

FATE

Fantastic Adventures in
Tabletop Entertainment

FLUDGE EDITION



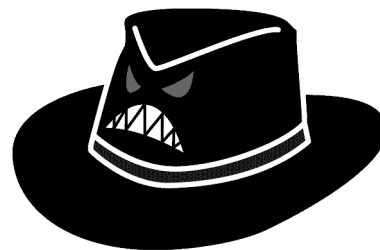
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About Fudge

FUDGE is a role-playing game written by Steffan O'Sullivan, with extensive input from the Usenet community of rec.games.design. The basic rules of FUDGE are available on the internet at <http://www.fudgerpg.com> and in book form from Grey Ghost Games, P.O. Box 838, Randolph, MA 02368. They may be used with any gaming genre. While an individual work derived from FUDGE may specify certain attributes and skills, many more are possible with FUDGE. Every Game Master using FUDGE is encouraged to add or ignore any character traits. Anyone who wishes to distribute such material for free may do so—merely include this ABOUT FUDGE notice and disclaimer (complete with FUDGE copyright notice). If you wish to charge a fee for such material, other than as an article in a magazine or other periodical, you must first obtain a royalty-free license from the author of FUDGE, Steffan O'Sullivan, P.O. Box 465, Plymouth, NH 03264.

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1. Introduction

Fate is a story-oriented roleplaying game system. Though it is a full-fledged standalone system, Fate can also be incorporated into a variety of popular roleplaying systems. In this book, we present a version of Fate that has been tailored to work with Fudge, an RPG by Steffan O'Sullivan. As such, we assume the reader is familiar with Fudge, and while everything necessary to play is included, you are strongly encouraged to acquire a copy of Fudge, either at your local game store, or for free online at fudgerpg.com. Those interested in starting out immediately may wish to check out "One Page Fudge" on page 72.

Reading the Book

Throughout the book icons have been used to denote different types of sidebars according to the following schema:



Examples: Examples of rules in use



Options: Alternative ways to use the game.



Designer Notes: Clarification on the reasoning behind certain decisions, and suggestions regarding how to use them in play.

Additionally, we have made regular use of common RPG terms such as NPC or Game Master on the assumption that the reader is already familiar with this terminology.

The Adjectives

The most important thing to understand about Fudge is how it describes things. Rather than assigning numerical values to elements like skills it uses adjectives, which are ranked as follows: Abysmal, Terrible, Poor, Mediocre, Average, Fair, Good, Great, Superb, Epic, and Legendary. Consider: a bodyguard might be a Good swordsman but have Mediocre social skills. He'll probably win a fight with an artist who's a Superb painter but a Poor swordsman. Almost anything can be described using this ladder — an empire may field a Superb army or a spaceship may be limping by with a Poor engine.

Rolling the Dice

To roll dice for Fate, pick your starting level (say, Good) and roll four six-sided dice. For each 1 or 2, move down one step, and for each 5 or 6 move up one. Lets say we rolled 2,3,5 and 5. Go down a step because of the 2, from Good to Fair, but then go up a step thanks to the first 5 (from Fair to



But I Don't Want Fudge!

Fear not. Recognizing that not everyone is a Fudge enthusiast, we have endeavored to make sure that FATE is accessible to as many players as possible. To that end, those with no interest in Fudge are directed to "Alternate Dice Methods" on page 73.





Example Roll

Cyrus needs to pick a lock. He has a Fair (i.e. +1) lockpick skill, and the lock requires an Average (i.e. 0) roll to open it. He rolls the dice and gets **++--** which adds up to +1. He adds the result to his skill and gets a Good result (Fair + 1 = Good). He succeeds with a margin of success of 2 (the difference between Good and Fair), and opens the lock easily.



Example of a Challenge

Cyrus and Finn are sprinting for the exit, and the GM needs to know who gets there first. Finn has a Good athletics skill, and Cyrus has a Fair.

Finn rolls **+-** for a total of 0. Good + 0 is still Good, so he has a Good result.

Cyrus Rolls **--++** for a total of -1. Fair - 1 is Average, so he gets an Average result.

Good is two steps above Average, so Finn wins with a MoS of 2, and Cyrus loses with a MoF of 2. Finn makes it out the door first.

Good) and again from the second 5 (from Good to Great) for a final outcome of Great.

Another way to look at the dice is as if they rolled either +1, 0 or -1. From that perspective, rolling 2,3,5,5 is the same as rolling -1,0,+1,+1, which is easier to deal with, since that just becomes Good + 1, which is Great. Visualize it like this:

The Ladder

Value	Descriptor
+6	Legendary
+5	Epic
+4	Superb
+3	Great
+2	Good
+1	Fair
0	Average
-1	Mediocre
-2	Poor
-3	Terrible
-4	Abysmal

There are special dice available for Fudge that have plus (+), minus (-) and blank () faces to make rolling easier, and we use them to clarify examples. These dice can be purchased at many game stores, or online through Grey Ghost Press (www.fudgerpg.com).

Success and Failure

When the dice are rolled, there is usually a target difficulty described according to the ladder. For instance, it might take a Good climbing effort to ascend a steep wall. To face this challenge, the player consults the appropriate skill, rolls the dice, and compares the outcome to the difficulty. If the outcome is equal to or higher than the difficulty, it's a success; if not, it's a failure. The difference between the difficulty and the outcome is called the margin of success (or failure), MoS or MoF respectively. It is often used to determine how well the character succeeded or how badly they failed.

When two characters are competing in a task, they both roll; the difference between the outcomes is the MoS for the winner and the MoF for the loser. A check made against a static target is a Test, while one made against another character is a Challenge. There are a couple of rules (see "Tests and Challenges" on page 9) for handling more complicated circumstances, but most of the time, this is really all there is to it.

2. Character Creation

Character creation is, ideally, very interactive, with the entire group creating characters in the presence of the GM. The methods below can be adapted to a less group-focused approach, but doing so loses many of the benefits of the Fate approach. Character creation consists of a small number of simple steps.

1. GM Overview.
2. Consider the character.
3. Describe each phase
 - a. Select the Aspects for the phase
 - b. Spend 4 Skill Ranks
4. Assign Fate points.
5. Select character goal.

GM OVERVIEW

Character generation should begin with the GM talking to the players about the game, in order to set appropriate expectations. The GM should address any rules considerations, such as how many phases there will be (see below). More importantly, she should make sure that everyone gets a clear idea of the theme and tone of the game. If all of the players want a game of courtly intrigue and the GM is planning to run a hack and slash adventure, this is a good time to find that out. Finally, the GM should give the players whatever background information they need to know.

Consider Characters

It's often helpful for players to get a sense of the sort of character they'd like to play. A lot of things can happen during the phases, so it's easiest to start with a simple idea, and build on it over the course of character generation. Once everyone has a concept, players should feel free to discuss them, unless the GM says otherwise. No player is obliged to participate in the discussion. In fact, no player is even obliged to have an idea at this point. However, doing so allows players to get a sense of what direction their fellow players want to take things, and it gives the GM a sense of what the group dynamic might look like.

Phases

Creation will have a number of phases set by the GM. Most games will use between five and eight, but it can



Count Piotr Nassevich

- | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Proud | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Veteran | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Noble | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Temper | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

really be any number. A phase is defined as a period of time wherein some events of note took place, but the specifics vary from game to game. A game of high school monster hunters might consider each school year a phase, while a game of immortal swordsmen might have a phase for every 50 years. Whatever the duration, the GM gives the players a sense of what was going on at the time, and the players figure out what their character was doing at the time.

Select Aspects

Players pick one or more aspects to represent important elements of the character that can tie into the events of the phase.

Aspects are used to describe any element of the character. Aspects include things like attributes (Strong, Weak, Agile, Charismatic, Tough, Fast, Slow), descriptors (Dutiful Charming, Alert, Dramatic), careers (Knight, Mercenary, Musketeer, Cutthroat) or even ties to the setting (Merry Man of Sherwood, Initiate of the Blue Wind, Fiodario Fencing Academy). Aspects may be good, bad or both but they should always reflect some important element of the character.

When an aspect is chosen the character gains one level of that aspect, noted as follows:

Knight (Fair)

An aspect may be chosen again on a subsequent phase, in which case it goes up a level and is noted as:

Knight (Good)

And then

Knight (Great)

The GM sets the maximum number of levels that can be chosen in a given aspect, but a good rule of thumb is a third to a half of the total number of phases.

Skill Ranks

Skill ranks, as the name suggests, are spent primarily to purchase skills, but they can also be invested in resources.

Buying Skills

Skill ranks may be spent to buy new skills or to improve existing ones. Acquiring a new skill costs one skill rank, and sets the skill at Average. Spending a skill rank to improve a skill raises it one step per rank spent (from Fair to Good, for example, or Superb to Epic.). Skills will generally be selected from a skill list (see page 63.)

Once the aspects are chosen, the player then picks four skill ranks appropriate to the events of the phase. If the player had spent the phase training in an order of knights, then skills like swords, riding or heraldry would probably be appropriate, while skills like garrotte or needlework would not (barring a very odd order of knighthood).

Skills are described according to the adjective ladder, and default to Mediocre. Spending one skill rank increases a skill to Average, spending a second increases it to Fair, spending another increases it to Good and so on. Players may spend those four skill ranks any way they like with only one limitation: there must always be one more skill in the next rank down. This means that a character must have two skills at Fair to have a skill at Good (and must have three skills at Average to have the two skills at Fair!). Because of how this looks, it is referred to as the skill pyramid. When the rules are observed, the pyramid is considered to be “balanced.” The pyramid must be balanced at the end of every phase.

This process is repeated for each phase.

Looking at the Pyramid

The pyramid can get confusing the first time you try to keep track of it. The good news is it's the hardest part of the system - once you're past that, the rest is easy.

It's often helpful to use tickmarks to track progression through the phases, since it allows a visual representation of the pyramid.

Looking at the sample character later on (see "Sample Creation" on page 7) in the first phase, the character buys ranks in knife, Herb Lore, Healing, Alertness. This can be marked as:

Knife	✓
Herb Lore	✓
Healing	✓
Alertness	✓

Next phase, she buys ranks of Knife, Healing, Bluff and Pickpocket:

Knife	✓✓
Herb Lore	✓
Healing	✓✓
Alertness	✓
Bluff	✓
Pickpocket	✓

And next, Knife, Bluff, Alertness and Move Silently:

Knife	✓✓✓
Herb Lore	✓
Healing	✓✓
Alertness	✓✓
Bluff	✓✓
Pickpocket	✓
Move Silently	✓

And the checkmarks show the problem. There are 3 ✓✓ and 3 ✓ - that's unbalanced. Instead of Bluff, she picks Hide instead, so:

Knife	✓✓✓
Herb Lore	✓
Healing	✓✓
Alertness	✓✓
Bluff	✓
Pickpocket	✓
Move Silently	✓
Hide	✓

This system saves the trouble of assigning adjectives at each level. Instead, whenever you're finished, simply count up the checkmarks, and assign a value as follows:

- 1 Average
- 2 Fair
- 3 Good
- 4 Great
- 5 Superb
- 6 Epic
- 7 Legendary





Why does Basketweaving help my Swordplay?

During character creation and, later, advancement (which is, in the end, the same as character creation in slow motion), you may find yourself wanting to bump a key skill up another level, but lacking the supporting pyramid structure to make that happen.

Of course, the thing to do at this point is to expand the base of the pyramid first, by adding other skills, in order to provide the structure to support the eventual higher skill.

This is all well and good as a mechanic for keeping skills from rising too fast, but you might be asking, "What's the justification?" Some of those skills you're adding at the lower levels might not seem like they'd have anything to do with the skill you're "really" trying to promote.

Part of the "in game" idea of what's going on here is that, with the troublesome "peak" skill in question, you've plateaued. Perhaps you've gotten about as good as you can get for a while, and it's time to branch out a bit, shake yourself up a little, and then come back refreshed with new perspectives.

Another possibility is that you *are* still improving in that skill, even if its listed rank isn't changing. Consider: the grain of the adjective ladder in Fate is pretty rough, with each rung of the ladder representing a significant step beyond the one prior to it. So while you may be improving, you're not improving so significantly that you've jumped up another level – yet. The fact that you're picking up other skills along the way indicates that time is passing, which is the "true" support that's being lent to your peak skill.

That all said, in theory, your skill choices within a phase (be it a period of advancement leading up to a goal aspect, or a phase during character creation) are related to the aspect you're getting during that phase, so chances are the skills you're picking up are going to be a bit more related to your Swordplay than, say, Basketweaving.

Say the skill in question is Swordplay. There are any number of things you could pick up that clearly do support that skill. For example:

Metalworking (make your own)

Knowledge: Fencing Schools

Shield Use

Athletics

Alertness

Other weapon skills

A skill to represent an advanced maneuver that isn't covered by your Swordplay skill

And so on. Knowledge and profession skills are often great picks during these times, as they expand the realm of things your character knows about, while still tying into the peak skill you're pushing.

That said, if you're learning Swordplay under the Great Kenjutsu Master Hiroko, and he sends you down to the river to make baskets out of reeds every day as a part of your training in discipline and patience – there's always justification to take Basketweaving.

Fate Points

Fate points are points which may be spent by a player to grant a bonus to an action or to influence the game in some way. The GM gives each player a certain number of them at the game's start, usually equal to half the number of phases. See "Fate Points" on page 18 for more details.



Captain Drescu

- Commission
- Charming
- Zealous
- Vain

Select Character Goal

Finally, the player should pick what direction they want the character to go in next. This is expressed as a goal, which should be the next aspect the player would like for the character. It's possible that the player will not have an idea, and that's fine, but the goals help tell the GM the sorts of things the players are interested in. See "Advancement" on page 20 for more information.

Sample Creation

GM Overview

The GM explains that the game is going to be a standard fantasy game with a slightly urban and low magic flavor, and that character generation will be five phases.

Think about and discuss the character

Deborah decides to make Sybil, who she thinks is going to be something of a trickster, but she hasn't got much more than that.

Phases

The phases break down as follows.

Phase 1

This phase covers a number of years, including Sybil's youth in the village of Simbul. She's raised by the village medicine woman, and she takes the aspect "Herbalist" and ranks in Knife, Healing, Herb Lore and Alertness.

Phase 1

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 1	Fair
Knife	✓
Herb Lore	✓
Healing	✓
Alertness	✓

Phase 2

Sybil runs off with a gypsy troupe, and travels the realm. She takes the aspect "Gypsy" and ranks in Knife, Bluff, Pickpocket and Healing.

Phase 2

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 1	Fair
<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy 1	Fair
Knife	✓✓
Healing	✓✓
Herb Lore	✓
Alertness	✓
Bluff	✓
Pickpocket	✓



Sybil

Aspects

Herbalist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gypsy	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Guild Thief	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hunted	<input type="checkbox"/>

Skills

Knife	Great
Hide	Good
Bluff	Good
Alertness	Fair
Healing	Fair
Pickpocket	Fair
Herb Lore	Average
Move Silently	Average
Pick Locks	Average
Streetwise	Average

Phase 3

Sybil continues to spend time with the gypsies, acting as a healer. She takes another rank in the Gypsy aspect, and ranks in Knife, Bluff, Move Silently and Hide.

Phase 3

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 1	Fair
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy 2	Good
Knife	✓✓✓
Healing	✓✓
Herb Lore	✓
Alertness	✓
Bluff	✓✓
Pickpocket	✓
Move Silently	✓
Hide	✓

Phase 4

Leaving the troupe, she heads to the big city to pursue a career as a thief. She joins the guild and takes the aspect “Guild Thief” and learns the skills Pick Locks, Pickpocket, Bluff and Hide.

Phase 4

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 1	Fair
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy 2	Good
<input type="checkbox"/> Guild Thief 1	Fair
Knife	✓✓✓
Healing	✓✓
Herb Lore	✓
Alertness	✓
Bluff	✓✓✓
Pickpocket	✓✓
Move Silently	✓
Hide	✓✓
Pick Locks	✓

Phase 5

As a result of a big haul that she fails to share with the guild, she ends up with the black mark on her, and a price on her head. She takes the aspect “Hunted” and buys ranks in Knife, Hide Alertness and Streetwise.

Phase 5

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 1 (Fair)	
<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy 2 (Good)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Guild Thief 1 (Fair)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hunted 1 (Fair)	
Knife	✓✓✓✓
Healing	✓✓
Herb Lore	✓
Alertness	✓✓
Bluff	✓✓✓
Pickpocket	✓✓
Move Silently	✓
Hide	✓✓✓
Pick Locks	✓
Streetwise	✓

GM assigns fate points

The GM gives Sybil 3 fate points to start the game. You can see her complete sheet on page 7.

3. Playing the Game

Tests and Challenges

In Fate, when a character must overcome a particular obstacle, the dice start rolling. The GM needs to make a number of decisions regarding how this contest is going to be resolved and then make a check of some sort. The simplest and most common sort of check is the static test.

Static Tests

For a static test, the GM sets a fixed difficulty, then the player chooses an appropriate skill, rolls the dice, and compares the outcome to the difficulty (“Setting Difficulties” on page 14). For simple tasks, the player needs to meet or exceed the difficulty set by the GM.

While that is all that’s needed in situations where all that matters is the success or failure of the action, sometimes the degree of success is very important. In those situations, the check is rolled in the same way as any other static test, but the GM looks at the difference between what the character rolled and what they needed. This difference is called the Margin of Success (if the character succeeded) or the Margin of Failure (if the character failed). Because a tie is a success, it is possible to have a margin of success of 0.

The simple rule of thumb is the larger the margin of success, the more significant the success. The exact effect varies from case to case, but to give a few examples:

Information Gathering

Each point of MoS gives one additional fact.

Physical Activities

Greater MoS means the act was done with greater speed or grace.

Social Actions

Greater MoS allows a longer lasting or deeper impression.

In general the MoS is broken down as follows:

MoS	Degree	Magnitude	Duration
0	Minimal	Negligible	Instant
1	Competent	Minor	Momentary
2	Solid	Moderate	Scene
3	Significant	Major	Session
4	Perfection	Overwhelming	Long term



Example Static Test

Finn is running from a couple of city guards. The GM informs his player that there’s some debris on the street, and it’s going to take a Fair jumping check to get over it without slowing down. Finn has a Good Jumping skill, and he rolls -0+, which brings the Good down to a Fair, which is enough to clear the debris



Quick, Where Can I Hide?

Jeremy is on the run from a gang of vampires. Luckily, he knows the town better than they do, and has an Area Knowledge skill of Good. He asks the GM if he can figure out a good place to hide in and lose the vampires.

The GM thinks about this, and she decides that this is a static test. Finding a location has a difficulty of Average, and adding specific criteria (i.e. a good place to hide) increases it to Fair. Jeremy rolls the dice...

If he were to roll a Fair result (MoS 0), he’d minimally succeed - he’d know of such a place, and have a general sense of where it is, but it would take him a while to find it.

If he were to roll a Good result (MoS 1), that point of MoS could translate into one more pertinent piece of information, like the best route to the location.

If he were to roll a Great result (MoS 2), he could get yet another piece of data, like a shortcut, or an alternative hiding place.



Option: Contests

While most conflicts between two characters are resolved dynamically (see below), when two characters are doing the same thing, it's often a good idea to have them both make static tests against a given difficulty, and use the MoS to determine who does better. This is most useful when it's important to know how well each participant does. In the case of ties (where a reroll is not appropriate), victory goes to the higher base skill.



Who Buys Next? (Static Contest)

Finn and Cyrus are throwing darts to see who pays for the next round of drinks. Finn has a Good thrown weapons skill, while Cyrus's is Fair. Hitting the dart board is an Average difficulty. Finn rolls for a Good (MoS 2), but Cyrus rolls a for a Superb (MoS 4). Cyrus wins, and in terms of describing the scene, Finn got a pretty good score, but Cyrus managed to hit a triple 20 or bulls eye. Looks like Finn is buying.

Static Challenges

While a test is a check which can be resolved in a single check, a challenge takes longer, usually requiring multiple rolls to ultimately achieve a specific (usually quite high) MoS. To accomplish this, successes are tracked on a challenge ladder, which looks something like this:

MoS	Degree	Ladder	Notes
0	Minimal	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
1	Competent	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Solid	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Significant	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
4	Complete	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Each time the character makes a check, they mark off a box of the appropriate MoS. If all the boxes of a given level are marked off, they mark a box of the next level up. If those are all full, mark the next up and so on. In this manner, it is possible to accumulate enough small successes to complete a large project and achieve a MoS of 4 (or whatever is required).

Customizing Challenges

While this system can be used to carve a model gun out of soap, it can also be used to carve faces in Mount Rushmore. Obviously, the requirements for different challenges can vary significantly. A challenge is made up of five parts: Difficulty, Complexity, Fragility, Span and Recovery.

Difficulty is the target difficulty the player is rolling to beat. It's important to note that while this may be quite high, it does not have to be. Some tasks are not so much hard, as simply time-consuming.

Complexity is the number and distribution of the boxes in the ladder. By default, the ladder will look a lot like the sample (above); a very simple task may have fewer boxes, while a very complicated task may have many more. Boxes need not be evenly distributed; for instance, the steps could be a pyramid or an inverted pyramid. Uneven distribution of boxes can be especially apt when there are outcomes from the intervening steps. For example, the GM creates a challenge ladder for finding the rumors in a given city. She puts a lot of boxes at the Solid and significant level, and ties each one to a rumor the player's will hear when they check it off.

Fragility is a measure of how well the task handles failure. Not all tasks are fragile, but most at least have some sort of problem that arises from a MoF of 3 or 4. Most often, fragility means that the MoF can be used to remove successes. By default, a MoF removes a success from an equivalent MoS (if there are no successes at that level, keep going up the ladder until one is found). For more fragile challenges, a failure may remove the highest success, remove all successes, or even completely destroy the project being

worked on. Alternately, the effects of fragility may not directly affect the success but instead have some sort of triggered effect.

Span measures how long the task takes in terms of how often a check may be made.

Recovery tracks how quickly the challenge recovers boxes. Span and recovery are often tracked together for convenience.



Word on the Street

The GM has a set of rumors for the streets of Alverado, and she builds them into a challenge. She sets the difficulty at Good, requiring the Streetwise or Contacting skills. She has 10 rumors, plus one secret, so she builds the ladder with a heavy concentration on solids and significant, so each one will be worth 1 rumor. She considers fragility - a failure is unlikely to disrupt the ladder - it's hardly going to take away information already gained. Instead, she decides on a special circumstance: On a MoF of 3 (which would be Poor result), the character will offend someone and get attacked by thugs. Lastly, she decides the span will be one day - this represents going out and spending a day beating the streets for news. However, news does get stale, so every week the player doesn't pursue this challenge, a box will become unchecked.

MoS	Ladder	Notes
0	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fair Difficulty
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Gain Spurious Rumor
3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Gain Useful Rumor
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	Secret (Plot Hook)

Fragility: On a MoF of 3, the character gets attacked

Span: Check 1/day

Recovery: 1 box per week

Challenges are most apt when they are required by the difficulty of the task rather than the sheer scope. They are generally designed to allow repeated effort to build up to a higher MoS, and thus an effect that could not normally be accomplished. However, they are not as useful for modelling tasks that are more about repetition and consistency, such as building a house. For such tasks, a series of Static Tests may be more apt, simply keeping a count of successes until a total is reached, possibly granting a bonus for a very high MoS on a given roll.

The problem with this method is that it can be staggeringly boring, especially if a lot of rolls are involved. The GM is strongly encouraged to make the span as long as can be reasonably justified to avoid massive die rolling extravaganzas.

Dynamic Checks

While Static checks are appropriate when the character has no direct opposition, many conflicts will be directly with another character. In those situations, both sides roll dice and compare outcomes.



Research Party (A Static Challenge)

A group of apprentice wizards must find a spell of significant power to use against the dark sorcerer who has imprisoned their mentor.

The GM decides the difficulty of finding spells like that starts at Great, and that if the students work together they'll eventually be able to find it, get it translated, and get all the pieces together to then go out and cast it. This sounds to her like a static challenge - the students will always be rolling against Great on their Research skills, and their successes can accumulate over time to hit the goal, which she decides must be Significant. She also decides that combined effort should pay off quickly, as teamwork is a theme of her game, and as such, decides only one box will be necessary per rung.

On a sheet of note paper, she writes down:

- 0 Minimal
- 1 Competent
- 2 Solid
- 3 Significant (Goal)

Each student makes a roll, and the GM looks at the margins of success each one gets against the Great difficulty, checking off boxes as appropriate. In just a few hours, the students have managed to unravel the secrets of Grynok's Mighty Spear. Nervously, they hope it's enough



Gimme Shelter

Dan decides to build a cottage. He's already gotten the plans and equipment, and now it's really just a matter of taking the time to do the work. The GM considers building a house to be a task that should require a professional, so he sets the difficulty at Good. Fortunately, Dan is a Great handyman. The GM decides that this will take about 8 weeks if everything goes well, and will let Dan take 1 day off the total time for each point of MoS, but add 1 day (plus 1 week wasted for the failure) for each MoF. The GM then lets Dan roll the dice while she does other, more interesting, things.



A Simple Dynamic Check

Finn (Sprinting: Good) and an angry guardsman (Sprinting: Average) are racing for the same door. Both roll, and Finn gets **+** **+** **-** **-** for a Fair result, while the Guard rolls **+** **+** **-** **-** for an Average result. Finn beats the guard through the door.

Dynamic Tests

As with static checks, sometimes all the GM needs to resolve a situation is the outcome, but sometimes the margin of success or failure is important. In those situations, the player makes a dynamic test, and considers the result as follows:

MoS	Degree	Magnitude	Duration
0	Minimal	Negligible	Instant
1	Competent	Minor	Momentary
2-4	Solid	Moderate	Scene
5-6	Significant	Major	Session
7+	Perfection	Overwhelming	Long term

Canny readers may notice that this table is very similar to the table for static tests, except that the numbers used to determine the MoS are different.

Why the Difference?

One interesting element of using Fudge dice is that because they are 0-centered, it doesn't matter whether the GM or the player is rolling the dice - it only matters how many dice are being rolled. When the player and GM roll four dice, they each generate an outcome from -4 to +4. This produces a total range from -8 to +8.

In practical terms, this means there's a much broader range of results if both sides are rolling dice. As the range is doubled, so is the MoS table. At least that's the theory. A perfect doubling would assign each step a 2 number value (0, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 etc.). However, we've expanded the "Solid" range because in playtest we found it was much more satisfying - a solid outcome is much more the midpoint of success, so making it more likely paid off nicely. In fact, in all honesty, we came up with the dynamic ladder first, and divided it in half for the static chart rather than the reverse.

Like many things, this is an issue of taste - GMs with a fondness for symmetry are welcome to change the steps to 1-2, 3-4 and so on, it won't break anything.

Dynamic Challenges

Dynamic challenges are very similar to static challenges. The same considerations that go into making a static challenge (Difficulty, Complexity, Fragility and Span — see "Customizing Challenges" on page 10) are used to create a dynamic challenge. The only difference are the new numbers for measuring MoS.



The Chess Match (A Dynamic Challenge)

Two chess masters, Louis and Ferdinand, are in a tense match that will decide the fate of a nation due to a risky wager by the Queen.

The GM wants to crank up the tension for this, so decides that checkmating the other master is each character's goal. Thus, she writes down two identical challenge tracks for each character, representing the difficulty of overcoming their opponent, and the state of the opponent's board:

MoS	Ladder	Notes
0	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Pawn Captured
1	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Knights and Bishops (-1 to the next roll)
2-4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Rooks (-1 for rest of match)
5-6	<input type="checkbox"/>	Queen (-2 for rest of match)
7+	<input type="checkbox"/>	King (Checkmate)

Fragility: None

Span: Each check constitutes a few minutes of play, spanning several moves.

Recovery: None

Playing the Match

Each set of opposed skill checks does not represent a single pair of moves in the game, but rather each significant moment in the game, which may be comprised of multiple moves. Further, the GM rules that if the highest box checked off is a Moderate, the target is at -1 for the rest of the challenge; if Major, the target is at -2 for the rest of the challenge. A Minor loss should force a temporary shift in strategy, so that too gives a -1 –but only to the next roll by the victim.

The players begin to roll.

In the first exchange, Louis gets a moderate (MoS 2) success, which the GM narrates as having taken one of Ferdinand's rooks. It's a bad result for Ferdinand this early in the match, and he's at a -1 for the rest of the game. Ouch.

In the next exchange, Ferdinand beats Louis by all of 1, overcoming his early loss. The GM says Ferdinand has claimed one of Louis' knights, giving Louis a -1 to his next roll – for the moment, Louis and Ferdinand will be on an equal footing.

Then, Ferdinand and Louis tie. The GM rules that they've traded pawns after some tense maneuvering, and checks off a box on the lowest rung for each of them.

Following this, Louis is no longer at a -1, while Ferdinand is. Louis ends up rolling extraordinarily well, while Ferdinand only hits the middle of his range – Louis beats Ferdinand by 5, depriving him of his Queen, and knocking him down to a -2.

In the final exchange, Louis' luck and Ferdinand's penalties conspire to give Louis a MoS of 5 again – but all Major boxes are filled up, and thus the result rolls into Overwhelming – checkmate. Louis wins.

Dynamic challenges can be used to model almost any sort of contest, from a footrace to a debate to a fencing match (see “Combat” on page 36).

Dynamic challenges are also appropriate when the character is performing an action where a number of random factors can come into play. In those

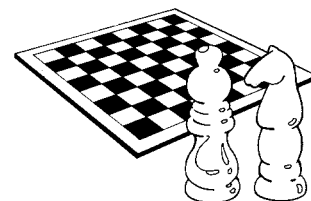


Who's Hot or Not?

Two courtiers come before the King to plead their case. Each has done his research, and knows that the King is easily distracted by fad and fashion, so they are trying to select the right outfit to draw his royal eye.

This is a “it works or it doesn't” sort of situation, so the GM calls it a test; both courtiers are making an active effort, so they'll both be rolling, which makes it dynamic.

Each rolls against his Fashion Sense skill. Hiram gets a Fair, while Gustav hits Superb. Gustav's MoS is 3, which is a Solid (MoS of 2-4) success over Hiram. He draws the King's eye easily, and does not have to wait long for his audience.





Fun With Terminology

One great hubris of game design is the creation of new terminology just to make one's game distinctive. We're honestly not trying to do that, but the choice of Static and Dynamic to describe certain checks may strike some as odd. In some other systems, these are referred to as Unopposed and Opposed checks. We opted for our terminology because it seemed slightly more accurate (some dynamic checks can be unopposed) and because it sounded a bit cooler.

situations, even if there is no direct opposition the GM may still roll dice - in this case the check is considered dynamic.

In Summary

Any given check is going to be one of four types: static tests, static challenges, dynamic tests or dynamic challenges. Static checks involve only the player rolling, while both the player and GM roll for dynamic checks. Tests are resolved in a single check, while challenges are resolved over the course of several rolls.

	Static	Dynamic
Test	Only player rolls, only one roll.	Player and GM roll, only one roll
Challenge	Only Player rolls, multiple rolls	Player and GM roll, multiple rolls.

Setting Difficulties

The following guidelines can be used for GMs looking to set difficulties for tasks. It's important to note that for many tasks, the difficulty is just the beginning. Most significant tasks will be challenges rather than tests, and will require multiple successes to accomplish their goal.

Assumptions About Difficulties

The baseline for these difficulties is based around the idea that a Superb skill represents the practical apex of human skill - transcending Superb is truly the stuff of epics and legends (funny, that). Not every game is going to hold that to be true, and if the ceiling moves up or down, move the difficulties up and down an equal amount

Negligible difficulty (Poor) - These are tasks that should not require a roll. These tasks are easily doable by anyone with the basic understanding of, and physical capability for, the task at hand. These should almost never require a roll.

Examples: Starting a car, turning on an appliance, climbing a ladder, getting into a swimming pool. reading the headlines, getting the punchline of a late-night monologue, popping microwave popcorn.

Simple Tasks (Mediocre) - This is the difficulty for most tasks that an ordinary person could encounter on a routine basis. They are the sorts of challenges that can be overcome without any real drama or struggle, provided the character is even faintly competent.

Examples: Driving a car in the rain, researching something with Google or an encyclopedia, writing a "Hello World" program, climbing a knotted rope, treating a first degree burn (such as a sunburn), juggling three balls, playing an instrument well enough not to scare the pets, catching a ball, writing a business letter, getting on a horse, jumping off a low diving board into water, cooking using a recipe, loading a gun, building a campfire.

Mundane Tasks (Average) - these are the sort of tasks that would challenge the average person, but are handled regularly by experts and professionals. Someone with basic skills might be able to perform this sort of task in a pinch, but not with any regularity.

Examples: Parallel parking with less than a foot of clearance, researching something obscure in a library, climbing a cracked stone wall, performing CPR, installing linux, juggling four balls,, playing an instrument in a marching band, rescuing a drowning swimmer in calm water, splinting a broken arm, digging a well, skinning an animal, sewing a dress, cooking from scratch.

Difficult Tasks (Fair) - These are tasks that are pretty much entirely out of the realm of a person with only basic training. These tasks are noteworthy enough that they are rarely approached without taking proper care to make preparations.

Examples: Performing simple surgery, rebuilding the engine of a car, climbing a cliff face, juggling knives, building a house, flying a small airplane.

Daunting Tasks (Good) - Even skilled professionals balk in the face of these tasks, and it's entirely possible for a person to go their whole life without ever facing a challenge of this scope. Capability with this sort of task is indicative of a great deal of training or natural talent (or both).

Examples: Flying a fighter jet, performing open-heart surgery, scaling the side of a building, cooking for a good restaurant, design an office building.

Staggering Tasks (Great) - Only the best of the best need apply - there are only a handful of people in the world at any given time who could do this sort of thing with any sort of consistency.

Examples: Multiple organ transplant, climbing Mount Everest, soloing for the NYC orchestra, developing an entirely new programming language, cooking for one of the world's finest restaurants or simply being Jackie Chan.

Nearly Impossible Tasks (Superb) - At this level, it is possible to start doing things that expand the very nature of the task at hand.

Examples - Researching a new branch of a science, composing a masterpiece.



Setting Difficulties

When all is said and done, setting difficulties is more art than science. While it is possible to provide guidelines for what reasonable difficulties might be, the GM will eventually find herself in a situation where she is going to have nothing to go on but her best guess. The urge in those situations is often to take several minutes to dig through the rules, looking for some explicit ruling - **RESIST THAT TEMPTATION!** We've written the book, and we can assure you that rule is not in here, so trust yourself, and use your best guess. Or barring that, try one of these tricks.

When in doubt, using your player's skill levels is a great yardstick for the sort of difficulties to set for them. If you know what level the skill is at, you can set the difficulty to whatever level will provide the challenge you desire (so for a simple task, go a step or two below the best skill in the party, while something more serious might be a step or two above the best skill in the party).

One last trick, if you're not sure what the difficulty should be, is to just let the player roll. If they roll very well or very poorly then the problem is solved without you needing to worry about it.

Difficulty Breakdown

Difficulty	Climbing	Medicine	Driving	Survival
Mediocre	Climb a ladder	Bandage a cut	Drive a car	Start a campfire
Average	Climb a knotted rope	Apply a tourniquet	Drive a car in the rain	Build a shelter from the rain
Fair	Scale a stone wall with handholds	Stitch a deep cut	Drive a car in a blizzard	Find potable water in the forest
Good	Scale a stone wall with fingerholds	Surgically repair a serious stab wound	Drive a car in a blizzard at high speed	Finding potable water in the desert
Great	Climb a cliff bare handed	Surgically repair a punctured lung	Race a car in the Indianapolis 500	Live in the desert for a week with no supplies
Superb	Climb a cliff in the rain, bare handed	Surgically re-attach a severed limb	Stunt driving in an action movie	Live among the wolves like one of the pack



Some Sample Aspects

Duty
Self-Destructive
Strong
Weak
Tirrinelli Fencing Academy
Knighthood
Bob, the talking skull



Rerolls

Cyrus is engaged in a bar brawl and rolls (-3). Not wanting to eat the broken bottle coming his way, he checks off a box of his Brawler aspect and tries to land a low blow. He rerolls all four dice, and gets (-1). Better, but still not good enough - the dirty trick he tried was one his opponent was clearly already familiar with. He checks off his second box of Brawler and describes it as throwing a chair to knock off his opponent's aim, and he turns one of the - dice into a , changing his result from (-1) into (+1), which is enough to save his bacon.

4. Aspects

Aspects represent elements of the character that are not reflected by their skills, including things like the character's advantages, disadvantages, connections and even attributes.

The exact form that aspects take in a game depends on the taste of the players. At their simplest, they are a dramatic replacement for more traditional attributes like strength or intelligence. Used to their full advantage, they can represent the character's ties to the game world in a manner that bears directly on play.

Using Aspects

Aspects have a number of uses, most commonly to gain a reroll. After the character makes a roll that is germane to the aspect (such as a joust with the Knight aspect, or a sword fight with the Strong aspect), the player describes how the aspect helps their character out, checks off a box of the aspect and either:

1. Picks up all four dice and rerolls them all or
2. Chooses a single die and change its value to a .

As such, it only takes a single reroll to try to undo a terrible roll, but it may take many rerolls to try to get a really good roll. And that's fine - if the player's been explaining each element, this is probably a pretty dramatic roll.

When you reroll, you are stuck with the outcome of the new roll, unless you want to use another reroll.

Checking off and using an aspect in this way is referred to as a positive invocation.

How Potent Are Aspects?

The default assumption of the system is that aspects are rare and powerful. The ability to turn any die into a is very potent and predictable. Some GMs may want to consider reducing the effect of a single aspect invocation, for flavor or balance reasons, or because a game has more aspects than usual (see "Free Aspects" on page 29).

There are a number of possibilities for this. In general, we suggest keeping #1 (pick up all four dice and reroll them all) but you can replace #2 (choose a single die and change its value to a) with one of the following:

1. Choose a single die showing and change its value to .*
2. Choose a single die showing and change its value to .
3. Choose a single die and increase its value by one step (so to or to)
4. Choose a single die and reroll it.
5. Nothing (only allow rerolling all dice.)

* - This is a very popular option, especially for less cinematic games

Other Uses of Aspects

Aspects also provide a passive bonus that the GM needs to keep in mind. A Strong character is by definition stronger than one who lacks this aspect, and a Slow character just doesn't get around that quickly. In rare circumstances, it may be necessary to roll the aspect. Mechanically, this is no different than rolling a skill.

It is also possible to invoke an aspect for effect. In this case, the player uses the aspect for a related advantage that is not related to a test or challenge, such as checking off a box of “Rich” to get luxurious accommodations, or checking off a box for an organization for them to have a chapter in town. This is subject to the same sort of restrictions as spending Fate points for coincidental effects (“How Much Power Should Players Have?” on page 19).

The other common use of aspects is involuntary invocation. This is done by the GM when she thinks the character's aspects would be detrimental or at odds with the action he has taken. In those situations, the GM declares that she's invoking the aspect (it's not checked off) and the player has two options: act in accordance with the aspect and gain a number of Fate points equal to the aspect level or pay a number of Fate points equal to the aspect level to overcome the aspect.

Refreshing Aspects

Since aspects are a narrative convenience, they operate on a narrative timeline. As such, they become unchecked at appropriate breaks in the narrative, most commonly between game sessions. Unless the GM determines otherwise, aspects are unchecked at the beginning of every session.

How Often Should Aspects Refresh

The default assumption for the system is that aspects will be refreshed at the beginning of every session. However, that is definitely not the only option. Aspects could easily refresh:

- At the end of every scene
- Each day
- When the PCs get a chance to rest
- At any significant story point

Changing the refresh rate will have some impact on the flavor of the game, with more frequent refreshes being well suited to a more cinematic game, where the characters can consistently do remarkable things. Feel free to experiment with various options to see what suits your style best.

One issue to bear in mind is that the more aspects the characters have, the less need there is for regular refreshes. If the characters have many aspects, there's less need to make them refresh more often.



What's That Smell?

In a horror game, The Crazy Guy tackles a vampire at a gas station where he's been hiding. He checks off a box of his “Smelly” aspect to declare that everyone suddenly notices that the usual smell of decay has been replaced by the smell of gasoline. The Crazy guy then flicks his bic, and both he and the vampire go up in flames.



Involuntary Aspect Invocation

Cyrus is faced with the opportunity to stand and fight against an onrushing horde or to hop on his horse and flee to safety. The GM looks at this situation and decides that this is a pretty good time to invoke Cyrus' Self Destructive aspect. Cyrus has the aspect at level 2, so he has 2 options - he can pay 2 Fate points to the GM to go against his nature, or he can stand and fight, in which case the GM awards him with 2 Fate points.

Not all situations are so dire. Cyrus' partner Finn has the Larcenous aspect at level 1, and at a party full of rich nobles, his fingers are just itching to pick a pocket or two. He could spend a Fate point to resist the urge, or he could play to his nature and get a bonus Fate point (and risk getting caught).



Fate Points and Coincidence

Finn is fleeing assassins who have disrupted a formal gala. He's lost his only knife, and as he runs through the hallways, he's looks for some sort of weapon. At this point, the GM has a couple of options. First, if the GM has already described the villa as the home of a hunter or soldier - the sort of place to have numerous prominently displayed weapons - then the GM simply says there are weapons at hand. Second, the GM might allow Finn to try to find one, through a combination of skill rolls and time consumption. Lastly, Finn's player might choose to spend a Fate point for a reasonable coincidence, and come across a display weapon, or a drunken fop easily deprived of his duelling sword.

Tuning Aspects

Aspects are designed to allow a character to operate at their best when it matters. The more aspects a character has, the more often he will perform well. Naturally, this means that as the number, utility and frequency of use of aspects is altered, the characters will perform at his best more or less often.

There are a number of elements that change when one customizes aspects. There are three main indexes:

1. How many aspects a character has.
2. How potent aspects are.
3. How frequently aspects refresh.

How these elements are set has a lot of impact on the game. There's no "correct" balance of these factors, so the rules presented should really be considered a default rather than canonical.

Fate Points

In addition to their role in deferring negative invocation of aspects, players may use Fate points in a number of other ways.

They may spend a Fate point to receive +1 on any roll. This may be spent before or after the roll, or even after any aspects have been invoked. Only one point may be spent in this fashion, unless it's countered (see below). This is the only possible way to increase the outcome of a roll to +5.

They may also spend a Fate point for minor narrative control of a situation. Common uses for this include finding a convenient item, knowing someone in a particular town, or showing up at just the right moment in another scene. Effectively, this expenditure allows the player to take the role of GM for a moment. The GM has full veto rights on any such expenditures, in which case the point is not spent.

More often than not, this sort of expenditure of Fate points is an attempt by the players to keep things moving. It's more fun to just assume you have the tool you need in your trunk than to have to drive back from the haunted house, hit a hardware store, and then drive back. As a GM, if the expenditure lets people continue to have fun without breaking anything, it should generally be allowed.

It's also important to consider how reasonable the player's request is. If it's really no stretch at all, spending a Fate point shouldn't even be necessary. Fate points are really for use in that narrow spectrum between completely logical and GM ruling.

Fate points may also be spent to cancel someone else's expenditure of a Fate point. If this happens, both Fate points are spent, but the person who spent the original point may spend another point to try again. This process can repeat as many times as people are willing to spend the points.

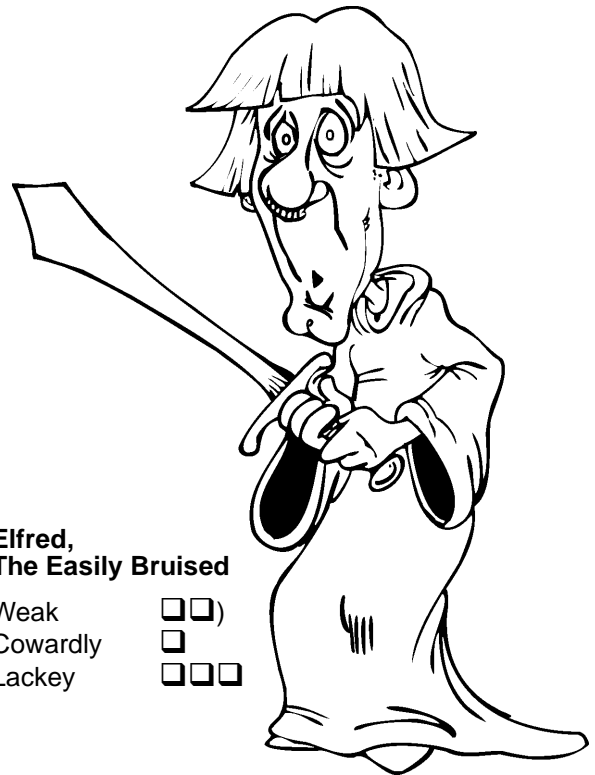
How Much Power Should Players Have?

Granting the players any degree of narrative control may seem like an odd idea to GMs who have not encountered the idea before. As such, exactly how far it goes is almost entirely based on the GM's comfort level. GMs are welcome to ignore this option entirely, but we strongly encourage GMs to at least give it a try. Even something so simple as allowing players to spend a Fate point to have the right item in their backpack can be very satisfying for everyone involved. As far as we're concerned, there's no limit on how far this power can extend. It's possible to give player broad narrative power with this mechanic, allowing them to use Fate points to create plots and NPCs and generally complicate stories. If that sounds like fun, give it a try - the only real limitation should be that it's done so everyone has more fun. If the players are spending Fate points and things are becoming less fun as a result, it's time to tone things down a notch.

Additional Uses of Fate Points

Fate points can be viewed as small "votes" you can cast to get the story to go your way, within certain guidelines. We've already talked about simply adding 1, and we've talked about using them to arrange minor circumstance. Here are a few other ideas that you may want to consider using in your game. Further, you may want to consider allowing someone to check off a box of an aspect to substitute for a Fate point expenditure in some or all of these cases.

- You can spend one Fate point to take the camera for a monologue. You can't interact with anything else during this time period; you're making a speech. At the same time, since you're monologuing, you won't be interrupted. Keep it short and sweet, but have fun with it. This is television or cinema. And yes, villains can do this as well -- how else do you figure they can manage to make their exit threats without the heroes stepping on their lines? This effect generally only lasts for a few sentences. However, the rest of the room is required to be quiet while you do it.
- You can spend two Fate points to give someone else a +1 to one of their rolls, even if they've spent a Fate point to give themselves a +1 already, providing that you can reasonably give them some sort of in-character assistance. You can't do this more than once for a particular given roll, though. If a friend of yours needs a +2, you'll be able to spend two to give them +1, and a third party will have to spend two to give them +1 as well!
- In combat, you can spend one Fate point to switch positions with someone else, even if it isn't your turn, so long as it's reasonable you could quickly change positions, without having to roll against a skill for maneuvering (good for trading off opponents).
- In combat, you can spend one Fate point to take a wound (a hit) instead of someone else, even if it isn't your turn, so long as it's reasonable you could interpose yourself, without having to roll against a skill for maneuvering.
- A point may also be spent for a fortuitous arrival - if a character is going to arrive as some undetermined point, the player may spend a point for them to arrive at a particular moment.



**Alfred,
The Easily Bruised**

Weak	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Cowardly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lackey	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>



Aspect Bidding

The level of the aspect may be treated as the is the **limit** on FP payout or reward. This can result in a bidding war (so to speak) back and forth between GM and player, started by the GM.

Let's posit a level 3 aspect: Greedy.

GM: (sliding a point forward) The governor's gold is on the table in front of you. Here's a Fate point. You want to take it.

PC: (sliding a point forward) No, I want to stay on this side of the law.

GM: (slides another forward, total 2) You can't take your eyes off of it. You keep thinking about your gambling debts, that warhorse you could buy...

PC: (slides another forward, total 2) I like gold as much as the next guy, but I hate jail more than I like gold. Honest. *whimper*

GM: (slides another forward, total 3) Ah, gold. Shiny gold. Feels good in the palm. Surely he won't miss a few coins...

PC: (slides another forward, total 3) Even setting aside the governor, my friends are here, and I'd get them in trouble. No can-do, chief.

GM: That's the limit. Okay, I'll collect. (Takes the 3).

At any point during this, the GM or the Player could have "folded", and collected the points on the table from the other guy.

Plot, Genre and Fate Points

Some of the uses suggested above are written with the notion that reinforcing teamwork and the feel of cinema is important. Other rules can (and should) be used to reinforce alternate genre-feel if desired.

But so far, we've only discussed spending. You may also want to think about what rewards you're giving out. Consider the possibility of writing on index cards certain key lines or actions that you're hoping the PCs might take, and then deal the cards out (either at random, or to specific folks). On these cards, note how many Fate points they'll get if they follow through with the action indicated on the card.

The nice thing about this approach is that it can give players a sense of structure, without making it necessary that they take you up on the offer. In a lot of ways, it offers the possibility of a certain amount of scripting and plot structure without taking that to its oft-decried extreme of "railroading".

Further, it can be done in such a way as to encourage player-to-player interaction. A lot of games can be deeply enhanced by creating some subplots and interaction among the PCs.

Consider these ideas:

- Do something dangerous: Even if it goes against your best instincts, do something dangerous --take on the main villain yourself, launch into a fight of five against one where you're the one, chase after a monster, and so on. Doing so gets you two Fate points.
- Freak out: Sometimes people are calm and collected in the face of adversity. When you play this card, this is not one of those times. You freak out --somewhat uselessly at that, running away, screaming, etc. Wiggled. Doing so gets you two Fate points.
- Don't take no for an answer: If another PC refuses you, tells you to leave them alone, or otherwise denies a request, don't back down --fight for what you want! Doing so gets you one Fate point.
- Try to go off alone: You need some time to yourself -- to brood, to cry, to rage, whatever the reason. Doing so gets you one Fate point.
- Don't let anyone go off alone: Go for strength in numbers. If someone's straying from the fold, take the time to bring them back in. Doing so gets you one Fate point.
- Evoke a cliché: In this (pulp, horror, superhero, space opera, cyberpunk, fantasy) story, there's plenty of room to do something that's classic to the genre. Do it, and get a Fate point.

Advancement

Each advancement period, the player may gain one skill rank, which can be spent or saved in accordance with the normal rules (i.e. the pyramid must be maintained). Four periods compose an arc and along with the fourth skill, the character gets a new aspect that reflects their experience and the skills they purchased.

Fate points may also be granted as non-advancement rewards. For a much more detailed treatment of advancement, "Advancement" on page 20.

Aspect Options

Almost anything can be an aspect as long as it's an important part of the character's story.

Props as Aspects

One option for aspects is an item of some sort such as a magic sword, an occult library, a car or even a castle. These items are considered an intrinsic part of the character's story. Something like King Arthur's Excalibur would be appropriate as an aspect. Items which the character makes regular use of, but which are less central to their concept, are generally purchased with skill ranks (see "Skill Ranks" on page 4). A given item may be represented by both an aspect and a skill rank.

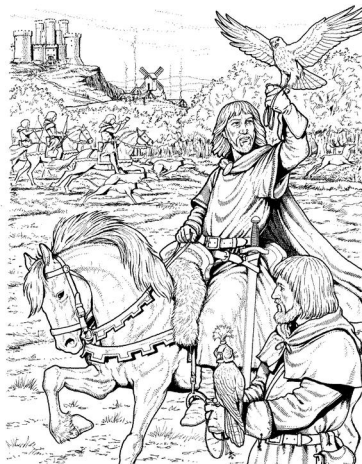
Mechanically, this means that in addition to the usual benefits for invoking an aspect, an item which is also an aspect will generally find its way back to the character's hands, even if it requires a conspiracy of coincidence. Causing the character to go without the item when they would reasonably have it qualifies as an involuntary invocation, thus granting the player Fate points.

While an item may be described in any way, it may be necessary to spend skill ranks to generate specific effects (see "Personal Extras" on page 25). Otherwise, the description of the item simply determines the circumstances under which it grants a reroll. Item aspects can also usually be invoked for effect to be conveniently available.

People as Aspects

It is also possible to have other people as aspects. In this case, it's important to define the relationship between the character and the subject of the aspect. Family members, mentors, enemies, dependants, old war buddies, liege lords, servants, familiars and rivals are all perfectly good examples of characters as aspects. The important thing about all of these is that they form an important part of the character's story, and can be expected to appear with reasonable frequency.

The player is expected to work out with the GM what the nature of the relationship is so the GM can work the details of the NPC into her game. In general, the number of aspects reflect how close the bond is between the character and their aspect, while the actual game stats of the subject character are up to the GM. The exception to this is when the NPC is subservient to the character, such as a manservant or a familiar - in those cases, the player will help determine the characters stats through their investment of skill ranks, see "Personal Extras" on page 25.



Zephyr, The Desert Fox's Steed

The mysterious swordsman, The Desert Fox, has invested two aspects in his steed, Zephyr. While making a late night visit to the commander's mansion, he alerts the guards and is forced to flee. He checks off one box of his Zephyr Aspect to invoke for effect, and have Zephyr waiting under a convenient window, allowing him to leap down onto horseback and flee into the night. On the off chance that he is pursued, he checks off the second box to improve his riding roll on his getaway.

Later on, Fox is captured by bandits and sold into slavery, and forced to escape the commander's secret gold mine on foot. Zephyr would be very useful for this, but is not available, so instead the GM awards Fox with 2 Fate points for the involuntary invocation. At the beginning of the next session, the thieves who Fox ambushes for precious food and water are found to have Zephyr in their pen, having failed to break him - coincidence has reunited the pair.

Later still, Fox has infiltrated the Commander's ball in disguise. He spends the session dancing, talking and spying, and gets no use out of Zephyr. However, because Zephyr would not have been of any real use at the party, its absence does not qualify as an involuntary invocation - after all, points out the GM, Fox could have brought him inside if he really wanted.

Baron Answald

Noble
Arrogant
Scholar
Destiny



Gustav Dore, Master of Thieves

During Finn's youth, he was taken under the wing of Gustav Dore, a thief of some note. Gustav has subsequently gone on to become master of the guild. Finn's player notes this down on his sheet as "Mentor: Gustav Dore □". He and the GM work out the details - Dore taught Finn a lot when he was young (which means that Finn can use this aspect to help with his Thieving skills), but he was always disappointed that Finn never joined the guild. This has put a little strain on their relationship, as Gustav makes no bones about the fact that he wants Finn to succeed him, so while Gustav is usually willing to help, it usually comes with the price of a healthy serving of guilt.

Aspects may also be NPCs the GM has created, entirely new NPCs, or even other PCs!

Stylistic Aspects

While aspects are usually simple and descriptive, there is nothing to say they cannot be more colorful. Catch phrases, for example, make very interesting aspects, since they say a lot about the character, and are fun to invoke (imagine: "Go ahead, make my day □□"). This works especially well for more cinematic genres where catch phrases are almost mandatory.

That only scratches the surface of the possibilities of this option. Passages from (real or imagined) scripture, rhyming couplets, lines from songs or haiku are all possible options.

The one caveat is that there's a lot of implicit flavor in choosing this option, and it may not be a flavor that goes well with the rest of the game. Make sure to discuss any such aspects with the GM to make certain everyone has the same understanding of what these aspects mean.

The Value of Aspects

Here's a little secret - the real measure of how powerful an aspect is can be found in one simple thing - how interesting it is. Interesting aspects are going to come up more often, and are more likely to grant reroll and provide Fate points. Take an enemy for example - not only do you get Fate points for him showing up and messing things up, you also get to invoke the aspect when you're fighting him. It's a serious win.

Interesting aspects are also easier to invoke, because they tend to make more sense. If a character has been trained by an order of knights with a clearly defined dogma, he'll get rerolls for the appropriate skills, but he can also invoke the aspect when he's defending that dogma (or gain Fate points when he suffers for following it). Compare that to a merely generic Knight aspect and the advantage should become clear.

This also emphasizes a really key point. Aspects are not just what define the character, they are what are important to the character. If you take your Mom as an aspect, she may provide a direct route to invocation for skills that you learned from her, but you could also invoke her for darn near anything if you're fighting to protect or rescue her.

One last secret - there's nothing to keep PCs from taking each other as aspects. This is a win-win situation, since the whole game benefits from the stronger connections between the characters, and the player in question gets an aspect that's likely to see lots of use.

Negative Aspects

A character may have any number of aspects, and each aspect may have multiple levels. In general, this is expressed as follows:

□□ Strong 2 (Good)

This is how a player would denote that their character has 2 levels of the Strong aspect.

Now, it's worth noting that they can also look like this:

Weak 3 (Great)

Obviously, this character is very weak, even though it is described as Great, a positive descriptor. This is an important example, illustrating that the level of the aspect is the magnitude of that aspect. As such, a character with Weak 3 is weaker than one with Weak 2.

That's not always a simple thing to get one's head around, especially for those with a long familiarity with Fudge - in that case the solution is simple. If you consider the attribute to be a negative one, treat the levels as a negative number. As such:

Weak -3 (Terrible)

While this is an entirely valid approach, it's use is ultimately a matter of taste.

Aspect Contests

On occasion, you may need to apply an aspect directly to play. This generally occurs under one of two circumstances - the character is involved in a contest purely within the domain of the aspect, or the character is engaging in an extended activity that calls upon multiple skills.

The obvious solution is to resolve these with dice, like any other contest, but the GM should make sure to apply common sense to these things. If one character is "Large " and another is "Small " and you want to know which is taller, it should be obvious without something as preposterous as a "height check" or the like.

It's worth noting that in contests between aspects, it's appropriate to use the aspects to grant rerolls (see "Using Aspects" on page 16).

Other Uses

Aspects may also be used to simplify extended actions. A character with a Ranger aspect may want to spend a few weeks hunting in the woods, getting the lay of the land, and looking for huffalump tracks. Rather than require multiple rolls for that, a simple roll on the Ranger aspect can sum up the outcome.



Corporal Clintoh

Conscript
Family
Handy



Magesight

Cecil has the intrinsic extra “Magesight”, purchased for one skill rank, which allows him to see the flows of magic. Now, when he makes other perception checks, the GM keeps in mind that when the player makes perception checks, the GM should include any pertinent magical details.

Alternately, if magesight is of importance to the campaign, the GM may require a separate “Magesight” skill, which is used for magic-related perception checks.

5. Extras

Extras are those elements of the character that require some representation outside the scope of skills and aspects. Some examples of the sort of extras which can be acquired include:

- A flaming sword
- A loyal lackey
- A weakness in your arch-nemesis
- Nightvision

Gaining Extras

Extras are purchased with skill ranks. Each phase, a character receives a number of ranks, usually four, but it can vary from game to game. These ranks are often referred to as “skill ranks” because their primary use is to purchase skills. In addition to skills, ranks may be spend on extras.

The sheer variety of potential extras makes it difficult to cover every single possibility, but the majority of extras fall into three main categories -

Intrinsic, Personal and **Shared**. Intrinsic extras are permanent parts of the character, like nightvision. Personal extras are those things within the character’s control, like equipment or servants. Shared extras are elements of the game environment, like resources and contacts.

Intrinsic Extras

This is the broadest, and hardest to quantify, type of extra. Often, characters may have certain “always on” effects. For example, in many settings, elves have supernaturally keen eyesight. When creating a character with abilities like this, it is, first and foremost, important to make sure that the GM and the player have the same understanding of what the ability is and how it will work. It’s also very important to look at any such ability and decide if it would be better represented by an aspect.

The line between aspects and passive abilities is a fuzzy one - both strength and low-light vision are always on, so it may seem odd that one is an aspect and the other is not. The line is a fine one, and the logical distinction stems from the thinking behind aspects - the boxes do not represent how many times the ability can be used, rather, they represent how many times they will matter to the story. While Strength is useful when the player decides it is, something like low-light vision is important when the GM decides it is, specifically through the creation of scenarios where is it may come into play.



Del Lupo

- Fast
- Smuggling
- Rough Crew

As such, passive effects should be considered to add the capacity to do something normally, i.e. at default skill level, which would not otherwise be possible. This may entail the addition of one or more new skills, depending on the nature of the new ability. If the extra allows a new way to do a normal activity, then no new skill may be required. On the other hand, if the extra allows an entirely new ability, a skill will usually be required to represent it.

Special skills may or may not interact with the pyramid like other skills will. In some cases, they may be tracked outside of the pyramid, or be their own pyramid. This will generally be decided on a case by case basis.

Special Skills and the Pyramid

This may seem like a trivial detail, but it has a great deal of impact on how powers interact with the rest of the game. Remember, each skill rank used for something outside the pyramid hurts the player's ability to raise skills; this is one of the implicit checks and balances in the system.

- If there is a large suite of skills used to represent magical or similar capacity, they should be their own skill pyramid.
- If the skills are independent, and there are not many of them, they should be part of the regular pyramid.

For lesser effects, if the extra allows something entirely inappropriate for a skill or aspect, the GM can decide it simply works, and that's that. However, anything this peculiar should definitely be the subject of serious GM scrutiny.

Personal Extras

Personal and shared extras are mechanically similar - one skill rank translates into one aspect in the target. The main distinction is simple. If something is within the character's domain (and thus, personal), the aspects the PC gives that thing are the only aspect it has. Things outside of the character's domain (shared) may have any number of aspects; the player is merely establishing what some of them are.

Most personal extras come in one of two flavors: equipment or servants.

Equipment is easily dealt with. Assign the item one or more aspects, and it will grant rerolls and occasional passive bonuses when the aspect is appropriate.

Servants is a catch-all phrase that includes things like bodyguards, familiars, friendly ghosts or any other NPC whose first priority is the character. Servants are constructed as characters who are generated using the number of phases equal to the number of skill ranks invested. This grants that number of aspects as well as appropriate skills (see "Pyramid Shorthand" on page 70). Some campaigns may grant more aspects; use the rules for giving aspects to PCs as a guideline.

It's important to note that the player cannot directly use any of the NPC's aspects - those only help the NPC. However, if the players has also bought



Sample Intrinsic

Tree-Friend - Druids of the Talon Reach have an affinity with the forest that keeps them in tune with their home. Any perception skills used in the forest reveal spiritual as well as physical details.

Aquatic - Initiates of The Rippled Knife undergo laborious rituals which allow them to purchase this extra, allowing them to breathe and operate underwater. They also receive the "Water-freedom" skill at default. This skill acts as the maximum value for any physical activity performed underwater.



Sample Weapon Aspects

Concealable
 God-Forged
 Thundering
 Cruel
 Holy
 Troll-Slaying
 Elf-forged
 Luminous
 True Silver
 Flaming
 Poisoned
 Unbreakable
 Frost
 Tainted
 Vorpal



Sample Personal Extras

A Magic Sword - Cyrus has spent an aspect on his father's sword, Narnasil. He wants to make sure it has some special capabilities, and in discussion with the GM, decides it's going to be Durable, and be useful against ghosts. With that in mind, Cyrus's player spends two skill ranks as follows

Narnasil ()

- Durable
- Ghost-Cutting

A Loyal Lackey - Finn decides to make a lackey of Lucan, the scoundrel he rescued from slavers. Because Finn is building him from the ground up, he does not need to invest any aspect in Lucan, but because he's investing a Fair amount in the NPC, he decides it would be a smart way to secure his investment. He spends an aspect on Lucan, and decides to spend 4 skill ranks. This makes Lucan a 4 phase character, which in this game means he has 4 aspects. Since Lucan will be posing as Finn's servant, but acting as a spy, he picks the aspects Lackey, Cutthroat, Innocuous and Spy. He then consults the "Pyramid Shorthand" on page 71 and stats Lucan up for the GM to approve.

- Lucan ()
 - Lackey
 - Cutthroat
 - Innocuous
 - Spy

the NPC as an aspect, the NPC's aspects provide a good guideline for the sort of benefits proved by the invocation of the NPC itself.

The stats of any such NPC must be approved by the GM, who should question any NPC with more than half the phases that the character has, and enthusiastically reject any NPCs with more phases than their patron character. The GM also has the option of statting up the NPC. If this

happens, the Player should get only a general sense of their capabilities, but the GM may construct the NPC as if every phase were a plot phase ("Plot, Genre and Fate Points" on page 20.)

Minions

Minions are a special kind of NPC servant that are best suited to villains, but may be occasionally useful. Minions are useful for representing large numbers of relatively unskilled servitors and cannon fodder. Minion ranks may only be purchased in conjunction with aspects like "Overlord". The total number of Minions is equal to the number of ranks spent on the minions, multiplied by the rating in the controlling aspect. This number represents how many minions (who are usually Average fighters, Mediocre everything else) are available in a given scene.

Shared Extras

Player-controlled shared extras usually come in two forms: contacts and resources.

Shared NPCs are defined a little differently than personal NPCs. Each skill rank spent translates into one aspect of the NPC in question. The first such aspect usually establishes the connection between the PC and the NPC. Subsequent ranks may be spent to strengthen that connection - busy and important NPCs may be favorably inclined towards the characters, but it may require extra ranks to be able to regularly make it onto their calendar - or to define some element about the NPC. The latter is potentially very powerful - it allows a player to decide during character creation that the current pope is corrupt or establish some other element of that NPC's story. The GM is free to limit the extent to which players may do this, but it's always wise to give these ideas due consideration.

One interesting way to spend these skill ranks is on enemies. If the PC has a particular enemy, it is entirely reasonable to spend a skill rank to give him a weakness, in the form of a negative aspect.

The relationship between a PC and NPC can be established simply by describing that NPC. But unless the PC purchases the NPC as an aspect, that relationship is potentially changeable. This is why the first rank should usually be spent on a connection.

Resources are somewhat simpler; the player simply selects an existing organization or location and gives it an aspect to represent a particular data point, like a connection to the character, a safehouse or some manner of debt. GMs may even offer up a stable of existing NPCs as "investment opportunities."

Handling Powerful Extras

It's possible to allow for items and abilities which are more powerful, but these should generally require the expenditure of more ranks. The GM should be most careful when dealing with powers which trump existing skills. An item that allows its user to fly can now outperform someone who has invested any number of ranks into things like climbing or jumping. Other abilities to watch out for include invisibility, telepathy, or the ability to render a foe completely helpless casually, such as sleep or paralysis.

This is not to say the GM should disallow these capabilities altogether. Instead, the GM is encouraged to find ways to make the power cool, yet playable. As an example of GM options:



Cloak of Invisibility

The GM may simply give the cloak an invisibility aspect of its own, based on the ranks invested. Thus, if there player spends a skill rank on the item, it is described as "Cloak of Invisibility (q Invisible 1 (Fair)). It probably makes the user moderately transparent, or blend somewhat with the scenery - it requires a Fair perception check to spot the character. More ranks makes the item more potent, so it's important to keep spending limits in mind.

Alternately, the player and GM may decide to come up with something a bit less generic. If the player wants a cloak that draws the shadows around him, the GM may let the cloak provide a +1 to concealment rolls in deep shadows. If the player wants it to be more potent, he works it out with the GM how exactly it functions, and the GM can set whatever cost in ranks he considers appropriate.

Last, the GM could consider the narrative limitation approach. This is only appropriate for items which have been ought as aspects. By this model, the item may be very potent - one skill rank could buy full invisibility or shapechanging or nearly anything else. However, to use the item, the player must check off an aspect box for the item. This is a bit of narrative sleight of hand designed to model certain literary conventions. Few fictional characters use magical items at their disposal with the kind of reckless abandon that PCs tend to. This option allows the inclusion of powerful items that suit the setting's tone, without them overrunning the game.



Sam Allen

- Outnumbered
- Outgunned
- Still Standing



Sample Shared Extras

The King's Ear - Taevin grew up playing with the king when he was a boy. While they have not remained close, they still are on good terms. His player spends two ranks for this connection

His Majesty

Connected to Taevin

Obviously, that's not the only aspect the king has, but it's the one which is relevant.

A Mentor - Finn was raised by Gustave Dore, Guildmaster of the Thieves' Guild. Finn has bought an aspect in Dore, but he also wants to nail down a few of the areas he's useful in. He spends 5 skill ranks for the following:

Gustave Dore ()

Connection to Finn

Smuggler

This is expensive, but guarantees Dore's utility.

A Place to Hide - The city of Alverado is not the safest of places, but Cyrus knows a good place he can go to ground there. He spends a skill rank to give the city the "Safe House" aspect. He could spend another rank to make it personal, so only he knows about it, but he doesn't. As such, while it's safe, it's not entirely secret - the people looking for Cyrus won't find him there. but others who use it, like beggars, thieves, etc., might.



Extras within the Pyramid

If a GM wishes to count extras within the pyramid, its mechanically easy enough, but there are a few considerations.

The main concern is that a player may choose to take advantage of the system by taking huge numbers of followers or planet-shattering weaponry.

The best guide against this is, of course, the GMs good judgement. Simply saying “no” cuts off most potential abuses.

For those who must have a guideline to play by, limiting characters to one extra per phase is appropriate.

Extras and Aspects

Players who invest in extras that are central to their character are encouraged to consider purchasing the extra as an aspect. There’s no obligation to do so, but the benefits are pronounced. Because aspects are tied to the character, they’re harder to lose and when they’re not available they pay out Fate points. In general, the more skill ranks invested in an extra, the better an idea it is to make it an aspect.

Extras and the Pyramid

The impact that extras have on the skill pyramid is potentially very strong. Each skill rank used on an extra is not simply one less skill level: it makes the construction of a pyramid that much more difficult. If extras are not considered part of the pyramid, characters who invest in extras are going to find themselves falling short of their companions with regard to skills. In theory, the additional flexibility and utility of extras offsets this. In practice, the balance between extras and the pyramid is a little more fine.

By default, non-skill extras, like props, allies and the like are not taken into account when building the Pyramid.

6. Character Creation Options

Aspects as Plot Hooks

Sometimes, the GM has certain goals during character generation. The GM may declare certain phases to have “plot” aspects. These phases will generally have events that the GM wants the PCs involved in, or which serve the campaign in some way. Common plot aspects include having everyone grow up in the same village, or having everyone end character creation in the same place.

Plot aspects may also be more general; for instance, the GM might want some or all of the PCs to have ties to a particular organization. They may even be used to enforce a theme; the GM might feel that all PCs need to buy certain aspects that reflect the tone of the setting.

The GM is entitled to declare plot aspects to be mandatory and leave it at that. However, if the GM takes too heavy a hand with that, the players are entitled to give her a wedgie and go play something they’d actually enjoy.

It’s suggested that the GM take a more carrot than stick approach, and offer a reward for choosing a plot aspect. In general, plot aspects reward one more skill point than normal, but the GM is entitled to make the reward anything that she sees fit. This bonus skill rank is referred to as a plot bonus.

Free Aspects

While it is strongly suggested that characters gain no more than one aspect per phase, GMs may wish to allow extra aspects at the beginning and end of character generation. These aspects could be used to represent nationality, family, interests, or almost anything else. It’s probably not a good idea to give more free aspects than there are phases, but up to that is perfectly reasonable.

Potential

In a game where the character creation phases are based on a strict timeline, it is possible that one character may be younger than the others, and thus have fewer phases. In that situation, the PC accumulates a point of potential during each phase they aren’t around.

Potential may be spent during any phase that the player buys an aspect, effectively granting them another phase. This is treated like a normal phase - an aspect and skills are bought and the pyramid is balanced. The only limitation is that the new aspect should be tied to the first aspect bought during that phase in some way. Any amount of potential can be spent on any phase.

In some games, it may be appropriate to grant all characters a number of rounds of potential to be spent in some specific way, such as on plot aspects, or on intrinsic aspects, like attributes. GMs who consider statistics and intrinsics to be very important may wish to consider allowing all players



Sample Plot Hooks

In a game set in Secarda, a nation of city states ruled by 13 great houses, the GM offers a plot bonus to any character who takes one of the great houses as an aspect for their first phase (effectively denoting birth into one of the houses). No one is obliged to do so, but the offer is enough to entice the players.

The GM has plans to include the church in her plots, so she offers a general hook - the first character to take an aspect tying them strongly to the church will receive a plot bonus for it.

For the last phase of character generation, the GM mandates that all characters must end up in the capital city. While this is mandatory, she grants a plot bonus to everyone for complying.



Sample Free Aspects

At the beginning of a 7 phase creation, Lydia asks her players to prioritize 3 things: themselves, their family, and their nation. She then gives free aspects based on their selection, 3 for their first choice, 2 for their second, and 1 for their third. The only rule in spending these is that they must tie into the choice, so National aspects include the nationality itself (French!) and any aspects the nation takes pride in. Family could be a general tie to family, or links to named NPCs. Self aspects are things like Strong or Cowardly.



Example of Potential

Kevin is playing a scrappy kid in a game with 5-year phases. Most of the rest of the characters are about 25 years old, but Kevin's character, Mikah, is only 15. He accumulates 2 points of potential during the first 2 phases. In the third phase (ages 1-5) he buys the aspect Child of Prophecy without any real idea of what it means, but he figures the GM will think of something. He doesn't spend the potential yet. In his fourth phase, he decides the prophecy is tied to him being a magical prodigy. He buys the aspect Sorcerer and 4 appropriate skill ranks. He also spends one of the points of potential to buy a second level of Sorcerer and 4 more skill ranks. This suits Kevin's idea for the character, so he decides to hold off on spending the other point of potential, and moves onto the fifth phase.

to take a few levels of potential, with the understanding that it will be spent on attributes and attribute-like aspects, such as Strong, Nimble or Magical Talent. See "Talented Novices" on page 32 for more on this idea.

Destiny

This is an optional rule designed to allow a player to create the lowly-farmboy-who-becomes-a-powerful-wizard sort of character, popular in fiction and film. During character creation, the player chooses the aspect "Destiny" and does not purchase any skill ranks with it. The nature of the destiny should be discussed with the GM to determine if it can be worked into the story (and if it's appropriate). It's even possible for the player to have an unknown destiny, in which case the GM determines the specifics.

The character may have multiple levels of the destiny aspect (called a Grand Destiny). This aspect can be used like any other aspect, specifically towards rolls that advance that destiny. At the end of any session where the character has not achieved their destiny (see below), they receive one Fate point.

The player and GM should come to an agreement regarding the sort of things that allow a destiny to come to pass. In general, destinies are not casually achieved, so the GM is perfectly entitled to veto a destiny that is likely to be achieved within a handful of sessions.

Achieving Destiny

There are two possible ways for a destiny to be realized, and the destiny aspect to be "cashed in" for other aspects.

The first is dramatic - the PC is in a scene where the destiny is coming to a head. They may be facing down the killer of their father, or discovering the ancient ruins that prove they're not a crackpot. The player informs the GM that they're achieving their destiny, and if the GM agrees it's appropriate (and the GM may not - she may know, for example, that the arch nemesis is really an imposter), it begins. The player is given 5 Fate points, which may be used only for this scene, any left over are discarded. The scene plays out however it goes, and at the end of that session, the player reduces their destiny by one level, and purchases an aspect that reflects the experience. With that aspect, they may buy 5 ranks of skills, just as if it was a plot aspect - which it effectively was (see "Aspects as Plot Hooks" on page 29). It should be noted, a Grand Destiny requires several of these scenes to achieve.

The second option is narrative. At the end of an arc, when players achieve a new aspect, the player and the GM can sit down and discuss how the arc affected the destiny. Depending on the agreement, any number of levels of destiny may be turned into aspects, and reward 5 skill ranks per, as above.

It is also possible that the character may turn away from their destiny. This will generally occur when the player decides they are no longer interested in that direction for the character, or they are tired of waiting. This can be done during any advancement period, and allows those levels of destiny to

be spent as aspects and skills. In this situation, the aspect only awards the usual 4 skill levels.

Structured Creation

The default assumption behind character creation is that things are pretty much wide open. Players are free to pick any aspects that they want and make any kind of story they want. The GM may provide a guiding hand in the form of plot hooks and the like, but overall, anything goes.

While this can work very well, it's not something that's going to work for every type of game. Sometimes, a little more structure is desired, whether to simulate career paths, environment or some particular development mechanic. The key to any of these is having well structured aspect and skill lists.

Most structured approaches are based around the simple idea of a limited list of aspects or skills, which expands as aspects are taken.

It's assumed in these models that characters are still free to choose aspects like Strong or Cowardly, since intrinsics are easy to justify in almost any context. The GM is the ultimate authority on what aspects are available, and would be well served to provide a list to players in advance, if only to give them a starting point.

Geographic Structure

This method requires that the GM have a list of a few important locations in the setting, and a list of the aspects and skills that can be gained in that location. During each phase, players declare their location, and choose aspects from the appropriate list. The exact nature of the places depends on the game: they could be towns, countries or even planets or dimensions. Depending upon how the geography is laid out, the GM may also put constraints upon how freely a character can move between phases. The GM might allow only moving between adjacent locations from phase to phase, or create a special "travelling" location where the character must spend a phase before moving on.

Pursuit Structure

The pursuit structure works in a manner very similar to the geographic one, except it replaces the character's physical location with the characters current pursuit. Descriptors in this case tend to be very general: Rural, Wilderness, Underworld, Military and so on, but the GM may have very specific pursuits available. This can be a great model for a conspiratorial or faction based game - time spent working with a certain faction opens up aspects that might not otherwise be available.

Changing pursuits depends upon the logic of the setting. It's very difficult to go from a Wilderness pursuit directly to High Society without at least an intervening Urban pursuit. However, the specific requirements will ultimately depend on the GM and the description of the events of the phase. Some pursuits, like secret societies, may even have special



Geographic Creation

Devon begins his life as the son of a simple farming family in the village of Arrn. Devon hopes to become a duellist someday, but there's no real opportunity for that in this backwater village. For that he needs to seek the duelling academies of Alverado. For his first phase, he may only gain aspects appropriate to Arrn, which the GM rules to include stats (which may be taken anywhere), domestic aspects, craft aspects or outdoors aspects. He takes the Hunter aspect, since it at least allows him to learn how to use a bow and knife.

For his next aspect, Devon wants to move on. The two nearby locations are the small city of Elsin, and the secluded mountain hold of the druids. Devon opts to move on to Elsin. In Elsin, he would have no opportunity to buy another level of his Hunter aspect, but he's fine with that. He wants to get some sword skill under his belt. Sadly, Elsin is too small a city to have any duellists, so he takes the aspect Mercenary, which serves his needs.

Alverado is still far away, so Devon opts to spend his next phase travelling. He works for a travelling merchant whose wares are heading in that direction, so the GM allows him to take another level of Mercenary.

As such, Devon begins his next phase in Alverado, and if all else goes well, he can finally join one of the academies, and buy the aspect Duellist.



Pursuit Creation:

Duvo is born the youngest son of a minor noble family. His initial phase is spent in the Society pursuit, receiving his education and taking the aspect Gentleman. With little prospect of an inheritance and less of a favorable marriage, he's unable to take another Society pursuit. He's a well educated young man of reasonable talents, and could easily turn to the pursuit of Business or Religion, but he opts for the Military. This allows a number of aspects options (Infantry, Cavalry, Engineer, Clerk, Marine) right out the door, and Duvo takes the aspect Infantry. He continues in the Military pursuit into his next phase, taking the aspect Infantry again.

Once again, he pursues the Military option, and with a third phase spent in the pursuit, a number of additional aspects become available, including Scout, Artillerist, Outrider and Spy. Duvo chooses to take the aspect Spy, and takes it again on his next phase.

He has now spent 4 phases in the Military. If he were to choose to leave at this point, he would have few options. Entering Business would be a shift of gears for him. An Urban lifestyle might be appropriate, selling his services as a bodyguard or the like. The greatest lure would probably be the Underworld, where a lot of ex-veterans end up.

In the face of such options, he takes another phase in the Military, and another aspect becomes available - Officer. Duvo takes that aspect and earns a commission. When his next phase comes around he has a new potential pursuit - Society always welcomes dashing young officers.

requirements, like certain skill levels or a certain number of phases spent in a particular pursuit.

Career Structure

Career Structures take some of the concepts in the pursuit structure and folds them into the aspects themselves. The idea is that there are a certain number of careers available at the outset, and as those careers are pursued, new careers open up. Thus, if the Squire aspect is available at the outset, the Knight aspect might become available to any character who has taken 2 levels of Squire.

The progression need not be that simple either. If there are a variety of careers available, some careers may require a combination of other careers. As an example, it may require a certain number of levels of the aspect Knight and a certain number of levels of the aspect Priest to make the aspect Knight Templar available.

This method can work very well when you have aspects which open up new skills or abilities. Some examples that might be useful can be found in "Magic and Supernormal Powers" on page 45.

Talented Novices

The phased creation system is designed to create characters with well-developed histories. For some games, that's not the goal - many games begin with characters who are effectively nobodies, with their story waiting to be told. For a game like that, the best solution is to make 1 phase characters, but grant them as much potential as one considers appropriate. It's not unreasonable for the GM to require that a certain amount of the potential be spent on intrinsic elements of the character, such as Strong or Stoic.

The GM may even grant a number of "freebie" aspects, which do not grant the character any skills, if she wishes to grant the characters a certain amount of advantage while still keeping them reasonably inexperienced.

Windows of Opportunity

The one drawback to all of these structured systems is that they are a little predictable. They do not allow for the possibility of the drunken swordmaster having retired to the isolated village, or the corrupt clerk more interested in his criminal profits than his legitimate bureaucratic pursuits. To simulate the odd turns of fate that seem to follow heroes of fiction around, the GM may allow players to include one or more "windows of opportunity" in structured creation. They can use this opportunity to take an aspect that they should not otherwise be able to, provided they can come up with a good explanation. The exact number of windows of opportunity available is the GM's decision, based on how strongly tied to structure she wishes creation to be. If the GM wishes, every phase could be a potential window of opportunity, provided the player has an interesting enough story.

7. GM's Toolbox

GMing can be a lot of work. It can be rewarding, fun, even invigorating, but it takes a lot to get from one end of a game session to the other, while maintaining one's imperturbable cool. The system shouldn't make that any harder, so here, we provide a collection of things that a GM's going to want to know, but that the players don't need to. Remember that any section of these rules can be removed if it doesn't suit your group; that's doubly true of this chapter. The goal is to prevent headaches, not cause them.

Aspects and NPCs

Aspects allow a GM to represent NPCs in a sort of shorthand. A GM may (and should, for most minor characters) simply assign aspects, and use those for all rolls. Thus, a caravan guard might be represented simply as:

- Mercenary 2 (Good)
- Perceptive 1 (Fair)
- Horseman 1 (Fair)

In general, these aspects do not allow rerolls. It is suggested that the GM construct the aspects in a pyramid, much like what is done with skills, but that is more of a guideline than a hard and fast rule, especially for NPCs with few aspects. The GM should also be aware that NPCs designed this way will probably have more effective skill levels than a character constructed from a similar number of aspects. This is somewhat offset by the absence of aspect invocations, but the discrepancy can become noticeable in high aspect (ten or more) characters, so it's best to limit this tactic to less important NPCs.

Difficult Skills

While it is assumed that most skills default to Mediocre, that is not necessarily the case. Certain rare or esoteric skills may begin with a lower default, such as Poor, Terrible or even Abysmal (which is practically the same as "none"). These skills are bought up like any other skill, except that it may take several ranks to get them up to Average. The good news is, until those skills reach Average, they are not counted for purposes of balancing the pyramid.

Advancement

The key element to advancement is the character's goal. This is the aspect the character is looking to pursue next, such as Master Thief or Officer.

When it comes to the point in the story where it is appropriate to distribute advancement, the character gains a single skill rank. This skill rank should be spent on a skill appropriate to the goal.

These skill ranks should be distributed over the course of a game arc, with the goal of awarding the fourth skill rank when the arc concludes. When that fourth



Jirelle Montgard, Explorer
Well-Educated
Adventurous
Well Travelled

rank is achieved, the character achieves their goal, and may add the aspect to their character sheet. The player now selects the character's next goal.

It is important that the GM work the goals into the story arc so that the conclusion is satisfactory for everyone involved. If that is not feasible, the player and GM should sit down and discuss how to make the goal work, and if it's not workable the player should be allowed to pick a different goal. The player should not be penalized in situations like that.

Exactly how long an arc should be and how few and far between advancement sessions should be is a matter of taste, and should be suited to the specifics of the game in question. In general, err on the side of caution - characters may move from fighting killer midgets to demon princes over the course of some games, but it's a phenomenon rarely seen in literature.

The pyramid needs only to be balanced when the character chooses a new goal - it may get unbalanced by the single skill point advancements. The GM should help the player keep track of this. Players should be spending skill levels in such a way that balancing the pyramid will be possible by the time a new goal is chosen. That said, if the character reaches their goal and the pyramid is unbalanced, the situation needs to be rectified. Ideally the GM and player can come to some agreement, either modifying some skill levels or laying out exactly what the next few skill purchases will be. The first time this happens, it is very important to try to work with the player, and not penalize them.

Of course, if the pattern repeats to the point of abuse, penalties become more appropriate - specifically, the GM is now responsible for spending the player's advancement skill ranks on whatever she sees fit, until the pyramid is rebalanced.

Off Screen Advancement

Advancement can also occur during downtime. If the GM determines that an extended period of time should occur between story arcs, it may be appropriate to allow an advancement phase to occur. This is treated just like a normal phase in character generation. The character may choose to buy their goal aspect during this phase - if so they should pick a new goal. There is nothing that mandates this during downtime - it's just a nice option.

Fate Points as Rewards

If advancement is slower than players are comfortable with, a good compromise is to award Fate points in lieu of more traditional advancement. The exact pace they are awarded at is up to the GM, but even a single Fate point per session (beyond those gained with aspects) can be a significant award.

Alternate Advancement

If the players are not comfortable with coming up with character goals, the GM may choose to simply award skill advancement, and let players choose the aspect when they have accumulated enough skills to earn it.

Changing Aspects

Over the course of play, a character's aspect may become inapplicable. The villain they've sworn vengeance against is dead, or the quest they set themselves to is completed. During an advancement, the character may change that aspect to something different, which reflects the experience the character went through in resolving the previous aspect. For example: If that character's father is an aspect, and his father is killed, "Vengeful" might be an appropriate replacement. Replacement aspects should be discussed with and agreed upon by the GM.

Lost Extras

If an extra is lost or destroyed, it does not have the kind of plot protection that aspects have. If the player can restore it in play, then all is well, but if a character reaches a goal and are still missing an extra, they may re-spend those skill ranks on other extras, or recover lost extras through whatever explanation the GM can think of.

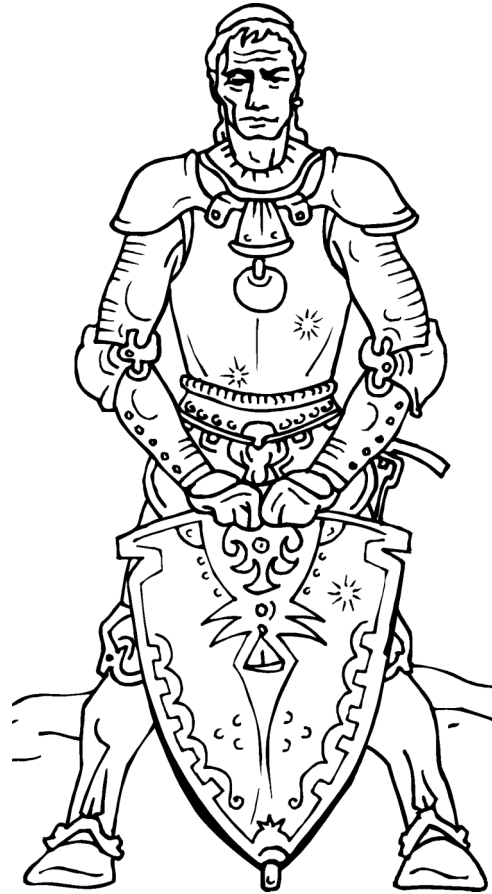
Skill Column

The pyramid structure results in more low level skills, with Greats and Superbs being areas where the character truly excels. However, the model does not work for every genre - some games call for more highly skilled characters.

Games like that are better served following a columnar pattern, where you must have as many skills in the rank below to support the skill you like. As such, to have one Superb skill, the character needs only have one Great skill, one Good skill, one Fair skill and one Average skill. Obviously this results in fewer total skills, but with more high level skills. This is not as egregious as it initially appears: since the column must be checked each phase, it's impossible to build directly up to too high a spike without widening the base.

Aspect Caps

It is generally assumed that there is no hard cap on the number of ranks a character may have in any particular aspect. However, the GM is entitled to place caps on how high an aspect can be bought, either in a general sense (e.g. no aspects over 3) or on case-by-case basis (if you buy one more aspect in the Church, they'll make you pope, which is great for you, but not so much for the game). As with all things, common sense and good judgement are the watchwords. For those desperate for a hard and fast rule, try this: no more than half of a character's aspect ranks may be in a single aspect or no aspect may be higher than the character's highest skill.



Ser Dylan the Humble

Knight
Proud
Indebted



Simple Combat

Jack and Bob have pulled knives, each intent on mugging the other. Both have the knife skill, Jack at Great, Bob at Fair. Both roll. Jack gets a **■■■+**, which is a Superb result. Bob gets a **■+■+** which is a Fair result. Jack wins the exchange by a margin of 3, which means a hurt outcome against Bob. Bob, seeing which way the wind is blowing, hands over his wallet and runs

8. Combat

The first thing to determine in a given combat is its pace. This is a choice that is best determined by the dictates of circumstance and the tastes of the players involved. It's reasonable to decide that one pace or another is an appropriate default for a game, but there's no harm in occasionally running a fight at a different pace, if appropriate. The three paces available are Scene Based, Exchange Based and Turn Based.

In a scene based combat, each participant makes only a single roll, and the overall outcome is determined by the overall result. Exchange based combats are composed of multiple rolls, each representing an exchange of blows or maneuvers. A turn based combat breaks things down to the finest grain possible, with each roll representing a single attack or defense.

All three paces operate on a similar mechanical principle - two rolls are compared, and the victor's margin of success is used to determine an outcome according to the table below.

Table 1: Combat Outcomes

MOS		Effect
0		Scratched - A negligible result. A near miss, or a hit which fails to have any real impact.
+1	□□	Clipped - A noticeable result. A hit or maneuver that provides a momentary advantage to the attacker, such as knocking a blade out of line or knocking his opponent back a step. In general, getting clipped applies a -1 penalty to the next action.
+2 - +4	□□	Hurt - A palpable result. A hit or maneuver that grants a persistent advantage, such as a shallow cut or a disarm. Getting hurt usually applies a -1 penalty to all actions for the duration of the scene
+5 - +6	□□	Injured - A significant result. A hit or maneuver with impact that carries on beyond the immediate scene - a serious injury being the most obvious example. Injuries apply a -1 penalty per box to most actions until the injury is healed.
7+ and up	X	Taken Out - A decisive result. A hit or maneuver that ends the fight right there, either from a knockout or perhaps passing out from injuries. It's worth noting that this is not automatic death - that is left to out-of-combat decision.

It might not be immediately obvious, but the above is just a highly detailed chart for a dynamic challenge (see "Dynamic Challenges" on page 12).

Scene Based Fights

Scene based fights are, mechanically, the easiest fights to run. However, they can be very challenging to make interesting. As such, the two situations when it is best to use a scene-level pace are:

- When players want to play out fights in a primarily narrative manner, and just want to get the mechanics out of the way.
- The fight is tangential to the game, and is best resolved quickly, such as fights involving only one player which leave everyone else twiddling their thumbs.

At the beginning of the scene, everyone involved states their goals and how they're going to go about them, and the GM states the opposition's goals and methods in general terms. Then everyone rolls and rerolls as normal. Ideally, the GM should be able to eyeball the results and work with the narratives to figure out how things went.

That sort of improvisation, while useful, is not always an option, and for those looking for guidelines, there are a couple of possibilities. The simplest is to look at the total numerical difference between the outcomes of each side, and determine the overall outcome based on the difference between those figures - the Combat Outcomes table on page 36 provides useful guidelines in that regard.

For a slightly more complicated resolution, consider pairing off the sides, either by player choice or based on the narrative, and resolve the larger fight as multiple sub-fights, using the same guidelines above.

However it's resolved, the fight should end in a way that allows things to move onto the next scene. It was assumed that if there was a safe way to retry the effort, it's done as part of the scene. As such, continually re-attacking a fortified position in hopes of getting lucky is not an option.

Injuries and Penalties

The combat outcome table is a good yardstick for the sort of consequences a fight can have. However, the more minor outcomes (clipped and hurt) have less bearing, as they don't tend to extend beyond the scope of the scene. As such, treat those outcomes as follows:

Scratch - Close thing. No advantage or disadvantage

Clipped - Minor Inconvenience. The character isn't badly hurt, but they look like they've been in a fight, and may have suffered minor wear and tear on gear, items or reputation.

Hurt - Major Inconvenience. As Clipped, but it's something that could be a real problem unless its dealt with - a damaged weapon or saddle, for example. Alternately, it can be an injury that's too small to provide a blanket penalty, but which could cause a problem under specific circumstances (running, using the left hand, etc.). This generally creates a -1 penalty that the GM can apply in appropriate situations.

Injured or Taken Out - These are resolved normally, see "Injuries and Advantages" on page 39.



A Scene Based Fight:

Cyrus and Finn are lost in the depths of the Blistered Citadel. Finally managing to find an exit, they need to get past the four guards blocking it. Finn's not much of a fighter, so he declares that his goal is to round the corner at a sprint and make it out past the guards before they have time to react. Cyrus is less subtle, and is just going to engage them, hoping the element of surprise will allow him to get the drop on them and get him the opportunity to get past. The GM declares that the guards will try to stop them.

Everyone rolls. Cyrus gets a Great result on his sword skill, and Finn rolls badly and gets an Average result for running. The GM rolls for the guards and they get two Averages, a Fair and a Good. Cyrus looks at that and spends a fate point to increase his outcome to Superb. Finn checks off a box of his Athletic aspect and rerolls, bumping up to a Good.

The GM looks at the factors involved - minor element of surprise, the discrepancy of numbers, the goals, and the skill rolls, and figures our heros are going to succeed, but not decisively. As the scene gets described, Cyrus draws their attention, allowing Finn to get free, and Finn in turn provides distraction enough for Cyrus to break free. One of the guards is down, but the other 3 are still up, which means they could potentially give chase, or raise the alarm (or both). All in all, it's taken more time to read this than it probably took to play it out.

Exchange Based Fights

The exchange pace is considered the default for Fate. It's well suited to striking a balance between drama and tactics, and allows tension to grow over the course of an extended fight. While it has many of the earmarks of traditional combat systems, it still falls strongly on the narrative end of the spectrum.

An exchange begins with all involved parties declaring their intended actions. These actions should only be things that take a few moments to perform, such as attacking someone, or jumping onto a rope and swinging to safety. Those involved roll their dice and compare them against whoever they are acting in opposition to (or against a GM-determined difficulty, if there are no opponent). Those individual exchanges are resolved against the Combat Outcomes table. If the fight is still going on, a new exchange begins.

GMs are encouraged to play a little fast and loose with things; the above is only a guideline. There's nothing wrong with handling individual exchanges one at a time; the important thing is to keep the overall flow of things moving and not let anyone get bored.

Injuries and Penalties

A clipped result means taking a -1 to the next exchange, while a hurt, injured or taken out result mean the character is, well, hurt, injured or taken out (see "Injuries and Advantages" on page 39).



Example of an exchange based fight:

(Note: This fight uses the rules from "Other Combat Modifiers" on page 43) Cyrus and Finn have settled in for a pint when the three guards they got past burst in, swords drawn. Cyrus jumps from his seat, drawing his sword to defend himself, and Finn dives under the table. The guards split, two (A & B) going after Cyrus and one (C) chasing Finn.



Cyrus rolls his swords skill and gets a Great result, guard A gets a Fair and guard B gets an Average. Normally, this would allow him to damage one of them, but he was getting his sword out and defending himself, so he is simply successful. Finn is not so lucky - he only rolls a Fair tumbling result, while guard C rolls a Good. That's a clipped result, and puts Finn at a -1 on his next roll. The GM rules that the guard pulled the table aside one handed, and Finn is now exposed.

The next exchange begins, with Cyrus mixing it up with his opponents, who are getting a +1 to their rolls for outnumbering him. Finn is in a tough spot, and decides he's going to try to kick the guard and knock him away and buy himself some time. The guards simply continue attacking.

Cyrus gets a Good, guard A also gets a Good, and guard B gets a Great - the Good is just a scratch, but the Great is a clipped result, so Cyrus is going to be at -1 next round - combined with the guard's +1, that's not very good for him. The GM describes that the guards have managed to move into flanking position.

Meanwhile, guard C rolls a Fair, and Finn rolls a Great, modified to a Good with the penalty. That would be enough for Finn's kick to clip the guy, but he wants to really knock the guy back, which the GM has determined requires a Hurt result. As such, he spends a fate point to bring his roll back to Great. That's a Hurt outcome, and Finn opts to knock him across the room and out of the fight for the next exchange or two rather than inflict the level of Hurt.

Cyrus knows he's got a pile of pain coming his way and hoping Finn will cover his back. Finn obliges and takes advantage of the opportunity to pull out a knife and throw it at the back of one of the guards on Cyrus.

Cyrus rolls a Good. It's modified down to a Fair from the clipped result. A & B roll a Good and a Fair respectively. They get a +1 outnumbering bonus beyond that, raising things to a Great and a Fair. Cyrus checks off a box of his Brawler aspect for a reroll. He turns one of his  dice into a  and manages to bump up to a Great. He spends a Fate point for a Superb, and hurts one of the guards - he chooses guard A because his back is to Finn. Finn throws the knife at guard A, and the GM gives Finn a +1 on his roll because the guard is not expecting it. Finn rolls spectacularly, and gets an Epic result, which his +1 bonus brings up to Legendary. The knife is now sticking out of Guard A's back, he is now injured and hurt, and thus at a -2 to all actions.

Cyrus smiles the smile of the psychotic as Finn throws another knife. The Guard who was knocked back is dragging himself to his feet this round. The injured guard can't safely disengage, so he and his buddy concentrate on Cyrus. Cyrus fights fully defensive this time, gaining a +1 to his roll. He gets a Fair, which the bonus raises to a Good. A&B get an Average and a Good. Both gain a +1 bonus for outnumbering Cyrus, but A also takes a -2 penalty (-1 for being injured, -1 for being hurt), so their final results are a Mediocre for guard A and a Great for guard B. Cyrus is clipped by the Great. Finn rolls a Great, but checks off a level of Underhanded to get a reroll, and pushes it to Superb. Guard A isn't outnumbering Finn, so he doesn't get to count the +1, and his Mediocre drops to a Poor. Superb vs. Poor is a MoS of 6, so Finn spends a fate point to bring his roll up to an Epic (and a MoS of 7), and the guard is taken out.

The fight continues, but at least it's fair now...

Turn Based Fights

Turn based fights work similarly, except they require a lot more die rolling. Initiative is determined by rolling alertness, with ties broken by tactics skill, then the combat skill being used. Characters act in the order of initiative, each taking an action. The actor rolls dice to attack, and if they beat the defender's roll to defense, damage is dealt according to the combat outcome table. The only real difference is that clipped results affect the next attack roll, and have no effect on defense rolls. Obviously, since it has the most rolls, this method can burn through aspects very quickly.

This is generally not the recommended combat system for Fate, but there are many players who swear by it, so it's included for completeness.

Injuries and Advantages

The core of the wound system can be summarized with the following chart.

Table 2: Wound Track

MoS	Result	Track	Effect
0	scratched		None
1	Clipped	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	-1 to next action
2-4	Hurt	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	-1 to actions for the scene
5-6	Injured	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	persistent -1 per box checked
7+	Taken Out	X	Unconscious or Disabled

Using the chart is simple: when the character suffers a particular result, mark off a box of the appropriate type. If there are no boxes of that type left, mark off a box of the next category down the chart. So if all three hurt boxes are marked off and a character takes another hurt result, mark off an injured result. Of course, this means if both injured boxes are full, the character goes directly to being taken out.

Clipped results generally result in a -1 to the next roll in the combat, but have little lasting effect beyond that. Clipped can be described as a very minor injury, but is better suited to some sort of momentary advantage. Practically speaking, there is rarely any need to actually mark off clipped boxes, since they go away so quickly. Multiple clipped results do not increase the penalty beyond -1, though they could conceivably spill up to a hurt result.

Hurt results generally put the character at a -1 to all actions for the duration of the scene. Generally, problems that qualify as Hurt may be bad, but can be taken care of with a bit of downtime - a small cut over the eyes, for example. As such, Hurt is the general yardstick for problems which can be remedied by action, such as a disarm or cutting someone's belt. If any hurt boxes are checked, the character is at a -1 to combat actions until the issue is resolved (generally the end of the scene).

Injured results generally mean the character has been hurt, and hurt badly. Characters take a -1 to actions for each injury. This -1 to all actions extends beyond the scene, and continues until the wound heals. How long a wound takes to heal depends greatly on the severity of the wound and the resources available. Assume it takes 2 weeks of rest or 3 weeks of light activity to heal a wound, with one day removed per MOS above Average of an applied healing skill.

Taken Out is not killed. Killing usually should occur after the fight, be it by cutting throats or by leaving opponents to die. Characters tend to be sufficiently willing to kill themselves through their own enthusiasm that there's no need to help it along with a bad throw of the dice.

In general, use common sense when applying the wound penalty to rolls. If someone is bedridden with injuries, and people are bringing him books, there isn't at any penalties to read, converse or listen. The penalty comes in when the character would have to move.

The Power of Clipped

If there is one thing to take away from the combat system, it is this - All of the results emphasize the end effect, not how it's achieved. What does that mean? It means that someone could have every box on their wound track filled in, and not have a scratch on them. Clips, Hurts and even injuries are just as often the result of a momentary advantage or disadvantage, the psychological upper hand, a physical impediment, embarrassment or nearly anything else that reduces effectiveness. Bearing that in mind, and combining it with the rules for challenges (see "Tests and Challenges" on page 9) means that the combat system is easily extended into other conflict, like debate.

Changing Wound Boxes

While the wound boxes as presented are the default for the system, there's no reason that they cannot be changed to make combats more or less brutal.

The Death Spiral

One effect of wounds overflowing into the next category is that over the course of a long fight, small injuries may accumulate to the point of becoming lethal. It also means that the more injured you are, the less well you'll be fighting and the more likely you are to be injured some more. The impact of these compound penalties is called "the death spiral" and while some players like the effect it has, others are very uncomfortable with it. In the latter case, the issue is easily addressed by adding more wound boxes, or simply removing overflow entirely.

Non-Lethal Damage

In certain circumstances, characters may deal or be dealt non-lethal damage, such as from fists or padded weapons. This has no impact on things during combat, but any injured results delivered in this fashion heal much faster, anywhere from at the end of the scene to within a day or two, depending on their nature.

Long Term Injuries

Exactly how long an injured box stays filled depends on how the injury was inflicted and the general tone of the game. An injured outcome from fisticuffs may fade quickly, but one from an assassin's dagger may linger for some time. In a gritty game, that injury may trouble the character for weeks or months, while in a more cinematic game, it can be quickly shaken off.

By default, assume an injury from a dangerous source (like a weapon, fire, falling or poison) takes one week to recover from. This may be reduced by making a medicine (or similar skill) check against a difficulty of Fair, and reducing the duration by 1 day per MoS. This is a cinematic assumption: more realistic games may extend that time two, three or even four times.

Combat Options

The exact rules for weapons and armor tend to be a matter of taste, so we have included a number of possible options. While we have broken these down into three categories (dramatic, simple and advanced), mixing and matching is encouraged. There's no reason one could not use dramatic weapons with advanced armor, for example.

Dramatic Weapons and Armor

(This is the default for Fate)

Weapons are not judged in terms of highly specific statistics, but in terms of the advantage they provide in combat. The rule is simple: superior weaponry provides a +1 bonus. As such, two combatants facing each other, one with a mace and the other with a sword, are on roughly equal footing, so no penalties are applied. Situation also plays into this - if one combatant has a sword and one has a knife, and there's lots of room to maneuver, the one with the sword gains a +1 advantage. If they have the same fight in a cramped sewer tunnel with little room to swing the sword, the dagger gains a +1.

Armor operates on a similar principle - superior armor grants a +1. In most circumstances, superior armor is easy to determine just by looking. The only exception is when armor becomes a true detriment, such as underwater or in quicksand, in which case the lighter armor is superior. (Simply being in an open area is not enough to invoke "superior mobility".)

The dramatic system works on a very simple principle: modifiers are only necessary to represent an advantage, not every specific detail of a fight. The assumption is that if two opponents are fairly matched, with roughly equivalent position, equipment and plans, the matter is settled purely by skill. However, if a character uses better equipment and smarter tactics, they will have an advantage over their opponent, and that's what modifiers are there to reflect. Guidelines for what sort of things provide modifiers can be found in "Other Combat Modifiers" on page 43.

Simple Weapons and Armor

This approach introduces a finer degree of granularity to weapons and armor. Both have ratings, generally ranging from 0 to 4. After a successful attack (one which produces a Scratch result or better), add the weapon's rating, then subtract the armor's rating, and consult the Combat Outcome table on page 36 for a result.

For melee weapons, the weapon's rating equates to the penalty to carry it concealed. For armor, the rating translates into a penalty for activities requiring full mobility.

Simple Weapons	
0	Unarmed
1	Knife, Small Club, Martial Arts Strikes, Holdout Firearm
2	Sword, Mace, Club, Pistol
3	2-handed Sword, Polearm, Rifle
4	Ludicrously oversized 2-handed weapons, Heavy Firearm



Tactical Crunch

The dramatic system may not immediately appeal to players looking for tactical depth - after all, so simple a system can hardly reflect the complexities of combat.

It's a common assumption, but one we suggest revisiting. In the end, all tactics come down to the simple question of who has an advantage, and by how much - no system can ever fully capture all of the subtleties and minute details of combat. However, a GM's judgement is far more adaptable and a GM can apply their understanding of tactics to any situation. This means that the dramatic system allows whatever level of tactical complexity that the GM is most comfortable with.



Simple Weapons & Armor:

Cyrus swings his broadsword (rating 2) at a thief in leather armor (rating 1) - He succeeds by 1, which would normally be a Clipped result. However, he adds 2 for his sword and subtracts one for the armor and produces a MOS of 3 (1 + 2 - 1 = 3), a Hurt outcome.

Simple Armor	
0	None
1	Leather, Studded Leather
2	Chainmail, Ringmail
3	Partial Plate, Light Plate, Scale
4	A Wood Stove

These numbers are really just guidelines. A particularly deadly (or “realistic”) game might have much larger numbers.

Advanced Weapons and Armor

Armor

A somewhat more sophisticated model for armor breaks it down into general categories (roughly equivalent to the ratings of simple armor).

Table 3: Armor Types

Outcome	Armor Type				
	0	1	2	3	4
Scratched	0	0	0	0-1	0-1
Clipped	1	1-2	1-2	2-3	2-4
Hurt	2-4	3-4	3-5	4-5	5
Injured	5-6	5-6	6	6	6
Taken Out	7+	7+	7+	7+	7+

If someone wants to represent something beyond AT4:

Table 4: Special Armor Types

Outcome	Armor Type				
	4	5	6	7	8
Scratched	0-1	0-1	0-2	0-2	0-2
Clipped	2-4	2-4	3-5	3-6	3-6
Hurt	5	5-6	6-7	7-8	7-9
Injured	6	7	8	9	10
Taken Out	7+	8+	9+	10+	11+

Armor’s protection is generally limited to preventing wounds. As such, it does not change the difficulty of maneuvers. When fighting someone in plate mail, it is easier to disarm them, a hurt outcome equivalent (AL 0, 2-4) than it is to actually hurt them (AT 3, 4-5).

Weapons

It is possible to have an even finer grain of difference between weapons by assigning specific attributes to them. For example:

Armor Piercing (AP) - Armor Piercing weapons reduce armor rating by 2, but are -1 to use. Extremely potent armor piercing weapons (APx2) reduce armor rating by 4, but suffer a -2 penalty.

Flexible (Flex) - Flexible weapons grant a +1 to maneuvers like disarms, but provide a -1 penalty in any fight where both parties have reasonable mobility.

Vicious (Vcs) - Vicious weapons are designed to rip and tear flesh, and increase their damage by 1 point. However, any armor greater than 0 is considered 2 levels higher against the attack. Vcsx2 weapons increase damage by 2 but improves existing armor by 4.

Locking (Lock) - Weapon locks to the user's gauntlet (or is part of it). As such, the weapon cannot be disarmed, but it also takes a -1 penalty to any maneuvers requiring finesse.

Other Combat Modifiers

A number of other elements can affect the direction of a fight, including:

Superior Position - this is something of a catch-all to cover situational modifiers. Possible reasons for receiving this modifier include:

- Elevated position
- Cover
- Fighting from horseback

In general, these situations shouldn't provide more than a +1 bonus, save in the most egregious of circumstances.

Outnumbering - +1 bonus for outnumbering your opponent.

Flanking - +1 bonus for getting in a position where your opponent's back is exposed. Cumulative with Outnumbered.

Surrounding - +1 bonus for completely surrounding your opponent. This is cumulative with outnumbered and flanked - since it's hard to surround someone without outnumbering and flanking them, this generally means a +3 bonus total.

The Drop

If a character is not expecting an attack and has no reason to be on the defensive, the character's skill is considered to be Mediocre or equal to their Alertness, whichever is higher.



"Mad" Lady Chesterson

Bloodthirsty	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reputation	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
The Hag's Teeth	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
"Don't touch the hat"	<input type="checkbox"/>



Fighting Defensively

Cyrus (Great sword skill) is fighting a mirror image of himself (also Great sword skill). Cyrus is hoping help will arrive soon, and chooses to fight defensively. Cyrus rolls a Superb outcome, while his doppelganger rolls a Good. Cyrus gains a +1 bonus for fighting defensively, and his outcome is bumped up to Epic. Cyrus defeats the reflection by 3 (Epic vs. Good = 3), which would normally result in the copy being hurt. However, because Cyrus fought defensively, the outcome is reduced to a scratch.

Multiple Opponents

When fighting multiple opponents, a character still only makes one roll. All members of the attacking group who beat the character inflict damage as normal. If the character beats all members of the attacking group, he may select one opponent (usually the one who rolled worst) and inflict damage on them.

Defense

If a character is unarmed, or does not wish to attack, many physical skills (especially Tumbling or Acrobatics) can be used in lieu of their combat rolls. If the defender wins the exchange, no matter how much they win by, it's treated as a scratch, though the GM may allow some defensive maneuvers, if in keeping with the skill - leaping out of the way of a sword blow is in keeping with leaping off a balcony.

If a character is using their combat skill and wishes to fight defensively, they may add +1 to their skill, but if they win the round, they inflict no damage. They may use this roll to perform maneuvers, such as getting away from their opponent, but may not perform maneuvers which affect their opponent.

Fighting defensively must be declared before dice are rolled.

Table 5: Default Combat Modifiers

Situation	Modifier
Superior Weapons*	+1
Superior Armor	+1
Superior Position	+1
Superior Numbers	+1
Flanking Opponent	+1
Surrounding Opponent	+1

* See simple (page 41) and advanced (page 42) rules for alternate arms and armor rules.

9. Magic and Supernormal Powers

There are few things less satisfying than a truly generic magic system. Magic adds color, flavor and texture to any fantasy setting, and if those elements are generic, the impact on the setting is obvious. Because Fate is designed to be plugged into a setting and reflect its specifics, a generic system would hardly be appropriate. Instead, we've included a variety of sample systems to give a sense of some possible approaches. Any one of them is usable, but they are ultimately more useful as guidelines towards the sort of customization that will help bring out the specific feel of a setting.

In general, magic systems are based off the initial purchase of one or more magical aspects, which then open up special skills or extras that can be purchased. Purchasing more magical aspect levels may open up additional new skills and extras.

Level Based Magic: The Great Library

In the world of Ald, magic is a structured, academic affair, and there is no greater center of magical learning than the Great Library. It is said that every spell ever written is somewhere in its miles and miles of bookshelves.

Characters looking to be mages must purchase a Magical Talent aspect. After that aspect is bought, the player may purchase a Cast Cantrips skill, as well as the aspect Magical Initiation. A character may potentially purchase up to 9 circles of Magical Initiation, and with each level a new Circle spellcasting skill (such as "First Circle Spellcasting") is available.

Mages must prepare their spells at the beginning of the day by studying them from spellbooks. The number of spells in a given Circle which the mage can have prepared is equal to the number of skill ranks invested in the skill (equal to the skill value +1). Once cast, spells are no longer available until prepared again.

By default, spells do not require a skill roll to cast. However, the skill roll may be called for to target a spell, or to cast it under particularly trying circumstances.

Ideas for adapting

This system assumes that there is a pre-existing spell list, broken into 10 levels from 0-9, and that a high degree of character advancement (enough to accumulate 10 aspects) is appropriate. If perchance no such system is available, it can easily be adapted to other level-based systems simply by changing the number of levels, usually reducing them. If an even larger list of spells is desired, simply increase the number of spell levels in a Circle. For instance, in a system with 20 spell levels, each Circle (and thus aspect level) might represent 5 spell levels; the skill level in that Circle would determine how many spells in that Circle could be cast each day.

Combinative Magic: The Brass Compass

The world is balanced perfectly between the four points: Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Hedge witches may claim some power over one element or another, but true mages know that power comes from the balance of the four, and the danger that comes of imbalance.

There are 4 magical aspects and 4 magical skills in this system. The Aspects are Initiate of Fire, Initiate of Earth, Initiate of Air and Initiate of Water, each representing a tie to the respective elemental force. To be a mage requires only one level of one of these aspects, but such a mage will have access to a far more limited range of power than a more well rounded practitioner of magic would.

The four magical skills (and their uses) are:

Evocation - Evocation is the preferred skill for combat, and is used for quick, usually forceful, expressions of power. For more sustained effects, summoning and mastery are usually more appropriate, but what it lacks in duration and finesse, it makes up in speed and power. Evocation is the favored skill of Fire Mages.

Summoning - The skill for bringing amounts of an element into existence and roughly shaping it (mastery is more useful for that, and the two skills are highly complementary). It is also useful for summoning creatures of the elements, but mastery is required to bind them. Summoning is favored by Earth Mages.

Mastery - Mastery is the ability to shape and control existing elements. It is arguably the most potent of the skills of magic, but it is also entirely dependant on the presence of material with which to work. Mastery is favored by Air Mages, who are rarely without a source of their element.

Dispelling - Beyond removing elemental matter, this is also the skill best suited to protection. While Mastery may allow a mage who takes his time to protect himself, only dispelling is fast enough to be usable in combat, and against evocations. Water mages favor this skill and its propensity to wear away any resistance with time.

Spellcasting is started by determining what element and skill is involved. Usually this is obvious, but in some cases more than one element may apply. In those situations, the GM may either allow a partial effect (such as destroying just the water in mud) or may rule that the mage must use their weakest aspect or skill. It is worth noting, living beings are considered to be a perfectly balanced combination of elements (Earth for form, Water for blood, Air for breath and Fire for life), so are very hard to target directly with any magics.

The next issue to determine is one of scope - how much of an element is summoned, shaped or dispelled, or how much force is deployed in an attack. The maximum scope is determined by the aspect level of the appropriate element. Scope is best judged roughly by the amount of material worked with, which breaks down according to the table below.

After element and scope have been determined, the character rolls the appropriate skill against the difficulty listed in the table. If appropriate, that difficulty is also the number a target must roll against to resist an effect.

Table 6: Elemental Magic

Rank	Scope*	Difficulty
-	Spark	Average
1	Finger	Fair
2	Fist	Good
3	Body	Great
4	Horse	Superb
5	House	Epic
6	Castle	Legendary

* - Dispelling generally works as one level higher scope against summoned material. As such, 2 ranks of Fire magic could dispel a fist sized natural fire, or a body-sized magical one.

The character may not generate an effect with a scope greater than their appropriate aspect level.

It is also possible for a mage to summon elementals. These are simple creatures defined by a single aspect - Elemental (of the appropriate type). The level of that aspect is equal to the rank required to summon one and sets its difficulty. Thus, a tiny fire elemental (Fire Elemental 1) is a difficulty of Fair.

To bind an elemental, the character must first summon it (roll summoning skill vs. difficulty) then bind it (mastery vs. difficulty). A Mage may only have one elemental bound at a time. It's worth noting that elementals are fairly obvious and have no real means to hide themselves. An elemental may be dispelled with a successful Dispel against their difficulty, using either their element or the opposed one (Fire v. Water, Earth v. Air).

Ideas for adapting

Long winded as it may be, the underlying principle is simple - a set of aspects and a set of skills, with aspects determining power and skills denoting, well, skill. What exactly the aspects and skills are is almost irrelevant. Elements were used in this example because they're a classic motif, but a solid magical system could be built off any logical (or mythical) combination. Imagine similar systems where the aspects are the Seven Deadly Sins, the Muses, the seasons, the phases of the moon, a different set of elements or anything else that strikes one's fancy.

Improvisational Magic The Door to Shadow

The gates have opened, and evil walks upon the earth in ways it has not for centuries. Around the corner and just out of the corner of your eye, it lurks, growing in power. Our only hope are those unlikely few, the mad, the destined and the unlucky, who have seen this threat for what it is and are fighting to stop it.

This is a simple, narrative system for playing a somewhat fast and loose game where magic is important, but it is not necessarily central. Mage characters need to purchase a Magical Talent aspect and a spellcasting skill. It is possible that those go under other names, such as Wicca or Thaumaturge with their Old Magick and Thaumaturgy skills. Generally speaking, this is just for color, but it may have some game effect (see below). The spellcasting skill (in whatever form it takes) can be bought without an appropriate aspect, but trying to use it to cast spells is exceptionally dangerous (see Feedback, below).

To cast a spell, simply determine its difficulty and make a spellcasting roll to meet or exceed the difficulty level, then mark off a level of the aspect. As such, yes, the aspect limits the number of spells that can be cast per day, and as such, it's dangerous to burn it for a reroll - as such, having another aspect to represent magical education, like Occult Studies or Ancient Lore can be quite useful, and what often allows a more experienced mage defeat a more powerful one.

Difficulty defaults to Average (0), and is increased or decreased by the effects of the spell as follows.

The spell's scope encompasses...

- Nothing: +0
- The Caster: +1
- A room: +2
- A building: +3
- A town: +4
- A state: +5

If the spell targets...

- No One: +0 difficulty
- 1 Person: +1 difficulty
- Small Group: +2 Difficulty
- Neighborhood: +3 Difficulty
- Town: +4 Difficulty

Note: Most spells either have a number of targets or a scope, not both. Thus, a spell to put everyone in a room to sleep would be based on targets, while one to illuminate the room would use scope. When in doubt, use the higher difficulty.

If the spell is...

- Irritating or inconvenient: +1 Difficulty
- Damaging: +2 Difficulty
- Incapacitating: +3 Difficulty
- Fully transformative: +4 Difficulty
- Mind Altering: +2 Difficulty (over and above other modifiers - mind control is effectively incapacitating and affects the mind)
- Instantly Lethal: Impossible

If the Casting takes...

- A few moments (i.e. in combat): +1 Difficulty
- A few minutes: +0 Difficulty
- A few Hours: -1 Difficulty
- A few Days: -2 Difficulty

If the spell requires:

- Nothing: +1 Difficulty
 - Easily acquirable, portable components: +0 Difficulty
 - Components are very inconvenient or hard to acquire: -1 Difficulty
 - Components are very inconvenient **and** hard to acquire: -2 Difficulty
- Note: if the spell requires components, their exact nature is determined by the GM - it's cheating to decide that your spell needs a rare ingredient you just happen to have on hand. This drawback is generally only appropriate for researched spells (see below)*

If the spell lasts...

- An instant (generally long enough for a combat attack): +0 Difficulty
- A few seconds: +1 Difficulty
- A few minutes: +2 Difficulty
- A few Hours: +3 Difficulty
- A few days: +4 Difficulty
- A few Months: +5 Difficulty
- A few Years: +6 Difficulty
- Forever: +7 Difficulty

Also, optionally for those with a more dramatic bent:

The spell affects the story by...

- Advancing the plot: -1 Difficulty
- Doing something someone could do with a mundane skill: +1 Difficulty
- Doing something that someone else in the party could do mundanely: +1 Difficulty (in addition to mundane penalty)
- Jumping over a large amount of plot: +2 Difficulty or more
- Bypassing an entire story: +4 Difficulty or more

And lastly, one unique modifier:

Inconvenient Timing: -1 Difficulty or more. Inconvenient timing is mostly just useful for villains, as it represents spells that can only occur under certain circumstances (“when the stars are right”). This generally gives a plot reason why a villain can be casting a world-destroying spell, but still be at a level that the PCs can manage.

Research

It is also possible to spend some time researching a spell in advance, either preparing it (which requires a magical toolkit of sorts, depending on the type of magic - a big cauldron for example) or researching it (which requires an occult library). In either case, a research roll is made against the difficulty of the spell, and if successful, subtract 1 from the difficulty of the spell. The GM may award additional bonuses for extreme degrees of success.

Researched spells are generally not re-usable. Duplicating an already researched spell requires another research roll.

Feedback

Magic is dangerous stuff. The number of aspects the character has represents the amount they can safely handle, but sometimes a caster needs to push themselves a little farther. If all of the caster’s Magical Talent aspects are checked off, and he still wishes to cast a spell, determine difficulty and roll skill as normal. If the spell is successful with at least a MOS of 1, all is well. However, if the spell fails, or succeeds exactly, the powers the character is working with get out of their control. This is treated as an attack on the character with a severity equal to the difficulty of the spell plus the degree by which the character failed (0, if the spell succeed). The character rolls to defend against this attack with their aspect level. Characters without a Magic Talent aspect default to Mediocre on this roll.

Ideas for adapting

As written, this system is functional but bland. Fortunately, it takes only a little tweaking to give it some flavor. It’s possible to give the various magical schools some mechanical impact. Generally, it’s best to makes this a +1 to skill in certain circumstances and -1 in other circumstances. Try to make the circumstances roughly equal. For example, the Alchemists of Bin-Assam practice a magical tradition rich in potions, smokes and exotic ingredients. They receive a +1 bonus to skill when casting a spell with required components. However, they are given to ornate, overly complicated rituals, and take a -1 penalty to skill when trying to cast spells more quickly than over the course over a few hours.

Modifiers that reflect the “rules of magic” also add a lot to the flavor of a setting. Perhaps spells receive a bonus when you know the target’s true name, or have a symbolic link to the target, such as a voodoo doll. Perhaps spells are more powerful at dawn or dusk. Some rules don’t even need rules: something like “curses return threefold” is better played out than left to a mechanic.

Stunt Based Magic The Great Lighthouse

In the city of Ald, the Great Lighthouse has held off attackers of every stripe for generations. At its peak rests and unquenchable flame, which adepts can direct to strike anything out to the horizon. Great as that power is, it only touches the surface of the potential of this mystical flame. Initiates who immerse themselves in it and survive become adepts, carrying a small amount of fire within them, and may use it to fuel their sorceries.

This fire magic is represented by two things: a spellcasting skill, called “Pyromancy”, and a number of “stunts”. By using the skill, the mage may start fires without kindling or tools, and even produce small fires (Fair=matchlight, Superb=a large torch) from their body without fuel, though this requires too much



Sample Stunt Systems

Air Magic

Caster can create and control breezes, and whisper to anyone within sight with a skill roll. With a stunt, whirlwinds can be created to transport the caster, or be used for attack or defense. Air Mages may not let their bare feet touch the earth or they lose their power until the next full moon.

Healers of St. Barnabas

Healers may use their skill for mundane healing and insure protection from infection and other complications. With a stunt, a healer may cure any wound by taking the wound upon themselves (The transferred wound fades at the end of the scene). Healers of Barnabas may even offer to sacrifice themselves to heal a mortal wound, but St. Barnabas only accepts this sacrifice if the subject is truly worthy. A healer who sheds another's blood on the battlefield loses the saint's blessing until they have performed an act of contrition.

concentration to be useful in combat (without a stunt). They may control fires (Fair=Torch, Superb = Bonfire) in showy ways, changing colors and sculpting shapes. They may passively use their skill as a defense against fire and heat. More powerful effects require using a stunt.

Stunts

Characters spend skill points for "Stunts". Performing a stunt allows the character to do something more dramatic with the skill. Each stunt bought gives the character a circle next to the skill, which refreshes in the same manner as aspects, and which can be checked off to perform a stunt. Thus, an experiences Fire Mage, with 3 stunts might express it as:

Pyromancy: Good (○○○)

This would cost 6 skill ranks total: 3 to bring the skill to Good, and one for each stunt.

The first skill rank must be purchased in conjunction with the "Pyromancer" aspect.

To use a stunt, simply describe the desired action and check off a circle.

Here are some guidelines that may help give a sense of what stunts can do:

- A stunt should never last any longer than a scene.
- A stunt generally translates into a single effect: A bolt of fire, a wall of flame, lighting something on fire. More sophisticated effects require multiple stunts.
- A stunt can allow magic to be used as a combat skill. This is limited by the effect: A bolt of fire might work for only a single attack, but a protective wall could last a scene.
- Spells which affect multiple targets take a -1 penalty to the roll for each target beyond the first.
- Spells which simulate weapons are fine, but they are bound by the general limitations of the weapons - i.e. creating a perpetual flame bolt that is held in the hand and using it as a sword is fine, but creating a 50 foot bolt claiming its a sword isn't really feasible.
- The addition of magic to a fight can grant a situational advantage (i.e. a +1 bonus).

Stunts are refreshed after a full nights rest or meditation in the presence of a (torch sized or larger) fire. A desperate Fire Mage may also immerse his hands (or other parts) and suffer bad burns (automatically suffering an "injured" result) to refresh his stunts.

Sample Pyromancy Stunts

Bolt of Flame - An old favorite, this blast of flame shoots from the caster's hand or eyes with the intent of incinerating the target. Used at range, this attack grants no bonus for superior armor, and if the target is wearing flammable clothes of metal armor, that qualifies as inferior armor for calculating bonuses. Range is usually line of sight, and the exact appearance of the bolt is shaped by the fancy of the caster.

Wall of Flame - Another classic, a wall of flame bursts into existence, either around the caster, or somewhere nearby. Passing through the wall subjects the target to an attack from the caster's skill as if they had been hit

by a bolt of flame. It's possible to surround a target in a wall of fire with an attack that generates a hurt result, and it's possible to directly target something with the wall (light it under their feet) with a injured result.

Brave The Inferno - Ignore damage from any single fire for as long as it lasts and as long as the character is exposed to it. This allows ignoring a single attack, walking around in a burning house, or passing through a wall of fire unharmed.

Other Stunts

- Shape a ladder out of a bonfire and climb it to a nearby window
- Increase the intensity of a forge to the point where it can melt magical metal
- Set something very large on fire
- Make a fire very hard to extinguish
- Study a fire and find out what it's burning
- Read a book by burning it

What Fire Magic Cannot Do

- Boil someone's insides
- Burn something non-flammable (though it can surround it in flame)
- Summon fire creatures or otherwise give life to fire
- Scry or teleport through fires
- Find information from cold ashes

Geas

Pyromancy does have certain limitations. A Fire Magi who is submerged in water (or other liquid) cannot perform any fire magic until the next full moon. Significant partial submersion (even a bad enough rainstorm) is enough, so Fire Magi are very careful around water which has created a legend that it is somewhat more baneful to them than it genuinely is. This has also inspired some peculiar bathing habits. In the south, sand and oil are more common than water anyway, so there is no problem, but in the midlands it's definitely an issue. Interestingly, snow and ice are not considered water (unless they melt), a loophole that the small number of northern Fire Magi take advantage of, though the idea of a "snow bath" is disconcerting to those of a less hardy nature.

Ideas for Adapting

Stunts are really designed to serve as a middle ground between handwaving magical effects and rigid bookkeeping of capabilities. Coming up with additional magic systems is as easy as deciding on the incidental effects, deciding what the stunts are capable of, and determining if there's a geas or other limitations.

The exact definition of what a stunt is depends strongly on the campaign. While it is possible that it may represent a concrete limit, that is not necessary. Like aspects, they are more of a narrative limitation, and because of that, GMs looking to blur the line of how often magic can be used are encouraged to allow appropriate aspect boxes to be used in lieu of stunt boxes. Of course, in games where wizards are expected to have a fixed number of spells per day (or some other cycle), no further explanation is really necessary.



Sample

Harry wants to cast a spell to find a lost girl. The GM decides that the difficulty is going to be based on how much information Harry wants to get. A general sense of direction from casting the bones is fairly low budget (difficulty Fair), whereas a series of grainy flash-cuts, of Poor quality and moderate utility, might be Good difficulty. A full video montage is at least great difficulty.

Later, Harry wants to blast an oncoming troll with a firebolt. This troll is pretty big, and while Harry could usually get away with a Superb difficulty for this, he's worried that it won't be enough, so he guns for a serious apocalyptic, comet streaks from the sky sort of effect, which the GM deems of Epic difficulty.

Finally, Harry wants to protect himself from gunfire. In the movie, this would mean lots of little ripple effects around him as the bullets strike his shield. Cable TV can do it, but it'll look cheesy, and as such only provide moderate defense. For more serious defense, he's going to need a higher difficulty.

Interpretive Magic Sorcery on a Budget

HARRY DRESDEN - WIZARD
Lost Items Found. Paranormal Investigations.
Consulting. Advice. Reasonable Rates.
No Love Potions, Endless Purses, Parties or Other Entertainment

-Jim Butcher: Storm Front

Sometimes magic just isn't easy. Whether because of the overwhelming disbelief of the vast swell of humanity, or some natural protection that keeps the world from accepting the supernatural. Whatever the case, necessity has made magic both subtle and rare.

The single most important component of any spell is how blatant it is. Blatancy is mostly a measure of how flashy or obvious the working of power is - it's a measure of how **wrong** whatever is being done appears to any bystanders. This puts very practical limits on anything done with magic - more often than not, if a task can be done mundanely, it's much easier to do so. This is why most wizards carry guns.

When using magic, players are encouraged to describe effects in terms of how they would appear in the movie version of their story. Now, this method depends on the player wanting to describe things interestingly - if players are more interested in describing things as flatly as possible in an attempt to drive down difficulties, the GM should do two things - raise the difficulties to an appropriate level, and consider using a different magic system.

Magic using characters should have some sort of aspect to describe their type of magic. This can be as general as "Wizard" or as specific as "Mystical Master of Cheese". These give a general guideline as to the types of magic the character can perform, and the GM is perfectly entitled to grant bonuses when she feels a magical effect is particularly in keeping with the aspect, or nix one that seems to have nothing to do with it (unless, of course, there's a really good explanation). The level of this aspect represents the character's "special effects budget" for magic (to wit, the most powerful spell effect they can manage). The character also has a spellcasting skill, which they roll when casting and attempt to meet or exceed the difficulty level for the "budget."

Table 7: Magical Budget

Asp.	Difficulty	Description
1	Fair	A set of bongos and interpretive dance
2	Good	Public access - a couple of guys with a camcorder
3	Great	Cable television production
4	Superb	Television "Mini-Series Event"
5	Epic	Blockbuster Movie
6	Legendary	Spielberg F/X extravaganza

Some budgetary notes:

- The more area or targets a spell affects, the more camera angles required, and in turn, the more budget.
- Remember, the target is part of the audience. As such, spells that quietly and invisibly choke someone or stop their heart won't work, because they won't notice them. You need to invest some in making them feel it. As such, the very least directly damaging spells require a minimum of a cable TV budget. Indirect damage (like burning someone by catching their house on fire) is a different beast entirely.

A character can temporarily boost their budget by checking off aspects. Each aspect checked off in this fashion raises the maximum budget for the next magical effect by one.

Ideas for adapting

Right off the bat, GMs may require that magical aspects be a little more specific, with the idea that a real wizard will have aspects in things like Evocation, Thaumaturgy or Summonings. However you think magic should work, toss it in there.

This is an odd system in that it is probably entirely unappealing to a large segment of gamers. It depends on a lot of trust between the players and GM and requires a lot of interpretation on the GM's part. If it doesn't work for you, don't worry about it. However, if this seems like your cup of tea, the possibilities for interpretation are probably already suggesting themselves.

Hedge Magic Age of Stone and Steel

It is a simple time, where a man's strength and skill can still shape his destiny, and the touch of the gods is still felt upon the earth. It is an age of wonders, and of rough, primal magics. There is magic in the forging of steel, magic in the paths among the trees and magic in this fire we gather around.

Magic is not a thing of spells or incantations. Instead it is a simple thing, tied to mundane actions. Magic is the difference between someone merely knowledgeable in the uses of herbs and a true healer. Magicians (they are never actually called that) can use their skills in ways that exceed simple mundane limitations.

Characters are not necessarily **better** at their skills, as that is determined by skill ranks. Instead, they may generally do more with their skills. For example:

Herb Lore can be used to heal wounds and disease with simple plant components, or even concoct useful compounds, like a sleep draught or itching powder.

A **Blacksmith** could produce goods of exceptional quality, resistant to rust and wear, several times as fast as his mundane counterpart.

A **Tracker** could follow a trail across otherwise impossible terrain, or discern seemingly impossible information from tracks (He's left handed, and is carrying two swords).

While this sort of magic can also be taken with combat skills, it's doubly important to remember that while it does not provide a concrete bonus, it grants the character a lot more flexibility of action. A normal person could probably not knock an arrow out of the air with a sword, or shoot out the center of a playing card blindfolded, but someone with mastery of **Sword** or **Archery** could.

The rules are simple. The character buys an aspect with the same name as the skill in question, representing their mystical connection to the skill. Specific mechanics are rarely appropriate for this type of magic - most of the benefits are narrative - those who feel the need for a mechanic can apply a simple formula. While there may be no bonuses, situational penalties may be reduced up to a level equal to the level of the aspect. Thus, if the aforementioned feat of archery suffers a -4 penalty for being a blind shot, the penalty is reduced to -1 for a character with Archery 3. Remember, this is limited to situational modifiers, like environment, not combat modifiers. If the card were (improbably) dodging, those penalties would not be reduced.

Ideas for adapting

Hedge magic is very useful in any setting where you want characters to be able to do cool things with skills. The main change in adaptation is the rationale for the power. In the example above, it is a result of a world saturated with magic, but one where formal sorcery has not yet been established. Other explanations might include ideas such as Zen abilities, or some means of tapping human potential.

It's worth noting that Hedge Magic was originally the brainchild of S. John Ross and was later adapted for Five Point Fudge by Steffan O'Sullivan. It's a great idea and worthy of further adapting, and I encourage anyone interested to check out the links in the reference section in the appendix.

Minor Powers Skin Dance

When the Weasel first talked to me I was so drunk that I just took it all at face value. Apparently, I agreed to some serious mojo-binding stuff, and in return I would get the Weasel's power. I guess I must have agreed, because I woke up that morning up inside my left pants leg.

In preparation for a threat only hinted at, the lords of the beasts have approached worthy humans and offered them the gift of skinchanging - the ability to turn into their patron creature. Despite the questionable value of some of these blessings, these skinchangers are prepared to use the little power at their disposal to defend mankind...as soon as they figure out what they're defending it against.

Skinchangers buy an aspect in the appropriate animal, and gain the ability to transform into that animal. It's difficult for a human to adapt to the workings of the animal physiology, so it is necessary for them to buy ranks in a skill called (animal) mobility (weasel mobility or what have you). This is a difficult skill to master, so it defaults to Poor (see "Difficult Skills" on page 33 for details on how to handle this). This skill is the general baseline for activity in the creature's form. If the creature can fly, things are doubly difficult, and default to terrible.

Many creatures have special abilities. Some are intrinsic - a weasel is small and a fish breathes underwater, and there's no need to reflect those with skills or aspects. Others have abilities better reflected with aspects - a bloodhound's keen senses or a ferret's speed. These aren't mandatory, but if the player wishes to take advantage of the animal's abilities, buying the appropriate aspects is a good idea. Some abilities are very specific to the creature, such as a skunk's spray. In those cases, the character should buy a skill to reflect that

ability. That skill defaults to the same level as the mobility skill did, and can never be higher than the mobility skill.

Some animals are also better suited to combat than others. Any skinchanger can use their mobility skill to dodge, but those gifted with natural weapons should buy a combat skill to use them. This skill has the same starting default as mobility, and can never be bought higher than the current mobility score.

Lastly, any form capable of fine manipulation should buy a manipulation skill to represent it. As with other skills, it defaults to the same level mobility does and cannot be bought any higher than the current mobility skill level. This skill is appropriate for simians, but may also be appropriate for some small mammals and birds.

Characters should not have more than one animal form. If they do, the skills for one form do not translate to the other form, unless the forms are **very** similar, like a squirrel and a chipmunk.

Ideas for adapting

The underlying model here is simple - an aspect that introduces a minor power can work just fine if it also requires at least one skill to use the ability. If the aspect is particularly useful, then it should require more skills. With that idea in mind, it's easy to model any sort of knack or gimmick, from ESP to Breath Control. This is also the idea behind a number of magic systems. This is a good model to simulate a genre with limited powers, like some urban fantasy or pulp.

Martial Arts Path of a Thousand Steps

There are three things you must learn if you wish to defeat me, my young pupil. First, you must look within yourself and find your core of strength. Second, your mind and body must be in perfect unison. Third...

WHACK

Third, stop listening when you should be fighting.

When the magistrates rose to power, they crushed temples across the land, claiming the long-protected rich lands they held. Numerous orders were destroyed entirely, their lore lost to all time. Others fled, taking their secrets with them into hiding. For generations, they have protected these secrets, and waited.

Their time has come. The magistrates war amongst themselves, and the people need hope. Monks and warriors of these ancient orders now walk among the peasantry, protecting them from the corrupt magistrates.

Martial artists trained in these ancient orders have learned to draw upon their own inner fire to perform seemingly impossible feats. This is reflected by the initial purchase of an Inner Fire aspect, representing their ability to draw upon their inner strength. Characters who have bought this aspect, may invest in a Chi Pool.

The Chi Pool is a special mechanic which represents the force available to the character. The pool starts at zero, and increases by one for each skill rank invested in it, in much the same way skill ranks can be invested in extras (see "Extras" on page 24). In general, skill ranks from any aspect related to martial arts or enlightenment can be invested into the Chi Pool.

Martial arts maneuvers have chi costs. When a character performs a maneuver, they check off a number of points from the Chi Pool equal to the cost. If they don't have enough Chi, they cannot perform the maneuver. The Chi Pool refills between scenes.

Martial Arts maneuvers also have requirements. One requirement is always the core skill - usually martial arts, but sometimes it's something else. To learn a maneuver, the character must usually have some combination of aspects and skills. For example, the Resplendent Backfist maneuver requires three levels of the Monkey



Chi Example

The Fat Master has a Chi Pool of 3. He performs the Gentlest Touch maneuver, which has a 2 chi cost. He now has 1 point of chi left. If he wanted to perform the Gentlest Touch maneuver again, he would not be able to during that scene, since he does not have enough chi



Stunning Blow

The Fat Master performs a stunning blow on a corrupt magistrate. He succeeds by 3. Since a hurt result requires a MoS of 2-4, he successfully hurts the magistrate. Additionally, because he only needed to succeed by 2, he also clips the magistrate. Bad day for evil.

School aspect, and a martial arts skill of Superb or better. Some maneuvers, generally the more powerful ones, also require knowing other maneuvers

Sample Aspects

Monkey School - The monkey school emphasizes maneuverability and unpredictability. Students of the monkey are trained in a variety of physical skills, like climbing and acrobatics, in addition to martial arts.

Tiger School - Long standing rival of the monkey school, the tiger school is a martial tradition first and foremost. Students are trained as soldiers, and are usually familiar with numerous weapons and other military skills.

Owl School - The scholastic nature of the owl school is reflected in its pupils. Rarely powerful fighters, they are instead scholars and savants of great skill, well trained in academic pursuits. Many great healers come from the owl school.

Kessen Do - While not a formal school, the followers of Kessen Do have been growing in number. Students of the semi-legendary wandering swordsman Ippen Kessen have taken up his wandering lifestyle, offering teaching in return for food and lodging. Formal instruction is limited, followers are expected to find their own path, and most are seasoned travellers as well as skilled bladesmen.

Sample Maneuvers

Iron Strike

Chi Cost: 1 Chi

Required Aspect: Tiger School 1 or Monkey School 1 or Owl School 2

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Fair

Other Requirements: None

The character channels his inner fire into his hands, turning them into lethal weapons. For the duration of the scene, the character's opponents gain no benefit for superior weapons against the character. The monkey school calls this maneuver Dancing Fist while the owl calls it the Sublime Hand.

Seeking Strikes

Chi Cost: Special (see Below)

Required Aspect: Tiger School 1

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Good

Other Requirements: Iron Strike

The character's lightning-fast blows find their way to weak points in armor. Each point of chi spent on this ability allows the character to ignore that many levels of an opponent's armor. (In the dramatic system, spending 1 point of chi is enough to result in the opponent being treated as unarmored by the character, which may allow a superior armor advantage.)

Breaking Blow

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Tiger School 2

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Good, Smith: Fair

Other Requirements: Seeking Strikes

The character strikes at an opponent's armor's weak points, striking buckles and joints and damaging the effectiveness of the armor. The character must declare that they are using this technique and spend the chi before attacking. He makes the attack as if the opponent's armor level was 0, but rather than do damage, he reduces the armor's level by 1 for each level of success (1 for a Scratch, 2 for Clipped, etc.). In the dramatic system, a Hurt result is enough to reduce an opponent to being effectively unarmored.

Stunning Blow

Chi Cost: 1

Required Aspect: Tiger School 3 or Owl School 2

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Great, Medicine: Fair

Other Requirements: Iron Strike

Aiming for the pain centers (for the tiger school) or chi flows (for the owl school) of the body to render blows more incapacitating. The character spends the chi before launching the attack, and if the attack succeeds by more than necessary for a particular outcome, it also adds a Clipped result.

Scurry

Chi Cost: Special (see Below)

Required Aspect: Monkey School 1

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Fair

Other Requirements: None

The character's acrobatic dodges go a long way towards keeping him out of harm's way. For the duration of the scene the character replaces the usual +1 bonus for fighting defensively with a number equal to the amount of chi spent.

Scamper

Chi Cost: 3

Required Aspect: Monkey School 2

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Great, Acrobatics: Fair

Other Requirements: Scurry

The character's leaps and swings defy all logic as he flies furiously around the battlefield. For the duration of the scene, so long as the character has terrain to work with and enough space to move around (branches or rafters overhead, for example, or alley walls), he can gain a +1 superior position bonus as long as he can describe it.

Resplendent Backfist

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Monkey School 3

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Superb

Other Requirements: Iron Strike

The monkey learns to strike when his opponent least expects it. The character spends the chi when declaring a full defense. If the character beats his opponent by at least 2, then the opponent is clipped.

Rapid Falling Leaves

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Owl School 1

Required Skill: Research: Fair or an appropriate academic skill at Good.

Other Requirements: None

The character may read a book in a quarter the time normally required.

Feast of Words

Chi Cost: 2 (or higher, see below)

Required Aspect: Owl School 2

Required Skill: Research: Good

Other Requirements: Rapid Falling Leaves

The character may go for day and a night without food or drink, provided that at least half of his waking hours are spent reading and researching works that he is not familiar with. Each day beyond the first that the character uses this ability increases the chi cost by one.

Gentlest Touch

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Owl School 1

Required Skill: Medicine: Good, Martial Arts: Good.

Other Requirements: None

Quick strikes to acupressure points can alleviate certain inconveniences, at least in the short term. The character spends the chi and touches the target (or themselves), and unchecks one hurt box. Gentlest touch may not be used on a target more than once per scene.

Cut the Swallow on the Wing

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Kessen Do 1

Required Skill: Sword: Good

Other Requirements: None

For the duration of the scene, he character may use his sword skill to defend against ranged attacks, including arrows.

Traveller's Broth

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Kessen Do 1

Required Skill: Cooking: Good

Other Requirements: A pot

Followers of Kessen know that hospitality is often limited by means - no one wants their family to go hungry just to be polite, but many feel obligated to do so. This old traveller's trick was originally the purview of the Laughing Monks, and it has survived the destruction of their order. The character needs only fill a pot with water and place some token, usually a stone, therein. Every person looking to eat needs to make some contribution to the pot, however small. The end result will be a tasty, filling gruel in sufficient quantity to feed everyone who contributed (up to the size of the pot).

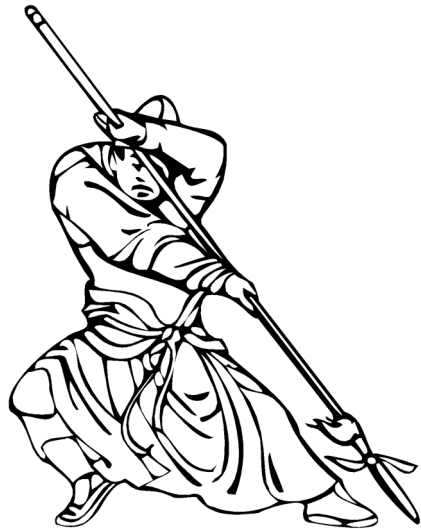
Ideas for adapting

As strongly tied as the example is to martial arts, the idea is easily adaptable beyond that scope. There's no reason that there couldn't be sailing maneuvers, or observation maneuvers. In fact, if one replaced the martial arts schools with skills-as-aspects (like "Age of Stone and Steel" on page 53), every skill could have its own maneuver tree.

The only real limitation is GM creativity. The common theme among these maneuvers is that they do not simply provide a +1 to a roll, at least not without qualifications.

One other thought to consider: It's possible to introduce very powerful effects, especially if one wants to have anime-style conflicts, with combatants shouting the names of complex maneuvers amidst special effects extravaganzas. That's a reasonable goal, and it's possible to keep "Super Moves" in check by either increasing chi costs, or requiring that certain very powerful maneuvers require an aspect check-off.

For a game in which maneuvers will be more common, the GM may allow a skill rank to purchase three or more points of chi.



The Fat Master

Inner Fire

Owl School

Appetite

Resilient

10. Utilities

Sample Aspects

Anger

The character's rage simmers just below the surface, awaiting opportunity to burst.

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

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

Bookworm

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

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

The GM might invoke this to: Cause problems when the character is faced with the need to apply his knowledge under the stress of "Real World" conditions.

Cowardly

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

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

The GM might invoke this to: Inspire the character to flee when he really need to stand his ground.

Curse of Toads

When the character tells a lie, a live toad pops out of his mouth.

A player might invoke this aspect to: Gross someone out, or convince someone who knows of the curse that he is honest.

The GM might invoke this to: Complicate things when lies would be more convenient.

Duty

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

A player might invoke this aspect to: Perform an action which directly upholds the duty.

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

Intelligent

The character is smart, simple as that.

A player might invoke this aspect to: Know useful things, or find them out if they aren't known.

The GM might invoke this to: Unless there are monsters that specifically like eating big brains, there's not much the GM can do with this.



Intelligent Vs. Bookworm

The aspects Intelligent and Bookworm grant almost identical bonuses, but their drawbacks differ greatly. While this may initially appear imbalanced, it's an intentional result of the rules. The Intelligent character is almost never going to be penalized for his intelligence, but neither is he likely to have anything particularly interesting happen as a result of being smart. In contrast, the bookworm's life will likely be more interesting, but more difficult. As a result, the bookworm is more likely to generate fate points.

Neither is better than the other in the end. Instead, they are different ways to play the same sort of character, and merely exist to allow players to tune the characters to the style of play they are most comfortable with.

Meticulous

The character is very thorough in his approach to almost everything.

A player might invoke this aspect to: Get a bonus to any task where he has the time and resources to do a thorough job, “discover” that he packed just the right tool.

The GM might invoke this to: Interfere with the character being spontaneous.

Onianos

A curved blade carved from the purest Moonstone, this sword has been passed down through generations of heroes. In the hands of the unworthy, its edge is dull and its balance shoddy, but in the hands of a true (or potential) hero, it strikes sharp and true.

A player might invoke this aspect to: Swordfight, or have the sword conveniently available.

The GM might invoke this to: Steal the sword. Require some ritual to renew the sword's magic.

Panasta Dados

Panasta Dados is the Master of Thieves of the city of Alverado, and at some point he took the character under his wing and taught him some of what he knows.

A player might invoke this aspect to: Perform a thieflly task, “Here's a trick Old Pan taught me.” Get some information about Alverado, get information directly from Panasta.

The GM might invoke this to: Have Pan call in a favor. Have Pan's enemies try to strike at him through the character.

Priest

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

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

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

Self Destructive

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

A player might invoke this aspect to: Do something stupid and dangerous.



Blake Masterson, Werewolf Hunter

- Hunter
- Preppy
- Educated

The GM might invoke this to: Keep a character from doing the safe, reasonable thing.

Raello

The character's family estate, it is a place of rest and refuge from the troubles of the world.

A player might invoke this aspect to: Draw upon the resources of the house.

The GM might invoke this to: Threaten the house.

Treacherous

The character has a knack for betrayal. He's the one who shows up on the movie screen and everyone watching knows that he's the one who's going to whisper lies in the king's ear and try to seduce the naive princess. Betrayal comes easily to the character, and while he may be steadfast and true in the end, it would be so easy not to be.

A player might invoke this aspect to: Lie, spy or generally connive.

The GM might invoke this to: Incite suspicious reactions from NPCs, especially when the character is telling the truth. Offer opportunities to stab comrades in the back.

Veteran

The character is the survivor of many battles, and the experience has shaped him. This is appropriate for a seasoned campaigner who has seen many battles (in contrast to Veteran of Gishal Falls, below).

A player might invoke this aspect to: Keep his wits about him in a fight. Assess a tactical situation.

Pitch camp in unfriendly country.

The GM might invoke this to: Invoke flashbacks. Introduce old rivals from the other side of the battlefield.

Veteran of Gishal Falls

The Battle of Gishal Falls was fought over the course of 4 months in the swampy, disease-infested valley below the falls. Both the Nadulians and the Asts consider the battle a defeat, and the casualty rates on both sides were obscene.

A player might invoke this aspect to: As Veteran, but also to resist disease or carry on activities in a swamp.

The GM might invoke this to: As Veteran, but the GM now **knows** who the opposing side was, and what people think of the battle. Some may consider the character a reminder of the Army's embarrassment, or resent them for surviving while a loved one did not.



Stereotypes Are Bad!

Yes, we know. This particular ethnicity was selected because the author shares it with some enthusiasm. This is not included to encourage thinking that all people of a particular heritage are a certain way, rather it is to point out that it is possible to represent national character, however it is defined, with an aspect.

More Aspects

Amnesia - The character has a hole in his memory of some size. The good and ill of this are somewhat subject to GM whim.

Banjo - The Demon Horse. He's fast, tough and smart, but he also eats meat. Especially rabbits.

Barbarian - Raised in the wilds, this character may be good at hunting and fighting, but lacking in social graces.

Courtier - Experienced with the ebb and flow of courtly intrigue, this is useful for dealing with those intrigues, but less useful for convincing an angry mob that you're really one of them.

Delusional - The character has some firmly held delusion. This tends to be useful on those occasions the delusion is useful (think Don Quixote), but otherwise problematic.

Fae-touched - The character knows something of the ways of Faerie, but this comes with some drawbacks, such as an aversion to Iron, the necessity of an invitation to enter a home, or just the attention of faeries.

Famous - The character is well known, which is useful for dealing with people who like him, but less useful when trying to avoid attention.

Holy - The character's convictions run so deep as to be a beacon in the darkness. This beacon may provide illumination, but it also is likely to draw attention.

Fop - A cultured gentleman can turn to excess. While Fops are usually skilled in social arts, they are also prone to a variety of vices, and have a most unwholesome reputation.

Gambler - Know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, but very rarely know when not to play the game.

Hunted - Someone (or something) is after the character. Useful for evading or confronting pursuers, but with obvious drawbacks

Irish - Useful for drinking, brawling and spinning yarns, less good for stopping drinking and keeping your temper.

Kind - Kindness is a virtue treasured by healers and those who bring succor, but it is ill-suited to many of life's cruelties.

Large - Useful when being big and strong comes in handy, but less useful when trying to do things like hide (or buy clothes that fit).

Ninja - Can you ever really have enough ninjas?

Rich - Outside of the events of play, the character has significant wealth. which is useful in many ways. Sadly, what he has, so many others want...

Rival - The character has a rival who he wants to defeat in some fashion. While this aspect may help with the rivalry, the rival himself is likely to cause problems.

Strong - Break things!

Vengeful - The character's been wronged, and seeks to make it right. This is useful for pursuing that revenge, but such focus can often turn into tunnel vision.

Weapon Master - The character kicks ass with weapons. People who kick ass this much tend to draw attention from others out to prove how much they kick ass.

Skill Lists

There is no one skill list that can apply to all games. The nature of the game should shape the skill list to reflect what sort of activities are important in the game. Skills are measures of how characters distinguish themselves. The idea of “party balance” hinges on the idea that each member of the group contributes something unique to the whole. The idea was originally couched in purely tactical terms, but its more broadly applicable. If each character in a given group has a particular area in which they excel, everyone is given an opportunity to take the spotlight from time to time. Naturally, there is also the question of genre - a computer programming skill will be out of place in a game of sword and sorcery.

When creating a skill list, it's important to keep two key elements in mind: there must be enough skills to allow each character an arena to excel in, and skills must be more finely defined in areas that will be important to the game. In the absence of a defined skill list, it's often useful to look at skills in terms of a few broad categories, and whether you want the skills in those categories defined in a broad, general or specific fashion.

Skill Categories

The most general categories of skills are Academic, Artistic, Athletic, Combat, Criminal, Magical, Perception, Professional, Social, Survival, which break down as follows.

Academic

Academic skills are generally oriented towards knowledge, research and learning.

Table 8: Academic Skills

Broad	General	Specific
Languages Lore Research Teaching	Area Knowledge Computers History Linguistics Literacy Mathematics Science	Specific academic skills tend to be refinements of the general skills: History becomes French History, American History and so on. Science becomes Chemistry, Physics and anything else appropriate. At this point, the advanced sciences are very similar to the roles of magical skills. They reinforce the specifics of the genre. In a science fiction game, for example, stardrive engineering might be a very important skill. Often, a game will have a specific selection of specific skills in conjunction with a more general list.



Language and Linguistics

The issue of languages is often a tricky one. The role of language is near and dear to many people’s hearts, and there are a number of ways they can be treated.

When using broad skills, the Languages skill measures what languages the player knows: each rank over mediocre equates to one language when play begins. When using general skills, Languages are split into Linguistics (spoken languages) and literacy (written languages). Languages are learned in the same fashion as with the broad skill.

In Broad and General cases, languages are fairly binary: either they’re known or not. A poor grasp of a language may be played out, or considered a temporary hindrance, but is mostly in the realm of GM interpretation.

Under specific skills, each language or language family is its own skill. Skill level measures the character’s fluency: Average means a heavy accent, Fair is faintly detectable, and Good and better is flawless. At the GM’s discretion, the character may be forced to use the lower of a character’s language and social skill when attempting to use social skills in another language.

Artistic

Artistic Skills cover the gamut of artistic expression.

Table 9: Artistic Skills

Broad	General	Specific
Art Performance	Acting Dance Painting Play Instruments Sculpture Singing	Each type of art form (Opera, Sketching, Specific musical instruments and so on) is its own skill.

Athletic

Athletic skills cover the general range of physical activities.

Table 10: Athletic Skills

Broad	General	Specific
Athletics Endurance	Acrobatics Climbing Endurance Jumping Running Swimming	Acrobatics Climbing Contortions Disease Resistance Distance Running Drug Tolerance Endurance Running Jump Sprinting Standing Jump Tumbling

Combat

Combat Skills are the meat and drink of most games, so they get a somewhat richer treatment than many other skills. Broad combat skills are simple enough: Melee, Ranged and Unarmed. Specific skills are simply one skill per weapon type (Sword, Bow, Longsword and so on). Broad skills are where there are a few more options.



GrandMaster Alpha All-Knowing NPC

Smug □□
Arrogant □□
Expendable □□□□□

Table 11: Combat Skills

Broad	General	Specific
Melee Missile Unarmed	<i>See below for three possible options.</i>	Dagger Flail Heavy Crossbow Light Crossbow Longbow Longspear Longsword Mace Rapier Sabre Shortbow Shortspear Shortsword Shuriken Staff Throwing Dagger Obviously, this list could extend pretty much indefinitely. Thankfully, it can generally be limited by the culture of the area the game occurs in.

Any of these three options can work as broad combat skills. No one option is really better than any of the others, and the decision should hinge upon whichever approach the GM considers most thematically appropriate.

Option 1: Weapon Category Combat Skills

This list treats the category a weapon falls into as a general skill. In many ways this is potentially the most comprehensive list.

Bows - Bows, Crossbows

Brawling - Improvised weapons

One Handed Edged - Swords, Knives, Axes

One Handed Blunt - Maces, Clubs

Polearm - Halberd, Spetum, Staff

Shield - Facility with a shield - grants an additional +1 if used as skill for an all out defense

Thrown - Knife, Shuriken

Two Handed - Two-Handed Sword, Greataxe

Unarmed Combat - Boxing, Wrestling, Martial arts

Option 2: Style Based Combat Skills

This list is based off fighting styles, with the reasoning that a sword and shield fighter is not much different from a mace and shield fighter, practically speaking.

Archery - Bows and crossbows

Fencing - Fighting with light blades, knives, possibly cloaks and canes

Haft Weapon - Any weapon with a long haft, such as a spear, staff or polearm.

Improvisational - Fighting with whatever happens to be on hand.

Mounted - Fighting from horseback.

Single Weapon - Fighting with a weapon in one hand and nothing in particular in the other.

Thrown - Throwing things.

Two Handed - Non-hafted weapons large and heavy enough to require two hands.

Two Weapon - A Weapon in each hand. Other than looking cool, the main advantage of this style is the difficulty in disarming it.

Unarmed - Fighting unarmed, be it bare knuckle brawling or some manner of martial art.

Weapon and Shield - A one handed weapon in one hand, a shield in the other.

As an example, under this model, a character with archery at Good would be Good with any bow or crossbow he picked up.

Option 3: Thematic Combat Skills

This list is divided along more stylistic lines, with each skill representing a group of weapons of combat styles joined by their thematic elements rather than any real tactical similarity.

Archer - Bows and daggers

Brawler - Improvised weapons and unarmed attacks.

Cavalry - Mounted use of swords and bows.

Cutthroat - Knives, saps, garrotes.

Duellist - Use of fencing weapons

Footman - Use of swords, shields and polearms

Knight - Mounted lances and swords, as well as swords afoot.

Martial Artist - Unarmed attacks and weapons like staves or oddly curved blades.

Pirate - Cutlasses and belaying pins.

Ranger - Bows and swords.

There are many more possibilities for skills, but they should be tied to the world in some fashion - for example one school of duellists may have a different skillset than another.



Butter-Flitter-Bipkin

Cute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fae	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carnivorous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Criminal

Criminal skills are exactly what they sound like, skills related to crime.

Table 12: Criminal Skills

Broad	General	Specific
Larceny Stealth	Fence Forgery Hide Lockpicking Pickpocket Sneak Streetwise	Once again, the specific skills take the general skills and render them appropriate to a particular area or area of expertise. Skills would include things like Streetwise (New York) or Safecracking, Electronic Security Systems, Counterfeiting Money and so on.

Magical

Magical skills are probably the most genre dependant skills of them all. Some games will have none at all, some may have only one, some many have many, Ultimately, what skills are needed for the magic system is determined by the magic rules being used.

Perception

Perception skills are important in almost any game, with the distinction being what it is important to notice in the game.

Table 13: Perception Skills

Broad	General	Specific
Awareness Observation	Awareness Search Sense Motive Spot	Awareness Danger Sense Detect Lie Direction Sense Investigate Listen Locate Hidden Read Person Spot Surveillance



Levels of Perception

The main difference between many perception skills is a matter of when they're applicable. At the broad level, Observation is used to spot things the character is looking for, and Awareness is for things that he's **not** looking for, like surprises, or things he might happen to notice in a room. The general category breaks that down further. Awareness fills the same role, but Observation has been split into Search and Spot. Spot is used for quick checks, when the character is trying to take in details at a moment's notice. Search is used when the character takes the time to look for something. The specific breakdown is similar, but many specialized tasks (like finding things that have been hidden) have their own skill.

Professional

Professional is a catch-all category, which includes most domestic, craft and professional skills, as well as most day to day skills.

Table 14: Professional Skills

Broad	General	Specific
Craft Healing Riding	Clerk Cooking Driving First Aid Medicine Smithing Riding Rope Use Stonecutting Woodcrafting	Accounting Administration Appraise Baking Blacksmithing Bureacracy Carpentry Driver Wagon Grilling Hagging Plumbing Ride Camel Ride Horse Silversmithing Obviously, there's an almost infinite number of specific professional skills. Thankfully, there's rarely any need to figure out what they all are.

Social

Social skills govern human (and non-human) interaction.

Table 15: Social Skills

Broad	General	Specific
Deceive Impress	Bluff Contacting Charm Intimidate Lie Seduce	Bluff Contacting (by group) Charm Diplomacy Deceive Etiquette Gossip Intimidate Public Speaking Leadership Unobtrusive Seduce

Survival

Survival skills are generally outdoors skills, though there are a few exceptions.

Table 16: Survival Skills

Broad	General	Specific
Survival	Herbalism Hunting Survival Tracking	Herbalism (by region) Find Tracks Forage Read Tracks Scrounge Shadowing Trapping Survival (By terrain: Desert Survival, Arctic Survival etc.)

Putting Together the Skill List

If a game revolves around courtly intrigue and deceit, it's appropriate to have a wide array of social skills, and perhaps only a small set of combat or craft skills. Similarly, a game with a lot of combat should have a decent range of combat skills to chose from.



A Sample List

Planning for a fantasy game, Lydia considers what kind of skill list to put together. She's looking to have a gritty, urban sort of game. Looking over the various categories:

Academic skills aren't going to be terribly important with a few exceptions, so she opts for the broad selection with a few specific additions.

Area Knowledge (The City)
Lore

Area Knowledge (The Court)
Research

Area Knowledge (Underworld)
Teaching

Artistic skills are also not critical, but since the city has its share of artists, and some of the players may be interested in that, she opts for a general list.

Acting
Play Instruments

Dance
Sculpture

Painting
Singing

She anticipates a lot of running about on rooftops, but it's not so important that it requires a specific list, so she opts for general athletic skills.

Acrobatics
Jumping

Climbing
Running

Endurance
Swimming

Combat will play a fairly major role in the game, but she has no desire to keep track of the minutiae of a specific system, so she wants a general option. Since she likes the general style of the thematic groupings, so she opts for:

Brawler
Footman

Cutthroat
Knight

Duellist
Pirate

Maybe others, if someone has a particular concept.

Criminal skills are also central enough to merit the general list, but not so critical to require specifics.

Fence
Lockpicking
Streetwise

Forgery
Pickpocket

Hide
Sneak

Magic has already been decided, as Lydia has opted to use Pyromancy (see "The Great Lighthouse" on page 49) so there's only one skill: Pyromancy

Perception skills are actually going to be critical, so Lydia opts for the specific list. However, she doesn't like Locate Hidden or Surveillance, so knocks them off the list.

Alertness
Direction Sense
Spot

Danger Sense
Investigate

Detect Lie
Read Person

Professional skills aren't going to matter that much, so she goes for the Broad list. However, she likes the rope use skill for various grappling hooks and piracy activities, and sailing is pgoing to be common so she adds them to the list.

Craft
Rope Use

Healing
Sailing

Riding

Social Skills are going to be similarly important, so she opts for the specific list.

Bluff
Intimidate
Leadership

Charm
Lie
Unobtrusive

Gossip
Public Speaking
Seduce

Survival skills just aren't going to matter much in an urban game. However, the scrounge skill is a great street urchin skill, so she tosses that in.

Scrounge

Survival

The final list looks like:

Acrobatics
Acting
Alertness
Area Knowledge (The City)
Area Knowledge (The Court)
Area Knowledge (Underworld)
Bluff
Brawler
Charm
Climbing
Craft

Cutthroat
Dance
Danger Sense
Detect Lie
Direction Sense
Duellist
Endurance
Fence
Footman
Forgery
Gossip

Healing
Hide
Intimidate
Investigate
Jumping
Knight
Leadership
Lie
Lockpicking
Lore
Painting

Pickpocket
Pirate
Play Instruments
Public Speaking
Pyromancy
Read Person
Research
Riding
Rope Use
Running
Sailing

Scrounge
Sculpture
Seduce
Singing
Sneak
Spot
Streetwise
Survival
Swimming
Teaching
Unobtrusive

Pyramid Shorthand

Sometimes you need a detailed character on the fly and don't want to mess with the headache of tracking the pyramid. In those situations, the following guidelines may come in handy. These examples represent pyramids optimized to get high skill levels as quickly as possible.

Table 17: Pyramid Shorthand

Phases	Skills
1	2 Average, 1 Fair
2	4 Average, 2 Fair
3	5 Average, 2 Fair, 1 Good
4	4 Average, 3 Fair, 2 Good
5	4 Average, 3 Fair, 2 Good, 1 Great
6	6 Average, 4 Fair, 2 Good, 1 Great
7	7 Average, 4 Fair, 3 Good, 1 Great
8	7 Average, 4 Fair, 3 Good, 2 Great
9	6 Average, 4 Fair, 3 Good, 2 Great, 1 Superb
10	8 Average, 5 Fair, 3 Good, 2 Great, 1 Superb
11	7 Average, 6 Fair, 4 Good, 2 Great, 1 Superb
12	7 Average, 6 Fair, 4 Good, 3 Great, 1 Superb
13	8 Average, 5 Fair, 4 Good, 3 Great, 2 Superb
14	7 Average, 6 Fair, 5 Good, 3 Great, 2 Superb
15	8 Average, 6 Fair, 4 Good, 3 Great, 2 Superb, 1 Epic

Conversion Notes

The aspects model makes conversion to or from many other systems fairly easy. In general, any system that has a single primary index, like levels, increments of 10 points or the like can convert that number into a like number of aspects. Similarly, systems that have only a few elements can often turn those elements directly into aspects.

Risus

S. John Ross' excellent "comedy" system is a pretty flexible, pretty simple d6 based system that measures characters in the number of dice they have in various cliché's. These numbers of dice convert precisely into aspect levels, and vice versa. Risus can be found at www.io.com/~sjohn/risus.htm

Over the Edge

Another great d6 system, this time from Jonathan Tweet. The 4 descriptors (including the negative one) become aspects. By default, the aspect level is equal to the die level - 1 for advantages and 2 aspects for the drawbacks. For more information, check out www.atlas-games.com

Level Based Systems

These are often the easiest to convert. One level equals one aspect, with the aspect type usually equating to the Aspect type. As such, a level 3 Thief would have 3 aspects of Thief, and the appropriate skills.

Alternately, a number of other ideas can be imported into a level based game, either as a whole or piecemeal. A phase based character generation can work simply with one phase equating to one level. Granting one aspect per level is generally appropriate, and aspect invocation can usually be used for a reroll.

Flavored Hero Points

Many systems use a hero point system of some variety or another. Some are very similar to Fate Points, simply by another name, but others are a permanent pool of points which can be used up and restored over time. Generally, those are useful for any sort of roll, offering a guaranteed bonus, or an automatic success. By turning that pool into a similar sized or slightly larger pool of aspects, you can use the existing mechanic, but make it more thematic. The only limitation is that since you're replacing a system that is basically positive, negative aspects are generally inappropriate, unless your GM is willing to give a specific reward for their invocation. If a GM wants to do this, one good option is to allow a negative invocation to uncheck any aspect box.

For an example of this sort of system look to the Sidebar.



Lucky Break

Suppose a system includes a Luck stat. This stat is treated as a pool of points which, when used, grant a bonus. This is normally marked on the sheet as:

Luck: ●●●●●●
□□□□□□

For a character with a 6 luck. Each time luck is used, a box is checked off, and every day, one box is recovered.

Now, this works just fine, but it's a little dull. If you "push your luck", it's pretty much the same every time. In contrast, aspects would give a much stronger sense of what's important to the character.

As a decent rule of thumb, a given pool turns into one and a half as many aspects, to make up for the fact that they're less universally applicable. Our sample Luck of 6 becomes 9 points, which could become:

Conviction □□□
Family □□
Master □
Fast □□□

The mechanic of invoking these is the same as the luck system, but these new aspects give a much stronger sense of what sort of reserves the character has. They are also subject to the same invocation limitations: once they're checked off, the box is used up until it recovers (and recovery occurs at a rate of one per day).

That leads to one other bonus to multiple pools. Each pool of aspects recovers the same way the luck pool does, but they recover independently. Thus, **each pool** recovers one box per day.

Appendix I. One Page Fudge

Rather than attempt to present Fudge as a standalone game system separate from Fate, this appendix is here to cover the few concepts we are assuming as preexisting knowledge.

The Classic Ladder

When something is rated in Fudge it is expressed in terms of a descriptive adjective, instead of a traditional pure-numbers approach. The ladder looks like this:

+3	Superb
+2	Great
+1	Good
0	Fair
-1	Mediocre
-2	Poor
-3	Terrible

Some players will prefer to have the number listed next to the adjective, for easy margin-of-success calculation, while others may feel that the number detracts from the “plain language” advantage Fudge character sheets possess.

Many Fudge GMs prefer to bracket the ladder with a Legendary for +4 and an Awful or Abysmal for -4.

The Dice

Fudge dice - available online and at many gaming stores - appear as six-sided dice with two sides having a plus(+), two sides a minus(-), and two sides a blank(■). Four of these “dF” dice are rolled to produce a center-weighted result from -4 to +4 which is, in turn, applied to a relevant statistic from the ladder. Thus, rolling +++- is a +2 on a standard 4dF roll. Using a skill rated as Good (+1), would give you a Superb (+3) result.

If finding Fudge dice is not convenient, a normal d6 will do, with 1-2 yielding a minus, and 5-6 yielding a plus. Colorizing or otherwise marking the sides may speed reading of the result; Fudge folk across the internet have all sorts of feelings about how best to do this, so if this is the route you're taking, it's worth looking around. If dice math is easy for you, the result is exactly equivalent to a 4d3-8 roll.

One variant worth noting is called 'dF.1', with the 1 referring to the number of sides that have a plus or minus on it (on normal dice, counting sixes and subtracting ones). There is a camp of Fudge players who prefer this method, as it makes the center-weighting much stronger -meaning that the character sheet more accurately reflects usual performance.

How Baseline Fudge is Different

Aside from the compressed ladder (above) Fudge, as it comes out of the box, is a more “standard” game than Fate, having attributes, gifts, and flaws instead of Fate's aspects. The alters a few mechanics - for example, in vanilla Fudge, the default level for skill is Poor, but in Fate it's Mediocre.

Fate's Fudge based incarnation also tends to require a fair amount of customization at the start; some argue that Fudge is more framework than system, but there are a few standard builds that folks tend to use, such as “vanilla” Fudge, and Steffan O'Sullivan's 5 Point Fudge. Fudge points are also rarer and more potent in vanilla Fudge.

Fate is meant to join this crowd as a “standard build” in its own right for GMs who are looking for a little less front-loaded effort in their Fudge experience.

Appendix II. Alternate Dice Methods

Fate D6

Six-sided dice(d6) have a lot of advantages for gaming. They're easy to read, easy to count, stackable and, most importantly, when there's a need, they can be rummaged from a couple of old board games. They also can be used very easily - there's no need to explain what these funny plastic shapes are, or what them mean. Most people are already pretty comfortable with the idea of rolling a few dice and adding them together.

When playing Fate with D6 rules, a lot of elements remain the same. The ladder is still in place, but it now has new values assigned to it. Rather than rolling four Fudge dice and adding the value of the adjective, just roll the number of six-sided dice associated with the adjective.

8d	Legendary
7d	Epic
6d	Superb
5d	Great
4d	Good
3d	Fair
2d	Average
1d	Mediocre
2*	Poor
1*	Terrible
0**	Abysmal

* - Poor and terrible scores are the same as if the player had rolled 1 die and it had come up showing a 1 or a 2. However, the die is considered to be “on the table”, so aspects can be used to change the die. Any bonus or penalty dice start out at this value.

** - An abysmal score means there is no chance of success at all. The GM may allow the player to spend an aspect to put a die on the table (which will be treated as if it had rolled a 1), which then allows it to be treated as a terrible skill (above).

Static Difficulties

Difficulties are measured in steps of 5, with the goal being to roll a total that matches or exceeds the difficulty target number (TN). Difficulty descriptions may be found in “Setting Difficulties” on page 14

1 - Negligible difficulty
5 - Simple tasks
10 - Challenging tasks
15 - Difficult Tasks

20 - Daunting Tasks
25 - Staggering Tasks
30 - Revolutionary tasks



Fate D6 in action

Dan needs to climb over a low brick wall. The GM figures the wall is not too high, and there are numerous footholds in the surrounding vegetation and the like, so he decides the TN is 10. Dan has a Fair (3d6) climbing skill, and he rolls a 3, a 4 and 5 for a total of 12; Dan gets over the wall without a problem.

Unfortunately, on the other side of the wall are a number of guard dogs. Dan comes back to the same wall, but this time, with a pack of dogs hot on his heels. He needs to climb the wall quickly, so the GM assigns a 1die penalty. He rolls 3 dice for his skill, +1 die for the penalty, and rolls 2,3,3,4. Because of the penalty, he only counts the 3 worst dice (2,3,3 for a total of 8) and he narrowly fails. and has to mix it up with the dogs.

Seeking vengeance, Dan comes back to climb the wall later, and this time he's brought some rope, climbing hooks and gloves. The GM accepts that this is overkill for the task, and grants 2 bonus dice. Dan rolls 5 dice (2,3,4,5,6) and keeps the best 3 (4,5,6) for a total of 15, and he easily clears the wall. Unfortunately, the dogs are ready for him, and he ends up having to run back to the wall. Now he has a 2 die bonus for the gear, but a 1 die penalty for the dogs. a die of bonus cancels out a die of penalty, and he makes the roll with a single bonus die. He gets the same roll as last time (2,3,3,4), but this time he counts the three best dice (3,3,4) for a total of 10, just enough to get clear.



Math is Hard!

There's a key bit of math that really ties together the dice and the difficulties. For each skill level, there is a level of difficulty the character can usually hit, and one they can potentially hit. The gap between these two grows as the levels go up. This plays out very well at the low levels: A Mediocre skill can get beat a simple difficulty from time to time, and an Average skill has a similar chance to overcome a challenging difficulty. The assumption behind these is that people can frequently operate at their optimal level, but will do so by preparing properly, taking time, having the right tools and resources, and so on. Even a single bonus die can have a big impact on normal tasks.

This same thinking applies even more strongly for high difficulties. Performing surgery is no easy task, and in the real world it involves many people, the best tools possible and an array of resources being brought to bear. A doctor who delivers a baby in the hospital delivery room can expect an array of bonus dice, but one who does so in the back of a cab is going to be much more dependant on raw skill.

With this in mind, skill level really measure two things - normal performance and best possible performance. Without expending a fate point, someone with an Average skill is simple never going to be able to perform a challenging task - they just aren't equipped to handle it. The best they can hope for is to not fail too badly.

One other bit of math to bear in mind: Each die will Average about 3.5, so the Average result is pretty easily judged. Each bonus or penalty die increases the outcome's Average by 1/3 of that (about 1). While this is hardly critical knowledge, it may be useful to some GMs.

If you want both the dice and the difficulties to progress at the same rate, using d8s or d6+1 in lieu of regular d6s will be a much closer match.

Dynamic Tasks

The difficulty of a dynamic task will almost always be the total of the opponents die roll.

Modifiers

It's easy to add bonuses and penalties to d6 rolls, and there are numerous ways to do it. For Fate, bonuses and penalties are applied as "Bonus Dice" and "Penalty Dice"; for instance, a "+1" modifier becomes one bonus die, while a "-1" modifier becomes one penalty die. Bonus dice are added to the total number of dice rolled, but do not change the number of dice counted. This means that if a player is rolling 3 dice, and gets two bonus dice, they would roll 5 dice, but only count the best 3. Penalty dice work the same way, except the player must count the worst dice. Bonus dice and penalty dice cancel out, so a player should never be rolling both at once.

Modifiers can be applied for a number of reasons. Low quality tools or a lack of tools might add a penalty die (or dice) while having high quality tools may grant a bonus. Similarly, doing a task quickly might cause a penalty, while taking the time to be careful might grant a bonus. Distractions might be penalties, while extra resources on hand may provide bonuses.

Aspects

Aspects are maybe used in Fated6 to do one of 2 things:

1. Turn a single d6 into a 5
- or
2. Reroll all dice

It's important to note that all dice are considered to be on the table for purposes of bonuses and penalties. Thus, if a character with an Average skill rolls with a penalty die rolls 2,2,4, he can check off an aspect to turn the 2 into a 5 to make the result 2,4,5, but he will still need to chose the two worst dice (the 3 and 4). Mind you, in this case, invoking the aspect has changed a result of 4 into a 6, enough to make a difference in many circumstances.

Fate Points

In addition to the dramatic uses of fate points, the mechanical benefit is to add 1 more die to a roll. While auctions are an option, no more than 1 fate die can apply to any single roll.

Appendix III. Design Notes

Why Aspects?

Aspects are a dramatic departure from more traditional attribute systems, and not everyone is entirely comfortable with their use. In this section, we'll separate the underlayers of the aspects concept in an effort to make things a little more plain.

Taking the Focus

In a more traditional system, an attribute like strength would generally provide a modifier that would grant a bonus to all strength-related action. The logic is simple: the character is always strong, so it always matters.

Aspects are designed to model a more literary convention, whereby things like strength only matter when the character is doing something interesting and has the focus of the scene. For instance, Porthos of Dumas's "The Three Musketeers" was quite strong, and this strength helped him out of a number of situations. However, the books did not linger on how each of his mighty blows was that much more lethal than those of his compatriots.

That is the thinking aspects are designed to model - the character may always be strong, but it only matters when the camera focuses on them and they call upon that reserve of strength (or passion, or courage, or love of family, or anything else) to make a difference.

Intrinsic Balance

Since aspects can be used up through voluntary invocations within a session, there is a kind of balance that is struck across all aspects. The more player-useful an aspect is — the more likely it is to provide opportunities to reroll — the more quickly those rerolls will run out. In a way, this keeps particularly "powerful" aspects of characters from taking over the story.

Additionally, the more "positive" an aspect is, the less likely it is to incur an involuntary invocation from the GM. This helps to strike the balance against the more negative aspects, in that negative ones are likely to generate a larger quantity of Fate points for the player.

Thus, aspects provide an elegant "point balanced" method to express character qualities both great and small, without a chart of disparate costs. They serve to build a story where the sidekicks are as interesting as the stars, and the flawed members of the team prove to have hidden reserves of strength.

Finally, aspects handle "hybrid" situations fairly well. Suppose you are using an aspect to represent membership in a particular society. With that membership comes a host of obligations and enemies — but also access to privileges and resources. The ability to use aspects as a double-edged sword is one of their secret strengths.

The Essential Differences

In the end, aspects are there to represent what sets the character apart from others.

This is why we do away with traditional attributes — an aspect is there to represent the deviation from the norm, whether that's in a positive (e.g. Dextrous) or a negative (e.g. Clumsy) direction. If someone lacks a Dextrous or Clumsy aspect, then they're like everyone else in the agility department.

What's possibly most confounding for newcomers to aspects, however, is the idea that they're all "valued" the same, level for level — even the "bad" ones, like Drunkard, Sickly, or Claustrophobic. And it's in this where the literary roots of aspects begin to show again.

Most RPG systems will offer you a payback for taking a flaw — a trade of a weakness for extra character points. And while there's no inherent problem with this set-up, it can at times seem artificial (as any one armed, one eyed honorable hydrophobic albino can tell you).

Aspects come to the table with the simple proposition that a quality of a character, regardless of whether it's positive or negative, is something that makes the character more interesting and better ties them to the story. Consider the “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” TV series: Buffy's superheroic Slayer aspect is on a kind of narrative equal footing with sidekick Xander's Normal Guy aspect. Both aspects bring the characters into the story, in a clear and thematic fashion.

In fact, it's often a character's weaknesses that make them so interesting, much more than the fact that they can kill vampires or fly or cast spells. We care more that they are Paranoid, or are Vulnerable to Kryptonite or have a Dark Secret in their past. Since such entertaining stories can be told around these weaknesses — indeed, some of the best GM's plots are born out of chosen character weaknesses — it almost seems we should be paying *more* for our weaknesses, if the yardstick used is “story significance”.

An Origin Story

The original ideas behind Fate came out of a long car ride to lake Tahoe, where Fred and I managed to drive our wives into the other car through excessive game geeking. Fred had run an amazing game of Amber using Fudge back on the east coast, and he was thinking of taking another swing at it. I'd played in his game, and while the system had worked out pretty well, he was looking to top his past performance.

One of the core ideas was to toss a fixed stat list out the window. The thought was that everyone was on roughly equal footing, statwise, and by default no stat was worth mentioning unless it was in some way exceptional. Any stat that a player wanted to pursue would be ranked on a three tiered system, for example, Strong, Stronger, Strongest. These were the first aspects, and after a little kicking around, we realized that these stats could be **anything**, and the wacky ideas started flowing (Drunk, Drunker, Drunkest!) and we realized the same mechanic could be used for almost everything that was not a skill. What's more, we had been sufficiently impressed with the 7th Sea model of charging points for drawbacks that this seemed a great way to reflect both the good and the bad.

The idea of phased based character creation had come out of some experimental games that had used cards to build characters, and it seemed to dovetail nicely with the aspects idea. The idea of the skill pyramid (originally a column) came out of a desire to keep people from spiking their skills without an escalating cost model. We threw all this together and were pretty pleased with the outcome, and in the end it made for a great game.

There were a few bugs that needed ironing out. In initial tests, characters bought skills **or** aspects during each phase, and it resulted in some odd unevenness in the characters. Aspects originally provided bonuses to rolls, which resulted in some really scary outcomes, especially in situations where characters could invoke multiple aspects.

The idea of switching from bonuses to rerolls came out of a weekend of camping and considering games like Dying Earth and Trollbabe, which make good use of the mechanic. That and the idea of making aspects more central to character creation were the two ideas the final version of the game crystallized around.

Other bits have fallen into place since then, but ultimately, this remains the results of a crazy conversation about trying to tie story and character background a little more tightly to the mechanics.

Final Words

You may also notice that the majority of this book is examples of one sort or another—that’s a conscious decision. We think it’s much easier to understand how rules should be used with copious examples than with any amount of explanation.

There is a base assumption at work behind almost all of these rules, and that is this: A good rules system supports the preferred style of play. Our hope is not that people will run out and play a game of Fate, but rather that they will take the parts on hand and make a game that explicitly suits them.



Appendix IV. Sample Creation

Lydia: Okay, let's sit down and make the characters. There are a few key aspects that I want you all to be aware of, going into this. As you know, this is going to be a multi-dimensional fantasy game, where your ties to the forces and philosophies of the universe can matter. So the first set of aspects available to you are kind of "alignment" based: Chaos, Order, Goodness, and Evil. I'd like you to take at least one aspect level in one of these, so the first one you pick will be treated as a plot hook and will be worth 5 skill levels.

John: Can we take both Chaos and Order?

Lydia: Sure, why not? But figure on me pulling you in both directions at once throughout the game.

John: Weird. Cool.

Lydia: Okay. The second set of aspects have to do with the elemental forces in the universe, which can be commanded by those who have the appropriate ancestry, from one of the six great houses which are rumored to be descended from the Elemental Princes themselves. The elements are: Fire, Earth, Water, Air, Wood, and Void. There are two kinds of elemental aspects. You can take a 'House' elemental aspect to represent your connection to and recognition by that house, even if you aren't part of the actual bloodline. You can also take an 'Ancestry' elemental aspect to represent actual possession of elemental powers and membership in the bloodline. The elemental powers granted by ancestry will be skills, bought like anything else, each of which will represent a particular trick that fits the theme of the element. These should be relatively minor; Fire might have 'Create Light', 'Provide Warmth', or 'Resist Flame'. Check with me to make sure the skill's in the right scope. Everyone clear on that?

Cass: Yeah, but what about other kinds of aspects — or are these the only ones?

Lydia: I was getting to that. Outside of these, it's pretty freeform. You can take aspects that are like classic attributes — Strength, Intelligence, that sort of thing — flaws, advantages, and connections to people and organizations outside of the elemental houses. If you have an idea, let's talk it out.

Okay, I'm going to have you all be about the same age and tie each aspect phase to a bit of a timeline. We'll start with you all in your early teens, with each phase covering two years or so.

Bill: How many phases total?

Lydia: Five. Alright, we'll go around the table and have each of you say a few things about your character at this point — name, appearance if you like, and where you figure you'll be at this point in your life. Cass, you start.

Cass: Okay, my name is Tyrena, and I'm a member of the archivist caste in the Air house. I'm a bit absent-minded, and at age 14, I've been apprenticed in the house's interplanar library.

John: I'm Ro Garrik, a punk redheaded kid with more attitude than brains. I've had plans to enlist in the Earth house's military for a while yet, and while I'm not of age, I've faked it and managed to get into the army before my time.

Bill: Right. I'm gonna play a guy who's working on becoming a necromancer, what house would that be?

Lydia: Void.

Bill: Okay, so, I know I'm going to grow up a little spooky, but I haven't worked it all out yet. The name's Juram. I think I'm a bit lost on concept, here.

Lydia: That's okay, Fate handles 'discovering' your character just fine. I'll throw some circumstances at you from phase to phase and you can make your decisions in reaction to that. I think you'll start out with Gustav, your widower father, who's keeper of the catacombs at the Nexus of Worlds.

Bill: Sounds great!

Lydia: Okay, everyone, pick an aspect that fits their starting circumstances, and use four skill ranks on skills that fit that aspect. Remember the pyramid shape we talked about earlier!

John: Military Training for me.

Lydia: You don't want House of Earth, first?

John: I've just started in at this point. I'm planning on that for next phase.

Cass: House of Air, I think.

Bill: I want a strong relationship with my dad —Connection:Gustav.

Lydia: Sounds good. Take your skills.

John: Swordfighting Fair, Athletics and Alertness at Average.

Cass: I'll pick up four skills at Average—House Lore, History(House of Air), Mythology, Interplanar Navigation.

Bill: Uh...

Lydia: Looking for a little help from Dad?

Bill: Yeah.

Lydia: Okay. As keeper, he's a quiet guy, tends to fade into the background a lot. He also has to watch out for interlopers, thievery, that sort of thing. He'd probably want you doing the same, to help him out around the place.

Bill: Cool. Okay, so, Sneak, Alertness, uh... Area Knowledge (Catacombs)?

Lydia: Sounds good. That's three, so you can put one at Fair and the other two at Average.

Bill: Sneak at Fair, then.

Lydia: Okay. So, these first two years are more about growing up than about the world around you. You all come out of this with a few of your rough edges polished off, but not a lot of world experience yet.

As we move into the next two years, there seems to be a rise in tensions across the whole nexus. Juram, Gustav is on higher alert, but won't say why — he's in regular contact with the other void folks, though. Tyrena and Private Garrik see signs of this as well — access to the library gets a bit more restricted, and Garrik, your platoon is kept on a higher state of alert. No news about why comes down from the higher-ups, though, in any of your cases.

Each of you should talk about what you're doing during this phase and then pick an appropriate aspect and skill set.

Cass: I figure that getting further into my studies works out just fine for me. I'm going to pick up my Ancestry of Air aspect at this point, and buy two elemental talents at Fair — Whispers on the Wind, for sending messages, and Lifting Breeze, for lifting and moving small objects and so on, are those okay?

Lydia: Perfect. Bill?

Bill: I think I'm a bit annoyed with Dad for keeping stuff to himself, so I'm going to help out less. Y'know, adolescent rebellion and stuff. What aspect should I take?

Lydia: Well, you haven't taken one of the alignment ones yet...

Bill: Rebellion's sorta Chaos oriented. You said that was a plot hook the first time?

Lydia: Yep, five skill ranks.

Bill: Let's do that, then... but what are the skills of Chaos?

Lydia: You should take skills that fit your circumstances and a chaotic theme. Chaos has a strong vibe of survival of the fittest, adaptability, and independent action...

Bill: Right, so I'll explore the catacombs some more, boosting up my Area Knowledge. I think I get lost for a while at some point... Survival: Underground sounds right. Uh, with those two skill levels spent, that gives me Area Knowledge and Stealth at Fair, and Alertness and Survival at Average. I need another Average to keep the pyramid, and I'm rebelling, so how about a little Brawling at Average, too. But that leaves me with two skill ranks, and I don't see a way I think they should be spent, so now what?

Lydia: Well, you could always pick up some minions or items with those ranks.

Bill: Like an item I take from the catacombs? That'd really twist dad's tail!

Lydia: Right, and it should be chaos themed, so something twisting, winding...

Bill: How about a cloak that lets me change my appearance?

Lydia: Spending two skill levels? Sure, I'll let it provide you some disguise effects.

Bill: Cool, new toy!

Lydia: That's the spirit. Okay, Private Garrik...

John: House Earth, like I said. This is still part of me working with the military, and I'm trying for at least Lieutenant, so let's go with Leadership, Tactics at Average, and Crossbow at Fair.

Lydia: And a fine military career continues. Okay, if everyone's ready... the next two years come to pass. You all are moving out of late adolescence and into early adulthood, now. It comes out that all the tension and hubbub has to do with a war between angels and demons that some think is heading towards the nexus. The houses are definitely moving into a "protect their own" mode at this point; the whole place is jittery now, like world war two London before an air raid. Joram, Gustav sends you to Void House proper, saying that the Catacombs aren't safe enough.

Bill: Dang it!

Lydia: ... And guard duty becomes a very important job, Private. Tyrena...?

Cass: I like the idea that Tyrena sort of ends up untouched by it all with her head stuck in books through all this... Can I take Oblivious as an aspect?

Lydia: No problem, it'll be a good source of Fate points for you as the game goes on, I suspect.

Cass: Yeah. Okay, so Oblivious, a Researching skill at Average, House Lore up one to Fair — that puts me at three Fair, four Average. Concentration and Planar Zoology at Average.

Lydia: That fits. Ro, you can assume your promotion, so...?

John: Excellent. I'm going to take an aspect of Order at this point, if that's okay? I've had the punk kid bits drilled out of me, and it's a good time to come in to my own with that extra skill level. Okay, I've got four Averages and two Fairs to start. Let's take Military History at Average, Survival (Wilderness) at Fair, for three levels —

Lydia: I'm not sure Survival fits the orderly theme we're looking for, here.

John: I'll accept that. Okay, then, let's make that a promotion for Tactics to Fair, so I'm at 4 Averages and 3 Fairs now, and I've got three levels left... can I get your permission to bump up Swordfighting?

Lydia: Hm. Sure, but note down that your training is founded in established forms and discipline. It's a flavor thing, but could be important.

John: Okay, so, yay, Swordfighting at Good, and two skill levels left over. Since I'm at 1/2/4 now, I can add in another Fair... I'll bump Leadership to Fair — but that's 1/3/3, so I need another Average — and pull in some Administration at Average to reflect the paperwork that comes with being an officer. I'm done.

Bill: Well, I said I wanted to be a necromancer of some kind, but I'm not sure if that still works.

Lydia: Well, you're around the House now, so picking up an Ancestry or House aspect would be appropriate.

Bill: Yeah. Okay, then, Ancestry of Void as the aspect... I've got two Fair and three Average, and four skill levels. I can buy a Good outright, how about Voices of the Dead, so I can talk to spirits?

Lydia: That's perfect.

Bill: And one skill level, which I've gotta spend. Time to learn more about my House, I guess... House Lore at Average.

Lydia: And so concludes the early coming of age stuff. We've got two phases left to go. In the next two years, the worst fears are realized. Angels and devils duke it out in the streets, across the planes. A number of interplanar gates are wrecked beyond functioning and the common man cowers in whatever dark corners he can find. The Houses themselves take some collateral damage during this period; as you exit this phase, the war will still be going on.

Bill: Crud, what's up with Dad?

Lydia: No word from him, and the House isn't letting anyone out.

Bill: Argh! Darn it, I'm going to go check on him anyway. Sneak out if I have to. I think another Chaos aspect is in order, to reflect the times.

Lydia: Okay. Just a normal aspect this time, no hook bonus.

Bill: No worries. Right, so, I've got one Good, two Fair, four Average... I'm going to be a skulker here, so I'm going to bump my Stealth to Good and my Brawling to Fair... That puts me at two Good, two Fair, three Average... I need another Fair and another Average, but that'd need three ranks, not two. Crud.

Lydia: Right, picking up another Good at this point would be tough, since you bought that item.

Bill: I can deal. Brawling to Fair still makes sense, and I'll add in Bribery at Average, to help me get out the gate without sneaking. Climbing at Average too, I think, and Intimidation when the soft touch fails me. How's Dad doing?

Lydia: He's turned the catacombs into a regular fortress, and is occasionally sheltering refugees. Got wounded early on, so he's developed something of a limp. He never says it, but you get the feeling he's glad you came along. Lieutenant Garrik...

John: Defending the house should only improve my ties to it, so I'm going to take another level of the House Earth aspect. I want some House Lore at Average, bump my Alertness up two to Good. That's 2/3/4, so the pyramid's balanced, and I have one skill level. I'll spend it on an Ally, in the sense that I've got a house guardsman who regularly works for me as a part of house military duty.

Lydia: I can run with that. We'll work out the details after the rest of character generation.

John: Righto.

Cass: I think this is where Tyrena snaps out of it for a while, studies some medicine, and helps with her house's wounded. I'm going to take a 'Healer' aspect. First Aid at Fair, Herbalism and Chirurgeon at Average.

Lydia: And now the final phase. The war between heavens and hells culminates with a bit of divine intervention. A titanic spear is driven into the center of the Nexus, releasing vast energies and shattering the structure of the planes. Many house holdings are in ruins — yours particularly, so this leaves you all between jobs up to the point of starting the game — and for Gustav and Joram, the catacombs keep a steady crowd of refugees, eating up all of Gustav's time and probably a good bit of Joram's. Tyrena and the Lieutenant should work out how they come into contact with the folks at the catacombs during this time, since I'm going to use that as the launching point for the game...

John: My friend, the ally, he got wounded, and we'd lost our medics... maybe the catacombs were nearby...

Cass: Yeah, and I've probably gone into good samaritan mode at this point — I'm going to take an aspect of Goodness this phase — so maybe I'm the one who tends to your friend, having found my way there and helping the refugees...

Bill: And I'm drawn to you folks out of looking for ways to help Dad but wanting to be around folks my own age... Though I probably give off a bad first impression, what with the conversations I keep having with the ones who don't make it.

Cass: Creepy. Okay, with the 5 ranks from the plot hook bonus, I'm starting with 8 Averages and 4 Fairs. Bump First Aid and Chirurgeon to Good, for three ranks. I'm going to need to calm a lot of ragged nerves during this time too, so I think Diplomacy at Fair makes sense.

Lydia: I can see that all fitting in with your strong tie to Goodness. Lieutenant?

John: I'm one of the folks with military experience still around after this, and there are a lot of refugees. I think it's time for me to take on a Protector aspect.

Lydia: Juicy! I like it.

John: Sword to Great, one. Leadership to Good, two. Athletics to Fair, three. Barricading at Average, four. Done.

Bill: I've got a roomful of refugees and no idea what to do with them. Given my necromantic tendencies, I think I'll be the one who makes sure that last wishes are carried out, and take another level of Void Ancestry.

Lydia: Okay...

Bill: Voices of the Dead is at Good and about where I want it, I think I'll pick up Sense Spirit Realm at Fair, for two, and put the other two into a couple spirit minions who decide to haunt me along the way, who can probably provide me knowledge and answers I wouldn't normally have access to...

Lydia: I could have fun with those, that works. Okay! Looks like we're done.

The Sheets

Juram

- Void Ancestry 2 Good
- Chaos 2 Good
- Gustav the Keeper 1 Fair

- Alertness Average (0)
- Survival (Underground) Average (0)
- House Lore (Void) Average (0)
- Climbing Average (0)
- Bribery Average (0)
- Intimidation Average (0)
- Stealth Fair (+1)
- Area Know.(Catacombs) Fair (+1)
- Brawling Fair (+1)
- Sense Spirit Realm Fair (+1)
- Voices of the Dead Good (+2)

Other Elements

- Item: Cloak of Faces (2 levels)
 Appearance Changing, Concealment
- Minions: Spirit Guides (2 Levels)

Goal

Spooky

Ro Garrik

- Order 1 Fair
- House Earth 1 Good
- Military Training 1 Fair
- Protector 1 Fair

- Military History Average (0)
- Administration Average (0)
- House Lore Average (0)
- Barricading Average (0)
- Tactics Fair (+1)
- Crossbow Fair (+1)
- Athletics Fair (+1)
- Alertness Good (+2)
- Leadership Good (+2)
- Sword Great (+3)

Other Elements

- Ally: Guardsman in House Earth: (1 level)

Goal

Champion

Tyrena

- Goodness 1 Fair
- Healer 1 Fair
- Air Ancestry 1 Fair
- Air House 1 Fair
- Oblivious 1 Fair

- History Average (0)
- Mythology Average (0)
- Navigation Average (0)
- Researching Average (0)
- Concentration Average (0)
- Planar Zoology Average (0)
- Herbalism Average (0)
- Whispers on the Wind Fair (+1)
- Lifting Breeze Fair (+1)
- House Lore (Air) Fair (+1)
- Diplomacy Fair (+1)
- First Aid Good (+2)
- Chirurgeon Good (+2)

Goal

Healer

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