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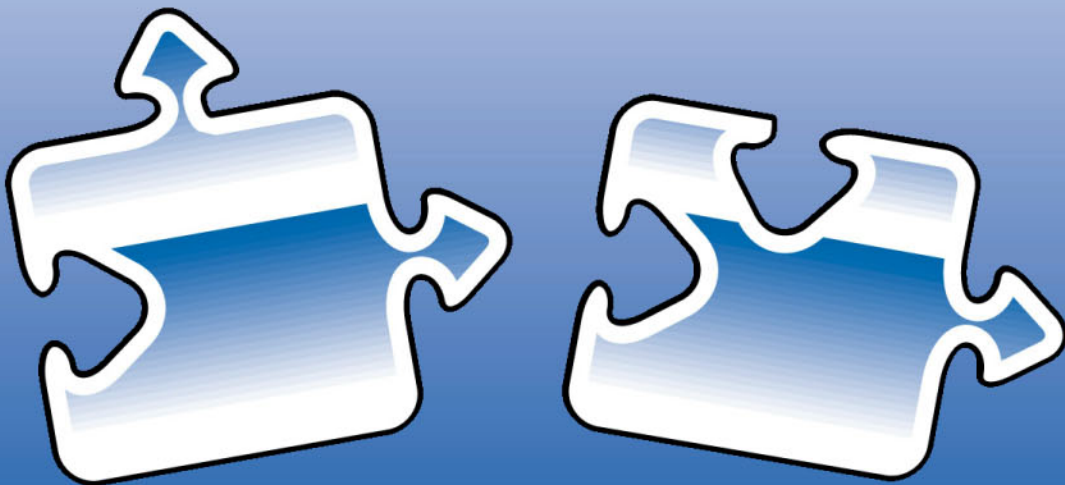
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# imPreso™

MODULAR ROLEPLAYING SYSTEM

Express Rules

[version ER 1.0]



This is the Express version of the Impresa™ Modular Roleplaying System. The full version is intended as a Roleplaying Game Design Kit, allowing you to build a custom system by combining stock rules modules into a final package. Impresa Modular Roleplaying System and Impresa Express are copyright 2003 by Brett M. Bernstein and Politically Incorrect Games. All rights reserved. Impresa is a trademark of Politically Incorrect Games. For more information, visit <http://www.pigames.net> or contact Politically Incorrect Games at [info@pigames.net](mailto:info@pigames.net).

## how to use these rules

These rules can be used in one of two ways—as a set of quick-play generic rules which can be adapted to your desired setting or inserted into your own custom game using the companion text version. You may ignore any or all special abilities and gimmicks or create new ones (as well as new skills, weapons, and armor) in order to customize the rules for your setting. The Usage Guidelines companion file details which modifications may be made to these rules. It is recommended that you check with Politically Incorrect Games if you are unsure about the modifications required for your game.

These rules assume that you have roleplaying experience and understand the art of directing a game. The term director is used to denote the person who acts as referee, although gamemaster may be substituted at your discretion.

## abilities

Abilities represent the potential and raw talent inherent in every character. Each ability is rated on a scale from zero (0) to six (6). This number indicates how many dice are rolled when attempting skills governed by the ability.

**Fitness** represents the character's strength, agility, and physical health.

**Awareness** represents the character's sensory ability and is the power of observation and intuition.

**Creativity** represents the character's spiritual, personal, and artistic affinity.

**Reasoning** represents the character's mental ability—logical deduction, rational thought, and memory.

**Influence** represents the character's social standing, charisma, and popularity.

**Luck** is an unusual ability as it does not govern any skills. Instead, its rating may be reduced in order to increase the odds of any skill task (see task resolution) or decrease the amount of damage sustained (see combat). Luck may only be increased at the director's discretion, usually as a reward for good roleplaying, achieving goals, or as positive reinforcement for a character's selfless acts.

ability ratings	
0	disabled
1	child-like or poor
2	low average
3	average
4	talented
5	gifted
6	unimaginable ability

## special abilities

Special abilities are used to add magic and other powers to the game. Since not all characters possess special abilities, they are ignored unless a specific game setting makes use of any or all of them. Special abilities function in the same manner as standard abilities. A few sample special abilities are listed below, but the you can create your own depending on your needs.

**ESP**, or extra sensory perception, acts an extension to awareness by increasing a character's sense of intuition. ESP can be used in different manners. It is up to the director to determine its exact use—add dice to all awareness tasks, use it in place of awareness, or use it exclusively with ESP-based skills.

**Endowment** indicates that the character has been granted supernatural powers from an entity existing in another realm. Endowments are typically granted in exchange for favors and if a character does not live up to his end of the bargain, this special ability may be taken away or the entity may punish him. Endowment is used to supplement other abilities—choose an endowed ability and add the endowment rating to tasks related to the chosen ability.

## skills

Skills represent general knowledge, training, and fields of study. Each skill is governed by a single ability (or special ability) and rated from two (2) to eight (8). Any skill may be attempted unskilled unless it has an asterisk next to it. Feel free to add your own skills to fit the setting.

### FITNESS BASED SKILLS

**Archery** covers the use and construction of bows and arrows.

**Athletics** helps a character climb, swim, throw objects, perform gymnastic stunts, and dodge attacks.

**Brawling** covers the ability to punch, kick, grapple, and parry in combat situations.

**Driving** covers the operation of automobiles, trucks, and motorcycles. It can also cover general vehicle maintenance when used with reasoning in place of fitness.

**Firearms** covers the use of any pistol or rifle. It can also cover general gun maintenance when used with reasoning in place of fitness.

**Melee** covers the ability to fight an opponent using hand-to-hand weapons such as staves, knives, swords, and clubs.

**Piloting\*** covers the operation of air-based vehicles such as helicopters and planes. It can also cover general vehicle maintenance when used with reasoning in place of fitness.

**Riding** is the knowledge of controlling horses and steering horse-drawn wagons and carriages.

**Sailing** is the art of steering and navigating a boat using only the wind and the sails. It can also cover general sail-boat maintenance when used with reasoning in place of fitness.

skill ratings	
2	undertrained
3	apprentice
4	capable
5	proficient
6	seasoned
7	professional
8	expert

**AWARENESS BASED SKILLS**

**Criminal** covers racketeering, confidence scams, picking locks and pockets, safecracking, hiding from the law, and escaping from bonds such as chains or ropes. Fitness may be used in place of fitness for physical maneuvers.

**Subterfuge** is the art of concealing one's true motives. It also covers disguises, forgery, and sabotage (when combined with the mechanical or electrical aptitude).

**Gambling** allows a character to play games of chance and deduce the odds of winning in a given situation. The character can also bluff when this skill is used with influence in place of awareness.

**CREATIVITY BASED SKILLS**

**Crafts** is the shaping and baking of clay pottery and forging crude metallic alloys such as bronze.

**Design** covers all forms of artistic training, including painting, drawing, sculpting, metal working, graphic design, photography, and even forgery.

**Literacy** is the art of language and literature. Literacy is used for reading and writing, and analyzing the written word when used with reasoning in place of creativity.

**Instrument** is the art of designing and playing musical scores with specific instruments.

**REASONING BASED SKILLS**

**Boating** is the building of small wooden sea vessels, such as canoes, rafts, or rowboats. It can also cover steering boats when used with fitness in place of reasoning.

**Computers** covers the operation, hacking, and basic repair of all computer systems.

**Electrical** is the knowledge of designing, building, and repairing electronic devices.

**Financial** covers all basic aspects of monetary application including accounting, business management, and trading.

**First Aid** is the application of basic medical techniques in order to sanitize and bandage small wounds, and act in emergency situations. A successful task indicates that one grade of fatigue is restored to the patient at the end of the day

**Investigation** is the acquisition of data through examination, observation, inquiry, and research.

**Engineering\*** covers a wide array of construction arts—architectural, civil, and aerospace.

**Legends** is the knowledge of superstitions, the occult, fairy tales, and mythology.

**Mechanical** is the knowledge of designing, building, and repairing mechanical devices.

**Medicine\*** is the knowledge of healing and treating the wounded or ill.

**Natural Sciences\*** covers a wide array of studies, including astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, and physics.

**Social Sciences\*** covers a wide array of studies, including economics, law, politics, sociology, and theology.

**Survival** is the knowledge of staying alive in the wilderness. Survival allows characters to build shelters, locate food sources, hunt, and follow paths. Essentially, the ultimate boy scout.

**INFLUENCE BASED SKILLS**

**Leadership** is the art of delegating responsibility and gaining the trust, respect, and loyalty of one's subordinates.

**Performance** is the art of oration, singing, acting, and stage performance.

**Streetwise** allows a character to know how to survive on the streets. It is the urban equivalent to the survival skill.

**Seduction** is the art of tempting others to do as you wish, particularly members of the opposite sex.

**Warfare** covers tactics and strategies as used by terrorists, mercenaries, and the military. Warfare also covers the use of grenades, mortars, rocket launchers, artillery pieces, and other weapons or military equipment such as explosives when used with fitness in place of reasoning.

**ESP BASED SKILLS**

**Mesmerism** can be used to put another person within eye contact into a hypnotic trance. The target character may then be given instruction which he must carry out. The difficulty of this task is determined by the complexity of the instructions—simple one-word commands are routine, while longer, complex orders are challenging.

**Telekinesis** is the power to move objects with the mind. Difficulty is based on the range to target but the size of the item should also affect it.

**Telepathy** allows a character to communicate his thoughts to another person or animal without speaking. Reading one's thoughts is a bit harder and increase the difficulty by one or two. The difficulty is determined by range.

**OTHER SKILLS**

**Composure** allows a character to remain calm in the face of danger, temptation, or habit, and is a valuable asset (see Composure tasks).

**gimmicks**

Gimmicks are used to better define a character's background, physical oddities, or personality.

**Authority** indicates that the character has certain responsibilities which permit him to exercise special rights. He can be involved in law enforcement, the justice department, or even city hall.

**Connections** indicates that the character has friends or associates in some sort of criminal, political, community, religious, or military organization which he can call on for assistance. The connections can also take the form of students, followers, or employees.

**Enemies [-]** indicates that someone doesn't like the character and either enjoys or is duty bound to thwart his efforts. The enemy may even go so far as to actively hunt the character or put a price on his head.

**Fugitive [-]** indicates that the character is an outlaw and on the run from law enforcement agencies. He should avoid the law as much as possible.

**Internal Compass** indicates that the character can never become lost in the wilderness or a city. He can extrapolate his general location from signs in nature.

**Internal Clock** indicates that the character possesses a knack for always knowing the exact time and date.

**Mannerisms [-]** indicates that the character is physically expressive when he speaks, either through wild hand gestures, facial expressions, nervous ticks, or studding. This may be suppressed for a turn by making a successful challenging awareness roll.

**Military Rank** indicates that the character is in the military and holds an officer's rank.

**Multilingual** indicates that the character can speak up to two languages in addition to his native tongue as a result of growing up in a household or culture where more than one language is used.

**Prestige** indicates that the character is widely known in a region, nation, or even the world for one reason or another. He could be a famous musician, actor, political figure, or businessman.

**Servitude [-]** indicates that the character is in debt to another person and must it off as a servant (butler, maid, assistant, etc.).

**Tolerance to Pain** indicates that the character is somehow immune to pain and can ignore all penalties caused by fatigue and injury.

**Vulnerability [-]** indicates that the character is extremely sensitive to a specific substance or mystical force (such as ESP). He receives two (2) grades of fatigue when directly exposed and double the normal amount of injury or fatigue when the contact is the result of an attack.

**Wealth** indicates that the character is extremely rich. He can usually scrape together enough cash for any deal.

## health

Health is used to measure a character's current physical condition. There are two types of health which are measured in these rules: fatigue and injury. Both have five grades of severity. The number of dice which a character can use for a task roll is reduced when fatigued or injured—fatigue affects all rolls, while injury only affects fitness and awareness rolls. This penalty is not applied from fatigue during combat situations, however, since a character is most likely pumping large amounts of adrenaline to keep him going.

	fatigue grade	injury grade	penalty
1	dazed	bruised	-
2	stressed	sprained	-1D
3	strained	wounded	-2D
4	exhausted	maimed	-3D
5	unconscious	incapacitated	—

Fatigue represents excessive effort which wears down a character, causing him to tire. Fatigue can also result from blunt trauma and physical strain. When a character has sustained five grades of fatigue, he falls unconscious. If he receives any more fatigue, it is applied as injury.

Injury represents the character's physical well being and can result from lacerations, breaks, and burns. When a character has sustained five grades of injury, he falls unconscious and is totally incapacitated. If he receives any more injury, the character dies.

## creating characters

Characters can be designed in four easy steps.

**Step 1.** Choose a name, profession, and background. Complete the remaining steps, using this one as a guide.

**Step 2.** Up to three gimmicks may be chosen for each character. Each gimmick reduces the amount of points available in step 3 by one or step 4 by three. If the gimmick has a [-] next to it's description, then it adds points instead of reducing them.

**Step 3.** Allocate points to abilities. The exact number of points depends the nature of the game and is determined by the director. No ability may be less than one or greater than six.

**Step 4.** Allocate points to skills. No skill may be less than two (unless unskilled) or greater than eight.

nature of game	ability points	skill points
dramatic	14	25
loose dramatic	18	32
light heroic	22	40

## task resolution

Tasks are tests of skill and/or ability. There are many aspects of a task which can affect the outcome.

All tasks are resolved with ten-sided dice. The proper notation for dice rolls is **xD**, where **x** corresponds to the number of dice used. For example, **2D** indicates that two dice are rolled.

The number of dice rolled is equal to the rating of the appropriate ability. Luck points may also be expended (and not regained until determined by the director) in order to increase the number of dice rolled by one (1) for each point. The result of each rolled die which is less than or equal to the skill rating is called a **STEP**. This represents how close (how many steps) the character has come to succeeding at his task. Unskilled attempts must roll a one in order to achieve a **STEP**.

The number of **STEPS** required for success is dependent upon the difficulty of the task.

difficulty	lifting capacity
1 trivial	45kg/100lbs
2 routine	60kg/125lbs
3 complex	80kg/175lbs
4 challenging	115kg/250lbs
5 formidable	160kg/350lbs
6 improbable	230kg/500lbs
7 impossible	320kg/700lbs

### Automatic Tasks

If a character with a skill rating of four (4) or more is attempting a trivial or routine task which is not resisted or contested, it is an automatic success as long as the number of dice rolled from the appropriate trait only is greater than or equal to the difficulty.

### Contested Tasks

A contested task is a direct competition against another character. The dice roll with the highest number of STEPS wins the contest.

### Resisted Tasks

A resisted task is one which is attempted in order to counter a previously successful task or thwart one which is directed at the character (an attack, for example) using a different ability or skill. For example, attempting to parrying a punch. The original task's number of STEPS achieved becomes the difficulty, although in cases where difficulty can vary (ranged combat, for example), the difficulty is increased by the number of STEPS achieved.

### Sustained Tasks

Some tasks either require a specific amount of time or may be easier achieved by spending extra time on the attempt. The director must decide the minimum time required (if applicable; this number can either be in turns, minutes, or hours) and the incremental amount of time at which a character receives a bonus. If a character spends more time on the task than the minimum, add 1D to the roll for each incremental amount of time beyond the minimum spent concentrating. If the minimum amount of time is not met, reduce the number of dice rolled (director's discretion).

For example, suppose a character is attempting to hack into a computer system. The director determines that it will take a minimum of twenty minutes. If the character is in a rush and only spends ten minutes on the task, the director may decide to penalize him by increasing the difficulty by one (or perhaps two). If the character spends forty minutes so that he gets it right, the director decides that the bonus increment is ten minutes, so the character's difficulty is reduced by two ( $40 - 20 = 20$ ; the increment is 10, so  $20/10 = 2$ ).

### United Tasks

Some tasks can be performed by multiple characters with one acting as the leader. Only the leader makes a roll, but he may add 1D for each additional character assisting who is able to use all his dice relative to the skill (all dice for one specific ability are available) and has a skill level of two (2) or greater for simpler tasks (such as lifting), or four (4) or greater for complex tasks (such as surgery). The character with the highest skill level should make the roll!

### Prostrated Tasks

A character may exert an extra 1D for any fitness-based task roll by choosing to gain one (1) grade of fatigue. This represents pushing one's physical self by willpower or the release of adrenaline.

### Composure Tasks

There are times when a character must restrain his desires, habits, and responses to stimuli. To do so, he must make a successful composure roll. The difficulty is determined by the director and the ability used is based on the nature of the restraint.

composure difficulty	
pain	1 per grade of injury
habits from gimmicks	3
temper	2-5
moral behavior	1-4
addictions	4-5

**Fitness** is used when the character is attempting to control responses from physical stimuli such as crying out or flinching from pain.

**Awareness** is used when the character must recognize and prevent his habits such as nervous ticks and unconscious speech patterns like studders, as well as controlling his temper.

**Reasoning** is used when the character must prevent either compulsive patterns of behavior such as addictions, or immoral acts such as sadism or infidelity.

### experience

One point of experience is gained whenever a character succeeds at a task of difficulty 4 or higher. This experience point is attached to the respective skill. It may be used to add extra dice to task rolls, but the skill rating limits the number of points which can be expended per task.

Twenty experience points can also be expended to raise the respective skill rating by one point.

Abilities cannot be raised under normal situations. Intense conditioning, however, can result

skill rating	max. expenditure
0	0
2	1
3	1
4	2
5	2
6	2
7	3
8	3

in a slight change in ability (no more than one point). This increase costs twenty experience points which may be taken from any skill related to the respective ability. For example, intense physical training over a period of several months can increase a character's fitness rating by one, but he must also expend twenty experience points which may be taken from any fitness skills. All changes are at the discretion of the director.

### combat rolls

Whenever a situation arises which calls for more detail (like combat), the characters act on a turn by turn basis. Each turn represents five seconds.

In order to determine the order in which characters act, each player rolls **1D**. This is called a reaction roll. They may act in the order of lowest result to highest. If there are ties, compare fitness ratings—higher acts first. Players may also add **1D** to the roll for each point of either fitness, awareness, or ESP (see below) sacrificed for the turn in order to increase reaction speed (these points may be not be used for the remainder of the turn). For example, Joe allocates one point from his awareness rating of 4 in order to increase his reaction speed, so he rolls **2D**. He may now only roll **3D** (4 minus 1) for awareness tasks until next turn.

A character may perform as many additional actions per turn as the number of extra dice added to his reaction roll. The character gets one free action of any kind, but the additional actions are dependent upon the abilities used to increase his reaction roll—one extra fitness-based task per point of fitness allocated to reaction; one extra awareness-based tasks per point of ESP allocated to reaction; and one extra awareness, reasoning, or influence-based task per point of awareness allocated to reaction.

The first action occurs in the order determined by the roll. If a character is attempting a second action, it occurs after everyone else has completed their first action; if others are also attempting a second action, the initial reaction roll, once again, determines the order in which they act. This continues in the same manner until all actions have been completed. A character may allocate dice from the appropriate abilities to each action, but once used, they are not available for the remainder of the turn. It is up to the director to determine if multiple actions chosen by a character are feasible given the situation. For example, a character may run across the room and fire his gun, or stay alert while defusing a bomb, but he cannot run across the room and defuse the bomb at the same time.

The following actions may be attempted in a turn:

**Move.** The character can walk, run, crawl, climb, or swim.

Distances are in meters per turn. The amount of dice (or difficulty) used for this action is determined by the desired speed and the skill used is athletics. The director may allow a character to move the desired distance simply by forfeiting the required dice for the remainder of the turn or make the character roll dice—the number of steps indicates the actual distance traveled.

difficulty	walk	run	crawl/climb	swim
1	2m	15m	1m	2m
2	3m	20m	2m	4m
3	4m	25m	3m	6m
4	5m	30m	4m	8m
5	6m	35m	5m	10m
6	7m	40m	6m	12m
7	9m	50m	8m	16m

**Attack.** The character may attack an opponent. The actual skills used varies by attack. Base difficulty of all attacks is two (2), except for ranged weapons (listed below), or resisted and contested tasks.

attack rolls	
unarmed	fitness & brawling
melee	fitness & melee
firearm	fitness & firearms
thrown	fitness & athletics
bow	fitness & archery

Weapon modifiers can also adjust the user's skill level when making an attack roll:

A **Recoil Modifier** is applied if burst fire is used or multiple shots fired.

An **Aiming Modifier** is used if one turn is spent aiming—the roll receives +1D.

weapon type	recoil	max acc	dmg	pb	short	medium	long	ammo
snub nosed pistol	-	+1	1i	5m	10m	40m	75m	6
9mm and .45	-	+1	2i	5m	10m	40m	75m	9
magnum	-1	+1	3i	5m	10m	40m	75m	6
carbine	-1	+2	4i	5m	10m	40m	100m	20
assault rifle	-2	+2	5i	5m	10m	50m	100m	20-50
heavy machine gun	-3	+3	6i	5m	20m	50m	150m	50-100
hi-tech laser pistol	-	+1	5i	10m	20m	30m	50m	50
hi-tech laser rifle	-	+2	7i	10m	20m	30m	75m	100
club	-	-	2f	-	-	-	-	-
knife	-	-	1i	-	-	-	-	-
staff	-	+1	3f	-	-	-	-	-
sword	-	+1	3i	-	-	-	-	-
arrow	-	-	1i	10m	25m	75m	100m	1

range	throwing distance	difficulty
point blank	3m	1
short	6m	2
	12m	3
medium	20m	4
	35m	5
long	50m	6
	75m	7

**Maximum Accuracy** indicates the maximum number of bonuses which are applied from bracing the weapon. Bracing indicates that the weapon has been made more stable for the purposes of accuracy. There are three types of bracing—using two hands, using a shoulder, and using a mount to stabilize the weapon. Each type of bracing adds one to the skill level for the roll, but two hands must be used in order to receive additional bonuses.

**+1** indicates that the weapon can only be braced by using two hands.

**+2** indicates that the weapon can be braced by using two hands (+1) or two hands AND a shoulder (+2).

**+3** indicates that the weapon can be braced by using two hands (+1); two hands AND a shoulder (+2); or two hands, a shoulder, AND a mount (+3).

All hits are assumed to be non-specific. In other words, the damage is caused by hits to the chest or from general bruising. If a specific body part is targeted, the attack roll receives an increase in difficulty by one. A success indicates that the targeted body part is hit. If the roll is not successful, but it would have been successful if a specific body part was not targeted (i.e. one less difficulty), the attack is successful, but the specific body part is not hit.

Other modifiers may be applied to attack rolls. Environmental situations may increase the difficulty. For example, it may be improbable to hit someone in the dark or challenging when he is running. Other factors such as technical knowledge may increase a character's skill level for specific tasks. For example, a character's engineering skill may add a few extra levels to his firearms skill to correct a jam.

**Defend.** The character may defend against an opponent. Abilities and skills used varies by defense. The number of steps from the defense roll becomes the difficulty for all attacks except firearm, thrown, and bow/crossbow; the difficulty is merely increased for these.

defense rolls	
unarmed block	fitness & athletics
unarmed parry	fitness & brawling
shield/melee block	fitness & melee
melee parry	fitness & melee
dodge	fitness & athletics

**Use Skill.** The character may attempt a non-combat related skill.

## determining damage

In order to determine damage, roll a number of dice equal to the weapon's damage rating. Unarmed attacks use one die and +1D if the character's fitness is three or greater. Melee attacks use an amount of dice equal to the damage rating and +1D if the character's fitness is three or greater.

Each die which is less than ten (10) minus his armor rating (subtract another one if his fitness is four or greater) inflicts one grade of fatigue or injury depending on the source of damage. Note: armor rating is used only if the type of armor protects against the appropriate source of damage (fatigue or injury).

armor type	armor rating	protection
heavy clothing	2	fatigue
leather armor	3	fatigue
medieval armor	2	fatigue & injury
older bullet-proof vest	4	fatigue & injury
modern armored vest	5	fatigue & injury
hi-tech armor	7	fatigue & injury
hi-tech force field	8	injury

If the character is not wearing armor and his fitness rating is less than four, no roll is required. Instead, he receives one grade of injury or fatigue (depending on the source of damage) per die.

A character may expend luck in order to ignore one grade of fatigue or injury per point. If a character receives two or more grades of injury, or three or more grades of fatigue, he is knocked down and must spend the next turn returning to his feet or may act on the ground with a -1D on all fitness rolls. If the amount of damage dice rolled against a character is greater than his fitness rating, he is also knocked down.

## wound recovery

Fatigue may be decreased at a rate equal to the character's fitness rating per day. Injury may be decreased at a rate equal to the character's fitness rating per week. The first aid skill can increase the rate at which fatigue is restored by one grade, while the medicine skill can increase the rate for fatigue and injuries.

## Active Exploits conversion

Active Exploits is a trademark of Politically Incorrect Games.

### Abilities & Special Abilities

Impresa abilities have a corresponding ability in Active Exploits.

Impresa ability	AE potential	AE mutable
0	-1	0
1	0	1
2	0	1
3	+1	2
4	+1	3
5	+2	4
6	+3	5

### Skills

Impresa skills will most likely have a corresponding skill in Active Exploits.

Impresa skill level	AE skill level
0	unskilled
2	unskilled
3	apprentice
4	apprentice
5	proficient
6	proficient
7	expert
8	expert

### Gimmicks

Impresa gimmicks will most likely have a corresponding gimmick in Active Exploits which typically requires little or no modification.

## genreDiversiion conversion

genreDiversiion is a trademark of Politically Incorrect Games.

### Abilities & Special Abilities

genreDiversiion traits may be converted to Impresa abilities in the following manner (rounding down when dividing):

Impresa ability		genreDiversiion Trait
fitness	=	fitness
awareness	=	empathy*
creativity	=	empathy*
reasoning	=	reasoning
influence	=	(empathy + willpower) / 2
esp	=	empathy**

\* Choose one ability (awareness or creativity) at the same level as empathy and the other at one less.  
 \*\* Only if the character has the medium or psion background.

### Skills

Impresa skills will most likely have a corresponding skill in a genreDiversiion title, otherwise choose the closest one or use the genreDiversiion skill description.

Impresa skill level	genreDiversiion level
0	0
2	1-2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8+

### Gimmicks

genreDiversiion backgrounds and clichés can be easily modified for use as Impresa gimmicks.





# impresas<sup>TM</sup>

## MODULAR ROLEPLAYING SYSTEM

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