

# **Awesome Adventures**

**By Willow Palecek**

# Awesome Adventures

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Do you have questions, feedback, or awesome examples of actual play? Come share them at the FATE list, at FateRPG at Yahoogroups.com! You can also check out my blog at <http://willowrants.wordpress.com>  
See you there!

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## Overview

Awesome Adventures is a game of high-action, high-excitement, high-tempo adventure. It's designed to be fully playable in a single session of 3-4 hours of play, or several sessions of 2-3 hours.

Awesome Adventures can be used to tell stories in several different genres, as long as those stories are about larger-than-life heroes facing similarly larger-than-life opposition. The heroic feats of swords and sorcery legendary figures, the two-fisted-tales of the Pulp, the no-holds-barred, explosion filled modern cinematic blockbuster, the eastern wuxia tale, and many science fiction epics- these are the stories that Awesome Adventures draws on, and will inspire you to tell your own.

Awesome Adventures is a roleplaying game- you and some of your friends take part in telling a collaborative story. Most of you will take the role of one of the story's protagonists, and act out the lead parts of the story. One player has the role of the Gamemaster, and has the responsibility of setting the stage, playing opposition and minor characters, and making sure the game hums along- his role is most like a movie's director.

## What You Need to Play

**Friends:** You'll want about 3-6 friends to play with, although it's possible to play with fewer or more. They should be people you normally enjoy socializing with, since playing Awesome Adventures is, first and foremost, a social activity.

**A Copy of These Rules:** One player (the Gamemaster) needs to have read the rules before play starts, and it helps if most of the other players have too. Before you play, whoever has read the rules should give everyone else a quick rundown of the basics; this should take about ten minutes. The rules can be helpful as a reference during play, so it may be handy to have additional copies.

**Paper and Pencils:** Every player will need a sheet of paper for his character- either a blank piece of lined paper, or a photocopy or printout of the character sheet. You'll want pencils (not pens!)

to write on them. The Gamemaster will want enough paper to keep notes, and some players find it helpful to keep some basic notes as well.

**Dice:** You'll need at least four dice, and it's helpful for each player to have their own set. Awesome Adventures uses "Fudge dice," which are funky dice with plus and minus signs on them. You can also use everyday six sided dice.

While not necessary, many people find the following useful:

**Poker Chips:** Or colored glass beads, or extra dice, or some sort of tactile substance that can be used to represent fate points.

**Index Cards:** Or sticky notes. You'll often have to take notes or jot something down, and a full piece of paper is often too long.

**Snacks:** Just make sure you don't use your snacks to represent fate points, otherwise they'll end up getting eaten.

## **The Ladder**

Most things are rated according the Ladder below. (If you see the term 'the Ladder,' that's what it's referring to.) The adjectives measure a person's skill, an item's quality, or a task's difficulty. This ranges from the worst of the worst (Terrible -2), to the absolute apex of potential (Legendary +8). Each level has an adjective descriptor and a numerical value.

**+8:** Legendary  
**+7:** Epic  
**+6:** Fantastic  
**+5:** Superb  
**+4:** Great  
**+3:** Good  
**+2:** Fair  
**+1:** Average  
**0:** Mediocre  
**-1:** Poor  
**-2:** Terrible

The typical unnamed characters are Mediocre (0) in most respects- completely average and neutral, as far as the dice are concerned. Most people are Average (+1) in tasks they do for a living every day- a typical doctor might have Medicine at Average, whereas a truly extraordinary or deficient doctor would have it at a different level. The absolute single best doctor in the world would have a Medicine skill at Superb (+5).

Tasks have difficulties as well. Something that an average, everyday person would be able to do more than half the time has a difficulty of Mediocre (0). The higher the difficulty number, the harder the task. In general, a character with a given skill level (like Fair or Great) has a better-than-even chance of meeting a difficulty at the same level.

## **How Dice Work**

Anytime you need to roll the die, you'll be starting with your base skill level, and roll four dice- either Fudge Dice, with two plus signs, two minus signs, and two blank faces, or standard six sided dice. Each single die can either move the result up a level, move it down one level, or keep it constant. A '-' on a Fudge Die or a 1 or 2 on a normal die corresponds to -1. A '+' on the Fudge Die or a 5 or 6 on a normal die corresponds to +1. A blank Fudge Die or a 3 or 4 on a normal die has no modifier. You'll take the results of the four dice, add them together, and apply it to the base skill level to get your result.

*Example:*

*Gwendolen the Ravager is trapped in a cage made of adamantium, so she braces herself and tries to break the bars. Gwendolen starts with a Might of Superb, and she rolls four Fudge dice, getting one "-" result, one "" result, and two "+" results, for a total modifier of +1, resulting in a Fantastic success. If she had rolled normal six sided dice instead and rolled a "1", a "3", a "5," and a "6" instead, the result would have been the same.*

## **How Skill Rolls Work**

Most of the time, when you attempt to do something, it will involve a skill roll. The skills themselves and their specific uses are

explained in the chapter Skills in Detail. When you roll, you take your Skill level, modify it by the die roll, and compare that to the task difficulty. If you meet or beat the task difficulty, you are considered to have succeeded at doing what you set out to do. If you get higher, you often get some greater effect, having succeeded better. Beating the difficulty by three counts as a Critical Success, and always has greater results.

*Example:*

*Remember Gwendolen and that adamantium cage?*

*Unfortunately for her, the difficulty to break out of it is Epic, and she only rolled a Fantastic. It looks like she'll be stuck for a while. On the other hand, if she had gotten an Epic success, she could have forced her way out, and if she had beaten it by three- +10, or above Legendary, she could have some extra result, like having pieces of the cage to use as weapons, or shattering the cage in a particularly satisfying burst of strength.*

Sometimes your opposition is not just a static obstacle, but another character. This is called an Opposed Roll. When this occurs, both characters take a skill relevant to the situation and roll it, and whoever gets higher wins.

*Example:*

*Having made an escape, Gwendolen finds herself facing the Venusian Princess Chezmerdela, who stands in the way of her freedom. Gwendolen tackles Chezmerelda, and they engage in an opposed Might roll- whoever gets a higher result will come out on top.*

During an opposed roll, a tie result sometimes represents both characters succeeding at what they want, or it represents a standoff. The Gamemaster will have to use some judgment in these situations. If a true tie is impossible, then both characters will have to roll again.

If you beat your opponent by three success levels in an opposed roll, that counts as a Critical Success.

## Aspects

Characters also have a set of attributes called aspects. Aspects cover a wide range of elements and should collectively paint a picture of who the character is, what he's connected to, and what's important to him (in contrast to the "what can he do" of skills). Aspects are covered in more detail in their own chapter. One thing that's important about Aspects is that they can be used to give mechanical bonuses to your character, turning a failure into a success, or a success into a critical!

## Fate Points

Fate Points are a supply of that extra awesome a character has. These can be spent to gain bonuses on die rolls, or activate aspects. Fate Points are covered in more detail on the chapter on Aspects.





# Character Creation

## Steps of Character Creation

- 1: Discuss the game genre.
- 2: Think about a character concept.
- 3: Come up with a cool name.
- 4: Go through the five phases in order, picking two aspects each time.
- 5: Assign skills.

## Game Genre

Before you and your friends sit down to make characters, you need to come to a consensus on what genre of game you're playing. This book comes with advice for three different 'big genres'- Fantasy, 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and Fantastic Future, but there's a lot of variety within each one- in your Fantasy game, does everyone have magic powers? Is it more like Conan, or Exalted? Will your 20<sup>th</sup> Century game have the feel of the Pulp of the 1920s, or the cinematic blockbusters of recent years? You should agree, in some very broad terms, what kind of genre game it is. Don't overly narrow down or restrict things at this point- just make sure everyone's got a starting point to work from.

## Character Concept and Archetypes

You want to start with a concept for your character- a few words about what they do and how they do it, like "master wizard," "costumed superhero," or "ace starship pilot." Each of the genre listings in this book has some sample Archetypes. You should feel free to pick one of these, or make up your own concept as you see fit- always play what you think is interesting and awesome, and don't feel constrained to pick something off of a list.

## Names

You want a catchy, adventure name for your character. A good formula for 'real world' games is a short, funky first name, and a descriptive/ evocative last name, like "Rolf Rugged" or "Drake Steel." You can rarely go wrong with alliteration. Fantasy characters often have an obscure name followed by a descriptor

or title, like “Balthazar the Wise,” or “Gwendolen the Ravager.” Try not to spend too much time coming up with a name- the more effort you put into coming up with the “perfect” name, the harder it is.

## **The Phases**

You’ll design your character in five Phases. Each one represents events in your character’s life. The first phase covers general background, upbringing, and early events. The second phase covers their formative adventures during a time of troubles. After this phase, the character has come into their own as a hero in their own right, and the last three phases are devoted to their shared adventures.

For each phase, you’ll come up with some events that your character was involved in, and two aspects about how that shaped them, what accomplishments they had, and the kind of hero they’re becoming. (You can also go back and revise them later, so just jot down whatever comes to mind.)

It’s been said before, but it bears repeating: character creation is a group activity! Everyone needs to share their events and aspects with everyone else, for feedback and collaboration. The character creation process includes a number of built-in ways to establish ties and history between the characters and the setting. Character creation can often take the time of a full session of regular play, and is a good opportunity to lay out the foundations of the setting, and allow everyone to establish a common understanding of each others’ characters. Remember, you are playing the game from the very moment the character sheets hit the table! During character creation, players are encouraged to talk out loud about their characters, make suggestions to each other, discuss how to make their characters intersect, talk about relationships and interactions between the characters, and otherwise establish some of the campaign background. Make sure everyone is having fun during character creation- it’s an essential part of play.

## **Phase One: Background and Upbringing**

This covers the character's youth and upbringing, and life before they set out on the path of the adventurer. Where did they come from? This is often a description of the more 'normal' aspects of the character, but we can often see the roots of heroism and greatness at this early stage.

Some things to consider:

\*In genres with fantasy or alien races, is the character human? Something else?

\*What were the family's circumstances like? Rich? Poor? Scholarly? Isolated? Pious? Political?

\*How big is the family? How well does the character get along with his family? \*Where is the character from? What is it like there?

\*How was the character educated?

\*What were the character's friends like? Did the character get into much trouble?

You need to come up with:

\*A brief summary of events related to the character's background and upbringing.

\*Two aspects related to your character's background. If your character is non-human, his race *must* be an aspect.

## **Phase Two: Formative Adventures in a Time of Troubles**

During this phase, the character begins to come into their own, and we begin to see their true potential. It is a time of strife, and from strife, heroes are made.

First, as a group, you need to figure out some sort of Trouble that would have affected most people world wide, either directly or indirectly. A good standby is "war," often "war against the evil empire." Fantasy settings are full of wars against Evil Empires. Pulp heroes were often active in the Great War, and modern heroes (especially ones out of a Tom Clancy-esque espionage drama) may have cut their teeth during the final days of the Cold War. The genre guides in this book give several different Time of Trouble possibilities.

After your group has the Trouble figured out, what did your character do about it? How did it affect them? Maybe they were involved in the conflicts themselves, saw and dealt in dealing behind the scenes, or avoided them, exploring secrets on the strange frontiers of the world.

Some things to think about:

\*How was your character involved in the Time of Troubles? Did you fight in a war? Work on a secret project? For who? How?

\*What sort of adventures did you have during this time? What happened? Did you meet anyone exciting?

\*Does your character have a mentor or patron? How do they relate? What happened to him or her?

You need to come up with:

\*A brief summary of events related to the Time of Troubles and how they affected your character.

\*Two aspects related to your character's involvement in the Time of Troubles.

### **Phase Three: Adventure!**

Your character now emerges as a legendary figure in their own right, and stars in their own adventure novel (or action movie, with unlimited special effects budget, if you prefer.) You should come up with a title for the story involving your character.

The general formula is "Character Name (in/and/versus) Adventure Thing!"

Some examples: "Rolf Rugged and the Underground Bandits" "Bruce Hammer vs. the Zombies from the Moon" "Quentin Quark in... The Uncertainty Principle!"

After you've got a catchy name, come up with a brief summary of the events of the novel. It doesn't have to be much longer (and probably shouldn't be) than the blurb on the back of a paperback novel. If you find yourself running out of space on the character worksheet, you're probably going into too much detail.

You need to come up with:

\*A Title for your novel (or movie) and a summary of the action and events.

\*Two aspects based on the events of the novel.

### **Phase Four: Guest Star!**

After starring in your own adventure, you go on to play a supporting role in another player's story. (Don't worry about the chronology and continuity of events too much. It's not that important.)

At this point, the Gamemaster should write down the name of everyone's novel- preferably on an index card, and then randomly deal them out to the players. (If someone gets their own novel, they should swap cards with someone else, until everyone has someone else's novel.)

Take a moment to consult with that player and review the events of their novel. How could your character help the star of that adventure? What supporting role could they play? What adventures will they have together?

Some possibilities of things a character can provide:  
Advice. Backup. Distraction. Equipment. Expertise. Funding.  
Rescue. Rumors. Transportation.

You'll need to come up with:

\*Another sentence or two, detailing your character's added involvement in the events of the novel.

\*Two aspects related to your character's involvement or the events of the novel.

### **Phase Five: Guest Star!**

Phase Five works just like Phase Four, except you can't Guest Star in the same novel twice. If you get your own novel or one you've already Guest Starred in, you need to switch with someone else.

## **Reviewing Your Aspects**

After you've got all your phases down, go over your aspects one more time, and make sure they all fit with the character. You might take a moment here to punch up an aspect, trade in an aspect for another idea you came up with, or move them around in your character's phases. See the Aspects chapter for detailed advice on picking, and using, Aspects.

## **Skills**

Once you've got all your Phases and Aspects figured out, it's time to fill out the skill pyramid. You get one skill at Superb (5)- a level at which you are unmatched, two at Great (4), three at Good (3), four at Fair (2), and five at Average (1). The remaining skills will be Mediocre (0).

Generally speaking, your three skills at the top of the pyramid- the Superb and the Greats- these will define your character's actions in the game, so you want to pick ones that you think you'll enjoy using, and using often.

Skills are covered in more detailed in the Skills chapter.

## **A Word of Advice on Making a Character**

We keep coming back to this, but it's critical to determine why your character does what he does. Awesome Adventures characters are exceptional, and they could very easily find success in less exciting fields than those that are likely to come the way of the characters, so it is on your head to figure out *why* your character is going to keep getting involved in these things. If you don't, the Gamemaster is under no obligation to go out of her way to make the game work for you – she'll be too busy with other players who made characters that have a reason to participate.

This may sound a little harsh, but there's a habit that a lot of smart, talented players develop over time that leads them to want to "win" the game. By having a character leave the adventuring life and become wealthy, powerful and successful elsewhere, they beat the system that otherwise forces them to constantly

grind against an escalating scale of opposition for negligible rewards.

The thing to remember with Awesome Adventures is that your character has already won. He's successful enough that he doesn't need to do anything adventurous with his life, so it's up to you to figure out why he continues to do so.

One way or another, the answer almost always points to the idea that success is not a goal, it's a means. The true goal, whatever it is for the character, is something that calls for action. Once you have that pinned down, you almost definitely want to reflect it in your choice of Aspects.

Remember that Aspects can be positive or negative for the character, but the most important thing is that they lead to active play. Aspects aren't there to help you 'win the game,' they're there to help you make your character relevant to the story, and to help the Gamemaster make a story that's relevant to the players.



## Aspects

Every character has a number of Aspects. Aspects are a way of describing the character above and beyond just the numerical stats, and making them someone completely unique. Anything that makes a character stand out from the crowd- a quality, a catchphrase, a signature weapon or piece of equipment, a special power, or a story hook or common situation can be an aspect. Aspects are limited only by your imagination- don't feel forced to pick from lists.

Scenes can also have aspects too, coloring the events that take place there, and the environment of the area.

## Using Aspects

Aspects come into the game in one of three ways: an Aspect can be Invoked for an advantage, which allows a player to modify the results of a roll, Invoked for Effect, which introduces favorable circumstances and events into the story, or Compelled, which can cause exciting trouble for the character but earn them Fate Points.

## Fate Points

Fate Points are what make Aspects tick. Fate Points can be spend to help a character (see Invoking and Bringing into Play), and they can be earned by having one's Aspects Compelled.

## Types of Aspects

Aspects come in lots of different flavors.

A **Phrase** can be anything from a descriptive phrase ("Strong As An Ox") to a simple descriptor ("Strong"), or even a literal quote ("No One Is Stronger Than The Sledge!"). Phrase aspects come into play based on how well the situation matches them; a colorful phrase adds a lot of flavor and innately suggests several different ways to use it. This potentially makes phrase aspects some of the most flexible aspects in the game.

Phrases include **Special Abilities**. A special ability is anything truly superhuman about the character- a capability they have that



no one else does. This is the really strange stuff, like turning into a werewolf, or having magic or mutant powers.

A **Person** can be anyone important to the character. A friend, an enemy, a family member, a sidekick, a mentor – as long as someone matters to the character, he makes an appropriate aspect. A person aspect is most easily used when that person is in the scene with the character, but the aspect can come up in other ways, depending upon the person's history and relationship with the character. For example, if a character has his mentor as an aspect, that aspect might be useful for things his mentor would have instructed him on. The 'person' doesn't even need to be a human- things like an animal companion (a loyal horse, or a trained monkey) fall into this category.

An **Organization** is quite a bit like a person, only larger. It might be a club or company the character is a member of- or one they're in charge of. Or it might be an enemy secret society the character regularly crosses paths with. He might even be a former member turned enemy! As long as the organization still plays a part in the character's life, it's an appropriate aspect. An organization aspect comes up most often when characters from the organization are in the same scene as the character, but like person aspects, it can deal with the character's past and history in the organization.

**Props** are things external to the character- an item, or even a place. A prop can be useful if it's something the character has with him, or if it's the crux of a conflict, but it may also imply things about the character, or even be useful in its absence (if only I had my "Trusty Toolbox"! ) The aspect can be used anytime the prop itself is on the scene or plays a strong role by implication. If the character has a signature piece of equipment with special properties, like a magic item, a mad science gizmo, a spaceship, or a giant robot, you'll certainly want to be taking it an aspect.

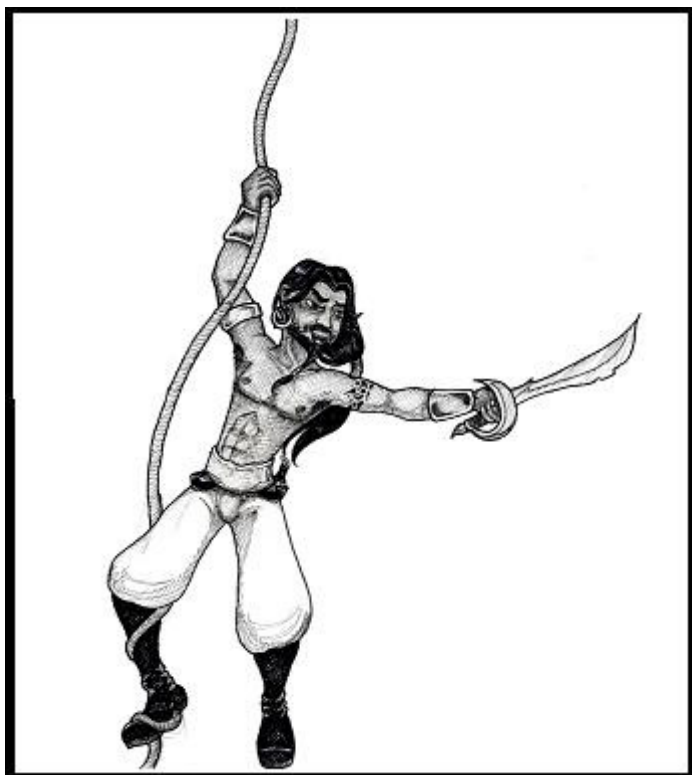
## **Picking Aspects**

Aspects do a number of things, but perhaps the most powerful is give the player a way of very explicitly telling the Gamemaster what they want to see in the game. A character with the Aspects

“Steel Sentinel, my Giant Robot,” and “Get a bigger robot!” not only wants to have a big robot, and situations where their big robot can come into play, but they also want to encounter *other* big robots, and have an opportunity to see who’s got the bigger (and better) robot. A character with an aspect of “Death Defying” wants to be put in Deathly situations that they can Defy.

You’ll notice that some of the sample Aspects in this book have a negative connotation to them, like “Drunkard,” “Gullible,” or “Honest.” Why put something on your sheet that will only make trouble for you? Easy! Trouble is fun, and by taking your favorite kind of trouble as an aspect, you can make sure it will see some time in the game- and even work in your favor later. (See Compelling, below.)

A clever player will often find a way to use negatively phrased aspects to their benefit- perhaps the “Honest” character finds that his reputation precedes him and he’s able to rally the townsfolk against a great evil- one they wouldn’t have believed in, were anyone else to tell them about it!



Aspects can be both useful and dangerous, but they should never be boring. As a rule of thumb, when picking an aspect, think of three situations where you can see the aspect coming into play. If you've got one reasonably positive situation and one reasonably negative situation out of that set, you're golden! If they're all of one type, you may want to reconsider how you've worded your aspect – try to put a little of what's missing in there. Ultimately, though, one aspect that's "all good" or "all bad" isn't that much of a problem, so long as you have a good mix throughout your whole set.

## Jazzing it Up

Aspects are one of the major sources of flavor for your character; they're the first thing a Gamemaster will look at on your sheet when trying to work out what sort of stories to throw you into. This is powerful juju, and the best part is, you are in *total* control of it with the words you choose for your aspect.



Whenever you're writing down the name of an aspect, ask yourself, "how much flavor does this aspect suggest?" If it seems fairly colorless, then you might well be off the mark, and it's time to kick it up a notch. Certainly, don't feel like you have to do this with every aspect you take, but if your character is served up as a bland dish, you may discover that your Gamemaster is at loose ends for keeping him involved in the story.

A few "good – better – best" examples are pictured here.

<b>Bland</b>	<b>Tasty</b>	<b>Bam!</b>
Strong	Strong as an Ox	Man of Iron
Dark Past	Former Cultist	Eye of Anubis
Swordsman	Trained Fencer	Trained by Montcharles

In each of these cases, the "bland" option certainly suggests its uses, but doesn't really jump off the page as something that suggests story. The "tasty" option is certainly better by dint of being more specific; both Gamemaster and player can see some potential story hooks in these, and they serve to differentiate themselves interestingly from their blander predecessors. But the "bam!" options are where it's at.

"Man of Iron" could easily be the phrase others use to identify the character, and suggests more applications than simple strength. "Eye of Anubis" names the cult the character was once a part of, sends the Gamemaster looking to ancient Egypt for some story ideas, and starts to put some NPCs onto the map. "Trained by Montcharles" gives the player plenty of opportunity for flashbacks to his time with Pierre Montcharles, which may include lessons and history that don't *just* have to do with fencing, and also hints at the possibility of Pierre himself showing up in a story down the line. So when you pick an aspect, ask yourself: is this bland, is this tasty, or is this "bam!"?

## Story and Situation

Here's a point to follow on the previous ones: more often than not, aspects tend to divide into another set of two camps – **Story** and **Situation** – and it's a good idea to make sure you have aspects of each type.

**Story** aspects suggest one or more sources for stories involving the character, by bringing in an external element from the world at large. People are almost exclusively story aspects. Props can be, if another party has an interest in them. Phrase aspects *might* be story aspects, but if they are, it's usually because they mix in some elements of the other two Ps. You can most easily identify a story aspect by asking yourself if the aspect, independent of the character, is something other characters might interact with, affect, and change. Strange cults, lost artifacts, enemies, hidden lairs, foreign lands, spouses, and more, all fit into this category.

**Situation** aspects suggest the *kind* of situations a character might be in much more than they suggest the *origin* of those situations. Phrase aspects fall strongly into this camp, and they operate as a statement to the Gamemaster of the style of stories the player wants his character to be in. Phrase aspects like “Nick of Time”, “Stubborn as a Mule”, and “Last Man Standing” all suggest vivid situations – ones which should rightly repeat themselves over the course of playing the character – but don't really suggest the *context* of those situations.

We're taking a few moments to focus on the split between story and situation aspects, because it's an easy one to miss if you're not looking for it. You can very easily fall into the trap of creating a character who only has situation aspects. On the surface, situation aspects may be more attractive, since they usually apply in a multitude of circumstances; certainly, you'll want to have at least a few situation aspects in your repertoire.

But if situation aspects are *all* that your character offers to the game, you run a real risk of being difficult to hook into the bigger storyline. This is why you should be certain to include a few story aspects on your character. Fundamentally, story aspects offer easy hooks to your Gamemaster to pull you into her story. You want this, since you came to the party to play the game. But it's more than just that. By providing story aspects, you've provided some things which exist separately from your character. At the core of it, this means you've helped to build the game world. You've got ownership and stakes in the bigger picture. The Gamemaster will be grateful to you for it, and that kind of gratitude pays out in the form of a more satisfying game.

## Getting on the Same Page

You may have noticed that, so far, I've been talking quite a bit about how your aspects communicate things about your character to the Gamemaster. I mean it. Out of all the things in the game, aspects are probably the clearest message you can send to the Gamemaster about what you want from the game, short of walking right up to the Gamemaster and saying so. Also, in all likelihood, the Gamemaster is going to have copies of your character sheets when you're not around, so the aspects you've picked are going to represent you in absentia. Once you've picked all the aspects for your character, take a step back and look at them as a whole, and ask yourself if they make the kind of representation you'd want them to. If they don't, change them!

By themselves, aspects can't say it *all*, of course, and it's important to remember that. Short of making each aspect a paragraph or essay, you're dealing with a few short, catchy phrases and names here. You want them reasonably short, because you want to be able to talk about them casually without running out of breath.

But the brevity of an aspect's name means some things are left unspoken. Take the time with the Gamemaster to speak these unspoken things when you can. Both the player and the Gamemaster should look at an aspect not as the end of an idea, but the start of one. You're both going to bring your own ideas of what the aspect means to the table and, at least to some extent, you're both right. Usually this works out fine – the combined perspectives make the whole greater than the sum – but sometimes the Gamemaster and the player will have a radically different idea of what the aspect entails. Be clear with one another, and figure out how to iron out any differences – ideally, *before* the fate points start flying.

That said, after you've gotten one or more sessions of play under your belt, you might feel like you've picked one or more aspects that don't "feel right". I'm sympathetic to that, and your Gamemaster should be, too. If an aspect doesn't seem to be working out well for you, you should feel free to ask your Gamemaster if you can change it.

## Aspects in Play

The process of using an aspect begins by declaring that one is relevant. Either the player or the Gamemaster may make this declaration. Then, determine if the aspect's relevance is working for or against the character who has the aspect. As a *general* rule of thumb, if it's *for*, the owner spends a fate point. If it's *against*, the owner gains a fate point unless he pays to avoid it.

This is the guiding principle that all specific uses of aspects – invoking, tagging, compelling – start from. Each type of aspect use has specific rules governing how it functions, but if you ever find yourself confused about from there.

## Invoking Aspects

An aspect can be used to give you a bonus, when that aspect applies to the situation you are in. Doing this requires spending a fate point (see below), and is called invoking the aspect. In this context, the aspect makes the character better at whatever it is he's doing, because the aspect in some way applies to the situation. Invoking an aspect can be used to either:

\*Pick up all the dice you rolled and re-roll them, or

\*Leave the dice alone and add 2 to the result.

It is possible to use more than one aspect on a single roll, but you cannot use the *same* aspect more than once on the same roll or action; even if you've re-rolled the dice, that's still the "same roll".

The Gamemaster has the final say on whether or not an aspect is applicable to a given roll. Generally, when you spend a fate point to invoke an aspect, you want to take the time to describe how you've utilizing your aspect, and describe the awesome stuff you're doing. Not only does this make it clearer why your aspect is related to what's going on, but it is a lot of fun.

## Invoking for Effect

A player can also invoke an aspect for effect, using it for a related benefit. This is an effect that *does not* require a die roll, although

it may open up the ability to make future die rolls. This can be used to make some sort of declaration related to the character's aspect, or bring a character's special abilities to the fore. This will often be used with Special Ability aspects.

For example, a character with a Order of the Golden Skull aspect could invoke his aspect to introduce Golden Skull operatives into the story, or say that they have a lodge in the city. A character with an Amazing Jet Pack could invoke that aspect to be able to use his Jet Pack. A character with an Archmage aspect could use that to cast a spell on his enemies. A character with a companion or sidekick would use it to make their sidekick be present and effective in the scene. If duration is important for the use of a special ability (such as the Jet Pack), the Fate point needs only be spent once each scene.

Note that sometimes additional die rolls may be required after the Invoking for Effect- the Jet Pack character may need to make Drive rolls, and the wizard character may need to make Mystic Lore rolls.

Sometimes, Invoking for Effect will allow a character to use one skill in place of another. For example, a character with the aspect "Mystic Healer" could invoke that aspect to use their Mystic Lore skill in place of Medicine, and a character with "Find the Weak Spot" might use Engineering in place of Fighting when trying to dismantle a rampaging robot.

For special ability and signature equipment aspects, invoking the aspect is required to rely on the special powers of the Aspect. The rule of thumb is- is this someone anyone could do with a high enough skill roll? Or is this something unique and special to the character? In the first case, the character does not need to invoke the aspect; in the second case they do.

Invoking for effect does not add any bonuses to the character's skill roll. If a character has the aspect "Supernaturally Strong" and wants their character to have supernatural strength, they should have a very high Might skill. They can Invoke their "Supernaturally Strong" aspect for a +2 bonus normally, but there's no 'effect' here that needs to be invoked. On the other hand, if the aspect can be used to allow the character to use



Might in a manner not normally appropriate (perhaps to crush a lump of coal into a diamond), that would be a proper use of Invoking for Effect.

Aspects brought into play in this way need to be invoked each scene they are used, and if an aspect is being used in fundamentally different ways- perhaps the Archmage is casting mind control spells one minute, and slinging fireballs the next- it needs to be separately invoked each time. However, the Archmage does not need to pay a Fate point for each individual use of the aspect- just once per unique effect per scene. A character does not need to spend a Fate point to Invoke for Effect when the use of the Aspect only adds color to the narration, such as a "Vampire" describing their unnatural litness and ability to make fang attacks.

*Example:*

*William Cross, vampire secret agent, has the aspect "Vampire." Cross frequently acts with supernatural speed and power. If Cross's player, Ryan, says, "I chase after him with my uncanny vampire speed," no fate point is needed- no special effect is being introduced, but Ryan may spend a point to invoke the Vampire aspect and gain a +2 bonus to the Athletics roll. Later, Cross might try to mesmerize some pesky vampire hunters, invoking his Vampire aspect for effect to be able to use Mystic Lore to supernaturally confuse them.*

*One of Cross's companions, Trapper Joe, is a Werebear. Joe has Endurance, Intimidation, and Might high up on the skill pyramid. If Joe is in bear-form and is doing something tough, scary or strong, Joe makes his skill roll as normal, however the 'Werebear' aspect may be invoked for a +2 bonus. Joe's player only needs to invoke the Werebear aspect for effect if being a bear is intrinsically useful in and of itself, such as when hiding in the wilderness and passing oneself off as 'just another bear.'*

## **Using Other Aspects**

The aspects on your character are not the only aspects that you can potentially use. Your fellow players' characters have aspects, of course, as do some NPCs; sometimes even the scene itself may have aspects, like Dark or Cluttered or On Fire.

To invoke an aspect other than your own, your character needs to directly interact with the object, location, or person that has the aspect you want to invoke, in a way appropriate to the action in progress. This means that if a scene has an aspect of Rigging (since it's on a pirate ship), not only does that mean characters can be described as swinging from the ropes, but characters can invoke the Rigging aspect when they do so. And that leads us to...

## Tagging Aspects

Tagging refers to the act of invoking an aspect that isn't your own; this includes scene aspects and aspects on other characters. In most respects this functions the same way as with an aspect on your own character's sheet – spend the fate point, and get either a +2 bonus or a re-roll.

## Compelling Aspects

An aspect can also allow a player to gain more fate points, by bringing complications and troubling circumstances into his character's life. When this occurs, it's referred to as compelling the aspect. The Gamemaster usually performs compels; when she compels someone's aspect, she's indicating that the character is in a position where the aspect could create a problem. However, players can also perform compels, usually on NPCs. The target whose aspect is compelled usually has the choice of spending a fate point and ignoring the aspect, or taking the consequences and limitations on his choices and receiving a fate point. When the target accepts the fate point, the aspect is officially compelled.

There are a couple of ways an aspect can complicate a character's life. An aspect may limit actions and choice. If a character is given a situation where he would normally have a number of choices, and limiting those choices to act in accordance with his aspect is going to make more trouble for the character, that's grounds to compel the aspect. It's important to note that an aspect may dictate the *type* of action, but it usually shouldn't dictate the *precise* action, which is always the player's decision. In this way, the compel highlights the difficulty of the choices at hand by placing limits on those choices.

*Example:*

*Jack Magnum has found an old warehouse, where two mafia family leaders are having a discreet meeting. While Jack's player is pondering his options, the Gamemaster smiles and passes forward a fate point. "I'll give you a fate point if you go in Both Guns Blazing," compelling his Aspect of the same name.*

An aspect may also *complicate* a situation, rather than directly limiting a character's choices. If everything would be going along normally, and the aspect makes things more difficult or introduces an unexpected twist, that's also grounds for a compel. In some cases, complications may suggest that certain consequences are mandated, such as failing at a particular action – perhaps the character would succeed at a defense roll against a Charm action, but his Gullible aspect is compelled, forcing a failure if accepted.

*Example:*

*Kitty Manx has the Aspect, "I don't want him, You can have him!" While exploring some ancient Egyptian ruins, she comes across the mummified King Atuk-Kut. The Gamemaster smiles and passes forward a fate point. "I'm compelling your I don't want him aspect- I'm thinking King Atuk-Kut falls madly in love with Kitty, and will stop at nothing to have her love."*

## **Self Compels**

Sometimes a player will think of a juicy situation related to one of their aspects that would make life troublesome for them- and it's the kind of trouble they think would be a lot of fun. In this situation, the player should suggest the compel, perhaps noticeably pointing towards or holding a fate point. If the Gamemaster thinks the compel will be fun, he should go ahead and compel it normally.

*Example:*

*Jack Magnum is holed out in front of another warehouse- and he's just gotten off the phone- back up is on the way, but will it get there fast enough? Jack's player smiles and says to the Gamemaster, "Gee, it would be pretty reckless of Jack if he just charged in Both Guns Blazing, don't you think?"*

Sometimes a character will play to his character's aspects in a way that's detrimental without even thinking about or negotiating for a compel. A Gullible character might fall for the most transparent of ruses. When that happens, the Gamemaster should make a note of it (sometimes with the player reminding her) and, if possible, award the player with a fate point retroactively.

It's important that the Gamemaster keep in mind what sorts of things would normally constitute a compel. Compels happen in order to make certain choices or situations more difficult or more dramatic for the compelled character. Certainly, staying in character and playing in a way that's appropriate to a character's aspects should be praised; but it should be rewarded only when the player's aspect-consistent play has actively made his character's choices more difficult.

### **Giving Someone An Aspect**

Often, a character will want to place an Aspect on a character or scene- permanently or temporarily. This is often an opposed roll with another character, or a roll opposed by a difficulty set by the Gamemaster.

Knocking over lanterns in a barn filled with hay to add the Aspect "It's on Fire" is probably a Mediocre difficulty, especially if no one's trying to stop it. Flapping one's arms to try to clear up a "Foggy" aspect is going to be Legendary, if the attempt is even allowed. Trying to add the aspect "On Fire" to another character is going to judiciously involve opposed rolls.

In general, the more severe the Aspect, the greater the penalty to the roll, and the more appropriate to the situation, the greater the bonus.

When a character creates an Aspect, they earn a Free Tag. The next time that character (or any allied) character wishes to Invoke or Compel that aspect, they may do so for free. Some aspects go away after they've been tagged- like "In My Sights" for a sniper getting a bonus to an attack, or compelling a "Cowering in Fear" Aspect to force an enemy to flee for the hills. Others, like "Gaping Chest Wound," might stick around for a while.



## Fate Points

So far there's been quite a bit of talk about Fate Points. To rehash, they can be spent to Invoke Aspects or Resist a Compel, and they can be gained by Accepting a Compel.

Characters normally start with a number of Fate Points- equal to the number of Aspects they have. This number is referred to as the Refresh Rate. Anytime there's been a significant break in the action- usually because a new session started, characters refill their Fate Points up to their Refresh rate. Most Awesome Adventures characters will have ten aspects- and therefore start each session with ten Fate Points.

For those of you keeping score, the Gamemaster can use Fate Points too. Normally, it's not worth worrying about keeping track of those, but if it matters, non-player characters can have their Fate Points calculated in the same way- they get Fate Points equal to their number of Aspects, which they can use to Invoke aspects, but the Gamemaster should always have an unlimited stockpile of points for compels.

## Some Example Aspects

To get a sense of how aspects might be used in play, consider the examples below. These are not "bam!" aspects in most cases, and that's intentional; "bam!" only really works when an aspect is personalized.

### Alien Artifact

The character has a rare piece of alien technology that is not widely understood, but offers great power and potentiality. (Or it might be a magic item, or a superscience gizmo). Make sure you discuss the artifact's abilities with your Gamemaster before play.

**A player might invoke this to:** utilize the artifact's powers (possibly requiring a mystic lore roll), use the artifact to augment his own abilities.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** introduce complications related to the item's powers, like a power drain or side effect, or bring in unscrupulous artifact hunters.

## Anger

The character's rage simmers just below the surface, awaiting opportunity to burst. Sometimes his rage gives him the drive to see things through, but more often it leads him to rash action rather than forethought.

**A player might invoke this to:** Vent his frustration, usually through explosive action towards whatever he's mad at.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** Cause the character to lose his temper at an inappropriate moment. Interfere with any action that requires calm.

## Bookworm

The character is an academic, well versed in all manner of obscure lore. His knowledge, unfortunately, is almost entirely from books, and theory is not always the same as practice.

**A player might invoke this to:** Dig up an obscure fact or other bit of knowledge at the right time. Research like a fiend.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** Cause problems when the character is faced with the need to apply his knowledge under the stress of "real world" conditions.

## Cowardly

The character is a firm believer in the better part of valor, either out of meekness, deep self interest, or some other motivator.

**A player might invoke this to:** Run, hide, or otherwise get away from something dangerous.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** Inspire the character to flee when he really needs to stand his ground.

## Duty

The character owes a duty to some one or thing which should come out of creation. Alternately, the character may simply take all of his responsibilities very seriously.

**A player might invoke this to:** Perform an action which directly

upholds the duty.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** Present a player a choice between upholding his duty or doing something more practical. Raise an issue of responsibility at an inconvenient moment.

## **Family Estate**

This should be given the specific name of the character's family estate, it is a place of rest and refuge from the troubles of the world.

**A player might invoke this to:** Draw upon the resources of the house, introduce connections based on family ties.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** Threaten the house, use the house as the scene of a murder (thus pulling the character in).

## **Priest**

The character is a member of the priesthood, and is expected to support the appropriate dogma, as well as accept whatever duties, responsibilities and powers come with the position.

**A player might invoke this to:** Give a stirring sermon. Resist the powers antithetical to his faith. Attempt to use the resources of his church.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** Deliver inconvenient orders from a superior. Present temptations that contradict the Priest's Dogma. Raise the ire of opposed religions.

## **Self-Destructive**

For whatever reason, the character seeks his own destruction, although he is unwilling to take direct action to do something about it. Instead, he throws himself wholeheartedly into dangerous situations in the hopes that this time will be his last.

**A player might invoke this to:** Help the character do something stupid and dangerous.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** Make the character do something stupid and dangerous.



## Vampire

The character is an undead bloodsucker. Vampire myths vary widely in their descriptions of vampiric powers and weaknesses, so make sure to discuss something like this with your Gamemaster.

**A player might invoke this to:** Help the character do something augmented by vampiric liveness and power. Activate a vampiric power, like turning into a bat or hypnotizing people.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** Send vampire hunters after the character, introduce daytime related activities or consequences, or play off other vampire weaknesses.

## Veteran

The character is the survivor of many battles, and the experience has shaped him. His actions during the Time of Troubles may have occurred while serving in the war. This is appropriate for a seasoned campaigner who has seen many battles.

**A player might invoke this to:** Keep his wits about him in a fight. Assess a tactical situation. Pitch camp in unfriendly country.

**The Gamemaster might compel this to:** Invoke flashbacks. Introduce old rivals from the other side of the battlefield.

## A Big List of Sample Aspects

If those weren't enough, here's a big list to get your imagination started.

A Fistful of Dollars  
Amazonian  
Ancient Mummy Lord  
Asteroid Miner  
Been There, Done That  
Book Worm  
"Bring it!"  
Caught Red Handed  
Dark Elf  
Dark Secrets  
Day Dreamer  
Death Defying

Demon Spawn  
Depths of Space  
Dragon Rider  
Dungeon Delver  
Fastest Gun in the West  
Femme Fatale  
From the Future  
Frostblade  
Great Destiny  
Gullible  
“My Kung Fu is Superior!”  
Mysterious Past  
Nosy  
Nothing Left to Lose  
On the Run  
One Tough Customer  
Overtime  
Pegasus  
Plucky  
Princess of Mars  
Rocket Pack  
SCIENCE!  
Secrets of the Ancients  
Secret Volcano Lair  
Serendipity, Space Freighter  
Strange Luck  
Too Close to Call  
Two Fisted  
Unspoken Love  
War Buddies  
Weregorilla  
World Traveler  
Wyvern Slayer

## Skills in Detail

Skills are one of ways in which Awesome Adventures characters are defined. Whereas Aspects often color *how* and *why* characters do things, skills often determine *what* they do. This chapter focuses on the nuts and bolts of skills- what can be done with them, and how each skill is colored and defined.

### Skills

<b>Name</b>	<b>General Use</b>
Academics	Knowledge/Science
Athletics	Physical
Burglary	Subterfuge
Charm	Social
Contacts	Social
Drive	Vehicles
Empathy	Social/Perception
Endurance	Physical/Resistance
Engineering	Crafts/Science
Fighting	Combat
Guns	Combat
Intimidation	Social
Leadership	Social
Medicine	Knowledge/Science
Might	Physical
Mystic Lore	Knowledge
Perception	Senses
Resolve	Mental/Resistance
Resources	Wealth
Stealth	Subterfuge
Survival	Outdoors

### Universal Skill Applications

Every skill has two different types of uses: active uses and knowledge.

Active Use refers to the standard daily usage of the skill. This is often, but not always, physical in nature. For example, shooting a gun is an Active Use of the Guns skill, and persuading or seducing someone is an Active Use of the Charm skill. Each skill

has its own Active Uses, and they are described under the skill's section in this chapter.

Knowledge refers to a character's knowledge of a topic- an Academician's master of scholarly knowledge, or a Scientist's understanding of physics or biology, but even the most mundane topics- for example, a character skilled with Guns can use his Knowledge of Guns to identify a rare gun by sight- or by the power burns it leaves behind.

Characters can also use their Knowledge of a topic to identify or even add aspects. Knowledge works the same for all skills, but what the character knows may vary.

## **Knowledge**

Knowledge is the act of using one's expertise to deduce facts from observation. With Assessment, the character (and the player) gain information about in-game facts (or Aspects). With Declaration, it is much the same from the character's perspective, only it allows the player to create and introduce new details to the game.

When Assessing a fact or detail, a character makes a roll based on a relevant skill. If another character is attempting to hide or obscure the detail, it is opposed by one of their skills (often Charm or Resolve for social rolls and face to face interaction, or Stealth for physical concealment.). Otherwise, the Gamemaster sets a difficulty level for the roll. (Often, a low difficulty reveals relatively obvious information, and with each increased success level, additional, more obscure information is added.) If the fact isn't particularly obscure or difficult, the difficulty on the Assessment roll is Mediocre.

If the character succeeds on his Assessment attempt, he learns a major detail or Aspect about the subject in question.

Assessment generally takes time to study a scene.

When Declaring a fact or detail, first the player states what the new fact would be- generally, with their character stating it in game as well. The Gamemaster must then consider the new fact, and the impact it would have on the game. New details that would

be clearly disruptive and against the spirit of the game should be vetoed, but for all others, use the following guidelines:

- 1: Is the declaration interesting or funny (within the bounds of genre appropriateness)?
- 2: If the declaration is wrong and acted upon, will there be interesting (or funny) consequences for the character?
- 3: Does the declaration suggest an interesting or heroic course of action?

The difficulty for the declaration starts at Mediocre. Each “no” answer adds two to the difficulty- so a interesting, fun fact that suggests an immediate course of action (which might have fun consequences if wrong!) is very easy, but a boring, dull, safe fact has a difficulty of Fantastic.

If the roll is an attempt to Declare an aspect about another character, use the same guidelines, only instead of a base difficulty of Mediocre, use an opposed roll with that character.

A failed Declaration roll usually has the consequence that the declaring character believes his erroneous declaration, at least until the error of his ways reveal themselves.

### **Combining Skills:**

Sometimes the character needs to perform a task that really requires using two or more skills at once. You never know when a character is going to need to throw a knife (Fighting) while balancing on a spinning log (Athletics) or when he’s going to need to explain germ theory (Medicine) to one of the Dead Gods (Resolve). Sometimes a character will use this to his advantage, bringing in his knowledge of all things magical (Mystic Lore) when trying to pick a magic lock (Burglary).

When this happens, the Gamemaster determines which skill is more important to the matter- this is the primary skill, which the player will roll, but modified by a second skill. If the second skill is of greater value than the first, it grants a +1 bonus to the roll; if the second skill is of a lesser value, it applies a -1 penalty to the roll.

## Helping

A character can use his skills to assist another. This works similarly to combining skills. One character counts as the primary actor, and will end up rolling their skill. A character can accept help from one other character, who must have the same skill or a related skill at the same level or higher. Help adds a +1 bonus to the roll.

## The Skills

### Academics

*“See the inverted chevrons in this bas-relief? It’s clearly an ancient form of Martian. Luckily, I’ve been brushing up on some of proto-Martian’s trickier conjugations.”*

Academics is a measure of the character’s accumulated knowledge, especially that dealing with educated or scholarly fields of study, such as history, sciences, linguistics, or art. Academics often will overlap with other skills, such as Medicine, or Mystic Lore. Academics is often possessed by professors, scholars, scientists, artists, and annoying know-it-alls.

#### Active Uses:

Academics main use is Knowledge, but it has several Active Uses. The first is research; if a character makes a failed Knowledge assessment roll, a character with Academics may re-roll the failed knowledge skill roll. This applies to any failed knowledge roll, not just one based on Academics.

Academics covers languages. At Mediocre, a character speaks only his native tongue. For each level of Academics above Mediocre, the character fluently speaks one additional language. You don’t have to decide all the languages a character speaks immediately- you can wait until it’s relevant in play to make the decision. The character can also get by in languages he’s not fluent in with an Academics roll- understanding simple phrases common to travelers like “where is the bathroom” is usually a Mediocre difficulty. Catching the finer points of a theological text in a dead Atlantean language would likely be Superb, or higher.

When using Academics to make a piece of art, roll- the result is the quality of the resulting work. If a character is attempting to craft a piece of art to gain an emotional response- such as singing a beautiful sonata that will calm a murderous crowd, or writing a biting satire to shame the duke, use the rules for social conflict.

Knowledge:

Academics will most often be used for knowledge rolls, covering book-learning and scholarly lore. When in doubt, if it's a knowledge roll, Academics is usually a safe bet.

### **Athletics**

*"You know what I always say: A marathon's not a marathon until ninjas attack."*

Athletics is a measure of the character's general physical fitness, grace, and agility. Professional athletes are the most likely characters to have high athletics scores, but so will career soldiers.

Active Uses:

Anytime a character is involved in a sport, or physical race, an athletics roll is the order of the day. Athletics can be used anytime climbing, jumping, or falling is involved. It can also be used to dodge incoming attacks.

It's important for the Gamemaster to make sure failed athletics rolls are interesting and fun- if there's a vast bottomless chasm, and the bad guys are getting away, it's not fun if a failed roll means a fall down the pit. Perhaps the hero is clutching a ledge with one hand, as crumbling rocks scatter into the abyss below him, and his ray gun is just out of reach... now that's excitement!

Knowledge:

Rules for sports, obscure physical tests and challenges, sports trivia.

## **Burglary**

*“The Gem of Benefice in the Great Cathedral is a fake, but the Hierarch doesn’t know that. We need to sneak in, evade the Temple Guards, and replace it with this- the real Gem of Benefice. Any questions?”*

Burglary covers thievery, knowledge of locks and security systems, assessing them, overcoming them, or preventing intrusion. Characters with high Burglary scores include cunning cops, master thieves, and private eyes.

### Active Uses:

Burglary’s main active use is overcoming locks and security measures. Most locks that a character encounters are only Mediocre difficulty, but certain locks may provide some more opposition. When breaking into a building with security measures put in place by another character, opposition is generally the defending character’s Burglary or Engineering (if he designed or built them himself) or Resources (if he instead purchased the best money could buy.) Burglary can also be used to find, detect, and disarm traps of all kinds.

A character attempting to pick another’s pocket, or steal an item while others are looking, would roll Burglary opposed by Perception.

Burglary often needs tools- a character without them will find himself at a penalty. Generally, a character should be given the benefit of the doubt when planning a job, but penalties might be assessed for, say, a spur of the moment safe-cracking.

### Knowledge:

Burglars often know about criminal techniques, criminal syndicates and guilds, latest crime-stopping and security measures, and heist techniques. Burglary is also often used to Assess a scene- if a character is planning to break into someplace, they’ll often case it before hand to see what Aspects it has, or find (or Declare) some weaknesses that can be exploited.



## **Charm**

*“Would I lie to you?”*

Charm is the art of winning friends and making a good impression. It is the social skill used when trying to influence people by being nice to them- whether that means telling them the truth, or what they want to hear. A character with a good Charm skill is popular and well liked.

### **Active Uses:**

Charm can be used to make a positive impression on another character, seduce them, or negotiate for them to do what you want. It can be used as a social attack skill, through clever bargaining, and get someone to go along with your plans. It can also befuddle someone, placing consequences on them. (See the How to Run a Social Conflict rules.) Charm is often opposed by Resolve, or Charm if the other party is being charming in return.

When lying to someone, Charm is often used as a Social Attack, tricking another into acting according to a well placed lie. When used this way, it can't force someone into acting against their essential nature. Honorable men can't be talked into doing something against their personal convictions with deceitful lies, but they can be tricked into thinking that something isn't against their code of conduct (those goods aren't stolen, those men are guilty of a crime, that woman is really innocent, etc.) See the How to Run Social Conflict rules. Charm is usually opposed by Empathy when used in this way.

Remember, Charm is based on social niceties and etiquette. A character that is being threatening or abusive will get hefty penalties to his roll, if he can even roll at all.

### **Knowledge:**

Characters with Charm will know the ins and outs of etiquette, all the latest gossip, and who's-who. They'll know where the best spots for a romantic rendezvous, or where they can get thirteen purple roses on short notice. When chatting up a friendly character, Charm can be used to Assess for rumors- gaining knowledge of events, or getting the character to confide a little bit

of himself.

## **Contacts**

*“Emperor Feng has returned from the Q Dimension? Get me the phone immediately- I have to alert the President!”*

Contacts is the ability to find out things from people and get in touch with people. The character is always in touch with the latest rumor, and has friends and associates just about everywhere. Characters with high Contacts skill include business executives, private eyes, reporters, and spies.

### Active Uses:

With contacts, a character can search for rumors, or plant one himself. On a contacting roll to find rumors, the character should find out *some* information, and on a really good roll, should get a major clue. If a character plants a rumor, it should come back in the game in some form or another- the greater the result on the contacting roll, the more credence people give to the rumor, and the wider it has spread.

A character can use his Contacts skill, and some time, to gain an audience with a hard-to-reach individual. The difficulty depends on the levels of insulation the person puts up between themselves and the world. A simple clerk or low level functionary in a public organization is Mediocre to contact. A low level functionary in a secret society might be Fair to contact. Corporate CEOs, heads of state, potent crime lords, and space warlords are Superb- higher if they are particularly paranoid or have enmity towards the character.

A good rule of thumb is to take the highest of the character's Contacts, Leadership, or Resources- this is the base difficulty to target the character.

### Knowledge:

Who's-who, goings on in the street, who to talk to in order to get things done. With Contacts, one might assess another to determine who they know.

## **Drive**

*“Hang onto your seats- we’re in for some chop- and also gunfire.”*

Drive is the ability to operate vehicles, no matter how crazy- cars, boats, planes, airships, chariots, and spaceships. Drive is a step above and beyond normal Sunday driving- this is the crazy stunt driving. Characters with Drive include getaway, race car, or stunt drivers, and ace pilots.

### **Active Uses:**

Normally, a character doesn’t need to roll drive to get from Point A to Point B, unless there is some Point C along the way that is a ninja ambush. For a car chase (or one using other vehicles), see the detailed rules in How to Run a Car Chase. Otherwise, Drive can be used to pull some fancy and impressive stunts, or even run someone over in a fight.

A character with high Drive also knows quite a bit about the workings of vehicles- enough to get by in a pinch when repairs are needed. Drive may be used like Engineering, but only to repair vehicles, and aided by the character’s Engineering skill.

### **Knowledge:**

Types of cars, rare vehicles, identifying a car by the sound it makes when it drives past, obscure driving laws, shortcuts, filing a flight plan.

## **Empathy**

*“Every time someone mentions the Incan gold, Dr. Mortimer nervously rubs the ring on his left hand. I believe he knows more than he’s letting on- much, much more.”*

Empathy is a skill at reading people- their emotions, their intentions, and perhaps their secrets. Characters with good empathy include counselors, gamblers, and reporters.

### **Active Use:**

Empathy can be used to resist Charm- one with Empathy can see through someone’s lies and bluffs. Empathy’s strongest use,

however, is in reading people's emotions.

Knowledge:

With Assessment, Empathy can be used to discern a target's emotional state, or even determine one of their aspects. In this case, Empathy is usually opposed by Charm, a character's ability to keep a good poker face and hide their true motives. With a Declaration, one can invent an aspect, or decide a target's emotional state.

### **Endurance**

*"If you thought fifteen slugs in the chest would bring me down, you're in for some painful disappointment."*

Endurance is a measure of the character's physical stamina, and ability to shrug off fatigue, pain, disease, poison, torture, and even physical wounds. Characters likely to have high Endurance skills include athletes and soldiers.

Active Uses:

Endurance is normally rolled to resist fatigue or shrug off a poison, with a difficulty based on the strenuousness of the task or the virulence of the poison. On a failure, the character takes a Consequence. (See *How to Do Stuff*, for more on consequences.) Endurance can also be used in combat situations to shrug off blows, he's taking the hits, he just doesn't care.

Knowledge:

A character with endurance likely has knowledge of stamina building exercises, and with Assessment, should be able to size up a potential foe to know just how tough they are.

### **Engineering**

*"How do you stop a fifty story robot? Get a bigger robot!"*

Engineering is an understanding of machines and machinery-how they work, how to fix them, how to make them, and how to break them. Mechanics, scientists, and inventors are the most

likely candidates to have a high Engineering skill.

#### Active Uses:

Engineering can be used to design, fix, or build just about any machine or gizmo.

If a machine has been damaged and is in need of repairs, Engineering can repair it, removing Consequences in place on the machine. (See How to Do Stuff for more on Consequences.)

When designing or building a machine, determine what it's meant to do. When you roll Engineering, the result is the rating of the machine- a Mediocre machine isn't very good for what it's meant to do, but a Superb machine is just about perfect.

Things like traps and security systems that are autonomous roll their machine rating just like a skill whenever they are used, often opposing some other roll. Machines that are tools to be used, like ray-guns, count as complimentary skills towards the user's relevant skill- Guns, in this case.

If a character designs a machine and another character later builds it off a blueprint, the first character is considered to be helping the second.

#### Knowledge:

Machines, analyzing the function of a device, telling who built a device, where to get strange parts.

### **Fighting**

*"My Unyielding Dragon Kung Fu is superior!"*

Fighting includes all types of hand-to-hand armed or unarmed combat- martial arts, boxing, street scrapping, fencing, and training with exotic melee weapons. Kung Fu masters, brawlers, fencers, and petty thugs all have skill levels in Fighting.

#### Active Uses:

The primary use of Fighting is attacking people in combat, and defending yourself. See How to Run a Fight for rules on combat.

A character might also use this skill to show off his martial arts training to impress someone, or keep their weapons in working order- oiled, sharpened, and fully charged.

Knowledge:

Martial arts or fencing styles, famous martial artists, pugilists, and weapon masters, rare weapons, weapon ordinances.

## **Guns**

*"I count sixteen goons, but I've only got fifteen bullets. Looks like I'm gonna have to get creative."*

If it's a ranged weapon, a character with Guns can shoot it. Fantasy characters might know this skill by the name Archery. Characters with high guns skill include hit men, archers, and soldiers.

Active Uses:

The primary use of Guns is shooting people. See How to Run a Fight for rules for combat. Remember that in addition to personal firearms, Guns is used for things like mounted vehicle weapons, submarine torpedoes, and spaceship laser arrays.

A character with Guns also knows how to keep his guns in working order. Guns may be used like Engineering, but to repair guns. Engineering aids the Guns roll for repairs.

Knowledge:

Anything a gun-nut should know: firearms make and models, ammunition calibers, identifying a specific weapon by the sound it makes when firing.

## Intimidation

*“The Duke is a very powerful man, with many... resources. It would be wise to heed his advice, lest something... unfortunate happen.”*

Intimidation is the skill of causing fear in others. Sometimes it's subtle, with veiled threats or a menacing glare, and sometimes it's direct, mean, and brutal. Intimidation can get a mugger to rethink his plans, or coerce someone into doing your bidding. Characters with high Intimidation scores include bodyguards, bullies, crooked cops, mafia men and thugs.

### Active Uses:

Intimidation is used for causing fear. It's considered a social attack skill, so you can use it on someone to force them to do your bidding, opposed by their Resolve. If you win, either must give in, or take consequences. (See How to Run a Social Conflict). Intimidation can also make someone back down, or make a powerful but gruff first impression. Intimidation is generally a contested roll, opposed by resolve.



Two things to keep in mind: one is that people don't like being Intimidated. Intimidation is often very successful in the short term, but may have long term consequences. Second, is that Intimidation is predicated on fear. A character Intimidating from a position of power will often have a bonus, and one trying to frighten a better armed, better connected foe will be at a penalty. But for the roll to even be made, some sort of justification for fear needs to be present.

## **Leadership**

*"Johnson, take your men and flank to the left. Connors, you're going right. Milton, I'm going to need some heavy, heavy suppression fire. Sgt. Friedman, you're with me. We're going straight down the middle."*

Leadership allows a character to run an organization and inspire his staff. It is also used by commanders to lead their troops. Efficient managers, able commanders, and villainous masterminds all have leadership.

Active Use:

Leadership can always be used as a helping skill, no matter the situation. It can also be used in Social Conflicts, but only against one of the character's subordinates.

When the organizational discipline or functionality of an organization led by a character is at question, the character's Leadership may be rolled.

Knowledge:

Ins-and-outs of organizations the character is a member or leader of, or comes into contact with, protocol, bureaucracy, allied or rival organizations.

## **Medicine**

*"Drink this. Yak liver elixir. It invigorates, energizes, rejuvenates, and exfoliates. The only downside is that it tastes like yak liver."*

Medicine is a character's knowledge of human (or inhuman) anatomy and biology, and what to do when that anatomy is in



peril. A character with medicine knows a thing or two about first aid, and an expert may even be a doctor.

Active Uses:

The primary use of Medicine is removing physical Consequences, see How To Do Stuff for full rules on Consequences. Medicine can also diagnose (assess) a character's illness, wounds, or a poison. Less scrupulous medics might even use their knowledge to craft a poison- the result of the Medicine roll would be the difficulty on an Endurance roll to resist the poison.

Medicine can also cover a character's knowledge of life sciences, like biology and botany.

Knowledge:

Medicine, hospitals, poisons, experimental treatments, rare drugs and herbs.

## **Might**

*"Watch out, Altaria 7 is a high-gravity world. Make sure you lift with your legs, not with your back."*

Raw physical power and muscle are the purview of Might. Lifting, breaking, heaving, these are acts of might. Weightlifters, strongmen, and heavy laborers rely on their Might scores.

Active Uses:

Might has two main uses: breaking stuff and lifting stuff. If a character is trying to break something, and has enough time on their hands, they'll eventually be able to do so- in this case, rolling Might is mostly a manner of how fast one's able to break it open. Sturdy wood might be a Good roll to quickly break, whereas a Bank Vault might be Legendary.

For lifting stuff, rather than having a chart of weight lists and capacity, eyeball the basic difficulty of the task. Generally, it's harder to pick something up and move with it than it is to just pick it up, and it's harder to throw something than it is to move with it.

A car crushing a trapped child might have a weight of Great to lift, and Epic to lift and move.

In a physical conflict where Might plays a major roll, both sides would use Might as a supplementary skill. Might can also be used for pins and holds in combat.

Knowledge:

Weight-lifting techniques, world records, feats of strength, lifting with your legs. Sizing up others to determine how strong they are.

### **Mystic Lore**

*“Look at the fine illumination on these scrolls- I believe they hold coded spell formulae- and worse, that the Archmage himself is a necromancer.”*

Mystic Lore is knowledge of the occult and the strange, the truths that society at large is unwilling to accept, or are closely guarded by the elite few. The archmage of the wizard’s guild, the ‘crackpot’ theorist at the new age book store, or the robed space wanderer with an energy sword and knowledge of a universal life force all have the Mystic Lore skill.

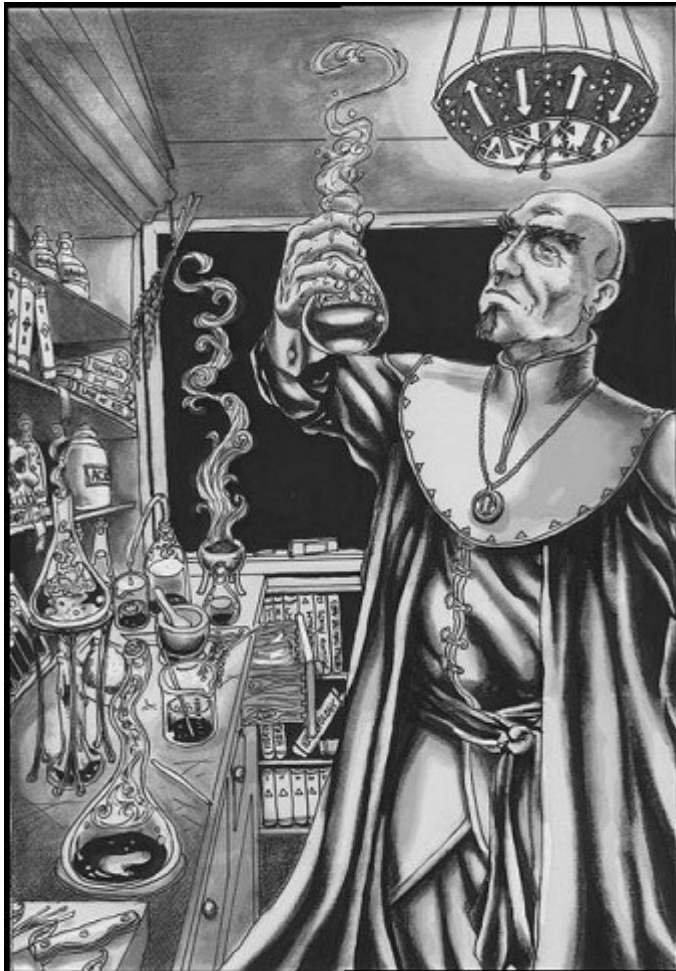
Active Use: A character who has Mystic Lore may have some special arcane or magical abilities. If they do, they need to be represented by Aspects, and require the expenditure of a Fate Point for their use. Once they’ve been activated for a scene, Mystic Lore is usually rolled to control or use those abilities. If you take a mystic ability as a player, make sure everyone is on board with the types of things that are likely to result- although it’s not necessary, for example, to detail every single spell a master wizard knows, but it’s a good idea to define his idiom, what his common spells are, and what he needs to do to cast a spell.

Like Academics, Mystic Lore can be used to research the answer to a failed knowledge roll, but only knowledge rolls based on Mystic Lore.

Knowledge:

In many ways, Mystic Lore is like Academics, but for magical and

occult knowledge. Some common knowledge uses include identifying magical effects, knowledge of magical histories and famous magics, blessed or enchanted items, and secret truths about the world.



### **Perception**

*“Ladies and gentlemen, I still have a number of shocking revelations. The first: the killer is still in this very room!”*

Perception is a measure of the character’s alertness, awareness of his surroundings, ability to methodically search for clues, and resistance to surprise. Bodyguards, criminals, scouts, private detectives, and watchmen often possess Perception.

## Active Uses:

Anytime a character is searching or actively looking for details, or when characters enter an unfamiliar area under tense circumstances, it's time for a Perception roll. A low difficulty should generally be set, with a success providing broad information, and little details being present on critical successes. If there's something to be found, the character should get something to go on. Even on a failed roll, a player should get some information- no one's completely ignorant of their surroundings.

If a character is looking for hidden people or objects, a Perception roll opposed by Stealth is in order. The Gamemaster can call for a Perception roll at a penalty if there's something hidden- like an ambush- and there's a chance the character might notice, even though he's not specifically looking.

## Knowledge:

Assessing details or a scene is a great use for Perception. A character can find out all kinds of details in this way.



## **Resolve**

*“The yakuza killed my parents. They burned my home to the ground. They killed my fiancée. They killed my dog. They have left me with nothing left to lose.”*

Grit. Courage. Tenacity. A character with Resolve can withstand coercion and trickery, and persevere in the face of opposition.

Active Uses:

Resolve is mostly used to allow a character to keep a cool and clear head. It is used to resist a number of social skills, such as Charm and Intimidation. Under a particularly stressful situation, the Gamemaster might call for a Resolve roll- on a failure, the character may suffer a Complication.

## **Resources**

*“Simply the best money can buy.”*

Resources measures a character's wealth and assets, and their ability to bring them to bear. A character with high resources doesn't just have the best things money can buy- he might have things money can't buy. Industry moguls, guild lords, landed nobility, and playboy billionaires all have high resources.

Active Uses:

The biggest use of Resources is spending money. A character with high Resources can pretty much spend as they choose and live the high life, without worrying too much. Resources rolls should mostly be used when buying something is time intensive, or the item is truly extravagant. Characters with high Resources should have a home base to call their own, ranging from posh high rise apartments, to secret volcanic lairs.

For rolls where throwing money around to grease palms might help (like Charm or Contacts), Resources can be used as a supplementary skill.

Gadgets, detailed under Engineering, can be purchased with Resources, however this takes time to find a supplier. A

character with Superb resources should *not* start the game with an extensive list of Superb quality equipment, but should be able to pick up ‘the best money can buy’ when he has time to prepare.

Knowledge:

Smart investments, financial news, stock options, commodities appraisal, market trends, other wealthy individuals. A character can use Assessment to determine another's general level of wealth, picking up fashion, style, or subtler clues.

## **Stealth**

*“I can disappear anywhere there's a shadow... even my own.”*

Stealth is the art of not being seen- or heard. Stealthy characters can get in and out of wherever they're going with no one the wiser, or they can hide and conceal objects, using concealment or misdirection. Thieves, scouts, stage magicians, and assassins are all characters that rely on Stealth.

Active Uses:

Stealth is typically rolled because one character is hiding from another. The sneaking character rolls Stealth, and any onlookers roll Perception. The less light, more cover, and more distractions, the higher the Stealthy character's bonus. On the flip side, searchers get a bonus if there is ample light, wide open spaces, and few distractions.

Stealth can also be used to hide an item. The character makes a Stealth roll, setting the difficulty for others to find the item later.

Knowledge:

Hiding spots, camouflage, new advances in covert operations technology. A character could use Assessment to find likely hiding spots, for purposes of hiding himself or another, or even for determining where enemies would most likely be hiding. A character can Declare that a hiding spot exists, ideal for setting up an ambush or stashing ill-gotten gains.

## Survival

*“Look at these tracks. Three scouts passed by here- Legion. Two men, one woman. One of the men smokes. The other dyes his hair.”*

Whether it's the great outdoors, the land of the dead, or a hostile planet, Survival governs getting along in harsh climates, terrains, and environs. Survival also covers general wilderness lore and aptitude with animals. Explorers, hunters, animal trainers, noble savages, and rugged adventurers all find uses for Survival.

### Active Uses:

When making one's way through harsh or untamed terrain, Survival is used to find one's way, avoid getting lost, and find food. The more rugged the terrain, the more difficult the roll. Failure should result in exciting complications like catching exotic diseases, getting caught in natural hazards, or meeting hostile natives.

When handling animals, use Survival, often opposed by the Resolve of the animal in question if it is resistant to the character's commands. A character riding an animal uses Survival much as a character would use Drive for a car, although an untamed steed would warrant a penalty.

### Knowledge:

Wilderness survival knowledge, which plants are good to eat and which are poisonous, animal identification, local tribal customs. A character could use Assessment to determine any of that, what the weather is likely to be soon, or use a Declaration to determine local weather conditions and animal behaviors.





## How To Do Stuff

Characters in your games are going to do a lot. For most things they do, there's no real need for rules. Characters can stand, walk, talk, go shopping and otherwise do normal things without needing to roll dice. They can even take actions that use their skill, like driving to work, without worrying about the dice. The dice only come out when there is an interesting challenge with meaningful consequences.

On the simplest level, when a character rolls the dice, if he matches or exceeds the difficulty- how hard the task is, he succeeds; if he doesn't, he fails. When the issue is simple, then this may be all that's necessary, but sometimes you also need to know how well a character did or did not do. Clearly, if a character rolls three higher than the target, that's better than rolling only one higher.

The result of the roll is called the effort. Each point that the effort beats the difficulty by is one shift. If a roll is below the target difficulty, it's a failure and it generates no shifts – there are no “negative” shifts (if you flip the perspective, the opposition could be said to generate shifts – but this is rarely relevant). If a roll matches the target difficulty, it is a success but generates no shifts. If it beats it by one, it generates one shift; if it beats it by two it generates two shifts, and so on. A group of three shifts is called a Critical Success.

### Simple Actions

Simple actions are rolled against a difficulty set by the Gamemaster and are used to simply see if a character can do something, and possibly how well he can do it. The Gamemaster describes the situation and the player chooses a skill to apply to it, and rolls against a difficulty determined by the Gamemaster. Some sample simple actions include:

- \*Climbing a wall
- \*Looking up an obscure fact
- \*Searching a crime scene for fingerprints
- \*Shooting a (non-character) target

For simple actions, shifts often represent doing a task faster, sneakier, or better.

## Setting Difficulties

For any Simple Action, the Gamemaster will have to determine a difficulty for the roll. Rather than having a stock list of difficulties for each skill to be referenced in play, there are some rough guidelines, allowing Gamemasters to better facilitate speedy play, and eyeball challenges as they arrive.

If a task is easy enough that a completely normal person with only modest competence should succeed more often than not, but could reasonably fail a fair portion of the time, the difficulty should be **Mediocre**. This is the bottom of the barrel here. Player characters will almost always succeed against a Mediocre roll, especially if they have a relevant skill- what's interesting is how many shifts they get. (Drive Example: Parallel parking, without having to pull in and out and in and out.)

Anytime you increase the difficulty from Mediocre, you are making failure more likely. That's ok, but you need to make sure that failure would be cool and interesting. (If it wouldn't be, why are you rolling?)

**Average** rolls are a little harder. The rank and file person is going to see some difficulty here, but can reasonably have a decent chance of success. If they put a lot of time or energy into it, success is likely. Someone who knows their stuff will blow through it. (Medicine Example: Knowing where the first aid kit is.)

**Fair** kicks things up a notch. Would the difficulty of the task give a normal person pause? Could they still feasibly succeed? Might someone skilled typically succeed, but have some challenge? (Athletics Example: Running a five minute mile.)

With **Good** rolls, things are tough. Highly skilled people can generally do Good tasks in a routine fashion. Average Joe will have some trouble. (Burglary Example: Picking the typical key lock, with the proper tools.)

For a normal person, a **Great** roll is a one-in-a-hundred longshot. A true expert though, will usually come out ahead. This is a good difficulty for tough rolls that people in their element should still come out ahead. (Might Example: Lifting a car off of a trapped child.)

**Superb.** Ah, Superb. Without major time, effort, and expenditure of fate chips, for the normal person, it just isn't going to happen. But for people who are the best in the world at what they do (i.e. those player characters), it is well within the realm of possibilities. Is it a little bit fantastic, but mostly reasonable (or at least genre-appropriate?) If so, Superb is a good difficulty choice. (Academics Example: Making a convincing forgery of the Mona Lisa.)

You want to think carefully before introducing difficulties above Superb. This says to your players: "this is so hard, it's hard even for the best people in the world," and "failure is a possibility." Don't do this just to frustrate or hinder them- do it because they are asking for a lot with their roll. If the squirm, meet them halfway- see if you can find a lower difficulty, with lower results, that would be acceptable.

**Fantastic** should be your base go-to above Superb difficulty. Is what's being proposed completely over the top? Is it awesome? Is it genre appropriate? Is it technically feasible? Superb characters will fail Fantastic rolls more often than they succeed (barring Fate Points), but they have a decent chance of success. (Guns Example: Shooting an arrow down the center of another arrow.)

**Epic** difficulties are big, hard, and rough. Is the player asking for something really really absurd, difficult, or insane? But still, deep down, you can see how it's cool? But you need to make them sweat to earn it? Superb characters might succeed without Fate chips, but it's not that likely. (Academics Example: Translating a text of a dead language... which you've never seen before.)

**Legendary** difficulties is as high as it gets. (Sure, you might get a difficulty higher than that from an opposed roll, but you should never set one as a Gamemaster. Would the successful result live on in history? Would the failed attempt live on in history for the sheer audacity? Is the action technically impossible, but still cool? Legendary it is. (Engineering Example: Building a perpetual motion machine.)

## Contests

Contests are very much like simple actions, except the action is in direct opposition to someone else and easily resolved one way or another. Rather than setting a difficulty, each party rolls the appropriate skill, and the outcome is resolved as if the high roll had beaten a difficulty equal to the low roll. A tie means both succeed, but whether that means the outcome is a tie or if it calls for another roll depends on the situation. Some sample contests include:

- \*An arm wrestling match
- \*A footrace
- \*A shouting match
- \*A quick fight

## Conflicts

Conflicts are what happens when two or more characters are involved in a high-stakes conflict that is worth an extra level of detail. When many characters are acting at once, many things are happening, and (often, but not necessarily) violence is involved, the Conflict rules may be useful.

Conflicts break up the larger conflict into a number of smaller rolls, usually Contests or Simple Actions.

There are two types of ways to handle Conflicts: the Big Roll, or Cinematic Detail.

### The Big Roll

For the Big Roll, you put the outcome of the entire conflict on one roll. Usually, everyone will narrate what characters are doing in the early stages of the conflict, and then you'll roll to determine the outcome, and everyone will get to narrate the specifics of their success or failure. This works like a helping roll, only everyone involved gets to help.

This works best when used for encounters that you don't want to spend a lot of time on mechanically, but let everyone shoot the breeze and look cool. It can be useful for fights against hordes of mooks. It also works well if you don't want the dice to get in the

way of roleplaying- you can have a big social scene, make a high-stakes die roll in the middle, and go from there.

To make the big roll, after everyone's stated what they are doing, figure out appropriate skills, and have everyone roll. Take the highest roll on the side, and add +1 for every roll of the same success level. Whichever side has the higher success level wins the conflict. Additionally, every member of the losing side takes a Consequence based on the margin of success. (See Consequences, below.)

If everyone's depending on one key character, you can have them roll their skill for the group result, and everyone else rolls what they're using to support. If they match or exceed the key character's skill result, add +1 success level to the group result.

## **Cinematic Detail**

In Cinematic Detail, everyone takes turns acting and trying to accomplish their goals. Going around the table, the Gamemaster asks everyone what they're doing, what they're trying to accomplish it, and how they're doing it. Then everyone will go ahead and make some rolls, with the results of the rolls providing progress on each player's actions. If the conflict is resolved at that point, the characters will move on to other things; otherwise the action will continue for another round. Generally, the conflict will continue until all characters on one side of it have been removed from play, either by taking Critical Consequences or by Conceding Defeat.

This works best if you have a climactic showdown that you want to play out in detail, or if the stakes are high.

## **Doing Stuff To People**

It's been said before, but characters can place aspects on other characters or the scene- itself permanently or temporarily. This is often an opposed roll with another character, or a roll opposed by a difficulty set by the Gamemaster. Doing so is called a Maneuver.

Knocking over lanterns in a barn filled with hay to add the aspect "It's on Fire" is probably a Mediocre difficulty, especially if no one's trying to stop it. Flapping one's arms to try to clear up a

“Foggy” aspect is going to be Legendary, if the attempt is even allowed. Trying to add the aspect “On Fire” to another character is going to judiciously involve opposed rolls.

In general, the more severe the aspect, the greater the penalty to the roll, and the more appropriate to the situation, the greater the bonus.

When a character creates a temporary Aspect, they earn a Free Tag. The next time that character (or any allied) character wishes to Invoke or Compel that aspect, they may do so for free. Some aspects go away after they’ve been tagged- like “In My Sights” for a sniper getting a bonus to an attack, or compelling a “Cowering in Fear” aspect to force an enemy to flee for the hills.

Generally, if the margin of success on the Maneuver roll was two or less, the aspect can only be tagged once, and should be something situation. On a Critical Success, the temporary aspect will generally last until the end of the scene, or until someone makes a maneuver to try and remove the aspect.

Others, like “Gaping Chest Wound,” might stick around for even longer- these are special kind of Aspect, known as a Consequence, and require a special kind of action- an Attack.

## **Consequences**

When the opposed action is violent, or particularly stressful, the aspects involved are usually consequences. Whereas most aspects stick around for a few rolls or a scene at most, consequences can persist longer.

When physically or verbally attacking a character, all a character needs to bestow a Consequence is a success on an opposed roll. This is enough to bestow a Mild Consequence. For every Critical Success (three shifts) generated, the consequence is shifted up one level- first to Moderate, then Severe, then Critical.

If you are inflicting a consequence on a character, and they already have a consequence of the same level, upgrade the consequence one level. The exception is Mild Consequences- a character can take two Mild Consequences, and will start

upgrading to Moderate on the third consequence taken.

Consequences never apply any penalties or game effects to the character, however they are often tagged or compelled. More severe consequences open themselves up to more severe compels. Note that unlike Aspects created with maneuvers or other actions, Consequences do not earn a free tag.

*Example:*

*Gwendolen the Ravager has taken a Moderate Consequence in a fight- Big Slash Across Arm. Any 'attack' roll that hits her would inflict a Mild Consequence. One that hits by six or nine would do a Severe or Critical Consequence, respectively. An attack that hits by three would normally inflict a Moderate Consequence, but since Gwendolen already has one, that attack would instead upgrade to a Severe hit.*

The content of a consequence should be discussed with all players involved. The Gamemaster has the final say on what counts as a fair consequence. Generally speaking, a Mild Consequence is minor and limited in scope- bruises, gashes, etiquette gaffs, or embarrassment. Left to it's own, a Mild Consequence will fade at the end of a scene, unless a character has no opportunity to rest.

Moderate Consequences are a more lasting physical or mental injury. Some broken bones, large cuts, a major faux pas, or major mental stress. A character needs a few hours, around four to six, to rest, relax, and refresh. This may mean getting sleep in a comfortable bed, spending time with a charming member of the opposite sex, reading by the fire, or anything else of that ilk, so long as it's appropriate to the consequence. An afternoon of hiking might be a great way to get past a Heartbreak consequence, but it's not a great choice for a Bad Ankle.

Severe Consequences are potent physical injuries, lingering mental scars, or social ostracisms. Severe consequences require substantial downtime, measured in days or weeks. Generally this means that such a consequence will linger for the duration of a session, but will be cleared up before the next adventure begins.

A Critical Consequence has the potential to completely take a

character out of the action, and possibly change them dramatically. With a Critical Consequence, you can declare a character dead, missing an arm, knocked out and captured, gibbering insane, exiled and declared an enemy of state, or filled with murderous rage. A Critical Consequence puts a character in your power in some way.

It's up to the Gamemaster if a Critical Consequence can ever recover. Once a character's dead, they're dead (barring highly unusual circumstances.) A character that's knocked out will eventually wake up. With sufficient magic or technology, a missing arm can be replaced. One might clear their name through great deeds. In long-term play, Critical Consequences should become permanent aspects on the character's sheet.

## **Consequences for Big Rolls**

When using the Big Roll to resolve a conflict, each member of the losing side takes a Consequence based on the margin of victory. The consequence suffered can be the same for each individual character, or it might be different.

*Example:*

*A bunch of thugs are trying to capture the princess, and only the Royal Guard can stop them! Unfortunately, the thugs got a Superb result on their combine roll, compared to the Fair result of the Guard. This is a margin of victory of three, so each member of the Guard will be taking a Moderate Consequence.*

## **Conceding Defeat**

Sometimes it's obvious that you're in the thick of a fight you can't win. Sometimes the opposition is just better, or they got lucky and took out your backup, but the fight isn't worth carrying out. When that happens, it can be time to throw in the cards and call it a day.

Anytime a character is taking a Mild, Moderate, or Severe Consequence as a result of an attack, they may choose to Concede Defeat- they are Taken Out, but on their own terms. They are removed from the conflict in whatever way is relevant, without taking any lasting Consequences.



*Example:*

*A giant alien bouncer is keeping Lance Lightning and his friends out of the Nebula Club. Lance tries to bluff his way past, getting a Superb result on his Deceit roll, compared to the bouncer's measly Mediocre result. The bouncer is about to take a Moderate Consequence, but wisely chooses to Conceal Defeat and let Lance into the club.*

A character may choose to Conceal Defeat between rounds of a conflict, without having to wait for a successful attack roll. This is normally done when defeat is clear, to avoid gaining Consequences.

*Example:*

*Things are looking really dire for Lance Lightning. The Nebula Club turned out to be a trap, and Lance's companions have all been subdued and captured. Seeing the writing on the wall, Lance drops his pistol and puts his hands up. Looks like the slimy aliens win this one...*

## **Removing Consequences with Skills**

Medicine can be used to heal physical wounds. Empathy can be used to provide consolation and tend to depression and other mental anxieties. Contacts can help repair a character's reputation. Characters with high Endurance tend to heal faster, and those with Resolve regain their composure more easily.

When a character is attempting to heal another character or himself, compare the Consequence level with the chart below. If the character is attempting to heal himself, increase the difficulty by one step. On a success, the Consequence is lowered by one step, and heals at that rate- Mild Consequences are removed, Moderate ones will now fade at the end of the scene, and formerly Severe consequences need but a few hours of rest or contemplation to be removed. The time used on the healing roll counts towards any recovery. The new duration and level of a Critical Consequence is left to the Gamemaster.

## Consequence

Mild:

Moderate:

Severe:

Critical:

## Difficulty

Mediocre

Fair

Great

Usually Epic

## Setting Up Cinematic Detail

Once you've decided to use Cinematic Detail to resolve a conflict, the first thing you need to do is set the scene. The Gamemaster describes the backdrop of the conflict- where things are, what the scenery is like, and who is present. Sometimes the area is big- different parts of the area are remarkably different, or not everyone involved will be able to interact with everyone else. When that happens, the area is divided into zones.

People in a zone can interact with anything in that zone- fighting, talking, or physically manipulating. People with guns can generally interact with people in an adjacent zone. Moving from one zone to another generally takes an action.

Often, the scene, or specific portions of it will have aspects. The Gamemaster will want to make this clear to the players- perhaps writing them down on index cards or sticky notes and putting them in the middle of the table.

*Example:*

*Kitty Manx is stealing some gems from an ancient Incan Temple being unearthed by scientists, when an army of Nazis emerges from the jungle, after the same goal. The Gamemaster divides the area into three zones- the temple, the scientist tent camp, and the jungle. The temple has the aspects "big step pyramid" and "covered in vines," the scientist camp has the aspect "lots of tents and supplies," and the jungle has the aspects "thick underbrush" and "filled with snakes."*

## Declaring Actions

Once everyone has a good idea of what's going on, figure out what assorted NPCs are going to do, then go around the table and ask each player what their character is doing. You want to get a feel of why and how they're doing it- what do they want to

accomplish, what skill they're using, a general course of action, and establish some potential consequences for failure, but don't go too far into detail just yet.

Generally, a character will be attacking another character, setting up an aspect, or changing zones, but just about any action is possible. When someone hits you with a curveball, try to find a way to go with it, and keep things fun. Figure out what's appropriate to roll, and what kind of effects it might have.

If two characters are both waiting to see what another character is doing, you can have them make opposed Perception rolls to see who telegraphs their intentions.

## **Star Players**

Sometimes, the action is focused on one character, and everyone else is doing their best to help out the primary character. The iconic example of this is a chase scene- whoever is driving the vehicle has the most impact on getting away (or pursuing their quarry), but other characters will lend a hand, perhaps by shooting out the windows of a car, or using jamming systems of a starship.

The Star Player can be anyone, and based on any skill. If there's a fight, and only one character has high combat skills, and the other characters are taking a secondary role, the Star Player rules might be used. The purpose of these rules are any time the action zooms in on a single player.

Conflicts with Star Players resolve much like Cinematic Detail, only each turn of actions, the star player and one other character on the side get to take action. One character on the side can take an action each round, either to Help the Star Player's action, or to make an attack or maneuver of their own. If there's a choice, the supporting characters need to switch off- the Star Player gets to act every round, but everyone else gets a chance to pitch in.

If one side or the other as a whole has a vast advantage in the conflict, they can get a +1 or +2 bonus to their rolls.

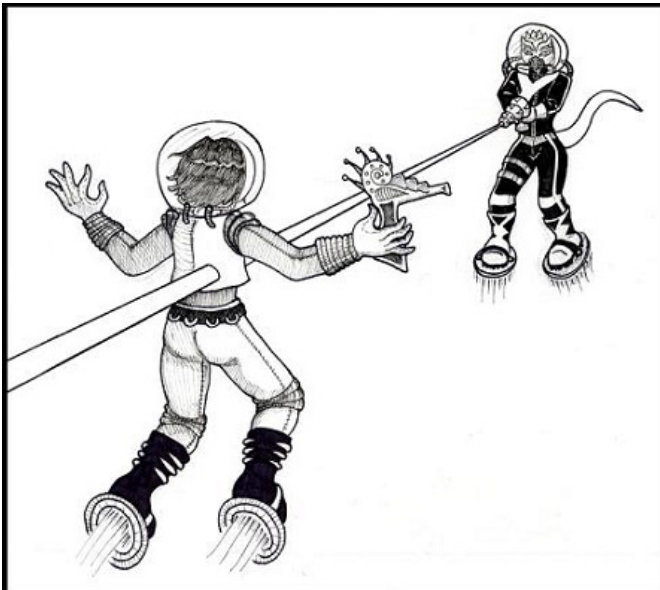
Since the Star Player rules give extra focus to a given character,

the Gamemaster should avoid using them too much for the same character. Everyone should get a chance sooner or later to be the star.

**Attacks**

If a character is attempting to directly harm or influence another character (by way of putting a Consequence on them), that is considered an attack. The rules above cover that. What follows is a list of the attack forms, and what skill generally governs them, and what skills can be used to defend.

<b>Attack Form</b>	<b>Attacker Rolls</b>	<b>Defender Rolls</b>
Casting a Spell	Mystic Lore	Varies
Convincing someone	Charm	Resolve
Deception, Seduction	Charm	Empathy, Resolve
Forcing Movement	Might	Athletics, Might
Harm, in hand-to-hand	Fighting	Athletics, Fighting Endurance
Harm, shooting a gun	Guns	Athletics, Endurance
Running someone over	Drive	Athletics Endurance
Scaring someone	Intimidation	Resolve



## **Changing Zones**

If it's all he wants to do, a character can change zones as his action. If he wants to change zones and take another action, the character needs to make an Athletics roll, at a difficulty of average. On a failure, the character must choose to either move and not act, or stay put and take some other course of action. Every two extra success levels, the character may move an additional zone.

## **Blocking**

When the character's action is preventative – trying to keep something from happening, rather than taking direct action to make something happen – he is performing a block action. He declares what he's trying to prevent and what skill he's using to do it. Players may declare a block against any sort of action or actions and may theoretically use any skill, but unless the block is simple and clear, the Gamemaster may assess penalties based upon how hard it would be, or how much of a stretch it would be. Players should never be able to “cover all bases” with a single block.

Anytime another character comes into conflict with the blocking character, the blocker rolls the skill they are using. This skill replaces the difficulty of the task if it is higher. For example, a blocking character can declare that he is protecting another character. When, later that exchange, any enemy tries to attack the protected character, the protected character gets the benefit of both the blocker's defense as well as his own, whichever is better. The attacker rolls his attack as normal. The defender rolls his defense as normal. If that defense roll is higher than the block strength, he uses the defense result; otherwise he uses the block strength. The attacker then generates shifts as normal.

## **Mooks**

Unnamed characters, those who are meant to provide a little bit of collective opposition for the characters. Mooks aren't a strong fight, and can really only stand up to the characters en masse.

Mooks have only two stats: a quality score, representing their skill in any conflict they are involved in. (This is only used for

things the mooks would be reasonably trained in- no getting your combat bodyguards to perform brain surgery!), and quantity- how many there are. A group of mooks will often have a single aspect.

Most Mooks are Fair or Good quality. Average Mooks represent people that are adept at the daily grind of their job, but ill-equipped to deal with powerful and unusual individuals. Average mooks might be rent-a-cops, gangster wanna-bees, or green soldiers. Fair Mooks are a little more skilled, and adept, and able to handle some pressure- police officers, regular infantry, trained attack dogs, goblins, or hired goons. Good Mooks tend to be capable, able to act under pressure, and have quality (non-named) commanders- experienced police officers, elite infantry, attack tigers, orcs, or yakuza enforcers. Great Mooks should be few and far between- anyone more accomplished than this needs to be a named character. These are the best of the best, but even they tend to eventually break under the opposition of named characters. Fully armed and supported SWAT teams, trained attack dinosaurs, a tribe of ogres, and special forces units might be Great quality.

Mooks don't worry about consequences like named characters do. Anytime an attack succeeds against a group of Mooks, it takes out one Mook, plus one for each shift. So a Critical Hit- which would do a Moderate Consequence to a named character- instead takes out four Mooks. The person making the attack decides if they are knocked out, killed, or just scared off, or another result appropriate to the situation.

Mooks who act together as a group are much more effective than individual Mooks. When there are two or three Mooks in a group, the group receives a +1 bonus to act and react. If there are four to six Mooks in a group, the bonus is +2; seven to nine Mooks get a +3 bonus, and any single group with ten or more Mooks gets +4. This applies to the group's rolls to directly act, not rolls to defend itself.

As a rule of thumb, when a Gamemaster has a large number of Mooks, she should split them up into several smaller groups – preferably one group for each player character they face. These groups don't necessarily need to be equal in number; sometimes it makes sense to pit the largest group of Mooks against the most

capable opponent.

One of the main uses for Mooks, be they ninjas or yes-men, is to improve the effectiveness of their leader. Whenever a named character and a group of Mooks are attacking the same target, they are considered to be attached. This has two benefits for the leader: he receives a bonus based on the group size (including him), and damage is applied to Mooks before it's applied to him. It has no benefits for the Mooks, who give up their ability to act independently, but that's more or less their job. The leader may use the Mook's skill or his own, whichever is better. Leaving or attaching to a group does not take an action, and a character may detach from a group automatically by moving away from it.

If damage is applied to the group with both a named character and mooks, and there are shifts left over, subtract one and apply those as a new attack to the named character. (Even if the new result has no shifts, that's enough to inflict a Mild Consequence.)

*Example:*

*Baron Von Sinister has a group of death robots. The death robots are Good quality. If the Baron's Leadership is at least Great, he can help the death robots, adding +1 to their rolls, effectively making them Great quality. If he has nine death robots, the group has ten members, getting +4 to all it's rolls- making it's first few attack rolls Legendary. Yowza!*

*If, on the other hand, the robots were commanded by a master fencer, that character could use his own Fighting skill. The death robot's quality doesn't help, but their quantity sure does!*

*After a few well placed attacks, Baron Von Sinister is down to his last two death robots. An attack comes in that succeeds with four shifts- the attack itself and the first shift takes out the robots, leaving three shifts. One shift is used to transfer the attack, but the remaining two aren't enough to bump up the consequence- the Baron takes a Minor hit.*

Generally, it takes a single success and nine shifts to completely take out a hero, or four successes divided up. It takes a total of ten successes/shifts to take out a group of ten mooks, so, as a rule of thumb ten mooks have roughly enough staying power (and

combat effectiveness) as a named character who's appropriate skill is two levels higher. A group of ten Good mooks and a named Superb fencer will provide about the same challenge, but it will be a different kind of challenge.

## **Putting it All Together**

You've got the pieces of a good conflict now- consequences, opposed rolls, attacks, and mooks. What do you do now? The following sections deal with ways to handle various common situations, and make sure they are punchy and exciting, and most of all, awesome.

## **How To Run a Fight**

A bunch of people in a grey, empty room, swinging at each other, whittling away at each other's resources is boring.

Fight scenes should be tense, exciting, colorful, and memorable. The worst way to achieve that is to put a bunch of orcs in a room and spend two hours making attack rolls.

Spice up the scenery! Why fight in an abandoned factory when you can fight in an active factory? Why fight in a cardboard box factory when you can fight in a fireworks factory? Always make sure the surroundings are interesting. Give them aspects. By giving the scene an aspect or two, you make it come alive- it's not an empty room any more. For a public place, a great aspect is "full of frightened innocent bystanders." For a wilderness location, a great aspect is "treacherous terrain." One of my favorite aspects for any place is "it's on fire!"

Even if the aspect is something as simple as a description of the room, like "fancy ballroom," that gives players something to go off of- so when someone says they want to swing from the chandelier, you know what aspect they're going to be tagging.

Incorporate the scene into your own narration. Have bad guys use cover, improvised weapons, and swing from chandeliers. Role play the bad guys! Don't just have them be a pile of opposition! Have them do interesting stuff- even if all you're doing is throwing out attacks, make them interesting.





For big areas, divide things up into zones. This makes things a little more interesting tactically, but that's really not the point. Zones allow you to have more variety, and some pacing- if the bad guys are two zones away, there's tension because you know they'll be coming in just a few turns. Giving different zones different aspects is a good way to flavor them, and have them not just be the narrative equivalent of hexes on a wargame map.

Make your opposition interesting. Give them aspects, and tag them. Don't always have them make attacks- have them do maneuvers, and blocks, and tricky clever stuff. Mix up how you use opposition- have one fight with two or three named characters and no minions, and one fight with lots of minions and no named characters.

Don't make your fights about defeating the other party. This might seem counter-intuitive, but the most exciting fights are those where something other than the lives of the heroes- if failure means death, you will want to pull your punches, and the players will know it. If failure means Baron Von Sinister gets his hands on the Golden Idol of the Monkey King, you can push all you want.

Throw a plot device item into the mix, some escape routes, and have Minions cover the villain's retreat (with Blocking actions) and you have a whole different kind of threat- one where there is a real, meaningful, chance of failure. Put innocent lives in peril. Use hostages. Set the building on fire, and have a time limit before it all comes crumbling down. Shoot down their zeppelin,

and see if they can fix it before it's too late- while enemy dog fighters are still strafing the craft. Have a fortification or building that the enemies are defending or trying to seize. Vary the stakes in each battle, and each one will seem a little different. And then, when a character confronts his arch-nemesis, and life and death is really what needs to be at stake, put it at stake.

My standard opposition for a big fight is a supervillain, a named henchman or two, and enough environmental threats and groups of mooks that there's enough discrete targets to go around. For example, if you've got one character repairing the dirigible's engines amidst a firefight, and three other characters, you want enough tactical threats for three people to face- not four. Primary villains are usually Superb in their highest skill, and named henchmen are Great. Mooks run the gamut. Don't worry too much about making the odds even; just try to make them interesting.

The more opposition you throw at the characters, the longer the fight will last. One Great NPC for every two players, or five Fair NPCs for a single player, is an interesting fight, but one the players will win. Fights with less opposition will be easier on the players, and run faster. Fights with more opposition may be harder, but they will also take longer.

## **How to Run a Chase Scene**

If a character has Drive high up on the skill pyramid, he's going to want some vehicular action- and the best way to give that to them is with a chase scene. The worst possible way to run a chase scene is to have a series of driving rolls, where the driver slowly accumulates successes. Not only is this dull, it's repetitive.

Consider chase scenes in the movies. Do they end when one side just gets away? Or do they end when one side blows up?

Chases are not just a series of rolls, counting up shifts. Chases are a form of combat- but they are a different animal, and focus on different things. The driver character(s) need to be the star(s) of the show- thus, chase scenes are an excellent time to use the Star Player rules.

For a chase, you need a number of stages. These are the stages of progress, showing that the pursuit is progressing. Stages are sort of like zones, but there's a clear one way progression. Stages can, and should have aspects on them. For most chases, you'll want to use conflict-based stages: each stage has some opposition, and when all or most of it is taken out, the chase moves onto the next stage, and more opposition is introduced. For some, time-based stages may be more appropriate- after a number of turns, the chase moves to a different surrounding.

*Example:*

*Lance Lightning has done it again! He's on the bad side of the Kromulan Militia, and they're sending some fighter ships on an intercept course. The first stage might be escaping from orbit, which he'll do once most of the Kromulans have been dispatched. Once when he breaks orbit, more fighters will be dispatched. After that, if he can make it through the asteroid belt-filled with Kromulan defense drones- he'll be out free and clear.*

*Later, when Lance steals a hover-speeder and has to chase down a scout threatening to reveal his location, it's just Lance and the scout. It's not really appropriate for conflict-stages, so the first three turns might take place in the desert wastes, and anything after that in the busy streets of a spaceport.*

Generally, conflict-stages are used when there's lots of opposition and the player characters are avoiding it, and time-based stages are used when the players are chasing down a single fleeing NPC vehicle.

Each vehicle involved in the conflict acts as a single character, no matter how many passengers it has. That means that the driver will act for the vehicle, usually making an 'attack' against other vehicles. Vehicles of named characters take Consequences in the normal fashion, and hordes of vehicles are treated like mooks. Normally an 'attack' represents doing some crazy driving that runs someone else off the road.

One passenger in each vehicle can take an action each round, either to Help the driver, or to make an attack. If there's the choice, a different passenger has to take an action each round. The driver gets to do stuff every round, but the passengers get to share in a piece of the action.

Example:

*Jack Magnum is hot on the tail of a yakuza oyabun who's fleeing the city, but there's a whole lot of yaks on bikes in the way. Nash Flash is riding shotgun in Jack's squadcar, and Koko Thunder is on her motorcycle. The yakuza bikers are one group of mooks. Each round, Jack, Koko, and the mook group each make Driving rolls to go after the other vehicles, and Nash, as a passenger, fires out the window with his Guns skill. After eight of the ten bikers have been eliminated, the Gamemaster rules that Jack has progressed to the streets near the docks- but some more bikers are here waiting for Jack and his friends.*

*Once those are dispatched, Jack is at the waterfront, and has to grab a speedboat to go after the fleeing oyabun. Now everyone's in one vehicle, so the Star Player rules are being used- Jack makes a Drive roll each round to try to catch/destroy the oyabun's boat, and Koko and Nash alternate taking supportive actions. Eventually, one of the boats is going to sink, or Jack will pull off a maneuver and put the "close enough for boarding" aspect on the oyabun's boat.*

If one side or the other has a vast advantage in the fight, they can get a +1 or +2 bonus to their rolls. A horse trying to outrun a car will have a hard time, and a car trying to side swipe a tank is going to have an even worse one.

Of course, sometimes you don't want to use the Star Player rules for your chase. If you have a starship, with each crew member having an important roll, and an enemy starship filled with its own crew, you can run out the conflict in detail, having each character take an action each turn. Depending on the pacing of the conflict, you may wish to use combat zones, conflict-stages, or time-stages.

## **How to Run a Social Conflict**

Balthazar the Wise needs Gwendolen the Ravager's help to cleanse the Catacombs of Cacophony. Gwendolen doesn't want to go anywhere near that place. What happens?

Sometimes it's best to just play it out. But sometimes, characters have high Charm or Resolve scores on their sheets, and they want to put them to use, or the conversation is at a standstill.

Is the conflict not that big of a deal? Is it mostly about ego, pomp, or something minor? Is the opposition a minor NPC? Make it a single opposed roll.

If it's really a big deal, important stuff is coming to the fray, or named NPCs are involved, detailed conflict rules may be in order.

Generally, Social Conflicts work a lot like fights, only the attacks are barbed insults, passionate gestures, and subterfuge. Mooks still have their place, but now they're yes-men, sycophants, or the peanut gallery.

Critical consequences from a social conflict often fade quickly or turn into aspects. One or both sides may 'give' partway through the conflict- Conceding the point if defeat is clear.

*Example:*

*Balthazar the Wise convinces Gwendolen- after a lot of coaxing. She's got some Consequences on her like 'Bruised Ego,' and 'Sulking.' Her critical consequence is "Reluctantly Agreed to Help Clear out the Catacombs," which will go away once she's finished the job. Her lesser consequences fade normally, but she might still be stuck with a Severe Social consequence during a fight, which means she can't take a Severe Physical one. To avoid that, instead of taking a lower level Consequence, she might Concede Defeat.*

## **How to Run a Mystery**

The mystery can be a difficult pitfall. On the one hand, it's often a staple of various genres- collecting clues to know who to fight can be almost important as actually fighting them. Some players really enjoy piecing together parts of a puzzle. On the other hand, it can get very frustrating, and is paced much slower than Awesome Adventures is meant to play.

The best thing to do is not have a specific solution or methodology set in mind. If the Gamemaster decides that the only way to get the clues is to find the bullet lodged behind the bookcase (specifically saying they're looking behind the bookcase), then the players will get bored.

Allow the players to make judicious use of their assessment skills. Suggest ways they might use them- a master fencer might use Fighting to assess an opponent's blade, noting if it's been used recently. Set your difficulties low and give some basic information on a success, and greater information on a critical success.

Always give out a clue that offers an obvious next step. The players aren't master detectives, and you can never give out perfect information. A mystery should play more like a trail of breadcrumbs leading to a culprit than a series of pieces to be put together.

Allow Declarations. A player might use a skill roll to make up facts- embrace this, and incorporate it into your adventure! If you can't, change your facts to fit, and make it fit. The players are telling you what they think is interesting and fun and worth pursuing. In fact, you may even wish to encourage Declarations- on a Superb success, you might ask a player to fill in the blanks and tell you what clue they found.

Some Gamemasters may be uncomfortable with this technique, and that's fine. However, it can be very handy in encouraging player involvement, and in creating a mystery story that no one, not even the Gamemaster, is sure will end.

## **How to Run a High Stakes Gambling Game**

Here's an example of a conflict that might require some detailed resolution, but isn't exactly obvious about how it might be handled. By considering this model, you can come up with ways to handle other situations that might come up.

*Example:*

*The player character is Ace Jackson, world-traveling dilettante, millionaire playboy, and man of action. He finds himself face to face with Count Cardwick, who once outwitted Ace for the Hope Diamond. Ace challenges the Count to a rematch, hoping to go for double or nothing.*

What's at stake in the situation? If it's just a small amount of money (relative to the characters- the Superbly wealthy can throw

a lot of money around!) or pride, it's best handled with a simple die roll. In the example, it's a rare diamond, but it might be a vast fortune, a magic item, a spaceship, or the character's very life!

The Gamemaster and players should work together to figure out appropriate skills for the situation. In gambling, Charm is appropriate for bluffing, Empathy is appropriate for sensing a bluff, and Resources is helpful for staying in the game (much as Endurance applies to physical conflicts.) In effect, Charm is the standard attack, and Empathy or Resources can be used to defend. Other skills can be used as maneuvers.

*Example:*

*Count Cardwick is not only a skilled gambler, but also a dirty cheat! He uses his Stealth to try to palm some cards- Ace can use his Perception to spot the maneuver. If he fails, the Count will get to set up an aspect, such as "Pocket Kings." Later, Ace uses his Empathy against the Count's Charm to give him the aspect "Telling Smile."*

Attacks, whether a burst of gunfire for fighting, or a well-timed bluff for gambling, put consequences on the opponent. What kind of consequence is appropriate for a gambling match? Losing one's cool perhaps, but more importantly, losing one's money. A take-out result means that the character is forced out of the game, and suffers any related consequences. Some possible consequences might be "Low on Chips," or "Down to My Last Reserves," and remember that these will stick around, just like any other consequence.

## Advice for Gamemasters

This chapter focuses on Gamemastering, the art of running an exciting, enjoyable, and awesome gaming experience for you and your friends.

Much of this advice covers the structure of *Awesome Adventures* and some other tricks. Additional advice on Gamemastering is widely available, although the author suggests the chapter “Tips and Tricks” from *Spirit of the Century* as a personal favorite.

### Awesome Attitudes

*Awesome Adventures* requires a certain outlook. It’s an optimistic, cheerful, action-packed outlook, with some explosions in there some place. You want the players to be cheering at how awesome they are, and you want to cheer right back at them. One of your jobs then, as Gamemaster, is to help make sure that the players are as awesome as they can be.

But whose awesome- your awesome, or their awesome? You might hate ninjas, but have a player that loves them. What do you do when a player wants to play a ninja *yet again*?

Let him. But make him turn it up to 11.

When a player wants something- whether it’s a character archetype, an aspect, or a course of action in game, don’t ever *ever* call it dumb or lame or anything else, and don’t ever give a flat out “no.” This kills the awesome. It doesn’t matter if you think it’s cool or not- it matter that they are enthusiastic about it.

If you want to say ‘no,’ cut it off. Try one of these: “what if...” “yes, and...” “how?” “why?” or just roll the dice.

Suggest an alternative- if a player is asking for someone that’s not really genre-appropriate, like a character who’s a world-renowned dinosaur racer in the modern day, you can suggest that maybe the character recently discovered a lost race of dinosaurs and raced one in the Kentucky Derby. It’s something along the same lines, that’s a little more within your comfort zones. Either the player will go for it, and you’ll have something



you're both happy with, or they'll retool their suggestion and come up with something new. (If the player is really *really* tied to the idea of a dino-racing circuit, it's better to retool the setting, than ask them to retool their idea.)

Suggest a complication- if a player asks for something you think is out there, or exists too much in a vacuum, bring it back into comfort zones by spicing it up. Perhaps a character wants to be the head of state of a major nation- a direction you were unprepared for the game to take. Go for it, and add in some toys for yourself- opposing neighboring nations, subordinates of questionable loyalty, or UN Sanctions, and you've got an adventure hook!

If a player is asking for something really crazy, ask them how they want to go about doing it, or why they want to do it. Their plan to replace the space dictator with a robot double might make perfect sense once they reveal their network of contacts and plans to dig a secret tunnel under the dictator's fortress- or your questions might cause them to rethink what they're doing.

If a player asks if a certain fact is true, or if a certain item is on hand, don't say no without good reason- if your first answer isn't yes, make them roll, or spend a fate point for a declaration.

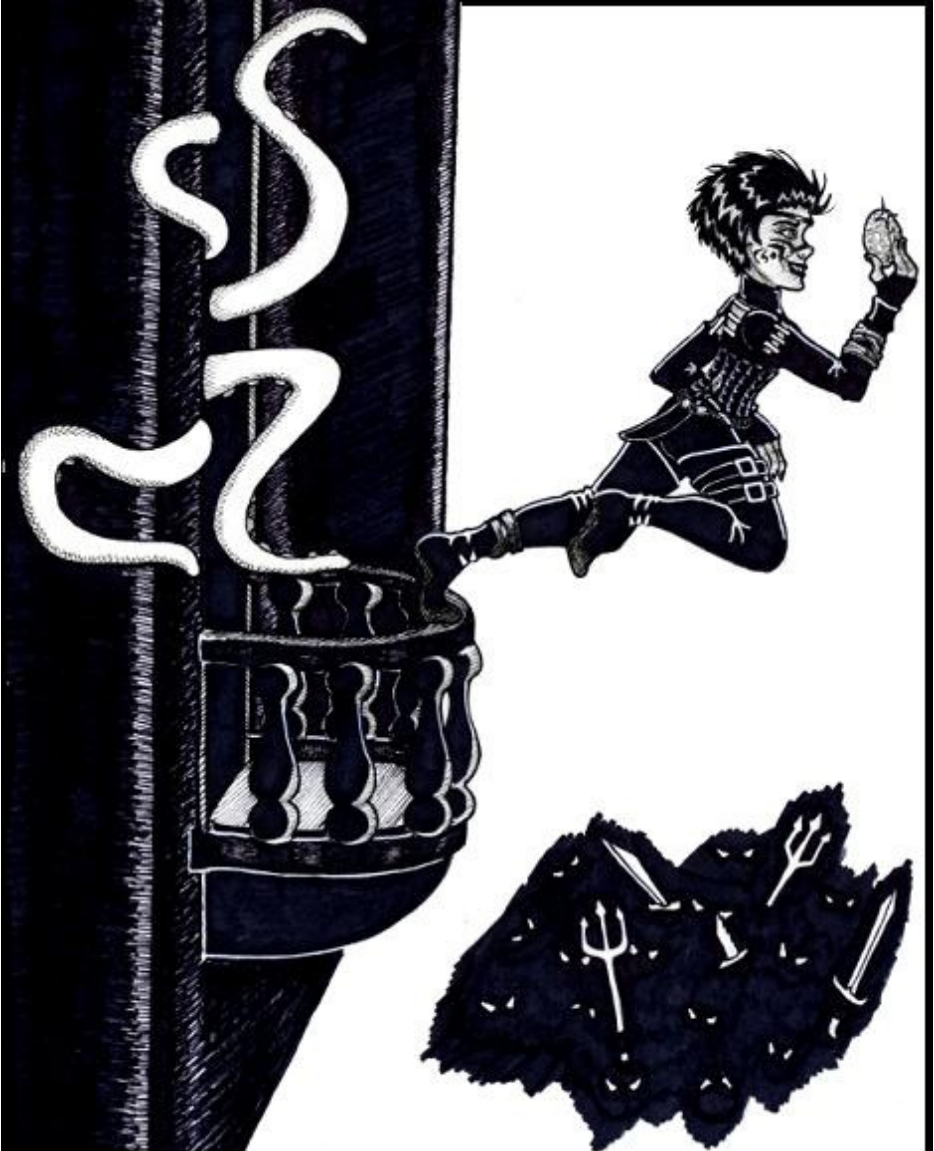
There is one good time to say no, and that's when a player is trying to break the rules. If you've Gamemastered for any amount of time, you've heard this one before- "I've got a really cool idea for a character, I just need to do X." What do they want? More skills (or higher skills), more aspects, more latitude, or just plain more favoritism than you'd give the other players. This person is trying to bully you into being more effective. Don't let them! Awesome Adventures characters are already really cool, and don't need breaking the rules so one character can be better. Find a way to make it work within the frameworks already here.

## **Success and Failure**

Given that the characters are (mostly) at the mercy of the dice, sometimes they'll succeed, and sometimes they'll fail. The trick here is to make sure that both possible outcomes are interesting and fun for all involved.

Think about James Bond. He's highly skilled, super cool, and a great example of an Awesome Adventures level character. However, he often fails. But he always does so in a way that's cool, advances the plot, and lets you know that he's James Bond.

So when your players fail, let them still be cool. Don't embarrass them, or put them down. Introduce complications, spice things up, make them groan, but always let them be cool.



## Gamemastering Character Creation

Though it may look like the players are doing all the work during character creation, the Gamemaster has some specific duties, that are subtle, but important.

Some games encourage players to make their characters separately, away from the table, cloistered with supplement books. Resist the urge to let players come to the game with pregenerated or partially made characters! You will lose out on a lot of fun opportunities.

One reason for shared character creation is niche protection- if both Joe and Bob enjoy playing gadget guys, and they come to the table with lovingly crafted gadget guys, there's going to be a lot of redundancy. If, on the other hand, Joe and Bob both voice their desire for gadget guys at the table, there's possibilities for characters that no one would have come up with independently. Maybe Joe really wants to make gizmos, and Bob really wants to use them, so Joe makes a mad scientist, and Bob is his business partner and prototype tester. Or maybe they are engineering rivals, each trying to one-up the other with their fantastic inventions. Now two characters with similar concepts- that would have otherwise stepped on each other's toes- are tied together, and are all the more interesting for it.

Another is making sure everyone is on the same page genre wise. If most of your players want to be Victorian London Steampunk adventurers, and one wants to be a space alien, you need to either get that player back on track, or reconcile it with the genre. There's nothing wrong with promising great space adventures the next time you play and asking for compromise, or figuring out a way to reconcile two different concepts (such as with a well-dressed, cultured space alien in a clockwork spaceship.)

Make sure players read what they write for each phase out loud, and make sure the other players pay attention. Awareness of each other's characters allows people to enjoy each other's characters. Players who focus solely on their own characters are missing out on a highly enjoyable part of the character creation process.

The most important, is to push the enthusiasm and the awesome. Your biggest job as a Gamemaster is to watch to make sure the players are having a good time, and are making characters that they will enjoy.

The loud, boisterous players who always give each other high fives, shout “awesome!” and come up with character concepts like time-traveling robot archaeologist ninjas? They don’t need your help. Seat them on the far side of the table from you. Make sure that those players who are shier, quieter, or newer to the game are seated near you, so you can keep an eye on them and lend them a hand when the going gets rough.

Watch players when they come up with aspects. If a player is having trouble with an aspect, or makes a bland aspect, lend a hand. Make a few constructive suggestions- say that what they have so far is a great starting point, but ask them to punch it up a little. One of my favorite questions for stoking player involvement is, “What’s the awesomest thing that could possibly happen?” When the player gives an answer, be supportive! Give them positive feedback, and they will bring the awesome again, and harder.

Ask players to clarify their aspects. If you don’t know what it’s supposed to be used for, think it’s too broad, or unclear, ask the player. They may have a different insight or phrasing that makes the aspect come alive, and gives you ideas on how to work it into the game.

Many players have been trained, by their games, or their fellow players, or their Gamemasters, to put a damper on their awesome. This is a sad, sad state of affairs. Sometimes you have to give the player permission to be awesome. Let them know that you won’t judge them, that you find their ideas cool, and that you think they have meaningful input for the game, and you’ll find that these players can be a source of amazing creativity and awesomeness.

Sometimes you will find a player who refuses to bring the awesome. They want to just play an average Joe, or settle for milquetoast descriptions. There’s nothing wrong with playing a ninja, but settling for “ninja” as one’s character’s entire description

is a little lame. Make the player punch it up. Ask them leading questions, like “what makes you different than the other ninjas?” “What’s the awesomest thing you ever did as a ninja?” “Do you have any awesome ninja rivals?” Force them to get their creative juices flowing.

The player who can’t come up with a seed for the awesome is in a different boat. At least the ninja guy knew what he liked. Sometimes, you have to blurt out some suggestions- you can start with the archetypes for your genre, then just start spouting ideas. Watch their eyes. Eventually, you will hit a chord, and their eyes will light up. Find what interests them, and let them make it happen.

Finally, you may find a player who doesn’t want the awesome. This player is your bane. They complain that things are ‘unrealistic’, or worse, ‘stupid.’ Resist the urge to fight with these players. Instead, calmly ask them if they want to play this game. If they say ‘yes,’ tell them they need to start bringing the awesome ASAP. If they say ‘no,’ politely direct them to the exits.

## **Making an Adventure Awesome**

Now that you’ve figured out the awesome and how to make it happen, it’s time to work on the other half of this game’s title- the Adventures.

What is an adventure? It’s a series of exciting scenes, connected by some common danger or call to action. The characters go from one scene to the next, besting challenges, uncovering information about the threat facing them, and arrive at a heroic climax where they will save the day.

What isn’t an adventure? It isn’t your plot, or your story, or your mystery. The adventure is something that happens organically, in play, with input from all involved. You can make an adventure framework (and in fact, you should, and much of this chapter is tools to help you do just that), but any attempt to plot out the course of the adventure is doomed before it begins. You are outnumbered at the table, and you have a responsibility to accept the creative input from your players.

What you'll want to start out with is a hook of some sort- stolen jewels, giant robots, or a plague of locusts. Preferably you'll have a couple of different hooks. Then ask yourself- how does this affect the player characters? How will it affect other characters? What's the awesomest thing that could possibly happen?

Tie your ideas together. There's a stolen mystic gem, and one party wants to use it to power a giant robot, and a sorcerer wants the gem, and summons locusts as his minions. Great! Now find a way to get the players involved- they should care about the gem, the robots, or the sorcerer, or better yet, all three.

For the first scene of the adventure, get the players involved, and get them involved hard. Never underestimate the power of in Medias Res- in the middle of things. Start with the first thing that would be exciting, and let the players tell you why they're doing it. Having a mysterious benefactor approach the players, hiring them to guard his mystic gem is bad. One it's trite, two, it only offers the illusion of choice- there's no adventure if they say no, and three, what if they succeed in protecting the gem? Instead, have them witnessing the gem being stolen, or already in the middle of chasing after jewel thieves, and ask them why they are there. (If it even matters at that point. They're already involved.)

Throughout the adventure, you want to aggressively frame scenes. 'Scene framing' is the technique of setting up a scene- the events occurring in play, the environment, and the people involved. Think about your favorite action movies- they don't spend much time on shopping lists. Every minute you spend dithering or dwelling is a minute you can't spend on exploding snake-filled zeppelins. When the action of a scene is dying down, put a wrap on it. Ask the players what they're doing next. And then jump ahead to the next point when something exciting is happening.

Make your settings memorable. Don't just have a fight (or a conversation, or whatever) in a gray, empty room. Make it the Count's palace, or a museum filled with priceless artifacts, or a volcano that's about to blow. Mix up your settings. Make each one in an adventure crazier than the last.

Make your plot hooks memorable. They don't necessarily have to

make sense; they just have to invite action and excitement.

Embrace the players' plans, no matter how crazy. They are playing larger-than-life characters with the capacity to pull off unbelievable stunts. You may not think their plans are the least bit tactically sound, but that's nowhere near as important as if the players think the plans are cool.

Be prepared for unexpected twists and turns during your adventure. Your players will throw things in all sorts of different directions. This is a good thing! It keeps you on your toes, and means that they are engaged in the story. If they come up with a cool idea, go with it. The adventure will be better for it.

Compel early, compel often. It gives the players a Fate Point boost, gives them a little bit of time in the spotlight, and makes sure the adventure revolves around them.

## **Gamemastering the One-Shot**

The One-Shot, (alternately known as the Pick-Up Game or Con Game) is an adventure that takes place in one sitting, of about four hours. In this, you and your players will come up with characters, and play through an adventure. All the advice in this book goes double in a One-Shot game. If you play every week, a wasted hour can be caught up next week. A One-Shot has very little room for slack- however it can result in some very potent and enjoyable gaming.

You can start with an adventure framework, like you would come up with for a higher-depth game (see Gamemastering the Mid-Term Game), with fully written up villains and the like, but those work best when you design them around the characters. The in-depth adventure framework can work, but you need to be on the look out for ways to tie spontaneously generated characters into it.

What I like to do is listen to the players while they're talking about their characters, and jot down some common themes- things like 'war,' 'art theft,' or 'zombies.' I'll come up with a list of ten or so, and start trying to figure out ways to put them together- like zombies pulling an art heist in a war zone, and BAM!- you've got

a crazy off the wall story, but one that everyone is interested in.

Once the players have all their aspects chosen and transferred to their character sheets and are finalizing their skills, I like to collect their character worksheets and jot down their aspects- each character gets their own note card or sticky note. I review them, look for some more themes or grabby plot elements- maybe someone has the enmity of a mercenary group, and I can throw them into the mix, looking for the stolen art. I'll usually end up with more plot elements than I can possibly use. This is just fine- I'll pick and choose what seems grabby at any particular time.

Also, I go through those aspects and put a check mark next to any that seem particularly compelling. Then I'll look for ways to compel those, or if things are going slow, throw a compel into the mix to spice things up. This way I can make sure that everyone's aspects are making into play.

In play, it's all about stringing together a couple of scenes, with plenty for the players to do. Since they've already told me what they're interested in with their backgrounds and aspects, I can make sure that's exactly what shows up in game.

## **Gamemastering the Miniseries**

In a miniseries, the players have a characters that will see several different sessions of play- perhaps about four to six. Generally, this type of play occurs with one session of play every week or so.

The miniseries game can be a whole different animal than the one-shot game. In a one-shot, character creation can take some time, so there's often only two or three hours for gameplay. This means that miniseries games often fill four hours or so- which can be a blessing, allowing more intricate plots or more time for friendly banter, but it can also be a curse, having to come up with a plot that can fill the added amount of time.

When creating characters for a miniseries, make the players go into more depth with their backgrounds. Question them about their aspects. Ask them to come up with situations where they might use the aspect, and a few situations where their aspects



might be compelled. Start thinking up some compels of your own- make a list if you can.

When you sit down to brainstorm an idea for a miniseries game, it can be helpful to have a bit more structure than the standard one-shot. The standard 'pulp-style' adventure follows a pretty generic but flexible framework, and it's useful thinking about these steps when setting up an adventure framework in advance. (Incidentally, it can be helpful to keep this in mind when running a one-shot.)

The standard pulp-plot starts by **Endangering the Characters**, forcing them to be directly involved in what's going on. Are they caught in the middle during an attempted heist or assassination attempt? Are there helpless bystanders? Is their zeppelin/pleasure boat/spaceship out of control and about to crash? Put the characters in immediate danger and action, and start hard and fast, giving them something to do.

Once they've got a handle on that situation, they'll be curious as to what it is that's going on. That's when you **Reveal the True Danger**, cluing them in to the nature of the real villain, what the actual plot is, or who the assassins work for. This is often an information gathering scene, with clue finding and exposition. Don't make it too hard on the players to get going on the right direction- the more difficult you make it for them to figure out what's going on, the more your game will stall out. Don't expect them to just 'figure it out,'- sometimes it's best to just literally drop the truth in their laps. The clues you give should point to some possible courses of action- those decisions are the real meat of this part of the story.

As this point, the players have generally taken the offensive. It's time for some **Complications**, whether that means having the villains send ninjas after the characters, or having a third party show up, after the same things the players are after. This is your chance to mix things up, throw a wrench in the gears, and generally make life more interesting and the adventure wider in scope.

With several things going on, it's time for **Rising Tension**. Raise the stakes, throw loved ones into the mix, put the characters into

a deathtrap, and make doom look inevitable. Do whatever you can to make things go from bad to worse. Your goal here is to put the players on the edge of their seats. What you throw at them here should be bigger and badder than everything else the adventure has had so far.

Once they've gotten their hides out of the fire, it's time for a **Twist**. Turn what they thought they knew upside down. Introduce a new villain, or hidden motives for an existing one, or new opposition or complications. If your characters look at you in bewilderment at what's going on, but it soon all comes together, you've pulled off a masterful twist. (If you can, foreshadow the twist, but don't give it away- it makes it all the more juicy.)

The twist leads into the **Climax** of the session. This is your big finale, where you pull out all the stops. The big bad guy is here, and the fate of the world (or whatever) is at stake. Use all your scene framing tools and any tricks you have up your sleeve to make this showdown a big one! The opposition here should be powerful and potent- a climax that is too easy is not a climax at all.

If you've still got time, and it seems ripe for another conflict, throw in a **Breakneck Escape**, as the players get away from whatever danger still lingers- like an exploding volcano fortress, or a horde of mooks. This can often be a good way to blow off steam, especially if the Climax was tense and tough.

Finally, it's good to have an **Epilogue**. This is when we find out a little bit about what happened, and we get the happy ending the players have been striving for. Sit back, relax, and let the players bask in their victory.

Not counting the Epilogue, there's a total of seven different parts to the framework- which means, that if you have seven players or less, you should be able to find something each character is excited about, and tie it into your adventure. The ace pilot? Maybe there's some fancy flying to be done during the Breakneck Escape. The femme fatale? Perhaps she can seduce some information out of someone to find out the True Danger. The engineer that builds giant robots? Put in some enemy giant robots! Make sure you mix up who gets to do what- if the pilot is

always just the getaway, and the femme fatale only gets to put her talents to use near the start of the adventure, those players will feel left out.

With your handy list of aspects, you can plan some potential compels in advance, and throw those into the mix of your adventure framework. For example, Gwendolen the Ravager has the Aspect “Harsh Woman from a Harsh Land.” The Gamemaster might invoke this during a scene of courtly intrigue to get Gwendolen into a bit of a hot spot, and cause some social complications for the group. (Of course, Gwendolen’s player might have her resist the compel and keep her cool, and that’s perfectly fine- but the Gamemaster should have some other complications available.)

This highlights an important point- the difference between an adventure framework, and an adventure. The framework is any prepared notes you bring to the game, a rough outline of what might happen in each of the phases of the adventure, some notes on villains and possible compels, and whatever else you find useful to prepare. The adventure itself is what actually happens in play- and sometimes the two have quite a bit in common, and sometimes they don’t. It’s less important that the adventure cleaves closely to your plans than that it is exciting and fun for all involved. Let the fun happen in play, let the adventure take it’s own course, and things will be all the more awesome.

Between adventures, take a note of what aspects came into play quite a bit (it’s helpful to underline or put a check next to an aspect in your own notes when you do so for just this purpose.) Take a look at the aspects that aren’t seeing much screen time, and find a way to bring them into the adventure. If you crafted a plot around one character’s villain one story, craft it around another’s the next. Make sure every character gets their time in the spotlight, and your players will have a blast. (Most players are willing to let another player be the star of the show if they know they’ll get the same treatment sometime soon.)

Another thing to do between sessions is ask the players if they want to make any changes to their characters. For example, sometimes a character will take a skill at Superb (say, Fighting), and another skill at Great (say, Might), but they find that they

enjoy using their Great skill more (doing heavy lifting, feats of strength, breaking bars, showing off), and their Superb skill doesn't get used that much. In such a case, it's certainly permissible to fiddle around with skills after they've been placed on the character's sheet. Other times a character's aspect may no longer seem relevant, or the player might come up with a way to spice it up. Let them change their aspects, to better suit their image of the character. Just be wary of someone who wants to make overly dramatic changes- switching their Superb and Mediocre skills around, or drastically rewriting their character background and concept. If you see this happening, that player may be better off crafting a new character.

## **The Long Term Game**

Sometimes, you'll have a group of friends (and a group of characters) that you enjoy gaming with so much, you want to play Awesome Adventures with them every week, months (or years!) at a time.

This can be a great experience, but for many players, with hectic schedules and other play-worthy games on their book shelves, it's not an option. Also, you risk the content of your game getting stale- once your characters have saved the world ten times, the eleventh loses its impact.

A longer game, or campaign, will often follow the basic structure of a miniseries, however the adventure frameworks tend to be longer and more intricate. Perhaps each adventure will span a number of sessions, with more detailed investigation, extra twists, and shadowy conspiracies. (Make sure your players are interested in that, though. Mysteries that are too oblique can be frustrating.) Maybe your fights are bigger, more epic, with more combatants. (Watch out for overdoing it- a fight that drags on loses its excitement, and a boring fight can be a death knell.) Spice your games with moderation, take what you and your players want, and make it bigger and longer.

The campaign game isn't all doom and gloom. You have an opportunity to present your players with longer adventure arcs- multiple adventures, tied together into a greater whole. This especially works well with Epic Fantasy or Space Epic genres,

since their stories tend to be large in scope.

Tie your stories together. If something is in someone's background, make sure it has a comeback. Have recurring villains, world sweeping plots, and give your players the chance to play their characters to the hilt.

One great thing about longer games is that you have an opportunity to see the characters grow and change. This is great stuff for the narrative, but can be tricky to handle from a character-sheet standpoint. Many players are used to games where their characters increase in effectiveness every session or so. This doesn't quite fit in with Awesome Adventures- the characters are already pretty darn effective, and tweaking with the skill pyramid is risky.

Instead, just like you would for miniseries games, ask your players if they want to change their aspects, especially when a major plot point is resolved or a character experiences fundamental change. In addition, every few sessions award the characters with a new aspect, letting them choose a way to further detail their character. This can be a new talent, a new catchphrase, or even a new favorite enemy, but it gives more breadth to the characters. (Remember that a character's total Fate Points is equal to their number of Aspects, so your players will have more Fate to throw around.) This lets the players see character growth, without that growth spiraling out of hand.

## **Building Villains and NPCs**

You can't have an awesome adventure without some awesome opposition. Memorable villains are the grist for your story. A villain should never just be a collection of stats and die rolls- give them a flavor and a personality of their own, or at least a gimmick.

Villains that are meant to be a centerpiece of an adventure's action, or were created by one of the players as opposition during character creation, should be equals to the player characters- they have the same skill pyramid, and ten aspects- but since they might have to go up against multiple player characters, they might have legions of mooks at their disposal.

Villains that are henchmen for the main villain and provide quality opposition, but who aren't meant to be as powerful as the player characters should have about five aspects, and a skill pyramid capping out at Great- one Great skill, two Good, three Fair, four Average, and the rest Mediocre.

Resist the temptation to make villains with skills at Fantastic or higher- no one is better than a Superb hero at their specialization. The exception is non-human enemies that are ancient, powerful, and beyond the scope of humanity. A character with Superb Might is as strong as a human can possibly get, but a Dragon might be even stronger. Villains with skills higher than Superb should be rare, and should be used singly, without any mooks or henchmen.

Characters who warrant names and spotlight time, but aren't sources of major antagonism or detail in the game probably don't need a full character write-up or skill pyramid, but it's useful to think of a defining skill or two and a handful of aspects, and jot them down on an index card.

## **Detailed Villain Creation**

If you have a scenario plotted out in advance, or you play a game with recurring characters and you want to have an adventure featuring someone's arch-nemesis, it can be worth it to follow some similar steps that players do when making their characters.

Villains should start with an Archetype, and an ominous sounding name. The 'Enemies and Opposition' sections of the Genre guides have some suggestions, or you can draw from your favorite books and movies for inspiration.

Villains only get three phases: Background and Upbringing, Sinister Action during a Time of Troubles, and Nefarious Schemes.

Background and Upbringing works just like a player character's chapter of the same name. Come up with a background and history for the villain, before they turned to the life of the antagonist. What was their family like? Did any events in their childhood shape their later actions? Do they have a tragic past?

During the Time of Troubles, villains are often active as well- but they use their powers for evil. A story dealing with corruption and redemption might showcase a villain slide to darkness here, elaborate on their foul actions, or build upon a player character's back story. Nefarious Schemes are the villainous equivalent of Adventure! What sort of plots was the villain up to? Were they successful? Who opposed them? (If the villain was introduced by the player, you have quite a bit to work with here already!)

For each of those phases, you'll have two aspects- for a total of six. If this is an arch-nemesis or mastermind, you'll want a total ten. The remaining four can be assigned as you please, or kept blank to be assigned during play.

### **On the Fly Villain Creation**

Often you won't have time to sit down and write out a back story for a character, and come up with ten aspects and a full skill pyramid. In this situation, you can come up with the most pertinent details when you need them, and then fill in the rest when you have time.

Start with an archetype, a name, and from there, come up with two or three aspects, and the character's top three skills. This is enough to introduce the character, get them in the story, and start seeing where it takes them. As needed, you can add more aspects and skills to the character, and eventually, you'll have a stat write-up before you know it.

### **General Advice on Making Villains**

When writing up a villain, make sure you're making a character that you will have fun playing, and the players will have fun playing against.

With that in mind, set up cool Aspects. When you use a Villain's Aspect, announce it for all to hear. Set up aspects that canny players might compel. A "genius without peer" will help a mastermind villain, but players might compel it to get him to spill the beans on his plan. This is cool!

When picking skills, you generally want one of their top three to be useful in combat, so they don't end up being a pushover in

physical confrontation. (If they get mooks to fight for them, Leadership is not a bad bet.) Don't make a Villain's superb skill the same as a player character's superb skill, unless they are specifically designed as a rival for the character.

Give your villains a reason for being, a passion, some sort of driving motivation. It doesn't have to be deep, but you should know what they want, how they will go about trying to get it, and then find ways to intersect that with the player characters. A villain there simply to oppose the players is an obstacle, not a villain.





## **Pitfalls, Tips, and Tricks**

The previous sections were, for the most part, devoted how to make sure that things go right. But what happens when things go wrong? It will eventually happen, and it's the job of the Gamemaster to make sure that the game gets back on track.

### **Players Who are Too Smart for Their Own Good**

Sometimes, the Gamemaster will come up with an expertly plotted adventure framework, with thrills, surprises, and twists, and a masterful plan. And then the players will figure it all out in the first fifteen minutes, completely foiling the villain's intentions with a cunning counter plan.

Never, ever, punish your players for unexpected cleverness. This only causes resentment. Instead, let them succeed. Let their plans work, let them foil the villains, and then bounce back with new challenges, new villains, and new plots. Reward the players for their success. Laud them with praise. Don't fall into the trap of making them do it your way.

### **Players Who are Too Dumb for Their Own Good**

On the other hand, sometimes the players just can't figure out the clues that are staring them in the face, the clues that seem blindingly obvious to you. The game shuts down, and it starts going nowhere, and nobody's having any fun.

Cut them a break. You don't have to hand them a new clue on a silver platter- it can be tattooed on the back of ninjas, ninjas with big swords and fiery tempers, but it should offer a clear course of action. Break up the monotony, show them an option, and let the game get back on track.

### **Bringing the Awesome**

Sometimes, you'll have a player who doesn't want to bring the awesome. When wrestling with space vampires on a rocky cliff side they'll say things like "I'm really strong," (referring to their Really Strong aspect, spending a Fate Chip.) This declaration is often muttered or said in a nasally voice.

This player is using Fate Chips for mechanical advantage, and not for awesomeness! This is bad, boring, and dull, and needs to be squashed immediately. It is acceptable for players new to Awesome Adventures to simply pick out an Aspect and use it- the first few times they invoke. After that, they have to Earn their Awesome.

Awesome Adventures characters need to be Awesome, and they have to do Awesome things. Ask the player, “How are you being really strong? How is that helping you? How are you bringing the awesome?” Ask them to describe, in some detail, the really cool things their character is doing. Make them bring the awesome.

It doesn't necessarily have to be much. Even “I get his neck in a tight hold and squeeze hard,” shows some imagination. The point here is to encourage your players to mix things up. Make sure your players don't become broken records. That tight hold might have been cool the first time, but next round they're going to need a bigger and better description.

Enforce diminishing returns of narration. If a player wants to spend four fate chips at once, make them do something super cool and fantastic. Make them amaze you- four chips is a plus eight modifier, for crying out loud. Make sure their Legendary actions feel Legendary!

## **The Empty Stare**

It happens- on a Legendary difficulty roll, the character gets a Fantastic result. One Fate Point is all they need to save the day.

So they hunker down, and stare at their character sheet, searching for an aspect that's relevant.

Here's a secret. In the right situation, with the right enthusiasm, and the right narration, just about any aspect is relevant.

When someone is staring at their character sheet, and you can see the wheels turning in their head, stop them. Tell them to look at you, not their character sheet. And then ask them, “What's the awesomest thing that could possibly happen right now?”

If they protest, cut them off, and repeat the question. It's an important one. See, having a relevant aspect isn't as important as being cool and awesome. What that question does is cut out the searching for a relevant character trait, and makes the question more about the heart of the character and the content of the narration. And then you get to what the player really wants to do, and what they really think is cool.

And then, once they've brought the awesome, and put a smile on everyone's face, that's when you have them spend a fate chip. At this point, whatever aspect is relevant should be pretty darn obvious, and if it's not, and what they said was truly awesome, even a spuriously linked aspect will suffice.

## **Leave them Wanting More**

Sometimes a one-shot turns into a miniseries. Sometimes a miniseries turns into a campaign. There's nothing wrong with either of those things. But sometimes a campaign turns into an exercise in fatigue. Players look for excuses not to show up, Gamemasters look for excuses not to run, but everyone says they're committed to the game, in sort of a nostalgia-driven way. Eventually the game fades away, with people half-wondering when they might play it again, but the bitter truth that the campaign is dead is a hard pill to swallow.

Don't let that happen to your game. Always go out with a bang, leave them with a genuinely fond memory, and leave them wanting more. When you see the symptoms of rigor mortis creeping up on your game, plan that finale you've been wanting to do 'someday'. Make it happen today. Put the awesome back in your game. Give the characters one last hurrah, then put the game in the ground. Send it off right, and they'll miss it, and talk about it for quite some time. Take that energy, and funnel it into the next game.

## **Sample Villains**

Here are some sample villains, for use in your own games, or to sow the seeds for your own dastardly concepts.

## **Baron von Sinister- Pulp Adventure**

Archetype: Devious Mastermind

### Phase One: Background

Born Heinrich von Sinister, son of wealthy barons in western Industrial Germany, Heinrich had the best education money can buy. A prodigious student, he outpaced his tutors, devouring scholarly texts, developing an aptitude for the sciences and stranger things. The Sinister family had the ear of the Kaiser, and the heir to the Sinister Barony was well-groomed for a life at court.

Aspects: Well-read in Obscure Lore, Son of Germany

### Phase Two: Sinister Action during a Time of Troubles

The Great War broke out, with Imperial Germany at war, surrounded by enemies. Despite his comparatively young age, young Heinrich received a commission as an officer, and fought on the western front. Despite his inexperience and the harsh conditions, Heinrich was an able commander, and his unit performed admirably, leading the push to Paris.

Heinrich was disheartened when surrender came and the war was lost. France ruined his home of Germany, forcing reparations payments and destroying the once proud German state- and worse, his father was dead, killed by American troops.

The young baron turned his efforts to revenge. First he would rebuild his family's (and his country's) industrial resources, then he would make see that Germany would be great again. He joined a number of secret societies- notably the Thule Society, mystic occultists supporting the rise of Fascism, and the Bavarian Illuminati.

Aspects: Baron of Sinister, Illuminatus

### Phase Three: Nefarious Schemes

The Baron has a terrible invention- the Wunderpanzer. While Germany's panzer tanks are without peer, and have the ability to roll across Europe, the Wunderpanzer is a mobile steel castle, bristling with cannons and weapons. A weapon like the world has never seen before, the Wunderpanzer has the potential to destroy an entire city with it's main battle gun.

The secret of the Wunderpanzer- it requires far more energy than

is physically possible with conventional technologies. At it's heart, is a chained angel- summoned and bound with dark magic, kept in bondage with chains of bone and steel, it's life force painfully being drained away to fuel the Baron's dream.

Aspects: Demonic Engineering, Wunderpanzer

Other aspects:

Genius Without Peer, Dark Occultist, Layers of Plots, Power is not Enough

Aspects:

Baron of Sinister

Dark Occultist

Demonic Engineering

Genius Without Peer

Illuminatus

Layers of Plots

Power is not Enough

Son of Germany

Well-Read in Obscure Lore

Wunderpanzer

Skills:

Superb: Engineering

Great: Leadership, Mystic Lore

Good: Academics, Contacts, Resources

Fair: Charm, Fighting, Perception, Resolve

Average: Drive, Endurance, Empathy, Guns, Medicine

Mediocre: Athletics, Burglary, Intimidation, Might, Stealth, Survival

Using the Baron:

The Baron combines the classics: he's the fiendish mastermind, the mad scientist, and the Nazi, all rolled into one. As presented he's a thinker, not a doer- he finds dirtying his hands distasteful. Baron von Sinister acts through minions- but they are often armed with prototype weapons. When players do confront the Baron, he should be well protected with hordes of minions, inside the heart of his Wunderpanzer, or using another powerful gizmo built with his Engineering- perhaps a robotic battlesuit.

The Baron wants to rebuild Germany to greatness, and is an ally of the Fascist powers in that country. However, even his

successes leave him bitter and pining for more- if Germany is rebuilt, he will want to see it sweep across Europe, and then all the world, if the Nazi party comes to power, he will seek to rebuild the German Empire- with himself as Monarchical ruler, and even if he conquers the world, he will set his sights on conquering Heaven and Hell themselves.

Baron von Sinister can easily be adapted to other times. In the modern day, he is over a hundred years old, but thanks to occult pacts, he appears to be perhaps in his forties, and is still in prime health. Having seen Germany lose in not one but two global conflicts, he fumes over its present place in the world, allying with the hated French and Americans. As Sinister Industries is one of the largest employers in the country, he has the love of the people, control of the military industrial complex, and the ear of the Bundestat. All the Baron needs is a crisis to seize power... one that might be of his own design.

In an alternate setting, like a fantasy world or outer space, the Baron's background may need some tinkering, but there's always a place for enemy nobility. Perhaps he is the Prince of the Dark Elves, or Baron of the planet Sinister, a core world of the defeated Star Imperium.

### **Commander Rigelia Kratus- Sci Fi**

Archetype: Mercenary Commander

Phase One: Background:

Rigelia Kratus grew up on the planet Coldstone, a harsh world known for its brutal wintery weather and its equally brutal military regime. Like all youth from her world, Rigelia was conscripted into military service. Rigelia took well to the life of a soldier, and reenlisted, taking a promotion to Sergeant after her mandatory tour-of-duty was over.

Aspects: Survival Instinct, A Soldier's Soldier

Phase Two: Sinister Action During a Time of Troubles

Coldstone was one of the first worlds to join the alliance that would become the Star Imperium, and the Coldstone Regiment was frequently dispatched to the front, putting down uprisings on worlds that resisted the might of the Imperium.

During the suppression of Kosh, Rigelia's commander was killed

by sniper fire. Taking command, Rigelia rallied her troops and led a raid on a rebel bunker, capturing a key figure of the Kosh leadership. Rigelia Kratus was promoted to Sergeant Major and received the Imperial Medal of Excellence.

Aspects: First In, Last Out, Imperial Medal of Excellence

### Phase Three: Nefarious Schemes

Rigelia and her unit were stationed on Krelkin, a backwater frontier world, as an Imperial Garrison, when the news came that the Emperor was dead, and the Imperium was collapsing. There was confusion in the ranks, and Rigelia took command of the garrison. With the locals emboldened and rising up against the garrison, Kratus had her men take all the supplies they could, storm the space port, and leave the planet.

With a steady core group of ex-Imperium troops, Rigelia Kratus returned to Coldstone, founding a mercenary company and offering positions to other Imperium officers. Taking the position of Commander for herself, Coldstone Military Solutions now does mercenary work for the highest bidder.

Aspects: Coldstone Military Solutions, Opportunist

### Other Aspects:

Ice Queen, For the Highest Bidder

### Aspects:

A Soldier's Soldier

Coldstone Military Solutions

First In, Last Out

For the Highest Bidder

Ice Queen

Imperial Medal of Excellence

Opportunist

Survival Instinct

### Skills:

Superb: Leadership

Great: Athletics, Survival

Good: Contacts, Endurance, Guns

Fair: Charm, Fighting, Resolve, Resources

Average: Drive, Engineering, Intimidation, Perception, Stealth

Mediocre: Academics, Burglary, Empathy, Medicine, Might,

Mystic Lore

Using the Commander:

As presented, Commander Kratus is a powerful enemy in her own right. She's got a fairly significant amount of military might at her disposal. However, her motivations are mostly a blank slate. What does Commander Kratus want? How can this conflict with the players? How the Gamemaster answers this question will expand on Kratus's character, and make her more interesting. She still has room for two aspects, so fill them out however you like.

Commander Kratus's primary use is meant to be the competent henchman for the villain. She can be found doing contract work for the most nefarious of foes, asking few questions and doing what needs to be done. (The Gamemaster may find Regelia Kratus to be too competent, if that is the case, subtract one level from all her skills at Average and higher, having her cap out at Great.)

Commander Kratus might make a bit of a recurring villain, if she takes contracts for multiple enemies of the players and manages to get away. This is best used if eventually she's a questionable ally- fighting on the same side as the players for a given adventure, in a situation that's awkward for everyone.

Kratus should always be accompanied by mooks. Coldstone Military Solutions soldiers are typically Good quality, and with Kratus's leadership bonuses, they act as a Great unit, plus size modifiers.

Commander Kratus should be fairly easy to convert to other times and places- mercenaries have always been a common element in wars, and the losing side will often have veterans. In a fantasy setting, the Coldstone Regiment might contain hardliners of the old evil empire, working for cults, thieves guilds, and pretenders to the crown. In a modern action adventure game, she becomes Rotislava Kratus, ex-Spetsnaz officer and founder of Coldstone Military Solutions, a private security firm that also provides intelligence and training to terrorist organizations.



## **Draconis Rex- Epic Fantasy**

Archetype: Ancient Dragon

The bards speak of Draconis Rex in hushed whispers, but few know the true extent of his history. An ancient Dragon, older than the kingdoms of the humans and even those of the elves, Draconis Rex claims the Black Steppes as his home. Though many have carved kingdoms for themselves in the Steppes, seeking the valuable Nightmetal hidden in veins, the land is under the dominion of someone greater.

When King Grummel Osterdorf of the Dwarfs declared the Black Steppes as his own, Draconis Rex had not been sighted in years. King Ostdorf considered the dragon superstition, and built a great city at the heart of the Steppes, Osterstadt, built of spires of Nightmetal, the jewel of his kingdom and a testament to the power of the dwarves.

It was a terror when Draconis Rex emerged from the caverns below the city. He toppled the great spires of Osterstadt, belched forth poisons that withered away the dwarves and rusted metal, and feasted upon the royal family. And Draconis Rex made Osterstadt his home. It still stands there, an empty ruin. Scavengers who are brave or foolish still go there, but they avoid the remains of the palace.

The human kingdoms push into the Black Steppes, building outposts and settlements. Draconis Rex is aware of these, and he is angered at the humans who invade his lands, but he bides his time, for he enjoys the thrill of conquest and destruction, and it has been a very long time since he had a foe as worthy as the Osterdorf dwarves.

Aspects:

Ancient Terror

Broken Throne of Osterstadt

Crushing Jaws

Cunning and Calculating

Destroyer of Armies

Dominion of the Black Steppes

Dragon King

Dragon's Wrath

Fearsome Visage

Impenetrable Hide  
Laying in Wait  
Lust for Conquest  
Massive Stature  
Poisonous Breath  
Territorial Nature

Skills:

Epic: Might

Fantastic: Endurance, Fighting

Superb: Academics, Mystic Lore, Resources

Great: Intimidation, Perception, Resolve, Survival

Good: Athletics, Charm, Empathy, Leadership, Stealth,

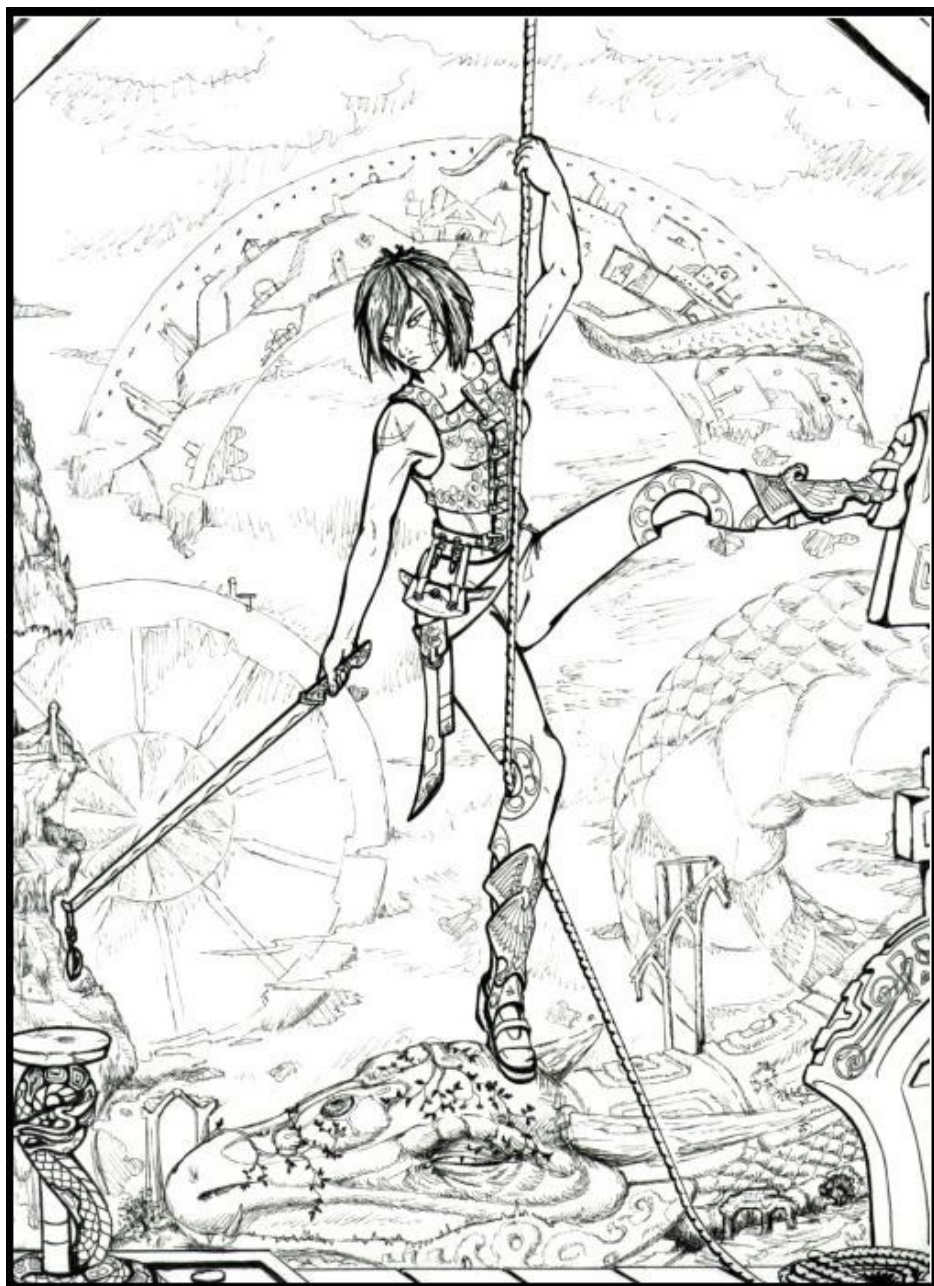
Fair: Burglary, Drive, Contacts, Engineering, Guns, Medicine

Using Draconis Rex:

Draconis Rex breaks a lot of the villain creation rules- he doesn't have phases, he's got a lot of aspects, and some really beefy skills. That's because most villains created with the phases will be peers of the player characters. An ancient dragon king? He doesn't recognize anyone or anything as his peer.

The players want to kill a dragon? Here's a dragon for them. But don't just make him a monster of the week, or he'll lose his impact. Lead up to him. Have the settlements in the Black Steppes threatened by agents of the dragon. (What might those be? Cultists, hired bandits, orcs, dragonspawn, or maybe even undead dwarves.) Draconis Rex starts by probing and threatening outposts, testing the mettle of their defenders. When a true threat is revealed, Draconis Rex deals with it dramatically and violently. A combat against the dragon king should be a many-on-one fight- Draconis Rex is powerful enough as is without the need for backup, and the players will need many Fate Points to emerge victorious.

To use Draconis Rex in a different setting, perhaps he emerges from millennia of hibernation in an African nation rich in diamond or uranium mines, claiming it as his own, treating that nation's capitol city to a similar fate as Osterstadt. In a science fiction game, the Dragon might be an ancient alien, ruling over an abandoned planet rich in rare minerals and elements. The threat is the same, but the trappings are different.



## **Advice for Players**

Now that you know how the rules of Amazing Adventures and how to make a character, you're ready to jump right in and start playing. This chapter is full of extra tips and tricks on how to be a better player and add some extra awesome to your gameplay.

### **Building a Better Character**

Before you put anything down on your character sheet, you should make sure you have some sort of concept for your character. Some people just start with a background and hope something emerges. This is a mistake, as it generally results in bland, uninteresting characters who have no place in Awesome Adventures.

Generally, simpler is better for archetypes. If you can't describe it in a short colorful phrase, you're probably getting into way too much detail. Things like "bank robber," "gun-bunny," or "crazy driver," are all perfectly valid archetypes. Less is more.

If you're stumped, pick a favorite character from a movie or novel of similar genre, and put your own twist on it. If you're playing in a fantasy game based loosely on Middle Earth, take Legolas- and turn him into a catgirl ninja. "Catgirl ninja archer?" Awesome.

Or, you can browse the skill list, pick a skill that jumps out at you, and build a concept around that. Tired of playing combat monsters and want to give a cunning socialite a go (with Charm, or maybe Contacts as an apex skill?) "Cunning Socialite," "Prince Charming," "Femme Fatale," or "The Fixer," are all great archetypes that could follow from that.

### **What Makes You Awesome?**

If you find that your characters are lackluster in play, ask yourself this question. Awesome Adventures characters should be Awesome. If you don't consider your character awesome, why should anyone else? Concepts like "just a normal guy," don't really have a place in this system. (Of course, "everyman on the brink" can be pretty cool.)

Answer this question! What makes you excited about this character? Why is your character awesome? How can you make that clear with your character's aspects?

### **What Are You Going to Do?**

What sort of stuff do you see your character doing? This question is worth asking because you can start with a cool concept, but have trouble finding things you're interested in doing during play.

For some characters, it's obvious. The gun-bunny will shoot stuff, the barbarian will hack at stuff, and the getaway driver will get the characters away from stuff.

But what about the more esoteric concepts? What's the explorer doing? What's the world famous musician doing?

Your novel will help you answer this question. What kind of adventures can your character have? How are they likely to react in a stressful situation? How can they bring the awesome during play?

This question may help you realize that an archetype that sounds cool on the surface, might not hold as much in-game appeal for you as you thought it did.

Also take a minute to consider what your character will do when the bullets or fists start flying, because eventually they will, and you'll want to keep your options for action open.

### **How Are You Going to Do That?**

Once you've figured out what you do, it's worth making sure you have mechanical support for actually doing it. Just as a gun-bunny needs Guns and a driver needs Drive, the two-fisted archaeologist needs Academics (and maybe Mystic Lore), the mad-scientist needs Engineering (and probably Academics), and the billionaire playboy needs Resources.

Sometimes this seems obvious, but it's possible to get wrapped up in aspects and forget to take the skill that actually does what

you want to be good at.

Thankfully, Awesome Adventures characters are simple enough that it's possible to rectify an unfortunate skill choice. Just let your Gamemaster know you're moving your skills around. As long as you don't try to abuse that, you won't have to worry about forgetting to take Burglary for your master thief ever again.

## **Choosing the Right Aspects**

The Aspects chapter has loads of advice on picking aspects. To summarize some of that here, make your aspects as interesting and individualized as possible, take ones that can be both positive and negative, and have a decent mix of story and situation aspects.

But there's some specific aspect-related pitfalls that are worth considering.

### **If It's Important, Make it an Aspect**

If you have a mentor, an enemy, a talent, or just about anything that's vital to your character, that you think is cool, and you want to see in game, make it an aspect. It's not enough for it to be on your character background sheet. If it's not an aspect on your character sheet, it's not important.

The Gamemaster only has so much time and so much energy to devote to the game, and they're going to generate their plots by looking at the aspects the players choose. If you want something to be a vital plot point... make it an aspect. If you want something to come up in game... make it an aspect.

Remember, this also means "important to the player," not "important to the character." Just because your character is an ex-vampire hunter, the heir to the throne, or the enemy of the moon-men, doesn't mean that you think that's a vital part of your character. If you just want that to be a minor footnote in your character's back story, just make it be that. If you make it an aspect, you will get embroiled in conflicts with vampires, rival claimants, or moon-men, and maybe that's not what you want. If it's not important... don't make in an aspect.

## **Help! The Plot Never Focuses on Me!**

It's always the other players who are having old rivals return, old friends to aid, and familiar places to return to. But you never seem to hook into the plot, finding yourself mostly strung along to play second fiddle to the other players.

You did take *some* story aspects, right?

Situation aspects might make you well rounded and able to act well in many situations, but they don't do a heck of a lot for entangling you into the plot. To do that, you're going to need to introduce a larger story into the game with your aspects.

Make a mentor, a rival, a love interest, an organization, a quest, or a goal an aspect. Give your Gamemaster the tool to compel your aspects. Remember, the Gamemaster will be compelling aspects, and using aspects to set up their plots. You want them to be compelling yours, because then you have more fate points, and weaving the plot around you, because then you have more screen time. The more work it is for them to try to figure out how to use your aspects, the more likely they'll start looking at the aspects on someone else's sheet.

I find that for a one-shot, two story aspects gives a pretty good shot that one of them is going to get used, and for a longer game, the more story aspects you have, the more plots can focus on or involve your character.

## **Help! I Never Have Any Relevant Aspects!**

Sometimes you just aren't looking hard enough. Or you're looking too hard. Try thinking about the situation, what's going on, what you're doing, and what aspects are related. You should be able to come up with something.

Or maybe all of your aspects are story aspects.

Story aspects tend to be much more narrow in scope than situation aspects. It's easy to bring "Strong" into just about any physical conflict, but harder to bring "Wooing Space Princess Chezmerelda," into play when she's not around.

One option is to take fewer story aspects the next time you play-say, no more than five. Or make your situation aspects just a teensy bit broader. (As it happens, individualizing them is also a good way to do this, since it gives everyone a clearer view of what it means, and how it might be transferred to other means of conflict. Counter-intuitive, but true.)

But maybe you've got lots of aspects, desperately need that +2, and just are drawing a blank on which one to invoke.

When that happens, stop. Breathe. Think. Is it really that important that you find a perfectly related aspect? Or is it more important that you'll be awesome? Describe the awesome thing you want your character to do in loving detail, slide that Fate Point forward, and if the aspect isn't evident to you, it might be to someone else.

## **Helping the Gamemaster**

Sometimes the Gamemaster has an off day. Maybe they're tired, maybe they're a little sick, or maybe they didn't have time to plan. When that happens, there's a few things you can do to take some of the burden off the Gamemaster.

One technique that's useful in longer games is to build Hooks into your character. A Hook is any event that would drive the character to action. For example, a foppish swashbuckling noble with great ambitions might be driven by rumors of a monster-filled fief ready to be claimed, intrigue with a beautiful princess, or even a crisis in world fashions. The point is, the player comes up with the generic details in advance, and then hands them over to the Gamemaster.

The best way to make a hook juicy is by making it an aspect. (Like "Monster-filled unclaimed-fief.") The other way you do this is by talking to your Gamemaster, and saying, "hey, wouldn't it be cool if X happened?" Either way, it's helpful, because it lets the Gamemaster know rather explicitly that you'd be interested in a certain plot development.

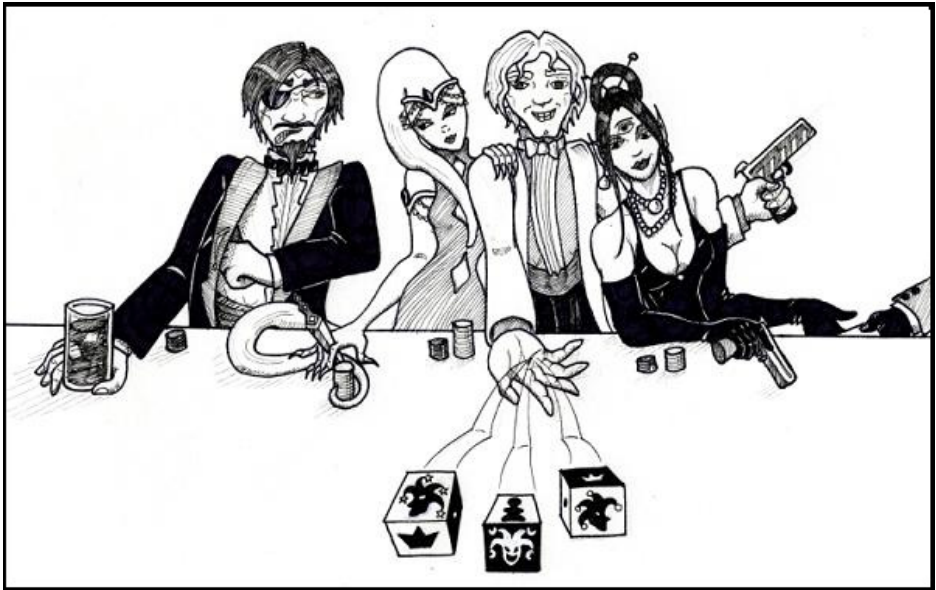
If the action of a scene is lagging, and nothing seems to be happening, ask yourself how you can spice it up. Are there



aspects on your character sheet that might cause entertaining trouble? Ask for a compel, and kick the story into gear while earning yourself some Fate points. Don't know what to do next? Make a Declaration, introducing story elements to drive things further to action. (This is extra effective when searching for clues for a mystery, which can get bogged down if the Gamemaster didn't think of enough ways to investigate, and depended on a single course of action. That never works.)

## Keep Things Awesome

Remember, *Awesome Adventures* is a game about bringing the awesome. Always be looking for cool, awesome, and amazing things you can do. Start doing this in character creation, and keep doing it every step of the way. When you're in a situation, think to yourself- what's the most absurd, dangerous, barely plausible thing someone might possibly consider doing right now? Would it be awesome if you did it? Is there any reason why you shouldn't?



## Genres and Settings

Awesome Adventures is meant to be used to tell all sorts of adventure stories, not limited to any one time or place. The default assumption of many of the skill descriptions is a roughly-modern game, set in a world like our own but more fantastic. Some of these details may need to change if you are playing a game set in centuries past or future, or in a world very different than our own.

This chapter will give you the tools to do that. It presents three Genres- wide possibilities for play- which you can use to build your own Settings. A genre is the broad strokes and assumptions about the world, and the Setting is the specifics.

### Twentieth Century Adventure

Twentieth Century Adventure looks towards the media and stories of today and the past century for inspiration. (The author is very aware that it's currently the *twenty-first* century, but Twentieth has a little more panache.) These are the stories of today, tomorrow, and yesterday, set in a world not quite like our own, a world where larger than life heroes reside and larger than life adventures take place.

In all of these cases, there's room for a little weirdness or wiggle room in the margins of history. Perhaps there's misunderstood ancient artifacts, mad scientists, werewolves, or countries that don't show up on the maps of our own world.

### Settings

**Cinematic Blockbuster** games call to mind the larger than life heroes we see on the big screen. These stories are high action, and have a lot of explosions, car chases, and fist fights.

**Technothriller** stories are often set in the world of today or the near future. The heroes or their opposition are often ahead of the technology curve, and have lots of cool gizmos. Often technothriller stories are a little more sedate, focusing on espionage or tense games of cat-and-mouse, but when the action shows up, it shows up in spades.

**Pulp** stories are the high action adventure tales of the 1920s-

hard boiled action from heroic men and women. Pulp stories sometimes get a little absurd, but that's all part of the fun.

## **Skills in Twentieth Century Adventure**

You won't need to make any tweaks to the skill lists or descriptions for a twentieth century game. The skills here can be used as-is. The only skill you might need to keep an eye on would be Mystic Lore- if a player takes this skill, they're voting for some weirdness in the game.

## **Times of Trouble in Twentieth Century Adventure**

The classic Time of Trouble is war. For Pulp games set in the 1920s, the Great War makes an excellent Time of Troubles. The twentieth century is ripe with conflicts, so if you set your game in other decades, you may be able to put World War II in the history of your characters.

For modern and near-future games, the fall of the Soviet Union and the final days of the Cold War are one possible Time of Troubles. September 11 and the resulting War on Terror is another. For a near-future game, you might even come up with an alternate Time of Trouble event, such as extended cold war between the United States and China, or a harsh war covering all of the Middle East.

When selecting a Time of Trouble, consider the themes you want it to convey. We can look back at the World Wars with a sense of nostalgia, and 'good guys versus bad guys,' but in the modern conflicts, things are rarely so clear cut. The morally grayer you present your Time of Trouble, the morally grayer the characters that emerge from it will be.

## **Character Archetypes**

While players have the leeway to explore any ideas that interest them, it's worth remembering that modern adventure stories have a handful of easily recognizable character types. While you are far from obliged to fit characters into these neat little "boxes", you are encouraged to create characters that match the overall flavor. Beyond that, you're free to fill in details as you like. A twentieth

century setting can support characters of almost every stripe, but there are a few common themes worth taking a look at.

## **Academic**

The academic is compelled by his interest in his field, which is usually something like history, linguistics, anthropology or (most famously) archaeology. The academic knows that lost, hidden, and forgotten knowledge exists all over the world. Ancient ruins, obscure libraries, mysterious artifacts – all these can offer answers to questions that have not even been asked yet.

What are **you** doing: You are answering questions, finding what was lost, and trying to expand the breadth of human knowledge.

Possible Aspects: Particular areas of expertise.

## **Agent**

The Agent is an elite operative of some group, perhaps for a government agency that can't be acknowledged, perhaps for a secret organization. He may not know, himself. But it means he's connected (well connected), and is privy to secrets that others just don't know about.

His job? Whatever the agency says it is. Thankfully, that is usually exactly what the Agent would be interested in doing in the first place. When conflict eventually arises between the operator and the agency, it usually goes very badly indeed for one of them or the other.

What are **you** doing: You're serving a greater cause – perhaps for your government, or perhaps a higher or more secret authority than that.

Possible Aspects: The agency he works for, rival enemy agencies.

## **The Gadget Guy**

The gadget guy is the recipient of the wonders of science. He is the keeper of a unique piece of technology, usually at the behest

of its creator. The creator may or may not still be alive and serving as a patron for him (and in some cases, the creator and the gadget guy are the same person!). The device in question is usually quite potent, and serves as a signature for the character – something interesting and immediately recognizable, like a jet pack, a super car, or an exotic weapon.

What are **you** doing: With great technology comes great responsibility. Your gadget has made you more capable of taking action (whatever action you pursue), so you have embraced it.

Possible Aspects: The gadget or gizmo itself.

### **Gentleman Criminal**

Crime is usually a brutish thing, fueled by necessity, but for some it is the only true challenge available. Usually possessed of copious talents, enough that they have already found success elsewhere, gentleman criminals pursue a life of crime because of its excitement. Such characters enjoy the good life and civilization, so the adventures of exploration hold no appeal to them, especially when compared to the thrill of the chase, outwitting investigators, and similar brushes with danger.

Often, these criminals turn into sociopathic masterminds as they turn more and more to crime. But others maintain a certain basic, albeit twisted, honesty that informs their crimes. A burglar may have a strong code to harm no one, or may rob from the rich to give to the poor. An assassin may only accept contracts on those he feels society is better off without. Most such ethical criminals can be convinced to leave their past behind them and use their talents to more challenging, world-bettering ends, but true retirement is not often in their nature.

What are **you** doing: You're trying to find something worth doing. When you find it, you seize upon it with gusto.

Possible Aspects: The character's source of criminal expertise, criminal syndicates, the target of the heist of a lifetime.

## Heroic Cop

Criminals lurk everywhere, and crime can fester if not dealt with. When criminal masterminds are canny, and the police are corrupt, there's little those on the side of right can do about it. Or maybe the gangs and syndicates are so well funded and so well staffed that they're more than the police can deal with. That's where the heroic cop comes in.

He's willing, and able to do what it takes to bring the bad guys down. Maybe he follows all the rules to the letter, or maybe he breaks them all, but whatever his style, he gets results. He can out run, out drive, out shoot, and out think the criminals, and he won't stop- ever- until justice is served.

What are **you** doing: Whatever it takes to see the bad guys behind bars. Even when the heroic cop is on vacation, he still finds a way to do what's right.

Possible Aspects: A loyal partner, a criminal syndicate or source of opposition.

## Scientist

Science is the door to the future, and every educated man has an interest in it. Despite that, it is easy to spot the committed scientist, master of one or more fields, dedicating his time and effort to the pursuit of science. Whereas other heroes seek adventure and appreciate science, the scientist seeks science and appreciates adventure.

While the scientist may have richly appointed labs or shops, there is still too much to be found, too many theories to be tested, too much to do, to simply stay cooped up. Scientists can have one or more fields of interest, which will generally be reflected by their equipment. A chemist or botanist may have a steady supply of bizarre and unique concoctions, while an engineer might have exotic gadgets or weapons.

What are **you** doing: You're challenging assumptions and testing theories, bringing science out into the field with the intention of proving a theory that can solve a problem.

Possible Aspects: Heroic science- a gizmo, lab, or theory with practical applications.

## **Veteran**

The veteran is the perfect soldier- or at least he was. He saw action in Europe, or Vietnam, or Afghanistan, or Iraq, and he was the elite of the elite. But now he's out of the forces, and it's peacetime. Secretly, he's happy peacetime isn't that peaceful.

The world is in conflict, and the veteran sees that. Having experienced his share of fighting, he knows how to get things done, and now he's found a cause worth fighting for, and an enemy worth fighting against.

What are **you** doing: Making the world a better place by taking out the bad guys who want to make it worse.

Possible Aspects: Old allies and enemies from the war.

## **Enemies and Opposition**

### **Crime Syndicate**

The crime syndicate deals in fear and powers. Syndicates, whether they are mafia, yakuza, triads, or just plain street gangs, want little more than wealth and power for their members- but those at the top are very wealthy, and very powerful, and don't care who they have to hurt to get more. Syndicates are always looking for ways to expand what they have, and this will put them in conflict with the characters.

### **Monomaniacal Mastermind**

The Monomaniacal Mastermind is the supervillain's supervillain. Everything he does exudes over the top, from his plan, to his base, to his mannerisms. The plot of the Mastermind should put the world in peril, and only the heroes can stop him- but first, they'll have to go through his colorful henchmen.

## **Nazis**

Everyone loves to hate Nazis. In the thirties and forties, Nazi Germany is rising to power, or already in power, and Nazi troops scour the globe, perhaps looking for occult artifacts or meddling in international affairs. After World War II, the Nazi menace is destroyed- or is it? Nazis might have a secret base in South America or Antarctica, and the Nazis, or perhaps some inheritor secret society (with a menacing name, like “the Thule Society”) extend their plots to modern day, plotting to restore their Reich.

## **Occult Organization**

The occult organization knows something about the mystic secrets of the world- and wants to use them to further their baleful agenda. Cults worshiping dark gods, sinister occultists looking for ancient artifacts, people meddling in things the don't (and shouldn't) understand, these are the occult organizations.

## **Shadowy Government Agency**

A rogue faction of one of the world's superpowers, most likely the United States, Russia, or China, that uses government resources and bureaucracy for its own ends, which conflict with the interests of the people and the government as a whole. The agency may wish to start a war with another power, experiment on the government's citizens, or overthrow the greater government. The agency will be supported by it's own adherents, as well as unwilling dupes.

## **Fantasy**

Fantasy is filled with the magical, the mythic, and the fantastical. Fantasy makes the impossible possible. This is where we find dueling wizards, rugged barbarians from the frozen wastes, elves, dwarves, and other fey creatures, magic items, and things of wonder.

## **Settings**

In any good fantasy story, something is in peril. Is it the whole world and life as we know it, or is it something a little more



personal and immediate?

**Swords and Sorcery** involves a number of larger-than-life protagonists, typically involved in personal, high-stakes, action-packed battles. Swords and Sorcery heroes usually live hard, love hard, and fight hard.

**Epic Fantasy** is usually made of broader strokes. Usually, the fate of the whole world is in peril, and the heroes must struggle against a doom over time. The tale of the epic is often told over a saga, with the heroes facing a number of challenges before they can finally face the climactic battle.

How common is magic in your setting? Does everyone know a spell or hex or two? Is magic rare, with a handful of learned wizards? Do wizards shun others of their kind, or do they organize in powerful guilds? Is magic something learned through study, or does it come naturally to the gifted? Is magic something feared, or something cherished? How about technology and scientific learning?

**Medieval Fantasy** is set in a world very much like our own dark ages, but with the fantastic peppered in. Magic might be something people talk about but never see, or the next kingdom over might be full of orcs that need to be defended against. Wizards live in tall towers, and tend to form guilds.

**Mythic Fantasy** focuses on a handful of larger than life heroes, in a distant past. Magic is potent, but rare and respected. These are the tales of Gilgamesh and Ulysses. These characters are often involved in more personal struggles, so these stories tend to take on a Swords and Sorcery feel.

In **High Fantasy**, magic is everywhere. There are ancient mystic civilizations, great magical items, and rich heritages- and it's all in danger, from a vast, shadowy evil. High Fantasy is almost exclusively Epic Fantasy.

## **Skills in Fantasy**

With the modern focus of many of the skills, they need a little bit of consideration. Those skills based solely on physical action or socializing don't need any changes, but some require technology, or assume a certain level of scientific advancement.

Academics is about learning, and generally assumes a scholastic

infrastructure. In the bronze age or medieval times, this skills might be renamed Scholastics or Natural Philosophy to better reflect the notions of the times- but the application of the skill remains unchanged. In a truly ancient setting a version of Academics, called Lore, applies, which contains the collected learning and wisdom of a people.

Engineering remains largely the same. In addition to being the ability to craft and repair items, and thus being the skill in trade of the blacksmith, it has the ability to make devices beyond the curve, but the player should keep in mind the idiom of the times. For ancient Greek artificers, a steam powered tank probably isn't appropriate, but a bronze one powered by a perpetual motion machine might be. A character would need Drive to pilot such a device.

Most characters won't have any Guns to speak of, but the skill can still be used as Archery to cover all ranged weapons. During the advent of the gunpowder weapon, it might be called Marksmanship.

While characters might not have access to the possibilities of modern Medicine, they surely know herbal or holistic remedies, or have access to healing magics.

## **Times of Trouble for Fantasy**

With a fantasy game, you have some more latitude in determining the nature of the Time of Troubles. Unlike a game set in the 'real world', you don't have to worry too much about actual events- you can make up whatever you want.

War remains a good Time of Troubles. Perhaps recently the Evil Empire was defeated, but remnants remain- or the Empire of Light was able to stand against the dark threat that it faced.

Maybe there was a holy crusade to lands far away. Men may have gone to war with other men, or the threat might have been more fantastic- perhaps the enemy kingdom was one of orcs in the mountains, or demons invading from hell.

Monstrous activity makes a good Time of Troubles. Did the Dragonstorm, a year in which dragons emerge and scour the world happen recently? Were there massive goblin raids? Did Leviathans destroy ships? What sort of response was there?

How might your character have helped?

Magical phenomenon make a third Time of Troubles. Did fire rain from the sky? Did magic backfire? Did comets crash into great cities? What caused it, and what did people do about it? What are you doing about it now?

## Character Archetypes

You should never feel constrained to pick one of these archetypes, but we return to them again and again in the fantasy stories we read or watch, and the ones we tell ourselves. There's plenty of room in each of these to flesh out a character's personality, individual powers, and uniqueness.

### Priest

The holy man, often one who belongs to an order of holy knights or healers, is driven by his duty to his faith. Perhaps he is invested with holy powers, or perhaps he is simply driven by what he knows is right, but priests are often well-learned, highly respected, and strongly motivated. In a world with active divinities, and palpable battles between good and evil, the faithful must act.

What are **you** doing: Striving towards the goals of your faith, protecting your flock, and fighting evil in all its forms.

Possible Aspects: The holy powers of one's faith, enemy gods, one's followers.

### Rogue

The rogue is the free spirit who gets things done by cunning, guile, and expertise. Maybe they're a wanderer, maybe they're a thief, but something is driving them to get out there, see the world, and do more. They may not always play by societies rules, but many of them are driven by hearts of gold.

What are **you** doing: Always looking for a bigger score, and bigger adventure.

Possible Aspects: A legendary heist, a guild or organization of

rogues, a corrupt organization that needs taking down.

## **Warrior**

The warrior is defined by battle. They live in a violent world, and they are experts in violence. Why does the warrior fight? Do they do so to defend something? Because they find something else so vile they must strive against it? Because they are driven to physical perfection?

What are **you** doing: Taking up the sword to defend and fight for what you believe in.

Possible Aspects: A legendary or magical weapon, a mentor.

## **Wizard**

The wizard is a master of the arcane arts. He deals in knowledge others cannot hope to comprehend. His legacy is an ancient and occulted one. For the wizard, great power is within his grasp, but it often comes at a price, and the risk of greater dangers.

What are **you** doing: Seeking to better understand the magical mysteries of the world, using your powers for the greater good.

Possible Aspects: The nature of the character's wizardry.

## **Enemies and Opposition**

### **Cultists**

Cults, deluded worshipers serving dark power, are a staple fantasy enemy. The cults serve a dark god, or an unknowable horror, or a giant monster. Their actions give their patron power, and the cult often takes actions for its own members' worldly power and aims. If the Cult achieves its goals, its patron may be able to walk in the material world in its full power.

### **Dragons**

Dragons are large, majestic, powerful- and greedy, and utterly unconcerned with human life. Dragons are hoarders, collecting

gems, gold, rare artifacts, and human nobility. No one's quite sure what they do with all that stuff, but they want it, and they'll fight to the death to protect their hoards. Dragons are cunning, and one should always take caution in dealing with one. When Dragons do leave their lairs, they do so for a purpose, and are a terror to those that stand in their way. They never leave their lairs unguarded- whether by traps, magic, or minions. Dragons are often served by monsters like orcs, or human cultists.

## **Evil Empire**

The Evil Empire threatens to conquer the land. Dark knights in spiky black armor, with big spiky black weapons. Evil Empires might serve a powerful and immortal (and immoral) leader who wants to extend his dominion, they might want to help such a leader ascend to power or regain it, or they might just want to get out there and cause pain and suffering.

Even if the Evil Empire is defeated, there's always a remnant of it somewhere. Are the forces of darkness rebuilding in the frontiers? Does a cabal lurk in the heart of civilization to create the dark rebirth where it would be least expected?

## **Orcs, Goblins, and other Monstrous Humanoids**

Orcs and goblins are the savage monsters that dwell in the hills, the mountains, and outside civilization. They are the 'other,' the monstrous people that we fear, that are the worst aspects of outsiders. Your orcs might be green skinned muscular humanoids, they might have tusks, or they might be furry and have dog heads.

Orcs prefer war to peace, and violence to talking. Their own societies are small, brutal, tribal affairs, with the biggest, nastiest, meanest orc rising to the top and bullying around the rest. Orcs know no fear in battle, because whatever the rest of the tribe might do to them is worse. Usually, orcs are only a regional threat, and spend as much time warring amongst each other as they do with humans, but every few generations, a leader so powerful, so fearsome, and so darkly charismatic comes along, and unites the orcish tribes under a single king. Those are dark times.

## Undead

Vampires, ghosts, and hordes of zombies. People that fear death and willingly turned to darkness to avoid it, or those whose final death was stolen from them, their bodies defiled. Undeath is not just a mockery of life- it is antithetical to it, for the dead often feed on the living.

## Fantastic Future

The fantastic future is all of our dreams about what might come to pass. In keeping with the general optimistic outlook of Awesome Adventures, the future is a time of wonder and progress, when things are better and bigger than they are today- but this time of wonder is in peril, for fantastic threats loom on the horizon.

### Settings:

Science fiction settings vary wildly in content and tone. Generally, those we play with in Awesome Adventures will be 'soft' sci-fi- the kind where problems can be solved with technobabble, no one bats an eye at planets with a single type of terrain, and the universe is filled with aliens that look like people in funny prosthetics.

The real question facing you should not be 'how much science,' but 'what kind of science?' Do the people in this game have teleporters? Laser guns? Gravity control? Try to worry less about how it works, and more about what kind of crazy stuff you can do with it.

The **Space Epic** is the larger than life science fiction tale, with the fate of stellar nations or the galaxy as a whole hanging in the balance. The protagonists often find themselves in conflict with large, organizational enemies, and are involved in galactic affairs.

**Space Pulp** takes the sensibilities of the Pulp of the 20s and blasts them into the next century! Ray-guns, Q-Radar, and Turing Machines are the order of the day, as are epic earthmen and Martian princesses.

**Cyberpulp** is a combination of the gritty tones of cyberpunk, with the optimistic tones and action-focus of Pulp. Dark, gritty, advertisement strewn streets, larger-than-life, heroes, part man,

part machine, roaming the streets, fighting for the common man in a world that no longer cares.

## **Skills in Fantastic Future**

Like Modern games, the only skill that's potentially out of place is Mystic Lore. If a character has this, that's a vote for some weirdness, so consult with the player and come up with some ideas.

## **Times of Trouble for the Future**

The old classic, war, is easily transferred to the galactic stage. Was it a conflict between two great stellar powers? Who won? Were the alliances drawn on lines of species, ideology, or even corporate ties? Perhaps the menace was an ancient (or new!) highly advanced race making its presence known.

The breakup, or creation of a new great power is also rife with conflict. What happens when the largest space empire (or space megacorporation) fractures from within and splinters?

## **Character Archetypes**

Most of the modern archetypes adapt fairly easily to the future as well- the heroic cop is a member of the intergalactic police force, the soldier was a veteran of the Orion Conflict, and the gadget guy has a gizmo years ahead of its time. But, there's also a couple roles that we've come to associate with science fiction in particular.

## **Alien Emissary**

For some characters, the fact that they're an alien is only one part of their character- a little bit of color that spices things up. For others, they are defined by it. The Alien Emissary is a paragon of his people, an exemplar of his culture. He provides a different perspective, extends a hand of friendship across the universe, and shows that different people can live in peace.

What are **you** doing: Solving galactic conflicts, while doing your best to bring fame to your people.

Possible Aspects: The character's alien species, his role as representative or ambassador for his people.

## **Psychic**

Unlocking the mysteries of the human brain, the psychic has feats of mental mastery few can match. Reading minds or emotions, sending messages, moving objects with the power of the mind, or lighting fires, these are some of the feats associated with the psychic. The psychic must be careful- the powers can be hard to control, and there are those who would use their gifts for darkness.

What are **you** doing: Looking to understand the mysteries within, using your powers for the greater good.

Possible Aspects: The nature of the character's psychic powers.

## **Space Pilot**

We often see ace pilots in all kinds of settings, but the space pilot is sometimes a different breed. The pilot has a close relationship with their craft- is it a sleek, single person fighter, a bulky tramp freighter riddled with secret compartments, or a big interstellar military flagship? The pilot knows the ship better than anyone else, and can make it do some amazing things.

What are **you** doing: Exploring the universe, one star system at a time, getting goods where they need to go, or blowing up the bad guys, all while doing death-defying maneuvers.

Possible Aspects: The Starship, a frequently visited star system.

## **Enemies and Opposition**

### **Bugs**

Giant, giant bugs, with chitinous hides resistant to bullets, and mandibles able to slice a man's head in half. A menace on the edge of the galaxy, they cannot be reasoned with. Hiveships floating through space, with queens the size of whales spawning forth eggs. They know only one instinct: expand.



This is the alien menace that is incompatible with human life. Maybe it's not bugs- maybe it's a zombie-like parasite, or a super virus, or a cybernetic collective. Whatever it is, it wants humanity dead.

## **Crime Syndicate**

The syndicates of the future are much like the ones of today, but with different chrome and operations. Smugglers, organ rings, syndicates pushing virtual drugs, the crime changes but the structure stays the same.

## **Evil Empire**

The evil empire spans the galaxy, threatening to bring free planets under it's dominion! A classic trope of space epics, the evil empire is the ominous threat. Whereas fantasy evil empires are often baroque and ostentatious, the science fiction evil empire is often sanitized, washed of life and emotion- a gray dystopia. It's not just death that the heroes face- it's something much worse: banality.

## **Shadowy Megacorp**

A corporation spanning the globe (or more than one), with its fingers in many pies, supporting illegal operations to gain a market advantage. The megacorp is utterly ruthless and unethical in its business dealings, and someone's bound to get hurt. Megacorps are a favorite target of Cyberpulp characters, who can often fight the corporations and win.

## **Other Genres**

There's no reason to limit yourself to what's been presented here. Maybe you want a high-action, high-stakes western, or a wall-walking, arrow-deflecting wuxia tale. Or something stranger, like a western wuxia. If it's action packed, and has the potential for Awesome Adventures, it's worth doing. The same principles used here should be kept in mind when making your own genres- what conflicts define the characters (Time of Troubles), what recurring roles we see again and again and serve as launching points for our own characters (Archetypes), and a few typical bad guys (Enemies and Opposition). You'll be taking off in no time!

## Sample Characters

Here are three sample characters, one from each of the broad genres, to give you guidance, and inspire your own tales of heroism.

### **Gwendolen the Ravager- Swords and Sorcery Fantasy**

Archetype: Formidable Barbarian

#### Phase One: Background

Gwendolen grows up in the Icy Steppes, a frozen area far away from civilization, living in a proud, nomadic warrior society. She was still young when they- the black armored knights- marched into her village and killed them all. Though raised as a warrior, she knew her only chance for vengeance would be to escape and fight another day.

Aspects: Harsh Woman from a Harsh Land.

Fight Smarter, not Harder.



## Phase Two: Formative Adventures in a Time of Troubles

The black armored knights who razed her village were knights of the Drelleth Republic, a terrible nation ruled by decadent sorcerers, who were scouring the land in search of magical artifacts. The other southern nations engaged in a great crusade to push back the Drells, at great cost to themselves. Gwendolen served as a mercenary, and distinguished herself in battle.

Aspects: Death to Sorcerers!

Follow Me!

## Phase Three: Adventure!

Gwendolen the Ravager and the Sinister Senate

The Senate of the Drelleth Republic sends a number of elite agents to find the artifacts they need to complete its ritual.

Traveling across Drell, joining with allied forces and fighting the Republic Knights, Gwendolen finally faces a Drelleth Senator, wielding a magic axe... an axe taken from her own village!

Slaying him and reclaiming the axe, she foils the plot.

Aspects: Frostedge, Axe of the Icy Steppes

Enmity of Drell

## Phase Four: Guest Star!

Balthazar the Wise and the Astronomicon

Balthazar the Wise translates the Astronomicon, learning of a threat from beyond the stars themselves. As he races to collect the components of a great ritual, Gwendolen protects him from cultists determined to bring dark forces into the world. After the ritual, they travel to the stars, and Gwendolen helps defeat a great evil by defeating the Starshard Champion.

Aspects: Warrior Without Peer

Spoils of War

## Phase Five: Guest Star!

Roderick, Prince of Thieves, and the Guilds of Hightower

Roderick, Prince of Thieves finds himself in a life or death struggle for rule of the underworld of the Imperial Capital. When Roderick is imprisoned by the Black Guildmaster and thrown into a nefarious deathtrap, Gwendolen comes to his aid, bending and breaking the traps and gates placed in their way.

Aspects: Heave!

Traps? I Hate Traps!

Aspects:

Death to Sorcerers

Enmity of Drell

Fight Smarter, Not Harder

Follow Me!

Frostedge, Axe of the Icy Steppes

Harsh Woman from a Harsh Land

Heave!

Spoils of War

Traps? I Hate Traps!

Warrior Without Peer

Skills:

Superb: Might

Great: Fighting, Survival

Good: Athletics, Endurance, Leadership

Fair: Engineering, Intimidation, Perception, Resolve

Average: Contacts, Guns, Medicine, Mystic Lore, Resources

Mediocre: Academics, Burglary, Charm, Drive, Empathy, Stealth

## **Jack Magnum- 1970s Adventure**

Archetype: Hothead Cop

Phase One: Background

Jack Magnum grew up on the mean streets of the big city. His father, Rex Magnum, was a police officer, and Jack wanted nothing more than to follow in his Dad's footsteps. He developed a very strong sense of right and wrong from an early age, and learned a thing or two about how to use a gun.

When Jack's father finally managed to put Vincent Monatelli, a Mafia crimelord behind bars, the Monatelli crime family took vengeance on Rex, taking him out of the picture.

Rex may have been gone, but the Monatellis' hadn't seen the last of the Magnums.

Aspects: What Rex Would Have Wanted

Life on the Streets

Phase Two: Formative Adventures in a Time of Troubles

The Mob Wars of '69 shook the city, and Vincent Monatelli was sprung from prison. Gangs working for Monatelli were moving in on Jack's neighborhood, so he brought evidence to the police.

Participating in a risky sting operation, Jack got close to

Monatelli. Things went bad, and Jack had to shoot his way out, but the city had one less mob boss.

Aspects: Hot Shot

Both Guns Blazing

Phase Three: Adventure!

Jack Magnum in Bullets for Breakfast

Jack, now a rising star of the Police Department, catches wind of a nefarious plot- Lenny Monatelli, cousin of Vincent Monatelli, is smuggling weapons into the city and arming gangs and criminals, using his network of pancake houses to hide the shipments.

Lenny Monatelli is a respected private citizen, so Jack has to use every trick in the book to prove his guilt- ending in an epic shootout down at the warehouse district.

Aspects: Plays By His Own Rules

Syndicate Stomper



#### Phase Four: Guest Star!

##### Koko Thunder and the Underworld Menace

The Police Department tasks Jack with investigating a new syndicate in town. When he learns they're vampires, he realizes he's completely out of his league. He teams up with Koko Thunder, a foxy lady who teaches him a thing or two about taking back the night. Learning that the undead are vulnerable to silver, Jack requisitions some silver bullets and helps bring down the vampire master.

Aspects: I Get Results

Man of Action

#### Phase Five: Guest Star!

##### Nash Flash in Disco Inferno

Crooked cops are trying to shut down the disco scene, and only Nash Flash can save disco! Jack Magnum, Nash's friend on the force, helps him cut off the crooked cops from their institutional support, and sees them put behind bars where they belong- but not before some trick driving helps save the day.

Aspects: Crime Doesn't Pay

Hell on Wheels

Aspects:

Both Guns Blazing

Crime Doesn't Pay

Hell on Wheels

Hot Shot

I Get Results

Life on the Streets

Man of Action

Plays By His Own Rules

Syndicate Stomper

What Rex Would Have Wanted

Skills:

Superb: Guns

Great: Drive, Perception

Good: Contacts, Intimidation, Stealth

Fair: Athletics, Charm, Empathy, Fighting

Average: Burglary, Endurance, Medicine, Resolve, Resources

Mediocre: Academics, Engineering, Leadership, Might, Mystic

Lore, Survival

## **Lance Lightning- Space Epic**

Archetype: Smuggler with a Heart of Gold

Phase One: Background:

Lance grew up on a planet on the outskirts of the galaxy, training as a machinist. He always enjoyed taking the family's transport out for a spin, and his free spirit and boyish good looks tended to get him into (and out of) trouble.

Aspects: Lady Trouble

Gearhead

Phase Two: Formative Adventures in a Time of Troubles

When the Star Imperium and the League of Free Planets went to war, Lance took a position on a merchant ship as an assistant technician. Though they were ostensibly neutral in the war, the Imperium inflicted harsh punishments on those caught supplying the League. Lance's ship was captured by the enemy, and the pilot killed for resisting arrest. Lance smuggled in a few tools with him, and managed to free most of the crew, retrieve the ship, and fly them out of Imperial territory.

Aspects: Free Spirit

Space Smuggler

Phase Three: Adventure!

Lance Lightning in Aces and Eight

Out of work and out of luck, Lance finds himself stranded on a space station ruled by crimeboss Johnny Eight. Lance does odd jobs for Johnny and saves up a decent stock of money. In a high-stakes game with Johnny, Lance manages to goad Johnny into putting up his prize spaceship to match Lance's bet. The cards are on his side, and Lance wins the pot, and the ship. Johnny changes his mind, and Lance is barely able to escape with the ship, newly renamed the 'Ace of Diamonds' and his life.

Aspects: The Ace of Diamonds

Luck Be A Lady Tonight

Phase Four: Guest Star!

Qin Xhong and the Dark Bodhisattva

Qin Xhong, a wandering Star Shaolin, tracks down one of the Dark Bodhisattvas, a corrupted Shaolin in league with the remnants of the Star Imperium. Lance pilots the Ace of Diamonds deep into enemy territory, has his advances rebuffed

by Qin Xhong, and helps crack the Dark Bodhisattva's security systems. The planet they were on explodes from the inside out, Lance Lightning has to do some of his craziest flying ever.

Aspects: Shadows of the Imperium

Pushed to the Limits

Phase Five: Guest Star!

Zyrryxyrg and the Omega Slave Pits

Through a wacky misunderstanding, Lance Lightning is arrested and shipped off to the harsh Omega Slave Pits. There he befriends the powerful but kind Zyrryxyrg, who fights as a gladiator for the amusement of the Omega Lords. Lance Lightning seduces the Omegean Princess Omnicron to gain access to their headquarters, making a distraction so Zyrryxyrg's slave rebellion can take over the planet.

Aspects: Mistaken Identity

Jilted Princess Omnicron

Aspects:

Free Spirit

Gearhead

Jilted Princess Omnicron

Lady Trouble

Luck be a Lady Tonight

Mistaken Identity

Pushed to the Limits

Shadows of the Imperium

Space Smuggler

The Ace of Diamonds

Skills:

Superb: Drive

Great: Charm, Burglary

Good: Engineering, Resources, Stealth

Fair: Contacts, Empathy, Guns, Perception

Average: Academics, Athletics, Fighting, Resolve, Survival

Mediocre: Endurance, Intimidation, Leadership, Medicine, Might,

Mystic Lore





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# **Awesome Adventures Character Worksheet**

**Character Concept:**

**Name:**

**Phase One: Background and Upbringing**

**Events:**

**Aspects:**

**Phase Two: Formative Adventures in a Time of Troubles**

**Events:**

**Aspects:**

**Phase Three: Adventure!**

**Guest Stars:**

**Events:**

**Aspects:**

**Phase Four: Further Adventures**

**Guest Starring In:**

**Events:**

**Aspects:**

**Phase Five: Further Adventures**

**Guest Starring In:**

**Events:**

**Aspects:**

# Awesome Adventures Character Sheet

Name:

Concept:

## Aspects

_____	Superb (+5)	_____
_____	Great (+4)	_____
_____	Good (+3)	_____
_____	Fair (+2)	_____
_____	Average (+1)	_____
_____	Mediocre (+0)	_____

## Skills

_____	Superb (+5)	_____
_____	Great (+4)	_____
_____	Good (+3)	_____
_____	Fair (+2)	_____
_____	Average (+1)	_____
_____	Mediocre (+0)	_____

## Consequences

_____	Minor (0-2)	_____
_____	Minor (0-2)	_____

## Moderate (3-5)

## Severe (6-8)

## Skill List

- Academics
- Athletics
- Burglary
- Charm
- Contacts
- Drive
- Empathy
- Endurance
- Engineering
- Fighting
- Guns
- Intimidation
- Leadership
- Medicine
- Might
- Mystic Lore
- Perception
- Resolve
- Resources
- Stealth
- Survival

## Critical (9+)

## Fate Points:

- Spend to:
- Add +2 to a roll.
- Re-roll all dice.
- Invoke for Effect:
- Add plot elements.
- Activate a special ability.

The Ladder: Terrible -2/Poor -1/Mediocre +0/Average +1/Fair +2/Good +3  
Great +4/Superb +5/Fantastic +6/ Epic +7/Legendary +8