SKEIN

A Dark Fantasy SRD. Powered by Fate.

Paul Mitchener
Graham Spearing

Wordplay Games

Contents

Chapter 1 - Introductions

What is this SRD?

Skein is the name of the underlying system that we use in our Age of Arthur tabletop role-playing game (http://rpg.drivethrustuff.com/product/111752). This version of Fate was in turn influenced by the Diaspora SRD (http://www.vsca.ca/Diaspora/diaspora-srd.html). Skein provides rules to resolve conflicts and challenges in a Dark Fantasy setting. You will find everything you need here to build your own game.

Skein is briefly outlined below to provide you with a primer before more detail is provided in further chapters.

The full Age of Arthur game, as well as providing a rich setting and beautiful artwork, expands on these basic rules with further examples and explanations. The Skein rules included here are nonetheless complete and playable, and we hope they provide inspiration for your own unique Dark Fantasy setting.

An introduction to Skein

Players

Players will create characters, their personae in the story that they will tell together. One of the players takes on the role of the Storyteller. The Storyteller draws out the initial setting, creates the basic story and mediates the rules. The players each have a character created using the rules in this game. Players describe the actions of their characters as they move through the story modifying and developing the initial narrative created by the Storyteller. The Storyteller creates 'non-player characters' that populate the game world and interact with the player characters.

Characters

Players' characters are made up of four basic elements:

- Aspects – descriptive phrases that say important things about the character.

- Skills – things that the character knows how to do. Skills are rated on a numeric range from 1 to 8. The higher the number the more proficient the character is with the skill.

- Stunts – special abilities that helps the character in certain situations.

- Stress – a measure of resilience when in a conflict.

Tests

Characters will face Tests. A Test is an obstacle or challenge that the characters have to overcome to make progress and take the shared story in the direction that they wish it to go. A desperate sword fight, a negotiation, a seduction, an enchantment, an imploring to the gods, a craven running away are all examples of Tests. Tests are rated on a numeric range from 1 to 8; the higher the number the more difficult the Test. The player will be able to use skills known to their character when making a Test. This skill is modified by a dice roll that provides a range from -4 to +4. If the result of the skill + dice roll is equal to or higher than the Test difficulty number then it is passed, if it is lower then the character has failed. Sometimes a second skill can be used as a 'support' providing a bonus if it is equal to or higher value than the 'main' skill. Failure can be fun too. It can either take the story in a different direction or rapidly curtail the options for a character.

Aspects

Aspects are used to describe just about anything in the setting, from characters to monsters, places, items and scenes. They can be used in play to improve the result in Tests. Each Aspect brought into play provides a +2 to the character. Frequently bringing an Aspect into play requires the payment of a Fate Point. Each player has a finite store of these. Fate Points can also be acquired by having their characters 'compelled' to act in a way that fits their Aspects and complicates or enlivens their situation. Fate Points flow to and fro between the players and the Storyteller throughout the game. Fate Points can be used in other beneficial ways including allowing the re-roll of rubbish dice rolls and declaring something to be true in the story.

Players may use Manoeuvres. A Manoeuvre is an action in a scene that may create a new Aspect that can then be brought into play to help their allies. Setting the enemy watchtower alight for example would create an Aspect 'Blazing tower of smoke'.

Outcomes

If a Test is failed in a situation that could cause physical or mental damage, the character suffers damage to what is known as a stress score. If a stress score is reduced to zero, then the character is knocked out of the story, either temporarily or permanently, depending on context. To prevent a 'knock out' a player can take a Consequence. A Consequence is a more enduring problem such as a wound, despair or social stigma that the character must carry for the current or more game sessions. Consequences are also Aspects that can be used by opponents during Tests.

If a Test is passed by 3 or greater then this is a critical result. This success is noteworthy and creates 'Spin'. Spin provides a +1 bonus to the character for the next dice roll.

A note on capitalisation

Throughout this SRD, we have chosen to capitalise all technical game terms to help them stand out.

If you find a term in the book that you don't understand then refer to the glossary.

Chapter 2 – Creating Characters

Your character is your voice in the game, the person whose story you will tell when playing in your fantasy game. This chapter provides you with guidance on how to create your character, to find out what they will bring to the story and the sort of voice you will have during play. The information about a character can be recorded either on a special character sheet, or simply written down on a sheet of paper.

A character can be created alone using these rules but benefits from being generated together with the other players in the first game session. The 'life tales', described below, pre-suppose connections and interactions between the players' emerging characters as they are described. This process creates an introductory narrative, mutual bonds, knowledge of each other's past, secrets, aspirations, losses and gains. It helps create a shared understanding before the game's collective story starts to unfold.

By this stage you may already have selected a Storyteller from your group to run the game. It can be a good idea for the Storyteller to also create a player character. This provides a non-player character known by the group, and creates the opportunity for the Storyteller to become a player if one of the players has a story in mind, and an urge to run the game to tell that story.

The Stuff of Heroes

Your character is described using four different game elements: Aspects, Skills, Stunts and Stress Scores. These are expanded on below.

Aspects

Aspects tell you important things about the character's identity and values

Aspects are short, evocative, statements that describe the character in ways that can be used in the game, both in favour and against the character, as well as being used as signposts for the Storyteller and players to suggest interesting courses of action.

The selection of a character's initial Aspects is an essential part of character generation. Aspects derive from the character's story background created through a number of 'tales'. These are the introductory chapters of the character's life.

Aspects are also the catalysts for the spending and earning Fate Points. You will have a small number of Fate Points, typically represented by physical tokens of some sort. Fate Points can help your character succeed and influence the outcome of Tests.

Aspects need to be worded in such a way that you can 'invoke them'. This is done by declaring an Aspect is relevant when your character is under pressure and being "Tested". If the invocation is approved by the Storyteller then the Aspect grants a bonus to the dice roll that determines if the character succeeds at the Test. This will cost you one of your Fate Points. Perhaps more importantly, Aspects also need to be worded in such a way as to invite 'compels' from the Storyteller and other players. A compel is where the Aspect is typically used to make things more difficult for the character. If the player accepts the compel then they gain one or more Fate Points to spend later. A well-worded Aspect is thus best phrased as a double edged sword, providing advantage and complications in equal measure.

Not all Aspects can work that way. It may emerge in play that some Aspects simply are not being used, either invoked by the player or compelled by others. You aren't stuck with a rubbish Aspect. The character experience process allows for Aspect trading to remove Aspects that simply aren't being used. The Storyteller could even allow you to do this for free after the first session or so to be sure that you are starting with useful Aspects.

Aspects might reveal something about the character that he or she may not even be aware of. An Aspect could also refer to an important relationship, such as to a character's lord, a family member, or a lover.

An Aspect might be a physical object, such as an heirloom weapon, or a powerful horse. In making that choice, the player is telling the Storyteller that this object is part of the character's identity. It won't be taken away, but it should also confer obligations and responsibilities, so that it too is an active part of the game mechanically.

Skills

Skills tell you what your character can do

Skills are the basic abilities of the character and are used continuously throughout the game. They are chosen from a list provided later in this section and used to add to the basic dice roll during any Test in which the skill is relevant.

Stunts

Stunts tell you how your character can break the rules to their advantage in play

Stunts are new rules that give you an advantage in certain Tests. Only player characters and selected significant Non Player characters have Stunts. They mark out the heroes and the protagonists who will shape the future of the world by their deeds.

Stress Scores

Stress Scores monitor how much trouble your character is in

Stress scores are indications of how stressed the character is physically, mentally and socially. They are reduced during play when a character loses Tests. If the character does very badly then the appropriate Stress score is reduced to zero and the character is knocked out of the game, either permanently, or temporarily depending on the situation.

Making Up Your Character

There are six steps to making a new character.

1. Let the story begin – Tales, Aspects and Oath-making

2. Select Skills

3. Select Stunts

4. Calculate Stress Scores

5. Starting Fate Points

6. Starting Resources

The rest of this chapter will take you through each step.

Let the story begin - Tales and Aspects

As befits heroes, who are important characters that will shape the future of your game world, your character will start play already with a story to tell. This story is split into five 'tales'. For each of the tales outlined below, players should follow this procedure:

Write a short paragraph or a series of bullet points describing the events of this tale (think in terms of allocating no more than five minutes for this each time and less is fine). You may wish simply to proclaim the events of the tale just as the bards do without writing them down.

In turn, read them out to each other. This is important, as it helps others learn about your character at the same time that you do.

Select one Aspect, derived from the written paragraph or from your telling of the tale. They can literally be phrases pulled straight from the paragraph or new phrases that are drawn from the tale and illustrate something about the character. This can be done individually, or as a consultative process with the group round the table. Once selected, everyone should read out their derived Aspect. You'll find that there is plenty of fiddling with Aspects at this point, getting them just right. Have fun with it and don't get too stuck on procedure. Your core objective is to come up with highly usable Aspects, so listening to the table and how they respond to your ideas can often yield exciting results. This will help shape what you put on your character sheet.

Repeat for each of the tales, until each character has a number of Aspects equal to the number of tales.

> **Rule** If you want your character to have magical powers then it must be featured in one of your tales and be assigned a relevant Aspect. An appropriate stunt must also be picked out later in in the process.

Going through these tales for four characters might take about 45--60 minutes, including reading aloud the gradual development of the characters after each tale.

On completing the five tales add one more Aspect to the character. It can be anything that you feel adds to the character that the tales have not yet allowed you to express.

Tale one: Beginnings

This tale tells us something about where the character has come from. This might be about their tribe, something about the way the gods have moulded them, the inherent personality of the character, their essence, those characteristics that define and mark them.

- What land are you from?
- What was the status of your family?
- Who are your parents?
- What gods do you worship?
- Are you quick tempered?
- Cold and cynical?
- Do you read?
- Are you noted in the hunt?
- Have you experienced the battles that have plagued your land?

Tale two: What did you do at...

The Storyteller will choose a starting significant event in the recent history of your land, which all the player characters were present at. For example this could be one of the big battles, character stories or, something else created to be prominent in the game. Either way, it is a point of connection between the player characters, something that draws them together and highlights something about their own stories. The Aspect derived from this

tale might include features of the event and the character's actions. It might feature a relationship or a blessing from the gods.

Tale three: What made you the hero that you are?

This tale describes how the character has become the noted person they are now. Consider what sort of path you have taken in life and how has that made a name for you?

- As a a priest, what rites did you undergo?

- Are you a brave warrior that can stand in the shield wall? How are you known to your companions?

- Are you a warband leader? What made you their leader?

- As a bard, which songs are you noted for and how do you convey them to your enraptured listeners?

- What vision brought you to the temple?

- How did you join the sisterhood of witches? What mysteries have you learned and what old magics can you wield?

- Merchant and master of commerce? In what do you trade and what trade routes do you ply?

Tale four: Significant events

Write a brief description of an event that causes a significant change to the character, something that the character would talk about later, maybe to his friends around the hearth, maybe only to his lover, or maybe to himself while in his sleep, racked with the cold sweats and the voices and the screaming. In this tale, the moment of crisis must reference one or more of the other player characters. As long as they agree, you may want to bring them in as an observer, a participant, or even as the focus of the event. This is an opportunity to help define another character as well as your own. Try to bind all the characters together in some way.

- How do their stories intertwine?

- How are their fates already linked?

- How has this tale shaped who the character is as they enter the game?

- How did they become associated with the other player characters?

Tale five: Oath making

This is an optional additional tale, should the character wish to be bound by an oath when coming into the game. Oaths are important for people in the Skein setting. An oath is something someone swears to do, or not to do, in the name of his gods or for something he holds very dear; preferably something where he has a related Aspect. An oath must be sworn in front of at least one adult witness.

The oath taken could either suggest a personal mission, or represent ties of duty and loyalty to the group he belongs to

The oath is an Aspect. If an oath is made during play (not during character generation) then the character immediately gains a Fate Point. The oath Aspect can be used and compelled in the same way as any other Aspect.

Oaths are taken very seriously. Trivial or flippant oaths may be disallowed by the table or deemed to have no mechanical benefit. Similarly, there is no benefit to swearing oaths with no real consequences. That said, even an oath of this nature might have unforeseen results.

Select Skills

Players select 15 starting skills from the list below. Skills are the things that the character is proficient at and forms the basis of how they will interact with the story and their success in the many Tests they will face.

Selected Skills should be logically consistent with the character's background material as elaborated in the Aspect tales but there are no hard and fast rules for selection. Skills are selected so that they are appropriate for the characters about whom we've now learned quite a lot (with even more existing in the players' imaginations).

There are many Skills from which you can choose, most of which represent a specific area of learned knowledge. In the Skill chapter each skill is expanded upon with a brief overview of how the skill can be used in a game session. The overview is a guide, the precise range of a given Skill's effect should be determined by the Storyteller in consultation with the table.

> **Rule** If a character attempts to use a skill he does not have, it is treated as being at an effective skill level of 0.

The skills are grouped into four main categories: Mental, Physical, Social and Magical. A character that has a number of skills from each of the first three categories is more 'balanced' and rounded, with ability in lots of different situations. There are no rules requiring you to have a certain number of skills in certain categories, but take a look at

the Mental/Physical/Social mix once your skill selection is done, it may reveal something further about your character.

Two skills are actually labels for a group of separate skills: Lore and Profession. When selecting one of these skills, you also need to select a 'Type'. You can select these skills multiple times with different Types should you so wish. See the descriptions for these skills in Chapter. You should pick one or more in your initial selection.

There is one skill that you must select: Wealth. The Wealth skill defines how wealthy you are rated from slave through to a mighty king. The level that you set will be determined by your character's story and agreed with the Storyteller.

Another skill to explicitly mention here is Languages. Player characters will know the language of their background. Further languages, or literacy in any of these tongues, requires levels in the Languages skill.

As well as the Mental, Physical and Social skills, a character might have a magical skill. These skills are rare. Having one must be justified by a character's background story.

> **Rule** In order to have a magical skill a character must have both a relevant Aspect and a stunt (see below) granting access to that skill. The Rune Magic skill also requires the character to know the Runes as one of his languages taken using the Languages skill.

Skill List

Mental Skills	Physical Skills	Social Skills	Magical Skills
Awareness	Agility	Charm	Divination
Gaming	Brawling	Contacts	Spirit Magic
Investigation	Melee Combat	Deception	Faith
Healing	Missile Combat	Empathy	Glamour
Lore [Type]	Riding	Intimidation	Plant and Root
Profession [Type]	Stealth	Languages	Rune Magic
Strategy and Tactics	Strength	Leadership	Shapechanging
Survival		Performance	
Willpower		Wealth	

Once you have selected your skills you need to assign a numeric skill level to each of them. The skill level tells you how proficient the character is with the skill. A skill level of '1' represents a basic grounding in the skill. A skill level of '8' means the character has mastered all possible elements of the skill and is one of the greatest in all the kingdoms of men.

Characters start with the following:

- One skill at Level 5

- Two skills at Level 4

- Three skills at Level 3

- Four skills at Level 2

- Five skills at Level 1

It is typically easier to start by deciding on your character's most proficient level 5 skill and then work down the lower levels. During play you will get opportunities to change these levels and add new skills.

Select Stunts

Stunts are special rules that give the characters an edge during Tests. Characters start with 5 Stunts. A list of examples can be found in chapter . All of the Stunts in this book are of one of the following seven types.

Specialism

Specialism grants a +1 bonus to a particular use of a skill. If the table agrees through consensus that the specialism is particularly narrow, the bonus is increased to +2, possibly for an additional cost of a Fate point in a scene where it is used. Such a limitation is especially relevant for combat skills. You may select multiple specialisms on one skill, though only one can apply at a time. Each specialism is one Stunt.

New Skill Use

This Stunt lets a skill do something it could not do before. This could be a mundane but clever reworking of a particular skill to operate in new situations. Some instances of this Stunt are magical in nature. For instance, a character could have a Stunt that allows him or her to run for a short time across water or an awareness ability that allows them to see into the Otherworld. A character must have an appropriate Aspect to have access to a magical version of this stunt.

If, by table consensus, the skill use seems particularly powerful or unusual, this Stunt should cost a Fate Point each time it is used.

New Combat Application

When a character has this Stunt, he or she can use a skill to either attack or defend in battle, when it could not be used in this way before. For instance, with this Stunt a character could use the Intimidate skill to defend himself or herself in personal combat, or have a fiery gaze that lets him or her use the Awareness skill to make physical attacks. As a variation,

this Stunt could also allow a successful defence in combat to cause damage equal to the degree of success, at the cost of a Fate point for each use.

Equipment is irrelevant to attacks and defences made using this Stunt. Attacks do damage equal to the Degree of Success regardless of weapon used or armour worn. This can of course be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on the situation.

Extra Capacity

The extra capacity Stunt doubles the benefit associated to a skill, such as the amount of extra stress granted to a stress score, or the bonus to a Test.

Ignore Restriction or Difficulty

This Stunt lets you ignore a particular restriction that will normally prevent a skill from being used, or ignore complicating factors that will increase the difficulty of a particular type of Skill Test. For example, this Stunt could let a character attempt to use the Stealth skill without any cover.

If ignoring the restriction seems especially potent to the table, this stunt will cost a Fate Point each time it is used.

Magical Calling

Magic is rare, though player characters are more likely to have access to magical skills than most. This stunt lets someone who also has a relevant Aspect learn a magical skill.

Extra Refresh

This Stunt does nothing except grant the character a +1 bonus to the initial number of Fate Points and the number gained when Fate Points are refreshed. It can be taken more than once to gain additional Fate Points at the start and each refresh.

As players become more familiar with the character generation process they may wish to select their Stunts before their Skills, or at the same time. The process can be undertaken iteratively, allowing finer control of elements and can be revisited a few times before the player is happy with the result.

Calculate Stress Scores

Finally, stress scores are calculated. Stress scores represent how durable the character is when embroiled in different sorts of Tests. The higher the score, the more 'damage' the character can take before they start to face more lasting consequences.

Stress scores can be reduced in each turn of a Contest when a character loses an opposed Test. If the score is reduced to zero then the character has lost the Contest and is out of the game for a moment, or has to choose a Consequence and stay in the action. This is

covered in more detail in the chapter on Tests. Stress scores can also be affected outside of Contests by losing Endurance Tests.

There are two stress scores. Both start at three, though this number is increased by certain skills and Stunts, as noted below.

Health

The Health Stress Score measures how much physical punishment the character can sustain before they face physical Consequences. Minor cuts and bruises, winded or fatigued, slightly under the weather.

The Strength skill increases the Health score. For every two Strength skill levels (round up) add one to Health. Some Stunts increase this further.

Strength	Health
0	3
1 to 2	4
3 to 4	5
5 to 6	6
7 to 8	7

Composure

The Composure Stress Score records mental and social stress such as fear, despair, and losing social standing or confidence. The mind is every bit as fragile as the body and the brutality and horrors in the dark fantasy worlds of Skein are just as challenging as anything that tests the body.

The Willpower skill increases the Composure score. For every two Willpower skill levels (round up) add one to Composure. Some Stunts increase this further.

Willpower	Composure
0	3
1 to 2	4
3 to 4	5
5 to 6	6
7 to 8	7

Starting Fate Points

A new character will have a Refresh rate of five, unless this number is increased by Stunts. The initial number of Fate Points is equal to the Refresh Rate.

Starting Resources

The character has the minimum amount of equipment from chapter 4 that he needs for his current occupation. For example, a soldier will have a weapon of some kind (most likely a shortsword or spear). A healer will have a healing kit. These will be of basic quality, not too expensive and certainly nothing with a cost of more than 2.

You can also pick a number of other items equal to his Wealth skill. These items must have a cost equal to or lower than his Wealth skill. Buying further items requires a Wealth skill test, as described in chapter .

Chapter 3 - Skills and Stunts

About Skills

Skills are the abilities that characters use to interact with the game world. They are used in Tests to see how a character fares during moments of tension, when the story could go one of many ways. Characters will start with a specific number of skills, selected from the list in this chapter. When a skill is known by a character it is rated numerically between 1 and 8, indicating how knowledgeable, experienced or just plain gifted the character is with the skill. The higher the number the more proficient the character is when using the skill in the game. Higher skills enable the character to overcome more difficult Tests and face more proficient opponents.

The skill descriptions in this chapter sometimes refer to game rules which you will find later in the book. These rules will be clear once you have read chapters such as '5. Playing Skein' and '7. Mortal Combat'. Revisit this chapter often to see how skills are used throughout the game.

Making up your own Skills

Most additions to the skill list can be accommodated through the Specialism Stunt, so consider this first before creating a whole new skill for the game. Still, if there is a skill that you would like to add to the list, feel free to create it or modify the ones suggested here.

The Skill List

Skills are split into four categories: Mental, Physical, Social and Magical. This is largely for convenience and has no impact on the game. For a character to be capable in a wide range of Tests they will have skills drawn from each of the first three categories. On the other hand, it may be more fun to follow your character concept and draw out the key skills that you think their Tales support.

Mental Skills

Awareness

Awareness Skill Tests are often requested by the Storyteller, rather than initiated by the player, to see if a character notices something. Awareness also determines the order of action in combat. The combatant with the highest Awareness skill gets to act first.

Gaming

The character is proficient in social games and games of chance. A gamer always seems to come out of the games ahead or with an advantage. A gamer is prepared, indeed confident, to take risks and can be used as a support skill to help with dicey manoeuvres that need split second timing, difficult negotiations and social schemes that could easily lead to dangerous consequences. It is not usable as a support for most combat Tests. The gamer relishes the challenge and often knows when is the right time to make their play.

Gamers rock.

Healing

The Healing skill encompasses all sorts of healing with specialisms providing a skill focus including first aid, treatment of poisons and diseases, surgery and the calming of a troubled mind. The last of these can include recovering from mental afflictions inflicted by magic.

A successful Healing Skill Test removes Health stress and improves the healing time for physical Consequences. A Healing Test can also be made to reduce the recovery time needed against a poison or disease, or to place a manoeuvre assisting a Strength-based Test to resist being afflicted by disease or poison.

Investigation

The Investigation skill is used to search an area for clues, secret doors, traps and so on. The main difference between the Awareness and Investigation skill is that the Investigation skill is used for a systematic search over a relatively protracted time, whereas Awareness is about picking up something using the basic five senses. Certainly a character might find things with Investigation where he has no chance with Awareness, but of course Investigation takes time.

Lore [Type]

Lore is a catch all skill representing important areas of knowledge. When this skill is taken, a particular type of lore must be specified. Examples include: History, the Fae, the interventions of the gods, Healing Herbs, Folklore, Dark Magic. Lore skills are also very useful as supporting skills in a Test, providing knowledge and understanding to help overcome difficulties.

Profession [Type]

When this skill is taken, a particular profession must be specified. Examples for just the first three letters of the alphabet include artist, blacksmith, carpenter and cook. A specialism can be selected within the profession type.

Essentially, any skill a character might have that is not covered by the other skills in this section can be taken as a profession skill. So, if Profession [Engineer] is selected a specialism Stunt can also be selected with possible examples being: Bridges, Dwellings, Hillforts, Civil engineering, Shipbuilding

This skill can be taken multiple times to provide knowledge for a range of professions.

Strategy and Tactics

The Strategy and Tactics skill measures a character's experience and understanding of battles, whether large or small. A Test can be made to place an Aspect on an opponent or an environment during a battle.

Large battles are resolved by contests involving the Strategy and Tactics skills of the two commanders, modified by the forces under their command and perhaps the actions of the player characters. This skill is heavily used in the 'Battle' chapter.

Survival

The Survival skill measures a character's ability to live off the land, find food and water and safe trails and camp-sites in the wilderness. Navigation is also a part of the Survival skill, as is handling boats. If a character spends a day hunting for provisions, he finds sufficient food to feed one person for a day per Degree of Success. See the 'Playing Skein' Chapter for information on how Degrees of Success work.

Willpower

The Willpower skill is used to resist attempts at persuasion, torture and for more general displays of single minded courage . An attempt to influence a character using the Charm or Performance skill is opposed by a Willpower Skill Test. Taking a Specialism indicates that the character is particularly motivated to resist whatever it indicates.

Willpower is used to determine the Composure Score.

Physical Skills

Agility

Agility is a fairly general physical skill that covers such activities as running, swimming and climbing. It is also used to defend against the Ranged Combat skill. When determining the order of action in mortal combat, Agility is used to break ties if opponents Awareness skill is the same.

Brawling

The Brawling skill can be used both to attack and to defend in hand to hand combat and when using clubs or improvised weapons. A one handed improvised weapon or club always does +1 damage. A two-handed weapon of this nature always does +2 damage. The Brawling skill can also be used to wield other melee weapons, but they do basic Brawling damage as a one-handed or two-handed club when used in this way.

Melee Combat

This skill is the use of weapons for the individual warrior during hero duels or in wild and bloodthirsty melee. It also covers the use of weapons by the trusted stout warrior who stands in the shield wall, holding the line and supporting his brethren in the heat of close order battle.

Missile Combat

This skill is used to make attacks with thrown weapons and missile weapons such as axes, slings, spears and bows. The Missile Combat skill can only be used to attack. To defend against Ranged Attacks the target must use the Agility skill.

Riding

The Riding skill governs the ability to ride horses and other riding animals and the ability to control animal-powered vehicles, such as carts and chariots.

Stealth

Most activities where a character desires to hide or stay unnoticed are governed by the Stealth skill. Using the Stealth skill needs at least some sort of cover. Generally, when Stealth is tested, it is rolled against another character's Awareness skill, or the highest Awareness skill of someone in a group.

As well as sneaking around, the Stealth skill also includes sleight of hand skills such as conjuring tricks, picking locks and stealing items directly from someone's belt. The first and last of these are also usually opposed by an observer's or victim's Awareness skill.

Strength

Strength measures both a character's muscle power and stamina. Tests for acts of endurance and brute force will be based on Strength.

Strength is used to determine the Health Score.

Social Skills

Charm

The Charm skill measures a character's general likeability and powers of persuasion. Tests are made whenever the character tries to influence another through essentially honest

means, or tries to make another character like him. Persuasion attempts through the Charm skill are opposed by Willpower.

Only individuals and small groups are affected by the Charm skill.

Contacts

A Contacts Test is made to find helpful non-player characters belonging to a particular profession or within a particular organisation, social group or kingdom. Any such character found with this skill will be willing to help the character in some capacity, possibly for pay. If the Contacts Test has a Degree of Success of 3 or more then the character is very helpful and will support without the need for any further incentive.

On the other hand, if the Test fails, the character can find an enemy rather than a potential ally.

Deception

Attempts to trick and lie are governed by the Deception skill. Deception attempts are generally opposed by the potential victim's Empathy skill.

A character can also attempt to disguise himself using the Deception skill. It takes about an hour to prepare a disguise and needs appropriate materials. A character cannot disguise himself as a specific individual, only, at best, a particular type of person. When Deception is used in a disguise attempt, it is opposed by Awareness.

Empathy

Empathy Tests can be made to guess when someone is trying to conceal something, whether the truth or an emotion. A Test can also be made to attempt to get some insight into someone's motivation or personality, to reveal something beyond the obvious and the visual.

Attempts to trick the character using the Deception skill are opposed by Empathy. Further, the Empathy skill is used to determine the order in which people act in social conflicts, with the higher Empathy skill going first.

Intimidation

The Intimidation skill is used to threaten another character. It can be used to cow another character, or to attempt to force the other character to do something or not do something. Although a character may get his or her own way with the intimidation skill, the target is unlikely to be pleased with him or her afterwards. Intimidation attempts are usually opposed by Willpower.

Languages

This skill is needed to be literate, or to be fluent in other tongues. Here's how it works. Each level of the Languages skill grants either knowledge of a foreign language or knowledge of an alphabet, and literacy in that alphabet.

Leadership

The kingdoms need great leaders to keep them free from the evils that plague the world, people that can inspire others to unite against the common foe, and return the land to prosperity and freedom. Leadership is the ability to organise, inspire and direct groups of people and whole kingdoms to act together. The skill is particularly used in the Battles chapter.

A successful Leadership Test, as a manoeuvre, against a difficulty of 2, creates motivation, courage and belief in the target audience. Place a temporary Aspect on a scene or individual related to this with the first use available for free.

Performance

Performance Skill Tests are made to impress a crowd of people. The Performance skill includes boasting in the lord's hall, rousing oratory, singing, storytelling and playing a musical instrument.

Unlike the Charm skill, the Performance skill can influence whole crowds. Performance cannot be used directly to persuade someone to pursue a particular course of action, but it can be used to place an Aspect on a crowd or scene.

Wealth

A character's Wealth skill is likely to frequently vary, though it is selected in the same way as any other skill in the process of character creation. Rules for the Wealth skill, and buying things, can be found in chapter 4.

A character with high social rank, a noted hero, a prince or even a king will usually have high Wealth, though in the current era of chaos impoverished kings are not unheard of. The Wealth score represents resources that can be freely spent on other things. For many rulers, most of their resources are tied up to the running of the kingdom.

Magical Skills

Magical skills are learnt as a result of the stories and tales that are developed in character generation. There needs to be a good reason for a character to have a magical skill. These reasons should be reflected by a relevant Aspect. In addition to this Aspect, a relevant Stunt must be taken for each magical skill learned.

We only give brief descriptions of these skills here. A full description can be found in Chapter 9. Note that all of these skills can have their scope increased (sometimes significantly) by further Stunts.

Divination [style]

This skill represents training in a specific style of divination which can be used to find out information that the character does not know. The difficulty of the Test is based on how obscure the information is. Each style of divination is a different skill. Examples

include astrology, dream visions and ectomancy (divination from inspecting the innards of a sacrificial animal).

Spirit Magic

Spirit magic is used to perform a manoeuvre which calls upon the favour or displeasure of incorporeal omnipresent spirits. Mechanically, a skill Test at difficulty 2 is made in order to place a temporary Aspect representing this pleasure or curse on a target. As with all Aspects placed by manoeuvres, this Aspect may be used once for no Fate Point cost by the character (for a blessing) or his enemies (for a curse).

Faith

The Faith skill is a talent of the most dedicated worshippers of a particular god or pantheon. Faith is used as a personal defence against magical attacks and to neutralise hostile magic. The character can also spend a Fate Point to use his Faith skill as a defence against a magical attack directed against someone else.

Glamour

The Glamour skill is the magic of the Fae and those with Fae blood. It deals with temporary illusions which only last a few minutes. Some stunts can boost the duration of Fae magic. Most uses of the Glamour skill involve a difficulty 2 skill Test, or an opposed Test made against another's Awareness skill.

Plant and Root

Both magical and mundane herbalism are represented by the Plant and Root skill. The main use of the skill is to prepare infusions. An infusion grants a temporary Aspect for a scene, depending on it nature, when it is taken. Such an Aspect can be used once for no Fate Point cost. It should be noted that preparing an infusion needs a well-equipped kitchen and takes an entire day.

A character with the Plant and Root skill can be assumed to have a number of infusions at hand equal to his skill level.

Rune Magic

Rune Magic is one of the two main skills of wizards. An object enchanted with a rune, which requires a Fate Point to be spent and a Rune Magic Test at difficulty 2 to be made, has a permanent Aspect representing the rune magic. Normally, engraving a Rune takes a full day.

Note that in order to learn the rune magic skill, the character must know the Runes as one of his languages gained using the Languages skill.

Shapechanging

A character with the Shapechanging skill knows how to turn into various animal forms. One form is known per skill level. Changing to animal form (though not back to human) needs the character hold a specially prepared animal skin. One with this skill begins play with an animal skin for each form known. If need be, another skin can be prepared from a slain animal of the relevant type. Making another skin takes a full day.

Each change of form costs a Fate Point. The character's belongings and clothes do not change with him.

Stunt Examples

Below is a large list of ready to play example Stunts for you to use for your heroes and to provide inspiration for Stunts of your own. The type of Stunt is listed after the Stunt name. A few stunts require the character to have a relevant Aspect before they can be learned. These stunts are marked with the symbol (*).

Mental Stunts

Jack of All Trades [New Skill Use]

The character can spend a Fate Point to temporarily gain, for a scene, a skill he does not ordinarily know. The new skill is at level 1, and remains for the entire scene.

Many Tongues [Extra Capacity]

The character knows twice as many extra languages or alphabets as his level in the Languages skill would normally allow.

Planned Assault [Specialism]

A character leading a force in battle can make a Strategy and Tactics Test against difficulty 2 to grant everyone under his command a +1 bonus to all combat skills in the first turn of a fight. The Stunt can also be used by a general in mass combat. In this case, the first Strategy and Tactics Test made to make an attack within the battle has a +1 bonus.

The bonuses for this stunt and the Heroic Inspiration stunt can be stacked.

Scholar [New Skill Use]

This Stunt grants the character a second Lore skill at the same level as one of his or her existing Lore skills. It can be taken more than once.

If one of these Profession skill is increased as a result of experience, so is the other.

Strong-willed [Extra Capacity]

The character has an extra Composure stress point for every level of the Willpower skill, instead of for every two levels.

Physical Stunts

Berserker Rage [Specialism] (*)

The player of a character with this stunt can spend a Fate point to enter a killing rage, which increases all damage inflicted in hand to hand combat by 1. In order to have this stunt, the character must have an Aspect indicating his uncontrolled lust for carnage in battle. This Aspect may be compelled to force the character to seek out melee combat when retreat would be a better idea, or to blind him with anger, making him strike friend and foe alike.

Counterstrike [New Combat Application]

If the character successfully defends himself in hand to hand combat, and has a shield, then he can immediately spend a Fate Point to inflict damage on an opponent as if the defence were an attack with the same degree of success. As usual, the counterstriker adds his weapon's damage and the defender subtracts the absorption score of any armour before the result is applied.

Fighting Style [Specialism]

The character favours a particular weapon or type of fighting, such as two daggers, the hunting bow, a two-handed battle-axe, a shortsword and shield, or boxing. A fighting style can be either offensive or defensive. An offensive style grants a +1 bonus to all attack rolls. A defensive style can only be taken for a hand to hand weapon, and grants a +1 bonus to all defence rolls.

This Stunt can be taken more than once, for multiple fighting styles, but only one bonus can apply at a time.

Heroic Charge [Specialism]

When a character with this Stunt charges into close combat or brawling, the first attack made has a +2 bonus to damage, if successful.

Tough [Extra Capacity]

The character has an extra Health stress point for every level of the Strength skill, instead of for every two levels. A large animal, or being with supernatural might (not a player character) might have this Stunt more than once. In that case, each time it is taken after the first add a number of stress points equal to the Strength score.

Social Stunts

Belonging [Specialism]

With this Stunt, the character owns something that is beyond his usual resources. For example it could be a villa, a sought-after treasure or a minor magical item. The cost of the belonging can be no more than 2 more than a character's Wealth skill level. A character can take this Stunt twice to own something even more valuable, worth 4 more than a character's Wealth skill level, with the table's agreement.

If the character has an Aspect related to the item as well as this Stunt, he may have a magical item, as described in chapter 4, regardless of its theoretical cost.

Cutting Retort [Specialism]

If a character with this stunt suffers composure damage, the next use of a social skill in the same scene has a +2 bonus.

Elegant [Specialism]

As long as the character has an hour or so to prepare for a formal event, and dresses appropriately, he or she gains a +1 bonus to his Charm skill for the duration of the event. Dressing appropriately is a matter of time rather than any particular expense. The character's fashion sense is sufficient that he can make almost anything look absolutely fantastic.

However, if something happens to ruin the character's look, for example mud being thrown on their fashionable clothes, then the bonus no longer applies.

Numbers are No Defence [Ignore Difficulty or Restriction]

When the character uses Intimidate against a warband, the opponents gain no bonus to defence due to numbers.

Rally [New Skill Use]

Once per battle, the character can pay a Fate Point and make a Leadership Test against difficulty 2 to recover stress in mass combat, or restore a number of taken out members of a warband in a smaller battle. The amount of stress or people affected is equal to the degree of success. Obviously, the force cannot gain more people or stress than it had originally.

Supernatural Stunts

The following stunts grant a character minor magical powers. In order to learn any of these stunts, the character must have an appropriate Aspect, such as one that indicates the favour of a pagan god. Some godly Aspects, and stunts will be closely related to gods and can be included as worshipper benefits in the description of a particular deity.

In some cases animal stunts are also allowed to player characters with appropriate Aspects as supernatural stunts.

Dark Adapted Eye [Ignore Difficulty or Restriction] (*)

The character can see his or her surroundings perfectly in the dark. No extra difficulties for darkness apply, even when it is pitch black, and there is absolutely no source of light.

Second Sight [New Skill Use] (*)

The character can sense the presence of magic, including magical items and ongoing magical effects. Moreover, an Awareness Test can be made against an opponent's Glamour skill to see any Fae glamour as the illusions they really are. This does not necessarily mean that the character can see what a glamour is hiding. For example, it might be obvious to the character when a Fae being is disguised by a glamour, but this need not mean they know what the Fae creature really looks like.

Song of Battle [New Skill Use] (*)

A character with this Stunt can use his Performance skill to influence the outcome of mass combat, in the same way as a character with the Spirit Magic, Faith or Glamour skills.

Weapon of Vengeance [Specialism] (*)

A character with this Stunt can, whilst holding a weapon, name a specific enemy and dedicating the weapon to that enemy's destruction. Doing this costs a Fate Point. The weapon does an extra 2 points of damage against that enemy.

Once this stunt is used, it cannot be reused for as long as the named enemy lives.

Stunts for Magical Skills

Divination

Diviner [Magical Calling]

The Diviner Stunt is required to learn the Divination skill.

Call upon the Spirits of the Departed [New Skill Use]

A diviner with this Stunt can, in the presence of a body or at the location of where someone has died, call upon the departed spirit to speak to him. The difficulty of the Divination skill Test needed to do this is 2 if the one he seeks died in the last month. Those who have been dead for longer are much more difficult to find and contact. For the longer dead, increase the difficulty according to the time track.

Only the diviner and those with appropriate magical senses can see or hear the departed spirit. The spirit contacted is, in many ways, more of an echo knowing only what it did

in life. It has the same personality as the once living person. It has no desire or need to cooperate with the diviner who summoned it. Further social skills may well be needed to get any use out of this Stunt.

The spirits of those who have received certain gods' burials cannot be summoned in this way.

Obscurement [New Skill Use]

A character with the obscurement Stunt is hard to pin down with other divinations. The difficulties of any divinations made against the character are increased by half the character's own divination skill.

Moreover, the character knows when someone else tries use a divination on him, though not any of the details. He may of course attempt a counter-divination of his own, at the usual difficulty and Fate Point cost, to attempt to discover this.

Spirit Magic

Spirit Speaker [Magical Calling]

The Spirit Speaker Stunt is required to learn the Spirit Magic skill.

Curse Barrier [New Skill Use]

Using this Stunt, a magician can protect a portal or area with a barrier. In combat, the area protected is either described as part of the abstract system or, if maps are being used, a zone, or a border or barrier between zones. In either case, the curse barrier takes time to erect and needs physical materials such as bones and skulls, either animal or human.

Making a curse barrier also costs a Fate Point. After the barrier is made, the materials used are left clearly visible, a sign of the ward's presence. Anyone crossing the barrier or entering a protected area suffers from a curse, decided when the barrier is created, as if cursed by the magician in person. The victim can attempt to resist the curse normally.

If the physical signs of the barrier, the bones and skulls, are interfered with, destroyed or removed, the perpetrator is automatically cursed, with no chance to resist. Further, the curse is a long-term event as if the magician had spent a Fate Point when inflicting it. A curse barrier can only be safely dismantled by the magician who made it, or by another magic worker who succeeds at a Spirit Magic or Faith skill Test made against the Spirit Magic skill of the one who placed the curse.

Death Curse [Specialism]

At the moment of his death, the magician gains a free use of his Spirit Magic skill at a +2 bonus. If this power is used to place a curse on an enemy, then the curse Aspect is especially powerful and provides a +4 bonus rather than a +2 bonus if brought into play.

Ward [New Combat Application]

A ward created using Spirit Magic and this Stunt can be placed on any other person in the vicinity at the cost of a Fate Point. It lasts for a scene. The result of the magic skill Test used to place the ward counts as a defence against all physical attacks for whatever remains of the scene, or until an attack penetrates the ward, beating the result of the initial skill Test.

The defence created by a ward in not physical, but rather causes attackers to suffer from bad luck.

Faith

True Faith [Magical Calling]

The True Faith Stunt is required to learn the Faith skill.

Divine Favour [New Skill Use]

The character can call upon their god to bless an action, either one of his or that of an ally. The beneficiary of this blessing gains a temporary Aspect reflecting its nature. This temporary Aspect can be used once for free before vanishing.

Lay on Hands [New Skill Use]

The character can use the Faith skill to heal another person, as if using the Healing skill. However, the healing is all but instantaneous and needs no special ingredients or bandages, even against the deadliest of diseases or nastiest of wounds. All that is needed is to touch the one hurt and utter a brief prayer.

However, each use of this Stunt costs a Fate Point.

Shield of Faith [Remove Restriction or Difficulty]

With this Stunt, the Faith skill can be used to defend against any attack, not just magical attacks.

Glamour

Fae-blooded [Magical Calling]

The Fae-blooded Stunt is required to learn the Glamour skill.

Distracting Illusions [New Combat Application]

The character can use the Glamour skill for defence in combat, whether close or ranged. At the cost of forsaking his or her main action, or paying a Fate Point, the character can also defend another.

Enduring Glamours [Remove Restriction or Difficulty]

The character can use the Glamour skill to create solid objects, though not solid moving objects. However, a sword, for example, created of glamour and made solid with this Stunt can be picked up and used normally.

Like other glamours, objects created out of glamour last just a minute as a default, but each Degree of Success in a skill Test made to create an object increases the time a glamour lasts, moving the time one step long the time track. One limitation of glamour-created objects however, is that they vanish when touched with iron.

Any object the glamour weaver can envision can be created and size is barely a factor. However, the object can be no more than a zone across. Objects with inherent artistic beauty or intricate moving parts can only be as good as their creator's understanding of such things. A relevant artistic or craft-based skill Test is required to create such an item, modified by the creator's Glamour skill.

Perfect Disguise [Specialism]

This Stunt grants a $+2$ bonus to the Glamour skill when it is used to make someone resemble a different person. An illusory form granted using this glamour normally lasts around an hour. Note, however, that the touch of iron forces someone disguised by this Stunt into their true form.

Beyond being disguised, no particular skill modifiers or other advantages apply to taking on a new form, though the one affected by the glamour has the temporary Aspect Disguised as [person]. This temporary Aspect can be used and even compelled as normal.

One who is very familiar with the person whose features have been taken might recognise the one disguised as an impostor. This is decided as usual by an opposed Glamour and Awareness Test.

Plant and Root

Hedge Magic [Magical Calling]

The Hedge Magic Stunt is required to learn the Plant and Root skill.

Brew Poisons [New Combat Application]

A character with this Stunt can use the Plant and Root skill to prepare effective poisons as infusions. A poison must be placed in a victim's food or drink, or on a weapon used to stab the unfortunate target. If placed on a weapon, the poison remains active for one scene, though only one dose at a time can be introduced in this way.

The victim of a poison must make a Test with their Strength opposed by the Plant and Root skill of the one who prepared the poison. If the result of the Plant and Root Test is higher than the result of the Strength Test, the victim immediately suffers damage to the Health stress score equal to the Degree of Success, as well as having a Poisoned Aspect that lasts the rest of the scene. As usual for Aspects placed by a manoeuvre, this Aspect can be invoked by an opponent once at no Fate Point cost.

Healing Medicine [Specialism]

This Stunt increases power of an infusion made using the Plant and Root skill that places an Aspect that aids the Healing skill. The Aspect created by this infusion provides a +4 bonus to the Healing skill when used rather than +2.

Ointment of True Vision [New Skill Use]

A herbalist with this Stunt can use the Plant and Root skill to prepare an eye ointment that lets one who uses it sense magic and, potentially, Glamour. The ointment lasts for one hour if the Plant and Root Test succeeds against a difficulty 2. Each Degree of Success on the Test increases the duration of the effect according to the time track.

To sense Glamour, an Awareness Test is also needed, opposed by a Glamour roll made by the one producing the glamour. A successful Awareness Test does not necessarily mean the character can see what a glamour is hiding, just that something in particular is a glamour.

Thus, for example, the character can see when someone is disguised by a glamour, but not who they really are.

Rune Magic

Rune Wizardry [Magical Calling]

The Rune Wizardry Stunt is required to learn the Rune Magic skill.

Blessing of the War God [New Skill Use]

The Rune Magic skill, which is normally used to enchant objects, cannot normally be used to directly influence the outcome of a mass battle, as described for Spirit Magic, Faith and Glamour in chapter 8. However, a wizard with this Stunt can use Rune Magic rituals in this way.

Empowered Enchantment [Remove Difficulty or Restriction]

A character with this Stunt has used Rune Magic to create an enchanted item more powerful than usual. The Aspect the item is enchanted with can be used once per scene for free at no Fate Point cost. This Stunt can be taken more than once. Each time it is taken, the character has another magical rune-inscribed item.

Runewarding [type] [New Skill Use]

To use this Stunt the wizard inscribes appropriate runes on a stone and buries it or embeds it in a doorpost to create a barrier against a particular type of supernatural force or creature.

The wizard attempts a Rune Magic Test at difficulty 2 and spends a Fate Point to create a ward. Malicious forces need to successfully win in a Willpower Test against this difficulty to be able to move beyond the protected area, or use their powers within that area. The

area is either abstractly described or protects a zone on a tactical map. Each type of ward is a different Stunt, which has to be learnt separately.

Shapechanging

Skin Turner [Magical Calling]

The Skin Changer Stunt is required to learn the Shapechanging skill.

Animal Speech [New Skill Use]

A character with this Stunt can speak to and understand animals of the same general type as one of the forms that he knows. For example, a character who can change into an eagle could communicate with all birds, or a character who could change into a wolf can speak to both wolves and dogs.

Note that this communication is limited by the fact that the character is talking to an animal and the animal can only communicate things it understands.

Favoured Form [Remove Restriction or Difficulty]

The character need not pay a Fate Point to change to or from a particular animal form. This is decided when this Stunt is taken.

Natural Shapechanger [Remove Restriction or Difficulty]

A character with this Stunt does not need an animal skin to change to animal form.

Animal Stunts

These Stunts might be possessed by player characters with the table's approval, but will then be supernatural in nature, and require an appropriate Aspect. Stunts which could be taken by player characters with supernatural powers are marked with the (*) symbol. Others are reserved exclusively for animals and supernatural creatures.

Armoured Skin [Extra Capacity] (*)

The creature has Absorption 1 even when unarmoured. It can be taken more by animals and supernatural creatures for a higher bonus.

Beast of Burden [Extra Capacity] (*)

A being with this Stunt can carry twice as much as its Strength score would normally indicate.

Flight [New Skill Use]

A creature with this Stunt can fly at approximately the land speed of a non-flying creature of the same size, though at a cost- it is likely to be ungainly on land. A creature with both the Flight Stunt and the Swift Stunt (below) can fly at twice this speed, or more for short distances.

Any Tests involving Flight uses the Agility skill. This Stunt is not recommended for player characters.

Natural Weapons [Specialism] (*)

Brawling attacks made without any weapons have a +2 bonus to damage. It can be taken twice for a +4 bonus.

Scent Tracking [New Skill Use] (*)

This Stunt means the creature has very sensitive sense of smell. It is capable of telling subtle differences between scents if an Awareness Test is made at an appropriate difficulty. Further, a Test can be made at difficulty 2 (or, as usual, higher if there are complications) to track an individual or creature by following a scent trail.

Swift [Extra Capacity] (*)

Over long distances, a being with this Stunt can move twice as fast as its Agility score would normally indicate with its main means of travel (so, for example, a bird with this Stunt could fly swiftly, but not necessarily walk swiftly). Within combat, if a map is used, the creature can move one extra zone each turn.

Water Creature [New Skill Use] (*)

This Stunt lets a creature move in the water at the same speed as a human can move on land. Further, the being can survive underwater either for around an hour by holding its breath (make a Strength Test if doubt ever arises), or indefinitely if it has gills. However, in the latter case, the creature cannot breathe when out of water.

Chapter 4 - Wealth and Equipment

Wealth and Buying Things

In Skein, a character's exact resources are not tracked. Instead, every character has a Wealth score which is an abstract measure of spending power. Unlike most other skills, wealth can go up or down depending on a character's circumstances. For example, finding steady employment, or being granted a villa and surrounding lands will add to Wealth. Overspending, or having one's lands overrun by barbarian invaders, will cause Wealth to fall.

When it comes to buying things using wealth, any service, piece of property or treasure has an associated Cost. This cost is a number, generally between 1 and 10. Buying something out of the ordinary for the character requires him to make a Wealth Test, with difficulty equal to the Cost of the item.

Rule
Only a character with a Wealth score of at least 1 can attempt to buy something out of the ordinary. If a Wealth Test to buy an item fails, the buyer's Wealth falls by 1. If the item has a Cost of Wealth or less, a failed Wealth test still buys the item. If the item has a Cost greater than Wealth, a failed Wealth test does not get the item, as well as Wealth being reduced.

Any reduction in a character's Wealth score lasts until his finances have time to recover; typically a few months.

Precisely what out of the ordinary means when it comes to making purchases is open to the interpretation of the table, but Wealth checks are certainly needed when:

- Buying an item with a cost of one less than a character's Wealth score, or higher.

- Buying equipment for henchmen, or other player characters.

• Buying something rare where the character is, regardless of the listed cost.

Treasure

One time cash rewards, or hoards of valuables are known as Treasure. Any treasure found has a Value, from 1 to 10. Treasure can be used instead of Wealth to purchase an item with a Cost less than or equal to its Value. After the purchase, the Treasure's Value is reduced by the item's Cost. Once Treasure is reduced to zero, it has all been spent.

A character might have more than one cache of Treasure. Different caches are kept track of separately, and not combined.

Selling an item gives a character Treasure with a value equal to one less than its cost. It is usually the case that the selling of an item regains less money than it cost to buy. Of course, just because an item has value, it does necessarily mean it is easy to find a buyer.

Weapons and Armour

Armour

In Skein, armour reduces damage from successful attacks. The amount of damage reduction is the armour's Absorption score. The following armour is available in the typical dark fantasy settings.

Armour	Absorption	Cost	Notes
Leather Cuirass	1	2	
Ring Mail	2	3	-1 penalty to physical non-combat skills
Scale Mail	3	4	-2 penalty to physical non-combat skills
Chain Mail	3	5	-2 penalty to physical non-combat skills. Has the Aspect: Heavy Armour
Shield	+1 extra	1	+1 damage if used as a weapon.

Melee Weapons

Melee weapons are used with either the melee combat or brawling skill. The damage score of a weapon adds to the damage caused by a successful attack.

Note the brawling skill is used to fight unarmed and to wield clubs and improvised weapons. The melee combat skill is used for all other weapons. Actually, other weapons can be used with the brawling skill, but when used in this way, do a mere +1 damage if one-handed, or +2 damage if two-handed, as if they were mere improvised clubs.

The following melee weapons are common in the dark fantasy settings.

Weapon	Damage	Cost	Notes
Unarmed	0	-	
Club/Improvised	1	0	
Big Club/Improvised	2	0	Two-handed
Staff	1	0	Two-handed, +1 to melee defence
Dagger	1	1	Can be thrown
Hand Axe	1	1	Can be thrown
Large Knife	2	1	
Mace	2	1	
Short sword	2	2	Ignore one point of armour.
Battleaxe	3	2	Two-handed
Small Spear	2	2	Can be thrown
Heavy Spear	3	2	Two-handed
Lance	3	2	Mounted combat only
Broad sword	3	3	

Ranged Weapons

The following ranged weapons are common. Note that ranges can either be used narratively, or, if a map is used in combat, used to give the maximum number of 'zones' within which the weapon is effective. For more details, see chapter

Weapon	Damage	Cost	Range	Notes
Thrown Stone	0	0	Short	Thrown only
Sling	0	0	Medium	
Dagger	1	1	Short	Thrown melee weapon
Hand Axe	1	1	Short	Thrown melee weapon
Shortbow	1	1	Medium	
Javelin	2	1	Medium	Thrown only
Spear	2	2	Short	Thrown melee weapon
Longbow	2	3	Long	
Crossbow	2	3	Medium	+1 bonus to attacks, must take an action to reload between shots.

Everything Else

Clothing

Typical jewellery includes earrings, armbands and brooches. More important jewellery often has an associated Aspect. Both expensive clothes and jewellery (though not necessarily of the most expensive sort in this day and age) form a part of the typical costume of a noble.

Item	Cost
Cheap Clothes	0
Work/Travel Clothes	1
Cold Weather Clothing	2
Embroidered Robe	2
Expensive Clothes	3
Fur Cloak	3
Jewellery	3 to 6

Consumables, Lodging and Services

Item	Cost
Barrel of Beer	1
Bottle of Wine	2
Rare Spices	2
Rented Rooms in City	1 to 3 per month
Drink in Tavern	0
Cheap Meal	0
Respectable Meal	1
Impressive Meal	2 to 3
Inn Food and Lodging	1 per night
Guide or Messenger	1 per task
Servant	1 per month
Skilled Cook	2 per month
Mercenary	2 per month
Healer	1 per patient
Tutor	2 per month
Engineer	3 per month
Entertainer	1 to 2 per day
Group of ten mercenaries	4 per month
Pay and upkeep of small army (100 men)	6 per month
Large Town House	4
Construction of village cottage	3
Country Villa	6
Construction of small fortress	7

Transport

Item	Cost	Notes
Riding Horse	2	
War Horse	3	
Cart	2	1 horse needed
Chariot	3	2 horses needed
Rowing Boat	2	
Riverboat	4	
Small Sailing Ship	6	Minimum 6 crew needed

Specialist and Miscellaneous Equipment

Item	Cost	Notes
Basic Survival Equipment	1	Knife, cloak and means to make fire
Climbing Equipment	2	
Cooking Equipment	1	
Large tent	2	Sleeps up to four people
Rations for one month	1	
Trained Falcon	4	Adds +1 to Survival Tests to hunt.
Trained Dog	2	If a fighting dog, skills are as a wolf.
Artisan's Tools	1	Tools required for one particular craft or profession. Different professions need different toolkits.
Book	1 to 3	
Healing Kit	1	
Merchant's Scales	1	
Musical Instrument	1 to 3	
Small Mirror	2	
Lockpicks	2	
Lock	3	
Perfume (per vial)	3	
Water Clock	4	
Writing Equipment	1	Ink, a quill and parchment

Equipment and Aspects

As a default, none of the items listed above in this section give any modifiers to skills, with the exception of weapons and armour, or are in any way remarkable. It is possible, however, to pay extra for an item that is especially well-made, or has a distinguished history and perhaps a small amount of associated magic.

Any such item has an Aspect, indicating the way in which it is special. Such Aspects can be used as normal. Such an item has its cost increased by one, or possibly more for very special objects. Rune engraved items of course also have Aspects.

Magic Items

Magical items are rare and wondrous things. They are always unique. There is absolutely no such thing as a 'standard' magical device. The creation of such unique artefacts is beyond all but the most powerful wielders of magic. Such artifice is more in the realm of the gods than of ordinary mortals. Making a magical item similar to those described here is likely to first involve an epic quest to gather magical or legendary materials. The precise details of the process is for the table to decide, but should be far from easy or straightforward and all but impossible to repeat.

All that said, a player character can begin play with a magical item if he has both the Belonging Stunt and an Aspect linking him to the artefact, or indicating ownership. After

all, player characters are unique individuals with the potential for greatness, precisely the sort of people liable to own such powerful objects.

Magic Item Creation

A magic item is a mundane object, with all of the properties of that object- for example, a magical sword is still a sword. Due to its magical nature, it will never break by accident. In terms of game mechanics, a magical item (including those allowed to the player characters with a relevant Stunt and Aspect) is described with an Aspect, and two Powers. These Powers are similar to Stunts. The Stunts list, or the powers of the magic items below, provide examples.

Chapter 5 - Playing Skein

This part of the SRD describes the core rules of the game that are used to arbitrate outcomes when characters Test themselves against the elements and other characters. Who wins the fight between the two kingdoms' champions? Have the characters managed to sneak into the temple undetected? Have the portents been correctly divined in the intricate patterns that glisten in the dry earth from the spurts of blood from the staggering death dance of the enemy sacrifice? Skein will help you to find out.

Rolling Dice

Player characters will be 'tested' when they use their abilities during the game. Fate is fickle and so all Tests have a random element that will partly determine the outcome. Skein uses 'Fudge Dice', special six sided die with two faces blank, two faces marked '+' and two faces marked '-'. Almost every dice roll in Skein uses four of these dice which we will call '4dF'. A single roll of 4dF, yields a range from -4 to +4. You add up the dice with '+', subtract those with '-' and you have a total.

But I don't have any Fudge Dice!

If you wish you can use ordinary six-sided dice reading each die result as: 1-2 as '-', 3-4 as blank and 5-6 as '+'.

Aspects

Aspects are short phrases that help to illuminate something important about things in the story. Everything that can be described can potentially have Aspects: characters, monsters, objects, places, landscapes, buildings, kingdoms.

Rule
Apart from characters, something that the Storyteller decides to give Aspects will have between one and three of them, with one Aspect being more typical than three.

Some of the different types of Aspect that can be used are:

- A character's own Aspect, including your oath

    These are covered in character generation.

- Equipment

    Very special pieces of 'equipment' can be given Aspects such as valuable garments or heirloom and magical weapons.

- Opponent

    Your opponent in a Test may have Aspects that you could bring into play to your advantage.

- Consequence

    A Consequence is a more enduring result from a failed Test that the character has to describe to stay in the game. Typically these would be physical wounds, psychological torment or some sort of social disaster. Your character's Consequences can be exploited by their opponents and vice versa. The first time a Consequence is used by an opponent they can bring it into play without the cost of any Fate Points.

- Scene

    The scene in which the Test takes place can also be described, possibly using the environment or the surrounding psychological atmosphere. The table may wish to suggest additional scene Aspects for them to use during Tests.

- Manoeuvre

    A manoeuvre is an action carried out by a character to create a new Aspect that can be used by themselves or other friendly characters. It's the principal way that one character can assist another in undertaking a task. The first time a manoeuvre created Aspect is used it can be brought into play without the cost of a Fate Point.

- Map Zone

    If using maps to visualise action scenes then a particular zone or boundary could have an Aspect that can be used in play. Typically these Aspects are written straight onto the map for easy reference.

If the player has sufficient Fate Points then they are able to bring into play as many Aspects of any type as desired during a Test.

Oaths

Once an oath is agreed and spoken, all parties are bound to it. There is immense power to an oath. By making an oath you tell this world that something is true. You break the oath and the gods will be displeased, consequences must be faced.

Oaths can also be used for political advantage. It is common for kings to use the oaths that they have made to bind them to particular courses of action and, perhaps more importantly, preventing them from making different alliances or taking contrary courses of action. Such hiding behind oaths is far from uncommon.

Breaking an oath can be dangerous. Any time an oath is broken by a character he takes a Consequence. The Consequence can be either mild, moderate, or severe as decided by the Storyteller and can be brought into play by the player or others. This Consequence counts towards the usual three Consequence limit. It will not vanish until whatever the character did to break the oath is put right or becomes irrelevant by the passage of time.

There might be further story-related results from breaking an oath sworn on something held precious. For example, if a character swears an oath on his children's lives and then breaks it, dire things might happen. The effect of breaking such an oath could be the character's children being kidnapped or otherwise endangered; it need not be an automatic death sentence.

The Ebb and Flow of Fate

Fate Points

Skein uses Fate Points as a sort of currency to help shape the story being told. It takes Fate Points to bring Aspects into play so that they can influence the outcome of Tests. If you have Fate Points you will be able to make things happen, turn abject failure into roaring success, create a new direction to the story and influence other characters' actions.

Fate Points are a finite resource that will be spent to enliven play, promote conflict and to help characters come out of Tests smelling of roses rather than pushing up the daisies. Fate Points should be represented by using some sort of thematically appropriate token such as war rings, holy glass beads or conkers.

Players and the Storyteller will gain and spend Fate Points throughout a session of Skein. Summarised below are all the different ways that Fate Points can exchange hands, illustrating how to make the best of them and to make the game more fun.

Gaining Fate Points

Players will always be on the hunt for Fate Points. If they have a small stockpile of ready to spend Fate Points in front of them, they will play their characters with more bravado and take more risks.

Here are all the different ways to gain Fate Points:

Refresh

At the beginning of every game session there is a refresh. At a refresh, each player has their total Fate Points brought up to their character's Refresh Rate (usually 5, for starting characters). If a player already has more Fate Points than the Refresh Rate, they do not benefit from the refresh. Neither do they lose Fate Points.

As noted below, the Storyteller is also given a pool of Fate Points for her characters at the start of each session, usually 3 per player. If these Fate Points are not spent, they are lost, though they are of course regained at the start of each game session. These Fate Points are to be used by NPCs that are opposed to the PCs. If the Storyteller has a *significant* character that is friendly to the player characters, or at least on their side in a conflict, then they will have their own pool, initially consisting of 3 Fate Points.

The Storyteller may also decide to call for a refresh at any other appropriate moment during a game. If the session is filled with particularly difficult and dangerous Tests that are quickly pulling Fate Points away from characters then a refresh can be called to reflect the intensity of play. It's up to the Storyteller to gauge if a refresh is called for.

Players will usually be joyous when a refresh is offered to them, a cue to make the harried Storyteller a fresh cup of tea and offer a selection of choice biscuits. However, there is a price- for a refresh in the middle of a game session, and the Storyteller also gains 5 Fate Points for her characters.

Rule
At a refresh, each character with less than their Refresh Rate has their total brought up to that number. At the start of a game session, the Storyteller has 3 Fate Points per other player to spend on his opposing characters. At a refresh called in the middle of a game session, the Storyteller also gains 5 Fate Points for her pool.

Being compelled

The Storyteller can compel a player character, by requesting that they behave and act in a certain way that is suggested by one of their Aspects. This can happen at any time during play. The Storyteller offers the player a Fate Point as an incentive to go along with the suggested behaviour. The Fate Point token is wafted in front of the player being compelled, enticing them to accept. There might even be some persuasive taunting. The player can refuse, but doing this means he must give a Fate Point to the Storyteller.

In moments of high drama, the Storyteller might escalate, offering two or even three Fate Points to go along with a compel. It still costs the player just one Fate Point to ignore the compel.

Being compelled is a core and fun part of Skein. When Aspects are compelled, the character and the story can be moved in an unexpected direction, at an unexpected time, making the game more interesting. This provides a rich vein in which to accumulate Fate Points to be spent later. When a player is creating Aspects for their character they need to consider how they can be used by others to compel them and help to gather valuable Fate Points.

If a compel happens during a Test, it is resolved before any other actions take place in a particular turn of action, as it may determine what a character actually does!

Using Aspects to enliven play

Aspects say something important about a character. If a player plays out their character's Aspects in a way enlivens play then the Storyteller can choose to provide a Fate Point as a reward. The player may wish to explicitly signpost which Aspect they are calling on as they undertake a particular action or behaviour in the game. The table can decide the best convention for showcasing Aspects during play.

A Storyteller might also use one of a player character's Aspects in generating a story. For instance, suppose a player character has an Aspect indicating a mortal enemy. If this enemy shows up in a story to cause trouble for the character, this is not a compel as such, as it does not suggest a particular course of action, but is using this Aspect, and so, nets the player a Fate Point.

Bringing sparkle to the table

If a player brings some sparkling play to the table, raises a laugh or induces a positive response from the group, then the Storyteller can reward the player by immediately giving them a Fate Point.

Spending Fate Points

Fate Points can be spent all too easily. Presented below are all the ways that you can spend them.

Bringing Aspects into play

Before the dice are rolled, spend a Fate Point to bring a relevant Aspect into play. This Aspect can be one of your own, or associated with the environment, a special piece of equipment, or even one of an opponent's. This gives you a +2 bonus to the total for this Test.

If a player wishes they can bring more than one Aspect into play on a Test. When multiple Aspects are brought into play, each cost one Fate Point and provides a cumulative +2 bonus. Each individual Aspect can only be use once for a specific Test.

Fate Points are most frequently spent in this way.

Re-rolling the dice

Pay a Fate Point to re-roll the dice any time that you are not happy with the result of your roll. Keep whichever of the two results you prefer. If the player still doesn't like the result then they can spend another Fate Point for a further re-roll, taking their preferred result from the three rolls and so on. All bonuses from the original roll still apply to any re-roll.

Compelling Characters

Just as a player's character can be compelled (see above), they can also offer a compel to another player or Storyteller character. If the compel is accepted then this costs 1 Fate Point which is passed over to the player who accepts the compel.

Unlike Storyteller compels, player compels do not cost a Fate Point to refuse. A player compelling another player is a way to pass Fate Points around the table, with the condition of acting according to an Aspect.

Compelling the Story

If a player wants something to happen in the story, they can spend a Fate Point to take narrative control and make things happen. Appropriate changes include finding a useful object, meeting a friend (or enemy) and adding Aspects to a scene. The narration should be at least tangentially relevant to an Aspect that is already in play.

If the Storyteller agrees with the new content created by the player then they take the Fate Point and the player narration stays true. The Storyteller has the option to modify the narration, but in this case the Fate Point is returned to the player. If the rest of the table agrees that it's inappropriate, the narration can even be entirely vetoed, though this is not in general recommended.

Free Aspects

Some Aspects can be brought into play without paying a Fate Point. These 'Free Aspects' are created by manoeuvres or as a result of Consequences being taken. The first time that they are brought into play, either by the player that created them, or one of his allies, it provides a +2 bonus or a re-roll for no Fate Point cost. If the Aspect still exists in the scene after it is used, then subsequent uses of the Aspect costs a Fate Point as usual.

Storyteller Fate Points

The Storyteller also has a pool of Fate Points for her characters. This Fate Point pool is limited, starting at 3 Fate Points per player at the beginning of the session.

Unlike player characters, non-player characters (NPCs) have no Fate Points of their own. Any Fate Point expenditure for them comes from the Storyteller's store. The Storyteller only gets Fate Points back at the start of a session or a refresh, or when a player compels an NPC. She does not get them for compelling her own NPCs.

Fate Points given by the Storyteller to players for Compels, exciting roleplaying, and so on, are not paid from the Storyteller's pool, but are taken "from the infinite bag" as it were. Any Fate Points spent by players are put back into the bag. There is no direct exchange of Fate Points between the Storyteller's character pool and the players' stores.

Rule

The Extra Refresh stunt adds an extra Fate Point for a character at the start of the game and at each refresh. If the Storyteller has an NPC with the Extra Refresh stunt, she adds an extra Fate Point to her character Fate Point pool at the beginning of a scene where that NPC appears. Giving this stunt to an NPC is useful when the character has one or more stunts that require a Fate point to be spent when used.

Tests

During much of a game session there will be no need to look at rules or test the player characters' skills. The story will flow and events will be described between the storyteller and the players as the tale progresses. However, there will be moments when the players will wish to do something opposed by someone or something else. This will require the character to use the Skein game rules, their skills, Stunts and Aspects to succeed. These moments of uncertainty and tension are called 'Tests'.

The most basic type of Test is the Simple Test. Simple Tests form the basis for Contests, which use all the rules for simple Tests but then layer on some additional ideas to provide more 'game focus' to these crucial moments of conflict in play. Simple Tests are resolved with one roll of the dice, whereas Contests are generally resolved after several dice rolls.

Simple Tests

Most Tests in the game are likely to be simple Tests. They involve adding a relevant Skill and any other modifiers, such as from Aspects, to a roll of the dice. Remember, that every dice roll is 4dF, and generates a number from -4 to +4.

Players will be trying to match or exceed the difficulty number set by the Storyteller. If the Test involves two characters competing against each-other, then both roll the dice, and add their Skill number and any modifiers. Whoever has the higher total wins the Test.

Here are the basic steps.

1. Decide what the Test is about, the required skill and what happens if the player wins or loses. If the player doesn't have the necessary skill then they can still attempt the Test but at an effective Skill Level of 0.

2. If the Test is not a conflict between two characters then the Storyteller sets the difficulty number for the Test. The higher the number the more difficult the Test. The Test difficulty will typically be a number between 0 and 12. This is the number that the character has to reach to win.

As a quick guide here are some difficulties:

Difficulty	Description	Notes
0	Easy	You really should be able to manage this. Only an unlucky dice roll or lack of a relevant skill will hinder you.
2	Routine	Not too difficult, should be achievable.
4	Difficult	Some skill required and a reasonable dice roll too.
6	Challenging	Only highly skilled or very lucky characters will find these Tests stress-free.
8	Formidable	A high applicable skill level, good dice roll and some well-used Aspects will be needed.
10	Impossible	All of the above and more.
12	Very Impossible	It had better be worth it.

The player starts with their applicable Skill number and then modifies this with a roll of the dice. The outcome is described depending on whether or not they reach the difficulty set by the Storyteller. Reaching the number indicates success. Getting below the number indicates failure.

Basic Rule

In a simple Test, roll Skill + Dice roll against a difficulty number set by the Storyteller. If the result is greater than or equal to the difficulty number, the character succeeds in what they were attempting.

In a Test against another character, compare Skill + Dice roll, with the higher total winning.

The use of Aspects and Fate Points can modify the total rolled.

Now let's make these simple Tests more interesting. A number of things can happen before the dice are rolled.

Being compelled

Another player or Storyteller can decide to compel one of the acting player's Aspects to influence how or whether the player undertakes the Test. If the player agrees to the compel then it is possible that the Test does not happen at all. It's also possible that the outcome of the Test is altered in some kind of way.

Using Aspects

Before the dice are rolled a player can bring into play one or more Aspects. Aspects used should be relevant to the Test. They cost one Fate Point each to bring into play and each provide +2 to the player's result.

Re-roll the dice

A player can spend a Fate Point and re-roll the dice, taking the preferred result.

Degree of Success

How well a player character does in a Test is measured by how high their total is compared to the Test difficulty or an opponent's total. The difference in these numbers is termed the Degree of Success. If the character only just matches the difficulty (Degree of Success of 0), then they have just barely succeeded. Higher Degrees of Success indicate a more notable victory. A Degree of Success of 3 or higher is known as a 'critical' result, which is a very good thing.

- 0: barely a success, just scraped through, the outcome is positive but possibly with a complication

- 1: a solid success with the winning outcome going your way

- 2: a great success with the outcome even better than expected

- 3 or more: a critical success creating a positive game based reward called 'Spin', in addition to a great outcome

If time is being measured using the time track (see section), then the Degree of Success may shorten the time the Test takes.

Spin

If a character gets a critical result, a Degree of Success of 3 or more, on a Test then, in certain circumstances, they create Spin. Spin provides a bonus +1 to the character's next dice roll. Usually, Spin only applies when there is no other benefit from such a high Degree of Success.

Putting it all together

Here is the full sequence for simple Tests:

- Describe the Test, the outcomes and the skills to be used

- Set the difficulty

- Declare and resolve compelled Aspects

- Check if any supporting skills are applicable

- Consider using any available Aspects to help if required

- Roll the dice, add the appropriate skill, add any bonuses due to Aspects – this is the player's Test result

- Compare against the Test difficulty or the opponents result. If equal to or higher than the difficulty then the player succeeds at the Test

- Consider a re-roll of the dice by spending a Fate Point

- Determine the Degree of Success and describe the outcome

Often a simple Test will only involve a skill number and a roll of the dice. All the options above are always available if needed.

Manoeuvres

A Manoeuvre is a character action that can create a temporary Aspect on the scene, another character or even themselves. The Aspect can then be brought into play like any other. The first time it is brought into play by the character or an ally doesn't cost any Fate Points, it's free. After that, each use of the Aspect costs a Fate Point as usual. A manoeuvre-created Aspect normally lasts for the rest of the scene, but some vanish after one use, depending on the narrative. If there is any doubt, the Storyteller decides how long a manoeuvre-created Aspect is available.

Manoeuvres also provide a way for a character to help another in a skill Test.

There are two types of manoeuvre:

Simple action manoeuvre

To perform a simple action, the player simply describes what their character is doing and makes a relevant Skill Test at difficulty 2. The effect of the action is applied if the Test is successful. Any Aspect created in this way is written down and available for use.

Contested manoeuvres

A contested manoeuvre is usually targeted at another character. For the manoeuvre to succeed a Test needs to be won against the target. A Degree of Success of 0 (a tie) is enough for a contested manoeuvre to succeed.

Assisting another character

A character can aid another in a Test by making a relevant skill Test at difficulty 2. If this Test works, then the one being aided has a +2 bonus to their Test.

This is a special case of a manoeuvre. The assistant makes a skill Test to place a temporary Aspect, and the one performing the main Test then invokes it at no Fate Point cost for the bonus. It is a short cut in that we do not worry explicitly about describing the Aspect placed by the manoeuvre.

The Time Track

Sometimes a Test will have both a difficulty and a duration to complete. As an option, higher degrees of success will reduce the time needed to complete the Test.

In this case, the time needed to perform the task is reduced by one step on the time track per Degree of Success, up to a maximum of four steps.

The Time Track

Instant
A few seconds
Half a minute
A minute
A few minutes
15 minutes
Half an hour
An hour
A few hours
A day
A few days
A week
A few weeks
A month
A few months
A season
Half a year
A year
A few years
A decade
A lifetime

Chapter 6- Endurance Tests and Contests

Damage

Stress and Consequences

Stress Scores

During social, psychological and physical conflict there is a danger that characters will get damaged. This damage is measured on the two stress scores: Health and Composure. During a conflict, two opposing characters will make a Test and one will win. The Degree of Success of the victor is the damage inflicted on the opponent, modified by armour and weapons in the case of combat.

This damage is the number the stress score is reduced by. Stress loss represents very minor injuries and setbacks from which characters can quickly recover. However, if you run out of stress your character has been knocked out of a conflict. In some situations, such as combat, this could be fatal!

To prevent an early exit from a conflict, your character can absorb some damage by taking a Consequence. Some rules (such as breaking an oath) could temporarily change this.

Consequences

Consequences represent more lasting and significant harm to the character. When a character has been damaged by an attack, before subtracting the damage from the stress score, you may reduce the Degree of Success by applying one or more Consequences: a mild Consequence reduces the number of damage levels by two, a moderate Consequence reduces the number of levels by four, and a severe Consequence reduces the number of levels by six.

After reducing the damage by Consequences, any remaining damage is deducted from the relevant stress score. A character may normally only have one Mild, one Moderate and one Severe Consequences, regardless of the track the Consequence was scored against.

A character may only take one Consequence at a time as a result of a single instance of damage. So, if a character suffers 12 levels of damage as a result of single blow, it cannot be reduced to zero by taking a mild, a moderate and a severe Consequence at the same

time. At best it can only be reduced to 6 by taking a severe Consequence. In this example the character is likely to be knocked out anyway!

The defender determines the precise wording of the Consequence (subject to reasonableness, as agreed by the table). The Consequence is an extra Aspect that can be invoked and compelled as usual. The first time a Consequence is invoked by an opponent, there is no fate point cost.

Examples of Consequences

Mild:	(Health)	Broken Weapon, Nauseated, Ruined Clothing, Sprained Ankle, Winded
	(Composure)	Confused, Embarrassed, Headache, Needs a Drink, Shaken
Moderate:	(Health)	Broken Nose, Burned, Exhausted, Sickened, Gaping Wound
	(Composure)	Crisis of Confidence, Depressed, Nervous Stammer, Shamed, Terrified
Severe:	(Health)	Broken Limb, Bleeding to Death, Internal Injuries, Gruesome Wound
	(Composure)	Cannot Face the World, Humiliated, Hysterical, Mental Breakdown

---

Being Knocked Out

A character is out of play when he sustains a hit that reduces any stress score to zero. Consequences can keep the amount of damage down. So, for example, a person that takes eight levels of damage more than his Health stress score in combat cannot be saved. That's a one-strike kill… or maybe there's a better way to narrate it?

The attacker narrates taking out his opponent (subject to reasonableness, as determined by the table). Anything that suits the method (sword attacks, punching, whatever) and that genuinely removes the character from play is suitable. If the Contest was a wild melee then your character might be unconscious, dead or maimed. If the Contest is a social conflict then you might be ostracised and friendless.

When narrating how an opponent is Taken Out, it is essential to articulate how and if the opponent can return to the game. This gives a lot of power to the victor and should be an incentive to players to offer concessions when things aren't going their way.

Concessions

A player who thinks their character is going to lose a Contest can seek to exit early by offering a Concession. The concession explains how the character escapes from the Test

and the complication they must endure to do so. It's a great way for villains to escape to return in a later game session.

Both players and the Storyteller can offer a Concession. However, there are limitations. Firstly, A Concession must be offered before the dice are rolled and damage is applied. It is too late to offer a Concession after a bad dice roll that would take a character out! Also, the opposition in a Test is not required to accept a Concession and can instead opt to fight on.

Healing

Recovering Stress Loss

Stress loss is not real damage. They are the sweats, panic, scratches, "only a flesh wound," and so on: nothing that actually affects performance or can't be fixed with a tiny amount of downtime. All Health and Composure stress damage is erased after an opportunity for the character to have some safe downtime. The table should rule when enough time has passed or whether the downtime was sufficiently relaxing. It could be a welcoming homestead with no one fighting in it, or the uneventful three days' travel time to the next destination, or even just a quiet moment to reflect and pull yourself together.

Recovering Consequences

Characters cannot begin removing Consequences until the associated stress score has been restored. Consequences can be naturally healed over time. Once this time is passed the Consequence can be removed. The healing process can be speeded up by skilled healers who know the right treatments, herbs and restorative experiences to bring mind and body back together. Magic can bring immediate restoration, but sometimes at a cost.

Natural Healing

- A Mild Consequence is cleared within one game day, or at the end of the session, whichever is sooner.

- A Moderate Consequence remains for a game week or until the end of the following session, whichever is sooner.

- A Severe Consequence remains for a game month or must be carried through two complete sessions in which the associated stress score is never damaged, whichever is sooner. If it is incurred during session one, it is gone no sooner than the end of session three. If the associated stress score takes hit in a fight during that session, you'll need to hold the Consequence through yet another one.

Healers

Healers can improve the time it takes to recover stress and remove Consequences. Health stress can be healed with the healing skill and minimal equipment, such as improvised

bandages. The difficulty of the Healing Test is the amount of damage to Health. The Degree of Success is the amount of Health stress restored. Such healing can even be used during a contest or combat, where it counts as the healer's action for a turn.

If a character has no stress damage, an attempt can be made to heal Consequences.

- A Mild Consequence can be treated by a healer after the situation (for example, a combat) in which the wound was sustained is over. It requires dressings, salves or other herbs. If the healer can make a successful Test against difficulty 2 then the time to remove the Consequence is reduced according to the time track, starting at a day.

- A Moderate Consequence remains until a healer can make a successful Test against difficulty 4. Success reduces the healing time, again, according to the time track starting at a week. The healing requires a dedicated quiet place where the person can be attended to. The location may have Aspects that can be used.

- A Severe Consequence can be healed by a healer rolling against difficulty 6. It requires a recognised place of healing such as would be found in an abbey, hospital or sacred grove. Location Aspects, if any, may again be used. Success reduces the healing time as expected on the time track starting at 'a few months'. In only the most exceptional case should the impact of the severe Consequence be removed before the end of the session following the one in which it was received.

A failed Healing Test cannot be attempted again, unless a Fate point is spent to do so, or circumstances change for the better.

Endurance Tests

An Endurance Test is a simple Test where, if a character fails, he or she suffers a point of damage per level of failure. For a physical Test, damage reduces the Health stress score. For a mental Test, damage reduces the Composure stress score. Consequences may be taken as usual to alleviate this damage, though such may, as usual, be long-term effects.

Endurance Tests are often more difficult than ordinary simple Tests. If such a Test is taken at all there is a good chance that a character will suffer at least a small amount of damage, unless a character has exceptional skills or uses relevant Aspects.

Rule
The difficulty of an Endurance Test is the difficulty of a Test to come through it without taking any damage whatsoever, however minor.

Stress loss from an endurance Test does not vanish until the situation that caused the Test is over. So, for instance, damage due to a long journey or lack of food will not go away until a character has rested or eaten. Damage from a disease will not go away until the disease has been cured or run its course.

Physical endurance Tests are more common than mental ones, but both sorts are possible. They are useful tools for the table to resolve certain situations.

Poison and Disease

Poisons and diseases are modelled by Strength-based endurance Tests. For a typical poison or disease, the difficulty of the Test is 4. As usual, a point of physical stress damage is suffered by the victim per level of failure. Someone with the Plant and Root magical skill and the Stunt Brew Poisons can easily make poisons. In this case, the difficulty of the Test to withstand the poison is the level of the Plant and Root skill Test.

This damage is not applied immediately. It takes a few minutes to take effect with poison, and a few days to take effect with disease. In particular, note that the utility of poisons within combat is limited.

However, damage from a poison or disease may not be healed for as long as the poison or disease is in the victim's system: a few days for a poison, or a month for a disease. A Healing Test at difficulty 0 can be made to reduce this time according to the time track.

As is the case with any form of Healing Test, a failed Test cannot be attempted again, unless a Fate point is spent to do so, or circumstances change for the better.

Travel

Normally travel is a fairly routine event, requiring at most a Survival-based Endurance Test at a final difficulty of 2, even when travelling for several days over long distances. Usually, no Test is required.

All this assumes that travel is at a relatively leisurely pace, with adequate rests and provisions. If there is a lack of rest then the journey endurance Test difficulty is increased by +2.

If a traveller wishes to move more quickly, there is always the option of a forced march, which increases the daily travel distances by 50%, but means an endurance Test is needed at difficulty 2 on the first day, with +2 to difficulty for each day afterwards.

Another way to increase travel times is to ride rather than walk. On roads, or over flat terrain, daily travel distances are increased by 50%. It is also possible to attempt a forced march when riding. In this case, the horse must make a Strength-based endurance Test. The character's Riding skill can be used to support the horse. A typical horse's Strength skill is 4, but horses will not take Consequences, instead an overused horse will drop from exhaustion.

> **Armies and Travel**
> Armies always move more slowly than one might expect, given the speeds of individuals within them. All of the above travel distances are halved when a large force travels together.

Extreme weather conditions, such as heat, cold and storms, can also make it hard to travel. A Survival-based endurance Test is required at difficulty 4 for each day of journeying in such conditions. Travel distances are halved. A lack of suitable clothing for the conditions adds a further +2 to the difficulty.

The final complicating factor to consider is lack of provisions. Lacking provisions is not necessarily a disaster, as it is possible to forage and even hunt on a journey, but nonetheless a lack of provisions adds a further +2 to any difficulties in the endurance Test. In this case Tests are needed every day, even for a routine journey.

These difficulties are summarised in the following table.

Travel Situation	Difficulty of Endurance Test
Routine	2
Forced March	+2 per day after first
No Rest	+2
Extreme Weather Conditions	4
Lack of Suitable Clothing	+2
Lack of Provisions	+2

Contests

Contests can be used for everything from chases and wrestling matches to board games and debates. They are used when the table does not want to resolve a Test in a single dice roll. The spotlight is on this 'contest', because the stakes are too high, it's too interesting, or there is the possibility of long-lasting Consequences.

The Set-Up

The first step in a Contest is for the table to decide whether the Contest is physical or mental, which skills can be used and the effects of winning or losing.

The first of these is usually obvious. A chase and a wrestling match are examples of physical contests, though the latter can also be handled by the personal combat rules for a little more detail. A debate and a game of chance are examples of mental contests. The difference between these two forms of contest is that physical contests use the Health stress scores of participants, whereas mental contests use the Composure stress scores.

Which skills are allowable in a contest is usually obvious, though some skill uses may be less obvious, and need the agreement of the table. For example, in a chase, the Agility and Strength skills are both relevant. There are also situations where other skills, such as Stealth could be used. In a wrestling bout, the key skills are likely to be Agility, Brawling and Strength. A debate is more free-ranging, with all social skills being suitable if their use is described to the satisfaction of the table. On the other hand, Gaming is perhaps the only appropriate skill to use for a fair game of latrunculi.

The effects of winning and losing a contest will sometimes be clear. For a wrestling match or latrunculi game, the winner wins and the loser loses, though it is possible there are other things invested in the outcome. Indeed, this is likely if the more detailed contest rules are used rather than a single opposed skill Test. For a chase, the outcome decides whether the one being pursued is caught or gets away.

On the other hand, the effects of winning or losing a debate are often less clear. Perhaps a 'neutral' judge is won over to a particular point of view. Perhaps the opinions of a crowd are swayed. The outcome depends on the situation and what is decided by the table. In any case, the effects of winning and losing are best chosen before the contest begins.

Resolution

A contest is divided into a series of turns. The length of the turn depends on the contest. It might be a few seconds long in a wrestling match, or a few minutes long in a chase, debate, or a game of chance. Even longer turns are possible in some forms of contest, for example a pursuit between ships, or a race across the wilderness to reach a particular destination. In any case, the rules are the same, though with very long turns. A contest may well be interrupted temporarily or permanently by other events.

The simplest form of contest has just two participants. In this case, each turn, both participants make a relevant skill Test. Fate Points can be spent as usual. The winner of this Test inflicts damage on the loser, either to the Health or Composure stress score, depending on whether the contest is physical or mental, equal to the amount he or she has won by.

When one participant is reduced to zero stress, they have lost the contest. The other participant has won.

As usual, all Health and Composure damage is erased after an opportunity to have some safe downtime. There are no long-term effects from this damage alone beyond that of losing the Contest, which may be unpleasant.

Manoeuvres

A character involved in a Contest can also make a manoeuvre instead of an ordinary Test in a turn of a Contest, as described in the previous chapter. A manoeuvre in a contest is often also an opposed skill Test. This Test does not have to involve one of the normally allowed skills in a contest if appropriately described. For example, Deception can always be used to trick an opponent, or Awareness to spot something new.

If a character attempting the manoeuvre loses the opposed Test, he or she takes damage as usual. If the Test is drawn or won, the character gets to place an appropriate Aspect on them reflecting what happened, rather than inflicting damage.

As usual for a manoeuvre, this new Aspect can be used once at no Fate Point cost for a +2 bonus to a skill Test in the contest. The Manoeuvre can be brought into play by the character that placed it or one of his allies. Manoeuvres are one way for characters without the usual skills to compete in contests. They are especially effective when groups of allies are involved (see below).

Consequences

Taking Consequences in a contest can stave off the inevitable, perhaps giving a chance to turn things around at a cost. It is not necessary or desirable to suffer Consequences to avoid losing every single contest encountered. We say more about this in the Storyteller Advice chapter.

Most friendly or non-lethal contests usually end with nothing more than a Mild Consequence. However, someone particularly determined might choose to take a Moderate or Severe Consequence, such as a broken arm in a wrestling match. The contest can continue after this point but that is an indication that it is turning serious and is no longer just a game.

Larger Contests

In some contests, for example a race, there will be more than two participants competing against each other. In this case, everyone involved makes a skill Test each turn. The one with the lowest result suffers stress damage equal to the difference between their result and the highest one.

A participant reduced to zero stress drops out of the contest. Sometimes this will end a contest as a 'loser' has been found. Sometimes the contest will continue with fewer people involved until a winner is decided when everyone else has dropped out.

The effects of dropping out may vary. Consider, for instance a chase between a number of pursuers and a number of people attempting to escape. Those who would escape get away if every pursuer drops out of the contest, or the pursuers give up, having lost too many people. On the other hand, as soon as one person running away drops out, they are caught by the remaining pursuers. It is up to their fellows whether to continue running, or to choose to drop out to keep their comrade company, perhaps turning the chase into a personal combat.

Teams

Sometimes, a group of those involved in a contest will act together as a team. In this case, everyone in the team rolls as above, but only the best result counts. When a team loses a turn of a contest, the participant with the lowest result suffers the damage inflicted. If any team member drops to zero stress, the team as a whole loses the contest.

For a group of NPCs with identical skill levels, where nobody particularly stands out, the Storyteller should save time by just rolling once for the entire group, at the skill level of an individual member.

Chapter 7 - Mortal Combat

In the dark and dangerous world there are many forces that will strive to kill your character. This chapter builds on the Tests chapter providing you with some more options to detail what happens when player characters face mortal danger. When detailing a combat in Skein the table can choose how the flow of activity is represented in play. You have two options:

- Abstract – the flow of the combat is simply described and relative distances and movement are quickly arbitrated by the Storyteller. This approach works best for uncomplicated combats between a small number of opponents or if you are happy to keep everything in the imagination and not get tactical.

- Mapped – the flow of combat is represented by a drawn map and some sort of token to represent each player character or group of characters moving together. These tokens could be simple counters through to detailed miniatures. This approach works best for more detailed combats, with lots of protagonists and where you want to factor in the impact of terrain and movement.

Using a Map

When representing the action of a combat a quickly drawn map can add a new dimension to the action. The area can be swiftly drawn on plain paper as the map is not meant to be an accurate cartographic representation, but rather a sketch of the terrain. The map is laid out in zones, abstract divisions of space in which significant terrain types are identified. Player character movement between zones may have some action cost associated with it (doors, etc.) or not, using a mechanism referred to as a border. Range is somewhat abstracted by being measured in numbers of zones. Here are some general pointers:

If the map is of outside terrain then:

- Characters in the same zone are in hand-to-hand combat range. They can punch, grapple and stab each-other with ease.

- Characters in different zones can only attack each-other with missile weapons. The maximum separation between attacker and defender depends on the range of the missile weapon. Short range is 2 zones, medium range is 3 zones, and long range is 4 zones.

If map is of a building such as a villa, tomb or temple then:

- Characters in adjacent zones can be poked with spears with some effort, being one or two metres distant.

- Characters further distant can be attacked with missile weapons, depending on the nature of the map and any barriers.

Buildings and tombs will typically be represented as floor plans providing more detailed and precise measurements and built over a number of levels.. This can be abstracted so that a whole level or group of rooms can be given an Aspect to describe them.

Zones

Zones are deliberately abstract and involve some bending of space. Maps for a good Skein fight should be kept simple. Lay a piece of paper over the playing area and then sketch the map. When a few terrain elements have been laid down, it should become obvious how to divide it into zones and apply zone Aspects and pass values for borders.

Avoid laying out a grid. The zone system rewards a layout based on the significance of the terrain rather than its precise measurement. Zones should not only represent strict distances but also represent the relationships between space and ease of travel and view. Wide open spaces can be big, for example, while rooms in a villa can be much smaller, becoming zones with their walls as boundaries. A long straight corridor can reasonably be a single zone if it is narrow enough that you couldn't swing a sword in it.

Some general rules for zones inside structures include:

- Rooms with doors that close are a zone, no matter how small.

- Split big zones up if the range is too long.

Overall, try to keep the basic rules for zone ranges: same zone is melee, adjacent zone is spear range if indoors, two zones away is throwing and three or four is firing missile weapons. More than four zones is enough to credibly claim you can escape.

If a zone has an Aspect (and this is a great way to model terrain effects), just write the Aspect right on the zone.

Borders between zones can have pass values. Any border between zones that is especially difficult to cross will have a pass value, which is the Degree of Success (from a successful move action – see below) needed to pass through the border. Basic doors might have a pass value of 1 or 2. Iron bound treasure room doors might have a much higher pass

value; perhaps 4 or higher. A pass value may become zero, when the door is opened. Once the door is closed it regains its pass value.

Some pass values:

- A heavy iron door: (hard to open, stays open, hard to close): 4/0/4

- A barrier of burning logs : (hard to clear, stays cleared): 8/0/X

Managing Combat

This section provides all the rules to manage combats and make use of those absorbing maps that you may have sketched out.

The Sequence

Combat occurs according to a strict sequence of events. In order to run the Sequence, one player should be named the caller (usually the Storyteller, but if one player's character is not physically present in the combat scene, it makes sense for him to call, while the Storyteller controls the opposition). The duty of the caller is to run the Sequence: he ensures that each phase is given sufficient time and that there is a smooth pace as phases proceed.

Taking Turns

Characters take turns to act in order of Awareness skill, with ties broken by Agility. If the narrative of the combat suggests another order then the Storyteller can go with what makes sense of the developing situation.

Combat is organized into turns of non-specific length, but each representing something between ten seconds and a minute, depending on the actions described. Consequently, it may be assumed that more is happening within each turn than is actually being described.

- Each player's turn consists of a "free" one-zone move and an action.

- The "free" move may be used to reduce a pass value by one.

Characters are able to undertake one action when it comes to their turn. The main action will fall into one of four categories: move, attack, manoeuvre, or do something else.

Move

Any combat action allows a character to move a single zone. If, however, the player declares his whole action to be a move, he may roll Agility against a difficulty of 2. The Degree of Success is the number of extra moves available, up to a maximum of two additional zones and for passing any barriers between the zones.

A character may move no more than three zones in a single turn, including the free move. Excess levels can be used to reduce additional pass values, though.

Borders with a multiple move cost to pass through (like a closed door or difficult terrain) can be moved through with one turns' expenditure (if it's sufficient) or by continued movement over multiple turns. So, for example, when trying to move through a closed door with a pass value of 2, a player adjacent to it could reduce it by 1, with his free move, and still make a combat action or forfeit his combat action and make an Agility roll to attempt to move further. Any Degree of Success may be brought to bear on border obstacles as long as the three zone movement limit is maintained.

Attack

If a player declares an attack action, he selects the skill he will use to attack. This will normally be Brawling, Melee Combat or Missile Combat but could be something else if he has an appropriate Stunt. He then considers if any Aspects are to be brought into play. As usual, each Aspect costs 1 Fate Point and provides a bonus of +2.

Dice are now rolled and modified by the Skill and Aspect bonuses to find the total Test score. The defender then picks a skill to defend with. Brawling or Melee Combat can be used to defend in hand to hand combat. Agility can be used to defend in either hand to hand or ranged combat. Melee Combat can also defend against ranged attacks if the defender has a shield. Defensive skills from Stunts can also be used if appropriate. It is permitted to use the same skill for both attack and defence. As with attacks, once a skill has been chosen, the defender considers if Aspects should be brought into play, and then the dice are rolled.

Rule
First the attacker picks a skill and selects any Aspects. Then dice are rolled to generate a total. A Fate point can be spent now for the attacker to re-roll if desired.

Then, in response to the attacker's total, the defender picks a skill and selects any Aspects before rolling the dice. A Fate point can be spent for the defender to re-roll if desired.

The difference between the attacker's roll and the defender's roll after all modifications is the Degree of Success, as in any opposed Test. If the Degree of Success is zero or positive, the attack was successful. If negative the attack fails. If the result is -3 or lower, the defender gets spin to be used later.

Damage is now calculated. Add damage values from weapons, or other sources, to the Degree of Success. Subtract any absorption values from armour or other sources. If the total is zero or less then no damage is inflicted. See the weapon and armour tables to find the damage and absorption values for weapons and armour

For each successful attack, damage is subtracted from the Health stress score. If a Consequence is used to mitigate damage, it is immediately available as an Aspect to opponents and can be used once by an opponent with no Fate Point cost.

If a successful attack does no damage due to armour or other factors, then the attacker gets to place a free temporary Aspect on the defender instead. This temporary Aspect is similar to one placed by a manoeuvre (see below), and can be used once for free by the attacker or his allies for no Fate Point cost.

Rule

A character may be attacked by multiple opponents. The defender is able to defend against all the attacks made against him at no penalty. The multiple attackers may choose to use manoeuvres to create Aspects that their fellow attackers can use.

Each defence is a separate roll with the option of Aspects and re-rolls as usual.

Composure Attacks

A Composure attack is conducted to unnerve, goad, taunt, intimidate, distract and generally destroy the will of the opponent. Damage is done to the Composure stress score only. Characters attack using persuasion or intimidation abilities and they are opposed by Willpower or other abilities that make sense to the table.

Manoeuvre

A player may wish to place an Aspect on a zone or a character. This can represent anything from distracting an opponent by throwing dirt in their face, flanking and positioning, to changing the environment of the conflict. This is a manoeuvre, as described in chapter 5.

Before the manoeuvre, the player may choose to move his character one zone. To summarise the rules again, the manoeuvring player makes an appropriate Test against either a target difficulty of 2, or an appropriate Skill that the opponent is using to defend, depending on the situation. If the roll is successful he places the Aspect. Manoeuvre rolls can be modified by Aspects, spin and so forth just as any other roll.

An Aspect placed by a manoeuvre can be used once by the one who placed it or an ally at no Fate Point cost. Subsequent uses of the Aspect cost a Fate Point as usual. The Storyteller should determine whether the Aspect placed is lasting or transient.

Lasting Aspects are Aspects that affect the person or terrain directly for the duration of the conflict or scene.

Transient Aspects are Aspects that derive from the continuous action of an individual. Transient Aspects last only until the placing character acts again, though he may use the Aspect in this last turn of its existence.

A character may also use a manoeuvre to remove an Aspect placed by an earlier manoeuvre. Doing this requires a relevant skill Test at difficulty 2.

Create an Obstruction

One way to inhibit movement is to create an obstruction, which applies a pass value to the border between two zones. The precise nature of the barrier and its duration (whether it needs to be maintained or whether it is permanent) depends entirely upon the narrative offered by the player. It is subject to table approval.

The player declares a target zone boundary and declares a Skill to be used, then narrates his attempt. A Test is made against difficulty 2. If the Test succeeds, then the player may place a pass value of two on any single border of the zone he has declared as his target. If a pass value already exists on the border, it may be increased by +1.

As with other combat actions, the decision to do something else may be preceded by a free one-zone move. The player can be compelled to prevent the action. If a compel is accepted the player's action ends. Whatever the result, the process should be narrated once it is completed.

Do Something Else

Players invariably will want to do something that doesn't naturally fall into one of the above three actions. This is fine and subject to table consensus and a plausible narrative. A player may want to juggle the flagons of ale, by making an Agility Test, or any of a host of other creative things. The Storyteller simply sets a difficulty for the Test and works out how it impacts what is going on.

Special Rules

Ambushes

A group or warband with a savvy leader can attempt to ambush another group of combatants. To decide whether an ambush is successful, the leader of the ambushers must make a Strategy and Tactics Test against the best Awareness or Strategy and Tactics skill amongst the targets.

If an ambush works, the ambushers each gain a free attack before the usual combat sequence begins. These attacks can be defended against normally.

An individual may also attempt to ambush another individual. This uses the Stealth skill rather than Strategy and Tactics, and is opposed by the Awareness skill of the victim. If an individual ambush such as this succeeds, the ambusher again gets a free attack at a +2 bonus, as if using a free Aspect placed by the earlier Stealth Test.

Going Defensive

During a combat a player might decide to forsake attacking and other activities to do nothing but defend himself. On a turn when he does this he gains a +2 bonus to the defence roll, but can take no other actions. This option must be chosen at the start of the turn.

If the player decides to act after a turn spent doing nothing but defence, any spin gained as a result of the defence can be spent normally. Stunts that allow a character to do damage as a result of a successful defence can also be used.

Going Offensive

A particularly bold, berserk or foolish player can also forsake defence in order to concentrate on attacks. In any Turn that he does this he has a +2 bonus to the attack roll, but is not really defending himself. His total defence is treated as zero until he next gets the chance to act.

Mounted Combat

A character fighting from horseback gains a couple of advantages. Firstly, if riding a trained warhorse, the Riding skill can be used to support the warrior's melee combat skill. Secondly, against unmounted enemies of man size or smaller, the character gains a +1 bonus to damage.

Finally, if there is time and space, a horseman with a melee weapon can charge into battle, making a Riding Test as a manoeuvre to give a bonus of +2 to the next melee combat skill use. This counts as a free action. This can be stacked with the Heroic Charge Stunt.

Out of arrows

Who wants to count arrows or bolts? Not us. It's way more fun to have an Aspect and let your opponents decide when you run out of missiles. Anyone using a bow or crossbow that makes three attacks or more in a scene may automatically gets the Aspect "Out of ammo" which may be compelled by opponents.. The archer doesn't have to accept the compel, and Fate Point, but must pay a Fate Point to keep firing missiles.

Warbands

Some combatants such as nameless soldiers, members of a gang of bandits, or Fae commoners, require less detail than full non-player characters and are individually of little importance to the story. As such they are often vulnerable in a fight. That said, such fighters can still be dangerous in a group. We call a group of such combatants a warband.

Warbands could be both enemies and allies of the player characters in a fight. The rules in this section make it possible to run a battle where the heroes have a dozen soldiers on their side whilst their enemies can have twice as many again. Here's how it works.

A warband member is described solely by his combat skill. This is a single skill encompassing all fighting and related skills. His armour and weapons are also described. All of those in a single warband are identically armed and armoured and have the same combat skill. The group has a number of Aspects less than or equal to the combat skill level.

The following table can be used as a guideline when selecting the combat skill level of a warband.

Combat Skill Level	Description
0	Completely Untrained
1	Limited Training, Militia
2	Professional
3	Veteran
4	Elite

Each member of a warband has a stress score of one, or his combat skill level, whichever is higher. Both Health and Composure damage are taken from this same score. When a warband member has stress reduced to zero, he is out of the fight. Any extra successes carry over to further warband members. Warbands and warband members are not allowed to take Consequences.

All members of a warband must be in the same zone, though it is permissible to split warbands into smaller groups. Indeed, when a warband attacks, it is normal to split it into one group for each opponent or opposing group of warbands.

A warband makes a single attack at a level equal to the combat skill level, with a bonus depending on the number of people in the group as follows. No more than six people may attack a single opponent.

Number in Group	Bonus
1	0
2 to 3	+1
4 to 6	+2

Defences, however, do not have these number-dependent bonuses, but are made at a level equal to the base combat skill. Those taken out in armed combat are incapacitated and possibly dead, see below. Warband members taken out in unarmed combat will recover automatically once the fight is over.

Psychological Warfare

The Intimidate skill can be used in a fight against warbands. Such a skill, when used against a group, will cause a number equal to the Degree of Success to flee (if possible) or surrender (if not). In any case, these warband members are considered taken out for the duration of the battle, though they might reappear later.

Weapons and armour are ignored. If the warband has a leader, they defend against the attack using either their Leadership or Intimidation skill. Otherwise, the defence is made

at a level equal to a warband member's combat skill. Either defence does gain a bonus for the number of people in the group.

Shield Walls

A group of warriors armed with shields can elect to block rather than attack. In this case, the defence roll does gain the bonus due to numbers. Moreover, the result of the defence Test must be beaten by a skill such as Strategy and Tactics or Agility in order to move into or through the zone containing the warriors.

Not every warband has the training and discipline to form a shield wall. An appropriate Aspect indicating such is needed to use this action.

Death and Healing

As a default, any warriors taken out in an armed conflict will be dead. However, a trained healer can, after the fight is over, make a single Healing Test against difficulty zero. The Degree of Success is the number of warband members saved from death. With a short rest, such men at arms will be fully recovered.

Only one such Healing Test is allowed, but if more than one healer is available, then they can support the healer using the 'Assisting another character' rule.

Chapter 8 - Battle

Battles involving dozens, hundreds or even thousands of participants are an important part of Skein. A typical battle, if there is such a thing, centres on shield walls of infantry, manoeuvring for position, seeking to overwhelm the enemy with strength, skill and numbers. This foundation of infantry is often supported by special troops such as heavy cavalry, archers and other skirmishers. Many armies are further supported by magic, as described below. The winner of the conflict between opposing magicians gives an advantage to their army.

However, the skill of a general and individual heroics are just as important when winning a battle as the size of an army and the skill of its troops.

Armies

For simplicity, a force in the mass combat system is referred to as an army, regardless of its size. The person in charge of an army is referred to as a general, regardless of his actual title. The general is fundamental to the outcome of mass combat. He is usually either a player character or a major named NPC.

An army is described simply by four statistics.

Size

The number of combatants in the army.

Army Skill

The main relevant skill of a typical soldier in the army, rather than the elite or honoured warriors. As a guideline, the following skill levels are appropriate.

Army Skill Level	Description
0	Completely Untrained
1	Limited Training, Militia
2	Professional
3	Veteran
4	Chosen men

Generals

The Army Skill is supported by both the Strategy and Tactics and Leadership skills of its general. If a general's Strategy and Tactics or Leadership skill is equal to or higher than that of the army, then the Army Skill gets a +1 bonus. If both skills are equal to or higher than that of the army, then the Army Skill gets a +2 bonus

Aspects

An army will have between one and five Aspects. These Aspects can, for example, describe an army's morale and general condition, any special types of warrior or elites, or their equipment.

Stress Score

An army's stress score is special in that it depends on both its own size and the size of the army it is fighting. In any case, the larger army in a battle always has a stress score of 10. The stress score of the smaller army depends on its relative size. For example, an army of 500 facing an army of 1000 will have 5 stress. If it has just 200 men, it will have a mere 2 stress.

Size of Smaller Army	Stress Score
10% of larger army or less	1
Up to 20% of larger army	2
Up to 30% of larger army	3
Up to 40% of larger army	4
Up to 50% of larger army	5
Up to 60% of larger army	6
Up to 70% of larger army	7
Up to 80% of larger army	8
Up to 90% of larger army	9
More than 90% of larger army	10

It can be handy visually to represent the stress scores of the armies with tokens on the table, removing tokens as damage is taken. If one army is twice the size or bigger than the other one then it gets an extra Aspect, Seriously Outnumbers the Enemy, which it can use once for free in the actual battle, at no Fate Point cost. Various other factors in the preliminaries, below, also set up various free Aspects.

Preliminaries

Before the battle proper begins, armies jockey for position, personal combats take place between champions of each side and wizards parade and curse the enemy. The mechanics for these initial steps are as follows.

Manoeuvring

Before the battle begins, the generals of each side make an opposed Strategy and Tactics Test to get their armies into the best position relative to the opposing forces. Shield walls need to be placed where they are the most advantageous according to the terrain, the enemy's weak spots need to be exploited and one's own weak spots need to be covered. Tricks in the coming battle, such as encircling and flanking manoeuvres need to be set up. This manoeuvring phase also accounts for setting up any siege weapons and artillery, or if appropriate, landing ships and organising coastal defences.

The winner of this opposed Test gets to place an Aspect reflecting position on one of the two armies. When the actual battle begins, the side whose general placed this Aspect can use it once for no Fate Point cost.

Magic

Certain forms of magic can affect the coming conflict. Spirit magic can be used to hurl curses at the enemy. Glamour can create distracting illusions. Faith magic can be used to bless one's own forces and call upon Heaven's favour.

In any case, a magician from each army coordinates such battlefield magic. Both of these magicians make an opposed Test in the relevant magic skill. The winner of this magical duel is able to place an Aspect reflecting this magical outcome on his own or the opposing army. When the actual battle begins, the side whose magician placed this Aspect can use it once for no Fate Point cost.

It is possible that a side might have more than one magician. In this case, a leading magician is still selected to make the actual roll, as above. Any supporting magicians can perform manoeuvres to support the magic user making the actual opposed roll.

Champions

Sometimes, heroes will step forth from the ranks to fight before the main action of the battle begins. Such battles may be formal or informal affairs. They typically continue until one hero surrenders, retreats, or receives a serious injury. These hero battles can also be fought to the death.

Typically one champion from each side steps forth to fight. The winner of the fight gets to place an Aspect reflecting the effect of the victory on his own or the opposing army. When the actual battle begins, the side whose champion placed this Aspect can use it once for no Fate Point cost.

If more than one champion comes forward from each side for individual combat, there are a number of individual one on one fights at this stage, or possibly a small melee between groups. In this case, the side that does the best overall gets to place the free Aspect. This may involve a decision on the part of the caller or Storyteller.

Skipping the Preliminaries

There will not be magical showdowns or hero duels before every single battle. In some battles these things will take place, but are unimportant to the story. For example, a hero duel is unimportant to the story if it is between unknown NPCs.

The magic and champions phase of a battle are optional examples of colour that can be skipped when appropriate. You may wish to add your own preliminary events that influence the forthcoming bloodshed.

Other Factors

Terrain and Weather

Such things as terrain and weather conditions are simply another Aspect, which may be used by either army.

Fortifications

An army fighting from good fortifications gains an Aspect, Fortifications, which can be used once for free. Partial or inadequately prepared fortifications and such things as quickly erected wooden palisades also provide Aspects, but these cost Fate Points, as usual, to use.

The Battle

The actual battle is divided into turns, each lasting between fifteen minutes and an hour. Like personal combat, a battle is a strict sequence of events. Battles do not use maps and zones. In order to run a battle, one player should be named as caller. The caller is usually the Storyteller, but if one player's character is not involved in the battle, it makes sense for him to call, while the Storyteller just controls the opposition to the player characters.

The duty of the caller is to run the sequence of events in a battle: he ensures that each phase is given sufficient time and that there is a smooth pace as phases proceed.

Individual Heroics

At the start of the turn, individual heroes such as the player characters can try to influence the course of a battle. Generals cannot indulge in such heroics, they have their own roles to play, described below.

A character who seeks such heroism must pay a Fate Point to make a relevant skill Test, depending on what they are trying to do. Weapon skills, representing heroism in the fight, are always appropriate, but other skills can also have an impact if the table agrees.

The difficulty of the skill Test is equal to the remaining stress of the opposing army. The player can spend Fate Points to aid this Test as usual. If the skill test succeeds, it places an Aspect on an army, which can, as usual for placed Aspects, be invoked once for no Fate Point cost by the character's army.

If the skill Test fails, the would-be hero suffers Health damage equal to the number the Test failed by. Note that individual heroics from major characters on the side of the smaller army are resolved first.

Getting Personal

Quite often in a battle, the player characters will seek to take out important NPCs on the enemy side, with magic users and enemy generals being prime targets. Let them try!

Attempting to get personal in this way does not cost any Fate Points. It interrupts the flow of a battle with a personal combat. This combat will not typically be against the important foe alone. The NPC will be protected by a Warband with combat skill and armaments the same as that of the army. The number in the Warband will be twice the army's current stress score. Player characters will need to take on the Warband as well as the target. It is therefore something best done by more than one player character. If a player character wants to try to influence the course of a battle alone, the rule for individual heroics is above.

Taking out a major NPC gives a free Aspect indicating the fallen enemy or possible loss of morale. Taking out the leader of an army's forces might lead to a withdrawal or surrender, at the Storyteller's discretion. It also means the army no longer benefits from its general's Leadership and Strategy and Tactics skills. A deputy may step forward to take up command but they will generally be at one level lower than the dead general unless there is a specific character described who might occupy this role.

Army Actions

After any individual heroics, the armies attack. The smaller army attacks first and the other force defends. Damage from a successful attack is inflicted against the opposition's stress with the amount of damage equalling half the Degree of Success, rounded up. A draw from an attack does no damage but lets the attacker place an Aspect. As usual for manoeuvres, this Aspect can be used once for free by the army that placed it at no Fate Point cost.

The army general can spend his Fate Points to use any appropriate Aspects, which might include his own, those of the armies fighting, any generated through individual heroics, and any terrain or scene Aspects. Storyteller generals take Fate Points from the Storyteller's pool of Fate Points as usual.

Armies may not take Consequences to mitigate stress loss.

Resolution

When an army is reduced to zero stress, it has no active combatants remaining on the field. An army may also concede a conflict by withdrawing (if possible) or surrendering. This ends the battle, but prevents further stress loss on the part of the defeated army.

Even an army reduced to zero stress has probably not fought to the last man. As indicated below, many of the losses will be those who have fled the field, or are merely wounded.

The Aftermath

When a battle is over, an army has lost a proportion of its numbers equal to the fraction of its damage stress that has been checked off. However, not all of these losses are necessarily casualties. Some may represent troops who have merely withdrawn or fled, or who were wounded.

Thus, when a battle is over, the general can make a Leadership Test at difficulty 2 to recover numbers equal to 10

Withdrawal and Surrender

An army can withdraw from battle or surrender at the end of a turn. It suffers loss in numbers as indicated above. A Leadership Test can recover some of its losses. An army that withdraws gives up the ground it was holding to the enemy. It means losing, but better to lose than to be wiped out!

Unfortunately, in some situations, for example when defending fortifications, an army cannot withdraw. In this case, the only options are to fight until it reaches zero stress, or surrender. What happens to an army that surrenders, and to the people it was protecting, depends on the surrender terms agreed to. Giving up prisoners to the victors is a common custom.

Effects on Player Characters

The survivors within an army that has taken losses are often battered and bruised, and sometime seriously injured. This includes the player characters, and major NPCs the Storyteller wants to keep track of.

At the end of a battle, each player character and major NPC makes a physical Endurance Test at a difficulty equal to the amount of stress his army has lost. If the army was on the losing side then add a +2 to the difficulty; if the army was reduced to 0 stress then add +4 to the difficulty.

The Test can be made using any skill that can be used for defence in combat. As usual for an Endurance Test, if it fails, the character suffers physical stress equal to the number it failed by.

Chapter 9 - Magic and the Gods

In the worlds of dark fantasy, skilled warriors and a strong sword arm brings power and authority. However, underpinning such visible expressions of might are the many paths of magic that continue to pierce the Otherworld, and bring ancient power to life at the behest of those with the knowledge to wield such dangerous arts. The Fae are watching, with glamour and old magic. Perhaps their time will come again in this age of chaos? The gods have not forgotten us. Some gods may slumber, but others intervene and meddle, their power still felt in the land. Invaders bring new gods with them too. Magic and the wars of the gods could yet prove to be as pivotal to the future of the kingdoms as the strength of armies and the outcome of battles.

There are several major magical paths available, each described by a particular skill and Stunts related to that skill. A specific Stunt that represents an innate magical ability is required to learn each magical skill, with extra Stunts indicating further powers or specialisation. The precise nature of magic, both what it can do and how it works, depends strongly on the magical path taken.

Some individuals not born with such a talent for magic can still use magic because of their training as a bard, or through the favour of the gods. The powers of such individuals tends to be less flexible and powerful in scope than those with magical skills, but is still sometimes significant. Such powers are usually described by Stunts and Aspects.

Divination

There are a number of different styles of divination available in typical Skein settings. The main examples are astrology, augury (divination from the movements of birds), dream visions, ectomancy (divination from the entrails of a slain animal) and pyromancy (divination by looking at smoke from a fire on which special incense has been burned). A character with the Divination skill is trained in one of these styles. All styles of divination work the same way mechanically.

With suitable time and preparation, Divination can be used to find out information about people, places and events in the past, present or future. Examples of preparation include calculations involving star charts for astrology, or going into deep sleep for dream visions. Any attempt to divine information costs a Fate Point and requires a Divination skill Test.

The Test is at difficulty 2 if the information is general and widely known and concerns the present or recent past. The difficulty is increased by 2 if the information desired concerns the distant past or near future. It increases by 2 again if the information sought is obscure or specific.

Multiple increases to difficulty might apply. A further +2 to difficulty applies if the preparations involved in the divination are imperfect, but could still work. For example, the difficulty to divine specific (+2) information about an obscure (+2) event in the future (+2) is at difficulty 8 (including the base start difficulty of 2). Note that all future events only represent what is likely to happen if events run their natural course, they can sometimes be changed if interfered with.

A player can also use the Divination skill (and pay the usual Fate Point cost) to state information concerning what a divination has found rather than asking the Storyteller for details. The Storyteller may either accept the statement of information, or modify it and return the Fate Point to the player. If accepted, the information creates a new Aspect on a person, an item, or the scene.

Spirit Magic

A practitioner of spirit magic can call upon the old gods to bless friends and curse enemies. Mechanically, a blessing or curse is placed on a target using the Spirit Magic skill. In the case of a blessing, the skill Test is at difficulty 2. A curse on an individual creates a Test opposed by a Willpower, Spirit Magic or Faith skill test by the target.

If a blessing or curse is placed successfully, the target gains a temporary Aspect representing the nature of the blessing or the curse. A magician can also bless himself or for that matter, curse himself, though that is, presumably, less likely. A blessing or curse is a special case of a manoeuvre.

The recipient of a blessing can invoke the blessing Aspect once for free. The enemies of a victim of a curse can invoke the curse Aspect once for free. The target of a blessing or a curse must be present in the scene where it is placed. This is a temporary Aspect and lasts only for the duration of that particular scene.

A magician can also use Spirit Magic to make a mental attack, defended against as above. A Consequence taken as a result of such an attack is a curse that potentially lasts longer than one placed by a manoeuvre, unless it is cured by magic. The curse can, as usual, be used in play once for free; further uses cost a Fate Point each time.

Faith

Dedicated worshippers of a god or pantheon can gain the Faith skill and some related Stunts. In order to have the Faith skill, a character must have an Aspect reflecting sincere religious beliefs.

The main use of the Faith skill is to oppose other, profane, forms of magic. The Faith skill can be used by a character as a defence against a magical attack, or to neutralise magic

already in effect. The chance of success is determined by an opposed Test between Faith and the opposed magical skill.

As well as defending himself against magic, a character with Faith can spend a Fate Point and make a Test to defend someone else he wants to protect from a magical attack, as above.

Glamour

In order to learn the Glamour skill, a character must have an Aspect some appropriate source of innate magical ability, as well as the Fae-blooded stunt. Essentially, what the Glamour skill does is create illusions.

Illusions created with the Glamour skill are extremely temporary, lasting but a minute. They also vanish when touched. Aside from this limitation a glamour can affect any sense. There are glamours involving sight, sound, smell and even taste. The most common use of a glamour is to impress or confuse. Mechanically, a Glamour skill Test is made to place an Aspect on a person (including the one weaving the glamour) or on the scene. As usual for manoeuvres, such an Aspect can be invoked once for no Fate Point cost.

Examples of glamours include shrouding an area in mist or gloom, distracting noises coming from the distance, or making someone temporarily supernaturally beautiful or hideous. Glamours are fixed to people, objects, or locations. They will only move independently when mentally commanded to do so. These commands require concentration. In a conflict, maintaining a moving glamour counts as a character's main action.

Most Tests of the Glamour skill are against difficulty 2, though the difficulty is increased if more than one sense is involved in a glamour, or the glamour is moving. Attempts to imitate something real with a glamour only work if the result of the Glamour skill Test beats an Awareness Test made by an observer. If the observer's result is higher, he or she is convinced that something is not right. He or she may not have the experience to say that the source of the wrongness is a glamour.

If the glamour is intending to mimic someone or something very familiar to the observer, the observer gains a +2 bonus to the Awareness Test.

Without appropriate Stunts, the Glamour skill cannot affect material things, or make objects or people undetectable to the senses (rather than merely disguising them).

Plant and Root

Plant and Root is the ancient art of the herbalists. It draws magical effects through picking, preparing and mixing plants. Many know the properties of plants and can create infusions and balms, but only a truly skilled practitioner is able to coax the magic from plants.

Creating an infusion using the Plant and Root skill requires a day's work, including both finding and picking appropriate plants and preparing them. Preparation needs some facilities, but no more than can be found in a well-equipped kitchen. A Test must be made at

difficulty 2 for an infusion to work. Better results on the skill Test reduce the time needed according to the time track.

Many plants are more effective when used for magic at particular points of the celestial calendar, or under certain phases of the moon. Thus, Lore skills involving astrology can act as complementary skills to Plant and Root.

One who consumes an infusion gains a temporary Aspect for a scene. The Aspect will depend on the nature of the infusion prepared. It can be used once at no Fate Point cost and will usually materially affect the consumer's body, or perhaps their mind.

Rune Magic

The runes are a magical alphabet that can imbue places or objects with potent magic. When used magically, they are carved into wood, stone and metal and empowered by a rune wizard through song, dance and animal sacrifice to create magical effects.

Rune Magic is the skill used to enchant objects with the power of the runes. To learn it, the character must know Runes as part of his or her language skill. In rules terms, enchanting an object needs relevant runes to be inscribed onto it and for the wizard to make a Rune Magic Test at difficulty 2 and spend a Fate Point. Normally, it takes a full day to inscribe a rune. A high Degree of Success can reduce this time according to the time track.

A rune-enchanted item gains an Aspect that can be brought into play by its wielder at the usual Fate Point cost. The enchantment lasts forever, or until the runes are defaced. Only one set of runes, and so only one rune-magic Aspect, can be placed on an individual item.

Shapechanging

The Shapechanging magical skill lets a character alter his form into that of one or more animals. One animal shape is known for each level of the skill. Changing to or from animal form costs a Fate Point, but there is no limit to how long a change to animal form can last. Common animal forms include those of a bear, wolf, horse, hawk and salmon. However, others are certainly possible.

In order to shift into the form of an animal, the character must have a specially prepared animal skin. No clothing or possessions other than the animal skin change form with the character. If the animal skin is stolen or destroyed, the character can make another from the skin of an animal he has killed. Making a new skin involves a magical ceremony, which lasts all day. Someone who has stolen an animal skin cannot use it to change form unless he has this skill and knows the form of that animal.

While in animal form the character gains the animal's physical attributes. Thus, someone in fish form can swim well and has no problems underwater, someone in horse form can gallop at the speed of a horse and bear heavy loads, and someone in bird form can fly. There are also some limitations. For instance, generally, the character will lose the ability to speak while in animal shape, unless he forms the form of an animal capable of speech, such as a raven.

A character's skills and stress scores do not change in animal form. However, the character gains a temporary Aspect, Form of [animal]. This Aspect can be used, with the table's approval, without any Fate Point cost, thus giving a +2 bonus or a single re-roll to any skill Test where the animal form helps. It can also be used by the Storyteller to impose a -2 penalty or a single re-roll to a skill Test where the animal form causes problems. When in the form of a small animal this Aspect will increase any physical damage inflicted on the character by 2 but does not otherwise affect (and indeed, may even boost) defences.

The Form of [animal] Aspect can also be compelled to make the character act more like the animal whose form he has taken. Such a compel grants Fate Points as usual.

Gods of Dark Fantasy

Some magical skills invoke the power of the gods, but more than that, the gods themselves sometimes bless mortals with special gifts, or curse them. A blessing or curse takes the form of an Aspect, which might be as simple as something along the lines of "Blessed by [Deity]". Specific Aspects often refer to a god's personality or area of divine interest. Such Aspects are permanent, and are usually taken as part of character creation, but they can also be earned using experience in play. They are entirely different in scope than blessings and curses placed through spirit magic.

A character with such an Aspect is allowed to learn appropriate supernatural stunts. In some cases, Stunts normally reserved for animals are appropriate for use as supernatural ones. In other cases, Stunts which could be mundane are listed, but for that particular character are supernatural in nature.

Chapter 10 - Story Telling

Playing with Fate

Conflicts and Consequences

Using Consequences wisely is even more important for the Storyteller's non-player characters. If the player characters are going to comfortably win a conflict, there is really no reason to draw it out by having the non-player characters suffer a series of Consequences. This is true even if the conflict is fatal for the poor loser.

As a guideline, minor NPCs should not take any Consequences in a conflict. Significant NPCs should take one Consequence and major NPCs should take two Consequences. In an epic climactic battle, the major enemy could take all three Consequences, assuming this prolongs the excitement of a conflict. Similarly, a major recurring threat could also take all three Consequences.

Setting Difficulties for Tests

Storytellers will often be setting Tests for the player characters. What difficulty number should be used for Simple Tests, not measured against an opposing character? Our suggestion is to set the difficulty at 0 for a simple Test without any complications. Each complication adds +2 to the difficulty. So for example, simply climbing an ordinary cliff, in good conditions, where there are lots of handholds and so on, will require an Agility Test at difficulty 0.

On the other hand, climbing a sheer cliff (+2) in a storm (+2) at night (+2), when it is icy (+2) will be a Test with a difficulty of 8. These guidelines are fairly generous, allowing characters to excel at simple tasks that play to their strengths, especially when Aspects and Fate Points are involved.

For some situations that require Tests described in the book we have listed the required Difficulty to succeed. Skein assumes at least one complication in a stressful situation, so difficulties are often rated at 2.

The player can improve his rolls by making appropriate manoeuvres such as taking a turn to "study the climb" (using the Awareness skill) and placing an aspect like "Slow and Careful" on the character. This assumes that the character has the extra time to take and is not running for his life or something.

Note that normal, simple actions, where there are no consequences for failure, and the Degree of Success does not matter, do not need a Test.

Developing Characters

In a series of scenarios, characters develop and improve over time. Firstly, in between scenarios, or at the end of a gaming session, or other natural pause, there is a refresh.

During the refresh, each player gains enough Fate Points to bring them up to their Refresh Rate. Those with more Fate Points than their Refresh Rate do not benefit. Such an excess of Fate Points will be rare, especially if the game is action packed with incident.

At each refresh, the player characters are also awarded with experience points. A player character gains one experience point for participating in the scenario up to that point. In special circumstances, a player character might gain further experience points as follows.

A character who has completely fulfilled an oath removes the relevant Aspect and gains 1 more experience point. At the storyteller's discretion, a player character who has performed exceptional deeds in the course of the session, going the extra mile with heroic or otherwise significant acts that affect the plot gains an extra experience point.

Experience points may be spent to do any of the following.

- Increase a skill by one level. The cost is a number of experience points equal to the level of the skill the character wishes to attain. So, if a character wishes to increase Awareness from Level 4 to Level 5 then this would cost 5 experience points. Skills can be increased to a maximum of Level 8.

- Gain a new skill at Level 1. This costs 1 experience point.

- Add a new Stunt. This costs 3 experience points. However, a character cannot have more Stunts than Aspects.

- Add a new Aspect. This costs 3 experience points.

- Increase the Refresh Rate by one. This costs 3 experience points. However, the number of Fate Points gained at each refresh is not allowed to exceed the number of Aspects unless they have the 'Extra Refresh Stunt'.

Rule
Character skills can go no higher than Level 8. A character can have no more than 10 Stunts.

In addition to spending experience points, every player has the chance to do one of the following at no experience point cost:

- A player may 'swap' a level from one neighbouring skill to another. A skill at Level 1 can be removed completely and a new skill added at level 1.

- A player may change an underused or no longer relevant Aspect for an Aspect relating to in-game events from previous sessions.

- A player may exchange one Stunt for another.

Characters may therefore change and develop from one session to the next, developing Skills and interests as time progresses.

Chapter 11 - Allies and Adversaries

Within this chapter you will find ideas and templates to describe the rich cast of characters and creatures that will populate your adventures.

Animals

Mundane animals have a number of skills at varying levels, but compared to human characters have few skills. An animal will usually only have one Aspect, reflecting its animal nature. A simple Aspect of "horse" or "wolf" is usually enough, though feel free to embellish with others. Examples might include: Affectionate when fed, Evasive, It's watching you, Majestic, Petulant, Really Quite Angry, Stubborn, Surly, Too close to my offspring, Vigilant.

There are no set numbers of Stunts for animals; they simply have whatever is needed. Many of these animal Stunts are not permitted to ordinary humans, though they are described in the Stunts section. Some animals have natural armour and weapons, so will also have absorption and damage scores listed.

Another difference between animals and humans in rules terms is that animals do not have separate health and composure stress scores. Instead they have a single unified stress score on which both physical and mental damage is tracked. The magnitude of this stress score depends on the Strength of the animal, as for humans, and is also modified by Stunts.

Bear

Bears are dangerous and territorial animals, but will generally only attack when provoked or defending territory or young.

Skills:	Agility 2
	Awareness 2
	Brawling 4
	Strength 5
	Survival 2
Stunts:	Tough, Armoured Skin, Natural Weapons (×2)
Absorption 1	Damage 4 (natural weapons)
Stress 8	

Bird of Prey or Raven

A raven or ordinary bird of prey or is too small to be a real threat to an adult human, though they might be a nuisance, scare you, or bring you interesting messages in their talons.

Skills:	Agility 4
	Awareness 4
	Brawling 1
	Stealth 2
	Survival 2
Stunts:	Flight, Swift
Absorption 0	Damage 0 (natural weapons)
Stress 1 or 2	

Boar

Boars have dangerous tusks and a habit of charging those they see as a threat. Player characters make a good threat. Because of the danger they pose, they are popular animals to hunt for sport as well as food.

Skills:	Agility 2
	Awareness 1
	Brawling 3
	Strength 3
	Survival 2
Stunts:	Heroic Charge, Armoured Skin
Absorption 1	Damage 2 (natural weapons)
Stress 5	

Giant Eagle

Giant eagles, with wingspans up to three metres across, are large enough to be a threat to travellers. These birds can be found in some of the more remote mountain ranges of Britannia. They're not large enough to ride and drop swords into ponds.

Skills:	Agility 3
	Awareness 4
	Brawling 3
	Stealth 2
	Strength 1
	Survival 2
Stunts:	Flight, Swift, Natural Weapons
Absorption 0	Damage 2 (natural weapons)
Stress 4	

Horse

In some adventures horses can be regarded as 'scenery', a means to get somewhere more quickly, or to accentuate status. Sometimes it will be useful to go into more detail, especially if the horse becomes embroiled in combat due to the folly of its rider. The following statistics are used for a typical horse.

Skills:	Agility 2
	Awareness 1
	Brawling 1
	Strength 4
	Survival 1
Stunts:	Beast of Burden, Swift
Absorption 0	Damage 0 (natural weapons)
Stress 5	

Some elite cavalry have access to trained war horses. War horses are similar to the above, but the Brawling skill should be increased to 3 and the Damage to 1. The creature's Aspect of "horse" is refined to "war horse".

Lynx

The lynx is a short-tailed wild cat over three feet long. Lynxes tend to be solitary predators, hunting domestic farm animals. They usually shy away from contact with people but can be dangerous if cornered.

Skills:	Agility 4
	Awareness 3
	Brawling 3
	Stealth 4
	Survival 3
Stunts:	Natural Weapons, Vanish
Absorption 0	Damage 2 (natural weapons)
Stress 3	

Wolf

The wolf is the totemic predator living in packs out in the wilds. In these troubled times the wolves really are at the door in many places. Although the statistics below are for wolves, they can also be used for big dogs when detail is needed.

Skills:	Agility 3
	Awareness 3
	Brawling 3
	Stealth 2
	Strength 2
	Survival 3
Stunts:	Natural Weapons, Scent Tracking
Absorption 0	Damage 2 (natural weapons)
Stress 4	

People

Minor Characters

A typical unnamed non-player character, such as a soldier in a group or a servant encountered, will be a minor character. They are simply and quickly created with a total of one Aspect and six skills:

> One skill at level 3
> Two skills at level 2
> Three skills at level 1

They do not typically have any Stunts and should be given any equipment appropriate for their status and role in the adventure.

Significant Characters

Significant characters are more important to the story and more skilled than minor characters. In combat, groups of minor characters are often led by a significant or major character. Unlike minor characters, significant characters tend to be specifically named and often have their own evolving goals and ambitions. Significant characters are typically not quite as powerful as player characters, but they are close. A significant character specialised in a particular field will be more skilled than a starting player character that is not so specialised.

These characters are built with a total of two Aspects, one Stunt and ten skills:

> One skill at level 4
> Two skills at level 3
> Three skills at level 2
> Four skills at level 1

Equipment is given as appropriate to the story rather than tied to wealth level. In exceptional cases the significant character will have an appropriate Belonging Stunt.

Major Characters

Major characters are the peers of the player characters and are of major importance to the story, often recurring in more than one scenario, growing in experience just as the player characters do. The characters described in this section are all individuals, rather than generic templates. As usual feel free to modify in order to create new NPCs. Some features, such as precise locations and points of origin have been left so that these can be customised to the needs of the game.

These characters are created with a total of three Aspects, two to four Stunts and fifteen skills:

> One skill at level 5
> Two skills at level 4
> Three skills at level 3
> Four skills at level 2
> Five skills at level 1

Aspects are activated using Fate Points from the Storyteller pool.

To create a major character that is fully equivalent to a starting player character, add two phases to the background indicating a connection with another major character (including the player characters) along with an appropriate Aspect, an oath and enough Stunts, to bring the total up to five.

Open Gaming License

1. Definitions: (a)"Contributors" means the copyright and/or trademark owners who have contributed Open Game Content; (b)"Derivative Material" means copyrighted material including derivative works and translations (including into other computer languages), potation, modification, correction, addition, extension, upgrade, improvement, compilation, abridgment or other form in which an existing work may be recast, transformed or adapted; (c) "Distribute" means to reproduce, license, rent, lease, sell, broadcast, publicly display, transmit or otherwise distribute; (d)"Open Game Content" means the game mechanic and includes the methods, procedures, processes and routines to the extent such content does not embody the Product Identity and is an enhancement over the prior art and any additional content clearly identified as Open Game Content by the Contributor, and means any work covered by this License, including translations and derivative works under copyright law, but specifically excludes Product Identity. (e) "Product Identity" means product and product line names, logos and identifying marks including trade dress; artifacts; creatures characters; stories, storylines, plots, thematic elements, dialogue, incidents, language, artwork, symbols, designs, depictions, likenesses, formats, poses, concepts, themes and graphic, photographic and other visual or audio representations; names and descriptions of characters, spells, enchantments, personalities, teams, personas, likenesses and special abilities; places, locations, environments, creatures, equipment, magical or supernatural abilities or effects, logos, symbols, or graphic designs; and any other trademark or registered trademark clearly identified as Product identity by the owner of the Product Identity, and which specifically excludes the Open Game Content; (f) "Trademark" means the logos, names, mark, sign, motto, designs that are used by a Contributor to identify itself or its products or the associated products contributed to the Open Game License by the Contributor (g) "Use", "Used" or "Using" means to use, Distribute, copy, edit, format, modify, translate and otherwise create Derivative Material of Open Game Content. (h) "You" or "Your" means the licensee in terms of this agreement.

2. The License: This License applies to any Open Game Content that contains a notice indicating that the Open Game Content may only be Used under and in terms of this License. You must affix such a notice to any Open Game Content that you Use. No terms may be added to or subtracted from this License except as described by the License itself. No other terms or conditions may be applied to any Open Game Content distributed using this License.

3. Offer and Acceptance: By Using the Open Game Content You indicate Your acceptance of the terms of this License.

4. Grant and Consideration: In consideration for agreeing to use this License, the Contributors grant You a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive license with the exact terms of this License to Use, the Open Game Content.

5. Representation of Authority to Contribute: If You are contributing original material as Open Game Content, You represent that Your Contributions are Your original creation and/or You have sufficient rights to grant the rights conveyed by this License.

6. Notice of License Copyright: You must update the COPYRIGHT NOTICE portion of this License to include the exact text of the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any Open

Game Content You are copying, modifying or distributing, and You must add the title, the copyright date, and the copyright holder's name to the COPYRIGHT NOTICE of any original Open Game Content you Distribute.

7. Use of Product Identity: You agree not to Use any Product Identity, including as an indication as to compatibility, except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of each element of that Product Identity. You agree not to indicate compatibility or co-adaptability with any Trademark or Registered Trademark in conjunction with a work containing Open Game Content except as expressly licensed in another, independent Agreement with the owner of such Trademark or Registered Trademark. The use of any Product Identity in Open Game Content does not constitute a challenge to the ownership of that Product Identity. The owner of any Product Identity used in Open Game Content shall retain all rights, title and interest in and to that Product Identity.

8. Identification: If you distribute Open Game Content You must clearly indicate which portions of the work that you are distributing are Open Game Content.

9. Updating the License: Wizards or its designated Agents may publish updated versions of this License. You may use any authorized version of this License to copy, modify and distribute any Open Game Content originally distributed under any version of this License.

10 Copy of this License: You MUST include a copy of this License with every copy of the Open Game Content You Distribute.

11. Use of Contributor Credits: You may not market or advertise the Open Game Content using the name of any Contributor unless You have written permission from the Contributor to do so.

12 Inability to Comply: If it is impossible for You to comply with any of the terms of this License with respect to some or all of the Open Game Content due to statute, judicial order, or governmental regulation then You may not Use any Open Game Material so affected.

13 Termination: This License will terminate automatically if You fail to comply with all terms herein and fail to cure such breach within 30 days of becoming aware of the breach. All sublicenses shall survive the termination of this License.

14 Reformation: If any provision of this License is held to be unenforceable, such provision shall be reformed only to the extent necessary to make it enforceable.

15 Copyright Notice: Open Game License v 1.0 Copyright 2000, Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Fudge 10th Anniversary Edition Copyright 2005, Grey Ghost Press, Inc.; Authors Steffan O'Sullivan and Ann Dupuis, with additional material by Jonathan Benn, Peter Bonney, Deird'Re Brooks, Reimer Behrends, Don Bisdorf, Carl Cravens, Shawn Garbett, Steven Hammond, Ed Heil, Bernard Hsiung, J.M. "Thijs" Krijger, Sedge Lewis, Shawn Lockard, Gordon McCormick, Kent Matthewson, Peter Mikelsons, Robb Neumann, Anthony Roberson, Andy Skinner, William Stoddard, Stephan Szabo, John Ughrin, Alex Weldon, Duke York, Dmitri Zagidulin