

IRONSWORN SYSTEM



MOTIVATIONS

CARD SET

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WHAT ARE MOTIVATIONS

Motivations are the reflection of your character's ideologies and interests, and what drives them throughout the fulfillment of their vows, oaths, quests or missions. By nature, motivations are too abstract to be considered such, but they might become one if you wish them to be fulfilled in a specific way.

PLAYING WITH MOTIVATIONS

Choose up to 2 motivations when creating your character or anytime as appropriate to the fiction. Keep in mind that these are not permanent, as the character might develop. The number of motivations to have might be tailored according to the players' agreement, which is not recommended to be greater than 3.

When a character acts in a way that is contradictory to one of their motivations, the buyoff is triggered. This signifies a turning point in the character's arc in which they no longer operate under this drive, so it doesn't make sense for them to have this motivation. When this happens, take the buyoff benefit and discard the motivation card.

When you have less than the maximum agreed of motivations per character, you may take another one if it is appropriate to the fiction. This might happen as a conscious decision or naturally throughout the quest.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING AND PLAYING MOTIVATIONS

Having a motivation signifies that you are truly committed to a specific cause or principle. You might be driven towards a certain course of action because of a principle represented in a motivation, but perhaps you are not entirely devoted to it. In which case, having such motivation would not actually be representative of your character. For example, as a lawman, you might be covering your identity to infiltrate a community to uncover a truth, an act that is aggravating towards this group. In this case, how do the *Aggravate Group*, *Cover Identity*, *Enforce Law*, and *Pursue the Truth* motivations come into play as your character's representative drives?

It is also possible that two motivations conflict with each other given a circumstance. What if you look to *Preserve Affinity* with a character that does not wish to *Preserve Nature* as you do, for instance? What if you look to *Enforce Law*, but now a law dictates that you must take actions that implies aggravating the wilderness, and by doing this you wouldn't *Preserve Nature*?

Motivations draw your character in. When an opportunity arises, their motivations would make them want to act in a specific way. Sometimes there will be other factors that will push against it, factors that would lead to a failed vow; in which cases envision your character's inner struggle. Would your character fulfill their vow and abandon their motivation, or forsake their vow to fulfill their motivation?

KEEPING TRACK OF LAYERS, OR NOT

Motivations are meant to assist you to have focus and guidance for what your character would do, to facilitate role-playing and, with this, granting narrative framing for mechanical benefits. Therefore, taking the layer reward from motivations is not a rule carved in stone. This option is there to allow you to take it by arguing at the table how you fulfilled a certain layer in a scene and to incentivize role-playing. If you missed a momentum trigger, you can discuss it in the table if you can take it retroactively.

USING MOTIVATIONS WITH THE IRONSWORN SYSTEM

When **you fulfill a motivation**, take +momentum according to its highest layer came to fruition.

- **Layer 1:** Take +1 momentum.
- **Layer 2:** Take +2 momentum.
- **Layer 3:** Take +3 momentum.
- **Buyoff:** Take +5 momentum.

When **you trigger a motivation buyoff**, envision what you learn that makes you change your conviction or interests. Then, discard the motivation card and take another one to take its place if it is appropriate.

USING MOTIVATIONS IN OTHER SYSTEMS

There are three methods you might use to implement the motivation cards in your system. Agree upon it during session zero or at the time of incorporating them into your game.

1ST METHOD: USE AN ALREADY EXISTING MECHANIC CURRENCY

Many systems already offer a mechanic to reward role-playing and narrative enriching acts in the table. *Fate* uses Fate Points, *Savage Worlds* uses Bennies, *Dungeon World* uses +X forward additions, and *Numenera* and *The Strange* (the Cypher System) use Effort. These are mechanical currencies the players are rewarded with for significantly collaborating with the story being told. You may easily incorporate the motivations cards in these systems by agreeing upon which layer grants how much of the system mechanical currency.

2ND METHOD: FIXED REWARD

Assign a mechanical reward to each layer and the buyoff. According to the role-playing game system you are using, these rewards might be –but are not restrictive to– the following:

- Additional die.
- Damage negation opportunity.
- Experience points.
- Narrative authority.
- Roll additions.
- Reroll any dice.

Keep in mind that not each layer is necessarily meant to grant distinct mechanical benefit –even though the 2nd and 3rd are intensely greater than the latter–, but the buyoff gain should be noteworthy and greater enough that its triggering ends up being enriching in terms of gameplay.

3RD METHOD: MOMENTUM TRACK

If your system doesn't support a reward mechanic such as the aforementioned, you might use a custom momentum track from 0 to 10, or up to 20, depending on the granularity of your system. With this track, you might use the Ironsworn System way of using this mechanic. Then, you may spend your momentum for the following benefits:

- Roll addition: 1 momentum.
- Additional die: 3 momentum.
- Damage negation: 5 momentum.
- Dice reroll: 5 momentum.

Feel free to add any benefit as per your system and to modify the above values to accommodate to your game.

IN CASE OF UNBALANCE

Naturally, you choose up to 2 motivations per character, but if you are role-playing with a system in which mechanical reward for triggering a layer causes unbalance, you may lower the number of motivations per character to 1.

At the same time, if you see that some granted benefits cause gameplay unbalance, determine the source of unbalance and tailor it. If you the source of unbalance is...

- **The frequency of a layer fulfillment:** Remove it or allow rewarding the triggering of layers once or twice per session.
- **A layer reward:** Make it the same as the layer above or below.

MOTIVATIONS LIST

Aggravate Organization—you spurn an organization or community for ideological reasons.

Battling—you thrive for the thrills of combat.

Carousing—you thrive for making use of your wealth to make you, or others, feel good.

Commanding—you are looking to stand out as an exemplar leader.

Cover My Identity—your real identity is something you are looking to cover from certain individuals.

Cover My Past—your past is something you are looking to cover from certain individuals.

Discover the Forgotten—you thrive to discover forgotten lore and uncovering secrets.

Enforce Law—you procure rightfulness and make sure law is fulfilled whenever it is up to you.

Gain Power—you are looking to obtain power, whether it is prestige or a position.

Gain Renown—you are looking to make yourself a name.

Gain Wealth—you are always in the look for valuable goods.

Help Others—you feel inclined to help those in need.

Making Deals—you thrive on making negotiations.

Preserve Affinity—you have someone you are kindred to, for which you are strongly interested in keeping close.

Preserve Nature—you thrive for preserving nature.

Prove Myself—you are looking to prove yourself worthy.

Pursue Courage—you procure bravery and make sure courage is present whenever is up to you.

Pursue Justice—you procure that your sense of fairness comes to fruition whenever is up to you.

Pursue Peace—you abhor violence.

Pursue the Truth—you procure the truth to come out and uphold it whenever is up to you.

Rebel—you despise structures that support formal authorities among individuals.

Redeem Myself—you are working towards gaining back trust and fixing previous wrongs.

Safeguard My Ward—you are looking to provide security and protection to an individual at all cost.

Show Cleverness—you like using your intelligence to enrich your interactions and solve problems.

Suffering—you are thriving on personal pain and martyrdom.

Survive—you avoid at all cost situations that put you in danger.

Uncover My Past—you are looking to retrieve information from your past.

Uphold Belief—you have a strong conviction that guides you and you want to give testimony of it to others.

Uphold Nobility—you believe yourself to be the cut above the common people.

Wandering—you are on a personal journey to wander.

MOTIVATION**AGGRAVATE GROUP**

Group:

You spurn an organization or community for ideological reasons.

- **Layer 1:** When you speak in public or show how to act against the group you contemn.
- **Layer 2:** When you act against the group you contemn.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, for acting against the group you contemn.
- **Buyoff:** When the group you contemn either cease to exist or you support it.

MOTIVATION**BATTLING**

You thrive for the thrills of the combat.

- **Layer 1:** When you engage in combat.
- **Layer 2:** When you defeat someone in combat.
- **Layer 3:** When you defeat someone more powerful than you in combat.
- **Buyoff:** When you diffuse a violent situation or willingly pass up an opportunity to enter in battle.

MOTIVATION**CAROUSING**

You thrive for making use of your wealth and time to make you, or others, feel good.

- **Layer 1:** When you spent your wealth or valuable time to raise your spirit.
- **Layer 2:** When you spent your wealth or valuable time to raise other's spirit.
- **Layer 3:** When you postpone or decline a duty in order to spent wealth or valuable time to raise spirit, yours or someone else's.
- **Buyoff:** When you refuse, or argue against, using your valuable time to raise spirit, yours or someone else's.

MOTIVATION**COMMANDING**

You are looking to stand out as an exemplar leader.

- **Layer 1:** When you act according to the fact that you are in command.
- **Layer 2:** When you issue an order to someone, get them to follow it, and it pays off favorably.
- **Layer 3:** When you issue an order to a group, get them to follow it, and it pays off favorably.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly abdicate your leading position.

MOTIVATION**COVER MY IDENTITY**

Your real identity is something you are looking to cover from certain individuals.

- **Layer 1:** When you make preparations to cover your identity.
- **Layer 2:** When you cover your identity in a situation that demands it to be revealed.
- **Layer 3:** When you cover your identity by convincing others despite suspicious.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly reveal your identity to whom you were not interested in revealing it, or they get to know it by other means.

MOTIVATION**COVER MY PAST**

Your past is something you are looking to cover from certain individuals.

- **Layer 1:** When you make preparations to cover your past.
- **Layer 2:** When you cover your past in a situation that demands it to be revealed.
- **Layer 3:** When you cover your past by convincing others despite suspicious.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly reveal your past to whom you were not interested in revealing it, or they get to know it by other means.

MOTIVATION**DISCOVER THE FORGOTTEN**

You thrive to discover forgotten lore and uncovering secrets.

- **Layer 1:** When you show what needs to be done to discover a lost piece of information or item.
- **Layer 2:** When you discover a lost piece of information or item.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, for discovering a lost piece of information or item.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly pass up an opportunity to learn something important or get a forgotten item.

MOTIVATION**ENFORCE LAW**

You procure rightfulness and make sure the law is fulfilled whenever it is up to you.

- **Layer 1:** When you act to uphold the law.
- **Layer 2:** When you act to prevent a crime committed by someone else.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, by acting to uphold the law or to prevent a crime committed by someone else.
- **Buyoff:** When you break a law or allow someone to do it.

MOTIVATION**GAIN POWER**

You are looking to gain power, whether it comes in form of prestige, position or capabilities.

- **Layer 1:** When you get a new ability.
- **Layer 2:** When you learn a new ability, get authority, or earn a boon from someone important.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, in order to learn a new ability, get authority, or earn a boon from someone important.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly take a decision that makes eschew gain power, lose authority or lower your position.

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MOTIVATION**GAIN RENOWN**

You are looking to make yourself a name.

- **Layer 1:** When you do something to impress someone else.
- **Layer 2:** When you get prestige or take credit for an action, whenever you have done it or not.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, by doing something to impress someone, or as a consequence for taking credit for an action, whenever you have done it or not.
- **Buyoff:** When you refuse taking credit for an accomplishment, or allow someone else to claim credit for something you accomplished.

MOTIVATION**GAIN WEALTH**

You are always in the look for valuable goods.

- **Layer 1:** When you find wealth.
- **Layer 2:** When you make a deal or leverage a circumstance that favors you in wealth.
- **Layer 3:** When you double your wealth or take more than that the double.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly give away from your wealth or reject a payment or reward.

MOTIVATION**HELP OTHERS**

You feel inclined to help those in need.

- **Layer 1:** When you help who cannot help themselves.
- **Layer 2:** When you put yourself in danger, or sacrifice something important, for helping someone else.
- **Layer 3:** When you take someone in unfavorable circumstances and change their life to where they can help themselves.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly ignore a request for help or the fact that someone evidently needs it.

MOTIVATION**MAKING DEALS**

You thrive on making negotiations.

- **Layer 1:** When you get into an agreement, make a contract or offer a favor in exchange for something.
- **Layer 2:** When you fulfill an agreement, a contract or get something in exchange for making a favor.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, in order to fulfill an agreement, a contract or making a favor in exchange for something.
- **Buyoff:** When you turn down a chance to negotiate or pass up a deal that favors you.

MOTIVATION**PRESERVE AFFINITY**

Kindred:

You have someone you are kindred to, for which you are strongly interested in keeping close.

- **Layer 1:** When you act to leverage your affinity with your kindred.
- **Layer 2:** When you must make an important decision that is influenced by your kindred.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, by being loyal to your kindred.
- **Buyoff:** When your relationship with your kindred is severed, or you do something that show that it is no longer a priority to you.

MOTIVATION**PRESERVE NATURE**

You thrive for preserving nature.

- **Layer 1:** When you act to preserve nature.
- **Layer 2:** When you prevent someone else from causing damage to a natural element.
- **Layer 3:** When put yourself at risk by preventing someone else from causing damage to a natural element or by offering aid to an element of nature.
- **Buyoff:** When you cause damage to a natural element, willingly or not, or allow someone to do it.

MOTIVATION**PROVE MYSELF**

You are looking to prove yourself worthy.

- **Layer 1:** When you take on a difficult challenge.
- **Layer 2:** When you succeed at a challenging obstacle to accomplish a goal.
- **Layer 3:** When you miss on a significantly risky task, but rise and try again.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly pass up an opportunity to test yourself, decline a challenge, or give up on one.

MOTIVATION**PURSUE COURAGE**

You procure bravery and make sure it is present whenever it is up to you.

- **Layer 1:** When you act despite a terrifying obstacle.
- **Layer 2:** When you instill confidence in someone else, and it pays off favorably.
- **Layer 3:** When your words or deeds fill others with courage, and it pays off favorably.
- **Buyoff:** When you allow fear to overcome, or give up on an important task because it would be too dangerous to proceed.

MOTIVATION**PURSUE JUSTICE**

You procure that your sense of fairness comes to fruition whenever it is up to you.

- **Layer 1:** When you successfully settle a conflict that results in a just outcome.
- **Layer 2:** When you successfully settle a conflict in the presence of someone that differs from your sense of fairness.
- **Layer 3:** When you bring justice to someone who deserved it.
- **Buyoff:** When you commit to a morally questionable act, allow someone who deserves to be judged to avoid it or stand mute before injustice.

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MOTIVATION**PURSUE PEACE**

You abhor violence.

- **Layer 1:** When you act to show the importance of procuring peace.
- **Layer 2:** When you diffuse a violent situation or prevent someone from recurring to violence.
- **Layer 3:** When you refuse, or avoid, hurting someone else in a situation that demands it from you, because you, or someone else, was at risk.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly recur to violence or allow someone else to do it.

MOTIVATION**PURSUE THE TRUTH**

You procure the truth to come out and uphold it whenever it is up to you.

- **Layer 1:** When you induce the truth coming out in a charged situation.
- **Layer 2:** When you uphold the truth despite of opposition.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, by upholding the truth.
- **Buyoff:** When you lie or avoid the truth to come up.

MOTIVATION**REBEL**

You despise structures that support formal authorities among individuals.

- **Layer 1:** When you disobey an authority.
- **Layer 2:** When you act against an authority.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, for acting against an authority.
- **Buyoff:** When you acknowledge, support, or become, an authority; or accept a favor from one.

MOTIVATION**REDEEM MYSELF**

You are working towards gaining back trust and fixing previous wrongs.

- **Layer 1:** When you act to leverage a fix towards your reputation.
- **Layer 2:** When you prove yourself to someone who has doubts or thinks poorly of you.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, by acting to prove yourself to someone who has doubts or thinks poorly of you.
- **Buyoff:** When you have cleared your reputation or give up on your redeeming path.

MOTIVATION**SAFEGUARD MY WARD**

Ward:

You are looking to provide security and protection to an individual at all cost.

- **Layer 1:** When you prevent your ward from doing something that would put them at risk.
- **Layer 2:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, by protecting your ward.
- **Layer 3:** When you rescue your ward from potential harm.
- **Buyoff:** When your ward dies or you act as if protecting this person is not your priority.

MOTIVATION**SHOW CLEVERNESS**

You like using your intelligence to enrich your interactions and solve problems.

- **Layer 1:** When you come up with a clever plan or point out something no one knew.
- **Layer 2:** When you point out something no one knew and it pays off favorably.
- **Layer 3:** When a plan previously elaborated by you pays off favorably.
- **Buyoff:** When you refuse to share knowledge, practical or not, or refuse to provide your insight when others demand it.

MOTIVATION**SUFFERING**

You are thriving on personal pain and martyrdom.

- **Layer 1:** When you willingly suffer physical or mental damage.
- **Layer 2:** When you willingly suffer physical or mental damage and your next move shows that you are not fleeing from the source of suffering.
- **Layer 3:** When you get wounded or shaken.
- **Buyoff:** When you willingly flee from a source of physical or mental damage.

MOTIVATION**SURVIVE**

You avoid at all cost situations that put you in danger.

- **Layer 1:** When you act to show the importance of avoiding perilous situations.
- **Layer 2:** When you avoid a perilous situation.
- **Layer 3:** When you flee from a source of physical or mental damage.
- **Buyoff:** When you leap into danger with no hesitation.

MOTIVATION**UNCOVER MY PAST**

You are looking to retrieve information from your past.

- **Layer 1:** When you get into a moment with the potential to give you something from your past.
- **Layer 2:** When you learn or discover something from your past.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk or sacrifice something important, for the sake of learning or discovering something from your past.
- **Buyoff:** When you have uncovered all you needed to know from your past, or have let it go.

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UPHOLD BELIEF

Belief:

You have a strong conviction that guides you and you want to give testimony of it to others.

- **Layer 1:** When you explain or defend your belief to someone else.
- **Layer 2:** When you convince someone else to your belief.
- **Layer 3:** When you put yourself at risk, or sacrifice something important, by upholding your belief.
- **Buyoff:** When you renounce your belief, talk against it, or show that share it is no longer important to you.

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UPHOLD NOBILITY

You believe yourself to be the cut above the common people.

- **Layer 1:** When you demonstrate superiority by refusing to stoop to the level of the ones you think are below you.
- **Layer 2:** When you, and the ones with you, get a benefit from your showcase of nobility.
- **Layer 3:** When your noble traits overcome a problem.
- **Buyoff:** When you show that you have got over yourself by denying any noble trait by act or words.

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WANDERING

You are on a personal journey to wander.

- **Layer 1:** When you undertake travel.
- **Layer 2:** When you reach your destination after traveling.
- **Layer 3:** When you meet a place new to you.
- **Buyoff:** When you establish a settlement for you to reside, or when you willingly pass up the opportunity to meet a new place to you.

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