Star Wars: Use the Force

The Force is one of those weird setting touchpoints that means something different to everyone. Here are some of my thoughts.

The Force:

- Is Mysterious. It doesn't allow you to lift "up to 100kg" of material or choke someone "1d10 meters away". It shouldn't be quantifiable.

- Lets You Do Impossible Things. You can't do merely possible things with the Force. It's impossible to fire lightning from your fingers, or see the future, or close your eyes and fire a torpedo at precisely the right moment... but you can do these things through the Force.

- Requires Faith, Not Training. This one requires some more explanation.

Fanaticism

Luke Skywalker, Jedi Knight, had.... maybe a week of actual training. Obi-Wan sat with him for a few hours on the *Falcon*, and he spent a few days with Yoda on Dagobah. That's it.

It wasn't particularly conventional training. Obi-Wan made him wear a blindfold and block irritating lasers. Yoda made him do headstands and run around a swamp. It doesn't make a lot of sense. Surely, becoming a Jedi takes more than a few pushups. What's really going on here?

Luke is a skeptic. He doubts everything, gets frustrated, and wants to quit. He *knows* you can't block blaster bolts while blindfolded. He *knows* an X-wing is heavier than rock. He *knows* these things because they are true... from a certain point of view.

But as we know, that's not the truth at all. To the Force, there is no weight. There is no time. That's why Yoda says, "Do, or do not. There is no try." Your effort has nothing to do with it. It's all about faith. If you believe that the X-Wing will be lifted, it will be lifted.

Yoda isn't building Luke's muscles. He's breaking down his resistance. The constant exercise and lousy food is just like boot camp, except this is some weird Gnostic version. It's the same thing with the training on the *Falcon*. Obi-Wan isn't training Luke to block blaster shots. He's forcing him to confront the impossible and accept it. On the final attack run on the Death Star, Obi-Wan says to "Use the Force, Luke." But he immediately says to "Let go."

One the main criticism of Rey's character in *The Force Awakens* was her ability to instantly, without any training, use the Force to do "difficult" tasks. She moves objects with her mind, plants commands, senses memories, all that, and with no training at all. How?

She believes. She is a complete and utter fanatic. She closes her eyes and *really* trusts in the Force. Luke constantly struggles to overcome his doubt and let go, but Rey doesn't. She believes unconditionally. For her, there is no "try".

Han tells her it's all true, and she believes.

So, if all that sounds interesting, how do we incorporate it into a game?

- "Force Powers" are right out. In a video game, having "Force Lightning II" or "Improved Force Dodge" makes sense, but tabletop RPGs can do better.
- The Force should let you do only impossible things.
- Effects should be evocative rather than quantitative.

The [Fantasy Flight Star Wars](#) games don't fit these requirements. West End Games d6 system has a lot of the same issues. It's fairly pervasive. Force-users fit into the same design space as wizards, and therefore, because wizards have spells, Force-users have spells.

Here's how I'd use the Force in [Fate Core.](#) I'll talk more about hacking Fate Core for Star Wars in other posts, but this seems like a good place to start.

The Force

The Force skill is a very unusual skill. There are very few limits on what you can do with it, but here are a few ideas:
Overcome: Move something. Reach out to another living being. Sense something you can't see. Do something impossible.

Create Advantage: Add an *Aspect* that makes it easier to trick, dominate, or calm someone. Alter your environment.

Attack: Hurt someone directly. Throw something at them.

Defend: Block blaster fire or walk through it unharmed.

What else? Well, whatever you think is thematically appropriate. Remember that the Force is a mysterious, mystical part of the setting and not a source of definitive powers. Remember, the Force can only do impossible things.

Rating

Most characters should have this skill at +0. At +1, you are vaguely sensitive to the Force. You might not know it though. At +2, you are aware of your connection to the Force, and if you aren't careful, others will be as well. At +3, you are strong in the Force, and you have practiced your abilities. Others are aware of your abilities and seek to destroy or use you. You are under constant threat.

At +4 or higher, you are both confident and powerful. Others are urgently aware of your abilities. You are in immediate danger almost everywhere you go.

Stunts

Characters with a +1 or higher in Force automatically gain the "Dark Side of the Force" Stunt, replacing one of their existing Stunts.

Dark Side of the Force: Gain +2 to Force when you act out of fear, anger, or hatred. Other Stunts could give you a bonus to certain uses of the Force, or let you use it instead of other skills such as Deceive or Empathy. Try to keep these vague and thematic as well. Remember, using the Force attracts attention, and is potentially quite dangerous.

Secrecy

Every time a player with Force makes a Force roll, they can also damage a concept named "Secrecy". Secrecy has 2 stress boxes and 3 consequence slots, just like an NPC.

When a player succeeds on a Force roll, their shifts of success are dealt as damage to their Secrecy. Stress and consequences fade as normal. If you end up killing your Secrecy, very bad things may start to happen to you.

Secrecy could also mean that your character is unaware of their own abilities.