

GREY CELLS



BOGDAN CONSTANTINESCU

A Dapper Fish Designs Publication

Grey Cells
Copyright © 2020 Bogdan Constantinescu
All rights reserved.

First published in 2020 by Dapper Fish Designs.

Spiral Bound ISBN: 978-0-6487569-0-3

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior express permission of the publisher.

The exception to this is exclusive personal use. Backups and similar copies may be made as long as there is no intent to distribute them.

This book was produced using the Adobe Creative Suite.
Typefaces: Gill Sans MT, Agency FB, Billionaire



CREDITS

Bogdan Constantinescu

Game Design / Writing / Layout / Editing

Blythe Ashton

Character Illustrator

Liviu Constantinescu

Cover Illustrator

Krzysztof Stepień

Character Sheet Design

Dedicated to Virgil Constantinescu. who held many secrets we'll never know.



THANKS

Super Thanks to Liviu Constantinescu, my supportive and brilliant brother who is a mystery I've been trying to solve all my life.

Special Thanks to Alex Baumann, Andrew Delaney, Ashnil Kumar, Bislab, Brothgar, Caillech, Chiyoko, Dancole, Daniela Constantinescu, Dasdagger, Ehpeaell, Eva, Fliek, George Constantinescu, Hablaman, Herbert Peppard, J. Larkin, Less.weird.nickname, Munkholt, Neylla, Peter Budd, RogueRobotGames, Ryan Thomas, Slyder, Titan, Tympest, Wei Jiang, Woolicane, Yorgen, Zach Benitez and Zombie Horse. Without your help this game would never have come to be.

Many Thanks to all Kickstarter backers for your support and patience.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....1

What Is Grey Cells.....	1
Principles of Play.....	2
Why Play Grey Cells.....	2
What You'll Need.....	3

1: BASICS OF PLAY.....4

The Conversation	4
The Mechanics	5
Creating A Character.....	10
Progressing The Investigation.....	12

2: GENRE.....16

Great Detectives	16
Cozy	17
Hard Boiled.....	18
Police Procedural	20
Thriller	21

3: BACKGROUNDS.....23

Beat Cop	24
Crook.....	28
Detective.....	32
Reporter.....	36
Scientist	40
Socialite	44
Advancement	48
Creating Custom Backgrounds.....	51

4: SPECIAL ACTIONS.....53

Action Blocks.....	53
Information Gathering	55

Combat.....	61
Limited Actions.....	68

5: CONTACTS.....71

Contact Tags	72
--------------------	----

6: EXPLOITS.....73

Academic.....	73
Action.....	76
Awareness.....	77
Police.....	79
Social.....	80
Underworld.....	81

7: MOMENTUM POWERS.....83

Academic	84
Action.....	84
Awareness	85
Police.....	85
Social.....	86
Underworld.....	87

8: MASTERING A MYSTERY.....88

GM Principles.....	88
Handling The Rules	90
The Villainous Agenda.....	92
Crafting Cases.....	95
Prices & Threats In Detail.....	99
Personal Agendas	106



INTRODUCTION

IT IS THE BRAIN, THE LITTLE GREY CELLS ON WHICH ONE MUST RELY. ONE MUST SEEK THE TRUTH WITHIN - NOT WITHOUT.

~HERCULE POIROT

WHAT IS GREY CELLS?

Grey Cells is a roleplaying game for three to four players about solving crimes. It's about being an investigator, grilling suspects, examining crime scenes and plumbing the darkness for critical clues under the constant shadow of the villain's agenda. It's about piecing together a picture of the truth, but most of all, it's about people. Every criminal has a motive, and everyone connected to the crime is changed by it - the perpetrators, the victims, and the investigators.

Players in Grey Cells create their own crime fiction stories. Taking on the persona of investigators and detectives, players work together to explore the world, question witnesses, and solve mysteries presented to them by one player assuming the role of Game Master (GM). Often Grey Cells can feel as much like a puzzle solving exercise as a roleplaying game, as you put your heads together to deduce solutions, with your characters and the mechanisms of the game helping you to collect and assemble critical clues.

Whether the story be about hard-boiled private eyes, modern detectives or nosy old ladies, Grey Cells provides both opportunities and guidance for both creating stories and existing within a variety of crime fiction genres.

Regardless of where our characters come from, we play to delve into the unknown, to unravel the tangled web of motivations, evidence and deceit. We tear the truth from unwilling hands and with its threads stitch together a tapestry. We use our little grey cells. We solve cases.



INTRODUCTION

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

BE CURIOUS

Grey Cells is driven by curiosity. Question everything and everyone. Find loose threads and pull on them. Write down clues and see how they fit together.

Between scenes, take what you know and compare it to what you have learned. What's been confirmed? Does anything not add up? Did someone just lie to you? Or has someone been lying from the start?

Keep your mind active. Stay engaged with the story and with the other players. Work together, keep your curiosity alive and even the most fiendish mystery will be elementary.

BE PATIENT

Eventually, you will run into dead ends. When all your leads have gone cold and you don't know where to look next, don't get frustrated. Look over what you've gathered, see if there's a scene you haven't looked at, or a character you haven't talked to.

And if you still come up empty? Embrace failure. Things will go wrong, and sometimes you will get outwitted. Having a villain get away with it can be very exciting, and sets a perfect stage for later cases involving them!

This principle also applies to the GM - what you might think is a simple case can still be quite complex when viewed from outside. Be generous with information, but don't volunteer too much unprompted. Your players have the tools they need; give them time to work it out.

BE DRAMATIC

Investigators have their own relationships, desires and fears. When possible, discuss the case in character with your fellow investigators. Consider the genre you're playing in and the stories you're trying to tell.

As the GM, keep in mind what your own characters are thinking, feeling, and hiding. How have they been affected by the crime? What is their attitude towards the investigators? Portray them as people, and use language appropriate for the genre, both in conversation and when describing the world.

WHY PLAY GREY CELLS?

A mystery plot can be overlaid onto many roleplaying games and work to a greater or lesser extent, but Grey Cells takes that a step further.



In Grey Cells, the mechanisms and characters are built around the idea of gathering and assembling clues, as well as interacting with the world in a general sense. The players and GM also have tools such as **momentum powers** to push the investigation onwards and ensure that the story never reaches a standstill.

Writing mysteries can be challenging, and in roleplaying games that challenge is compounded by featuring unpredictable player characters. To this end, Grey Cells includes a set of GM tools to help them craft mysteries specifically for a roleplaying environment - indeed, any roleplaying environment. If you want to add a mystery plot to an existing game, Grey Cells can help.

Ultimately, playing Grey Cells is a fusion of playing engaging characters while sinking your teeth into a solid puzzle. If you are looking for a mix of crime drama and mental gymnastics, Grey Cells is for you.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

ESSENTIALS

- » Two to four players, including one GM.
- » Character sheets
- » Notepads
- » Pencils
- » A handful of six-sided dice (at least 5)
- » Index cards or Post-Its
- » The Grey Cells rulebook

LUXURIES

- » Whiteboard
- » Corkboard & pins
- » Printed Person of Interest cards

BASICS OF PLAY

THE CONVERSATION

Most of Grey Cells is talking to your fellow players and the GM. Each player's mandate is to communicate their character's actions and thoughts, and speak as your character when conversing with other characters in the game.

Much of the conversation will be interrogating non-player characters (NPCs) controlled by the GM, or interrogating the world itself, such as asking the GM for details in a crime scene.

When it is time for characters to act, the dice determine if those actions are successful, and the conversation resumes with the results of those actions in mind. But characters don't talk to each other in a vacuum; they exist in scenes.

FRAMING SCENES

In Grey Cells, players are tasked with solving a crime, and to do so they create scenes - generally visiting locations or Persons of Interest (POIs). The players decide where they will go, and the GM begins the scene by describing the location and introducing the characters and situation they find themselves in - or asking the players to place themselves in the scene, if appropriate.

The pace of these scenes will vary depending on the genre of the game; a Hard Boiled or Police Procedural game may skip straight to the critical part of the scene, while a Cozy or Great Detectives game might spend more time describing set dressing. These are examined in more detail on Page 14, but generally the pace of the scene will wax and wane with the action.

Keeping the pace and level of detail to the play group's preference helps to maintain focus and keeps the game moving; just be careful not to rush past important clues or drown them in florid descriptions.

PREPARING A CRIME BOARD

Sometimes mysteries spiral to an extent that it's impossible to keep all the details, clues and connections in the case in mind. To this end, a crime board



can be very helpful.

The board can be represented by index cards or post-it notes on a table between the players, or a corkboard or whiteboard if available. If playing online, a shared digital space to keep notes can also serve this function.

A section of the board should be reserved for each important case element: suspects, key locations and events. Take notes on each element as you learn about them, and leave space to expand these sections if possible.

Players should divide the responsibility of note-taking between themselves, and share the spotlight during scenes. One approach is to have player characters (PCs) take turns being the lead character in scenes, with the other players still contributing but also ensuring that notes are taken on critical details.

FOLLOWING LEADS

Often clues you'll find in a scene will lead to a new character or location that bears investigation. Sometimes these can be overt, such as a conspicuously placed hotel matchbook, or they can be more subtle and require deduction to uncover. Keeping play flowing is about knowing where you'll go next.

Keep track of what leads you have available and make them clear in your notes. Also, knowing what questions you want answers to can keep scenes focused and make sure the investigation is on track. What are the most important parts of the case right now? Do you still lack a clear motive for the crime? Is there an accomplice as yet unaccounted for? Always think what loose threads and unanswered questions you can pursue, and decide who or what you think holds the answers.

If you still find yourself stuck, look to your own contacts and abilities; your characters have their own resources and people willing to assist them. When up against a wall, investigators can create their own leads!

THE MECHANICS

ATTRIBUTES

Every character in Grey Cells has an array of attributes which indicate where their talents lie. There are four primary attributes:

Observation (OBS): Your perception and eye for detail.

Education (EDU): Your knowledge and scholarship.

Muscle (MUS): Your physical strength and toughness.

Agility (AGI): Your manual dexterity and speed.

BASICS OF PLAY

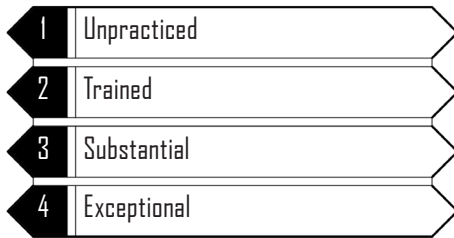
There are also three secondary attributes. These serve as a special currency the characters, usable once per point. Insight and Grit are restored to their full value at the start of a play session, whereas Cash is restored at the start of a new case.

Insight (INS): Your intuition and sense for the out of place.

Grit (GRIT): Your determination and perseverance.

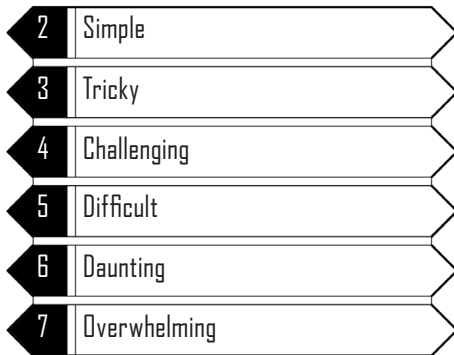
Cash (CASH): Your disposable wealth.

Attributes are indicated by a number from 1 to 4:



ATTRIBUTE CHECKS

The central mechanic of Grey Cells is an attribute check. Whenever a character performs an action that has a risk of failure or the outcome of which is unsure, the GM selects an appropriate attribute for the action and assigns a Difficulty (DIF) between 2 and 7 as a target number.



The player then rolls a number of six-sided dice (d6) equal to their score in that attribute. For example, a character with **MUS 3** that is trying to force a door open would roll 3d6.

Then, compare the number of dice with results equal to or greater than the DIF (successes) to determine what kind of a success is achieved:

0	Fail
1	Partial
2	Full
3+	Critical

Finally, look at the action block to see the final result. Most actions will use the **General Action** block (shown here), but some special actions such as **Asking Around** and **Brawling** have their own action blocks.

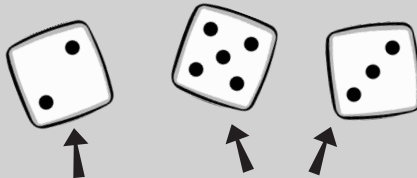
GENERAL ACTION

DIF: Determined by GM
Roll Any Attribute

- FAIL
You don't get what you want, with Consequence.
- PARTIAL
You get what you want, but with Consequence.
- FULL
You get what you want.
- CRITICAL
You get what you want, with Benefit.

*Nancy is examining a burgled store to discover how the perpetrator broke in. The GM decides that it wouldn't be too challenging and sets the DIF of the check to 3. Nancy has **OBS 3**, and so she rolls three dice.*

DIF 3



Unsuccessful Die

Successful Dice

Two of Nancy's dice were equal to or greater than the DIF (3 and 5) so Nancy scores a Full success. The GM reveals that the back door of the store has a splintered frame where it latches closed.

BASICS OF PLAY

CONSEQUENCE & BENEFIT

Often actions will result in Consequences or Benefits. These are determined by the GM, and provide a narrative or mechanical problem or advantage in addition to the results of the action - something goes wrong, or unexpectedly well. Their nature is dependent on the situation and the gravity of the action being attempted, and are discussed in more detail on Page 90.

Consequences and Benefits help the story develop beyond the direct actions of the players by injecting unexpected complications and opportunities. These should take the investigation in interesting directions, rather than simply making life easier or more difficult for the players.

OPPOSED ATTRIBUTE CHECKS

Often characters will find their actions directly opposed by someone else. This works like a normal attribute check, except one character (usually the player character) makes an attribute check against a DIF equal to 2 + the opposing character's attribute.

*Phillip is hiding from a mobster, hoping to overhear something important. He makes an **AGI** check against the mobster's **Observation**.*

*Phillip has **AGI 2**, and the mobster has **OBS 2**.*

DIF 4



Phillip has one successful die, so earns a partial success. He puts his ear to the door but the words are muffled and he can't make it out clearly; he only catches part of the conversation.

SHIFT

Shift is a bonus or penalty on a roll, usually caused by character abilities or injuries and fatigue. It works by adjusting the value of single dice by 1 per point of shift. Positive shift (e.g. **+Shift** or **Shift +1**) increases the die value, while negative shift (e.g. **-Shift** or **Shift -1**) decreases the die value.

In situations where a check has both **+Shift** and **-Shift**, they cancel each other out on a 1:1 basis until only one type of shift is left. **+Shift** is applied by the player, whereas **-Shift** is applied by the GM.

Shift can never exceed +3 or -3.

ADVANTAGE & HELP

When you have a situational advantage, you gain an Advantage die to the attribute check on top of the dice you roll from your attribute. You can only ever have one Advantage die in a check, regardless of how many factors are in your favor. You don't lose dice for disadvantageous situations; this is instead reflected in a higher DIF.

If another character wants to Help with an action, they must have a score of at least 2 in the relevant attribute. If they do, they provide Advantage to that check. However, they are also affected by any Consequences that result from that check.

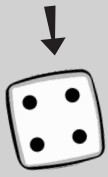
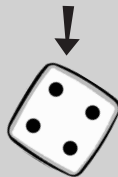
If in the previous check Phillip was in a dark room, it would be more difficult for the mobster to notice him. His Advantage die gives him a total of 3d6.

DIF 4



*Again, Phillip only has a partial success. However, if he had an exploit that granted him **Shift +2** when hiding, he could use that to improve his roll.*

SHIFT +2



*After applying his **+Shift**, he earns a critical success!*

BASICS OF PLAY

CREATING A CHARACTER

SELECTING A GENRE

Before creating characters, the group should decide what genre of game you want to play. This determines the style of game, the feel of the world and the cases you'll be facing. Genres are covered in Chapter 2.

Once you know what kind of a world you'll be stepping into, you're ready to start creating your character!

BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTOR

A character's background determines who and what they were before they began play. Each background offers sets of attributes, and these combine with a descriptor to determine a character's starting attributes.

Your background also determines your choices for starting contacts, exploits and momentum powers.

Beyond providing starting attributes, a character's descriptor only serves as a role-playing prompt; a simple description of what kind of a person they are.

Use them to inform how your character would react to the world and people around them - for instance, a Learned Detective would behave quite differently from a Hard-Boiled Detective.

CONTACTS

Characters don't exist in a vacuum - when you create a new character, they already know people, and some of those people are willing to help them out.

Contacts are usually specialists in a field, determined when you pick them. They might be forensic pathologists, historians, or a bartender in the seedy side of town. Contacts are categorised by Tags - a loose indication of their walk of life and how they can help the investigation. Contacts are covered on Page 71.

You can usually call upon a Contact multiple times throughout a case unless there's a reason they'd be unavailable.

EXPLOITS

Characters have special abilities and talents, known as Exploits. These grant



+Shift, unlock new uses for Secondary Attributes, and improve your character in other ways.

Exploits are divided by Tags; what Tags you have access to at character creation are determined by your background. A full list and description of Exploits can be found starting on Page 73.

MOMENTUM POWERS

Momentum powers are unique abilities that characters can use to get information that would otherwise be very difficult to access. Momentum powers are tied to your background - someone with a police background might be able to put out an **All Points Bulletin** to determine someone's location, whereas someone with a criminal background could make **An Offer You Can't Refuse**.

A Momentum Power can be used once per play session - once it's used, it's gone until the next time you play.

Momentum Powers are explored in more detail starting on Page 83.

ARMED

Some backgrounds have access to firearms and other deadly weapons. Having a weapon is optional even for backgrounds that can start with them, though having one can be useful should the investigator find themselves in a fight.

EXPERIENCE & ADVANCEMENT

At the end of a case you earn experience points (XP) equal to the number of evidence points you collected, and a bonus 2XP if you apprehended the villain. Once you have 12 XP, you reset your XP to 0 and take an advancement.

Advancement options are covered starting on Page 48.

INJURY & FATIGUE

Health is measured on two metrics: Injury and Fatigue, which measure your character's Status. Any effect that refers to Status can affect either Injury or Fatigue. Each track has two Status boxes that can be filled as a character is hurt or worn out. The more boxes are filled, the more a character is hindered, as shown ahead.

BASICS OF PLAY

0	No penalty
1	Shift -1 to all checks
2	Shift -2 to all checks
3	Shift -3 to all checks
4	Shift -4 to all checks*

Since the limit for **-Shift** is -3, the fourth level of status penalty only serves to cancel out **+Shift** the investigator may receive on that check.

If you need to fill a status box and cannot, you are knocked out of the current scene - you might be rendered unconscious, captured, hospitalized, or (rarely) killed. Another PC might be able to spare you from the worst, but ultimately the GM decides what happens.

PROGRESSING THE INVESTIGATION

The path an investigation takes will vary with each case, and with each group of investigators. How you go about your investigation is up to you, but here are some reliable approaches. Your character will be better at some approaches than others, but most cases will require several different approaches to get all the information you need.

INSPECT CRIME SCENES

Not every case will have a crime scene, but if it does then that's a good place to start. Learn what happened, who was involved, and who is connected to the event, or to the location. Crime scenes often have hidden clues that a vigilant investigator may pick up on.

FIND AND QUESTION PERSONS OF INTEREST

Persons of Interest (POIs) are individuals who are particularly important to the case. They may not always be suspects, but it often pays to find out what they have to say, and how they're involved.

They won't always be on your side - a POI might withhold information, stonewall you, or lie to you. In those situations, finding out why they're acting that way through other means may be as valuable as the information they have.

ESTABLISH MOTIVE, MEANS AND OPPORTUNITY

As you investigate, a picture of events will begin to emerge. Often these three factors will allow you to determine who is the most likely culprit. Motive refers to a reason to commit the crime, means refers to whether or not someone was able to commit the crime, and opportunity refers to if they had an chance to or opening in which to commit the crime.

CLOSE IN ON SUSPECTS

Once you narrow down the POIs to a few suspects, search for information and deduce from what you know to reduce your suspect pool further, and find more information about the individuals you are most suspicious of. Once you know who is responsible, you can form a plan to confront them, apprehend them or otherwise resolve the case.

COLLECTING EVIDENCE

Whenever you discover evidence of a character's misdeeds, you earn an evidence point (EP). Place a token on the character's section of the crime board, preferably beside a relevant note of what the EP represents.

During the case, EP can be spent to Interrogate characters. If you do so, mark the EP as spent - it may not be spent again.

At the end of the case, investigators earn XP equal to the number of EP collected, including spent EP.

WHAT CONSTITUTES EVIDENCE?

Not every piece of information you find counts as an evidence point. To gain EP, the information must be evidence of illicit activity, or at least the strong implication of such.

This could be the result of physical evidence, or testimony from another character. Conjecture on the investigator's part does not provide EP unless you find evidence to back it.

Finding proof that a character lied to you usually also provides an EP, unless it overlaps with other evidence. For example, if you discover evidence that a suspect is a killer, you do not gain a second EP because they previously lied to you about not being a killer.

BASICS OF PLAY

INTERROGATION

When engaging a character in regular conversation, they are free to be as helpful or unhelpful as they see fit. An investigator may instead choose to **interrogate** them, applying pressure and leveraging evidence discovered against them to force them to cooperate.

This works like an Attribute check, except the number of dice you roll is equal to the number of EP spent. You may also spend **GRIT** as normal. The **interrogate** action is described in full on Page 60.

EVERYONE HAS A PRICE

In Grey Cells, every NPC has a Price and a Threat, things they want or fear that can be used to manipulate them. If you can work out what they are make use of them, you gain Advantage to the Interrogation check. Prices & Threats are detailed in Chapter 8.

Investigators also have a Price and Threat, though NPCs will not be able to use them against you. Instead, these serve as roleplaying prompts and concepts to help illustrate your character and their values.

THE VILLAINOUS AGENDA TRACK

The investigators are not the only ones at work during a case. The villain or villains also have their own plan they are pushing forward. As the Villainous Agenda track fills, aspects of the case might change; new evidence might appear, or bodies might start piling up. If the track fills completely, the investigators have one last scene to try and foil them; otherwise, their plan is complete and the investigators have failed.

The Villainous Agenda advances whenever the investigators complete a scene. Below is an example of a partially-filled Villainous Agenda track.



WHAT IS A SCENE?

Most commonly, a scene is the time spent visiting a significant location or person of interest.

There can be variance, however - a case that takes place entirely within one afternoon might have each conversation or each room of a house count as a scene. You can experiment with speeding it up and slowing it down to find out what works best for your group.

Some Special Actions **take a long time**: these are often scenes on their

own, or are used to open or close a scene.

INTERMISSION SCENES

Whenever the Villainous Agenda track progresses, the GM may trigger an intermission scene. These scenes indicate that something significant has changed, usually as a result of the villain's actions.

Intermission scenes may include any or all of the investigators, but **do not count as scenes spent towards the Villainous Agenda track**. These scenes may offer new information or new leads, or they could result in complications and closed doors.

An intermission scene could even include none of the investigators if the GM wants to show an event happening elsewhere, but in this case the investigators themselves usually won't know about it.

Sometimes, the Villainous Agenda track can move outside of the scene structure. This may be as a result of an investigator unwittingly serving the villain's cause, a scene strengthening the villain's position, or a significant setback in the investigation.

CLOSING THE CASE

When the investigators have solved the mystery and apprehended the villain, they are ready to close the case. The players and the GM may freely create scenes to form an epilogue to the story, though at this point EP are no longer earned.

Once the case is closed, each investigator earns 1XP per EP collected (both spent and unspent) and an bonus 2XP if they apprehended the villain. If they let the villain go they may still earn this bonus XP, as long as they were in a position to apprehend or arrest the villain and instead chose to let them go. If the villain escaped without the investigators having a say in the matter, they do not earn the bonus XP.

If the investigators were incorrect in their conclusions, arrested the wrong person or otherwise mishandled the investigation, the GM may reveal it at this point - or they could sit on that information and have it come up in a future case.

GENRE

There are many ways to play Grey Cells, and modelling your game after your favourite genre of crime fiction can help create engaging investigations.

Speak with your group about what genre or mix of genres you'd like to aim for - this can help to inform who your characters are, what the world around them is like and what manner of crimes they'll be dealing with. Feel free to tweak features of a genre to suit your group's taste.

GREAT DETECTIVES

THE INVESTIGATORS ARE...

Aces

Often brilliant detectives and their sidekicks, investigators in a Great Detectives game work alone. While they may call on certain useful individuals, they eschew the aid of the police force and its resources, relying instead on their own wits.

Respected

Viewed by the general populace as geniuses and miracle workers, Great Detectives may be called upon by desperate clients as a last resort when all other measures have failed. Even though the police force may not appreciate their meddling, they can't deny their skill.

THE WORLD IS...

Old Fashioned

People get around in horse-drawn carriages, communicate by telegram, and get their news from cryers in the town square.

Classist

Society is sharply divided into tiers, with a massive difference between the poor and the wealthy.

Grubby

Large parts of the city and their inhabitants are dirty, crowded and squalid. The wealthy dare not be seen in such places.



THE WORLD IS NOT...

- Safe** — Crime, poverty and prostitution are rife, and walking down a dark alley is inadvisable.
- Helpful** — Outside of contacts, it is rare to find someone capable of assisting in your investigation. The police force exists mainly to make you look good in comparison.

CRIMES ARE...

- Convolved** — The motives and methods of criminals are rarely clear. Criminals may be several steps removed from their victims, if they are connected at all.
- Violent** — Murder and assault are not uncommon. Even theft can involve injuries, damaged property and smashed windows.
- Independent** — Most cases have a single person responsible for them; a serial killer, a mastermind, an expert thief. Criminal networks are rare, and even if they're involved there's generally only one person responsible.

COZY

THE INVESTIGATORS ARE...

- Amateurs** — Rarely professionals, the investigators are talented but ordinary people drawn into the squabbles of their acquaintances.
- Social** — Cases are mostly investigated by talking to people; physical evidence is of secondary importance.
- Civilians** — Without any real authority, but the investigators may be able to get into places or talk to people the police can't.

THE WORLD IS...

- Clean** — The cobblestone streets are swept, people tend green gardens bursting with flowers - why, it would be a lovely place to live if not for all the murder.
- Small** — Often a Cozy mystery will take place inside a single mansion, or within a small town. There's a small cast of characters, and a small pool of suspects...

GENRE

Connected

... and they all know each other. Gossip abounds, love triangles form and are shattered every day, and everyone is in everyone else's business. Complex webs of relationships between characters are a mainstay of the genre.

THE WORLD IS NOT...

Graphic

Even murders are tidy affairs, and the deadliest poison makes for a very presentable corpse. Heavens forfend there should be a drop of blood on the carpet! Ever there is the veneer of civility, even in the midst of tragedy.

Dangerous

Communities are gated off from any undesirable elements, people are genteel and killers are more likely to invite you for tea than to do you harm.

CRIMES ARE...

Personal

If ever there is a crime committed, it is over a personal slight or a broken heart. People don't wrong those they don't know - they save the most heinous crimes for the people closest to them.

Premeditated

Crimes of passion are rare as hen's teeth. Any wrongdoing is the result of festering discontent and cold calculation.

Private

It would take some great secret to drive someone to a criminal act, either a secret held or a secret discovered. Affairs, embezzlement, hidden weddings, and sequestered wills are hidden - and discovered - every day.

HARD BOILED

THE INVESTIGATORS ARE...

Jaded

They've seen past the glitz and glamour, the shining lights and million-dollar promises. They've laid eyes on the choking heart of the city, and know how to squeeze the putrified truth from it.

Scrupulous

Surrounded by made men, crooked cops and politicians, Hard Boiled investigators are at the top of a very short list of people you can trust.

Scraping By

It's hard to find honest work in this town, even harder to find any that pays a damn. Investigators live in dingy offices and drink bottom-shelf whiskey.

Disliked

You don't make many friends in this line of work. Everyone's got something to hide, so nobody likes the guy who's job it is to pry into peoples' business. Even their own clients keep their distance.

THE WORLD IS...

Corrupt

Everyone's in someone's pocket, and nobody gets to the top without stepping on a few people on the way. Your employer might be involved in the very crime they're having you investigate.

Seedy

Drink, drugs and prostitution make a brisk business on the streets. Many people don't concern themselves with much beyond getting their next fix - and some folk have very exotic tastes.

Threatening

There's gotta be a way to do this that doesn't involve people offering to beat you, shoot you, throw you in the slammer, burn your house down or toss you in the river with a new pair of concrete shoes. Whatever that way is, you haven't found it yet.

THE WORLD IS NOT...

Forgiving

People who land in hot water often have a hard time getting out. Problem is, those people are the ones you usually find on your doorstep.

Grateful

Doesn't matter how many cases you close and people you save. At the end of the day, all you can really hope for is to keep the lights on a little while longer.

CRIMES ARE...

Messy

Every major crime is surrounded by a dozen smaller crimes trying to cover it up. There are plenty of threads you can pull on, but the spider doesn't appreciate people playing with its web.

GENRE

Monetary

Doesn't matter what the crime is - theft, blackmail, arson, murder, jaywalking - it almost always comes down to money.

Covered

Criminals have a support network you could only dream of. Thugs to get in your way, fixers tidying up loose ends; hell, half the police force is on the take. All you've got is a half-empty pack of cigarettes and the knowledge that the more people working to keep this guy safe, the more people know where he is.

POLICE PROCEDURAL

THE INVESTIGATORS ARE...

Police

Either working for or directly connected to the police force. They might be detectives, street cops, forensic scientists - their job is to uphold law and order.

Supported

Investigators have the precinct behind them, and this carries many advantages - labs, records, resources, but more important than anything else: the badge.

Overworked

Just because those resources exist doesn't mean they're always available.

THE WORLD IS...

Modern

Often set in a metropolis or major city, people enjoy all the conveniences and stresses that come with living there. Techniques such as fingerprinting and DNA testing exist.

Broad

Investigators will usually visit many different and distant locations throughout the case.

Relatable

People value the same things we do, live like we do, and talk like we do.

THE WORLD IS NOT...

Isolated

Mobile phones, social media and easy transport mean that nobody is ever really alone - and someone could always be watching.



Simple

It's a melting pot of technologies, cultures, traditions and motivations. The average person has to keep half a dozen plates spinning at any given time and wants many different things, even if - *especially* if - they contradict one another.

CRIMES ARE...

Graphic

Murders are brutal and motives can be twisted. Autopsies are common, and a strong stomach is advisable.

Spontaneous

Less planning tends to be involved, even for premeditated murder. Crimes are performed out of avarice, passion, and sometimes even by accident. Anyone can be a victim, and anyone can be a culprit.

THRILLER

THE INVESTIGATORS ARE...

Outmatched

Whatever they're up against is bigger than them, and more dangerous by far.

Desperate

This crime is just the tip of the iceberg. There's a lot more behind it, and if you don't do something fast, there'll be a lot more ahead of it too.

Alone

Perhaps you can't trust anyone. Perhaps they all think you're crazy, or think this is too big and want you to let it go. Either way, the list of people you can rely on is pitifully small.

THE WORLD IS...

In On It

Why does the Chief want you off the case? Does the witness know more than they're letting on? Is the car you keep seeing across the street meant to be there?

Dangerous

The closer you get to the villain, the more likely it is you'll become their victim.

GENRE

THE WORLD IS NOT...

Forthcoming

Sometimes the only way to get what you want is to force it out of someone.

Waiting

Thrillers may have shorter Villainous Agenda tracks than other cases; investigators who drag their feet may be doomed to failure.

CRIMES ARE...

Grand

The villain has a plan, and you've only seen the start of it. If they're on their own, they have the skills and the intelligence to pull it off. If they're part of a group, they have enough support that they think themselves untouchable.

Theatrical

Crime scenes may be staged, bodies specifically posed. Messages may be left to taunt the investigators.

Disturbing

Depending on the nature of the villains and the crimes, Thrillers may delve into dark territory. Talk to your group and decide together what kind of content people want to have in their game.

COMBINING GENRES

One way to mix up a setting is to combine elements of different genres. When the investigators or the villain don't fit within the world they live, that can create fertile ground for interesting investigations!



BACKGROUNDS

Investigators come from all walks of life, and from both sides of the law. Sometimes they're otherwise ordinary people who find themselves solving mysteries through interest, circumstance, or uncanny talent.

Each background represents a different style of investigator; rather than being specific roles or professions, treat them as an umbrella under which many different characters could be included. If you already have a character in mind, pick the background that best suits them, otherwise build your character around one that looks interesting to you.

Consider also what the other players want to play. While investigators of any and all backgrounds can work together effectively, some combinations are easier to justify in fiction. When building your characters, talk about whether your characters already know each other and why they're working together.

Sometimes a background represents who you were rather than who you are now. If you are having trouble making your characters connect, consider that your character may have left their background behind and is now in a position that better connects to the other investigators.

ABILITY TAGS

Some investigator abilities are divided by Tags. Your background will mark certain tags on your character sheet - abilities with those tags will now be available for purchase.

When you advance your character you can mark new Tags to broaden the capabilities of your character.

INVESTIGATOR COMBINATIONS

While each background is versatile, teaming up with investigators of different backgrounds or different focuses can help to form an effective team. Having a good spread of Primary Attributes and different marked Tags can ensure that the investigators will be able to take on any challenge they face. Doubling up on strengths can make the team excel in that field, especially since it makes it more likely they'll be able to Help each other when the time comes.



THE BEAT COP

Police work begins on the street, and that's where Beat Cops live. Often the first line of defense against crime, these are patrolmen, traffic police and emergency responders.

They deal with crime every day, though often it's more related to snatched purses and assault than complex mysteries. They may not always have the wits and training of their detective counterparts, but their life on the streets has made them able to run down a perp, break down a door, and hold their own in a fight.

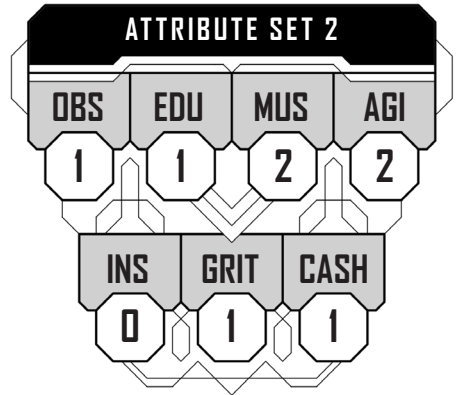
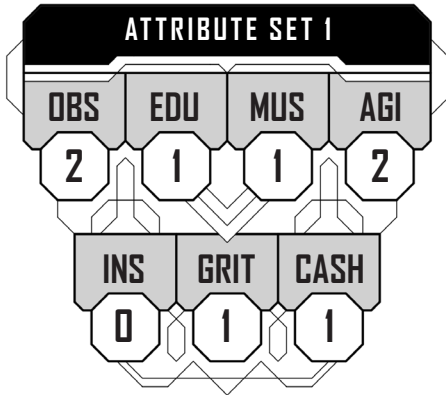
TOUCHSTONES

Martin Riggs, Roger Murtaugh (Lethal Weapon)
Arthur Hastings (Hercule Poirot mysteries)
Anne Lewis (Robocop)
Mike Lowrey, Marcus Burnett (Bad Boys)
David Starsky, Ken Hutchinson (Starsky & Hutch)
Cybil Bennett (Silent Hill)



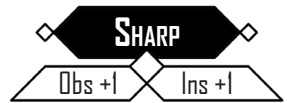
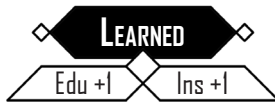
Beat Cop

Pick one of the following sets of starting Attributes.



DESCRIPTORS

Pick one and add its attributes to your total.



Select one Action, Police or Underworld exploit. Mark these tags on your sheet.



Select one Action or Police momentum power.

CONTACTS

You have one Legal, Specialist, or Underworld contact. Don't pick them yet, but mark these tags on your sheet.

ARMED

You may have access to a deadly weapon.

APPEARANCE

Choose one of each.

Rough face, bright face, weathered face, plain face.

Stocky body, slender body, hulking body, rotund body.

Crisp uniform, shabby uniform.

BEAT

The place you patrol is one of the following:

- » A gated community
- » An ethnic enclave
- » A center of business
- » A gang's turf
- » A quiet suburb
- » A den of debauchery
- » Crowded and squalid

FEATURES

You have two of the following:

- » Participated in a major case
- » Just come out of the Academy
- » Seen it all
- » A great failure weighing on you
- » At least one medal
- » A shady past
- » Worked undercover
- » No need for a partner

RELATIONS

Choose one for each investigator:

- » You have their back, no matter what
- » You patrol their neighbourhood
- » You've arrested them before
- » You've been friends for years
- » You've both lost someone
- » You've jumped away from explosions together

PRICE & THREAT

Choose one of the following to be your Price: What you value or desire more than anything else, and another to be your Threat: Your greatest fear or vulnerability.

- » Money
- » Power
- » Safety
- » Family
- » Image
- » Community
- » Freedom
- » Excitement
- » Revenge
- » Love
- » Lust
- » Obsession



THE CROOK

You are, or were, a criminal. Maybe you were embezzling, maybe you were collecting debts, or perhaps something darker. Crime is your forte.

Perhaps that's why you're so good at this, that killer instinct giving you the edge nobody else has. Maybe we need wolves to protect the sheep. Or maybe the other wolves should just watch their damn step.

TOUCHSTONES

Nathan Ford, Eliot Spencer, Parker (Leverage)
Lisbeth Salander (The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo)
Fiona Glenanne (Burn Notice)
Marv (Sin City)
Hannibal Lecter (Silence of the Lambs)
John Cleaver (I Am Not A Serial Killer)
Light Yagami (Death Note)
Jason Bourne (The Bourne Identity)



Crook

Pick one of the following sets of starting Attributes.

ATTRIBUTE SET 1

OBS	EDU	MUS	AGI
2	2	1	1
INS	GRIT	CASH	
1	0	1	

ATTRIBUTE SET 2

OBS	EDU	MUS	AGI
1	1	2	2
INS	GRIT	CASH	
0	1	1	

DESCRIPTORS

Pick one and add its attributes to your total.

DETERMINED

Obs +1 Grit +1

DIRTY

Obs +1 Cash +1

ELEGANT

Agi +1 Ins +1

HARD-BOILED

Mus +1 Ins +1

LEARNED

Edu +1 Ins +1

SHARP

Obs +1 Ins +1

SHREWD

Edu +1 Grit +1

SMOOTH

Agi +1 Grit +1

VIOLENT

Mus +1 Grit +1

EXPLOITS

Select one Action, Awareness or Underworld exploit. Mark these tags on your sheet.

MOMENTUM POWER

Select one Action or Underworld momentum power.

CONTACTS

You have one Administrative, Specialist, or Underworld contact. Don't pick them yet, but mark these tags on your sheet.

ARMED

You may have access to a deadly weapon.

APPEARANCE

Choose one of each.

Scarred face, sly face, charming face, intense face.

Broad body, lithe body, compact body, voluptuous body.

Ragged clothes, business clothes, dark clothes, heavy clothes.

FEATURES

You have two of the following:

- » An warrant out for your arrest
- » Blood on your hands
- » Done time in prison
- » Pulled off a major heist
- » A false identity
- » A score to settle
- » A price on your head
- » A heavy conscience

RECORD

You were one of the following:

- » A con-man or charlatan
- » A thug or enforcer
- » A criminal attorney, emphasis on "criminal"
- » A white-collar criminal
- » A supplier of illicit materials
- » A burglar or thief
- » A blackmailer

RELATIONS

Choose one for each investigator:

- » You've committed crimes on their behalf
- » You've escaped from their clutches
- » You got them out of hot water
- » You've faced death together
- » You keep the wolves at bay
- » You act as their informant

PRICE & THREAT

Choose one of the following to be your Price: What you value or desire more than anything else, and another to be your Threat: Your greatest fear or vulnerability.

- » Money
- » Power
- » Safety
- » Family
- » Image
- » Community
- » Freedom
- » Excitement
- » Revenge
- » Love
- » Lust
- » Obsession



THE DETECTIVE

This is your wheelhouse. Whether private, police or a nosy amateur, you have the skill, smarts and stubbornness to catch the ones that thought they got away.

Collecting clues and putting together the pieces is your bread and butter. You have the knowledge and experience to solve any crime - which is good, because there's no shortage of those.

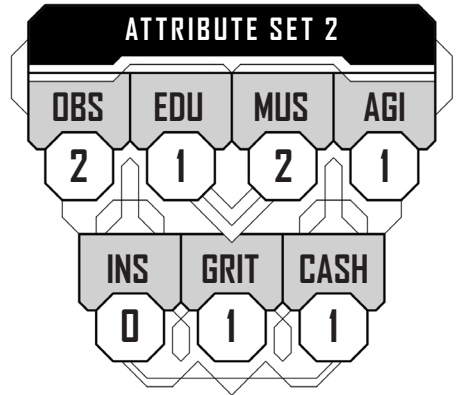
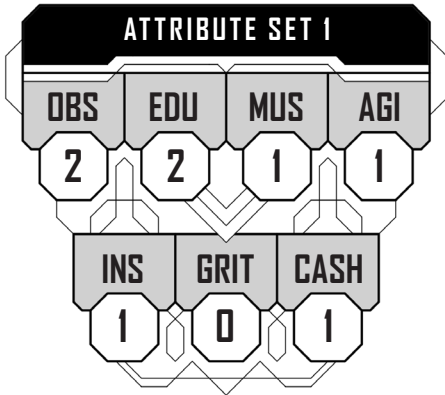
TOUCHSTONES

- Hercule Poirot
- Sherlock Holmes
- Maud Silver (Grey Mask)
- Clarice Starling (The Silence of the Lambs)
- Philip Marlowe (The Big Sleep)
- Sam Spade (The Maltese Falcon)
- Kate Beckett (Castle)
- Nancy Drew
- Veronica Mars
- L (Death Note)
- Kim Kitsuragi (Disco Elysium)
- Pikachu (Detective Pikachu)



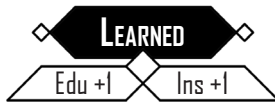
Detective

Pick one of the following sets of starting Attributes.



DESCRIPTORS

Pick one and add its attributes to your total.



Select one Academic, Awareness or Police exploit. Mark these tags on your sheet.



Select one Awareness or Police momentum power.

CONTACTS

You have one Legal, Medical, or Press contact. Don't pick them yet, but mark these tags on your sheet.

ARMED

You may have access to a deadly weapon.

APPEARANCE

Choose one of each.

Keen face, long face, weary face, striking face.

Tall body, hard body, frail body, dumpy body.

Sharp clothes, antiquated clothes, formal clothes, casual clothes.

FEATURES

You have two of the following:

- » A nemesis
- » A reputation for brilliance
- » Strained relations to the police
- » Folders of old case notes
- » Done this for too long
- » Caught a famous fugitive
- » A huge ego
- » Skirted the law to get results

REASON

You do this because of one of the following:

- » It challenges your faculties
- » It pays the bills
- » You were a victim in the past
- » Justice must be served
- » There's one case you must solve
- » It's a chance to show off
- » Nobody else will

RELATIONS

Choose one for each investigator:

- » You've investigated them
- » You've shown mercy to them
- » You've spent hours together on stake-outs
- » You've cleared their name
- » You've broken the rules for them
- » You know there's more to them than they're letting on

PRICE & THREAT

Choose one of the following to be your Price: What you value or desire more than anything else, and another to be your Threat: Your greatest fear or vulnerability.

- » Money
- » Power
- » Safety
- » Family
- » Image
- » Community
- » Freedom
- » Excitement
- » Revenge
- » Love
- » Lust
- » Obsession



THE REPORTER

Everyone knows someone. And you? You know everyone. If someone saw something, you know not only how to find them, but how to get it out of them.

You're the first on the scene, the one with the right questions. You can get into places the police can only dream of, and as to what comes after? You can read all about it on the front page.

TOUCHSTONES

Lois Lane (Superman)
Robert Graysmith (Zodiac)
Karen Page (Daredevil)
Madison Paige (Heavy Rain)
Irving Maurice Fletcher (Fletch)
Tintin
Jade (Beyond Good and Evil)



Reporter

Pick one of the following sets of starting Attributes.

ATTRIBUTE SET 1

OBS	EDU	MUS	AGI
2	1	1	2
INS	GRIT	CASH	
1	0	0	

ATTRIBUTE SET 2

OBS	EDU	MUS	AGI
2	1	2	1
INS	GRIT	CASH	
0	1	0	

DESCRIPTORS

Pick one and add its attributes to your total.

DETERMINED

Obs +1 Grit +1

DIRTY

Obs +1 Cash +1

ELEGANT

Agi +1 Ins +1

HARD-BOILED

Mus +1 Ins +1

LEARNED

Edu +1 Ins +1

SHARP

Obs +1 Ins +1

SHREWD

Edu +1 Grit +1

SMOOTH

Agi +1 Grit +1

VIOLENT

Mus +1 Grit +1

EXPLOITS

Select one Academic, Social or Underworld exploit. Mark these tags on your sheet.

MOMENTUM POWER

Select one Awareness or Social momentum power.

CONTACTS

You have one contact. Don't pick them yet, but mark four different tags on your character sheet.

ARMED

You do not have access to a deadly weapon.

APPEARANCE

Choose one of each.

Pensive face, round face, disarming face, sleazy face.

Tensed body, squat body, thin body, muscular body.

Business clothes, practical clothes, warm clothes, bright clothes.

FEATURES

You have two of the following:

- » Yet to get your big break
- » A popular blog
- » The respect of your colleagues
- » Kept secrets you shouldn't have
- » Told secrets you shouldn't have
- » Interviewed important figures
- » No real voice
- » Been blacklisted a few times

DRIVE

You seek one of the following:

- » The truth, no matter the cost
- » Gossip and glamour
- » Only to make a living
- » Awards and commendations
- » To spread a message
- » To make the world a better place
- » Stories no one else will touch
- » To air dirty laundry

RELATIONS

Choose one for each investigator:

- » You've interviewed them
- » You've provided information that cracked a case
- » You've warned them of a gathering storm
- » You've received confidential information from them
- » You know their secret

PRICE & THREAT

Choose one of the following to be your Price: What you value or desire more than anything else, and another to be your Threat: Your greatest fear or vulnerability.

- » Money
- » Power
- » Safety
- » Family
- » Image
- » Community
- » Freedom
- » Excitement
- » Revenge
- » Love
- » Lust
- » Obsession



THE SCIENTIST

Evidence doesn't lie. People can wheedle, they can cheat, they can steal, but facts are facts.

Those facts are what you're after. You know how to get them and you know what they mean. You know that even the most ironclad alibi can't survive the right bit of evidence - all you need is the right tool and you'll bring their house of cards crashing down around them.

TOUCHSTONES

Dr John Watson (The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes)

Gil Grisson, Horatio Caine (CSI / CSI Miami)

Dr Temperance Brennan (Déjà Dead, Bones)

Alec Hardison (Leverage)

Amelia Peabody (The Deeds of the Disturber)

Will Graham (Manhunter / Red Dragon)



Scientist

Pick one of the following sets of starting Attributes.

ATTRIBUTE SET 1

OBS	EDU	MUS	AGI
2	2	1	1
INS	GRIT	CASH	
1	0	1	

ATTRIBUTE SET 2

OBS	EDU	MUS	AGI
1	2	1	2
INS	GRIT	CASH	
1	0	1	

DESCRIPTORS

Pick one and add its attributes to your total.

DETERMINED

Obs +1 Grit +1

DIRTY

Obs +1 Cash +1

ELEGANT

Agi +1 Ins +1

HARD-BOILED

Mus +1 Ins +1

LEARNED

Edu +1 Ins +1

SHARP

Obs +1 Ins +1

SHREWD

Edu +1 Grit +1

SMOOTH

Agi +1 Grit +1

VIOLENT

Mus +1 Grit +1

EXPLOITS

Select one Academic, Awareness or Social exploit. Mark these tags on your sheet.

MOMENTUM POWER

Select one Academic or Awareness momentum power.

CONTACTS

You have one Academic, Administrative, or Medical contact. Don't pick them yet, but mark these tags on your sheet.

ARMED

You do not have access to a deadly weapon.

APPEARANCE

Choose one of each.

Soft face, chiseled face, curious face, sunken face.

Fit body, average body, wiry body, plump body.

Smart clothes, lab clothes, stained clothes, stylish clothes.

FEATURES

You have two of the following:

- » A teaching position
- » Over a hundred citations
- » Unorthodox ideas and methods
- » Your own lab or workspace
- » A history of challenging authority
- » Yet to secure funding
- » Patients who rely on you
- » A burning curiosity

FIELD

You study one of the following:

- » Medicine
- » Forensics
- » Psychology
- » Criminology
- » Engineering
- » Chemistry
- » Physics
- » Mathematics

RELATIONS

Choose one for each investigator:

- » You've treated them before
- » You've studied their work
- » You're impressed by their discipline
- » Your knowledge has been instrumental to their work
- » You've shared a great achievement

PRICE & THREAT

Choose one of the following to be your Price: What you value or desire more than anything else, and another to be your Threat: Your greatest fear or vulnerability.

- » Money
- » Power
- » Safety
- » Family
- » Image
- » Community
- » Freedom
- » Excitement
- » Revenge
- » Love
- » Lust
- » Obsession



THE SOCIALITE

The reporter may know everyone, but hey, everyone knows you. What they know you as, that's still up for debate.

Why do you do this? Who can say, perhaps you've got a virtuous streak, perhaps you seek the thrill of the chase, perhaps you're just bored. Whatever your reasons, you've got a way of getting under peoples' skin, and peeling back their layers of lies.

TOUCHSTONES

Miss Marple
Sophie Devereaux (Leverage)
Patrick Jane (The Mentalist)
Phryne Fisher (Cocaine Blues)
Rick Castle (Castle)
Lucifer Morningstar (Lucifer)



Socialite

Pick one of the following sets of starting Attributes.

ATTRIBUTE SET 1

OBS	EDU	MUS	AGI
2	1	2	1
INS	GRIT	CASH	
1	0	1	

ATTRIBUTE SET 2

OBS	EDU	MUS	AGI
1	2	1	2
INS	GRIT	CASH	
0	0	3	

DESCRIPTORS

Pick one and add its attributes to your total.

DETERMINED
Obs +1 Grit +1

DIRTY
Obs +1 Cash +1

ELEGANT
Agi +1 Ins +1

HARD-BOILED
Mus +1 Ins +1

LEARNED
Edu +1 Ins +1

SHARP
Obs +1 Ins +1

SHREWD
Edu +1 Grit +1

SMOOTH
Agi +1 Grit +1

VIOLENT
Mus +1 Grit +1

EXPLOITS

Select one Academic, Awareness or Social exploit. Mark these tags on your sheet.

MOMENTUM POWER

Select one Academic or Social momentum power.

CONTACTS

You have one Academic, Political, or Press contact. Don't pick them yet, but mark these tags on your sheet.

ARMED

You do not have access to a deadly weapon.

APPEARANCE

Choose one of each.

Rugged face, beautiful face, demure face, mischievous face.

Svelte body, curvaceous body, athletic body, obese body.

Expensive clothes, loud clothes, lounge clothes, simple clothes.

FEATURES

You have two of the following:

- » Invites to every party in town
- » Wealthy parents
- » Frequent romantic flings
- » A secret you've managed to keep
- » Fame and notoriety
- » A stiff upper lip
- » Too much time on your hands
- » Had tiffs with the law

REPUTATION

You are known as one of the following:

- » A gossip
- » A playboy/playgirl
- » An oddity
- » A thrill seeker
- » A deviant
- » A rebel
- » A gentleperson

RELATIONS

Choose one for each investigator:

- » You've gotten them into fancy events
- » You're always seen together
- » You vouched for them at a critical time
- » You've heard an interesting rumor about them
- » You've boosted their reputation

PRICE & THREAT

Choose one of the following to be your Price: What you value or desire more than anything else, and another to be your Threat: Your greatest fear or vulnerability.

- » Money
- » Power
- » Safety
- » Family
- » Image
- » Community
- » Freedom
- » Excitement
- » Revenge
- » Love
- » Lust
- » Obsession

BACKGROUND

ADVANCEMENT

Once an investigator has accumulated 12XP, they clear their XP track and select an advancement, noting it on the advancement cycle on their character sheet. Advancements are selected in a cycle of four options. The first three advancements are minor advancements, chosen from the list below. Each individual advancement can only be selected twice per cycle; for instance, you can only select the Learn Exploit advancement twice, even if you're learning different exploits. The fourth advancement increases a Primary Attribute by 1, to a maximum of 4.

Once all four advancements have been chosen, the investigator clears their advancement cycle on their character sheet and may choose freely once more.

Advancement options are as follows:

LEARN EXPLOIT

Select a new Exploit from available Tags.

ESTABLISH CONTACT

You have a new Contact available. This could be an NPC you met during a case, or it could be a new character. If it's a new character, you do not need to detail them immediately; see Chapter 5 for details on creating Contacts.

IMPROVE SECONDARY ATTRIBUTE

Increase **INS**, **GRIT** or **CASH** by 1, to a maximum of 4.

UNLOCK EXPLOIT TAG

Mark an Exploit Tag on your character sheet. When choosing new Exploits, you may now select Exploits with this Tag.

UNLOCK CONTACT TAG

Mark a Contact Tag on your character sheet. When choosing new Contacts, you may now create Contacts with this Tag.

SWAP MOMENTUM POWER

Replace your Momentum Power with another one available to your background.



RETIRING CHARACTERS

A situation may arise where you wish to retire your character from play. Perhaps they have completed a narrative arc and are moving on in their lives, or you feel another character would be more satisfying to play. Regardless of the reason, you may retire your character at any time. Do the following:

- » Decide with the GM and players what happens to this character.
- » This character is now removed from play.
- » Create a new character, with one free advancement.
- » Your new character and each other investigator may gain your old character as a free Contact, if appropriate.

ROLEPLAYING RETIRED CHARACTERS

Even though they are no longer active PCs, retired characters may still show up when called upon. In these situations, the original player or the GM controls them and speaks for them, whichever works best for your group.

Retired characters follow the same rules as other Contacts, so they are limited in the help they can provide. When making rolls, they use their own attributes and abilities rather than using default values.

If you wish to bring an old character out of retirement, select the Retire advancement on your current character, and swap back to your old character - they will be as you left them, plus one free advancement and your other character as a Contact.

Branith, a Crook, has closed another case and has earned enough experience to advance. He would love to increase his **AGI** but must first select three other advances. He decides to learn the **Break & Enter** exploit, so he notes it on his character sheet and marks the advancement box.

ADVANCE 1

- Exploit: Break & Enter
- _____
- _____
- Increase Primary Attribute

Once he earns a second advance, he remembers that he had some close calls with dangerous characters, so he learns the **Catch Me If You Can** exploit to help with such situations.

ADVANCE 2

- Exploit: Break & Enter
- Exploit: Catch Me If You Can
- _____
- Increase Primary Attribute

On his third Advance, he would like to improve his **Break and Enter**, but he cannot select he same advancement three times in the same cycle and he has already learned two exploits. Instead, he improves his **INS** to get more use out of Catch Me If You Can.

ADVANCE 3

- Exploit: Break & Enter
- Exploit: Catch Me If You Can
- Insight +1
- Increase Primary Attribute



Once he earns his fourth advance, Branith gets to improve one of his primary attributes by 1. He decides to improve his **AGI**, since this will improve Break & Enter as well as general **AGI** checks.

ADVANCE 4

- Exploit: Break & Enter
- Exploit: Catch Me If You Can
- Insight +1
- Increase Primary Attribute

With the Advancement cycle fully completed, Branith erases the marks and the Advancements he has selected (though he keeps their benefit) and the Advancement cycle begins again.

CREATING CUSTOM BACKGROUNDS

If you have an idea for your investigator that is not covered by the existing backgrounds, work with your GM to create a unique background. Following these steps will result in a background that should be balanced with the other backgrounds.

ASSIGN PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES

Select two Primary Attributes and set them to 2. The others remain at 1. Consider which primary attributes would be focused on by this background, and pick accordingly.

ASSIGN SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

Set **CASH** to 1, and set either **INS** or **GRIT** to 1 - the last Attribute remains at 0. Alternatively, set **CASH** to 3 and **INS** and **GRIT** to 0.

DESCRIPTORS REMAIN THE SAME

Custom backgrounds have access to the same list of Descriptors as standard backgrounds; they work the same for everyone.

BACKGROUND

SELECT AVAILABLE EXPLOITS

Pick three Exploit Tags to be available to this background. Consider in what fields the background would be skilled in or involved with.

Academic Exploits should be available if the background is involved with research, education or medicine.

Action Exploits should be available if the background is regularly exposed to violence, or trained in its application.

Awareness Exploits should be available if the background deals with a great deal of detail oriented work.

Police Exploits should be available if the background works directly with the police force.

Social Exploits should be available if the background deals heavily with other people, especially if that is the main purpose of their vocation.

Underworld Exploits should be available if the background works outside the law, and regularly engages in illegal enterprise.

SELECT AVAILABLE MOMENTUM POWERS

From your list of selected Exploit Tags, select two that best fit the background: these are your available Momentum Power Tags. Rarely, a background may have cause to have Momentum Power Tags that are different to its Exploit Tags.

SELECT AVAILABLE CONTACTS

Pick three Contact Tags to be available to this background. Consider what sort of people the background would regularly interact with, and whom they may form working relationships with.

CREATE PERSONAL DETAILS

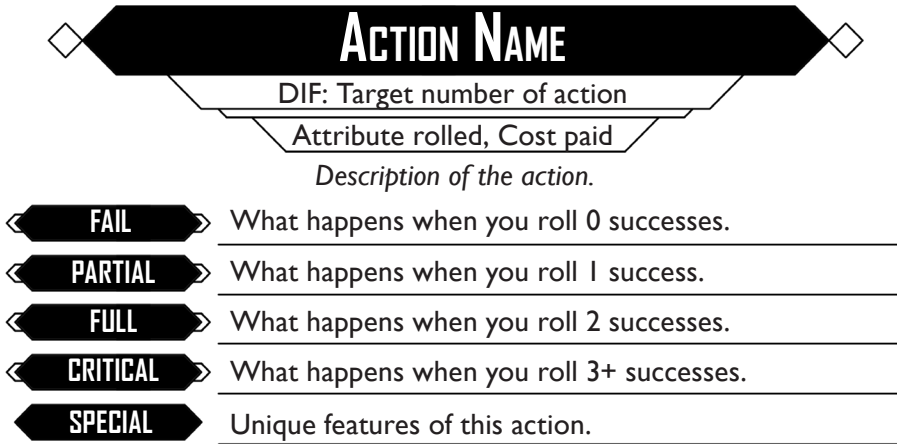
If this background is only going to be used by one player, there is no need to make a full list of options for personal details. Instead, ask the following questions; the answers will form the basis of your investigator's personal details.

- *What do you look like? How does your background inform your appearance?*
- *Where within your background does your specialty lie?*
- *How are you like others of your background? How are you different to them?*
- *How do you relate to the other investigators? How does your background affect that relationship?*

SPECIAL ACTIONS

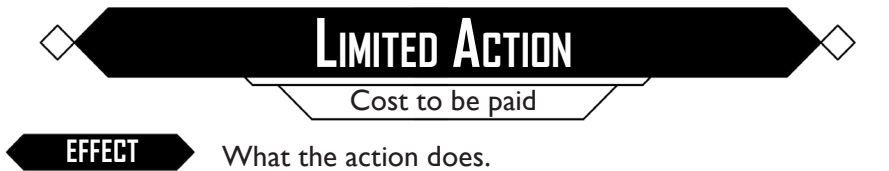
ACTION BLOCKS

In Grey Cells, actions that characters can take are detailed by Action Blocks, as shown below:



LIMITED ACTIONS

Some actions do not require an attribute check. Instead, these require you to spend **INS**, **GRIT** or **CASH**. As such, these have a limited number of uses dependent on a character's score in that attribute. Remember that **INS** and **GRIT** are replenished automatically at the start of each play session, whereas **CASH** is replenished at the start of a new case.



SPECIAL ACTIONS

BASIC ACTIONS

Most of the time, an investigator's actions will be covered by the **General Action** and **Opposed Action** blocks.

GENERAL ACTION

DIF: Determined by GM

Roll Any Attribute

Any action not covered by another action block nor opposed by another character.

- ◀ **FAIL** ▶ You don't get what you want, with Consequence.
- ◀ **PARTIAL** ▶ You get what you want, with Consequence.
- ◀ **FULL** ▶ You get what you want.
- ◀ **CRITICAL** ▶ You get what you want, with Benefit.

OPPOSED ACTION

DIF: Opponent's Attribute +2

Roll Any Attribute

A general action that is opposed by another character.

- ◀ **FAIL** ▶ You don't get what you want, with Consequence.
- ◀ **PARTIAL** ▶ You get what you want, with Consequence.
- ◀ **FULL** ▶ You get what you want.
- ◀ **CRITICAL** ▶ You get what you want, with Benefit.
- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ +1 DIF if the opponent is in an advantageous position, and +1 DIF if the task is inherently difficult. If the DIF is lower than what the action would be unopposed, GM determines DIF instead. If more people are opposing you, gain Shift -1 per additional opponent, max Shift -3 with four or more people opposing you.

SPLITTING UP

When time runs short it may be tempting to split up the investigators to cover more ground and save time. This is done by taking the **Split Forces** action and allows the investigators to engage multiple scenes while only advancing the Villainous Agenda once.

The investigators may be divided into any configuration they see fit, and as many separate groups as desired. One of the groups must always be designated as the primary group, however - this group does not need to make a **Split Forces** check and the Villainous Agenda advances after their scene is complete.

When making the **Split Forces** check, any investigator in the relevant group may make the check for the entire group.

Note that investigators may split up to take the **Recover** action without requiring a **Split Forces** check.



You and other investigators split off from the team to engage in a separate scene. This scene does not progress the Villainous Agenda.

FAIL	Take Shift -1 to all checks in this scene.
PARTIAL	Engage the scene, with Consequence.
FULL	Engage the scene normally.
CRITICAL	Engage the scene normally, and recover 1 Grit.
SPECIAL	Gain Advantage to this check if another Investigator is accompanying you.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Several actions are available to investigators to find out more about people and things in the world. Often these will ask you to **Hold one per successful die**. This means that instead of standard tiers of success you choose between several options; each point of Hold may be spent to select another option. You may choose the same option multiple times.

Such actions only trigger consequences if the investigator rolled no successful dice on the check.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Hold may be held onto and spent at a later time; you don't need to select all your options when you make the check. This may be justified in any appropriate way, and does not consume significant time when spent during a later scene even if the action that created the hold takes a long time.

TAKING A LONG TIME

Some Special Actions **take a long time**. This means that if the action is performed during a scene it will usually trigger the end of that scene and advance the Villainous Agenda.

If the action is taken as its own scene, such as the Investigators visiting a neighbourhood to comb it for witnesses, this may be followed up by a short scene to explore or act upon what they have learned as long as it's in the same location. After this, the Villainous Agenda will advance.

TYPES OF CLUES

Some actions and investigator powers offer specific types of Clues, e.g. **Discover a Link**. In some situations an effect will offer different types of clues, e.g. **Discover a Lead or Clue**. In these situations the effect will prefer the first option if it's appropriate, though a single piece of information may count as multiple different types of Clues.

The types of Clues are as follows:

Clue

A piece of information that helps to illustrate the truth behind events and the details of the case. This could be hearsay, rumors, unconfirmed alibis and physical evidence that can't point directly to an individual's wrongdoings, e.g. the time of death, foggy weather, a burst car tyre, the type of weapon used. This is the base unit of information in Grey Cells.

Lead

A Clue that unlocks a new avenue of investigation. It's an indication that you can learn more about the case by looking in that direction. Pursuing a Lead should provide more information related to the investigation, but the Lead itself mostly serves to highlight new directions to investigate in. A Lead could be a name in a ledger, a hotel matchbook left at the scene of a crime, a dying man whispering "Rosebud".

Connection	A Clue that links two or more elements of the case in terms of relationship or causality. It could be a money trail from one person to another, someone having worked for a company, or someone's actions inadvertently ruining another person's life.
Secret	A Clue that only a few people know, that no record exists of, and/or that measures have been taken to erase evidence of.
Fact	A Clue that is public knowledge, that a paper trail exists of, or that research can reveal.
Evidence	A Clue that provides a direct indication (or strong suggestion) of wrongdoing. This could be witness testimony, a bloody fingerprint, a strong motive, being in possession of the murder weapon. Actions and powers will never explicitly provide Evidence, though other clues may act as Evidence. Finding Evidence will almost always provide an Evidence Point.

ASK AROUND

DIF: Determined by GM

Roll OBS

Question locals about a topic. Hold one per successful die.

- ◀ **OPTION 1** ▶ Find a witness to an event.

- ◀ **OPTION 2** ▶ Discover local knowledge about a topic.

- ◀ **OPTION 3** ▶ Discover notable recent events.

- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ Takes a long time. Cannot be repeated.

The results you get from information gathering actions depends on where you're looking. Locals or documents in one area will only have knowledge relevant to them - if you're looking in an area where the information you're after doesn't exist, you probably won't find much!

SPECIAL ACTIONS

River wants to Ask Around to see if anyone has seen a certain person of interest in the area. They have **OBS 3** and the DIF of the check is 4.

DIF 4



River has two successful dice, earning two hold. He spends the first one to “Find a witness to an event”, the event being the suspect showing up. The GM says that yes, some people saw the suspect poking around a couple of nights ago. River doesn’t want to spend the other die right now so he marks down that he has a held die for Asking Around in this area.



→ Spent



→ Held

Later, River discovers that there were some disappearances in the area in the past. He spends his held die to “Discover local knowledge about a topic”, the topic being the disappearances.

DIG DEEP

DIF: Determined by GM

Roll EDU

Look for information on a topic online, or in a store of information. Hold one per successful die.

◀ **OPTION 1** ▶ Discover a link between this and an event.

◀ **OPTION 2** ▶ Discover a link between this and an individual.

◀ **OPTION 3** ▶ Discover a secret or rumor about this topic.

◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ Takes a long time. Cannot be repeated.

The **Dig Deep** action should be used when looking for hidden information on a topic; readily available information and anything you could find with a quick internet search should be an **General EDU** check, not a **Dig Deep** check.

STAKEOUT

DIF: Determined by GM

Roll AGI

Observe a location over a length of time. Hold one per successful die.

- ◀ **OPTION 1** ▶ Notice if a person of interest arrives or leaves.

- ◀ **OPTION 2** ▶ Notice any unusual or suspicious activity.

- ◀ **OPTION 3** ▶ Shift +1 to another roll this scene.

- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ Takes a long time. Cannot be repeated.

TAIL

DIF: Target's OBS +2

Roll AGI

Follow an individual. Hold one per successful die.

- ◀ **OPTION 1** ▶ See where they go.

- ◀ **OPTION 2** ▶ See someone they meet with.

- ◀ **OPTION 3** ▶ See if someone else is following them.

- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ Takes a long time. Cannot be repeated.

INTERROGATION/CONVINCING

When speaking with characters in the world, conversation proceeds naturally. You may ask them questions and make requests of them, and they will react according to their character and their interests. In order to make people comply, you need Evidence Points (EP).

EP will generally be effective against particular POIs; for instance, knowing that a murder victim owed a POI a great deal of money would be an

SPECIAL ACTIONS

effective EP against that person, but would not be usable against someone who is unconnected to that debt. EP might be used against an unconnected character if their compliance is dependent on you convincing them that you're investigating something substantial and important, e.g. convincing the mayor that something big is going down and to give you the resources you need.

When you wish to interrogate someone or convince them to help, you leverage as many relevant EP as you want, and make the **Interrogate/Convince** check with a number of dice equal to the EP spent. Once an EP is spent it cannot be spent again, even against another character.

Not all characters will require **Interrogation/Convincing** to answer your questions; most characters will speak with you unless they have a reason not to.

INTERROGATE/CONVINCE

DIF: Target's Resistance

Roll EP Spent

Leverage evidence to open someone to questioning or persuasion.

Hold one per successful die. After this roll, increase the target's Resistance by 1.

- ◀ **OPTION 1** ▶ Force them to answer your questions during this scene.
- ◀ **OPTION 2** ▶ They volunteer a piece of information.
- ◀ **OPTION 3** ▶ They perform a reasonable service.
- ◀ **OPTION 4** ▶ You know if they are hiding something.
- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ Utilising the target's Price or Threat grants Advantage to this roll.

A target's Resistance starts from 2-6, as determined by the GM when the check is made. The value is then noted on the Crime Board.

*Since **Interrogate** does not use an Attribute, other characters cannot provide Help with this check.*

INTERROGATION/CONVINCING RULES

- » A character who is answering your questions may still lie to you.
- » You can only gain Advantage from someone's Price or Threat or by using violent coercion once; afterwards you must use a different approach to gain Advantage against them.
- » An investigator may attempt to Interrogate/Convince without EP, using only an Advantage Die (and potentially **GRIT**).
- » The target's Resistance increases by 1 on a success or failure.
- » A character's Resistance may exceed 6.

COMBAT

Investigators may get into scraps, or even deadly Confrontations. For small scale fights against a small number of opponents, the **Brawl** special action resolves the combat in a single roll. The stakes of a **Brawl** check are generally winning the fight and overcoming the opponents. If other stakes are involved, e.g. escaping from a fight, make an **Opposed Action** check instead.

Only one investigator makes a **Brawl** check, though other characters may provide help; if they do, they suffer the same consequences the leader does.

*Depending on the genre, a successful **Brawl** check against a target may grant Advantage on an upcoming **Interrogate** check.*

*This would be appropriate for **Hard Boiled** or **Thriller** games, arguable for **Great Detective** and **Police Procedural** games, and inappropriate for **Cozy** games.*

DAMAGE & INCAPACITATION

During combat, you'll likely have to mark Status boxes. To do this, cross or fill a number of status boxes on your character sheet as required by the result of the action, from top to bottom. This will incur **Shift -1** on all future rolls for each marked Status box, including on Recover checks. This penalty may be reduced or removed by clearing Status boxes.

If at any point you have to fill a Status box and cannot, you are incapacitated - rendered helpless, unconscious, or - rarely - dead. If this occurs as part of a partial or full success, you still get what you want as long as you have an ally involved in the check left standing.

If that's not the case, instead of getting what you want you are left incapacitated and at your opponent's mercy.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

RECOVERY

Status boxes are automatically cleared at the end of a case, but during the case investigators can take the **Recover** action and restore their status somewhat.

Investigators can split off from the group to make **Recover** checks without requiring a Split Forces check.

BRAWL

DIF: Opponent's MUS +2 or AGI +2

Roll MUS or AGI

Engage in small-scale combat.

- ◀ **FAIL** ▶ Mark 2 status, and you are at their mercy.

- ◀ **PARTIAL** ▶ Mark 1 status and succeed, with consequence.

- ◀ **FULL** ▶ Mark 1 status and succeed.

- ◀ **CRITICAL** ▶ Succeed, with benefit.

- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ Use MUS for melee combat, or AGI for ranged combat.

RECOVER

DIF: 4, +1 if in a poor environment

Roll MUS

Spend time resting and licking your wounds.

- ◀ **FAIL** ▶ Earn 1 Recovery Point.

- ◀ **PARTIAL** ▶ Earn 2 Recovery Points.

- ◀ **FULL** ▶ Earn 3 Recovery Points.

- ◀ **CRITICAL** ▶ Earn 4 Recovery Points.

- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ Takes a long time. Spend Recovery Points to clear a Status box or regain a spent point of a secondary attribute other than Cash, on a 1:1 basis. Recovery Points must be spent immediately and cannot be held.

ARMED COMBAT

*If an investigator's opponent is armed, the investigator marks an additional Injury after a **Brawl**, except on a Critical Success. If the investigator is armed but their opponent is not, they gain Advantage. If their opponent is armed but they are not, increase DIF by 1.*

CONFRONTATIONS

Sometimes a conflict will be more significant than a quick fistfight or shootout. You might be surrounded by a gang of armed mobsters. You could be stalked through an abandoned warehouse by a serial killer, or playing cat and mouse with a trained assassin. In a desperate conflict against a group of dangerous foes, or one very powerful foe, it is resolved through a Confrontation.

Confrontations operate in four steps - first, the investigators decide upon three Approaches: the tactics they wish to employ. The results of these rolls build a die pool that is used to determine the final result of the confrontation.

APPROACHES

When investigators enter a Confrontation, they choose three Approaches based on Primary Attributes, as follows:

OBS	Search Environment	Be Vigilant	Find Opening
EDU	Strategize	Bluff	Stall
MUS	Assault	Hold the Line	Break Guard
AGI	Distract	Evade	Hide

Each Approach must use a different Primary Attribute, and the Approaches must be divided between investigators as evenly as possible, i.e. if there are three investigators, each is responsible for a separate Approach check.

If there are more than three investigators involved in the Confrontation, the excess investigators may provide Help with a single Approach each.

The DIF of the Confrontation is consistent across all checks; a DIF 4 Confrontation will have DIF 4 for each Approach, as well as the final Confrontation check.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

After selecting an Approach, describe how you are implementing it before rolling the dice and seeing the result.

TAKE APPROACH

DIF: Confrontation's DIF

Roll Any Attribute

Prepare for a Confrontation.

- ◀ **FAIL** ▶ Shift -1 to final Confrontation roll.

- ◀ **PARTIAL** ▶ Shift +1 to final Confrontation roll.

- ◀ **FULL** ▶ +1 Die to final Confrontation roll.

- ◀ **CRITICAL** ▶ +2 Dice to final Confrontation roll.

- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ If the opponent is weak to the chosen Approach, take Advantage to this roll.

DETERMINING CONFRONTATION DIF

*Usually, the DIF of a Confrontation will be equal to the most dangerous opponent's operative attribute +1 (often **MUS** or **AGI**). As such, a Confrontation against a **MUS 3** opponent would be DIF 4 across the entire Confrontation.*

MODUS OPERANDI

Opponents in a Confrontation follow a Mental and Physical Modus Operandi (MO), secretly determined by the GM. Their MO determines how they will behave in a confrontation, but it also renders them vulnerable to particular Approaches. Selecting an Approach that counters an opponent's MO grants Advantage on the Approach check. Furthermore, if you select Approaches that counter both the Mental and Physical MO this will reduce the DIF of the final Confrontation roll by 1.

Confrontations are dangerous encounters, even for seasoned investigators; investigating, discovering their MO and outthinking an opponent may be critical to victory.

MENTAL MO

Implacable	Determined and focused on their target, often at the exclusion of all else.
Patient	Unhurried, waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike.
Wary	Careful, observant and on the defensive until they find an opening.
Reckless	Aggressive, careless, relying on strength and speed.
Bestial	Depraved, inhuman, driven by raw animal instinct.
Confident	Arrogant, believing themselves to be in control of the situation.

PHYSICAL MO

Stalker	Quiet, in pursuit, waiting to spring an ambush.
Rusher	Quick, seeking to close distance and overwhelm.
Bulwark	Stoic, unmoving, seeking to block attack and advance.
Savage	Frenzied, jumpy and barbaric.
Brute	Powerful, brutal, striking with overwhelming force.
Tyrant	Unstoppable, relentless, absorbing blows without reaction.

Once three Approach checks have been made, assemble the resultant die pool and use it to make the Final Confrontation check; this will determine the outcome of the Confrontation.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

MENTAL MO	WEAKNESS
Implacable	Search Environment
Patient	Be Vigilant
Wary	Find Opening
Reckless	Strategize
Bestial	Bluff
Confident	Stall

PHYSICAL MO	WEAKNESS
Stalker	Assault
Rusher	Hold the Line
Bulwark	Break Guard
Savage	Distract
Brute	Evade
Tyrant	Hide

FINAL CONFRONTATION

DIF: Confrontation's DIF

Roll Confrontation Pool

Resolve a significant conflict.

- ◀ **FAIL** ▶ Mark 3 Status, and you are at their mercy.

- ◀ **PARTIAL** ▶ Mark 2 Status, and a costly outcome.

- ◀ **FULL** ▶ Mark 1 Status, and win.

- ◀ **CRITICAL** ▶ Win, with benefit.

- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ If both of the opponent's MOs were countered, reduce

DIF by 1. Force of Will may not be used for this check. After the roll, you may discard failed dice to add Shift +1 per discarded die. This may exceed the Shift +3 limit.

WHO MARKS STATUS?

When marking Status in a Confrontation, everyone in the line of fire marks Status. If it is not narratively appropriate for someone to be injured or be worn out by effort, they do not mark Status.

Nikki and Jameson are pinned down by a group of criminals. The two of them are stuck behind cover as the criminals shoot at them, and try to find a way around their cover. The GM decides that their MO is that they are **Wary Brutes**; they are carefully trying to get around the cover (**Wary**) and are heavily armed and trying to kill the investigators through sheer weight of fire (**Brutes**). The GM declares that the DIF of the Confrontation is 4.

The investigators get three Approaches split as evenly as possible between them. Nikki takes the first approach. Seeing that they're surrounded, she tries to **Stall** the criminals, yelling at them that there's backup on the way and that they should surrender. Her **EDU** is 2. She rolls and decides to spend a **GRIT** to activate **Force of Will** (pg 68) to gain an additional die.



Nikki gets a partial success, so they note down that they have **Shift +1** to their Final Confrontation.

Jameson spends an **Insight** to activate **Gut Instinct** and ask the GM what their Mental MO is. The GM reveals that they are being **Wary**, and that trying to find an opening to get to a better position might be a good plan.

Jameson takes the **Find Opening** Approach. He has **OBS 3**, and gains a bonus die from countering the opponent's MO.

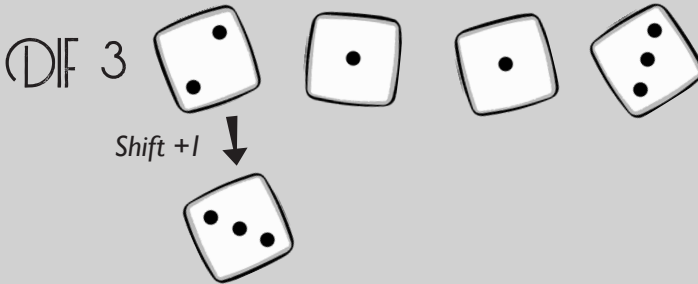


A **Crit!** Jameson finds an opportunity for them to make a break for it and notes that they have +2 Dice to their **Final Confrontation**. Nikki takes the opportunity and leads the two of them to escape. She takes the **Evade** Approach. She has **AGI 3**, and **Evade** counters the **Physical MO** of the criminals so she gets **Advantage** to the roll.

SPECIAL ACTIONS



Another crit! Nikki adds 2 dice to the **Final Confrontation** die pool. Keeping their heads low, Nikki leads Jameson towards the exit under a hail of gunfire. They make their **Final Confrontation** check: They have four dice and **Shift +1** from their Approaches. Since they countered both of the criminals' MOs, the DIF of the **Final Confrontation** check is reduced by 1.



Thanks to the lower DIF, they get a Full Success. Since both Nikki and Jameson were in the line of fire they each mark 1 Status. They also win the Confrontation - they escape from the shootout just as backup arrives and the building is surrounded by police cars.

LIMITED ACTIONS

The following limited actions are available to all investigators. More limited actions may be unlocked by taking exploits, detailed in Chapter 5.

To use these actions you must pay the associated cost (e.g. 1 **GRIT**).

FORCE OF WILL

Spend 1 GRIT

EFFECT

After any check, roll an additional die.

PUSH THROUGH

Spend 1 GRIT

EFFECT

Before making a check, use this action to ignore all Status Penalties for that check.

HUNCH

Spend 1 INS

EFFECT

Reveal a Lead regarding a topic.

*The **Hunch** action represents the investigator's gut leading them in a certain direction. It doesn't reveal new information on its own; it highlights something as important and worthy of further scrutiny, or it points to something that was said being particularly substantial.*

GUT INSTINCT

Spend 1 INS

EFFECT

When choosing Approaches in a Confrontation, identify the opponent's Physical or Mental MO.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

MEDICAL AID

Spend 1 CASH

EFFECT

When taking the Recover action, clear an additional Status box.

GREASE THE WHEELS

Spend 1 CASH

EFFECT

After taking an information gathering special action, roll an additional die if money could be used to improve the effort.

SPENDING SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

An investigator's Secondary Attributes (**INS**, **GRIT** and **CASH**) act as currencies that can be spent on limited actions. An investigator with 2 **GRIT** that activates **Force of Will** then writes "1/2 **GRIT**" on their character sheet. If you have 0 of a Secondary Attribute remaining, you cannot activate limited actions that require you to spend that Secondary Attribute.

Points of Secondary Attributes can be regained, usually through the Recover action.

CONTACTS

Investigators are not alone. Besides their immediate companions, each of them know people throughout the city that can aid them, providing critical knowledge, services and insights that may be key in solving a case.

DECLARING A CONTACT

You do not have to decide the details of a contact during character creation or upon gaining a new contact. Instead, hold on to the available contact and declare them in the middle of a case when they would be useful to you.

Once a Contact is declared, they are a permanent part of the world and cannot be changed (unless something unfortunate were to happen to them).

Cordelia finds herself at a dead end. However, she has a contact that she hasn't declared yet.

She chooses to declare an Underworld contact and invents Boris. She decides that he is a downtown fence who runs a watchmaker's shop as a front. Boris now exists in the world and can help Cordelia get back on the trail of the stolen loot she's after.

CALLING UPON A CONTACT

Visiting or calling a contact takes a scene, unless for whatever reason they are present during a different scene. If feasible, they could also be called to meet the investigators at another scene, if their specialty is related to it.

HOW CAN CONTACTS HELP?

Each Contact has a specialty, informed by their tag and decided when declared by a player. They might be historians, morticians, secretaries or drug dealers.

As a rule, a contact is willing to assist the investigators as long as it does

CONTACTS

not directly contradict their own interests. Also, a Contact will not follow an investigator knowingly into danger unless that is the service they provide, or they have a very good reason.

If Contacts have to make rolls, they will usually have **3 dice in their specialty**, or **4 if they have a very narrow specialty**. They have **2 dice for checks adjacent to their specialty**, and **1 die on checks unrelated to their specialty**. A broader specialist might be a banker, while a narrow specialty could be a single family's personal accountant.

Contacts are able to answer questions, provide specific services, search for specific information, and point the investigators towards good directions to further their investigation.

REPLACING CONTACTS

If a contact becomes unavailable or unhelpful due to circumstances beyond the investigators' control, these contacts may be cleared and a new contact may be declared in their place, at the GM's discretion.

CONTACT TAGS

Tags determine the nature of a Contact; where they exist in society, and what kind of things they might be good at. An investigator is limited in what types of Contacts are available to them according to their background, though they may use Advances to unlock additional tags.

Academic Scientists, teachers, students, etc

Administrative Record keepers, managers, executives, etc

Legal Lawyers, police, judges, etc

Medical Doctors, coroners, pathologists, etc

Political Senators, regulators, mayors, etc

Press Journalists, editors, news hosts, etc

Specialist Engineers, artists, soldiers, etc

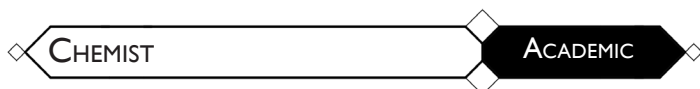
Underworld Thieves, thugs, smugglers, etc

EXPLOITS

Investigators learn tricks and talents to aid them in their search. These could provide **+Shift** in certain circumstances, unlock new actions, or allow you to break the rules in specific ways. They also allow you to spend Secondary Attributes for special effect, such as directly asking the GM questions about the case that they must answer honestly.

Exploits are divided by Tags; an investigator is limited by their background in terms of what Exploit Tags are available to them. An investigator may use advancements to unlock new Exploit Tags.

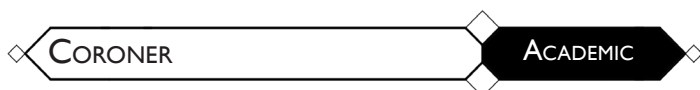
Some Exploits are divided into Tiers. When first selecting such an Exploit you learn it at Tier 1, then improve its Tier by 1 each time it's selected afterwards. Higher Tiers will usually improve the **+Shift** granted by the Exploit or provide another related benefit.



Tier 1: Shift +1 when identifying or working with chemicals, medicine, or poison.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.



Tier 1: Gain access to the Autopsy special action.

Tier 2: Shift +1 when taking the Autopsy action.

Tier 3: Shift +2 total.

Tier 4: Shift +3 total.

AUTOPSY

DIF: Determined by GM

Roll EDU

Perform a detailed examination of a cadaver. Hold one per successful die.

- ◀ **OPTION 1** ▶ Determine the exact cause of death.

- ◀ **OPTION 2** ▶ Determine the time of death.

- ◀ **OPTION 3** ▶ Determine details of the murder weapon.

- ◀ **OPTION 4** ▶ Discover unusual marks, residue, and details of the body.

- ◀ **SPECIAL** ▶ Gain Advantage if performed in a morgue or with a similar environment or equipment.

FIRST AID

ACADEMIC

Tier 1: When you or an investigator with you take the Recover action, clear an additional Status box.

Tier 2: Clear 2 additional status boxes total.

Tier 3: Clear 3 additional status boxes total.

FORENSIC PROCESS

ACADEMIC

When examining a crime scene, roll EDU instead of OBS.

HACKER

ACADEMIC

Tier 1: You know how to break into electronic systems. Roll EDU to do so.

Tier 2: Shift +1 when making this check.

Tier 3: Shift +2 total.

Tier 4: Shift +3 total.

HIT THE BOOKS

ACADEMIC

Tier 1: Spend a scene and make a DIF 4 EDU check. Regain 1 INS or 1 GRIT for each successful die.

Tier 2: Shift +1 to this check.

Tier 3: Shift +2 total.

Tier 4: Shift +3 total.

KEEN UNDERSTANDING

ACADEMIC

Spend 1 INS to ask “What is significant about _____?”

KNOW-IT-ALL

ACADEMIC

Tier 1: Shift +1 when recalling a Fact.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

LINGUIST

ACADEMIC

Tier 1: You know an additional number of languages equal to your EDU score.

Tier 2+: You may select this Exploit any number of times. Its effects stack.

Special: If your EDU increases, immediately learn an additional language for each Tier of this Exploit learned.

QUICK THINKER

ACADEMIC

Tier 1: Shift +1 on EDU Approach checks during a Confrontation.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Often cases will have all the characters involved speak the same language. However, for some settings and some mysteries it may be appropriate to introduce characters or documents with different languages.

If language is important in the game, each investigator should know one language per point of **EDU**. The **Linguist** exploit represents a character who has had extensive training in languages.

RESEARCHER

ACADEMIC

Tier 1: Shift +1 when taking the Dig Deep action.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

BRAWLER

ACTION

Tier 1: Shift +1 on Brawl checks, and MUS Approach checks during a Confrontation.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

FLOAT LIKE A BUTTERFLY

ACTION

When making a Brawl check, roll AGI instead of MUS. You may also do this when making an Assault Approach check in a Confrontation.

LETHAL WEAPON

ACTION

You are always considered to be Armed.

SHOW-OFF

ACTION

When making a Brawl check, or an Approach check as part of a Confrontation, you may increase the DIF of the check by 1. If you get a full success or better, recover 1 GRIT.

TOUGH AS NAILS

ACTION

You have an additional Status box. This counts as both an Injury and Fatigue box, and filling it does not count towards Status penalties.

WALK IT OFF

ACTION

Tier 1: Shift +1 when taking the Recover action.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

WRECKING BALL

ACTION

Spend 1 GRIT to break through an obstacle. Using this in a Confrontation grants two bonus dice on the Break Guard Approach check.

BLOODHOUND

AWARENESS

Spend 1 INS to ask “Where would be the best place to hide _____?”

KEEN HEARING

AWARENESS

Tier 1: Shift +1 on OBS checks involving hearing, such as eavesdropping on conversations.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

EXPLOITS

ONCE-OVER

AWARENESS

Tier 1: Shift +1 when examining a living person.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

PATTERN RECOGNITION

AWARENESS

Tier 1: Shift +1 when looking for patterns or comparing physical samples such as fingerprints, footprints or handwriting.

Tier 2: Shift +2.

Tier 3: Shift +3.

SENTRY

AWARENESS

Tier 1: Shift +1 on OBS Approach checks during a Confrontation.

Tier 2: Shift +2.

Tier 3: Shift +3.

SLEEP WITH ONE EYE OPEN

AWARENESS

When performing or helping with a Stakeout check, you may spend a held die to recover one Status box.

SLEUTH

AWARENESS

Tier 1: Shift +1 when examining a crime scene.

Tier 2: Shift +2.

Tier 3: Shift +3.

A horizontal exploit card with a white left half and a black right half. The left half contains the text "BAD COP" and the right half contains "POLICE".

BAD COP

POLICE

Spend 1 GRIT to discover someone's Threat.

A horizontal exploit card with a white left half and a black right half. The left half contains the text "FREEZE!" and the right half contains "POLICE".

FREEZE!

POLICE

Spend 1 GRIT to cause someone to surrender. During a Confrontation, instead gain two bonus dice when making a Stall Approach check.

A horizontal exploit card with a white left half and a black right half. The left half contains the text "GOOD COP" and the right half contains "POLICE".

GOOD COP

POLICE

Spend 1 INS to discover someone's Price.

A horizontal exploit card with a white left half and a black right half. The left half contains the text "LONG ARM OF THE LAW" and the right half contains "POLICE".

LONG ARM OF THE LAW

POLICE

Spend 1 GRIT to refresh a spent Evidence Point.

A horizontal exploit card with a white left half and a black right half. The left half contains the text "SIREN ON" and the right half contains "POLICE".

SIREN ON

POLICE

Tier 1: Shift +1 when driving.

Tier 2: Shift +2.

Tier 3: Shift +3.

A horizontal exploit card with a white left half and a black right half. The left half contains the text "TO PROTECT AND TO SERVE" and the right half contains "POLICE".

TO PROTECT AND TO SERVE

POLICE

Spend 1 GRIT when another character is injured to reduce that injury by 1 and redirect it to yourself instead.

EXPLOITS

HOT READ

SOCIAL

When you perform or help with a Dig Deep check, you may spend a held die to gain Shift +1 when anyone Interrogates/Convinces a related POI.

MANIPULATOR

SOCIAL

Spend 1 INS to ask “How can I get this person to _____?”

MASTER OF DISGUISE

SOCIAL

Tier 1: Shift +1 on EDU checks to disguise yourself.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

NO HARD FEELINGS

SOCIAL

Spend 1 GRIT to reset someone’s Resistance to its original value.

PENETRATING GAZE

SOCIAL

Spend 1 INS to ask “Is this person hiding something from me?”

WORD ON THE STREET

SOCIAL

Tier 1: Shift +1 when making an Ask Around check.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

BREAK & ENTER

UNDERWORLD

Tier 1: You know how to open locks and disable alarm systems. Make an AGI check for locks and an EDU check for electronic alarms.

Tier 2: Shift +1 when doing so.

Tier 3: Shift +2 total.

Tier 4: Shift +3 total.

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

UNDERWORLD

Spend 1 INS to ask “What’s the best way out of here?”. Using this in a Confrontation grants two bonus dice on the Evade Approach check.

FAST FINGERS

UNDERWORLD

Tier 1: Shift +1 when pickpocketing someone or performing sleight of hand.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

PARANOID

UNDERWORLD

When confronted with danger, spend 1 INS to have seen it coming and been able to do one thing to prepare for it. When used in a Confrontation, it may instead be used to grant two bonus dice on a Be Vigilant Approach check.

SHADOW

UNDERWORLD

Tier 1: Shift +1 when making a Tail check.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

EXPLOITS

SLIPPERY

UNDERWORLD

Tier 1: Shift +1 when making AGI Approach checks during a Confrontation.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

SNEAKY

UNDERWORLD

Tier 1: Shift +1 when trying to remain unnoticed, or for Hide Approach checks during a Confrontation.

Tier 2: Shift +2 total.

Tier 3: Shift +3 total.

RESTRICTED ACTIONS

Some actions require special training in order to perform them, namely hacking, lockpicking, disabling alarms and conducting autopsies. Investigators that do not have the associated exploits (Hacker, Break & Enter, Coroner) cannot attempt to take these actions, or help with them.

Once an investigator knows how to do these things, they are handled through a General Action check, except for conducting an autopsy which is handled by the Autopsy special action.

MOMENTUM POWERS

Investigators have uncanny talents and special resources that help them to make headway in an investigation. An investigator only ever has access to one Momentum Power, and must expend their Momentum to use it.

Investigators start every session with Momentum charged, and may use it once during that session to activate a Momentum Power.

Momentum Powers are divided by Tags, much like contacts and exploits, and depending on their background an investigator will only have access to certain Tags.

SWAPPING MOMENTUM POWERS

It is possible to exchange your Momentum Power for another by taking the **Swap Momentum Power** advancement. It may be that your current power is no longer appropriate for your character, or you prefer another.

Regardless of the reason, when swapping your momentum powers you are still limited by the tags allowed by your background.

However, depending on events in the game new tags may be unlocked as appropriate to the narrative - for instance, if an investigator begins working directly with the police, the Police tag may be unlocked. If you want to swap to a momentum power outside of your background's selection, speak with the GM and other players to see if it's suitable for your character.

LOSING MOMENTUM POWERS

Rarely, it may be possible to lose access to Momentum Powers - perhaps you've had to turn in your badge and gun and no longer have access to the crime lab. Some Momentum Powers are intrinsic to the character and can't be lost.

In the event that an investigator does lose access to their Momentum Power, they must either restore their access to the power in the fiction through play, or may use an advancement to Swap Momentum Power and take a new power more appropriate to their situation.

MOMENTUM POWERS

EUREKA

ACADEMIC

Someone makes an off-hand comment, or you notice an innocuous detail that provides a new Connection or Clue.

PEER REVIEW

ACADEMIC

Declare a new Academic Contact, for this case only.

PSYCHOANALYZE

ACADEMIC

Discover someone's Price and Threat.

SCIENCE!

ACADEMIC

Discover a Clue about how someone died, or how a physical event took place by examining a relevant location or object.

HERE'S HOW I'D DO IT

ACTION

Discover a Clue about how a violent event transpired.

I'VE HAD WORSE

ACTION

Clear all your status boxes. You may do this in response to being incapacitated; this prevents you from being incapacitated. If you would have lost a Brawl or Confrontation due to being incapacitated, you instead get your original result.

SHAKE THE TREE

ACTION

Attract dangerous attention, and gain an opportunity to find a Clue.

SUCKER PUNCH

ACTION

Incapacitate someone whose guard is down.

COLD READ

AWARENESS

Discover details about someone's life, profession, and recent activities.

DEDUCE

AWARENESS

Select one Clue. Discover a Connection or Clue related to it.

EAGLE EYE

AWARENESS

Cause someone to accidentally reveal a Clue.

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

AWARENESS

Witness a significant conversation or event.

ALL POINTS BULLETIN

POLICE

Discover a Lead or Clue on someone or something's location.

BACKGROUND CHECK

POLICE

Learn Facts about a POI's identity and history, including their criminal record.

MOMENTUM POWERS

RED STRING

POLICE

Discover a Connection between two POIs.

SEARCH WARRANT

POLICE

Gain access to a location for yourself and other investigators. POIs that would be upset by this gain Resistance +1.

TALK TO THE BADGE

POLICE

Cause someone to answer your questions during this scene. Then increase their Resistance by 1.

ANONYMOUS TIP

SOCIAL

Select a POI or an event. A third party will provide a Lead or Clue related to it.

BACKSTAGE PASS

SOCIAL

Gain access to any location. Your companions may still be restricted access, as appropriate. This does not trigger a Strike Out Alone check.

FRIEND OF A FRIEND

SOCIAL

Declare a new contact, for this case only.

OFF THE RECORD

SOCIAL

Cause someone to volunteer information.

RUMOR MILL

SOCIAL

Discover a Secret about a topic.

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE

UNDERWORLD

Threaten someone into providing a service or revealing information. Then increase their Resistance by 1.

FABRICATE EVIDENCE

UNDERWORLD

When Interrogating/Convincing someone, gain one free hold.

FIVE FINGER DISCOUNT

UNDERWORLD

Steal something that you could hide on your person.

FOLLOW THE MONEY

UNDERWORLD

Discover Facts about who profits or loses financially from an event.

SNITCHES

UNDERWORLD

Discover notable recent criminal activity.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

UNDERWORLD

Discover someone's Threat and a Clue regarding how it relates to the case, or how something is vulnerable.

MASTERING A MYSTERY

Running a mystery adventure can be one of the most difficult things to do in a roleplaying game. In terms of preparation, keeping the case organised, and having important details in mind during play, it can be a lot to juggle. However, a good mystery adventure can be more satisfying and engaging than many other forms of roleplay.

This chapter provides guidance in terms of structuring and composing a mystery adventure, how to give players information, manage NPCs and their secrets, and use the rules of the game to your advantage.

Many of the systems and advice in this chapter can be used in other roleplaying games if you want to introduce a mystery into an existing game, so take what you need to make the best game you can!

GM PRINCIPLES

You are the narrator, the world, and practically every character in it. This can be a daunting task, but these principles can make it easier to handle.

TELL THE TRUTH

Let your characters do the lying for you. Your job as the GM is to paint the world as honestly as you can - if ever there is a false clue or deception, it must be as a result of an NPC's actions, not GM fiat.

Grey Cells is not intended to railroad players to a solution; investigators have the tools to approach a case from a variety of different angles, collect the pieces of the puzzle and put them together. Let them take their own paths and forge their own story; don't force their hand to suit your narrative.

Some investigator abilities allow them to ask you questions directly. Answer these directly and honestly where possible. These are powerful and limited abilities that should be rewarded with valuable information. They shouldn't break a case open on their own, but should be helpful to the investigation, within the scope of the question being asked.



GIVE HUMAN MOTIVES

In real life, not every crime has a rational motive behind it. However, in a roleplaying game this tends to make for a poor story. Often discovering the truth of a mystery comes down to finding the reason behind it, and if that reason is convoluted or insane the case will be far more complicated and, odds are, far less satisfying.

Give your villains (and indeed, most of your NPCs) scrutable and relatable motives for their actions. Money, revenge, love, lust, desperation, duty - a motive doesn't have to be complicated for it to be effective. A motive may be hidden, but it shouldn't be confusing.

SIMPLICITY IS KEY

When putting together a mystery, you may be tempted to add extra twists and turns, false leads and complications to increase the challenge.

Don't.

As the GM, you are in position to see every piece of the puzzle, and when viewed as a whole it can appear to be too simple. However, what may be obvious to you can completely stump the investigators, because you already know the answer. The investigators are viewing the mystery from outside, so even a simple mystery can take some effort to solve.

As you and the investigators gain experience with the game, you can begin to ramp up the complexity, but especially for new groups and new games, keep it simple.

WHY, NOT HOW

This can vary depending on the preferences of the group, but most mysteries work better when the question being asked is *why* something was done, not *how* it was done. Most crimes are fairly simple in their execution; someone was shot, money was moved, threats were made. The meat of a mystery lies in the relationships between the people involved and what had transpired leading up to the crime.

TAKE YOUR TIME

Individual scenes, even crime scenes, shouldn't be bursting with information. Large amounts of exposition can be overwhelming and make it more difficult to process that information. Spread it out - place witnesses at different locations, have multiple locations of interest, and give the investigators time between scenes to process what they're learned.

MASTERING A MYSTERY

SAY WHAT IT IS, NOT WHAT IT MEANS

Whenever you present information limit yourself to the facts. Tell the players which side of a shattered window has glass shards on the floor, but don't tell them which side it was broken from. Interpreting clues is one of the best parts of being an investigator; leave that to them.

This rule can sometimes be relaxed if the investigators are seeking the advice of a contact or significant character, but in those situations always present the reasoning as coming from the character, not from the GM.

HANDLING THE RULES

DETERMINING CONSEQUENCES & BENEFITS

Often an investigator's actions will trigger consequences or benefits. A consequence could be a catch, a cost, or a complication, whereas a benefit could be a boon, a bonus or a breakthrough. These can be whatever you deem suitable in the situation, or they can be inspired by these options:

CONSEQUENCES

- » Something important is damaged or lost
- » The wrong people find out about it
- » It eats up precious time
- » It's exhausting
- » Someone gets hurt
- » You lose track of something or someone
- » Someone withdraws their support
- » You gain **Shift -1** (or worse) on a related roll
- » Someone's Resistance increases
- » Advance a Personal Agenda

BENEFITS

- » You notice something important
- » You earn someone's respect
- » It's extremely effective
- » A connection is revealed
- » Someone offers to help
- » A secret is hinted at
- » A theory is confirmed
- » Someone's Resistance decreases



EDUCATION & KNOWLEDGE

Investigators can make **EDU** checks to know about things; however, an investigator can't use an **EDU** check to already know secrets that they couldn't feasibly already know about.

EDU checks can provide public or common information about a topic, and have a DIF related to how obscure that knowledge is. If an investigator is fictionally positioned to know more about the topic, roll with advantage.

A critical success on an **EDU** check still won't reveal deep secrets, but it may point to them depending on what benefit you choose.

CHARGING CASH

Investigators are assumed to have enough money to cover their incidental living expenses. Only ask them to spend **CASH** when they are making a significant purchase, like renting a vehicle or buying a burner cellphone.

INITIATING CONFRONTATIONS

Confrontations are a major threat to the investigators, and should be used sparingly. A Confrontation begins when the investigators come into violent conflict with opponents who are extremely dangerous and are prepared to cause grievous harm or commit murder. A chaotic barroom brawl, though dangerous, would be resolved with a Brawl check rather than a Confrontation - the brawlers aren't trying to kill anyone, and are probably fighting each other as much as fighting the investigators. Starting the same fight in a mafia-run bar filled with armed mobsters is another matter.

When determining the DIF of a Confrontation, a good starting point is the most dangerous opponent's MUS or AGI +1, rather than +2 like a standard opposed check. The DIF may be higher or lower depending on circumstance. Most Confrontations should be DIF 4 or 5; a DIF 6 Confrontation is extremely difficult for all but the most seasoned investigators to succeed at and should be reserved for truly desperate struggles.

NPC ATTRIBUTES

Usually you don't need to prepare attributes and rules for NPCs beforehand. NPCs don't work quite as investigators do; they don't have Insight, Grit or Cash, they don't have exploits and they don't have momentum.

They do share the primary attributes, however; whenever an NPC is called upon to make a roll, or is opposing an investigator, you must determine their score in that attribute. Recall what each value means and assign them a value

MASTERING A MYSTERY

as appropriate.

1	Unpracticed
2	Trained
3	Substantial
4	Exceptional

Very few characters have 4 in a stat; this should be reserved for very important and potent NPCs. A skilled dancer might have AGI 3, but a world-class ballerina would have AGI 4.

NPC RESISTANCE

Most NPCs have 3-4 Resistance. Resistance 2 represents a very pliable individual, while Resistance 5 or 6 should be reserved for those with exceptional willpower and the most guarded against interrogation.

THE VILLAINOUS AGENDA

This track measures the antagonist's progress towards their goal. It also sets the pace of the adventure; once it fills, the investigators' time is up. Every scene the investigators engage in fills one section of the Villainous Agenda track once the scene concludes.

SETTING THE LENGTH

The length of the track will vary depending on your personal style and that of the other players. It may take a few sessions to get a feel for how long to make the track for your game; until then, err on the side of generosity.

A short mystery with only a few important characters and events should have a track from 6-8 spaces long, a medium length mystery with a broader cast and more to investigate should be 8-10 spaces long, and a long, complex mystery should be 10-12 spaces long.

VILLAINOUS EVENTS

When planning the mystery, you may wish to (secretly or publicly) mark certain spaces as Villainous Events; when these are filled, something special happens which may be to the benefit or detriment of the investigators.



This might be the next crime in the series being committed, a new witness coming forward, or an unexpected twist of fate. This event could be accompanied by a “cutscene” showing something happening that the investigators are not aware of, though these cutscenes should be played for drama rather than provide clues since the investigators aren’t there.

A villainous event could even advance the track multiple spaces, as it turns out the investigators have less time than they thought!

UNEXPECTED ADVANCEMENT

There are times when you may wish to advance the agenda outside of the regular scene progression, such as if the investigators’ actions (and probably their failures) have advanced the agenda. In such a case, you don’t necessarily want to advance it immediately, as it may not always be clear to the players that what they did helped the villain. Keep note of it until the agenda would advance naturally, then advance it two spaces instead of one as though it were a planned event.

EXTENDING THE TRACK

Sometimes you may wish to add spaces to the track, giving the investigators more time to solve the case. There are many reasons you could do this.

The investigators might take some significant action that makes the villain’s plot harder, such as getting the next victim out of harm’s way.

It could be planned from the start, as the final space on the track holds a villainous event that reveals that what they’ve been investigating so far is just the tip of the iceberg. New spaces are added, probably accompanied by new goals!

It could also be a lucky break for the investigators; the villain makes a mistake or another agency sweeps in to provide assistance. This can be an effective way of extending the track if you underestimated the complexity of the case. This should always be a mixed blessing at best; if another agency gets involved, have them fight for jurisdiction. Having a universally good event occur that buys them more time can feel like *deus ex machina* and rob the adventure of tension.

Don’t extend the track just because the investigators are running out of time, either - if they’ve had the time they need to solve the case and failed to do so, it’s not your responsibility to bail them out. Failure is real and possible in Grey Cells; it can provide great opportunities for character growth, dramatic twists, and provides fertile ground for future cases should the villain ever reappear...

MASTERING A MYSTERY

DESPERATE FINALE

When the Villainous Agenda track fills completely, the investigators have one final scene they can all partake in to try and solve the mystery. This could be an all-or-nothing scene where they push for that final piece of evidence, or a denouement to trick the villain into incriminating themselves. Once this scene closes, the case is over (unless they find some way to extend the villainous agenda track).

A STYMIED VILLAIN

It is possible that through the actions of the investigators they may inadvertently create a situation where the villain's plan is either impossible or highly unfeasible. In such a situation, continue the advancing the Villainous Agenda as normal and consider if the villain's plan is still salvageable. If it is, once the track fills up add a couple of spaces on the track to represent the villain having to pivot and delay their plans.

If it's not salvageable, and if the investigators have still not solved the mystery or realised who the villain is by the time the Villainous Agenda track has filled up, the villain's plans have still been foiled but it is likely that they themselves have escaped justice and may attempt another crime in a later case.

CLOSING THE CASE

Once the investigators have identified the villain and handled them however they see fit, or otherwise fulfilled the demands of the case, the case is closed!

The case also closes if the Villainous Agenda track fills completely and the Desperate Finale scene fails; in this case, the investigators have probably lost.

Once the case is closed, you and any other player can freely frame scenes to form an epilogue to the story without advancing the villainous agenda, though at this point no further EP are earned.

After this, reward XP to the investigators (Page 11).

THE BURDEN OF PROOF

Depending on the genre and the nature of the investigators, simply knowing whodunit may not be enough - detectives and police usually have to be able to prove whodunit in a court of law. The actual trial where this evidence would be presented is beyond the scope of the game, though you could include it as an epilogue scene.

In some genres and with some investigators, however, this isn't an issue - sometimes knowing is enough, and sometimes you have ways to deal with the

culprit outside of a court of law.

Whether or not this is a requirement of closing the case should be clear from the outset. Whether or not this is the case influences what kinds of mysteries you can create. In some mysteries, it's clear who the culprit is from early on, but the challenge is proving it - this doesn't work so well if the investigators don't have a burden of proof.

CRAFTING CASES

A lot of advice about writing mystery stories also applies here. Raymond Chandler's *Twelve Notes on Murder* or S. S. Van Dine's *Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories* are good starting points for learning about what goes into mystery fiction.

Some of their points will be reiterated here, but there is also advice specific to creating a mystery RPG.

THE WEB

It can be helpful to think of your mystery as a web, with your initial crime acting as the core and all the details you come up with branching off it.

You can draw it out as a mind map, or write the items more conventionally. Using digital software can be convenient for either approach as you will likely go back and make changes to your work as you go.

Experiment and see how large a web works for you.

BEGIN WITH THE CRIME

The first step in creating a case is to determine the origin of everything else that you're about to create. What was the crime that kicked off all the events that your investigators are about to unravel?

Pick a crime from the following list, or one of your own devising.

MASTERING A MYSTERY

Assault

Deliberate physical injury of another person. Sexual assault is also a serious crime, and can be a very sensitive theme - talk to your group about what kind of content they're comfortable including in the game.

Blackmail

Demanding compensation in terms of money or services in return for not revealing compromising information. A blackmailer may force their victim to commit other crimes, and will generally keep their victim on the hook for as long as possible.

Conspiracy

Planning an unlawful or harmful act. Investigators will be tipped off by some element of the planning, and should have an opportunity to prevent the crime.

Destruction of Property

Generally through force or arson.

Embezzlement

Misappropriation and theft of funds left in one's care, often hidden or blamed on an innocent party.

Extortion

Demanding money or services through force or threats. Differs from blackmail in that the victim need not have done something to leave themselves vulnerable to it.

Fraud

Deception for financial or personal gain, possibly including forgery of documents or false identities.

Homicide

Murder of another person. A classic mainstay of mystery fiction.

Kidnapping

Abduction and captivity of another person. The Villainous Agenda usually acts as a timer until the victim is either killed or lost.

Smuggling

Illegal transport of goods, especially contraband.

Theft

Seizure of funds or property, with or without the victim's knowledge. Could include pickpocketing, burglary or armed robbery.

THE FIRST STRANDS

Once you've picked what kind of crime you'd like as the core of the mystery, ask the following questions and write down your answers. At this stage, you don't need to think about fine details - work in broad strokes. Instead of creating unique characters and places, use fillers - "who did it" can be answered by "someone who was after their money" for now.

CYBER CRIME

Digital and internet crime doesn't get its own entry in the list because most of the time, cyber crime can fit into one of the other categories, especially Fraud, Theft, Extortion and Destruction of Property. If you'd like to include cyber crime in your case, pick the closest category and give it more digital elements.

- » *Who did it?*
- » *Why did they do it?*
- » *How did they do it?*
- » *What happened afterwards?*
- » *What is the villain's plan now?*
- » *What brings the investigators in?*

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

For each of the answers to the previous questions, go through them and ask at least one of these questions to start introducing details and complications. Not every question will apply to every point, pick the ones that resonate with the story forming in your head.

- » *Who else was involved? How were they involved?*
- » *What needed to be prepared beforehand?*
- » *What went wrong?*
- » *What does this change?*
- » *What opportunities does this create?*

Once you're done, go back over the new answers you just wrote and ask more of these questions, until you have a firm grasp of the situation.

WORKING IN DETAILS

Once you have a decent idea of what happened and the components of your mystery, it's time to turn your attention to the fine details. Do the following:

- » *Name your characters and groups.*
- » *Note (briefly) how they relate to one another.*
- » *Give every Person of Interest (POI) a Price and a Threat (read on for details).*

MASTERING A MYSTERY

- » Establish a timeline of what happened before the game begins.
- » Name and loosely detail important locations.
- » Decide what evidence would exist at key points in the mystery.
- » Plan the investigators' introduction to the case.

FOLLOW YOUR GUT

Draw connections where they appear. Leap at ideas that excite you. Explore where they take you. Change what you need to.

You will have time later to massage the details into a cohesive narrative, so don't worry if it doesn't fit perfectly. Also, don't be fancy - keep individual elements simple. Go with your first or second idea. Don't aim for a big twist, instead put together a tapestry of simple facts.

Finally, keep your genre in mind and let it guide you.

PERSONS OF INTEREST (POIs)

Not every NPC the investigators meet needs to be prepared beforehand, but some characters are critical to the investigation. These might be villains, victims or witnesses, or other important characters related to the mystery or to the investigators.

POIs are more detailed than incidental characters. A simple way to determine whether or not an NPC is a POI is whether or not they have a name. Or, to use a film analogy, if your mystery was made a movie, would this character be listed in the credits? If so, they're probably a POI.

A character does not have to be a suspect to be a POI; they can be innocent or even helpful to the investigators - declaring someone a POI is simply saying that they're important.

Contacts can also be POIs, though only if they are directly connected to the case.

NPC MOTIVATIONS

In Grey Cells, every POI has a Price and a Threat. Their Price is something they could be offered, something they desire that could be used to manipulate them. Their Threat is where you can turn the screws on them, what you can use to threaten them with to get them to do what you want. During preparation only POIs need to have their Prices and Threats determined;

if incidental characters need to have a Price or Threat these can be quickly decided or randomly determined during play.

Prices and Threats are chosen from the same list, as follows:

- » **Money**
- » **Power**
- » **Safety**
- » **Family**
- » **Image**
- » **Community**

- » **Freedom**
- » **Excitement**
- » **Revenge**
- » **Love**
- » **Lust**
- » **Obsession**

CRIMINAL MOTIVE

The Prices & Threats list can also be used to decide what the motive is for the crime in your mystery - since they already act as a character's driving motivation, these things could also push them to commit crimes. The motive may or may not be the same as the villain's Price or Threat. Some extra motives that don't also act as Prices or Threats are:

- **Envy**
- **Jealousy**
- **Desperation**
- **Negligence**

PRICES AND THREATS IN DETAIL

A character's Price and Threat doesn't fully define a character, but it does say a lot about them. Furthermore, it provides hooks that investigators can use to manipulate them, if they can find out what they are. They can also be used by other NPCs as well, possibly to drive them towards criminal acts. As such, finding out a person's Price and Threat and finding out who else knows what they are could be a valuable clue.

MONEY AS PRICE

This is likely one of the most common Prices; simple monetary greed. This character is likely to respond favorably to bribes, profitable deals, and offers of wealth.

These characters want to live lavishly and are usually free with the money they make.

MASTERING A MYSTERY

Someone with Money as their Price is explicitly greedy. Someone who accepts money as a means towards a different desire should have that as their Price instead. For instance, someone with a sick relative might accept money to help pay for their treatment, especially if the briber were to offer the money specifically for that purpose.

This person would have Family as their Price, not Money.

MONEY AS THREAT

This is about losing money. They fear people threatening to steal from them, sabotage their livelihood, sink their business or ruin a risky deal they are about to undertake.

These characters tend to be stingy and Scrooge-like, often hoarding money for its own sake.

POWER AS PRICE

Power can take many forms, but it usually comes down to the ability to create change. The more people that listen to you, the more your decisions, actions and commands can change the world around you, the more power you have. Often an offer of power is in the form of a position of power; one that could be taken away.

People can seek power for many reasons; often they have a cause they are pursuing and use that to justify their pursuit of power. Others want power for its own sake.

Similar to Money, if someone is genuinely seeking power for another cause, that cause should be their Price (or their Threat). The best way to decide whether someone's Price is Power or their cause is that if they had to choose between their power and their cause, they would choose their power every time.

POWER AS THREAT

These people already have power, and are afraid to lose it. The people who can exploit this are usually the ones granting them power in the first place, or someone who has information they could use to sabotage their power base.



SAFETY AS PRICE

Safety and security is most desired by those who lack it. People in a dangerous or unstable position are often open to offers of relief.

SAFETY AS THREAT

When in a position of safety and comfort, many people fear having that taken away, through the introduction of chaos and instability - or even just a threat of physical violence.

These people have lived sheltered lives - someone who has fought and struggled for their safety is more likely to resist these threats than to capitulate to them.

FAMILY AS PRICE

Sometimes an offer of aid is best made not to the person you're trying to influence, but to someone close to them. Family need not refer directly to blood relatives, this also encompasses close friends and other loved ones.

This is particularly effective if a family member is in dire straits and the character is unable to help them.

FAMILY AS THREAT

When someone proves resistant to coercion it can be far more effective to threaten those they care about.

These people could be matrons or patrons, or otherwise consider themselves responsible for the wellbeing of those close to them.

IMAGE AS PRICE

When someone is greatly concerned with how they appear to others, whether that be a cultivated reputation or having the respect of their peers, appealing to that can get results.

Image and Power often go hand in hand, but this focuses on fame and reputation rather than the ability to create change. A struggling actor with Image as their Price might do anything to get their big break, but are more interested in the fame than the power that might accompany their success.

IMAGE AS THREAT

People who have worked hard to create and maintain their image fear having it sullied, especially when it's based on a lie or they have skeletons in their closet.

MASTERING A MYSTERY

COMMUNITY AS PRICE

This is similar to Family, except that it extends to most people around them, even those they don't know particularly well.

These people tend to be in positions of legal or social authority, and are open to offers to improve the situation of those around them. They could be community figures, or company executives hoping to improve the lot of their employees.

COMMUNITY AS THREAT

When a community is stable, the threat of instability can be a powerful motivator.

These people are most interested in maintaining the status quo for the sake of those around them, rather than improving things.

FREEDOM AS PRICE

These people lack agency in their own lives, either due to incarceration or an unfortunate living situation.

This overlaps with power, but only so far as they seek the power to make their own decisions and live their lives as they want to.

FREEDOM AS THREAT

Threats of (or actual) incarceration, legal or otherwise can be effective ways to manipulate these people, as can denying their agency and personal expression.

These people may be nonconformists or deviants, or they are deeply worried about something they did that could land them in jail.

EXCITEMENT AS PRICE

Sometimes all it takes to get someone on board is the promise of a good time.

These people tend to be thrill seekers, risk takers, and those whose lives are so devoid of excitement that they jump at the opportunity.

EXCITEMENT AS THREAT

This is about the removal of something that excites the person; for instance, a drug addict might do anything to prevent being cut off from their supply.

REVENGE AS PRICE

These people bear a grudge; someone has wronged them badly enough that

UTILISING PRICE & THREAT

Just because a character doesn't have a particular Price or Threat doesn't mean it won't be effective against them. They give you an idea about their characters and their priorities, but just like real people they have many different (and sometimes contradicting) motivations.

Prices and Threats improve the chance to make characters comply with requests, but other means of persuasion may be effective, they just don't provide an Advantage die.

they will do almost anything if it helps them get back at their enemy.

REVENGE AS THREAT

Rather than seeking revenge, these people fear it - they know someone is after them for something they've done.

LOVE AS PRICE

Love makes fools of us all, but of these people in particular. They will do practically anything for the ones they love.

This refers specifically to romantic relationships, so these people usually only have one or a few targets for their affections and will do whatever they ask. These relationships need not be reciprocated - unrequited love can be an excellent motivator.

LOVE AS THREAT

This is about threatening romantic relationships, either by directly threatening their partner or threatening the relationship itself.

This could be exploited by someone with information that could damage the relationship, or even by the partner themselves if they were so inclined.

LUST AS PRICE

Some characters are driven by their sexual desires. These desires may have a specific target (who may or may not reciprocate), or they may be open to seduction by anyone they find attractive.

Having this as a price doesn't necessarily mean someone is promiscuous or even sexually active, but they probably want to be.

MASTERING A MYSTERY

LUST AS THREAT

This is often about withholding sex or interfering with someone's pursuit of it. It could mean a sexual partner refusing sex unless certain conditions are met, or one could threaten to jeopardise their sexual prospects.

These characters are sexually active, and consider sex an important part of their lives and could have one partner or multiple partners.

SEXUAL CONTENT

Having a character with Lust as their Price or Threat doesn't mean that they will proposition the investigators. It's important that everyone is comfortable with the content of the game; if a character would act that way, speak to your players beforehand about sexual content in the game.

If you're not sure about what your players are comfortable with and want to include such a character in the game, don't make them flirt with or proposition the investigators.

OBSESSION AS PRICE

Sometimes a Price can go too far. When a person becomes focused on their Price to an unhealthy degree, it becomes an Obsession. For instance, someone Obsessed with safety might never leave their house and have built their own panic room.

People can be Obsessed with something that isn't an existing Price; a project, a mystery or a memory can all be targets of an Obsession. Addiction and substance abuse also falls under Obsession.

Feeding and enabling someone's Obsession is often an effective way to manipulate them.

OBSESSION AS THREAT

There are two approaches to using Obsession as a Threat. It can mean withholding or removing the object of the Obsession, or if the target is aware of their Obsession and trying to rid themselves of it, pushing them back into the thick of it (or threatening to do so) can provide excellent leverage.



CRIMINAL MOTIVATIONS

While standard Prices and Threats can be sufficient motivation to break the law, there are some other common criminal motivators.

These are not Prices or Threats themselves, a villain or other POI may have a criminal motivation in addition to their Price and Threat. A criminal motivation is often related to someone's Price or Threat, however. For example, someone with Image as their Price might have Envy as their criminal motivation.

Criminal motivations cannot be utilised by the investigators to interrogate them, and only serve as another tool for the GM to prepare the case and characters involved.

ENVY

A crime committed due to envy is about taking what someone else has for yourself, which could be an object, person or position.

Alternatively it can be about destroying the thing you're envious of so nobody can have it.

JEALOUSY

This is about fear, justified or not, that someone else will take what you have. Crimes driven by jealousy are often about attacking the people you think want to take things from you, sometimes even pre-emptively.

DESPERATION

Sometimes people have no recourse except to turn to crime. People in danger, trapped in bad situations or driven to the breaking point may commit crimes to save themselves.

NEGLIGENCE

Accidents happen. Sometimes a crime is not due to criminal intent but instead the result of laziness, incompetence or just honest mistakes.

If the perpetrator realises they are at fault, they may commit further, intentional crimes to cover it up.

MASTERING A MYSTERY

PERSONAL AGENDAS

Certain POIs will have Personal Agendas attached to them. These work in a similar fashion to the Villainous Agenda, except **they only advance as a Consequence**, or when narratively appropriate.

A Personal Agenda is either something the POI is planning to do, or otherwise something that will happen to them. Personal Agendas are one of the following:

Impediment	If this Agenda completes, it will interfere with the investigation.
Opportunity	If the investigators resolve it before the Agenda completes, it will benefit the investigation. If the Agenda completes without being resolved, the window of opportunity has closed.

ASSIGNING PERSONAL AGENDAS

Not every POI has a Personal Agenda. When preparing your case, look at the connections between POIs and at how POIs are connected to the case at large. Consider the following questions:

- » *What do they want that could impact the investigation?*
- » *What might happen to them or be done to them that could impact the investigation?*

A Personal Agenda describes what will happen to the person without the intervention of the Investigators. They may interfere with the agenda or seize upon the opportunity it presents, assuming they find out about it.

Unlike the Villainous Agenda, Personal Agendas are usually not visible to the players on the Crime Board. Through investigation they may learn that one exists, but its progress should be hidden.

It is also possible that the villain themselves may have a Personal Agenda in addition to their Villainous Agenda, which may or may not be related to the crime.

RESOLVING PERSONAL AGENDAS

The Investigators may resolve Personal Agendas by acting to change their outcome. If they do so, the Personal Agenda is removed.

Sometimes if the Investigators cause the Personal Agenda to resolve in a way that benefits the POI, the investigators may treat that POI as a Contact



Sandra, a POI in a murder case, is assigned a Personal Agenda: “Targeted by the Killer”, a track with four spaces on it. The GM decides that it will be an Impediment; if it fills, the villain finds and kills her and she is no longer available to question.

TARGETED BY THE KILLER



During the investigation, the investigators ask Sandra to follow up a lead for them. She does so and the GM fills a space on her Personal Agenda track as her actions draw the killer's attention.

TARGETED BY THE KILLER



As the track fills, she may notice someone following her or otherwise fear for her safety.

If the Investigators discover that she is being targeted and manage to save her from being killed, she is grateful and does what she can to help. She becomes a Contact for the rest of the case.

REWARDS

In addition to XP, investigators may earn additional rewards depending on the nature of the case. A reward could be narrative (such as an improved reputation with a group of people) or it could be a mechanical benefit from the list below:

- » Extra **CASH** next case
- » A new Contact, either permanent or good for one use
- » A single use of a Momentum Power or Exploit
- » A weapon
- » A unique item that grants Advantage to specific tasks



PAINTING GAMES GREY

If you are playing another roleplaying game that you would like to add some mystery to, it is simple to apply elements of Grey Cells on top of it and include tools for both the GM and the players to engage with a mystery adventure. Following is advice for how to implement several Grey Cells elements into your game; you may use as many or as few of these as you like.

MYSTERY PLANNING

The GM tools to prepare a mystery are system agnostic and so transfer easily to almost any game. When preparing a mystery in another game, keep these tools and systems in mind.

PRICE & THREAT

Adding these motivations to NPCs is a simple way of fleshing them out and giving them values and stakes. Players that make use of an NPC's price or threat may gain a bonus to rolls when interacting with them, as appropriate for the game.

CRIME BOARD

If there is sufficient table space, including a crime board can act as a great prop to help coordinate the investigation and create the air of mystery.

CONTACTS

If the game doesn't already have a mechanism for contacts and connections, each PC can know one useful individual that they can invoke and will assist in the case as per their specialty. For a longer running campaign, PCs may earn new Contacts through advancement, replacing some advancement options with new Contacts, or allowing a new Contact with each adventure.

INFORMATION GATHERING ACTIONS

These actions offer useful options for players to gather information in an adventure. Consider what kind of roll a player would make to determine success in your game, e.g. what they would roll instead of **OBS**, and have the action work much as it does here, giving them a number of Hold or graded success depending on how well they did.



INTERROGATION

Many games already feature mechanics for manipulating others. Use them as normal, and grant a bonus to the roll if the PCs have evidence they are leveraging against them.

MOMENTUM POWERS & EXPLOITS

These abilities may require some modification to work with other systems, potentially being added as character abilities and advancement options. Pick only abilities that you would like to include, and consider how their effect would transfer well into your game.

INDEX

- Advancement 48-49
- Advantage 9
- Armed 11
 - armed combat 63
- Ask Around 57
- Attributes 5-6
 - checks 6-7
- Autopsy 74
- Backgrounds 10, **23-52**
 - Beat Cop 24-27
 - Crook 28-31
 - Detective 32-35
 - Reporter 36-39
 - Scientist 40-43
 - Socialite 44-47
- Brawl 62
- Cash 6, **91**
- Combat 61-63
 - armed combat 63
 - damage & incapacitation 61
 - recovery 62
- Confrontations **63-68**, 91
 - approaches 63
 - determining DIF 64
 - Final Confrontation 66
 - mental mo 65
 - modus operandi 64
 - physical mo 65
 - Take Approach 64
 - weaknesses 66
- Consequence & Benefit 8, **90**
- Contacts 10, **71-72**
 - tags 72
- Creating a Character 10-11
- Crime Board 4
- Custom Backgrounds 51
- Dig Deep 58
- Evidence Points 13,
 - Experience 11, 15,
 - Exploits 10-11, **73-82**
 - Bad Cop 79
 - Bloodhound 77
 - Brawler 76
 - Break & Enter 81
 - Catch Me If You Can 81
 - Chemist 73
 - Coroner 73
 - Fast Fingers 81
 - First Aid 74
 - Float Like a Butterfly 76
 - Forensic Process 74
 - Freeze! 79
 - Good Cop 79
 - Hacker 74
 - Hit the Books 75
 - Hot Read 80
 - Keen Hearing 77
 - Keen Understanding 75
 - Know-It-All 75
 - Lethal Weapon 76
 - Linguist 75
 - Long Arm of the Law 79
 - Manipulator 80
 - Master of Disguise 80
 - No Hard Feelings 80
 - Once-Over 78
 - Paranoid 81
 - Pattern Recognition 78
 - Penetrating Gaze 80
 - Quick Thinker 75
 - Researcher 76
 - Sentry 78
 - Shadow 81
 - Show-Off 77
 - Siren On
 - Sleep With One Eye Open 78



- Sleuth 78
- Slippery 82
- Sneaky 82
- To Protect And To Serve 79
- Tough as Nails 77
- Walk It Off 77
- Word on the Street 80
- Wrecking Ball 77
- General Action 54
- Genres 16-22
 - combining genres 22
 - Cozy 17-18
 - Great Detective 16-17
 - Hard-Boiled 18-19
 - Police Procedural 20-21
 - Thriller 21-22
- Grease the Wheels 70
- Gut Instinct 69
- Help 9
- Hold 55
- Hunch 69
- Interrogation 14, **59-61**
 - Interrogate/Convince 60
- Information Gathering 55
- Language Barriers 76
- Limited Actions 53, 68
- Medical Aid
- Momentum Powers 11, **83-87**
 - All Points Bulletin 85
 - An Offer You Can't Refuse 87
 - Anonymous Tip 86
 - Background Check 85
 - Backstage Pass 86
 - Cold Read 85
 - Deduce 85
 - Eagle Eye 85
 - Eureka 84
 - Fabricate Evidence 87
 - Five Finger Discount 87
 - Follow the Money 87
 - Friend of a Friend 86
 - Here's How I'd Do It 84
 - I've Had Worse 84
 - Off the Record 86
 - Peer Review 84
 - Psychoanalyze 84
 - Red String 86
 - Right Place, Right Time 85
 - Rumor Mill 87
 - Science! 84
 - Search Warrant 86
 - Shake the Tree 84
 - Snitches 87
 - Sucker Punch 85
 - Talk to the Badge 86
 - Tricks of the Trade 87
- Opposed Action 54
- Personal Agendas 106
- Persons of Interest 12, **98**
- Price & Threats 14, **99-104**
- Push Through 69
- Recover 62
- Restricted Actions 82
- Retiring Characters 49
- Rewards 107
- Scenes 4, **14-15**
 - intermission scenes 15
- Shift 8-9
- Special Actions 53-70
- Splitting Up 55
 - Split Forces 55
- Stakeout 59
- Status 11-12
- Take A Long Time 14, **56**
- Tail 59
- Types of Clues 56
- Villainous Agenda 14, **92-93**



Grey Cells is a tabletop role-playing game of detective fiction. Through choice or circumstance, your group of investigators are embroiled in criminal conspiracies that only they can stop. Faced with cunning villains and a ticking clock, will your wits and resources be enough to crack the case before it's too late?

INSIDE, YOU'LL FIND...

- Rules to create your investigator from one of six backgrounds: the **BEAT COP**, the **CROOK**, the **DETECTIVE**, the **REPORTER**, the **SCIENTIST**, and the **SOCIALITE**.

Unique talents and powers to set your investigator apart and help

- them solve even the most fiendish cases.

Simple mechanics to gather information and resolve conflicts.

- Many valid approaches to conducting an investigation, ensuring that even if you hit a dead end there'll always be another way to proceed.

Tools to create your own mysteries and suspects, each with their own

- easy to understand motivations and secrets.

Guides on how to tailor your game to match your favourite crime

- fiction genres: **COZY**, **GREAT DETECTIVE**, **HARD-BOILED**, **POLICE PROCEDURAL**, or **THRILLER**.



**DAPPER
FISH
DESIGNS**

ISBN 978-0-6487569-0-3



9 780648 756903 >