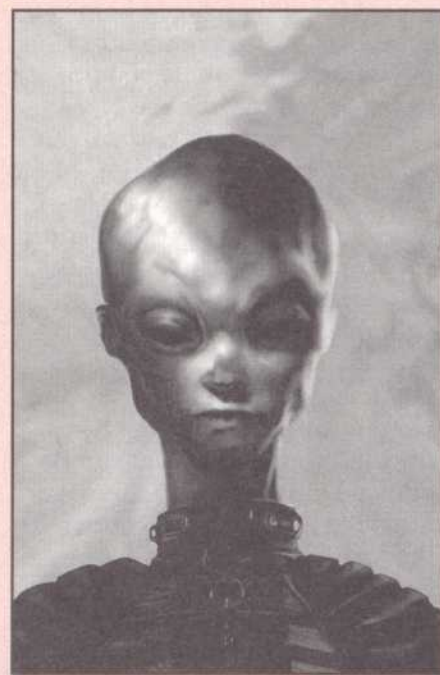
be controlled by having enemy “travelers.” Not only would they turn the tables on the heroes, they'd also be a continuing threat to empty bodies.

Suggest is mind control, and even though heroes can't make opponents spill their secrets or surrender, they can still maneuver others into making helpful mistakes. For example, “Your hands are cold” might make guard set a weapon down; “You'll only be gone a minute” could convince a millionaire to leave the safe open while out of the room. In cultures that are aware of psionics, there will likely be anti-psi devices in sensitive areas. Opposing characters (or their bodyguards) with high Will scores, or more generous Will feat checks for potential targets, are other ways to handle this.

Alien Psionic Skills

Undo can completely negate a psionic villain's plans. However, since it is a fraal skill, it is limited by being unavailable to other species. Alternatively, perhaps the villain has *undo* specialists in his or her employ!

Guidance can give heroes skills they ordinarily couldn't



use. This shouldn't be a big problem if the challenges require a variety of approaches and skills.

Dream Hunt tells heroes where to be, with very little effort on their part. This means the players don't have to think. Try mixing up challenges so that not all depend on a key figure being in a certain spot; alternatively, opponents who use robots or gridshadows to perform errands rather than living beings will stymie the psion.

Sheya's Clutch is particularly nasty since it deals damage that bypasses even psionic armor. The only drawback is that it's painful to use. Try stepping up the damage to the user if it's being used too often. Also, clever opponents will soon realize that keeping their distance is an effective defense.

Psionic Skills That Get Overlooked

At the other end of the spectrum are those abilities that at first glance look "lame." Players may consistently shun them as a waste of skill points. Gamemasters who notice these habits can make an effort to improve the perceived usefulness of those skills.

Biokinesis Skills

Rejuvenate might not look very useful at first because it doesn't restore wound or mortal damage. But the ability to heal fatigue damage is a huge advantage to overcoming step penalties from strenuous activity—such as suffering wound or mortal damage. This skill can help offset a bad Stamina-endurance check. Players should get the idea once they see that

biokineticist opponents take a long time to put down.

Transfer damage lets the psion absorb another person's damage—not the most attractive proposition. But it is tremendously valuable when the psion's skills aren't necessarily helpful, but the wounded person's are. Absorbing the injuries of a wounded Combat Spec or Tech Op removes step penalties so the character can keep fighting or disarm the explosive, for example. And a psion who also has *Biokinesis-heal* can recover in time to do the same trick again an hour later.

ESP Skills

Empathy is useful for judging another character's state of mind, but doesn't seem to have much practical application. However, it's extremely effective for determining the success of Personality skill checks targeting that character. That's a boost with *Interaction-bargain*, but in the case of *Deception* checks, knowing one's success can mean the difference between victory and betrayal.

Navcognition for many people implies navigating in space, and therefore of limited application. But knowing one's location is also useful on the ground, in the water, underground, in buildings, and so on. Mazes or mazelike structures will not be anywhere near as daunting to heroes with this skill.

Precognition has been reworked slightly from the description given in *Chapter 14: Psionics* in the *Player's Handbook*. As originally written it was of limited usefulness. Now it can provide a hero with additional Last Resort points at crucial moments, rather than simply telling him or her what to expect.

Telepathy Skills

Tire inflicts fatigue damage, which seems less attractive than abilities dealing physical damage. But it is a huge advantage against skilled opponents. Not only does it whittle away fatigue points, rendering a foe unconscious (see *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* in the *Player's Handbook*), but each fatigue point loss imposes a +1 step penalty to all of that character's actions. Since the only defense is *Telepathy-mind shield* (which not many Combat Specs have) even the sturdiest opponents can become too sluggish to put up a good fight. And the ability at higher ranks to draw the lost fatigue for one's own use makes a hero even more formidable in combat.

Alien Psionic Skills

Subdual can literally take all the fight out of an opponent. Even on Ordinary success imposes penalties on the character's ability to act, which can make all the difference in a close combat.

MIND GAMES

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