

MODERN AGE

BASIC RULEBOOK

现代



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Modern AGE*, a roleplaying game that lets you be the hero right now, in recent history, or even in the near future. Your game isn't limited to the real world, either; you might wield arcane or psychic forces while you explore hidden dimensions, or track mysteries through a world riddled with strange conspiracies. You can pursue personal goals of wealth, prestige, and secret knowledge, or work to make the world a better place—or at least, a place more in line with your vision of how it should be, no matter what anyone else thinks. Whatever your interests, as you work with other heroes and explore the world, your fate is your own, guided by your choices.

WHAT IS AN RPG?

Modern AGE is called a tabletop roleplaying game, because you will probably play it at a table or table-like object with a group of friends. A tabletop roleplaying game is like a computer roleplaying game, in that you play a character who explores a world, improves their abilities, and adds new ones during play. The difference? Instead of a computer interface, you experience the world through your imagination.

Characters portrayed by players are called Player Characters, or PCs. Players are responsible for playing their characters and working together to make sure everyone has fun. Sometimes characters come into conflict, arguing over what to do, but the *players* should always get along. It's like acting. The hero and villain of a movie may hate each other, but hopefully, their actors don't! Be considerate, don't boss each other around, and you'll have fun.

One person, called the Game Master (GM for short), describes the world and portrays supporting characters, villains, and rivals. The rest of you are heroes. Like most tabletop roleplaying games, *Modern AGE* requires one GM and perhaps a handful of other players. (You can have one or two players and one GM, but most people prefer three to six players—more are sometimes awkward to play with.)

If this doesn't make sense right now, don't worry. We'll explain it in more detail later. If you don't have a local gaming group, that's okay! Many groups play at a virtual "table," using messaging and video conferencing apps, forums, and sometimes, software and services especially designed for playing tabletop roleplaying games. Furthermore, don't forget that

you can learn a lot about playing tabletop roleplaying games (often abbreviated as tabletop RPGs) with online research.

GETTING STARTED

Here's what you need to get a *Modern AGE* game going:

- **PLAYERS:** Players portray the main characters of the game's story. Each player portrays a single character (except in special circumstances). Read the players' section of this book (Chapters 1-6) for the rules you need to know, but don't worry if you don't understand all the rules—it's more fun to learn while playing.
- **A GAME MASTER:** The Game Master (GM) needs to have a good grasp of the rules. GMs portray villains, allies, and incidental characters—everyone who isn't portrayed by a player. They set up storylines, events, and challenges. The GM needs to be impartial—no player can be their favorite—but also needs to look out for anyone who seems to be having less fun or is somehow being left behind. If you're the GM, you might make life difficult for the players' characters—you're playing the people who shoot at them, for instance—but your true goal is to help the players enjoy themselves. Listen to what the players want, and help them out when they're not sure how to use the rules.
- **DICE:** *Modern AGE* uses six-sided dice: your basic cubes. You need at least three in hand to do most things. One die should be a different color or style to set it apart from the rest, to act as the Stunt Die (a core part of the rules—read on for more). If you use a dice-rolling app, make sure there's a way to separate one die from the rest.
- **CHARACTER SHEETS & WRITING MATERIALS:** Use the character sheets in this book or others of your own design to record character statistics. In addition, keep pencils and plenty of blank paper for notes, impromptu maps, and so on. Of course, tablets, phones, and laptops can do the job as well, but remember that sometimes you'll be called upon to share notes.
- **A PLACE TO PLAY:** The classic roleplaying game setup puts everyone around a table with plenty of drinks and snacks. It works. You can play *Modern AGE* through chat programs, online forums, and other electronic venues, too.

MODERN AGE FOR EXPERIENCED ROLEPLAYERS

If you already know how tabletop roleplaying games work, here's what *Modern AGE* is all about.

- **CLASSLESS AND LEVEL-BASED, GRITTY, PULPY, OR CINEMATIC:** *Modern AGE* doesn't use character classes, but does use a level advancement system you may find familiar from other games. However, level advancement doesn't necessarily push characters to super-heroic levels of ability. The game has three "settings"—Gritty, Pulpy, and Cinematic—GMs can use to customize the system.
- **A STRAIGHTFORWARD 3D6 SYSTEM, PLUS STUNTS:** *Modern AGE* only uses six-sided dice, and most rolls are made with 3d6 against a difficulty number. It's designed to be easy to use, and to not punish people who don't master every little detail. However, one six-sided die called the Stunt Die generates stunt points (SP) that determine the degree of success and allows heroes to perform special moves and exceptional feats.

Modern AGE's rules system is known as the Adventure Game Engine (or AGE). It was originally designed for the *Dragon Age RPG*, also by Green Ronin Publishing. It has since been adapted into *Blue Rose: The AGE Roleplaying Game of Romantic Fantasy* and the *Fantasy AGE* roleplaying game. The games aren't identical, but they share the same "game DNA." Learn one, and the others should be easy to pick up.

Modern AGE is different from other AGE games. It doesn't use character classes, it reorganizes stunts, and has a few other differences, all of which are easy to absorb and will be noted throughout this book.



PLAYING YOUR CHARACTER

Every story needs characters to care about, and whose choices propel events. To play a compelling character, you need to answer two questions.

"WHAT DO YOU DO?"

As you encounter challenges and curiosities, the Game Master will ask this question constantly. Furthermore, ask it of yourself, even when the GM doesn't press you. The GM describes the environment and the actions of any character who isn't portrayed by a player. It's your job to react to these situations. The GM doesn't decide if you return fire when a sinister gunman takes aim at you. You do. Similarly, you decide whether to examine clues, and what to say to people you encounter. When it's a matter of talking or gesturing, you can perform those actions yourself. Otherwise, describe your actions: "I jump behind a barrier," or "I pick up the glove with a pair of tweezers." The GM tells you what rules apply, and whether to roll dice, and the results determine if your action succeeds or fails, or if there are further complications.

"WHO ARE YOU?"

When you play a character, you're not yourself; you're playing a fictional persona, like someone from a book, film, or TV show. When you act in character, their background and experience should influence what you do. Beyond that, you can approach your character's background in any number of ways.

Some players just view their characters as playing pieces or alter egos. They make decisions based on what they would do in the same situation. You might look at it as a form of acting, instead, where you assume the role, imagine how your character thinks and feels, and deeply consider their past experiences when you act. You can even do whatever you think would be the most entertaining thing to do at the time, or what plays to your character's abilities. No approach is more valid than any other, and you'll probably switch between approaches or combine them as you play. But in all cases, everything you do in character should be consistent with the character's background and abilities, along with the world they inhabit.

In any event, you need to know who your character is. **CHAPTER 1** tells you how to make a character. That's where you'll figure out their background, abilities, and what drives them to get involved in the unusual situations that pop up during the game. Think about the kind of character you want to play. The GM provides a range of possibilities based on upcoming adventures, where they're set, and the sort of people who would embark on them. Create the kind of character that matches the decisions you want to make, and you'll not only immerse yourself in the game world, but you'll learn to act in that role intuitively.

ADVENTURE, CAMPAIGN, & SETTING

An adventure is a discrete story and scenario in an RPG. Think of it as a single novel or an episode of a TV show. There may be several plot threads, but in the end, it tells one story. The difference between a roleplaying adventure and a book or show is that you have authorship. The decisions made by you and your fellow players drive the story to its exciting conclusion.

A campaign is a series of interlinked adventures. If an adventure is a novel or TV episode, a campaign is a series or a season. Some adventures have self-contained plots, while others tie together to tell a larger story. During a campaign, characters in the adventuring group earn experience points and gain levels. Over time they gain more powers and abilities, face greater challenges, and gain reputations for good or ill in the communities they move through.

A long *Modern AGE* campaign takes characters from levels 1 through 20, and provides hundreds of hours of game-play and entertainment. Most games take place in our world, with some sort of a twist. The GM develops this "campaign setting." It might be set in a world like our own, but underneath the history we know spies, supernatural conspiracies, or underworld syndicates influence affairs. Some games might be set during intriguing periods in recent history, from the Old West to the Great Game between Cold War superpowers. Your characters might be police detectives, counter-terrorist operatives out of a technothriller, or people with the ability to enter strange fantasy worlds that lie alongside our own. The setting inspires the stories that take place, from individual adventures to the wider campaign. The GM can find out more about the possibilities in **CHAPTER 11: THE CAMPAIGN SETTING**.

THE THREE MODES

Modern AGE introduces a way to customize the rules based on the kind of game you want to play. The Game Master selects the play mode, and this changes the rules. When the various modes lead to notable changes in the rules, *Modern AGE* color codes them, as shown in the following descriptions.

GRITTY MODE: In the **Gritty** mode, characters can be almost as easily injured as people in real life. A well-placed bullet takes them out of the fight. They can develop great expertise in their chosen fields, but are unable to perform truly outrageous stunts. The Gritty mode exists to support games that are supposed to feel “realistic” (in a story sense—the game isn’t a physics, biology, or psychology simulator). In Gritty games, there’s no such thing as a minor fight scene, because any violent event can have serious consequences. Exploration, fact-finding, and social maneuvering become the mainstays of play.

PULPY MODE: In the **Pulpy** mode, characters are portrayed as more overtly heroic action heroes. They’re tough, and get tougher as they accumulate levels. They can perform the odd heroic task, or benefit from handy strokes of luck, but they can still bleed, or get overwhelmed by a modest number of enemies. Pulpy games feature more action, but at the end of such scenes, characters are likely to come out of it bruised and battered. To win, they must avoid a head-on approach, learn about any enemies and obstacles, and use cleverness and stealth.

CINEMATIC MODE: In the **Cinematic** mode, characters are lucky, tough, and can perform the most heroic stunts. As they gain levels, they get even tougher, and able to perform the most extreme feats to defeat the opposition. They accumulate influence and power until some enemies become easy to defeat: mere “extras” compared to the heroes.

APPLYING THE MODES

Some rules in this book have different variations depending on the type of game. Check with your GM to find out which mode applies. GMs can choose to apply the same mode to every rule, or customize their games more finely so that, for example, characters accumulate Health according to the Cinematic rules, but Resources according to the Gritty rules, making them highly competent, but always searching for spare cash.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

The following is an example of play. It’s the sort of thing you’ll experience playing *Modern AGE*. This example talks about dice rolls and rules, but don’t worry about the specifics for now. It’s the process that counts.

In this snippet of play, Meghan is the Game Master. Wood plays Sean, a slick social operator. Malcolm plays Brian, an

ex-soldier with an ice-cold attitude, and Alejandro plays Indra, a scientist with a knack for getting into trouble. They’ve traced a string of murders to a secret society, and clues to a nondescript office building. They’re trying to get inside; Indra’s working on the lock and security system.

MEGHAN (GM): *[Continuing from prior events.] Indra [referring to Alejandro in-character], you wedge the foil in as the bolt opens, and hook it to the wire, seemingly defeating the security system.*

ALEJANDRO (INDRA): *[Speaking as his character] Ta-Daaa! Science! [Now, out of character] I push open the door slowly, and peer past it.*

WOOD (SEAN): *[In character. Wood shows he’s speaking as Sean by changing the tone and style of his speech. It’s okay to use another way to indicate you’re talking in character, such as saying, “I say . . .” or even using a hand signal.] Keep it down dear, we’re being sneaky.*

MEGHAN (GM): Hold the banter for a sec. You see a dimly lit office corridor ahead. It looks vacant; you see stacked chairs and a dusty bulletin board. The calendar is from 2005. You see an open doorway on the left, ten feet down. Now, are you actually being sneaky?

MALCOLM (BRIAN): Yes. I sneak to the side of the door, sliding against the wall. When I see that it’s clear, I wave for the others to follow.

MEGHAN (GM): One thing at a time. Anybody else going? *[Wood and Alejandro shake their heads.] Okay. Malcolm, roll Dexterity—Stealth focus.*

MALCOLM (BRIAN): *[rolls three six-sided dice – 3d6 – and adds his Dexterity. Brian doesn’t have a Stealth focus.] 11. Oh well.*

ALEJANDRO (INDRA): I hide behind the front door.

WOOD (SEAN): Good idea. Me too.

MEGHAN (GM): You never know. *[Meghan knows there’s someone in the room beyond, and rolls Perception (Hearing), only scoring a 4. Malcolm frets at the sound of Meghan rolling dice behind her screen. Brian successfully sneaks to the doorway, but Malcolm doesn’t know that – and neither does Brian. Keeping this information from the group heightens the suspense.]*

Brian, you see a man sitting in an office chair, leaning back. He’s wearing headphones. You see the weird horned symbol of the conspiracy painted on the wall.

WOOD (SEAN): Okay, I saunter down the –

MEGHAN (GM): – Hold on. Remember, only Brian knows about this guy.

MALCOLM (BRIAN): Easy shot to the back of the head. I take aim and shoot.

WOOD (SEAN): Okay, I can see *that*. I tiptoe as fast as I can to Brian’s side, preferably before he can shoot.

MEGHAN (GM): If we wanted I could have you roll initiative against each other, but I think it would be more interesting if Sean made it to Brian’s side before he shot anyone. Agreed?

MALCOLM (BRIAN): Sure.

WOOD (SEAN): Okay, good. I half-sneak to Brian’s side. When I see what he’s about to do, I put my hand on the barrel of his gun to stop him. As Sean, I’m a keen student of human nature. What can I tell about this man in the headphones?

MALCOLM (BRIAN): I frown and wait. *[Malcolm smiles at Wood to let him know that out of character, he's enjoying this interaction, even if his character Brian is annoyed.]*

MEGHAN (GM): Okay, that's an Intelligence roll, target number 13.

WOOD (SEAN): Anthropology focus?

MEGHAN (GM): That's right.

WOOD (SEAN): *[Rolls 3d6 and adds Sean's Intelligence and +2 for Anthropology.]* I got 17, including two 4s. *[Doubles mean Wood can spend stunt points on a stunt for this action.]* I got 2 on the Stunt Die. Can I use Intuition? Gives me a free clue.

MEGHAN (GM): Sounds good. First, here's what success gets you. Even though there's no insignia, you notice the polyester slacks and shirt of a security guard. The smell of alcohol-tinged sweat assails you. He's got grey-shot hair that looks a few weeks' growth from a crew-cut. If you had to guess, you'd say this guy was a former security guard, hired to do some shady work on the side. He's nothing like the fanatics you ran into yesterday.

Your stunt means you take in the room. You notice a folded elaborate cloth, a black candelabra, and a small table in an odd place. This looks like some place of worship, disassembled and stored on site.

ALEJANDRO (INDRA): Can I get in on this?

MEGHAN (GM): You can join the others without rolling to sneak.

WOOD (SEAN): Is there anything in the room that would benefit from being analyzed by our resident STEM nerd? *[In this case, Wood is making room for Alejandro to take the spotlight. Good groups share attention and invite each other to get involved.]*

MEGHAN (GM): Yes. Indra, you notice a computer tower case in the corner. This year's model, used for high-end machines. *[As GM, Meghan decided Indra knows enough about computers that a dice roll isn't necessary.]* It's on—and as you notice that, the man stretches and gets up. Only now can you see the semiautomatic pistol on his hip.

Okay everyone, tell me what you're going to do.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Will they fight? Talk the man down? What's the true significance of this room? That will get settled as the adventure continues.

THE GROUP DYNAMIC

Remember: roleplaying is a group activity. There are two aspects to this: the adventuring group and the player group.

Your character is one member of the adventuring group (also known as a party). Note that an "adventure" might include low-key activities such as investigating a crime scene or teasing information out of guests at a party. Each character in the group has individual goals, but they also pursue larger group goals. They may have disagreements and even feuds, but for the game to go on, the characters must stick together. Adventures often

WORLD OF LAZARUS™

The *World of Lazarus*, based on the critically acclaimed *Lazarus* comic series by Greg Rucka and Michael Lark, is the first campaign setting for *Modern AGE*. In the near future, time has rendered death obsolete, and life infinitely cheap. In the wake of governments' failure and global upheaval, the Families stepped in and divvied up the world. Now peace and order reign in a world of technological marvels and neo-feudalism. The Families quietly war with one another, wagering the lives of loyal Serfs while they relax in lives of indulgence, all while the Waste—those left behind by this new order—struggle daily for base survival.

Play members of a Family in the highest of high-stakes game, Serfs fighting for their Family's interests to maintain order and safety, or disaffected Waste fighting for a better life in the burned ruins of the old world. If you want to jump right into a *Modern AGE* campaign, the *World of Lazarus* is a great place to start.

aid this goal through their plots and structures, but a good group dynamic helps. This can start during character creation when everyone is settling on what they want to play. It's a smart idea to create characters who have complimentary abilities: a good combatant and skilled investigator who help each other, for example. When working out ties and goals amongst the PCs, you can build in reasons to adventure together.

The people gaming with you make up the player group, and that has its own dynamic. You and your friends are going to be spending a lot of time together, so you want a group of people who get along. That has three prerequisites.

- **RESPECT:** First, respect one another. Don't play with people you don't like. Don't do things in character that would upset other players, as opposed to the characters they play. (This is even true if it's something your character would "realistically" do.) If potentially upsetting things might come up in the story, talk about it before allowing it into the game. If potentially upsetting things might come up in the story, talk about them before allowing them into the game.
- **COOPERATION:** Work together. It's easy for each character to pursue their own agendas, but just as an author develops reasons for protagonists to stay connected, you should find reasons for the party to stick together. The GM can help here, but in the end, your hero should only part ways with comrades for short periods of time, unless you plan on retiring them in favor of a new character. Plus, there's nothing wrong with talking about collective goals out of character, or taking other players aside to chat about short- and long-term goals without speaking as your characters.

- **Fun:** That's the goal. "Fun" means different things for different people. You might be playing to make tactical choices in a challenging scenario, to experience an outrageous, daring adventure, or to immerse yourself in the life of your character. Each player wants to have fun in their own way, and there's nothing wrong with that, but you should have some common touchstones: things you want to do in adventures, and the style of game you want to play. You might have to compromise a bit, but that's okay—and it might lead you to have fun in unexpected ways.

These guidelines apply to the Game Master as well. The GM needs to respect players, cooperate with them in running the game smoothly, and help them all have fun. If a game session didn't go well for some reason, talk it about it afterwards. It won't do any good if everyone goes home to stew. Try to figure out where things went wrong and see if you can come up with solutions so it doesn't happen again.

A common problem is a player who is unhappy with their character. Maybe the character doesn't fit into the group well. Maybe the player wants different character abilities after some experience playing. This doesn't have to be a problem. It's perfectly fine for a player to make a new character of the same level and retire the old character. It is preferable to do that than to make a player continue to play a character they aren't having fun with.

BASIC GAME CONCEPTS

Before you delve into the rest of the book, here's a brief overview of the basic concepts of the game. You'll learn more about them as you read on.

In the *Modern AGE* RPG, you will make a character. Your character has a background, a profession, and a drive—that last is a set of personal motives that inclines your character to get involved in unusual situations. These provide your character's basic talents. For instance, a character with a violent past is more likely to be skilled in combat. Your character begins at Level 1 as an inexperienced hero. By investigating and overcoming challenges, your PC gains experience points and rises in level. Your character may eventually make it to Level 20 to face unthinkable threats and shape the world, but it won't be easy.

Your character has nine abilities, such as Intelligence and Strength, and each one has a numeric rating, with 1 being average for heroes. When your character wants to do something, the GM may call for an ability test. This is a dice roll to determine success or failure, and it's the most common roll in the game. To make an ability test, roll three six-sided dice (3d6), add the results together, and add the appropriate ability. This generates a test result, which you want to be as high as possible.

TEST RESULT = 3D6 + ABILITY

You may have to apply other bonuses or penalties, most commonly ability focuses that represent areas of special expertise. Once you determine your test result, the GM will let you know if it's a success or a failure and what happens.

Your character also has a Health score. When damage is inflicted, this reduces Health. If it reaches 0, your character may be killed, or might be stunned and rendered unable to act.

In combat and other situations, your character can perform stunts. When any two out of your three dice show the same number, you've scored doubles, and this generates "stunt points." You can then use these points to pull off certain special maneuvers. Stunts help keep the action dynamic and fun.

GAME DICE

Modern AGE only uses six-sided dice, also known by the term **d6**. This is the most common type of die (the cube) and can be found in many classic board games, if you need to scrounge for some. In general, dice are rolled five different ways in *Modern AGE*:

- **1D3:** Sometimes you need to generate a number from 1-3. In that case, you roll a d6 but halve the result, so a roll of 1-2 = 1, a roll of 3-4 = 2, and a roll of 5-6 = 3.
- **1D6:** You roll a single die and simply read the result. Sometimes there is a modifier attached, for example 1d6+3. In that case, just add the modifier to the die roll. If you rolled a 2, for example, you'd add the modifier of 3 to get a result of 5.
- **2D6:** As 1d6 above, but you roll two dice and add them together. If you rolled a 3 and a 6, for example, your result would be 9.
- **3D6:** As 1d6 above, but you roll three dice and add them together. If you are making an ability test, you must ensure that two of the dice are one color and the third a different color. That third die is known as the Stunt Die, and it's important. The result of the Stunt Die can determine your level of success and allow you to perform stunts.
- **4D6 AND MORE:** Some rules will ask you to roll a certain number of dice, by noting the number with "d6" afterward—4d6 for four dice, for instance. There may or may not be an additional modifier, appended to the listing (such as 4d6+2). Unless the rules say otherwise (which rarely happens), add the numbers you roll and then add any modifiers to the total. These rolls are often used for hazards that injure characters, where more dice mean greater damage (a measure of injury, explained in the rules).

WHERE NEXT?

If you are a player, **CHAPTERS 1-6** are for you. They provide the key information you need to know about the game. When you are ready to make a character, go to **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION**. That will explain the process and get you going.

If you are the Game Master, you should familiarize yourself with these chapters as well, as they contain the core rules of the game. You should then move on to **CHAPTERS 7-12**. They explain your unique and important role in a tabletop RPG and give you valuable advice and resources.

You are now ready to explore the *Modern AGE*. Investigate and challenge your world!



PLAYERS' SECTION



CHARACTER CREATION

Like a role played by an actor, your character is how you participate in a *Modern AGE* adventure, acting as your in-game alter ego. Since the stories featured in the game revolve around the main characters, it is important to define who they are, what they can do, and what they want. Try to ponder these questions about your character. This chapter takes you through all the steps necessary to create a *Modern AGE* character, and offers examples to guide you along the way. Once you're finished, you'll have your own complete and ready-to-play character.

GETTING STARTED

This chapter is your step-by-step guide to building a *Modern AGE* character. You may encounter unfamiliar rules or game terms here for the first time. Don't worry! They are explained in detail in the following chapters and you can always look up an unfamiliar game term in the **GLOSSARY** section at the back of this book and then return to where you left off.

When you begin character creation, you will likely want a copy of the character sheet presented in the back of the book. This is a paper record of your character and you can use it as a "work-sheet" when building them, as well as a reference in game play. You can photocopy the sheet in the back of the book or download and print out the sheet from greenronin.com. You'll also want some scratch paper for making notes and considering your options, something to write with, two six-sided dice of one color, and one six-sided die of another color.

CHARACTER CREATION IN 9 STEPS

Making a *Modern AGE* character is a simple nine-step process, outlined here and presented throughout this chapter in order. Just follow the steps and, at the end, you'll have a complete new character.

1. **CONCEPT:** Consider the type of character you want to play and that character's overall role in the group of characters the other players will create.
2. **ABILITIES:** Determine your character's core physical and mental abilities. These are areas where your character is strong or talented, average, or on the weak side.
3. **BACKGROUND:** Choose a background that describes where your character came from, and capabilities the character inherited or learned from it.
4. **PROFESSION:** Select a profession that defines what your character does now or did just before the first adventure, which gives you additional skills the character can perform.
5. **DRIVE:** Decide what inspires your character to take risks, get involved in the game's storylines, and take the various actions that they do.

SECONDARY TRAITS

Your character has several numbered traits other than attributes. Many of these are calculated using your character's attributes, though a few get some or all their values from other sources. The following section summarizes what these are.

- **RESOURCES:** This measures your character's wealth. Use the number listed for the character's profession, +1 per degree by which the character's social class exceeds that of the profession's.
- **HEALTH:** Your character's capacity to withstand injury before being killed or otherwise seriously affected. Depending on profession, this is 15 + Constitution or 20 + Constitution at 1st level. Some Drives add +5 to this total.
- **DEFENSE:** The ability to avoid getting hit in combat. 10 + Dexterity.
- **TOUGHNESS:** Your character's resistance to injury. Equal to Constitution, with a minimum of 0.
- **SPEED:** Your character's ability to move, measured in how many yards you can move, cautiously, during a round of action. 10 + Dexterity.
- **RELATIONSHIPS:** Your character's connections to other people, measured using slots equal to Communication (Minimum 1 slot). Some Drives add 1 slot.
- **CONVICTION (OPTIONAL):** If you use the optional Conviction system, a 1st level character starts with 3 points.
- **OTHER:** Some Drives may provide a Reputation, or 1 rank of Membership in an organization. See **CHAPTER 10: REWARDS** for more information about these.

6. **RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT:** Based on background and other factors, find out what your character's initial Resources are, and use those to determine what equipment your character has available.
7. **HEALTH, DEFENSE, TOUGHNESS, AND SPEED:** Figure out your character's starting Health, Defense, Toughness, and Speed game traits.
8. **GOALS, TIES, AND RELATIONSHIPS:** Based on everything you've worked out so far, choose your character's goals, both short- and long-term, their ties with other characters, and their important Relationships. This last category is a game trait, allowing characters with strong Relationships to perform exceptional deeds to support them.
9. **NAME AND DESCRIPTION:** Lastly, give your character a name and describe both the character's appearance and their overall personality and reputation.

STEP 1

CONCEPT

Who is your character? The character creation process will inspire ideas as you go, but it's a good idea to start with a basic idea of the type of character you want to play. The first thing to do is talk to the GM about the upcoming campaign, and the game world it'll be set in. You'll want to play a character who fits that setting, so, for example, an international socialite probably won't fit a post-apocalyptic world where scavengers fight over gas and canned food. Next, you want to check with the other players. It's almost always a good idea to play characters with varied, complimentary interests and abilities. A bodyguard's a good partner for a negotiator, and a high-roller can help fund a would-be inventor. These contrasts can also help to decide upon the Relationships in Step 8. For now, keep your concept loose, since going through the other character creation steps may inspire you to adjust or further specify who your character is.

EXAMPLE

Steve is creating a new character for a Modern AGE game focused on conspiracies and urban legend, so he leans toward someone with some investigative abilities. This fits Meghan's plans for the campaign. Steve's character also fills a niche left open by the other players' choices, since nobody else plans on playing a character with a strong investigative focus.

STEP 2

ABILITIES

Modern AGE characters are defined by nine abilities. They're scored on a numeric scale from -2 (quite poor) to 4 (truly outstanding). A score of 1 is considered average for player characters and other extraordinary people. 0 is average for common individuals, the sort of folks who avoid adventures and weird capers. Your character's ability scores provide a useful "snapshot" description of the areas where your character is outstanding, above average, poor, or just average, and you use ability scores to determine the outcome of most actions in the game. The abilities in *Modern AGE* are:

- **ACCURACY** measures aim, precision, and finesse, particularly in using ranged weapons, such as guns and thrown weapons.
- **COMMUNICATION** covers social skills, personal interaction, and the overall art of friendship and social influence.
- **CONSTITUTION** is your character's overall health, fortitude, and resistance to harm, illness, and fatigue.
- **DEXTERITY** covers deftness, eye-hand coordination, agility, and reaction time, from doing delicate work to dodging attacks.
- **FIGHTING** measures your character's abilities in close combat, with hand-to-hand weapons or unarmed methods.

DETERMINING ABILITIES

3D6 ROLL	STARTING ABILITY	3D6 ROLL	STARTING ABILITY
3	-2	11	1
4	-1	12	2
5	-1	13	2
6	0	14	2
7	0	15	3
8	0	16	3
9	1	17	3
10	1	18	4



ABILITY OPTIONS

Character creation in *Modern AGE* is presented with beginning gamers in mind. Random elements make the process easier because they cut down on decision making. If you have some RPG experience or just prefer more control when determining your character's abilities, you can use one of the following two options (GM permitting).

OPTION 1: ARRANGING ABILITIES

In this option, roll your abilities randomly, as described under Determining Abilities. However, you can arrange the results in whatever order you wish, deciding which result goes with which ability. Instead of rolling the abilities in order, just make nine rolls on the Determining Abilities table and assign the results to the nine abilities as you see fit. With the GM's permission, you may rearrange your abilities after choosing your background, profession, and drive to better fit those character traits.

OPTION 2: BUYING ABILITIES

In this option, your character's abilities all start at 0 and you get 12 advancements to increase them. Each advancement increases an ability by 1, but no ability can be greater than 3. You must spend all 12 advancements. Backgrounds can increase your abilities, as usual. Note that under this system you cannot have abilities lower than 0, nor do you have a chance of getting an ability score of 4.

- **INTELLIGENCE** measures a character's reasoning, memory, problem-solving, overall knowledge, and education.
- **PERCEPTION** is the ability to detect things using any of the character's senses.
- **STRENGTH** is sheer muscle power and the ability to apply it, from lifting heavy things to athletic feats.
- **WILLPOWER** measures self-control, self-discipline, mental fortitude, and confidence.

DETERMINING ABILITIES

Roll dice to determine your character's starting ability scores. You need three six-sided dice (3d6). Roll all three and add the numbers together to get a result from 3 to 18. If you roll 3, 4, and 6, for example, your result is 13 ($3 + 4 + 6 = 13$).

Make nine such rolls—one for each ability. Then consult the **Determining Abilities** table to see what ability score each roll gives each ability. A roll of 11 on the table, for example, means the ability's starting score is 1. When you are done with all nine abilities, you can swap any two scores. You can do this after generating all your abilities, or after choosing your background, profession, and drive. You may wish to hold off until

those three traits have been selected so that your character's abilities better match their personal history.

This gives you a chance to customize your character a bit.

EXAMPLE

Starting off his character, Steve makes nine 3d6 rolls on the Determining Abilities table, giving his character the following scores: Accuracy 2, Communication 1, Constitution 0, Dexterity 2, Fighting 1, Intelligence 2, Perception 1, Strength 3, Willpower 2. Since he wants more of an investigative character, Steve swaps the rolled Strength and Perception scores, resulting in Perception 3 and Strength 1.

The GM may decide you can determine your character's abilities using an alternate method. Read the Ability Options sidebar for possible options.

ABILITY FOCUSES

An ability focus (or just focus) is an area of specialty or expertise within the broader ability. For example, while Intelligence generally determines how smart and knowledgeable your character is, the Research focus indicates your character is particularly capable when it comes to digging up information using available resources. In game terms, if you have a focus, your ability is effectively 2 higher than normal when working within that focus or specialty. This is explained in detail in CHAPTER 3.

Focuses add detail and definition to your character. While there may be another character in the group who has the same Fighting score, your character might have the Brawling focus while the other character has entirely different focuses.

Your character gains focuses through background and profession, so you will choose them during those steps. You can find details on specific ability focuses in CHAPTER 3.

Modern AGE includes the following focuses. New focuses may appear in various *AGE System* setting and source books, and your GM may introduce new ones to suit their campaign:

- **ACCURACY:** Assault Rifles, Bows, Black Powder Weapons, Grenades, Longarms, Pistols, Shotguns, SMGs, Thrown.
- **COMMUNICATION:** Animal Handling, Bargaining, Deception, Disguise, Etiquette, Expression, Gambling, Investigation, Leadership, Performance, Persuasion, Seduction.
- **CONSTITUTION:** Propelling, Running, Stamina, Swimming, Tolerance.
- **DEXTERITY:** Acrobatics, Crafting, Driving, Forgery, Initiative, Piloting, Riding, Sabotage, Sleight of Hand, Stealth.
- **FIGHTING:** Brawling, Flexible Weapons, Grappling, Heavy Blades, Light Blades, Long Hafted, Short Hafted.
- **INTELLIGENCE:** Anthropology, Art, Astronomy, Biology, Business, Cartography, Chemistry, Computers, Cryptography, Current Affairs, Earth Sciences, Electronics, Engineering, Evaluation, Explosives, History, Homemaking, Law, Medicine, Navigation, Occultism, Physics, Research, Security, Tactics, Theology, Tinkering.
- **PERCEPTION:** Empathy, Hearing, Searching, Seeing, Smelling, Tasting, Touching, Tracking.
- **STRENGTH:** Climbing, Intimidation, Jumping, Machining, Might, Steering.
- **WILLPOWER:** Courage, Faith, Morale, Self-Discipline.

STACKED FOCUSES AND TALENTS

In some instances, combinations of background, profession, and drive may give a character the same ability focus or the same talent more than once. In cases where focuses and talents stack, use the following general rules:

- If a character already has an ability focus and would acquire that focus again, choose one of the other options available. If no other option is presented, pick another focus of your choice.
- If a character already has a degree of a talent and acquires that talent again, they gain the next degree of the talent.

STEP 3

BACKGROUND

Characters do not spring from nowhere, fully formed. They had a life and experiences prior to the start of the story being told around the game table. *Modern AGE* refers to this as the character's background.

Backgrounds are broad by design. They offer room for deciding exactly what a given background means in the context of the setting for your character. Backgrounds are intended to offer inspiration for your character's history, early life, and personality.

Determining your character's background involves two rolls. First, roll on the **Social Class** table. Once you have that result, roll on the appropriate backgrounds table for that social class. So, if your character is middle class, roll 1d6 on the **Middle-Class Backgrounds** table and record the result.

SOCIAL CLASS

1D6 ROLL	SOCIAL CLASS
1	Outsider
2-3	Lower Class
4-5	Middle Class
6	Upper Class

OUTSIDER

1D6 ROLL	BACKGROUND
1-2	Bohemian
3-4	Exile
5-6	Outcast

LOWER CLASS

1D6 ROLL	BACKGROUND
1-2	Military
3-4	Laborer
5-6	Urban

MIDDLE CLASS

1D6 ROLL	BACKGROUND
1-2	Academic
3-4	Suburban
5-6	Trade

UPPER CLASS

1D6 ROLL	BACKGROUND
1-2	Aristocratic
3-4	Corporate
5-6	Cosmopolitan

Your character's background provides the following benefits:

- +1 to an ability score.
- A choice of one of two ability focuses.
- A choice of one of two talents.
- A roll on a benefits table for the background, giving the character one additional benefit.

Talents are special skills, knacks, or natural abilities that the character's lifestyle develops. CHAPTER 3 describes what they can do in detail. Note that at character creation, your character doesn't need the prerequisites for talents listed in that

chapter. These only apply to talents acquired later, through level advancement.

EXAMPLE

Steve rolls a die for his character's social class, getting a 3 for lower class.

*Rolling a die on the **Lower Class** backgrounds table, Steve gets a 5 for Urban. Looking at the background, he gives his character +1 Dexterity. He chooses the **Misdirection** talent, feeling like his character is more cunning than athletic, and rolls once on the **Urban** benefits table, getting an 8 for +1 Perception.*

SOCIAL CLASS DESCRIPTIONS

The exact nature of social class may vary depending on the setting, and even within different places and cultures in the setting. Interpret your character's social class based on the setting and type of *Modern AGE* game you're playing.

OUTSIDER

More of a non-social class, outsiders tend to be outcasts, criminals, or non-conformists who can't or won't live according to society's customs. They often lack access to things other people take for granted, and learn to get by on their own, sometimes forming their own support networks and structures outside mainstream society. Some outsiders reject the norm by choice, but in many cases, outsiders are pushed out by society's biases.

LOWER CLASS

Hard work, usually physical, and precarious employment tend to rule the lives of lower class characters. Still, that labor is often all that separates them from becoming outsiders, so they cling to it. Lower class characters usually depend on family and friends to help keep them out of utter poverty. They might live in failing industrial towns, inner city apartments, or hardscrabble farms. In all cases, they make do with what is available and find ways to stretch resources until the next payday or job comes along.

MIDDLE CLASS

A measure of comfort and security comes with the middle class. A steady job, often skilled labor or "white collar," supplies the means to afford a few luxuries or non-essentials. Middle class characters might start off as a bit insular. They often separate themselves from the struggles of the lower social classes, focusing on the climb toward upper class status. Sometimes that climb leads to a slip. They tumble down to the lower class or even become outsiders. Some settle for stability instead, and prefer not to rock the social boat.

UPPER CLASS

Upper class characters sit at a society's summit, where they rarely need to worry about resources, except of course when they want more. Their concerns are often



focused on the responsibilities and privileges associated with their status. Some are born into privilege, inheriting wealth and opportunity, while others worked their way into the elite. In some societies, it's almost impossible to work your way to upper class status, and even if you do, you might get less respect compared to hereditary "old money" peers.

BACKGROUND DESCRIPTIONS

Feel free to fill out the framework of your character's background with details about how it affected the character's early life, and how that relates to the traits the background provides. For example, a character with a corporate background might be the scion of a wealthy family with an important position in the business world, groomed to inherit the family business. What business is it, and did the character accept this future or forge a different path? How did those choices bring the character to where they are now?

ACADEMIC	MIDDLE
2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Communication
3-4	FOCUS: Intelligence (Research)
5	+2 Resources
6	FOCUS: Intelligence (History)
7-8	+1 Perception
9	FOCUS: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
10-11	FOCUS: Intelligence (choose one)
12	+1 Willpower

You spent a lot more time at schools and academic environments than your peers. Perhaps you lived at a boarding school, or someone in your family worked at a college or university. You're inclined to be a bit bookish, and know your way around educational institutions. This doesn't mean you *like* book learning—studying may have been a chore imposed by your family—but you still know your way around libraries and schools.

ABILITY: +1 Intelligence
FOCUS: Intelligence (choose one)
TALENT: Knowledge or Linguistics

ARISTOCRATIC	UPPER
2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Accuracy
3-4	+2 Resources
5	FOCUS: Communication (Persuasion)
6	FOCUS: Dexterity (Riding)
7-8	+1 Perception
9	FOCUS: Communication (Gambling)
10-11	FOCUS: Communication (Leadership)
12	+1 Willpower

You come from a family with a history of privilege and responsibility, although it may have less of both these days. You might be actual nobility in cultures that still have such lineages, or belong to an important family with equivalent wealth and influence. You might be inclined to be a defender of tradition, and approach life with a sense of noblesse oblige (and unexamined entitlement), or you might be a "black sheep," who's rejected your heritage due to philosophical differences, or because of some scandalous behavior that makes you unwelcome at family gatherings.

ABILITY: +1 Communication
FOCUS: Communication (Etiquette) or Intelligence (History)
TALENT: Affluent or Contacts

BOHEMIAN	OUTSIDER
2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Dexterity
3-4	FOCUS: Perception (Empathy)
5	FOCUS: Willpower (Courage or Faith)
6	FOCUS: Communication (Animal Handling)
7-8	+1 Constitution
9	FOCUS: Dexterity (Acrobatics)
10-11	FOCUS: Communication (Persuasion)
12	+1 Perception

You grew up in an experimental, eccentric, or creative community. Perhaps you belonged to a commune, an artist colony, or some intentionally off-the-grid settlement. You're unfamiliar with some of the things people take for granted, but have had plenty of opportunities to expand your horizons. You might be trying to fit into mainstream society after some time away, or you might revel in your offbeat lifestyle.

ABILITY: +1 Communication
FOCUS: Communication (Performance) or Intelligence (Occultism or Theology)
TALENT: Party Animal or Performance

CORPORATE	UPPER
2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Perception
3-4	FOCUS: Communication (Persuasion)
5	FOCUS: Intelligence (Evaluation)
6	FOCUS: Perception (Empathy)
7-8	+1 Intelligence
9	FOCUS: Communication (Expression)
10-11	FOCUS: Communication (Leadership)
12	+1 Accuracy

Your early life was tied up in corporate culture, most likely due to family members who built their lives around a company in some fashion. Your family might include influential stockholders or powerful executives, and they may have expected you to follow

LANGUAGES

What languages does your character know? That's a tricky question. In some societies, most people speak two or three languages, but in others, people are monolingual. The GM should allow you to be able to speak, read, and write whatever languages your character would pick up due to their culture and social class, though you should impose a limit of three languages.

The Linguistics talent (see **CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER OPTIONS**) can be used to pick up additional languages. Furthermore, characters with Intelligence focuses such as Anthropology, History, or Occultism know enough of languages relevant to their fields to comprehend sources, perform research, and haltingly communicate, but they will be deficient compared to people who truly know how to read, write, and speak those languages. They may require basic tests (see **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**) to fully understand one of these languages.

their example — whether you did or not. Do you want to embrace a future in a corner office, rebel against everything represented by that office, or find a third way to approach your life? Your profession and related experiences hold the answer.

ABILITY: +1 Communication
FOCUS: Communication (Bargaining) or Intelligence (Business)
TALENT: Contacts or Intrigue

COSMOPOLITAN

UPPER

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Perception
3–4	FOCUS: Intelligence (Anthropology)
5	FOCUS: Communication (Persuasion)
6	FOCUS: Intelligence (Art)
7–8	+1 Communication
9	FOCUS: Communication (Bargaining)
10–11	FOCUS: Perception (Seeing)
12	+1 Willpower

You were raised in a cosmopolitan environment, such as a big city, where people from all over the world came and mingled. You were exposed to some of the best — and, potentially, the worst — of humanity and human achievement.

ABILITY: +1 Intelligence
FOCUS: Communication (Etiquette) or Intelligence (Current Affairs)
TALENT: Knowledge or Observation

EXILE

OUTSIDER

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Fighting
3–4	FOCUS: Communication (Bargaining)
5	FOCUS: Dexterity (Stealth)
6	FOCUS: Perception (Searching)
7–8	+1 Perception
9	FOCUS: Accuracy (Pistols)
10–11	FOCUS: Dexterity (Driving)
12	+1 Willpower

You might have lived a very different life were it not for some event that drove you from society. Feel free to roll again on the Social Class and Background tables to get a glimpse of what your former life was. Whatever the case, you and possibly your family were exiled by war, disaster, disgrace, or some other misfortune, and forced to start over with virtually nothing.

ABILITY: +1 Constitution
FOCUS: Fighting (Brawling) or Willpower (Self-Discipline)
TALENT: Affluent or Living on the Fringe

MILITARY

LOWER

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Willpower
3–4	FOCUS: Accuracy (Longarms)
5	FOCUS: Communication (Leadership)
6	FOCUS: Intelligence (Security)
7–8	+1 Strength
9	FOCUS: Perception (Searching)
10–11	FOCUS: Fighting (Brawling)
12	+1 Constitution

You grew up as a military brat. You were either a dependent of family members in military service, or you lived close by or on a military base or installation. You're familiar with military culture and may have picked up a thing or two from it along the way.

ABILITY: +1 Fighting
FOCUS: Accuracy (Pistols) or Intelligence (Tactics)
TALENT: One Combat Style or Observation

OUTCAST

OUTSIDER

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Perception
3–4	FOCUS: Perception (Seeing)
5	FOCUS: Fighting (Light Blades)
6	FOCUS: Dexterity (Forgery)
7–8	+1 Constitution
9	FOCUS: Dexterity (Sabotage)
10–11	FOCUS: Willpower (Courage)
12	+1 Communication



Fate singled you out for the life of an outcast on the fringes of society. You might have a criminal background that makes it impossible to find decent work and true respect, or you might belong to a minority group your society rejects. Whatever the case, you learned how to survive outside of the safety and structures most people rely upon. Do you value your continued independence, or yearn to rejoin society?

ABILITY: +1 Willpower
FOCUS: Communication (Deception) or Dexterity (Stealth)
TALENT: Living on the Fringe or Misdirection

LABORER LOWER

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Fighting
3-4	FOCUS: Fighting (Brawling)
5	FOCUS: Intelligence (Tinkering)
6	FOCUS: Willpower (Self-Discipline)
7-8	+1 Strength
9	FOCUS: Communication (Gambling)
10-11	FOCUS: Constitution (Stamina)
12	+1 Dexterity

Your family is used to hard, physical work—and so are you. Generations have worked the factory line, or in the mines, or

on rough seas. You might be looking to move on and up from there, or stick with it, or something might have upended the life you once knew. In any event, you'll carry the fortitude you've developed into any field you enter.

ABILITY: +1 Constitution
FOCUS: Dexterity (Crafting) or Strength (Might)
TALENT: One Unarmed Combat Style or Party Animal

SUBURBAN

MIDDLE

2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT
2	+1 Dexterity
3-4	FOCUS: Intelligence (choose one)
5	+2 Resources
6	FOCUS: Communication (Persuasion)
7-8	+1 Perception
9	FOCUS: Perception (choose one)
10-11	FOCUS: Dexterity (Driving)
12	+1 Intelligence

Life for you once took place in the picturesque neighborhoods outside of the city, but still close to the mall. It might have been just as idyllic for you as the housing development brochures portrayed, or perhaps it was a cookie-cutter, conformist nightmare you couldn't wait to escape. Love or hate the suburbs,

you know their customs, from backyard barbecues to picky neighborhood associations.

ABILITY: +1 Communication
FOCUS: Communication (Etiquette) or Intelligence (Current Affairs)
TALENT: Affluent or Contacts

TRADE		MIDDLE
2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT	
2	+1 Strength	
3–4	FOCUS: Intelligence (Tinkering)	
5	FOCUS: Intelligence (Evaluation)	
6	FOCUS: Constitution (Tolerance)	
7–8	+1 Perception	
9	FOCUS: Fighting (Grappling)	
10–11	FOCUS: Constitution (Stamina)	
12	+1 Constitution	

Your family lived off a skilled trade of some sort. It might not have been glamorous (far from it, quite possibly), but it paid the bills. You may have picked up some practical lessons and skills along the way. Perhaps you were ready to enter the family trade yourself, but you might have yearned for something new—even dangerous. You probably take pride in being able to make or fix things yourself.

ABILITY: +1 Dexterity
FOCUS: Dexterity (Crafting) or Strength (Machining)
TALENT: Improvisation or Maker

URBAN		LOWER
2D6 ROLL	BENEFIT	
2	+1 Accuracy	
3–4	FOCUS: Dexterity (Acrobatics)	
5	FOCUS: Communication (Deception)	
6	FOCUS: Dexterity (Sleight of Hand)	
7–8	+1 Perception	
9	FOCUS: Perception (Hearing)	
10–11	FOCUS: Strength (Climbing or Jumping)	
12	+1 Fighting	

You lived in the city, not in a high-rise or someplace with private security, but in the *city*. Its streets and vacant lots were your playgrounds, and you were navigating public transportation long before you could drive. You feel comfortable in urban environments. You know local eccentrics, dangerous people, and secrets from the heart of the city. In many societies, this background puts you at your culture's cutting edge, exposing you to new music and other arts before anyone else.

ABILITY: +1 Dexterity
FOCUS: Communication (Persuasion) or Constitution (Stamina)
TALENT: Freerunning or Misdirection

STEP 4

PROFESSION

Your character's profession describes what they do, their vocation and training, and often, how they earn a living.

Your character's profession provides the following benefits:

- A choice of one of two specific ability focuses.
- A choice of one of two specific talents.
- A starting Health score: 20 + Con for a physical profession, 15 + Con for others.
- A starting Resources score, modified by background and the Affluent talent.

Roll a profession on the table corresponding to your character's social class, or else choose one.

PROFESSIONS BELOW YOUR CLASS

You can also choose a profession from a social class below yours or roll on a table below your social class. If you choose or roll for a profession of a lower social class, your character gains +1 Resources per class that their rolled social class is above that of the profession. Thus, an upper-class character who chooses the artist profession, for example, has +3 Resources compared to the usual "starving artist."

EXAMPLE

Looking at the lower class professions, Steve immediately knows that he wants Investigator and chooses that with the GM's permission. Looking at the description, he gives his character Observation, starting Health of 15 (15 plus his Constitution, which is 0), and starting Resources 4.

OUTSIDER		LOWER CLASS	
1D6 ROLL	PROFESSION	1D6 ROLL	PROFESSION
1	Brawler	1	Athlete
2	Survivalist	2	Security
3	Criminal	3	Professional
4	Scavenger	4	Scholar
5	Fixer	5	Merchant
6	Artist	6	Politician

MIDDLE CLASS		UPPER CLASS	
1D6 ROLL	PROFESSION	1D6 ROLL	PROFESSION
1	Pilot	1	Commander
2	Soldier	2	Explorer
3	Investigator	3	Dilettante
4	Technician	4	Expert
5	Clergy	5	Executive
6	Negotiator	6	Socialite

PROFESSION DESCRIPTIONS

As with backgrounds, professions are designed to be broad and open to interpretation. Players should feel free to adjust the name, details, and descriptions of professions to fit their character concepts and the game's setting.

ARTIST

SOCIAL, OUTSIDER

Your life is about expression, whether it is sharing your sense of beauty, or expressing pain or outrage in forms others can understand. You may or may not make a living at art, but you need to express yourself through it.

FOCUS: Communication (Expression) or Intelligence (Art)
TALENT: Artistry or Performance
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 2

ATHLETE

PHYSICAL, LOWER

You pit yourself against physical challenges, whether from other teams and rival athletes or your own limits and personal bests. Your work involves a lot of training and practice to stay at the top of your game.

FOCUS: Constitution (Running or Swimming), Dexterity (Acrobatics), or Strength (Climbing or Jumping)
TALENT: Freerunning or Quick Reflexes
HEALTH: 20 + Con **RESOURCES:** 2

BRAWLER

PHYSICAL, OUTSIDER

There are always opportunities for people willing and able to knock some heads together. It's not fancy fighting, and it's certainly not fair, but you'd much rather have a reputation for winning and surviving than anything else.

FOCUS: Grappling Style or Striking Style
TALENT: Fighting (Brawling) or Fighting (Grappling)
HEALTH: 20 + Con **RESOURCES:** 0

CLERGY

SOCIAL, LOWER

People need faith, or at least someone to look after their hearts and souls just as much as their bodies and minds. You may have felt called to do this work, it might be a family tradition, or it might represent a life you've left behind. Do you keep the faith for others? How about yourself?

FOCUS: Intelligence (Theology) or Willpower (Faith)
TALENT: Inspire or Oratory
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 4

COMMANDER

PHYSICAL, UPPER

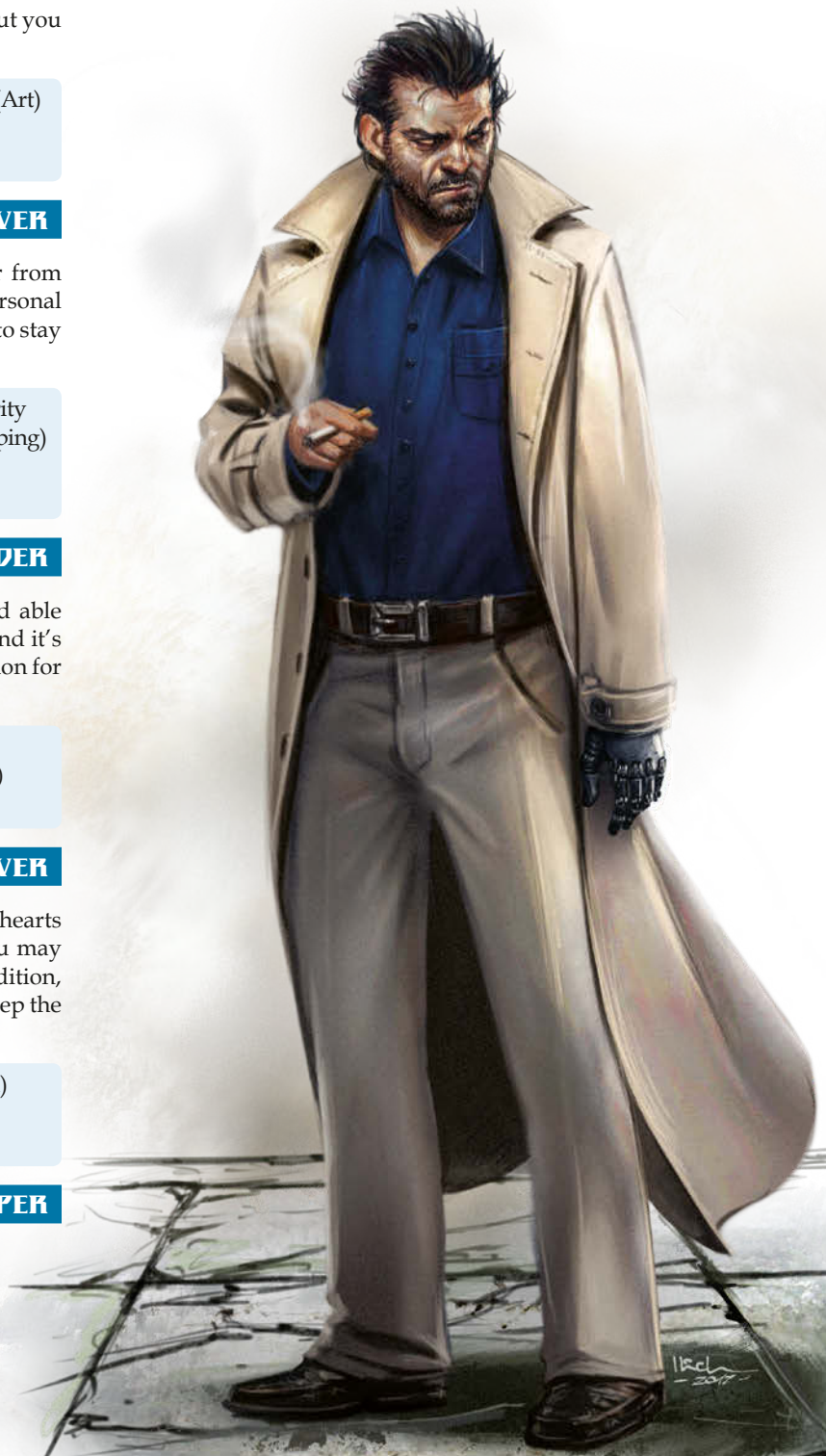
You're trained to lead soldiers in the field, as a noble calling or part of a professional elite. Your responsibility is to get the job done and ensure as many people under your command make it back as possible. Does a good commander prioritize the first goal or the second?

FOCUS: Communication (Leadership) or Intelligence (Tactics)
TALENT: Command or Tactical Awareness
HEALTH: 20 + Con **RESOURCES:** 6

CRIMINAL

SKILLED, OUTSIDER

When you're on the outside, you often bend and break the law to survive. You might feel you have no choice in the matter because of circumstances, or maybe you chose those circumstances, loving crime with professional pride, or to





further some political or personal end. Either way, you know how to work around the law.

FOCUS: Communication (Deception) or Dexterity (Forgery, Sleight of Hand, or Stealth)
TALENT: Burglary or Scouting
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 2

DILETTANTE **SKILLED, UPPER**

With so many possible things to learn and do, how can you choose? You're happy to sample from the banquet of possibilities laid out before you, learning as much as you can about something before moving on to the next interest.

FOCUS: Intelligence (Research) or Perception (choose one)
TALENT: Improvisation or Theory and Practice
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 8

EXECUTIVE **SOCIAL, UPPER**

You are the take-charge type, able to see the big picture or organize people to do great things. Your vision makes you a great leader, even if people don't fully comprehend your ultimate goals. You decide whether it's all about profit, power, or the thrill of command.

FOCUS: Communication (Leadership) or Intelligence (Business)
TALENT: Command or Intrigue
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 8

EXPERT **SKILLED, UPPER**

There used to be a time when you could know everything about anything, or nearly so, but that era's long gone. Still, you're enough of an expert in your chosen field to get paid well for it. Experts tend to belong to complex fields like finance, law, medicine, and the sciences.

FOCUS: Intelligence (choose one)
TALENT: Expertise or Theory and Practice
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 8

EXPLORER **PHYSICAL, UPPER**

There may not be any new continents or civilizations to discover (or are there?), but there are still plenty of obscure places left, which few or none have seen. It's your passion to explore them. You work to expand human knowledge, to satisfy your own need to discover someplace new, or for fame.

FOCUS: Intelligence (Cartography or Navigation) or Perception (choose one)
TALENT: Linguistics or Scouting
HEALTH: 20 + Con **RESOURCES:** 6

FIXER **SOCIAL, OUTSIDER**

You are good at getting things done in a less-than-legal fashion, or outside of the normal channels. While some fixers are motivated by profit, others do what they can to help people in a restrictive, corrupt system.

FOCUS: Communication (Bargaining) or Intelligence (Evaluation)
TALENT: Improvisation or Living on the Fringe
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 2

INVESTIGATOR SKILLED, LOWER

People lie and keep secrets. They've been doing it since the dawn of time. Likewise, people like you, who know how to dig up the truth, have always dogged deceivers. You might bring criminals to justice, get information to the public, or find out what a client wants or needs to know.

FOCUS: Communication (Investigation) or Perception (choose one)
TALENT: Intrigue or Observation
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 4

MERCHANT SOCIAL, MIDDLE

Money runs the world, and you make money work for you. You know how to buy at a discount, sell at a profit, and conduct deals to come out ahead. You might be involved in trade, work in retail or wholesale, or deal in rarities that require knowledge to identify and eloquence to sell.

FOCUS: Communication (Bargaining) or Intelligence (Business)
TALENT: Affluent or Contacts
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 6

NEGOTIATOR SOCIAL, LOWER

The harder things are, the more people need each other to get by and the more likely it seems they are to disagree. You know how to get people together, settle disputes, find compromises, and grease the rusty wheels of conflicting agendas so they turn in unison once more.

FOCUS: Communication (Bargaining or Persuasion) or Perception (Empathy)
TALENT: Intrigue or Oratory
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 4

PILOT PHYSICAL, MIDDLE

You're at your best when at the controls, whether behind the wheel of a car or truck, in the cockpit of an aircraft, or piloting something even more exotic. You have the nerve and the skill needed to make your vehicle do what you need it to do. It becomes an extension of your body, its humming as essential as your heartbeat.

FOCUS: Dexterity (Driving or Piloting)
TALENT: Fast Fury or Speed Demon
HEALTH: 20 + Con **RESOURCES:** 4

POLITICIAN SOCIAL, MIDDLE

From neighborhoods to nations, people need to be organized for society to function. You know the tricks it takes to get people to cooperate to that end. Your speeches help people

devise collective political dreams, but behind closed doors you deal in the art of the possible. You might be virtuous or corrupt, but isn't that a matter of perspective?

FOCUS: Communication (Deception or Persuasion) or Intelligence (Current Affairs or Law)
TALENT: Contacts or Oratory
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 6

PROFESSIONAL SKILLED, MIDDLE

Whether in a cubicle farm or an office, you know the white-collar world. You might see it as a career path or a stepping stone toward something else, but you know your job and the skills and challenges that come with it.

FOCUS: Communication (Bargaining or Expression) or Intelligence (one of Business, Computers, or Research)
TALENT: Affluent or Expertise
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 6

SCAVENGER SKILLED, OUTSIDER

Most people would be amazed at the things that get thrown away and forgotten, but not you. You're all too familiar with that bounty – how to find it, salvage it, and make the best use of it.

FOCUS: Intelligence (Tinkering) or Perception (Searching)
TALENT: Living on the Fringe or Maker
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 2

SCHOLAR SKILLED, MIDDLE

Knowledge and understanding are your fields, focused on a specific area of interest. Whereas the expert profession tends to be about applied knowledge, you focus on knowledge for knowledge's sake. You might work in a university, or have an amateur obsession. You look to gain greater understanding of your field and, in so doing, perhaps expand the world's understanding as well.

FOCUS: Intelligence (choose one)
TALENT: Expertise or Knowledge
HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 6

SECURITY PHYSICAL, MIDDLE

You protect places, things, and people. You might keep watch over a sedate mall, or patrol a war zone. You could be a law enforcement officer, a private security guard, or a special consultant. No matter your job, you keep "bad guys" from getting what they want, and you keep your charges safe.

FOCUS: Intelligence (Security) or Perception (Empathy or Seeing)
TALENT: One Fighting Style or Protect
HEALTH: 20 + Con **RESOURCES:** 4

SOCIALITE SOCIAL, UPPER

Life is a never-ending series of social engagements, from parties and receptions to fundraisers and even funerals, and

you navigate them gracefully. Your social obligations might be a burden or a source of enjoyment for you but, whatever the case, you handle them with aplomb. You might lead a life of pure recreation, but your engagements could have political or charitable dimensions as well.

FOCUS: Communication (Etiquette or Seduction) or Constitution (Stamina)

TALENT: Attractive or Contacts

HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 8

SOLDIER

PHYSICAL, LOWER

Your people need someone to defend them, to stand on the front lines and, sometimes, to go to war against their enemies. You're trained to follow orders, fight, and do whatever's needed to complete your mission. You could be part of a government's armed forces, a revolutionary, or a soldier-for-hire, working for clients who can meet your fee.

FOCUS: Accuracy (Assault Rifles) or Fighting (Brawling)

TALENT: One Fighting Style or Tactical Awareness

HEALTH: 20 + Con **RESOURCES:** 2

SURVIVALIST

PHYSICAL, OUTSIDER

Survival is life's most basic challenge, and you have learned how to meet it in extreme situations, either out of necessity or because you love the wilderness. You know how to make do without many of the products and social contacts people depend upon for their everyday lives.

FOCUS: Accuracy (Bows or Pistols) or Perception (Tracking)

TALENT: Living on the Fringe or Tactical Awareness

HEALTH: 20 + Con **RESOURCES:** 0

TECHNICIAN

SKILLED, LOWER

You fix things. Whether you're a mechanic, maintenance technician, or even work in information technologies, people depend on you to keep it all operational. You might work in vast server farms, in lightless sewers, in a massive factory, or in a nondescript office. Wherever you are, you maintain part of the modern era's infrastructure.

FOCUS: Intelligence (Computers, Electronics, Engineering, or Tinkering)

TALENT: Expertise, Hacking, or Maker

HEALTH: 15 + Con **RESOURCES:** 4

DRIVE

D6	COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2
1	Achiever	Networker
2	Builder	Penitent
3	Caregiver	Protector
4	Ecstatic	Rebel
5	Judge	Survivor
6	Leader	Visionary

STEP 5

DRIVE

Your character's drive describes what motivates them to act, what moves them to say "yes" to an opportunity, including a call to participate in a game's stories. It defines the kinds of things your character wants to do. Drive gives you cues for action as a player and provides the GM with "hooks" to encourage your character to act. As a player, when a chance to do something interesting comes up, ask yourself: "How does my drive inspire me to get involved?"

Choose a drive for your character, or roll on the **Drive** table. To determine which column to use, roll 1d6. On a 1-3, roll on Column 1; on 4-6 roll on Column 2. Your character's drive provides the following benefits:

- A quality and a downfall. These help guide roleplaying and have a specific game effect if the optional Conviction system is used in play.
- A choice of one of two specific talents.
- One of the following improvements: Health (+5 increase), Membership (rank 1), Resources (+2 increase), Relationship (Intensity 1), or Reputation (rank 1). For details on Memberships, Relationships, and Reputation, see CHAPTER 10.

EXAMPLE

Looking over the drives, Steve sees several that appeal to his emerging concept of his investigator character: Judge, Penitent, Protector, and Rebel. Unsure which to choose, he rolls randomly and ends up with Rebel, suggesting his character is a nonconformist who has gotten himself in trouble in the past. From that drive, Steve chooses Improvisation to add to his character's talents and Reputation for his improvement.

DRIVE DESCRIPTIONS

The following dozen drives are enough to get you started. Players wanting to create their own can do so with the GM's permission, using the guidelines provided previously and with these drives as examples. The key thing to remember with drive is it encourages characters to act. Avoid drives that encourage characters to do nothing or sit on the sidelines.

ACHIEVER

You want to accomplish things for which you'll be recognized. Some achievers want success, fame, and accolades, while others are looking to leave a memorable legacy, but all achievers are keenly aware that life is short and everyone has the same number of hours in a day. It's how you spend them that matters.

Your quality is ambition, knowing what you want and going after it. Your downfall is obsession, becoming too focused on your goals and unable to see anything (or anyone) else.

TALENT: Expertise or Inspire

IMPROVEMENT: Membership, Resources, or Reputation

BUILDER

You want to create something lasting. It might be an institution, an organization, a movement, a community, or something else. Unlike the Achiever, who is all about the accomplishment, you're all about the end product, and you're willing to do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, to get there.

Your quality is organization, being able to figure out how to structure things so they work. Your downfall is stubbornness, becoming so caught up in structure that you lose flexibility.

TALENT: Maker or Oratory

IMPROVEMENT: Membership, Relationship, or Resources

CAREGIVER

You're here to help as many people as you can, however you can. You might not be able to help everyone, but you're certainly going to try, and you have a difficult time turning away from anyone in need.

Your quality is compassion, naturally feeling and responding to the needs of others. Your downfall is self-sacrifice, a tendency to place the needs of others above your own.

TALENT: Emergency Care or Inspire

IMPROVEMENT: Membership, Relationship, or Reputation

ECSTATIC

Life is a banquet—and most poor suckers are starving to death! Not you, though, because you aim to squeeze every drop of juice out of your limited time in this world, and you encourage your friends to join you, although you're willing to go off on your own if none of them do.

Your quality is a zest for life and a willingness to find enjoyment in things and try new experiences. Your downfall is an irresponsible tendency to overdo enjoyment at the expense of more practical matters.

TALENT: Attractive or Party Animal

IMPROVEMENT: Resources, Relationship, or Reputation

JUDGE

Life is all about making decisions and exercising good judgment. You believe in finding out as much as you can about things so you can make informed and carefully considered judgements about them.

Your quality is discernment; you pay close attention to details and information. Your downfall is aloofness, a tendency to distance yourself from the world to remain objective.

TALENT: Knowledge or Observation

IMPROVEMENT: Membership, Resources, or Reputation

LEADER

Somebody needs to stand up, take responsibility, and get things done. You might relish the opportunity to lead or accept it reluctantly but, either way, you're a natural at it, and it's hard to resist an opportunity to take charge.

Your quality is responsibility. You make decisions and live with the outcome.. Your downfall is isolation, the distance imposed by your role as leader, which can affect relationships and how close you can be with people under your command.

TALENT: Command or Inspire

IMPROVEMENT: Health, Membership, or Reputation

NETWORKER

You're here to make friends, because it's all about who you know. You may be a genuine "people person" with a knack



for making a good first impression, or a first-class manipulator who understands how to get what you want from others.

Your quality is gregariousness. You are good with people and at home in social situations, and tend to seek them out. Your downfall is that you are overwrought. You tend to get caught up in social conflicts, and think finding just the right person is the solution to every problem, making you prone to overly complex schemes.

TALENT: Contract or Intrigue

IMPROVEMENT: Membership, Relationship, or Reputation

PENITENT

You screwed up. Maybe you didn't mean to, or maybe you did and should have known better. Whatever the case, you're trying to make it right. You may or may not want anyone else to know about your past mistakes, but what happens next is what really matters.

Your quality is humility. You have fallen low and learned from it, so you're not quick to judge or to accept accolades. Your downfall is guilt, as your misdeeds sometimes haunt you and you feel any new missteps heavily.

TALENT: Living on the Fringe or Theory and Practice

IMPROVEMENT: Health, Membership, or Relationship

PROTECTOR

There are a lot of threats out in the world, and you guard against them. Exactly what you consider a threat, and who or what you are protecting from it might vary, but the most important thing is you are not going to stand idly by when you could act.

Your quality is devotion to those under your protection and to your ideals, no matter what challenges lie in your path. Your downfall is recklessness when it comes to putting yourself (and others) in harm's way to protect your charges.

TALENT: Misdirection or Protect

IMPROVEMENT: Health, Membership, or Reputation

REBEL

Authority needs to be questioned. You may think all forms of authority are inherently oppressive and need to be brought down, or just that healthy institutions require periodic house cleanings—or purging fires. Whatever the case, you threw out doing things “by the book” some time ago.

Your quality is innovation, the ability to look at things from angles no one else has considered, and to do things your own way. Your downfall is defiance, a dislike of conformity, conventionality, and doing what you're told.

TALENT: Expertise or Improvisation

IMPROVEMENT: Relationship, Reputation, or Resources

SURVIVOR

Life is hard, but you are going to make it, no matter what. You may have already had to struggle to survive early in life,

or you are preparing for the struggle you know is coming—whether anyone else believes it or not.

Your quality is preparedness. You survive by being ready for anything and knowing what to do in any situation. Your downfall is cynicism. You are always anticipating and preparing for the worst, making it difficult for you to see the good in anything.

TALENT: Living on the Edge or Tactical Awareness

IMPROVEMENT: Health, Reputation, or Resources

VISIONARY

You have a vision to share with the world, whether the world wants it or not. This vision might be your unique artistic expression, a personal philosophy, secret knowledge, or religious or spiritual gnosis, but you're driven to share it, regardless of the risks.

Your quality is faith in your vision and its ability to reach the right people, given the opportunity. Your downfall is zealotry, where your vision becomes confused with absolute and unwavering truth, which might lead you to offer it where it is unwelcome or to try and eliminate other visions you see as false or opposing.

TALENT: Artistry, Oratory, or Performance

IMPROVEMENT: Relationship, Reputation, or Resources

STEP 6

RESOURCES & EQUIPMENT

To prepare your character for adventure, determine the character's Resources based on profession with modifiers from background, talents, and drive, and then use those Resources to kit your character out with equipment beyond what's provided by the character's chosen profession.

RESOURCES

Modern AGE characters have a Resources score, a composite of material resources and available cash, credit, and income that works much like other ability scores. The Resources score serves as the basis for Resources tests, used to purchase goods and services.

STARTING RESOURCES

A character's starting Resources score is based on social class and background, possibly adjusted by profession or talents. Over the course of play, a character's Resources score may decrease from major expenditures and increase as the character gains levels. A character's Resources score can never fall below -2, but there is no effective limit to how high the Resources score can increase.

Since Resources is an abstract concept, it's sometimes difficult to determine exactly how materially well-off a character is. To get a general sense, check the **Resources Score** table.



THE RESOURCES TEST

Resources tests are used to determine what you can afford and what goods and services you can reasonably access. The Resources score reflects a character's buying power. Every item has a target number to purchase, also called its cost. To purchase an item, make a Resources test against the item's cost.

A Resources test is just like a regular ability test: a 3d6 roll plus your current Resources score. If your test result equals or exceeds the cost of an item, you successfully purchase it. If you fail, you can't afford it at this time.

RESOURCES TEST: 3D6 + RESOURCES SCORE VS. COST (PURCHASE TARGET NUMBER)

- **AUTOMATIC SUCCESS:** If your current Resources score, plus 4, is equal to or greater than an item's cost, you don't need to make a Resources test; you automatically succeed. The cost of the item is negligible for you. If you have Resources +5, for example, you can purchase items with a routine or easy cost (cost target number 7-9) without a test. The GM may set reasonable limits on this, as it's not meant to represent the ability to buy an infinite number of low-cost items.
- **RESOURCE DEPLETION:** If you successfully purchase something with a cost greater than your current Resources score, plus 10, your Resources score decreases (see **Depleting Resources** for details).

RESOURCES SCORE

RESOURCES SCORE	FINANCIAL CONDITION
-2 to +0	Impoverished or in debt
+1 to +2	Struggling
+3 to +5	Middle class
+6 to +8	Affluent
+9 to +10	Wealthy
+11 to +13	Rich
+14 or higher	Very rich

- **PURCHASING AND TIME:** Purchasing items with a cost of 13 or higher may take additional time, as the GM sees fit, for you to locate the item(s) and arrange the deal.
- **TRY AGAIN?:** You can try again if you fail a Resources test, but not until you have spent an additional number of hours equal to the cost of the item "shopping around" and looking for other options and venues.
- **MATERIAL SUPPORT:** One character can help another buy something, so long as the assisting character's Resources score is equal to or greater than that of the purchasing character. In this case, you provide the other person with a +2 bonus on the Resources test to buy that item. If the item's cost is above your current Resources score +10, you also deplete your Resources to reflect the financial assistance you've given.

DEPLETING RESOURCES

Any time you purchase something with a cost greater than your current Resources score +10, your Resources score decreases by 1, representing a significant depletion of your available Resources. Your Resources score decreases only if you successfully purchase something. If you attempt a Resources test and fail, your Resources score is unaffected.

GAINING RESOURCES

The GM may grant a Resources award at the end of an adventure where the characters acquired wealth. This is generally a +1 increase in Resources, although the GM may

award a +2 increase in cases where the characters acquired a significant windfall. Further increases in Resources depend on the mode of the game:

- **GRITTY:** Resources increase only when characters receive a Resources award from the GM.
- **PULPY:** Characters can restore 1 point of depleted Resources upon gaining a level, but otherwise gain Resources only from GM awards.
- **CINEMATIC:** Characters gain +1 Resources upon gaining a level, as they establish their reputation and connections. This is in addition to Resources awards given by the GM.

SELLING THINGS

In some cases, characters may want to sell a valuable item. To do so, first determine the item's cost, as if purchasing it. The item's value is equal to its Resources - 1. If the item's value is greater than the seller's Resources, selling the item grants a +1 increase in Resources. If its value is 6 or more greater than the seller's Resources, selling the item grants a +2 increase.

This assumes the item is sold legally. Selling something illegally—either because of how it was obtained, or because it is illegal by nature—reduces its value by an additional -1 (so cost -2), and the GM may require a Communication (Bargaining) test for the seller to avoid the notice of the authorities. Failure means the sale does not go through, and the character may have to evade arrest!

The GM should handle the acquisition and sale of valuables acquired from the characters' adventures with a Resources award rather than managing the value and sale of individual items. This minimizes bookkeeping and streamlines gameplay.

EQUIPMENT

Modern AGE characters start out with certain basic equipment and possessions, as follows:

- Ordinary clothing.
- The essential tools or items of the character's profession (if any).
- Any weapon the character has an associated focus or talent for using.

Beyond these basics, available equipment and the character's overall lifestyle—things like a home, vehicle, and other daily necessities—are determined by Resources as related to the setting. Some items, particularly military-grade equipment, may be limited in terms of availability. See **Equipment** in CHAPTER 4 for additional information.

EXAMPLE

Steve's character has Resources 4. It's not exactly an extravagant lifestyle, but he makes ends meet. Steve determines that he maintains a small office in a less desirable part of town for his investigation business, with a spare room that doubles as his bedroom. He's got an outdated computer and a cheap cell phone.



STEP 7

DERIVED STATISTICS

Calculate your character's Health, Defense, and Toughness scores based on ability scores and modifiers from profession and talents.

HEALTH

Health measures how much damage your character can sustain before being taken out of a fight and put in danger of dying (see **CHAPTER 3** for more on this). *Modern AGE* characters have a starting Health score based on profession, which may improve as they advance in level (see **Advancement** in this chapter).

DEFENSE

Defense measures how difficult it is to hit your character with attacks in combat. The higher your Defense score, the better. Determine your character's Defense as follows:

$$\text{DEFENSE} = 10 + \text{DEXTERITY}$$

Some characters gain bonuses to Defense from talents.

TOUGHNESS

Fairly few people wear armor in a modern context, unless they're police or soldiers going into a combat situation. Indeed, wearing armor outside of those situations is more likely to earn *Modern AGE* characters unwanted attention from the selfsame police and soldiers!

Modern AGE characters have a Toughness score equal to their Constitution score (but never a negative number), which can reduce the damage from some attacks. In Gritty games, Toughness reduces only stun damage. In Pulpy games, Toughness reduces all stun and impact damage, including impact wound damage, but not ballistic wound damage. In Cinematic games, Toughness reduces all damage except for penetrating wound damage. See **Damage Source and Type** in **CHAPTER 2** for details on the different sources of damage. The benefits of Toughness are summarized on the **Toughness** table.

TOUGHNESS	
MODE	TOUGHNESS REDUCES...
Gritty	Stun damage only
Pulpy	Stun damage and Impact wound damage
Cinematic	All damage, except for Penetrating wound damage

If your character also wears armor, see **Armor** in **CHAPTER 4** for the bonus that armor grants to the character's Toughness for different sources of damage.

WHAT ABOUT POWERS?

Some *Modern AGE* games may include extraordinary powers, detailed in **CHAPTER 6**. Since these powers are optional, and it is up to the GM how and when characters acquire them, they are not a default part of character creation. See the **Gaining Powers** section of **CHAPTER 6** for details on how characters might acquire them, and consult with your GM as to the availability of extraordinary powers in the game. If any are available at character creation, the GM will let you know your options.

EXAMPLE

Steve's character's starting Health is 15 based on his profession and Constitution 0. His Defense is 13 (10 plus his Dexterity of 3). He doesn't have any Toughness, due to his Constitution of 0, but then Steve figures he's more about thinking his way out of things rather than getting into a lot of fights.

SPEED

As humans, default *Modern AGE* characters possess a Speed score equal to 10 + Dexterity. You can choose a lower Speed to represent a mobility impairment or notably short stature, if that's part of who your character is, but this is entirely your choice. **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES** discusses how your character's Speed translates into movement during action scenes. Worn armor reduces your character's Speed by its penalty.

STEP 8

GOALS, TIES, & RELATIONSHIPS

A character's drive is what moves them forward. The character's goals are what they are moving toward. Characters also have ties to other people. Consider your character's goals and what ties they might have with other characters in the group.

GOALS

Modern AGE characters can have any number of goals, but generate up to three for your character to start. Goals are often connected with a character's drive, or at least their drive is how they tend to pursue their goals. Ideally, goals should help define what is important to your character, and offer the GM inspiration for stories and ways to involve your character in adventures.

When considering goals, try for a mix of short- and long-term ones. Short-term goals give the GM ways to involve your character in adventures right away, such as by looking for a specific person, thing, or piece of information. Long-term goals may take years to achieve, and can be played out over much of the campaign, depending on how they're set up. This might include things like bringing down a powerful nemesis,



making a scientific breakthrough, or achieving tremendous success in a professional field.

If you can't come up with any goals for your character right away, that's all right. Think about the character's goals during the first few game sessions. As you play your character, ideas for goals may suggest themselves. If you can, come up with just one short-term goal for your character to follow initially until you think of some others.

EXAMPLE

Now Steve starts considering who his character really is and what his goals might be. He's decided the character is an ex-cop framed by factions within his old department and terminated by an internal investigation. His immediate goal is making it as a private investigator. Long-term goals include delving deeper into the case that got him canned and rooting out the conspiracy within the police department, which goes to deeper and stranger places than he could anticipate.

TIES

While some roleplaying games start the characters off not knowing each other, thrown together by circumstances, the group's cohesion is stronger if they have some pre-existing ties. This doesn't necessarily mean the characters all know each other, or even like each other, before the game begins—just that there is something tying them together. For example,

two characters might have served in the same theater of war, or worked for the same employer, even if they didn't meet then. Characters might be distant family members, have a shared enemy, or encountered the same strange phenomenon. Of course, it's equally possible for two or more characters to be old acquaintances with a deep history.

Try and come up with at least one tie for each of the other player characters. The group's ties will evolve and grow during play, but these ties set some useful starting points.

EXAMPLE

A background with the police force and a short time as a P.I. offers some opportunities for Steve's character to have ties with the other player characters. He may have worked with some of them or, given their less-than-legal inclinations, he may have investigated or even arrested them!

RELATIONSHIPS

After defining your background, profession, drive, ties, and goals, you should have an idea of the sort of people your character knows and how they know them. If these connections are especially strong, they constitute a capital-R Relationship. The strength of your Relationship—good, bad, or peculiar—is measured by the Intensity of its Bond. At the beginning of play, your character gains Relationship slots; each is worth one rank of Relationship Intensity. As your character advances, they acquire more slots to build new Relationships

or strengthen existing Bonds. Your character can have many more friends, enemies, and other social connections than they have Relationship slots, but Relationship slots represent especially strong instances of these.

Your character starts out with a number of Relationship slots equal to their Communication ability, with a minimum of 1 slot. Add any slots gained during character creation to this base. You may devote these to one or more Bonds, but at 1st level, no Bond can have more than 2 ranks of Intensity. Thus, if you started with 3 ranks of Intensity, you'd have to define one Intensity 2 Relationship and one Intensity 1 Relationship, or three Intensity 1 Relationships. You may set up Relationships with other player characters with their players' permission, or with NPCs the GM specifies or creates with your help.

Relationships confer the ability to perform exceptional deeds that support them. For the full rules, see CHAPTER 10. For now, just figure out how many slots your character has, and the Intensity they will devote to each Relationship, before thinking about specific Bonds.

EXAMPLE

Steve's character has Communication 1 and didn't acquire any other Relationship slots, so that leaves one slot to fill. Steve has decided that his character has a prosthetic arm, and he knows that Alejandro is making a character with scientific and mechanical ability—someone who might be able to fix and maintain his prostheses. With Alejandro's permission, Steve decides that Alejandro's character helps him this way, and that it involves enough trust to be measured with an Intensity 1 Bond.

STEP 9

NAME & DESCRIPTION

Lastly, what is your character's name and how do they look? Although this step is the end of character creation, don't make it an afterthought. You're likely to be hearing your character's name a lot, and the right name can really help bring your character to life. Likewise, paint a picture with your character's appearance that tells the other players something about who that character is. You might want to focus on including at least one or two memorable details.

EXAMPLE

Steve fleshes out the remainder of his character's details. He decides that his character is originally from Canada, but moved to the States to pursue a failed romantic relationship (a potential future character tie), became a cop in the campaign city, and worked there for a few years before running afoul of the conspiracy that led to his dismissal. Steve names his dogged investigator Jeff Mackintosh and describes him as an Anglo Canadian man who'd be good-looking if he ever cleaned up his somewhat rumpled appearance, which demonstrates Mackintosh's attitude following his recent downturn of fortune.

STUNT SELECTIONS

While this isn't a formal part of character creation, at some point after determining your character's abilities, focuses, and talents (acquired by background, profession, and drive) you should look at CHAPTER 5: STUNTS and see which stunts you would especially like your character to use during the game. These stunts should be related to your character's focuses and talents. Note their names, costs, and effects, and you'll have a short list of stunts to call on when the possibility arises.

Nevertheless, you can still use any stunt that fits your action, even if you didn't put it on your list. Making your stunt list is just to help you pick stunts during the game, not a limitation on what you can choose.

MEMBERSHIPS

At character creation, you may pick up ranks of Membership in an organization. Not all characters have Membership ranks unless the GM decides they do. Membership confers various privileges depending on the organization. If you have Membership ranks, the GM will let you know which organizations might take your character in, and together, you'll develop the story of how the character got involved with one of them.

CHAPTER 10 contains the rules for Memberships.

CONVICTION (OPTIONAL)

Whether it's luck, talent, or sheer determination, heroes often have something setting them apart from everyone else, allowing them to perform amazing feats under the most difficult circumstances. In *Modern AGE*, this is Conviction. It is an optional system GMs can include to give heroes an extra edge—and throw even greater challenges at them!

GAINING CONVICTION

Modern AGE characters start out with 3 points of Conviction at level 1 and gain an additional point every odd-numbered level thereafter (3rd, 5th, and so on). NPCs and creatures do not have or use Conviction.

USING CONVICTION

Unless otherwise noted, spending a Conviction point is a free action and can be done at any time. You may spend only 1 Conviction point per round, however. You can spend Conviction for any of the following benefits:

- **DODGE:** You can spend a Conviction point to gain the benefit of a Defend action (+2 to your Defense for the round) without expending an action to do so.
- **RECOVER:** You can spend a Conviction point to immediately regain 1d6 + Constitution + level in Health as a free action. At the GM's discretion, you can likewise spend a Conviction point to immediately shake off some

debilitating or limiting effect, such as being temporarily blinded, stunned, or in pain.

- **RE-ROLL:** One Conviction point allows you to re-roll any one roll of the dice you make, keeping the second result. This generally means re-rolling a failed test in hopes of success, although you can also re-roll damage rolls. You cannot spend a Conviction point to re-roll dice rolls made by the GM or other players, including tests made in secret for your character. Use the second roll's result to determine if a test generates any stunt points.
- **SURGE:** Spending a Conviction point can give you an additional major or minor action during the round. Using this extra action does not change your place in the initiative order.
- **SURVIVE:** Spending a Conviction point automatically stabilizes a dying character at 0 Health. That character will not die unless an enemy deliberately takes a major action to deliver a killing blow. The stabilized character can recover Health normally.

REGAINING CONVICTION

Characters regain expended Conviction by doing something in accordance with the different sides of their drive, either their quality or their downfall. The GM decides when an action is appropriate to gain the Conviction point, although players can suggest relevant moments.

Note that a character can follow *either* their quality or downfall to regain Conviction, and the GM may occasionally use this to put temptation in a character's path. A character with temper as their downfall might act in accordance with their drive by getting angry or even violent. They'd get a point of Conviction, but would also have to deal with the consequences of their actions.

The GM can also award characters Conviction for a particularly impressive success or achievement in the adventure that renews their confidence and determination. Overcoming a difficult challenge or solving a complex puzzle might give the heroes a burst of hope in the form of renewed Conviction. The same may be true for guidance, advice, or comfort offered by important NPCs. The GM chooses when to do this, but it should happen only once or twice in an adventure at most, and may not occur at all in some adventures.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

XP TOTAL	LEVEL	XP TOTAL	LEVEL
0	1	25,000	11
2,000	2	28,000	12
4,000	3	32,000	13
6,000	4	36,000	14
8,000	5	40,000	15
10,000	6	44,000	16
13,000	7	48,000	17
16,000	8	52,000	18
19,000	9	56,000	19
22,000	10	60,000	20

ADVANCEMENT

As *Modern AGE* characters adventure and overcome challenges, they advance in level, representing the sum of their experiences. Level advancement gives characters opportunities to improve their abilities and talents, and possibly other game elements.

GAINING LEVELS

There are two ways to handle level advancement in the game: achievements and experience points.

With achievements, the GM simply decides when the characters have accomplished enough to gain a level. This usually happens after a major milestone in the game, such as the end of an adventure or plot arc, but an achievement can happen during a game session, especially if there is a lot of in-game downtime.

With experience points, the GM awards a certain number of points to each character at the end of each adventure or game session. When these experience points (XP) accumulate to a sufficient total, the characters advance to the next level, as shown on the Experience Point table. GMs can award fewer or more experience points to slow or accelerate advancement during play. Rules and guidelines for awarding experience points are in CHAPTER 10.

LEVELING IMPROVEMENTS

When characters gain a level, they gain various improvements:

HEALTH

Health increase during advancement varies by game mode as follows.

GRITTY: Character Health does not improve from level 1.

PULPY: Add 1 + your character's Constitution score to Health at each level, with a minimum increase of 1 Health per level.

CINEMATIC: Your character gains 1d6 + Constitution score (again, a minimum increase of 1) in Health at levels 1–10, and then just 1 + Constitution score at levels 11–20, with a minimum increase of 1 Health per level.

DEFENSE & TOUGHNESS

Defense and Toughness increases during advancement vary by game mode as follows.

GRITTY: These scores don't improve.

PULPY: Add 1 to either Defense or Toughness at level 4, then the other at level 8, alternating increases every 4 levels.

CINEMATIC: Increase both Defense and Toughness by 1 every 4 levels, starting at level 4.

GAME MODES: GRITTY, PULPY, AND CINEMATIC

The GM will tell you if you're playing the game in Gritty mode, Pulpy mode, or Cinematic mode. The mode the GM chooses is based on the type of campaign you'll be playing in, and adjusts the rules for your character. In Gritty mode, characters are easily injured and take more time to recover. In Pulpy mode, characters are a bit tougher than would be "realistic," and in Cinematic mode, characters are able to take a beating and perform amazing feats. The following table summarizes what this means for your character. Note two things, however. First, game mode affects many other rules throughout this book, including combat and stunts. Second, the GM can decide to run a "mixed mode" game, where different rules use different modes. When in doubt, check with the GM.

GAME MODES				
GAME MODE	HEALTH ADVANCEMENT	TOUGHNESS AND DEFENSE ADVANCEMENT	TOUGHNESS APPLIES TO:	RESOURCES
Gritty	No improvement after level 1	No improvement after level 1	Stun damage (all forms)	GM awards only
Pulpy	1 + Constitution (minimum 1) per level after 1	+1 to Defense or Toughness, alternating every 4 levels from level 4 onward	All stun damage and impact wound damage	Replenish 1 lost Resources point each level, and GM awards
Cinematic	1d6 + Constitution (minimum 1) per level after 1 until level 10; 1 + Constitution (minimum 1) per level after level 10	+1 to Defense and Toughness at level 4 and every 4 levels after	All damage except penetrating wound damage	+1 Resources per level beyond level 1, and GM awards

RELATIONSHIP SLOTS

You get a new Relationship slot at levels 4, 8, 12, 16, and 20. You also acquire a new Relationship slot every time your Communication ability increases by 1, as long as the resulting ability rating is a positive number above 0. You may use these slots immediately to increase the Intensity of an existing Bond by 1 per slot, or you may keep these slots open until events during the game prompt you to develop a new Relationship.

CONVICTION

In games using the optional Conviction rules, characters gain an additional point of Conviction at level 3, and another point at every odd-numbered level.

ABILITY ADVANCEMENT

You get one advancement to spend on one ability of your choice. You cannot advance the same ability two levels in a row. The number of advancements needed to improve your ability's score by 1 depends on the new score you're looking to obtain. For scores up to 5, it requires one advancement. For abilities from 6 to 8, it requires two. For abilities from 9 to 12, it requires three. You get no benefit from advancements until you've gained enough for the new score, so keep track of advancements spent that have not yet increased the ability score.

ABILITY FOCUS

You can choose one new ability focus for your character. You cannot choose a new focus for the same ability two levels in a row. Starting at level 11, you can choose a focus you already have and increase its bonus from +2 to +3.

TALENT IMPROVEMENT

You can choose a new novice talent for your character, or gain a degree in a talent your character already has.

SPECIALIZATIONS

At level 4, 6, 8, 12, 14, and 16, you may acquire specializations through degrees in specialization talents. At each of these levels, you can purchase a degree in a specialization in addition to the degree you gain in a normal talent.

TAKING STOCK

When your character gains a new level, take stock of your character's goals. Have any been achieved? Have any changed from the last level? Based on events since the last level, does your character have any new goals? A new level is a good time to take stock.

EXAMPLE

After an initial adventure with his new associates, Jeff Mackintosh has earned a new level! Steve looks over the checklist and improves his character's Health (by 1, since it's a Pulpy game and Mackintosh has Con 0). He gets one ability advancement, which he decides to put into Constitution to improve the investigator's long-term chances, giving him another point of Health and a point of Toughness. He can choose a new ability focus and either improve an existing talent by one degree or choose a novice degree in a new talent. Steve decides to add Intelligence (Investigation) — a natural for Mackintosh — and to improve his Improvisation talent to Expert. Recent events have helped to solidify Jeff Mackintosh's reputation as a private investigator, and have already offered some inroads into the corruption of his old department, which Jeff plans to pursue, wherever they may lead.



BASIC RULES

Now that you made a *Modern AGE* character and learned a bit about the game, it's time to see how everything comes together in play. First, this chapter gives some practical advice on being a player. It follows up with the basic rules of play, giving you what you need to know when you sit down at the table. Here you will find rules for ability tests, narrative and action time, exploration, social, and action scenes (which include combat), stunts, and healing. If you feel a bit overwhelmed after reading this chapter, don't worry. You don't need to memorize all this to play. The GM is there to help adjudicate the rules, and you'll pick things up along the way.

PLAYER BASICS

If you've never played a roleplaying game before, though, you may still be wondering what it means to be a player. Before getting into the nitty-gritty of ability tests and running action scenes, it's worth taking a step back and reviewing a few basics.

Your character sheet is a good place to start. You'll find a character sheet at the back of the book and you can photocopy this as needed (or download it from www.greenronin.com). The character sheet is the cornerstone of your PC. Bring it to each game session. Some players leave their character sheets with, or make copies for, the GM to make sure this isn't a problem.

You should also ensure that your character sheet is up to date. It's up to you to track Health, experience points, ability increases, Resources, and other details. When you show up at a

session, your character should be ready to go. Health is going to change the most, going up and down as your character gets into fights and heals up. You may want to track this on scratch paper so you don't have to constantly erase and write new totals on your sheet during play. If your character is wounded at the end of a session, be sure to note current Health for next time.

You'll also want to bring dice (at least 3d6, with a different color for the Stunt Die), a pencil, some scratch paper for notes, and any drinks and snacks you might want during play. You might also use tokens or miniatures to represent your character. If you use the most common types of these, it's convenient to make one inch on a map equal two yards in the game..

PLAYING ADVENTURES

During a session, you'll play your character through an adventure: a story where your character is one of the main characters. It's the GM's job to present the adventure, and yours to play a leading role in its story. An adventure is a series of related scenes, often called encounters. Each encounter builds on the last. Some adventures reach a climax and conclusion in one play session; others may require a few to finish, and lead to future adventures, as part of a series of linked stories called a campaign. Over time, your character grows more competent and might change as a person. The GM helps you represent this by either granting a new character level periodically or by awarding experience points at the end of each session. See **Advancement** in **CHAPTER 1**. Rules for experience points can be found in **CHAPTER 10: REWARDS**.

THE STUNT DIE AND STUNT POINTS

You always roll three dice when taking an ability test: two dice of one color or style, and one die of another. The off-colored die is known as the Stunt Die, and it has several uses in the game system. It is used to generate stunt points (SP), to measure degrees of success, and to break ties. When you see a reference to the Stunt Die, just remember it's the "odd die out" in an ability test.

When doubles come up on certain successful tests, this generates SP. By "doubles," we mean you roll the same number on any two of your three dice. If your roll succeeded in the first place, you can then use stunt points to pull off special maneuvers, or earn extra benefits above and beyond simple success. Stunt points are often used primarily in combat encounters to keep fights dynamic and fun, but you can also use stunt points in exploration and social encounters. Check out **CHAPTER 5: STUNTS** for more information on those options.

As the scenes where story action takes place, encounters are the building blocks of the adventure. There are three basic types of encounters in *Modern AGE*:

- **ACTION ENCOUNTERS:** These are classic action scenes where characters defy immediate physical dangers. They might battle foes, try to escape a collapsing building, or chase a fleeing suspect through a crowded street—or all the above at the same time!
- **EXPLORATION ENCOUNTERS:** These scenes delve into the world, its puzzles, and dangers that don't so much jump out at you as lie in wait. They include such challenges as searching a crime scene for clues, overcoming natural hazards, avoiding traps, solving puzzles, or even browsing online sources.
- **SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS:** These scenes feature conversation, intrigue, interpersonal drama, romance, and tense interrogations. Characters sweat out suspects in police interview rooms, or blend in at sophisticated parties—or maybe they're the ones sweating under interrogation, and they don't want to blend in, but make a scene.

Each type of encounter has different challenges and rewards. Some require a lot of dice rolling, but others don't need any. Different players may prefer different types of encounters. One may live for the thrill of combat, another for the challenge of problem solving, and a third for getting to know the people who populate the story. A good adventure uses all three types of encounters to mix things up and provide something for everyone.

ABILITY TESTS

During a game session, the GM sets the scene, telling you what people, places, and things are present. The players decide what their characters do, interacting with each other and the elements the GM described. As a player, you narrate the actions of your character. You might say, "I use the computers at the library to find the address for the secret rave." The GM tells you the results of your action, and may introduce new elements into the scene. For example, if you (as your character) looked for that rave, the GM might respond with, "You search for 10 minutes, but all you do is accidentally open a link with a very noisy video on autoplay. An angry librarian rushes in to confront you." Then again, the GM might say, "You quickly find the symbol from the rave leaflet in an image search, and see that it's graffiti on the

wall of an old factory near the docks." The exact response depends on what your character is trying to do, and whether they succeed or fail.

HOW DO YOU FIGURE THAT OUT?

If it's an action with little chance of failure, or one someone with the character's history (reflected in their background, profession, focuses, or talents) can routinely do, and nobody's trying to stop them, they succeed. Anybody with the cash can buy a bus ticket, and any mechanic can fix cars all day long. Even if there's a chance of failure, if it's not critical to the story, you don't necessarily need to roll dice; the GM can just decide if you succeed or fail.

SO, WHEN DO THE DICE COME OUT?

That happens whenever a character's action is important to the story and there's a chance it might fail. That's when it's time to roll an ability test.

Ability tests are the heart of the Adventure Game Engine, and you'll make several in each game session. To perform an ability test, roll three six-sided dice (3d6), all at the same time. You want to roll high to succeed! One of the dice should be a different color or otherwise visually distinct from the other two. This special die is called the Stunt Die (see **The Stunt Die and Stunt Points** sidebar). Add the numbers on all three dice together. Next, add the ability you're testing (such as Strength to lift something). Add another 2 if you have an applicable ability focus (such as Might, the Strength focus that applies to lifting). The GM consults the rules and decides which ability and focus apply. The final number is your test result. In other words:

$$\text{TEST RESULT} = 3\text{d}6 + \text{ABILITY} + \text{FOCUS}$$

Even if you have several focuses that could apply, you can use only one on a test. You can never gain the benefits of more than one focus on an ability test.

EXAMPLE

Amy is trying to vault over a fence while running. The GM decides this is a Dexterity test. Amy's player rolls 3d6 and gets a 10 (3 + 3 + 4). She then adds her character's Dexterity of 3, and another 2 because she has an applicable focus (Acrobatics). Amy's final test result is 15 (10 + 3 + 2).

When *Modern AGE* books refer to ability tests, they use the following format: Ability (Focus). Intelligence (Chemistry) and Constitution (Swimming) are examples of this format. In most cases, it does not matter if you have the listed focus. You can still attempt the test; you just won't get the bonus a focus provides. Some tests demand specialized skill or knowledge, however, and those require you to have the focus to even attempt the test. If you don't have the required focus, you automatically fail. These tests note that the focus is required by using this format: Intelligence (Navigation required).

EXAMPLE

The scientist Indra and the brawler Amy acquire a folder with papers full of strange formulas. Naturally, they try to figure them out. The GM tells the players that the test will be Intelligence (Chemistry required). Indra has the Chemistry focus, so her player can make a test to see if she understands the papers. Amy does not have the Chemistry focus, so she has no hope of understanding the papers. It's gibberish to her.

USING TESTS

Once you know an ability test's result, you need to compare it against another number to determine whether you succeeded. The number you use depends on the type of test. The two most common types of test are basic tests and opposed tests, detailed below. CHAPTER 8 also discusses advanced tests, which are used in special situations. If the situation calls for an advanced test, the GM should guide you through the procedure.

BASIC TEST DIFFICULTY

A player rolls their basic test versus the target number picked by the GM. The GM sets the TN based on their assessment of the test's difficulty. The GM should take anything that influences that difficulty into account. For physical tests, heat, cold, the weight of an object that needs to be moved, or the size of a target that needs to be hit might all count. In social situations, a well-dressed character might do better than one in rags. The GM boils it all down into a basic difficulty. The following table provides benchmarks.

BASIC TEST DIFFICULTY

TEST DIFFICULTY	TARGET NUMBER
Routine	7
Easy	9
Average	11
Challenging	13
Hard	15
Formidable	17
Imposing	19
Nigh Impossible	21

MAKING A BASIC TEST

In a basic test, you roll against a fixed target number (TN) determined by the GM. Here's how you do it:

1. Tell the GM what you are trying to do.
2. The GM determines the ability to be used and an applicable focus (if any), and assigns a TN to the task based on its difficulty and the prevailing circumstances.
3. Roll your ability test, and figure out your total.
4. If the total is equal to or greater than the TN, your character succeeds at the action. If it's less than the target number, they fail. This may not have an effect, but in some situations, failure may have unfortunate consequences.

EXAMPLE

Amy is trying to climb a building in the middle of the night. The GM decides this is a Strength test, and Climbing is the obvious focus. The wall has many handholds, but they're hard to see in the dark, so the GM decides the target number is 13. Amy's player rolls and her test result is a 14. Despite the darkness, she skillfully climbs the wall. If Amy's player had failed, she might have been unable to find a way up—or she might have fallen and suffered an injury, depending on the GM's decision.

MAKING AN OPPOSED TEST

When your character directly competes with another, or against some dynamic opposing force (evil spirits in a supernatural campaign, for example) you must make an opposed test. In this type of test, both competitors roll. The highest result wins. Use the following procedure.

1. Tell the GM what you are trying to do.
2. The GM determines the ability and applicable focus (if any) to be used by you and your opponent. The GM might assign varying bonuses or penalties to each of your rolls which take your individual circumstances into account.
3. You and your opponent's player (or the GM) both roll ability tests and determine your respective totals.
4. Compare the test results. If you beat your opponent's test result, you win. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Stunt Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.

This same process can be used when more than two characters compete. In such cases, each participant's player makes an ability test. The highest result is the winner. Break ties as described in step 4. If you need rankings for each participant (such as for a five-person race) go in order of test result, breaking ties where necessary.

Not all participants need to use the same ability in an opposed test, though it often happens. Many situations pit one ability against another. A bodyguard trying to penetrate a spy's disguise, for example, would make a Perception (Seeing) test opposed by the spy's Communication (Disguise) test.

EXAMPLE

Amy made her climb, but notices a woman taking in the night air on the opposite side of the roof. She wants to quietly sneak to the trapdoor and slip into the building without the woman noticing. The GM decides that this is an opposed test of Amy's Dexterity (Stealth) vs. the woman's Perception (Hearing). Amy's player rolls a 10, and the GM rolls a 12 for the woman. The GM tells Amy's player that Amy kicked a potted plant she hadn't seen in the dark. As the sound echoes, the woman whips around and sees Amy – and Amy sees the woman's angry expression in the moonlight.

TESTS AND TIME

The GM decides how much time each test takes. This varies from a couple of seconds to an hour or more, depending on the action. Sliding a key card up your sleeve without anyone seeing is a minor action, taking but a moment, while asking around town about a specific person might eat up two hours.

While you most commonly roll tests when you initiate an action, sometimes you roll them as a reaction, or to resist something or someone. If pushed to the edge of a cliff, for example, you might roll a Dexterity test to avoid falling. If a psychic tries to bend your will, you might roll a Willpower test to resist. These sorts of reaction tests usually happen during another character's turn; taking them almost never uses up your time. When it comes around to your turn again, you get to perform actions as usual.

DEGREES OF SUCCESS

Most of the time, you only need to know if you succeeded in your ability test. Sometimes, however, it's important to know how well you succeeded. This is one of the uses of the Stunt Die. Check the dice on your ability test and note the number on the Stunt Die. If you are level 6 or higher and you have the focus involved with the test, you can add the focus to the Stunt Die when determining the degree of success. The higher the number, the more impressive your success is. A 1 on your Stunt Die means you barely pulled it off, while a 6 or better means you did it flawlessly. (Note that if you failed the test, the result of the Stunt Die is irrelevant.) The GM will then adjudicate what this success represents. It will often be a modifier to related rolls, but it might also provide additional information, more favorable reactions from GM-controlled characters, or sometimes just a flashier description. Your GM will tell you when the result of your Stunt Die is important.

EXAMPLE

Amy flees the scene of an attempted burglary and wants to stash her gear in an alley while she hides in plain sight at a bar. The police will be searching for clues, so the GM wants to know how good a job Amy did hiding her kit. Amy's player rolls a successful Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) test and gets a 5 on the Stunt Die. That means the gear is extremely well hidden. When police officers search the alley, the GM decides to represent this success by adding 2 to the test's TN. With the added difficulty, none of the cops find the kit, and Amy enjoys her drink in peace.

NARRATIVE TIME

It is the GM's job to track time in the game. It is divided into two types: narrative time and action time.

During play, it's rarely important to track time to the minute. If you tell the GM you want to climb a ridge to get a view of the surrounding countryside, the response might be, "It takes you about an hour to make the climb." Long distance travel is usually handled this way. The GM might say, "One week later you dock at the port." This sort of loose tracking is narrative time. A typical game will have sections of narrative time interspersed with frenzied action time. When the GM says, "Roll for initiative," it signals that the game is switching to action time.

ACTION TIME

When things get tense and it starts to matter who does what, and in which order, as fast as characters can throw a punch or jump a fence, action time begins. Action time is most commonly used to handle combat, but it has other uses as well. Anything that would be considered an action scene in a movie can be handled with action time.

While narrative time is loose, action time is more tightly defined. Once it begins, the GM tracks time in 15-second increments called rounds (so there are 4 rounds in a minute). During each round, every character or creature in the encounter gets an opportunity to participate (called a turn) during which they can take a certain number of actions (see **Taking Actions**). Once everyone has taken a turn, the round ends, and a new one begins.

When action time begins, the following procedure takes effect.

1. The GM says, "Roll for initiative." Action time is now in effect.
2. Each player makes an initiative roll for their respective characters. This is a Dexterity (Initiative) ability test with no target number – you can't fail at initiative. The GM rolls initiative for each major NPC and each group of minor NPCs (major NPCs act individually, while minor NPCs act together). Note that initiative rolls never generate stunt points, even when the dice score doubles.
3. The GM compares the test results of all the characters and arranges them into an initiative list from highest to lowest. This is the order that characters will take their turns in each round of the combat. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Stunt Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.
4. The character at the top of the initiative list takes a turn. On a turn, a character can take a major action and a minor action, or two minor actions. Once these actions are resolved, this character's turn is over.
5. The next character on the initiative list takes a turn.
6. Repeat step 5 until each character has taken a turn.
7. Once each character has taken a turn, the round ends and a new one begins. Continue steps 4–7 each round. Initiative does not need to be rolled each round. The



order remains set for the duration of the encounter. If new characters join the encounter, they roll initiative at the start of the round they appear, and get added to the initiative list.

8. When the encounter is finished, the GM declares that action time is over. Narrative time now resumes.

EXAMPLE

The brawler Amy, the ex-soldier Brian, and the scientist Indra are investigating an abandoned warehouse when four gang members attack them. The players each roll for initiative and the GM rolls once for these bruisers (as a group—they will act at the same time on the initiative list). Putting the test results in order, the GM writes down the initiative list: Brian 14, Amy 12, Gang Members 9, and Indra 8. Brian takes his turn first, followed by Amy, the gang members, and Indra. Then a new round begins with Brian taking another turn, and so on.

TAKING ACTIONS

When it's your turn in a round, you tell the GM what you want to do. On your turn, you may take a major action and a minor action.

- **MAJOR ACTION:** A major action asks the character to make a focused effort, often affecting something or someone that can resist them, and requires an ability test. Taking a swing at a thug, trying to pick a lock in the middle of a firefight, and providing first aid to a wounded ally are all examples of major actions.
- **MINOR ACTION:** A minor action is not as involved as a major action, but still represents a deliberate effort on the character's part and usually works automatically, with no test involved. Things like running toward a new position, fetching an item from a container, or reloading a semiautomatic pistol are all examples of minor actions.

You can take these in any order, and can take fewer actions if you like. You may also replace a major action with a second minor action. You can talk while taking your actions, but since a round is only 15 seconds long, what you can say is limited.

FREE ACTIONS

Some actions take a negligible amount of time. These are known as free actions, and they don't count toward your usual action limitations. The rules will note when something is a free action. The GM can always restrict the number of free actions you can take, if it wouldn't be realistic for you to perform them all on your turn.

ACTION DESCRIPTIONS

A list of the most common major and minor actions follows. You are not limited to these actions. If you want to do something else, just say so and the GM will adjudicate it. The GM may require you to roll an ability test depending on what you are trying to do.

Some variable actions may require a major, minor, or free action depending on how they are applied, such as reloading a ranged weapon, which relies on what kind of weapon you're shooting with, and using extraordinary abilities like magic or psychic powers, which depend on the power you're using. See **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT** and **CHAPTER 6: EXTRAORDINARY POWERS** for more information.

MAJOR ACTIONS

ALL-OUT ATTACK

You attack a single adjacent enemy in hand-to-hand combat, throwing the full weight of your Strength behind the attack. Doing this will compromise your ability to react to counterattacks, but if you hit, you do +1 damage. Whether or not the attack you make actually hits, you suffer -1 to your Defense until your next turn.

CHARGE

You move up to half your Speed (rounded down) in yards and finish with a melee attack against an adjacent enemy. If you moved at least 4 yards in a straight line before reaching your target, you gain a +1 bonus on your attack roll.

DEFEND

You concentrate on defending yourself this round. Until the beginning of your next turn, you gain a +2 bonus to your Defense.

FIRST AID

You provide quick medical assistance to an injured ally. You must be adjacent to your ally and have bandages ready. This is a TN 11 Intelligence (Medicine) test. If you succeed, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to the Stunt Die + your Intelligence (minimum 1 Health point). A character cannot benefit from another First Aid action until additional damage is taken.

GRITTY MODE: The First Aid action is TN 13, and only restores Health equal to the provider's Intelligence + 1 (minimum 1).

MELEE ATTACK

You attack one adjacent enemy in hand-to-hand combat. An enemy within 2 yards of you is considered adjacent.

RANGED ATTACK

You fire or throw a missile weapon at one visible enemy within range.

RUN/CHASE

On foot, you may move up to double your Speed in yards, sacrificing the ability to perform another action so you can move farther. You cannot take this action if you are prone (you'd need to use the Move action to stand up first). If riding a mount, you may urge it forward the same distance. On foot, on a mount, or in a vehicle, this action is required to participate in a chase. See **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES** for chase rules.

STUNT ATTACK

Instead of trying to damage an opponent, you focus on performing a specific action stunt, like attempting to subdue an enemy with a hold instead of hurting them. Roll an attack as usual. A successful attack awards you 1 automatic stunt point of a type appropriate for the attack, but inflicts no base damage. If you roll doubles, you earn additional stunt points as normal, and may choose a stunt that also damages your opponent, but only the damage from stunts applies. You may attempt Stunt Attacks against objects as well as opponents, though the GM may rule that some stunts do not apply. See **Attacking Objects** in this chapter for more information.

MINOR ACTIONS

ACTIVATE

This action allows you to start using certain abilities or items, such as an arcane power or an electronic device. When a vehicle has integrated weaponry (such as a machine gun built into a spy car) you use the Activate action to deliver attacks.

AIM

You take the measure of your opponent and plan your next strike. If your next action is a Melee Attack or Ranged Attack, you gain a +1 bonus on your attack roll.

GUARD UP

You balance action and defense. Add +1 or +2 (your choice) to your Defense until the end of this round. However, you suffer the amount you choose as a penalty to all tests you make—even opposed tests—for the remainder of the current round as well (unlike the more advantageous Defend action, which lasts until the beginning of your next turn). If you choose this minor action, you must do it before any major action you take this turn, and that major action cannot be Defend.

MOVE

You can move up to your Speed in yards and can combine this with actions like falling prone, standing up, mounting a horse, or climbing on a vehicle, but these actions consume half your Speed (rounded down).

PREPARE

When you take this action, you postpone your major action to use at a later point. You declare one major action and your choice to Prepare it. After you do so, the next person in initiative order acts, and so on, but at any time until your next turn, you can interrupt another character and take your prepared action immediately. If you don't use the prepared action by your next turn, you lose it.

PRESS THE ATTACK

You stand ready to pursue an enemy if they fall back or flee. You can take this action after successfully striking an enemy target with a melee attack (whether you inflict damage or

not). After you declare this action, if that enemy moves away from you, you may immediately move up to your Speed in yards in direct pursuit at no additional cost in actions. This occurs immediately after your foe's movement, before they can do anything else. Your movement need not bring you adjacent to that enemy if you can't go that fast. In that case, you simply move as far as you can before you stop. You can decide to forego some or all the movement this action allows when your enemy triggers it.

RAM

When operating a vehicle in motion, you use it to sideswipe or collide with a target. Your attack roll uses whatever focus you would use to operate the vehicle, and you may opt for a sideswipe or a full collision. Against another vehicle, a ram is a Stunt Attack that automatically generates 1 SP to put toward anti-vehicle stunts on a sideswipe, and 2 SP on a collision. A vehicle's Defense is equal to 10 + Handling rating + the ability used to operate it, based on its focus. Against living targets, a ram inflicts damage instead, and the attack is rolled against the target's Defense. See **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT** for more on ram types, damage by vehicle as modified by speed, and vehicle Handling.

READY

You draw a weapon, pull out a device, or otherwise ready an item that is stowed. As part of this action, you can put away something already in hand. You could holster a handgun and pull out a grenade, for example.

STAND FIRM

You lower your center of gravity and prepare to resist any effort to move you from the place where you stand. Until the beginning of your next turn, any enemy who uses the Skirmish or Knock Prone stunts to move you or knock you to the ground must succeed in an opposed test pitting their Strength (Might) vs. your choice of your Strength (Might) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) to move you or knock you prone. This test can only be attempted after your opponent spends the relevant stunt points, which are nevertheless expended to no effect if you win the test. An opponent who attempts to Skirmish you more than once as part of a single attack (to move you more than 2 yards) makes only a single opposed test against you, with all the skirmishing movement hanging in the balance.

VARIABLE ACTIONS

USE A POWER

You attempt to use a special ability granted by a talent, specialization, or any other source, including arcane spells or psychic powers. This may be a major action, minor action, or free action depending on the power and the use of any related stunt, and may require a specific ability test.

RELOAD

You reload a missile weapon. This may be a major action, minor action, or free action depending on the weapon, the stunts used, and your abilities.

COMBAT

Sometimes words are not enough, and conflicts can be settled only by bringing fists, blades, and bullets to bear. In a Cinematic game, combat can be an exhilarating experience, full of gravity-defying stunts and incredible fighting moves. In Gritty games, a fight can take you out in seconds. You'll want to avoid violence unless it's the only way to survive or protect what you hold dear. Pulp games stand between these extremes. A game's mode will determine whether combat is a common event or a terrifying rarity.

Like everything else in *Modern AGE*, the core of combat is the ability test. The most common type of test is called an attack roll, and is used to try and hit an opponent. This section shows you how to make attacks and inflict damage, and shows you what it takes to kill a character.

MAKING ATTACKS

There are two basic types of attack: melee and ranged (arcane or psychic attacks from special powers are covered in **CHAPTER 6: EXTRAORDINARY POWERS**). Both are handled the same way.

1. Start by picking a target. To make a melee attack, you must be adjacent to your opponent (within 2 yards of your target). To make a ranged attack, you must be able to see your target and be within range. See **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT** for more information about weapon ranges.
2. Make an attack roll. This is an ability test based on the weapon group of the weapon you are using (Fighting for heavy blades, for example, or Accuracy for firearms). This is modified by a focus, if applicable, and any other relevant bonuses (such as aiming, charging, special items, talents, etc.).
3. Your attack roll is a basic ability test. Your target number is your opponent's Defense.
4. If your test result is equal to or greater than your opponent's Defense, your attack hits.

EXAMPLE

It's Amy's turn. She sees a crooked cop 4 yards away and uses the Charge action to close the distance and attack. Amy's player makes an attack roll. This is a Fighting (Brawling) test, which is right up Amy's alley thanks to her experience as an MMA fighter. The roll is a 9, and she gets +3 for her Fighting ability, +2 because she has the Brawling focus, and another +1 for charging. Her test result for the attack roll totals 15 (9 + 3 + 2 + 1). This beats the bad cop's 11 Defense, so Amy lands a solid punch.

INFLECTING DAMAGE

Once you've hit an opponent, you inflict damage unless you're performing some special move, like a Stunt Attack. Your damage roll determines if you struck a telling blow or one that was glancing and ineffectual. Armor is impor-

tant here, as it protects the wearer from a certain amount of damage. The procedure for calculating damage follows.

1. Roll your weapon's damage and add any other relevant modifiers (such as talents and extraordinary powers). Add your Strength ability to damage with melee weapons, and your Perception ability to damage with ranged weapons. You can find the damage for each weapon in **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT**. Semiautomatic and automatic firearms also add a rate of fire bonus to the damage, as explained under Firearms later in this chapter.
2. Depending on the game's mode and your weapon's damage source and type (see **Damage Source and Type**), subtract your opponent's Toughness + Armor Rating to the extent that they'd apply to the attack's damage type. See the rules for Toughness in this chapter and **CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION**, and the different kinds of armor and their ratings in **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT**.
3. The result of steps 1 and 2 is your damage total. The GM deducts this amount from your opponent's current Health. Note that if your opponent is well armored, you may hit but inflict no damage.

PULPY/CINEMATIC: All attacks inflict +2 damage in these modes. This does not apply to hazards, stunts, and other sources of damage.

EXAMPLE

The brawler Amy just landed a devastating punch on a fascist agitator. The punch is an unarmed attack with a damage of 1d6 (the Striking Style talent increases her unarmed damage to 1d6), so Matthew rolls 1d6 and gets a 4. He adds Amy's Strength of 3. The thug is not wearing armor but has a Toughness of 2. The damage total is 5 (4 + 3 - 2), so the GM deducts 5 from the thug's Health.

DEFENSE & COVER

You usually don't have to take any action to avoid attacks. It's a reflex, and covered by your Defense score. You might take actions to modify your Defense, however, such as Defend, Guard Up, or a Stunt Attack that boosts your Defense.

Taking cover is a special case. In modern games, the prevalence of firearms makes it prudent to put something between yourself and their firing arcs. You can take cover in two ways. First, you can jump for cover using the Take Cover stunt as part of your attack or other major action. Second, you can move behind cover.

Cover provides a bonus to your Armor Rating against all ranged attacks except for those that inflict penetrating damage, and impose a penalty to your ranged attacks. Total cover, where you are completely hidden, has additional effects. (You can't use the Take Cover stunt to move into total cover.) See the **Cover** table for details.

As noted, cover provides no extra armor against penetrating damage. Furthermore, in Gritty games, the GM can decide that some forms of cover are too fragile to provide an armor bonus. In Pulpy or Cinematic games, even fragile cover works against attacks, but might be destroyed over one or more rounds.

DAMAGE SOURCE & TYPE

Damage comes from three different sources: impact, ballistic, and penetrating attacks.

Impact damage is inflicted by weapons and attacks that rely on sheer force, such as unarmed strikes and most hand-to-hand weapons. Most armor protects against impact damage, providing whatever Armor Rating is listed with the letter I, such as 4I for an Armor Rating of 4 against impact damage.

Ballistic damage usually comes from firearms or shrapnel, and cuts through armor not specifically designed to stop it. In most cases, only modern bullet-resistant armor protects against it, with an Armor Rating accompanied by the letter B (such as 6B for an Armor Rating of 6 against ballistic damage), noted in the armor's listing.

Penetrating damage ignores most armor and comes from special weapons, hazards, and abilities, such as raging open flames or the Called Shot stunt. Very few things reduce penetrating damage.

The GM can always use common sense when figuring out how well armor protects someone. For example, a poison may not list a damage source, but if you drink it, your armor obviously won't help you.

Furthermore, attacks can deal one of two types of damage: stun damage, which is non-lethal and leaves only bruises and broken egos, and wound damage, which breaks bones and can easily kill. Toughness reduces damage based on the game's mode, an attack's damage type, and its damage source.

COVER

RATING	ARMOR BONUS	RANGED ATTACK PENALTY
1	2	-1
2	3	-2
3	4	-3
Total	Can't be attacked at range*	Can't make ranged attacks*

* In Gritty mode, or when using attacks that do penetrating damage, attackers take a -3 penalty to ranged attack rolls but might shoot through your cover. You can shoot through your own cover in those situations, at a -3 penalty to your ranged attack.

BEING BULLETPROOF

Remember, Toughness works differently depending on the game's mode, as follows.

GRITTY MODE: Toughness reduces stun damage from impact and penetrating sources, not ballistic sources.

PULPY MODE: Toughness reduces both stun and wound damage from impact and penetrating sources, but not ballistic sources.

CINEMATIC MODE: Toughness reduces all damage, including ballistic damage, unless the GM decides otherwise. For instance, swallowed poison or a mystical curse might bypass even Cinematic Toughness.

KILLING CHARACTERS

As characters lose Health, they get closer to death. The game's mode dictates just how much closer they get when their Health reaches 0.

GRITTY: Player characters at 0 Health are dying. They perish after a number of rounds equal to 2 + Constitution unless they receive medical attention. Dying characters' players must make a TN 9 CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) test to remain conscious. If they succeed, they can talk and perceive their surroundings, but cannot take any other actions. If they fall unconscious, they remain so until they regain 1 or more Health. They die at the start of their turn on the final round, so allies have until then to save them.

PULPY: Pulpy PCs at 0 Health are also dying, but after a number of rounds equal to 2 + Constitution, the character's player may attempt another TN 9 CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) test to survive a number of additional rounds equal to the Stunt Die result. At the end of the period, the player rolls again, at +2 to the test's TN, to secure more rounds of life as before. The test's TN increases by 2 more each time the player needs to roll. The character automatically stays conscious, but the player can choose to declare their character falls unconscious at any time. This reduces the survival test's TN by -2. Even if conscious, the character can't do anything more than talk and perceive their surroundings.

CINEMATIC: Cinematic PCs at 0 Health use the rules for Pulpy characters, but they may take one minor action per turn, unless of course the player decides that their character falls unconscious. Furthermore, if a Cinematic character scores doubles on the Constitution (Stamina) roll to survive and spends 3 stunt points, they may take a major action during their turn as well – but only immediately after the survival test.

Most NPCs simply die when their Health reaches 0. The GM may choose to apply the PC rules to major NPCs, however.

Note that Health never goes below 0. There is no negative Health. Further injury either has no effect or instantly kills characters already at 0 Health.

EXAMPLE

Brian flees an angry mob in a Gritty story. He takes a wrong turn down a dead-end street and gets cornered. He defends himself for 2 rounds, but a blow from a street tough reduces him to 0 Health and Brian collapses on the asphalt. Since his Constitution is 3, Brian will die at the start of his turn 5 rounds from now. Hopefully his friends will show up in time.

INCAPACITATING CHARACTERS

When a character is reduced to 0 Health by an attack that deals stun damage, they are rendered unconscious rather than dying. They stay at 1 Health and only regain consciousness after 2d6 minutes, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

Sometimes characters want to incapacitate their opponents instead of killing them. When an attack that deals wound

damage would otherwise kill a character, the attacker can choose to deal stun damage instead.

GRITTY: Only damage from impact sources can be turned into stun damage. There's no such thing as shooting someone with the "flat of a bullet."

PULPY: The GM may rule certain circumstances warrant turning a lethal attack into an incapacitating one, like shooting someone in the knee.

CINEMATIC: Even a barrage of ballistic damage can be turned into stun damage with an appropriate description, like changing aim at the last moment to shoot a chandelier, which falls on the target.

DELIVERING A COUP DE GRACE

A dying or unconscious character can be killed by a coup de grace in all game modes. Any adjacent enemy can perform a coup de grace as a major action, and this automatically kills the target. A ranged attack can be used to deliver a coup de grace if the attacker makes a successful attack roll vs. Defense 10.

ATTACKING OBJECTS

There are times you might want to shoot out a tire or kick in a door. You're attacking an object. Attacking an object in combat is much like attacking a living opponent. You make an attack roll as usual, but instead of Defense scores, objects use target numbers based on their size. Use the table below as a guide.

OBJECT COMBAT TARGET NUMBERS

TARGET SIZE	TN
Very large (an immobile SUV, a tool shed)	7
Large (an immobile small car, a dumpster)	9
Human-sized (an immobile bicycle, a large mailbox)	11
Small (a tire on an 18-wheeler, a specific window)	13
Very small (a small drone, a lamppost)	15
Diminutive (a wielded handgun, a bicycle tire)	17
Minuscule (a light switch, a door handle)	19
Almost invisible (a keyhole, a spy camera)	21

The GM may modify your roll if the object is moving, and based on other factors. In addition, if you're adjacent to the object and it isn't moving, it's easy to hit; you get a +5 bonus to your attack roll – after all, it's easy to hit a mailbox with a baseball bat if you're standing right in front of it.

In some cases, an attack roll isn't always appropriate. If the object would be easy to hit, or what you really want to do is to disable or modify it instead of just wrecking it, a basic test might be called for instead. The GM decides which rules to use. Finally, note that some stunts bypass the rules here; use the rules listed for the stunt instead of those in this section.

You'll often attack an object as part of the Stunt Attack action, in which case attacking it has whatever effect the stunt designates, or as an action where the results are determined by the



GM. If an object might be gradually battered apart, the GM can assign Health and Armor Ratings to it based on the desired goal (it takes more damage to destroy a door than just kick it open). The GM can also determine that some attacks inflict double damage to particular objects (roll damage dice twice and add them together), while others inflict half damage. The GM may decide that some attacks are penetrating, or even useless against given targets. This represents the fact that, for example, an axe will readily chop down a tree, but a bullet or kick won't.

COMBAT STUNTS

Combat is more than two fighters taking turns whacking at each other. A good fight should be dynamic and feature a lot of movement and action. The stunt system provides a fun framework that adds some spice to any fight. You use stunts to represent those special moves action heroes perform to throw their opponents off-balance, gain an edge in a fight, or simply do something spectacular that brings them closer to victory.

The combat stunt system is simple. If you make a successful attack roll and get doubles on any of the dice, you can perform one or more stunts in addition to dealing your normal damage. You receive a number of stunt points (SP) equal to the value shown on the Stunt Die and must use them right away to perform stunts. Initially, all characters choose from the same list of stunts, but as characters gain levels, they may get access to new stunts or get to use standard ones for fewer SP. These options can be found in the description of specializations and talents.

You can perform a given type of stunt only once in a round, though you may combine two or more different stunts as long as they make sense in the story context. The only exception

to this rule is the Skirmish stunt, which can be used multiple times as long as you have enough SP.

Once you have decided what stunts you want to use, you can narrate how your character pulled them off. You can perform the stunts in any order you choose.

If you don't want to trust your options to the dice, you can take the Stunt Attack action (see **Taking Actions** in this chapter). This action guarantees that you will have at least 1 SP available, but in exchange your attack will do no damage by itself, which could be what you had planned anyway.

Finally, if your action would be consistent with a Relationship (to save someone the Relationship specifies you care about, for instance, or attack someone a Relationship says you despise), once per game session you can spend stunt points equal to the Relationship Bond's Intensity. You do not need to roll doubles to get these stunt points, and you can spend them on top of any other stunt points you generate. See **CHAPTER 10: REWARDS** for Relationship rules.

Note that some stunts are core stunts, listed with (Core) in the tables below. These are good all-around stunts which cost 1 SP to start, but can usually be enhanced by spending more SP. If you can't decide on a stunt, pick one of these. Other stunts list requirements in parentheses. This may be a required type of weapon or attack (such as an automatic weapon), a form of damage (such as stun damage) or a game mode (Gritty, Pulpy, or Cinematic). Note that this requirement exists in addition to anything determined by the type of stunt. The GM can always bend the rules if a good description justifies it, however. A good description can justify virtually any stunt, even if it seems unlikely the ability test would lead to it. The sole exception is initiative rolls, which never generate stunt points.

BASIC GENERAL COMBAT STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1-3	(CORE) MOMENTUM : Gain +3 to initiative per SP spent until the end of the next round.
1-3	(CORE) DUCK AND WEAVE : Gain +1 to Defense per SP spent until the beginning of your next turn.
1-3	ADRENALINE RUSH : Temporarily regain Health per SP spent (GRITTY 2 / PULPY 4 / CINEMATIC 6). You lose this Health again at the end of your next turn, even if you would drop to 0.
1-3	TAKE COVER : If you can find cover in your immediate vicinity, gain a cover rating equal to SP spent, up to the maximum rating available nearby.
1+	SKIRMISH : Move yourself or your attack's target 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend; you can choose Skirmish more than once per turn.
2	KNOCK PRONE : Knock your enemy prone. Melee attacks against a prone foe gain a +1, but ranged attacks against a prone foe suffer a -1.
2	LIGHTNING ATTACK : Make a second attack against the same target or a different one within range and sight; you must have a loaded missile weapon to attack at range.
2	VICIOUS BLOW : Inflict an extra 1d6 damage on this attack.
3	BLOCKADE : Move up to 3 yards to position yourself between a foe and something or someone else. Until the beginning of your next turn, that foe must succeed at a minor action Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Might) test vs. your Defense to reach whatever or whoever you're protecting.
3	SHOCK AND AWE : When you succeed at a non-attack physical feat or take an opponent out, anyone who witnesses it rolls Willpower (Courage) or (Morale) vs. your Strength (Intimidation). If you win, they suffer a -1 to the next opposed roll they make against you, or a -1 to their Defense vs. your next attack against them, whichever comes first.

BASIC FIREARMS STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1-3	(CORE) OVERWATCH : Your opponent suffers -1 to attack rolls per SP spent until your next turn.
1-4	(CORE) PRECISION MARKSMANSHIP : If you make an attack with a firearm that benefits from an aim bonus before the end of your next turn, increase the aim bonus by +1 per SP spent.
1-3	SHORT BURST (AUTOMATIC WEAPONS) : Ignore one point of your opponent's ballistic armor per SP spent. You deal at least 1 point of damage no matter what.
1	RAPID RELOAD : Next time you miss with a firearm, immediately reload without checking against Capacity.
1	SUPPRESSIVE FIRE (AUTOMATIC WEAPONS) : You pepper an area with bullets. If anyone, friend or foe, stands or moves within (GRITTY 1 / PULPY 3 / CINEMATIC 5) yards of where your target was positioned when you attacked between now and your turn next round, roll a new attack against that individual, whether you want to or not, to a maximum of one attack per target in that zone.

BASIC GRAPPLING STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1	(CORE) GRAPPLE : You and your target make opposed Fighting (Grappling) rolls without generating SP; if you win, they can't move from where they are on their next turn. You and the target both take a -2 penalty to Defense until the beginning of your next turn.
1-3	(CORE) HINDER : If you attacked with Fighting (Grappling), your opponent's next melee attack's damage is reduced by 2 per SP spent.
2	TAKEDOWN : You and your target make opposed Fighting (Grappling) rolls without generating SP. If you win, both you and your target fall prone (-1 to ranged attacks against both of you, but +1 to melee attacks against both of you), but your target takes an additional 1d6 damage and can't get up until you do, or until they succeed at an attack against you.

BASIC MELEE STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1-3	(CORE) PARRY : Your opponent suffers -1 to Defense per SP spent until your next turn, as you guide their limb or weapon off-guard.
2	DISARM : You and your target make opposed melee attack rolls without generating SP. If you win, knock your enemy's weapon 1d6 + Strength yards away in a direction you choose.

BASIC ANTI-VEHICLE STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1-3	(CORE) DENT : Your actions make the vehicle harder to handle. Impose a -1 penalty to tests to operate the vehicle per SP spent.
1+	PIERCE HULL : Your attack penetrates a vehicle's tough outer shell. If a vehicle has a Hull rating of 1 or higher, you must spend SP equal to it on this stunt before spending other SP. This stunt has no other effect.

COMBAT STUNT TYPES

Modern AGE has a lot of stunts! Players should look through the full selection in **CHAPTER 5: STUNTS**, note ones they feel would especially suit their characters, and pick them when they generate enough SP. In this chapter, we'll stick to combat stunts with low costs that are easy picks when you're just starting out. Core stunts are marked as such to indicate that they're usually good picks, in case you have trouble selecting a stunt. As you grow more familiar with the game, incorporate the more complex stunts found in **CHAPTER 5**. Pick favorites from the list there, note their effects, and use them when you gain enough stunt points.

Different stunts are linked to different actions. Each type has its own table, though you can pick any stunt you can describe in a way that makes sense. If you're not sure which, go with **General Combat Stunts**. The GM can always bend the rules and allow a stunt that isn't normally paired with your action, but which makes sense in the story. Combat stunt types include the following types.

- **BASIC GENERAL COMBAT STUNTS:** These don't rely on a specific form of attack. If you're not sure what stunt to pick, stick with this table.
- **BASIC FIREARMS STUNTS:** To use these stunts, you must attack with a firearm. At the GM's discretion, you might use another ranged weapon (such as a crossbow) instead. This chapter presents the easiest ones to use.
- **BASIC GRAPPLING STUNTS:** These stunts require a melee (or close combat) attack. Some of them must use Fighting (Grappling) to attack, but others involve a follow-up roll using it instead.
- **BASIC MELEE STUNTS:** These stunts require melee attacks, unarmed or with close combat weapons.
- **BASIC ANTI-VEHICLE STUNTS:** These stunts require you to target a vehicle. Note that chases may also use Chase Stunts, found in **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES**.

Expanded lists for all these types, including more advanced stunts, can be found in **CHAPTER 5: STUNTS**.

EXAMPLE

Amy is trying to fight her way through the crowd to rescue Brian before he dies. She attacks a tough on the outside of the crowd. Her attack roll is a 16 in total and her dice read 3, 5, and 5, with one of the 5s being her Stunt Die. This beats the tough's Defense, so Amy hits. Since she also rolled doubles, she receives a number of stunt points equal to her Stunt Die (5 in this case). Amy decides to perform three stunts. She spends 1 SP to use Skirmish on the target of her attack, moving him to the side 2 yards. He also takes normal damage from the attack. Then Amy spends a second stunt point to use Skirmish on herself to step into the spot recently vacated by her opponent. Lastly, she spends her remaining 3 SP to make a Lightning Attack. Since she is still adjacent to her original target, she could attack him, but chooses to attack a new opponent – the woman now in front of her. She rolls another successful hit and gets doubles again. She does not, however, get any more SP (this is spelled out in the Lightning Attack stunt description). Amy's player describes how she barrels into the crowd screaming obscenities, smashing the tough aside and pushing forward to rescue her friend.

FIREARMS

Firearms are the weapons of choice for many characters who have trained for combat in *Modern AGE*. They have evolved drastically since their early black powder versions, while retaining their basic principle: firing a small projectile at extremely harmful speeds at their targets. The following rules apply to attacks using firearms. **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT** lists the different types of firearms available to characters.

DAMAGE SOURCE

Except for black powder weapons, firearms deal ballistic damage. Ballistic damage ignores any form of armor that does not specifically protect against it and may ignore Toughness, depending on the game's mode, as described earlier in this chapter. See **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT** for a selection of armor that functions against ballistic attacks, including firearms.

RATE OF FIRE

A Ranged Attack action with a firearm represents shooting more than once during the round, and the damage is an abstract average of the shots that grazed or hit their mark. Some firearm models make this a lot faster and deadlier, depending on how many bullets they discharge on a single pull of the trigger and how fast they load new ammunition into their chamber. This is called the rate of fire.

- **SINGLE SHOT (SS):** A single shot weapon requires its user to manually actuate the mechanism to load new ammunition into its chamber. This is part of the Ranged Attack action, but it means that the weapon fires a single bullet with each trigger pull, and may not be used to attack more than once in a round, regardless of talents and stunts that allow a character to attack more than once. (The character may still pull the trigger multiple times, but the weapon's limitations keep this from being represented by more than one attack roll per round.)
- **SEMIAUTOMATIC (SA):** A semiautomatic weapon still fires a single shot with each pull of the trigger, but new ammunition is loaded automatically after each shot, so it can be used more than once in the same turn. A successful attack with a semiautomatic weapon adds a rate of fire bonus to the damage roll equal to the number rolled in the Stunt Die for the attack. This bonus stacks with any bonus to damage from talents and stunts. A character with appropriate talents and stunts can attack more than one target in the same turn with a semiautomatic weapon, but if used in this manner, the weapon's rate of fire bonus does not apply to the damage of subsequent attacks.
- **AUTOMATIC (A):** An automatic weapon fires a stream of bullets with each pull of the trigger. An attack with an automatic weapon works the same as a semiautomatic weapon as described above, but certain stunts like Long Burst can be performed only with an automatic weapon.

CAPACITY

Different types of firearms vary in the amount of ammunition that can be inside their magazines, cylinders, or feeds.

FIREARMS IN GRITTY GAMES

In Gritty games, firearms are more lethal, but it's more important to conserve your ammunition. When missing an attack with a firearm in a Gritty game, add +1 to the Stunt Die to determine whether the weapon is emptied; this is increased by +1 for every missed attack afterward. The character must have stated beforehand that they are carrying spare ammo, or they will run out once the gun is emptied.

However, action heroes rarely worry about having to reload during a firefight, and running out of bullets is more a dramatic moment than an accounting exercise.

In *Modern AGE*, a firearm's capacity is listed as a number from 2 to 6 (see **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT**). A capacity of 6 represents a weapon with a lot of room for ammunition, and 2 represents one that needs to be reloaded practically every time it is fired. A missed attack with a firearm might mean that the firearm ran out of ammo rather than representing bad aim. When a firearm attack misses, compare the number in the Stunt Die with the weapon's Capacity. If the number rolled is equal to or greater than the weapon's Capacity, the weapon is empty and must be reloaded before being used again. If the number is lower than the weapon's Capacity, it can continue to be used normally.

Weapons in the Black Powder group and some specific longarms have a Capacity of "—"; this means that the weapon can accommodate only a single piece of ammunition and *must* be reloaded after firing it, whether the attack hits or misses.

Reloading a firearm is a major action, and reloading a weapon in the Black Powder group requires 1d6+1 minor actions. The Rapid Reload stunt can reduce the actions required to reload a firearm. This assumes the character has spare ammo available. If the optional Conviction rules are being used, the GM may award 1 point of Conviction to a character when their firearm is emptied and dictate that they are out of ammo entirely.

GRENADES

In *Modern AGE*, grenades are uncommon due to purchase restrictions, but not at all rare (see **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT**). Unlike attacks with weapons that must be aimed, you don't need to score a direct hit on your targets with a grenade, but just get close enough to catch them in the blast.

Thrown grenades are ranged weapons with a range of 15 + Strength yards. Like using any other item during action time, you must use the Ready action to have the grenade in your hand, and only then you can take a Ranged Attack action. However, you're not trying to hit a specific target, but a specific location within range, where a hurled object can possibly land (over a stack of boxes, but not through a solid wall, for example). Note that unlike other ranged weapons, you do not add Perception to grenade damage.

A grenade attack is a TN 11 Accuracy (Grenades) test, modified for difficult throws at the GM's discretion. Success means the grenade lands and detonates where you intended, but failure means the grenade lands up to 1d6 yards away in a direction of the GM's choosing, and then explodes. Grenades

affect everything and everyone within 2 yards of the explosion, dealing damage and any additional effect.

You can use stunts with grenade attacks. Each stunt can affect only one target, but you need not assign all stunts to the same target. If you catch two foes in the blast of a grenade and generate 4 SP, for example, you could use Pierce Armor on one foe and Knock Prone on the other.

VEHICLES, MOUNTS, & COMBAT

Combatants can ride horses and other mounts, or operate vehicles in combat. When multiple characters pursue and evade each other at high speed, that triggers a chase, which requires the GM's help to plan (see **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES** for chase rules). Otherwise, accounting for mounts and vehicles require a few special rules.

You can mount an animal or enter a typical automobile as part of a Move action. If you do so, you can move only half your Speed in yards (a Move action normally lets you move your Speed in yards). Other vehicles may require more time. Popping the hatch of an armored vehicle takes extra time, and aircraft usually require pre-flight checks, and flying without them is perilous.

Once in the saddle or at the controls, you use Move and Run/Chase actions as normal, but you move using the mount's Speed or the vehicle's Velocity (see **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT** for Velocity and other vehicle specifications). When multiple characters use the Run/Chase action, it triggers a chase using the rules in **CHAPTER 8**. Passengers do not have to use Move and Run actions, as they are simply carried along. They take actions as normal, but the GM should bear their situation in mind.

Enemies can choose to attack you or your method of travel. Some vehicles provide an armor bonus from cover (see the rules for **Defense & Cover**, in this chapter). Attacking a vehicle uses the rules for attacking objects. Attacks on specific parts of a vehicle, such as tires, headlights, and so forth, use the rules for attacking objects (the GM determines the TN and damage required to destroy various parts). Attacking the vehicle itself uses the rules for vehicular combat which follow. The GM decides which rules apply on a case-by-case basis.

SPEED AND CONTROL

CHAPTER 8 and the focus descriptions in **CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER OPTIONS** list the focuses necessary to control a given vehicle or mount. Each vehicle has a Velocity class and modifier, and a Handling modifier. At Standard Velocity, use normal Speed scores, such as those listed for characters. For faster conveyances, estimate how far a vehicle moves based on its real-world values. When an unexpected danger comes up, make a basic test set by the GM, using the appropriate focus. **CHAPTER 8** also provides the rules for vehicle crashes.

VEHICULAR COMBAT

As noted, operating a vehicle counts as your Move action. If a vehicle provides cover, it hinders you as you shoot out an open window or attack in some other way, as per the usual rules for cover hindering fire.



In addition, you may use the Activate minor action to operate built-in weaponry, and the Ram minor action to strike a target with the vehicle itself. **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT** lists the full effects of ramming attacks, which are divided into sideswipes and collisions.

Using the rules for attacking objects, the GM can assign Health ratings to vehicle parts, and invent effects when these parts are damaged or destroyed. For instance, if a character shoots out a tire, the GM might decide this prompts a test to prevent a crash and, in any event, slows the vehicle down. On the other hand, if an attack targets the vehicle as a whole, it doesn't inflict damage in a conventional fashion. Instead, all attacks become variations of the Stunt Attack action, even if they would normally not be. Generated stunt points are used to inflict Anti-Vehicle Stunts (see **CHAPTER 5: STUNTS**). Some weapons, such as anti-material rifles, generate bonus stunt points when used to attack vehicles.

A vehicle has a Defense of 10 + its Handling rating + the ability used to operate it, based on its focus. This is Dexterity for most motor vehicles, as they use the Dexterity (Driving) focus.

A few vehicles are exceptionally tough. Against these, an attack must spend stunt points on the Pierce Hull stunt before devoting them to other Anti-Vehicle Stunts.

The GM can always disallow certain attacks against vehicles for being inherently ineffective. Stabbing a car with a knife is unlikely to cause more than cosmetic damage, for example.

RIDING MOUNTS

When engaging in melee combat from a higher position than your opponent, atop a mount such as a horse, you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls. Some mounts, like police horses, are

trained for combat and can attack on their own, but most can't. If they can attack, they attack on your turn. You don't need to roll initiative separately for the mount. Attacking a mount inflicts damage to the mount's Health, and you roll against its Defense.

Opponents can use the Knock Prone stunt to try to dismount you. This is more difficult than overbearing someone on foot, though, so you get a chance to resist it. If you make a successful Dexterity (Riding) test, you remain mounted. The TN for this test is equal to 10 + opponent's Strength. If you fail, you are knocked to the ground, take 1d6 penetrating damage, and are now prone. The GM controls the actions of the mount until you re-mount or the encounter ends.

CRASHES

Crashes inflict the following damage to passengers by default, based on Velocity, but can inflict more, less, or different forms of damage based on the exact situation. The GM decides when these circumstances arise. For example, crashing a boat may inflict little damage, but force characters to sink or swim. **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES** provides further detail, along with guidelines for when a chase may lead to a crash.

CRASH DAMAGE	
VELOCITY	DAMAGE
Standard	1d6 impact, stun
Fast	2d6 impact, wound
Very Fast	4d6 ballistic, wound
Extreme	6d6 penetrating, wound

HEALTH & RECOVERY

Health measures a character's fitness and wellbeing. A character with full Health is vigorous and ready for action. A character with less than full Health is fatigued or wounded. A character reduced to 0 Health is dying and may die unless they receive medical attention.

In *Modern AGE*, Health and damage are abstract by design. When a character takes damage from crowbar, for example, it can represent bruising, fatigue, loss of breath, or cracked bones—narrate the exact injury to match events during the game. Just watch your character's Health, and be careful when it gets close to 0.

When your character is wounded, there are several ways to heal. The following rules apply to recover in Pulp or Cinematic game modes. See **Gritty Recovery** for Gritty games.

- Another character can aid you with a First Aid action, as described under **Major Actions** in this chapter. You can't benefit from another First Aid action until you take more damage (there is only so much benefit you can gain from basic care).
- You can take a breather after a combat encounter. This is a 5-minute rest that lets you catch your breath, tend to minor cuts and abrasions, drink some water, and so on. After a breather, you get back 5 + Constitution + Level in Health. You can take only one breather after an encounter. If you were at 0 Health when the combat encounter ended, you cannot take a breather at all.
- You can get some sleep. If you can get at least 6 hours of restful sleep, you gain 10 + Constitution + Level in Health. In Cinematic games, if you received only stun damage during the day, you recover all your Health with a good night's sleep.
- You receive extended medical attention. Another character can tend to your injuries with a TN 13 Intelligence (Medicine) test that lasts 1 hour or is concurrent with sleep as above. The character in charge of your care must use proper medical tools and supplies (found easily in any clinic, hospital, or doctor's office). Success means you recover an additional amount of Health equal to 5 + treating character's Intelligence + double the result of the Stunt Die.

GRITTY RECOVERY

In Gritty games, a character's life is in more danger from injury. If you're playing a Gritty game, the Health recovery rates are as follows:

- Extended medical attention and extraordinary powers work the same as in Pulp and Cinematic games. First Aid only heals 1 + Intelligence (minimum 1) Health.
- You can take a breather after combat if you received only stun damage; if you suffered any amount of wound damage, you need proper medical attention.
- After sleep, you recover only 5 + Constitution in Health of either stun or wound damage.

- You can be healed by extraordinary powers, like an arcane spell or a psychic ability (see **CHAPTER 6: EXTRAORDINARY POWERS**).

EXAMPLE

Amy drives off the toughs before Brian dies, and the combat encounter ends. He is still at 0 Health and dying, so Amy tries to save him with a First Aid action. She makes an Intelligence (Medicine) test, which is not her strong suit. However, she gets an 11 and just manages to save Brian's life. She rolled a 10 (3 + 3 + 4) and then added her Intelligence of 1 for a total of 11. Brian gets back 5 Health (the Stunt Die result of 4 plus 1 for Amy's Intelligence). Not much, but better than dying. With Brian saved, Amy can relax a bit and take a breather. She rests for 5 minutes. She is level 2 with a Constitution of 2, so she gets back 9 Health (5 + 2 + 2). Since Brian had 0 Health when the combat encounter ended, he cannot take a breather.

EXPLORATION ENCOUNTERS

Exploration encounters do not normally put the lives of characters in immediate danger, and because they happen mostly in narrative time, they do not require as many detailed rules as combat. Much of the time, exploration encounters can be resolved simply by roleplaying or describing the situation, or using advanced tests (see **CHAPTER 6: MASTERING THE RULES**). Exploration stunts are listed in **CHAPTER 5: STUNTS**, providing tools to give a more flair and twists to situations that require more finesse than combat.

Exploration encounters involve searching out an area, investigating a mystery, making or modifying machines and other objects, and doing pretty much anything where the focus is on places, objects, and information, instead of action or social exchanges. But there's no strict division between encounter types, so exploration encounters flow into action encounters and are punctuated with social situations.

EXPLORATION STUNTS

There's an extensive set of exploration stunts available to characters, listed in **CHAPTER 5: STUNTS**. The basic stunts in this chapter can get you started.

INVESTIGATIONS

Information is power in *Modern AGE*, and in contemporary settings, finding information will often consume the lion's share of an adventure. Note that some investigations have social components, and will mix with a social encounter.

SIMPLE INVESTIGATIONS

Some investigation scenes are very simple. Succeed at an ability test against a TN set by the GM, and you win the information you need. You just need to be in the right place at the right time. In some cases, a roll won't be required. The

information is either obvious once you get there, or the GM assumes your character has the interest and ability to find it. The GM may also ask for a specific focus that represents the required knowledge or intuition to notice the information.

EXAMPLE

Jeff the investigator looks closely at the scene of a car accident. The GM, Meghan, calls for an TN 13 Intelligence (Explosives) test. Intrigued by the choice, Steve, Jeff's player, rolls and scores a 15. Meghan says that Jeff notices the pattern of twisted metal indicates an explosion, not a collision, in the style used by the assassin known as the Dhole, who the heroes are looking for. That's a lot of information to give out in one roll, but this is a simple investigation, and Meghan wants to move the story along. Meghan could have also decided that anyone with the Explosives focus and a background with the Dhole would automatically pick up this information.

DETAILED INVESTIGATIONS

Some investigations must be carried out across multiple steps, forming an investigative trail. Each step on the trail is a lead, and discovering the significance of a lead unearths a clue and a new lead. Discovering all clues produces a reveal—the ultimate truth the clues uncover.

A trail doesn't need to be a linear path. It can have many branches, but in most cases following any branch to the end will produce the same reveal. The GM should avoid putting dead ends in an investigation, unless an enemy blocks the trail deliberately, or as a momentary setback that can be reversed by creative heroes.

The GM doesn't need to pre-plan the trail; they can improvise depending on what the heroes do. Instead, the GM creates several leads with connecting clues. GM must determine the following for each lead.

SITUATION

What brings the characters to the lead, and what is the lead in the story? A stray matchbook could be a lead, as could an anonymous email that at first glance, seems to be full of gibberish. A combat encounter could also constitute a lead.

BASIC EXPLORATION STUNTS

SP COST

STUNT

1–3

(CORE) WHEN A PLAN COMES TOGETHER: You reveal this test was part of your plan all along, granting a bonus equal to SP spent on one ally's next test during the same encounter to accomplish the same goal. You must make this decision before the ally rolls.

1+

A STITCH IN TIME: You put in the effort to do it right the first time, setting yourself up for more success later. Gain +1 per SP spent on your next test related to this one during this encounter, as long as this roll was part of an advanced test.

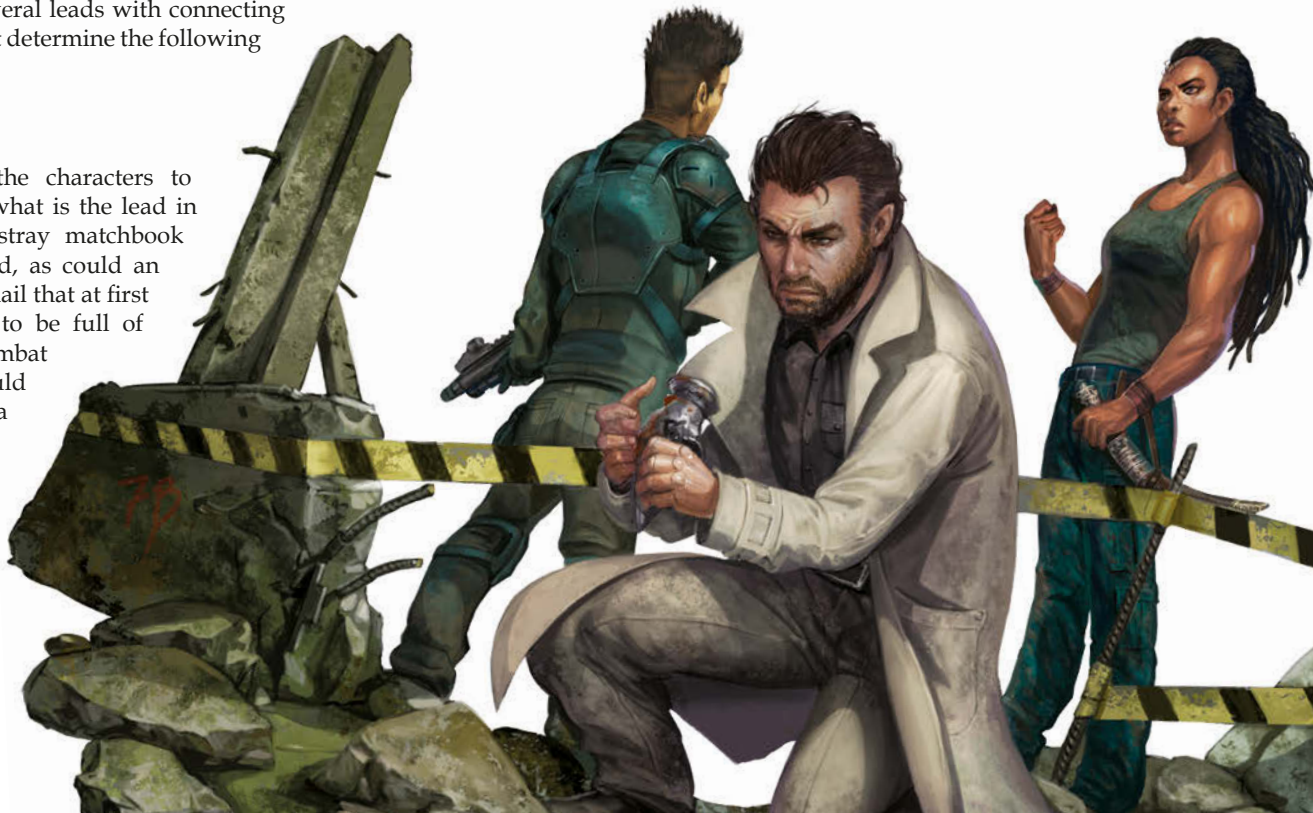
1+

PAY DIRT: In the course of your endeavor, you win a bet, happen across a conveniently abandoned briefcase of cash, or discover something valuable you can pawn off to make a buck. Temporarily gain +1 Resources per SP spent; this increase lasts until you next fail a Resources test. Instances of this stunt don't stack.

UNLOCKING METHOD

What unveils the clue and the next lead? The following options are available.

- **AUTOMATIC:** Just showing up, finding the object, or otherwise doing what's necessary brings forth the clue. The GM can tell you based on your prior knowledge or common sense. An NPC might be willing to spill the beans.
- **HAVING THE FOCUS:** Like the automatic method, no roll is needed, but the character examining the lead must have one or more specific focuses. Noticing that a gunman



never intended to hit his target might be automatic for anyone examining bullet holes or a video of the firefight, as long as they possess an Accuracy focus in any modern firearms. A character with the Intelligence (Art) focus might notice an obvious forgery.

- **ABILITY TEST:** Commonly, unlocking a lead requires an ability test. This is often an Intelligence, Communication, or Perception test, but any ability might be useful. For instance, a Fighting test might reveal that an enemy studied at a particular martial arts school. The GM determines the most useful, or primary focuses, and any tangential, or partly useful focuses, along with the TN of the test. See **Investigation Focuses** for more details.

CLUE AND NEXT LEAD

Determine the payoff of the new clue and next lead. The clue is simply information. The GM tells you what the unlocked lead means. The GM should not just provide information based on the lead itself, but add whatever the hero's previous knowledge and common sense would bring forth. The solved lead also points toward a new lead, until you've uncovered enough clues to prompt the full reveal.

INVESTIGATION FOCUSES

The GM decides which, if any, focuses are helpful or even required to unlock a lead. A focus that is best suited to unlock a lead is called a primary focus. If an ability test is required, roll the dice and apply the focus as usual.

Some focuses are useful, but less than ideal. These are tangential focuses. For instance, you might not have Intelligence (Explosives), the primary focus to examine a detonator, but you might ask the GM if your Intelligence (Electronics) might help. The GM might then decide it's a tangential focus and reveal less information, or information more suited to the focus in question. If an ability test is required, the TN increases by +1 for a test with a tangential focus. If you don't have a primary or tangential focus, the GM decides whether you can make a test to unlock the lead at all, especially for tests with a required focus (see **CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER ACTIONS**).

The GM doesn't need to decide on primary and tangential focuses ahead of time, and can define them after talking to the players. If you present a good enough argument, an unlikely focus might become a tangential focus, or even a primary one.

EXAMPLE

After Amy knocks out a gangster, Jeff searches the unconscious body, and finds the thug's cell phone: the lead. It's password protected, so he passes it to Indra, who might be able to crack it with her technical expertise. The GM calls for a TN 11 Intelligence (Cryptography) check. Indra has Intelligence (Computers). The GM says this is a decent tangential focus, raising the TN to 12. Indra's player Alejandro succeeds with a roll of 15. The GM tells Indra's player that a text message told the thug to meet at the Erebus Club at midnight and ask for John, to "make the sale." The GM says this indicates that the gang they're after does business at the club (the clue) and there will be a major transaction that night (the next lead).

THE REVEAL

Once the GM decides you've unlocked enough leads and deciphered enough clues along the trail, they provide the reveal: the final truth about the subjects being investigated. The GM can simply inform you, or provide it through an NPC, discovered documents, and other story elements. Again, the GM draws on your prior knowledge and common sense. The reveal's facts should be either scattered throughout the clues you've discovered, or the clues should bring you somewhere where it all comes to light.

The GM doesn't always have to provide a moment for the reveal. You may discover it with the facts at hand. If the GM thinks it would be useful, they can inform you that you've figured everything out, and perhaps grant additional rewards to recognize your cleverness.

EXAMPLE

The heroes have unlocked several leads. Jeff discovered that a car accident was really a bombing, and had the hallmarks of a terrorist called the Dhole. They informed the police, who raided the suspect's hideout, but when expert marksman Brian investigated the scene, he noticed that the Dhole and Detective Smythe weren't trying to shoot each other. Sean interrogated Smythe, and determined she'd been asked to help the Dhole by a gang called Bloody Sword, who fed her secret heroin addiction. Asking around about the gang provoked them to attack, but the heroes prevailed, and after examining a thug's cell phone, the heroes discovered an upcoming deal at a nightclub. From a safe hiding place, they witnessed the gang supplying weapons to the Dhole, and indeed, discovered the gang supported the Dhole's fascist aims. Thus, the heroes encountered the reveal: the Dhole and the Bloody Sword were preparing to become a militia, set to bring a wave of violence to the city.

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Social encounters involve interactions between people, or in some games, between people and intelligent nonhumans, too. Naturally, social encounters may be combined with exploration or action encounters. An investigation might require interviews, and combat can stop or start at the utterance of a single, critical word.

The GM may choose to run social encounters as a pure role-playing exercise, without any rules. The GM plays the part of any NPCs, while you speak as your character, or tell the GM the sorts of things you'd like your hero to say. The following rules aren't meant to get in the way of roleplaying, but to provide inspiration for social scenes, align improvised dialogue with the goals of the story, and streamline interactions that might otherwise be awkward or boring.

Some supernatural or exceptional powers (see **CHAPTER 6: EXTRAORDINARY POWERS**) can influence characters while sidestepping these rules completely. Their rules take precedence over those in this section.

Morale rules, covering an NPC's willingness to fight, are covered in **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES**.

SOCIAL STUNTS

Stunts can enhance social actions. **CHAPTER 5: STUNTS** provides a large list of social stunts. The following social stunts can start you off, and apply to a wide range of situations.

IMPRESSIONS & ATTITUDES

First impressions matter. The GM decides how an NPC feels about you based on that NPC's motives and emotions. In other words, the GM sets the NPC's attitude. The GM doesn't need to use any rules, but might find it useful to select an attitude from the following table, or roll 3d6, adding the following modifiers:

- **COMMUNICATION:** Add the Communication ability score of the character taking the lead in making contact. If a Communication focus would apply to the first impression, add its bonus as well.
- **REPUTATION:** Add +2 for a Reputation that would impress the NPC. Impose -2 for a Reputation that would offend the NPC. See **CHAPTER 10: REWARDS** for more about Reputation.
- **OTHER MODIFIERS:** The GM can add other modifiers to the roll based on the NPC's feelings and motives.

The GM can apply a roll or choose an attitude for a group of similar NPCs, or set different attitudes for each individual.

One overriding rule is that NPCs will never defy their most deeply held values, or sacrifice their personal safety, without an exceptional circumstance coming into play. Violent threats using Strength (Intimidation) are one way to sway an unwilling NPC. Blackmail, lies, and other methods might work, but the NPC could resent you for this, with potential future consequences.

VERY HOSTILE

The NPC can barely contain their dislike, and is inclined to respond to contact either with violence or by leaving the characters' presence. They may nurse a grudge and oppose characters in the future. This is a rare spontaneous impression, and the GM should come up with a specific reason why any first impression would get a Very Hostile response.

HOSTILE

The NPC reacts to contact with ire, but might disguise this. They'll either refuse to provide help or undermine the characters' apparent interests.

STANDOFFISH

The NPC would prefer that characters just leave them alone. They'll either avoid characters, ignore them, or firmly ask interlopers to go away.

NEUTRAL

The NPC hasn't decided things either way about the characters making contact, and responds with cool caution,

BASIC SOCIAL STUNTS

SP COST

STUNT

1+

(CORE) IMPRESS: Gain a +1 per SP spent to your next social test against the same target as this test, during this encounter.

1

CARDS ON THE TABLE: If you were completely honest when making this test, your target must be completely honest in the next social test they make against you during this encounter. (This doesn't stop either character from omitting information.)

1

MAKING AN ENTRANCE: As long as this is your first action of the encounter, gain +1 to your next opposed roll against one character who witnessed it. You can choose this stunt multiple times per roll.

ATTITUDES

3D6 ROLL

ATTITUDE

SIMPLE INTERACTION MODIFIER

3 or less

Very Hostile

-3

4-5

Hostile

-2

6-8

Standoffish

-1

9-11

Neutral

+0

12-14

Open

+1

15-17

Friendly

+2

18+

Very Friendly

+3

bored disinterest, or polite detachment, depending on their personality.

OPEN

The NPC is curious or inclined to listen to characters, and reacts based on personal motives and interests. Things could go either way. A negative variation of Open is Cowed, where the NPC is a bit afraid of what the characters might do if they don't act receptive. Once the threat appears to be gone, the NPC becomes Standoffish.

FRIENDLY

The NPC takes a shine to characters making contact and is inclined to help them, though will hesitate to provide any assistance that could cause them problems. A negative variation of Friendly is Shaken, where the NPC helps characters out of fear. Once the threat appears to be gone, the NPC becomes Hostile.

VERY FRIENDLY

The NPC is exceptionally welcoming, and provides gestures of respect or hospitality without being prompted. The NPC may provide extraordinary help, though nothing that contradicts their values. This is a rare spontaneous impression, and the GM should come up with a specific reason why any first impression would get a Very Friendly response. A negative variation of Very Friendly is Terrified, where the NPC anxiously does anything possible to avoid a perceived threat. If the threat is gone and the NPC feels safe, their attitude shifts to Very Hostile.



INTERACTIONS

It's perfectly possible to roleplay social interactions without using any rules, but sometimes the element of chance can create unexpected twists and inspire creative strategies.

SIMPLE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

The simplest way to carry out social interactions is to decide what you want from the NPC, and how you'd like to convince them to achieve it. After that, make an opposed test between your chosen strategy (often a Communication test with an appropriate focus) versus the NPC's Willpower, who might apply a focus the GM considers relevant for the attempt (see CHAPTER 3: CHARACTER OPTIONS).

If the GM has decided on the NPC's attitude beforehand, you may gain a bonus or suffer a penalty to your interaction test based on the NPC's attitude, as shown in the Attitudes table above. Unless events in the story dictate otherwise, most NPCs begin interactions with a Neutral attitude toward you.

The GM can always decide that the NPC will never do certain things, or will acquiesce to some requests automatically. Otherwise, if you win the opposed test, the NPC basically does as you wish, though not always exactly as you request.

EXAMPLE

Sean wants to get a look at the hotel's guestbook and, as he walks in, smiles broadly at the night manager. After

chatting about how awful it is to work nights all the time, Sean says that they simply must figure out if a business partner has checked in to "plan meetings and that sort of thing, so I can get to bed by dawn. You know how it is." The night manager apologizes because hotel records are private, but at least she can look a name up. Sean explains that their "client" is famous, and uses several different pseudonyms, and Sean must get a peek at the screen to figure it all out. The night manager again explains that records are private, and Sean says, "You know what it's like to work in service at all hours. They all expect something unreasonable, and we've just got to drink our coffee and try to stay awake. Can you bend the rules just this once? I won't tell anyone." Sean's player rolls Communication (Persuasion) versus the night manager's Willpower (Self-Discipline). The GM informs Sean's player that he can add +1 to Sean's roll because the night manager has an Open attitude. Sean rolls a 14, adding the attitude bonus, against the night manager's 12; the night manager smiles sheepishly and swivels the screen around.

DETAILED SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Sometimes you want to flex your social muscles, or get involved in deep intrigue. This is where detailed social interaction applies. In these rules, the goal is to change an NPC's attitude to one where they feel inclined to do something in your favor. This may involve significant effort, so this system is better applied to major favors or changes in a relationship with the NPC. Again, some NPCs may never act in certain ways, as it contradicts their strongest beliefs.

SOCIAL RULES FOR PCS

The rules in this section are normally only used to sway NPCs, but you can use them with other players to guide your role-playing. In this case, the rules serve as advice, telling you what you *might* do, not what you *must* do. You select your own starting attitude. If you change your attitude and put yourself at a disadvantage because the rules suggest your character would be swayed by social maneuvering, the GM may reward you in some fashion. If you use experience points, following the rules may earn an XP award. Becoming known as a true friend or someone willing to act for others may also win you Reputation awards or Relationships. See **CHAPTER 10: REWARDS** for the possibilities.

The effort involved to achieve such significant influence is measured in shifts. A shift represents a change in attitude, opinion, object of attention, or any other social hurdle you must overcome.

The GM decides the NPC's current attitude, and the attitude required to comply with your wishes. Note the number of shifts required to move along the scale from the NPC's current attitude to the target attitude. For instance, moving from Standoffish, to Neutral, to Open, to Friendly is 3 shifts. Add 1 shift to focus the NPC's attention toward doing what you wish. Furthermore, the GM can add 1 or 2 shifts to represent the NPC's greater resistance to your efforts if the desired actions would inconvenience or trouble them in some way.

The final number of shifts can be cleared in two ways: social maneuvers or in a grand gesture.

SOCIAL MANEUVERS

Each shift becomes an action you need to perform to adjust the NPC's attitude. You can suggest an action, or the GM can require one. These may be opposed tests with the NPC, or a specific task for you to complete, such as buying the NPC a present, or laying low one of their rivals. These tasks clear any additional shifts that represent resistance first. Subsequent shifts improve the NPC's attitude, and your last task directs them to your goal. Utterly blowing a task may set progress back by 1 or more shifts, at the GM's discretion, but in many cases, nothing may happen, though any change in attitude can linger, providing a partial benefit. Thus, shifting attitudes is something that can happen gradually between other encounters.

EXAMPLE

Sean wants to infiltrate a secret society called the Shadow Masons, and must win the trust of the group's "Gate Master" through social maneuvers. The GM decides the suspicious Gate Master is Standoffish, and Sean must make him Friendly. That's 3 shifts, plus 1 shift to get the Gate Master to induct Sean into the conspiracy. Sean must perform four tasks that gradually increase their trustworthiness in the Gate Master's eyes. Sean starts off by arranging to bump into the Gate Master a few times at the grocer's and on the street, introducing themselves and casually saying, "The news is all rubbish – things get done behind the scenes." Building rapport this way is represented with an opposed Communication (Persuasion) vs. Willpower (Self-Discipline) check, which Sean wins. The Gate Master now regards Sean with a Neutral attitude, as a smart local character. Next, Sean arranges to bump into him at the local watering hole, and buys him a few drinks. Sean's player, Howard, roleplays this well, getting the taciturn man to open up, and the GM decides no roll is required, and the Gate

Master (whose name is Jim, Sean learns) is now Open to Sean. When they meet again, Sean confesses to Jim that they know he's a member of the Shadow Masons, and that Sean considers this a good thing. "We need people willing to take charge, but stay humble, in the background," says Sean. This time, the test is Communication (Etiquette) vs Jim's Willpower (Faith); Sean narrowly succeeds, and the Gate Master is now Friendly. The GM decides that Jim makes the next move. "If you want to join us," says Jim, "You need to bring a freshly severed hand to us on the night of the next new moon." This infiltration may be trickier than Sean thought.

THE GRAND GESTURE

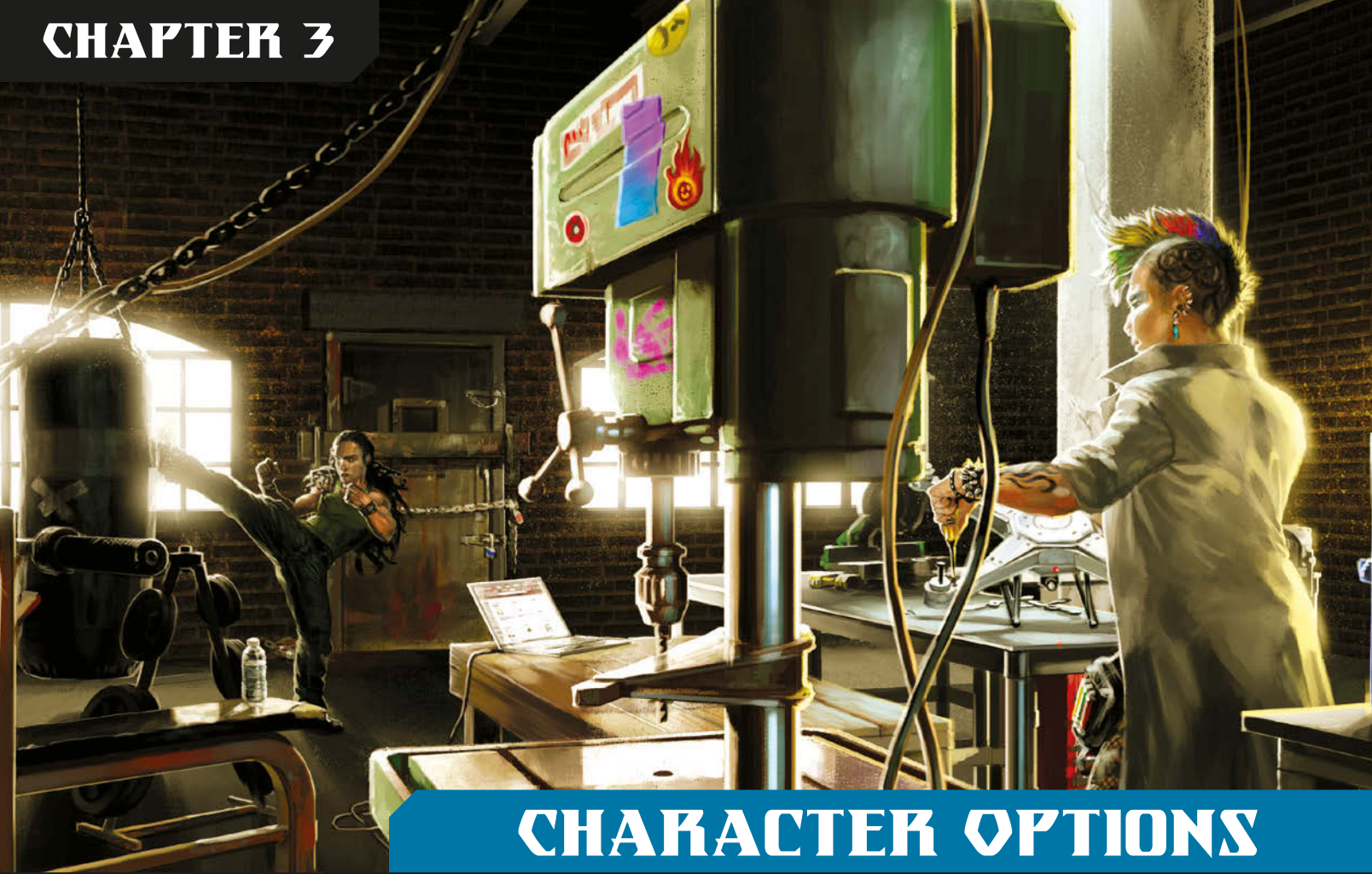
Instead of performing many small tasks to clear shifts, the GM may allow you to perform a single ambitious gesture intended to influence the NPC in one fell swoop. The grand gesture is an advanced test (see **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES**) representing any complex project that might win the NPC's favor. A grand gesture test has a success threshold of 3–5 (determined by the GM), multiplied by the number of shifts, with interval times and other details set by the GM. If you complete the gesture in time, you produce the desired attitude and response, but if you fall short, you get nothing.

EXAMPLE

Brian wants to join an elite security force, but to do so, he needs to graduate at the top of a grueling training course, the sort of program that Navy SEALs would recognize. By policy, the instructors are Hostile; to pass, he needs to make them Friendly by excelling at the tasks set before him over 2 weeks. That's 4 shifts, plus 1 shift to graduate. The GM decides this is a grand gesture, an advanced test with a success threshold of 20 (4 multiplied by 5 shifts) and each increment lasts a day and requires a different combat related attribute and focus. After some early setbacks, Brian manages to score 22 by day 14. He's now a member of a black ops mercenary company. If he'd washed out, he would have gained nothing.

OTHER ENCOUNTERS

Many encounters will feature a mix of action, exploration, and social elements. GMs should try to provide opportunities for characters to use their strengths even when the encounter doesn't directly play to them, so you can talk angry combatants down, or discover a secret to sway an NPC in a social encounter. There should always be multiple ways to succeed or fail. Apply your creativity and make each encounter your own.



CHARACTER OPTIONS

Focuses, talents, and specializations are the building blocks of your character. All provide ways to make your character unique.

Your character gets initial focuses and talents through the process of character creation, and will earn more of each by gaining levels in play. Focuses and talents provide game system benefits, but they also give you background and story hooks. Let's say you take the Hacking talent. Well, where did your character learn top-notch computer skills? Perhaps you have a degree in computer sciences, or learned to code and network systems as a hobby – and maybe you did something with those skills that will haunt you during the campaign. You can come up with anything you like, but answering such questions tells you more about your character.

Specializations can further customize your character. They represent advanced training and experience, so you do not start with any at level 1. You earn them at certain levels, and each one adds special talent ranks unavailable to characters without that specialization.

ABILITY FOCUSES

As noted in CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION, a focus is an area of expertise within a larger ability. A character with Communication 3 and the Deception focus is a good communicator in general, but excels at fooling others. Some focuses represent special knowledge (even when they aren't Intelligence focuses), and at times the GM may decide to give extra infor-

mation to characters with specific focuses. CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES discusses such situations.

If you have a focus, you get a +2 bonus when making a related ability test. If you are level 6 or higher, the focus also adds to the test's degree of success. The GM will usually let you know what focus applies to each test, but don't be afraid to ask if it isn't clear whether a focus applies. You can learn more about ability tests and how focuses apply in CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES. Descriptions of the ability focuses follow. The GM has final call on whether a focus applies to a given test.

Here is a complete list of focuses in *Modern AGE*. You may find new focuses in other AGE books.

ACCURACY FOCUSES

ASSAULT RIFLES: Proficiency with weapons in the Assault Rifles weapon group.

BLACK POWDER: Proficiency with weapons in the Black Powder weapon group.

BOWS: Proficiency with weapons in the Bows weapon group.

GRENADES: Proficiency with weapons in the Grenades weapon group.

LONGARMS: Proficiency with weapons in the Longarms weapon group.

PISTOLS: Proficiency with weapons in the Pistols weapon group.

SHOTGUNS: Proficiency with weapons in the Shotguns weapon group.

SMGs: Proficiency with weapons in the Submachine Guns weapon group.

THROWN: Proficiency with weapons in the Thrown weapon group.

COMMUNICATION FOCUSES

ANIMAL HANDLING: Interacting with and caring for animals.

BARGAINING: Negotiating with others and making deals.

DECEPTION: Lying to and tricking those less mentally adept than you.

DISGUISE: Altering your appearance to look like someone else or a different class of person.

ETIQUETTE: Knowing the social niceties of various cultures.

EXPRESSION: Conveying your thoughts and ideas effectively through indirect means, such as letters, op-ed newspaper articles, podcasts, vlogs, and social media.

GAMBLING: Playing and profiting from games of chance.

INVESTIGATION: Interviewing people for information and finding and deciphering clues.

LEADERSHIP: Guiding, directing, and inspiring others.

PERFORMING: Entertaining an audience with an artistic talent.

PERSUASION: Convincing others to agree with you.

SEDUCTION: Using your allure at its best in the game of love.

CONSTITUTION FOCUSES

PROPELLING: Moving a muscle-powered vehicle such as a bicycle or rowboat

RUNNING: Moving quickly in both short sprints and long-distance hauls.

STAMINA: Enduring fatigue, disease, and privation.

SWIMMING: Moving across water and staying afloat.

TOLERANCE: Withstanding the effects of potentially toxic substances, whether consumed recreationally or after involuntary exposure.

DEXTERITY FOCUSES

ACROBATICS: Executing gymnastic, balancing, and tumbling maneuvers.

CRAFTING: Making items with manual skills, like woodworking, sculpting, leather working, glassblowing, and so forth.

DRIVING: Pushing the performance of everyday motorized vehicles like cars, SUVs, motorcycles, or powerboats.

FORGERY: Making false documents, doctored photos, or other ersatz items look authentic.

INITIATIVE: Acting quickly in tense situations.

PILOTING: Operating complex vehicles like aircraft, military drones, yachts, or tanks.

RIDING: Directing a mount such as a horse or pony.

SABOTAGE: Disarming or defeating the purpose of mechanical devices such as locks or traps.

SAILING: Operating and maintaining a sailing ship.

SLEIGHT OF HAND: Using manual dexterity to trick others, hide things, and pick pockets.

STEALTH: Sneaking about quietly and out of sight.

FIGHTING FOCUSES

BRAWLING: Proficiency with weapons in the Brawling weapon group.

FLEXIBLE WEAPONS: Proficiency with weapons in the Flexible weapon group.

GRAPPLING: Proficiency with unarmed techniques intended to immobilize and restrain.

HEAVY BLADES: Proficiency with weapons in the Heavy Blades weapon group.

LIGHT BLADES: Proficiency with weapons in the Light Blades weapon group.

LONG HAFTED: Proficiency with weapons in the Long-Hafted weapon group.

SHORT HAFTED: Proficiency with weapons in the Short-Hafted weapon group.

INTELLIGENCE FOCUSES

ANTHROPOLOGY: Knowing the traditions and beliefs of various cultures.

ART: Knowing about artistic movements, styles, artists, and works in any of the fine arts.

ASTRONOMY: Knowing about the nature and phenomena of planets, stars, and outer space.

BIOLOGY: Knowing natural flora and fauna.

BUSINESS: Knowing how to run a business, as well as the names and practices of famous entrepreneurs and their companies.

CARTOGRAPHY: Making and reading maps and blueprints.

CHEMISTRY: Knowing and making chemical substances according to their properties.

COMPUTERS: Using computers and other smart electronic devices like smartphones and tablets.

CRYPTOGRAPHY: Creating and deciphering codes and ciphers.

CURRENT AFFAIRS: Knowing about politics, newsworthy events, and popular culture.

EARTH SCIENCES: Knowing about the constitution and behavior of the earth and its atmosphere.

ENGINEERING: Knowing the practicalities of construction, building, and invention.

ELECTRONICS: Knowing and making electronic devices and their operation.

EVALUATION: Knowing the value of goods, works of art, and other valuables.

EXPLOSIVES: Identifying, using, and safely handling explosives, as well as understanding their effects and detonation methods.

HISTORY: Knowing important events, places, items, and personalities from the past.

HOMEMAKING: Cooking, cleaning, and managing a household with efficiency and style.

LAW: Knowing about codes, regulations, and different legal proceedings of all levels of the judiciary and law enforcement.

MEDICINE: Tending to the wounded and sick, and understanding medical and anatomical knowledge.

NAVIGATION: Planning and following a route from one place

OPTIONAL: SPECIAL FOCUSES

Mad scientists, ingenious tinkerers, and heroic mechanics are common character types in *Modern AGE*, but they spend little time on-screen working on their creations, and are usually depicted with a broad ability to make numerous gadgets and repair any machine. Action heroes demonstrate all-around athleticism instead of basing what they do around being champion sprinters. Many (though not all) focuses are therefore broad, even when they cover fields where, in real life, extreme specialists dominate certain areas.

If you wish for your character to be able to make more specific items, such as specializing in assembling RC drones, or to otherwise excel in a specialized field, you can create a focus with a narrower scope, but you must have the GM's authorization. The GM chooses the most appropriate ability for the focus. After that, you must take up the challenge of bringing the focus into play, though a good GM will remember your focus choices and try to make them relevant.

to another, interpreting maps and geographical data, and figuring out where you are.

OCCULTISM: Knowing about the supernatural and phenomena that science cannot explain, whether they are real or not. For any focus necessary to use a special power, see **CHAPTER 6: EXTRAORDINARY POWERS**.

PHYSICS: Knowing about the nature and properties of time, space, matter, and energy.

RESEARCH: Conducting a systematic investigation, usually using records, archives, and books.

SECURITY: Knowing about different security devices, systems, protocols, and personnel.

TACTICS: Knowing strategy, tactics, and famous applications thereof, both for military and law enforcement.

THEOLOGY: Knowing religious traditions and practices.

TINKERING: Fixing machinery and devices to restore them to normal or operating conditions or modifying them to exceed their capacities.

PERCEPTION FOCUSES

EMPATHY: Discerning the feelings and emotions of others.

HEARING: Using your auditory sense.

SEARCHING: Finding things that are hidden or obscured, such as secret compartments.

SEEING: Using your visual sense.

SMELLING: Using your olfactory sense.

TASTING: Using your olfactory sense.

TOUCHING: Using your tactile sense.

TRACKING: Following tracks and other signs of passage.

STRENGTH FOCUSES

CLIMBING: Scaling walls and other vertical obstacles.

INTIMIDATION: Overwhelming others with physical presence and threats.

JUMPING: Springing and leaping.

MACHINING: Making heavy-duty items such as archaic weapons and motor parts using heavy machinery and tools.

MIGHT: Performing feats of raw power, such as lifting or holding up heavy objects.

STEERING: Directing and guiding heavy or cumbersome vehicles or machinery.

WILLPOWER FOCUSES

COURAGE: Overcoming fear in the face of adversity.

FAITH: Deriving inner strength through spiritual or moral belief.

MORALE: Maintaining good spirits and confidence in yourself or your group. NPCs tend to use this focus more than PCs.

SELF-DISCIPLINE: Focusing your mental energy or controlling your impulses and emotions.

IMPROVING FOCUSES

Focuses grant a flat +2 bonus to ability tests. For more powerful characters, that measure of focus is not always enough to win the day or to set your character apart from others with similar training. Therefore, at higher levels, characters can take a focus for a second time to further improve their bonus on those rolls. Starting at level 11, when you would gain a new focus, you may instead select a focus you already have, increasing your bonus with that focus to +3 instead of the previous +2. Underline the focus on your sheet to indicate you've chosen it a second time.

Remember that you cannot select a focus from the same ability two levels in a row.

TALENTS

Your character has areas of natural aptitude and special training called talents. These provide a way to customize your character that goes beyond their background, making choosing talents an important part of developing your character.

Each talent is divided into three degrees: Novice, Expert, and Master. (Note that "Expert" replaces the "Journeyman" degree in other Adventure Game Engine games, and they should be considered equivalent.) Each of these provides a game system benefit. You have to be a Novice in a talent before you can become an Expert, and an Expert before you can become a Master.

You acquire your initial talents at character creation, from your background, profession, and drive. You gain new talents and new degrees by gaining levels. Most talents also have requirements, like specific focuses or weapon groups. Unless you acquired the talent at character creation, you cannot take the talent unless you meet these requirements.

When talents are listed for a character, the standard format is talent first, followed by the degree achieved in parentheses. Command (Expert), for example, or Speed Demon (Novice).

A catalog of available talents follows, using this format:

TALENT NAME

REQUIREMENT: You cannot take this talent unless you have the specified requirement(s). You do not need to meet the requirements for a talent at level 1, but only after gaining new levels and learning new talents.

A short description of the talent.

NOVICE: The benefit gained when you become a Novice.

EXPERT: The benefit gained when you become an Expert.

MASTER: The benefit gained when you become a Master.

TALENT DESCRIPTIONS

ANIMAL TRAINING

REQUIREMENT: None

You know how to train animals.

NOVICE: You know the basics of dealing with animals. With a week of training, you can teach an animal to follow a simple one-word command like “heel,” “follow,” or “attack.” You can teach a single animal a number of commands equal to your Communication.

EXPERT: You can train animals to follow more complex commands, like “guard this place” or “return to me when strangers approach.” Teaching a complex command takes 2 weeks of training and the total number of commands a single animal can learn is equal to your Communication + 2.

MASTER: Your training can turn animals into prime examples of their kind. With a month of training, you can increase an animal’s Dexterity or Strength by 1. It also gains the Willpower (Morale) focus. An animal can receive such training only once.

ARCHERY STYLE

REQUIREMENT: Accuracy (Bows) focus

You are experienced with bows and crossbows.

NOVICE: When you take the Aim action, your next attack with a bow or crossbow inflicts +1 damage in addition to the normal benefits of aiming.

EXPERT: When you attack from hiding with a bow or crossbow and fail, you remain hidden. If the attack is successful, you can immediately make a new Dexterity (Stealth) test if there is cover within 4 yards and you have not moved yet in your turn. You can enjoy each benefit only once in the same combat.

MASTER: When shooting a bow or crossbow, you can perform the Called Shot, Hamstring, and Maim stunts for 1 SP less than their normal cost.

ADVANCED MEDICINE

REQUIREMENT: Intelligence (Medicine) focus

You can repair broken bodies and treat the roots of a disease.

NOVICE: You react to unexpected complications when treating a patient. You can re-roll any dice with a result of 1 or 2 when making an Intelligence (Medicine) test, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

EXPERT: Your skill in surgery can save lives from the brink of death. You can operate on another character with the proper tools and/or location for 1 hour. After the operation, the treated character recovers an amount of Health equal to 10 + your total Intelligence (Medicine) bonus. In Gritty games, the treated character must rest for at least 6 hours after the operation, or the recovered Health is lost.

MASTER: You can remedy the crippling effects of most injuries. When you use the First Aid action and roll doubles, you can spend SP to remove a special effect caused by a hazard or another injury. If the special effect is a penalty, each SP spent reduces the penalty by 1. Otherwise 1 SP removes the condition entirely. If you treat a character with a 1-hour operation as above, you do not need to spend any SP. In Gritty games, this relief lasts until the end of the encounter, at which point the effect returns and can be removed only with a 1-hour operation as described above.

AFFLUENT

REQUIREMENT: None

You do not have to worry about your expenses.

NOVICE: You have access to comfortable savings. When you select this talent, increase your Resources by +2.

EXPERT: You have a sterling credit record. You may add 2 to your Resources score when comparing your score with an item’s cost to purchase it automatically, without a test, or to determine whether the purchase will deplete your Resources. You can enjoy this benefit only once per game session, and you must choose whether it applies to an automatic purchase or to avoid depleting your Resources. Additionally, when selecting this talent degree, increase your Resources by +1.

MASTER: You have an eye for market opportunities. You can re-roll a failed Resources test, but you must keep the result of the second roll. Additionally, when selecting this talent degree, increase your Resources by +1.

ARTISTRY

REQUIREMENTS: Communication 1 or higher and the Dexterity (Crafting) focus or Communication (Expression) focus

You can create fine works of art.

NOVICE: Choose a field of visual (painting, sculpture, digital illustration, 2D or 3D animation, video editing, photography, and so on) or literary (poetry, fiction, scriptwriting, copywriting, journalism, and the like) arts. You are trained in the use of the tools and tricks of your trade and can use the Dexterity (Crafting) or Communication (Expression) focuses to create works of art. The GM determines the time and TN of the test depending on your intentions, and the Stunt Die determines your work’s quality if you succeed. You can sell your work if you know a buyer, giving you a temporary bonus to Resources tests equal to half the result of the Stunt Die (minimum 1); this bonus disappears upon your first successful Resources test to purchase something, or at the end of the current story if

you have not used it. Alternatively, you can waive the bonus to Resources and gain a Reputation instead. This Reputation fades over time if you don't produce any other works of similar quality. Any Reputation derived from your art fades away after a number of months equal to the result of the Stunt Die.

EXPERT: You grow as an artist, either deepening your mastery of your craft or diversifying your talents. You learn the techniques of a new artistic field or gain a +1 bonus to ability tests to create works of art in a field you are trained in. This bonus also applies to the Stunt Die result to determine the quality of your work.

MASTER: You become an undisputed master in your craft. You learn the tools and tricks of a number of artistic fields equal to your Communication, or select one of the fields you are trained in and add your Willpower to the Stunt Die to determine the quality of your works. Upon successfully creating a work of art, you can re-roll the Stunt Die to determine its quality, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

ATTRACTIVE

REQUIREMENT: None

You have that "it factor" that makes heads turn.

NOVICE: Your presence is as stunning upon a second impression as it was the first. You can use the Making an Entrance social stunt a second time at any point in an encounter. Also, if an NPC would be attracted to you, their initial attitude is one step more favorable.

EXPERT: You know how to best exploit your looks. You can perform the Flirt social stunt for 3 SP instead of its normal cost, and the target of your efforts can have a Neutral attitude instead of Open.

MASTER: Every move you make captures the eyes and imaginations of others. When interacting with characters that would be attracted to you, you can re-roll a failed Communication (Deception, Performing, Persuasion, or Seduction) test, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

BURGLARY

REQUIREMENT: Dexterity 2 or higher

Private property is a foreign concept. You know how to bypass security to enter a place and take anything that strikes your fancy.

NOVICE: You know your way around security systems. When you succeed at an Intelligence (Security) test to study a lock, alarm, guards, or any part of a security system or protocol, the GM provides you with one more piece of information.

EXPERT: Security measures cannot stop you. If you fail a Dexterity (Sabotage) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

MASTER: No valuable can escape your notice. If you fail a Perception (Searching) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

COMMAND

REQUIREMENT: Communication 2 or higher

You are a natural leader.

NOVICE: Your presence inspires your allies. If you take a major action to make a heroic gesture (point forward, shout a battle cry, wave a flag, and so forth), your allies gain a +1 bonus to Willpower (Courage) and Willpower (Morale) tests for the rest of the encounter.

EXPERT: Your allies follow your lead. Any NPCs that you lead gain a +1 bonus when rolling for initiative.

MASTER: When you stand firm, your allies stand with you. When you lead NPCs in an encounter, they do not have to take a Willpower (Morale) test until more than two-thirds of your side's combatants are out of the fight (dead or incapacitated). If you leave the fight or fall in battle, this benefit is lost.

CONTACTS

REQUIREMENT: Communication 1 or higher

You know people, sometimes in the unlikelyst places.

NOVICE: You can attempt to make a contact out of an NPC with a Neutral or better attitude toward you with a successful Communication (Persuasion) test. The GM will set the target number based on the likelihood of you knowing the NPC or having mutual friends. The more distant the NPC's origin or social class from yours, the more difficult the test will be. A contact's attitude shifts one step in your favor, and they will readily provide information without a test, as long as it wouldn't harm them. They will usually not perform other favors without further persuasion.

EXPERT: Once you've established a contact, you can try to get a favor with a single successful Communication (Persuasion) test, regardless of their attitude toward you and without engaging in a complex social interaction. The target number is based on the nature of the favor and whether it puts the contact in any danger.

MASTER: You can turn an acquaintance into an ally with a show of loyalty. If you do a significant favor for an established contact, they will automatically become Very Friendly, and any potential risk in the favors you ask of them will not affect the target number of the Communication (Persuasion) test from the Expert degree. If they're already Very Friendly, they become zealously loyal; you do not need to make an ability test to ask favors of them, regardless of any danger involved, and the GM can use your ally to provide prompts if you become stuck in the course of a story, in the form of unsolicited advice or favors. These allies' attitudes can drop if they're not treated well, but never fade with the passage of time. You can drift apart for a decade and they'll be as loyal as when you last met.

DUAL WEAPON STYLE

REQUIREMENT: Dexterity 2 or higher

You can fight in hand-to-hand combat with a weapon in your main hand (your primary weapon) and another in your off hand (your secondary weapon). Neither can be a two-handed weapon, and the secondary weapon is considered to have a Minimum Strength 2 higher than normal (you'd need Strength 1 to use a short sword as a secondary weapon, for example). Unless otherwise stated, your attacks come from the primary weapon.

NOVICE: Wielding two weapons can aid you in attack or defense. If you take the Activate action, you can gain either a

+1 bonus on your melee attack rolls or a +1 Defense bonus vs. melee attacks until the end of the encounter. You can switch the bonus you are taking with another Activate action.

EXPERT: You can perform the Lightning Attack stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3, but the extra attack must come from your secondary weapon.

MASTER: You can overwhelm opponents with blows from both weapons. If you make a melee attack with your primary weapon and you are not charging, you can make another attack with your secondary weapon as a minor action. The second attack cannot generate stunt points, and you add only half of your Strength (rounded down) to damage.

EMERGENCY CARE

REQUIREMENT: Intelligence 1 or higher

You can treat wounds and illnesses in the field.

NOVICE: You have trained as an emergency medical technician, and your aid is swift and sure. First Aid is a minor action for you.

EXPERT: If you're not a certified paramedic, you should be. When you use the First Aid action, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to $(\text{Stunt Die} \times 2) + \text{Intelligence}$.

MASTER: You can patch up the most grievous wounds. When you use the First Aid action, your ally gets back an amount of Health equal to $(\text{Stunt Die} \times 3) + \text{Intelligence}$.

GRITTY: In Gritty mode, you heal Stunt Die (no multiplier) + Intelligence Health points at Expert tier, and $(\text{Stunt Die} \times 2) + \text{Intelligence}$ Health points at Master tier.

EXPERTISE (FOCUS)

REQUIREMENT: You must have the appropriate focus

You are a specialist in your field.

NOVICE: You deepen your knowledge or skill with a specific focus. Select an ability focus you know and choose a narrower task or field. For example, you can choose "hacking" for Intelligence (Computers) or "ghosts" for Willpower (Courage). You gain a +1 bonus for ability tests covered by the narrower task. You can select this talent multiple times, each time applicable to a different focus. For example, Expertise (Computers, Hacking) and Expertise (Courage, Ghosts) each count as two different talents. You can choose Expertise only once for each particular focus.

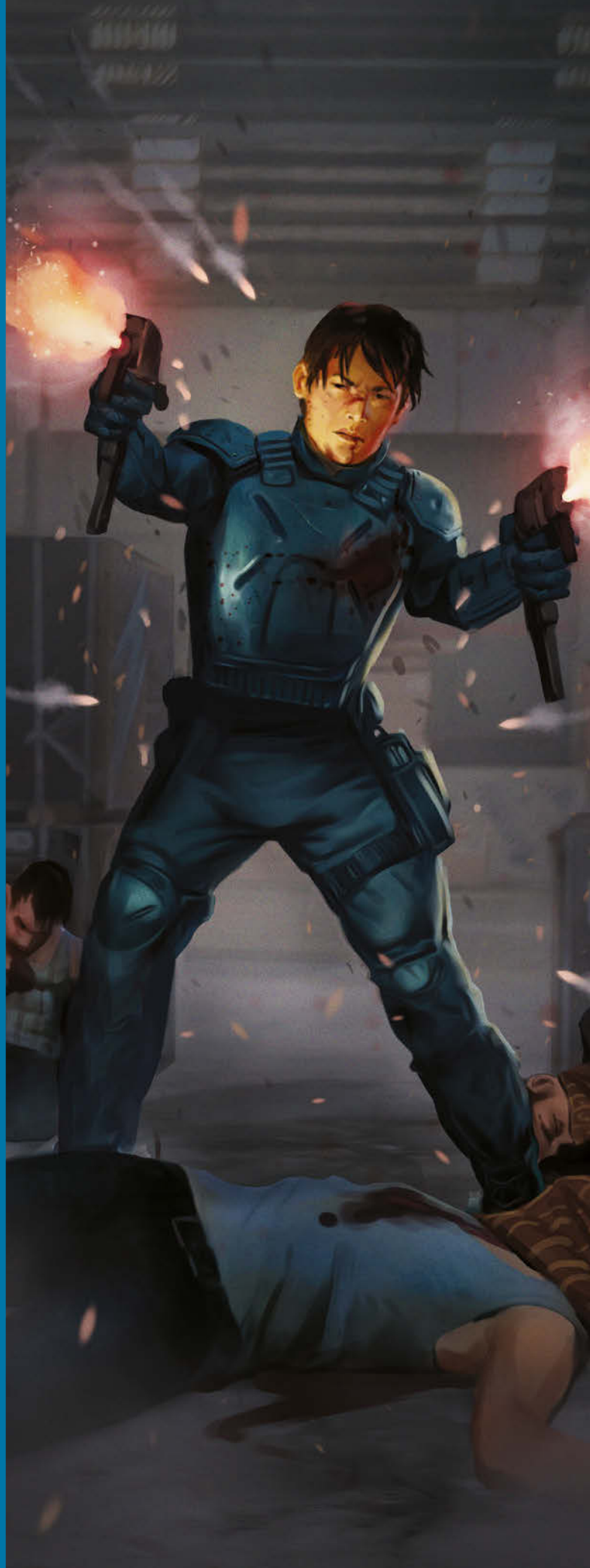
EXPERT: You can apply your expertise with confidence. If you fail an ability test covered by your chosen expertise, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

MASTER: Pick one type of stunt (action, exploration, or social) that is relevant for your chosen expertise. You gain a +1 bonus when generating stunt points with ability tests of your chosen expertise.

FAST FURY

REQUIREMENT: Dexterity (Driving, Riding, or Piloting) focus

You're an aggressive driver, pilot, or rider, unafraid to trade paint, dog an enemy, or strike from the saddle. This talent



must be purchased separately for living mounts, aircraft, and land or water vehicles.

NOVICE: You know how to line up a target. When making a ram attack or attacking with a weapon while in your vehicle or atop your mount, you enjoy a +1 bonus to attack rolls.

EXPERT: You use the mobility of your vehicle or mount to attack with devilish agility. When you're in a vehicle or mount, you can make an attack roll at any point of your movement. Normally you'd have to attack at the beginning or end of your movement. During a chase (see **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES**), you can attack another participant as if their Chase Total was 2 points closer to yours than it really is.

MASTER: They better get out of the way! You gain +1 SP whenever you roll doubles on an attack roll while driving, piloting, or riding, or on any test you make to direct your vehicle or mount.

FREERUNNING

REQUIREMENTS: Dexterity 2, Dexterity (Acrobatics) focus

The roofs, alcoves, and catwalks of the city are your playground.

NOVICE: Every move you make is part of one fluid motion. Using the Move action to stand up, climb, dismount, and the like does not reduce your Speed. Furthermore, whenever you're in a chase on foot (see the chase rules in **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES**) add +1 to your Chase Total, in addition to the Stunt Die result, whenever you succeed on a Chase Test.

EXPERT: When you run, gravity is merely an inconvenience. Terrain-based hazards do not reduce your Speed. When you fall, if you succeed at a Dexterity (Acrobatics) test with a TN determined by the GM based on height and nearby surfaces, you suffer only half damage. You may also use Dexterity (Acrobatics) instead of Constitution (Running) for Chase Tests on foot, as long as you're in a built up urban environment, or another location where rapid climbing and bounding would be useful.

MASTER: Impressive acrobatics are just the way you naturally move. You can re-roll any die result of 1 on each die in Dexterity (Acrobatics), Stamina (Running), and Strength (Climbing, Jumping) tests, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

GRAPPLING STYLE

REQUIREMENT: Fighting (Grappling) focus

You can subdue and restrain your opponents before they know what's happening.

NOVICE: You are slippery and swift. If you fail an opposed Fighting (Grappling) test to avoid being grappled (as per the Grapple stunt's description), you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

EXPERT: If you successfully hit an opponent with an unarmed Stunt Attack action and you choose a stunt from the grappling category, you acquire 1 additional SP to apply to additional stunts.

MASTER: You can perform the Pin action stunt for 3 SP instead of the usual 4. In addition, your penalty to Defense when using the Grapple and Pin stunts is halved.

HACKING

REQUIREMENTS: Intelligence (Computers) and Intelligence (Security) focuses

If it's stored in a computer, it's yours for the taking.

NOVICE: Everything you need to know is a couple of keystrokes away. When you succeed at an Intelligence (Cryptography) or Intelligence (Security) test, the GM can provide you with an extra item of information about the subject. Also, you can use the Intelligence (Computers) focus instead of Communication (Investigation) and Intelligence (Research) if the information you seek can be found online and you have a means to connect. This also means that you consider Intelligence (Computers) as a primary focus in an investigation for any task where Communication (Investigation) and Intelligence (Research) are primary focuses.

EXPERT: Security codes and countermeasures melt like butter under your efforts. If you fail a Dexterity (Sabotage) (electronics only) or Intelligence (Computers) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

MASTER: You know all the shortcuts in electronics and programming. When you make an advanced test (see **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES**) using Intelligence (Cryptography), Intelligence (Computers), and Dexterity (Sabotage) (electronics only), add +2 to the result of the Stunt Die for the purpose of reaching the test's threshold. You can perform the Cover Your Tracks exploration stunt for 2 SP in tests involving the above focuses.

HURLED WEAPON STYLE

REQUIREMENT: None

You are adept with weapons you throw by hand.

NOVICE: Your accuracy is uncanny. You gain a +1 bonus on attack rolls with weapons from the Thrown Weapons and Grenades group.

EXPERT: You can grab a throwing weapon in an instant. You Ready a throwing weapon or grenade as a free action instead of a minor action.

MASTER: You master your own leverage to throw further. You can add your Accuracy to the range of throwing weapons and grenades.

IMPROVISATION

REQUIREMENT: Intelligence 1 or Willpower 1 or higher

You can come up with the next best solution to a problem.

NOVICE: You can do a little bit of everything. You can make an ability test that requires a specific focus, even if you don't have that focus. You don't gain a focus bonus to your roll and don't generate SP on such rolls, but you are always considered to have a primary focus in investigations.

EXPERT: Anything in your hands is a weapon or a tool. When you perform the Whatever's Handy combat stunt, the penalty of your improvised weapon is reduced by 1 and lasts 2d6 rounds before breaking. If improvising a tool instead of a weapon, you can perform tests that require the tool, but you don't generate SP when doing so.

MASTER: You can turn a failure into a success. If you roll doubles on a failed test, you generate a number of SP equal to the result of the Stunt Die -2 (minimum 1). The test still fails, but you can try to salvage the situation with a stunt that you can perform with the SP available through this talent. Unfortunately, your stunt cannot achieve your intended original action. The GM determines if a stunt is too similar to the original action to use this talent rank, or is permitted.

INSPIRE

REQUIREMENT: Communication 2 or higher

Your words and presence motivate others into action.

NOVICE: You inspire calm and courage in your friends and allies. If you are conscious and they are within sight of you, any allies gain a +1 bonus to all Willpower-related tests.

EXPERT: With you around, things don't seem as bad. Once per encounter, you can spend 2 minor actions to offer words of inspiration to your allies. All who hear these words are healed for 1d6 + your Communication, and gain a +2 bonus on their next test. The Health your allies recover in Gritty games is only equal to your Communication.

MASTER: You can inspire greatness in others. If you are conscious and they are within sight of you, any ally generating stunt points generates +1 SP.

INTRIGUE

REQUIREMENT: Communication 2 or higher

You are a master of secrets.

NOVICE: You understand how to navigate the waters of social situations. Choose one of the following Communication focuses: Etiquette, Deception, or Seduction. If you fail a Communication test with your chosen focus, you can re-roll it but you must keep the result of the second roll.

EXPERT: You can squeeze information out from the most reluctant sources. If the focus you chose in the Novice degree is considered a tangential focus during an investigation (see CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES), you ignore the +1 increase to the TN of the test. In addition, if you use the focus you chose in the Novice degree to successfully complete a task in a complex social interaction, you clear two shifts instead of only one.

MASTER: The secrets you know can build or ruin anyone's good standing. You can perform the Cast Out and Oozing Confidence social stunts for 1 SP lower than their normal cost. In addition, you can use Oozing Confidence to benefit another character.

KNOWLEDGE

REQUIREMENT: Intelligence 2 or higher

You have an inquisitive mind and absorb facts easily.

NOVICE: You have studied hard. When you make a successful Intelligence test with a knowledge focus, the GM should give you an extra piece of information on the topic. A knowledge focus is any Intelligence focus with a description that starts with "Knowing," such as Anthropology and Physics. The GM determines the additional information and it may or may not be pertinent to the main question at hand.



EXPERT: You are an accomplished researcher. When making Intelligence (Research) tests as part of an advanced test (see CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES), you gain a +1 bonus to the result of each Stunt Die.

MASTER: While your knowledge is vast, you have two areas of particular specialization. Pick any two of your knowledge focuses. When making tests using those focuses, you can re-roll a failed test but you must keep the result of the second roll.

LINGUISTICS

REQUIREMENT: Intelligence 1 or higher

You can learn new languages easily. When you learn a new language, you learn to both speak and read it.

Most campaign settings in *Modern AGE* are in the world as we know it or some variation of it. The languages available will be mostly the same as those in the world around you, but your campaign setting may have additional, fictional languages. If so, your GM will let you know which ones are options for this talent.

NOVICE: You learn an additional language.



EXPERT: You learn two additional languages. You can also imitate a specific dialect with a successful Communication (Performing) test.

MASTER: You learn three additional languages. Furthermore, you can express yourself in one of the languages you learned through this talent with native proficiency, without the slightest hint of your own accent.

LIVING ON THE FRINGE

REQUIREMENT: Communication 1 or higher

The edges of mainstream society are your hunting grounds.

NOVICE: There is very little information available about you. Other characters suffer a penalty of -2 to any tests to find information about you or your activities. This stacks with the Cover Your Tracks exploration stunt.

EXPERT: You know where the black market sets up shop. Once per session, you can gain a +2 bonus on a Resources test by using black market channels, but your Resources are depleted by 1 regardless of the test result and the cost of the item.

MASTER: You are a true denizen of the underworld. The penalty for tests to find information about you is increased by an additional -1, and when you buy in the black market, your Resources may be depleted following normal rules.

MAKER

REQUIREMENT: Any manufacturing focus

You don't need stores when you can make things using a manufacturing focus. A manufacturing focus is any focus with a description that starts with "Making" or "Knowing and Making," such as Dexterity (Crafting) and Intelligence (Chemistry).

NOVICE: Do-it-yourself is your way of life. You can use a manufacturing focus to make any item with the appropriate tools and access to a workshop. Making an item is an advanced test using your manufacturing focus with a TN equal to the item's cost - 2 (see CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT for item costs and CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES for advanced tests). The GM determines the success threshold of the test based on how complicated the item in question is. An easy item like a table or a LED flashlight can have a success threshold of 5, while a more complex item like a sculpture or a clock can have a success threshold of 10 or 15. Truly complex items like cellphones and computers can have a threshold as high as 25. Each roll for the test represents 6 hours of work, which need not be consecutive, and you can stop making the item for days and resume the advanced test later (just make sure to note how many successes you have achieved toward the threshold). Raw materials can be an award or can be purchased with a Resources test with a TN equal to the item's cost - 5.

EXPERT: Your workmanship is reliable and steady. If you fail a test with a manufacturing focus, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

MASTER: When you perform an advanced test with a manufacturing focus, you gain a +1 bonus to the result of each Stunt Die for the purpose of reaching the success threshold.

MISDIRECTION

REQUIREMENT: Communication (Deception) focus

You can sow confusion among friends and foes alike.

NOVICE: You confound people so much they cannot react appropriately. As a major action, you can make a Communication (Deception) test opposed by an opponent's Willpower (Self-Discipline); if you succeed, your opponent cannot use stunts until the end of your next turn.

EXPERT: Your targets become too focused on you to do anything else. When you use the Over Here! exploration talent, the bonus your allies gain from the stunt is +2 instead of +1, and you also gain a +1 bonus.

MASTER: Your guile can help you through sticky situations. When you use a Communication focus in combat and roll doubles, you gain +1 SP.

OBSERVATION

REQUIREMENT: Perception 2 or higher

You have an eye for detail.

NOVICE: You notice things others do not. Choose one of the following Perception focuses: Empathy or Seeing. If you fail a Perception test with your chosen focus, you can re-roll it but you must keep the result of the second roll.

EXPERT: Analysis of your observation often leads to insight. On a successful Perception test, you can spend 2 SP to make a second, immediate Perception test with the same TN but with a different focus than the first one, and gain additional information (if any) from a successful test with the second focus. This includes additional information when you uncover the clue within a lead.

MASTER: Nothing escapes your scrutiny. On a successful Perception test, you can spend 2 SP and gain a +2 bonus to all Perception tests on the same object or subject as the first test.

ORATORY

REQUIREMENT: Communication (Persuasion) focus

You are a skilled public speaker who can sway others with your words.

NOVICE: You know how to work a crowd. If you fail a Communication (Persuasion) test when trying to convince a group (not an individual), you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

EXPERT: Your words are like magic. Each time you perform the Sway the Crowd social stunt, you affect three additional people instead of one.

MASTER: You can agitate a crowd. If you make a successful Communication (Persuasion) test when addressing a group and the result of your Stunt Die is 5 or 6, you rouse them to immediate action. You can't necessarily control what they do, though you can try with Communication (Leadership) tests, but they take your words to heart and act on them.

OVERWHELM

REQUIREMENT: Fighting 2 or higher

In hand-to-hand combat, you are relentless and overbearing.

NOVICE: You can balance precision and lethality. When you make an attack with a melee weapon, you can take up to a -3 penalty on your attack roll to receive a corresponding bonus to your damage roll.

EXPERT: Your expertise makes you dangerous. When you succeed with an attack with a melee weapon, you can add your focus for that weapon to your damage total.

MASTER: You shatter your opponent's defense with brutal or relentless attacks. By spending 3 SP after a successful attack, your target must make a Strength (Might) test opposed by your attack roll, if they fail, they suffer a -2 penalty to Defense until the end of your next round.

PARTY ANIMAL

REQUIREMENTS: Communication and Constitution 1 or higher

You take your fun seriously.

NOVICE: You can drink other people under the table. You gain +1 to Constitution (Tolerance) tests.

EXPERT: You are intimate with the party crowd. Choose one of the following focuses: Communication (Seduction) or Perception (Empathy). If you fail a test with your chosen focus, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

MASTER: When you're having a good time, (you think) you're invincible! Choose one of the following social stunts: Flirt or Benefit of the Doubt. You can perform that stunt for 1 SP less than its normal cost.

PERFORMANCE

REQUIREMENT: Communication (Performing) focus

You have a natural talent for the performing arts.

NOVICE: Choose three performing arts (playing a musical instrument, singing, acting, dancing, miming, stand-up comedy, juggling, or any other art performed in front of a crowd). You are an accomplished performer in your chosen arts. In addition, you may perform the From the Heart, and Sway the Crowd stunts for 1 SP less than their normal cost.

EXPERT: You can get the feel of a room and adapt accordingly. If you have 15 minutes to observe a crowd before performing or speaking in front of them, you gain a +1 bonus to any Communication-based tests to persuade or entertain them. You can also choose a number of individuals in the crowd equal to your Perception (minimum 1); at the end of the 15 minutes of observation you know their initial attitudes toward you and whether they changed at the end of your performance.

MASTER: When performing, you exude confidence and style. You may perform the With a Flourish exploration stunt while entertaining an audience for 3 SP instead of its usual cost of 5, and its effects last until the end of the day.

PINPOINT ATTACK

REQUIREMENTS: Accuracy or Fighting 1 or higher, and Dexterity 1 or higher

If you can see it, you can hit it. Hard.

NOVICE: You can strike where it hurts the most. Once per round, you can add 1d6 to the damage of a successful attack if your Dexterity is greater than your target's.

EXPERT: Your instinct is as sharp as your eyes. When you take the Aim action, the attack bonus you gain is +2 instead of +1.

MASTER: You can perform the Called Shot action stunt for 3 SP instead of its normal cost. You can also use it with any weapon, not just firearms.

PISTOL STYLE

REQUIREMENT: Accuracy (Pistols) focus

Between the quick and the dead, you tend toward the former.

NOVICE: You are deadlier when you're closer. You gain a +1 bonus to damage with pistols against targets within 6 yards.

EXPERT: Your weapon's small size helps you respond quickly to threats. You can roll your initiative with an Accuracy (Pistols) test instead of a Dexterity (Initiative) test if you have a pistol in your hand, or if it's holstered and you draw it as your first action. You can generate stunt points with this special test.

MASTER: Double-tap is the only way to be sure. When hitting a target with a pistol, you can add your Dexterity to the damage total. Each time you do this, the Capacity of your pistol (see CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES) is reduced by 1 until you reload, when it returns to its normal value.

PROTECT

REQUIREMENTS: Perception and Willpower 1 or higher

You are the shield that will protect your friends.

NOVICE: Your desire to protect others gives you speed. When you perform the Blockade action stunt, you can move up to 6 yards instead of 3.

EXPERT: You react quickly to put yourself between a friend and harm. When you perform the Guardian Angel action stunt, the amount of damage you take instead of your ally is equal to the number of SP spent + 2.

MASTER: You become the shadow of those who would hurt others. If you are standing next to an opponent and that opponent moves near one of your allies, you can move adjacent to the opponent before they finish their turn, even if it would surpass your Speed. Your Speed is 0 on your next turn.

QUICK REFLEXES

REQUIREMENT: Dexterity 2 or higher

You react to threats speedily and instinctively.

NOVICE: You can prepare yourself for action in an instant. Once per round, you can use Ready as a free action on your turn.

EXPERT: You can flip yourself up or drop down with lightning speed. You can go prone or stand up as a free action. (These normally can be done only as part of a Move action.)

MASTER: It is hard to get the drop on you. You may re-roll your initiative roll at the start of a combat encounter, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

RIFLE STYLE

REQUIREMENT: Accuracy (Longarms) focus or Accuracy (Assault Rifles) focus

A rifle in your hands is far more dangerous.

NOVICE: Countless hours at the range have taught you to fire accurately from a fixed position. If you are prone or can brace against a sturdy object such as a wall or ledge, you gain +1 to your attack roll. This stacks with the Aim action.

EXPERT: You trust in your weapon's power to punch through cover. The attack roll modifier for defender in light cover does not apply to your attacks with a longarm or assault rifle. This includes the penalty from the Human Shield action stunt.

MASTER: You push your weapon's range to the limit. Penalties to the attack roll due to range do not apply to your attacks with a longarm or assault rifle.

SCOUTING

REQUIREMENT: Dexterity 2 or higher

You are skilled at the art of reconnaissance.

NOVICE: You can use the lay of the land to your advantage. If you fail a Dexterity (Stealth) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

EXPERT: You know how to get the drop on your enemies. You can perform the Seize the Initiative stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 4.

MASTER: You are a skilled observer. If you fail a Perception (Seeing) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

SELF-DEFENSE STYLE

REQUIREMENT: Fighting (Brawling) focus

You are trained in martial arts that are focused on defense and deflection.

NOVICE: You use your opponent's momentum against them. When a melee attack misses you, you can use the Grapple action stunt as a reaction without spending any SP. In addition, you can perform the Knock Prone action stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2 against an opponent you have grappled.

EXPERT: Your grip is like a steel vise. If you fail a Fighting (Grappling) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll.



MASTER: You can counter your opponent with grace and skill. When you perform the Disarm stunt, you can keep the weapon. In addition, when you spend SP on Knock Prone after making a Fighting (Grappling) attack, you may automatically move your opponent 2 yards for no additional SP cost. You may increase this distance with the Skirmish stunt. The enemy falls prone after being moved.

SINGLE WEAPON STYLE

REQUIREMENT: Perception 2 or higher

You can fight effectively wielding only a single-handed melee weapon.

NOVICE: Fighting with a single weapon demands increased awareness. If you take the Activate action, you gain a +1 Defense bonus until the end of the encounter while fighting in this style.

EXPERT: You can create a whirling defensive wall with but a single weapon. Your bonus to Defense increases to +2 while fighting in this style.

MASTER: You know how to fight several enemies at once. Opponents making melee attacks against you never gain a bonus on their attack rolls for outnumbering you.

SPEED DEMON

REQUIREMENT: Dexterity (Driving), Dexterity (Riding), or Dexterity (Piloting) focus

Your extraordinary skill makes any mount or vehicle under your control almost an extension of yourself. This talent must be purchased separately for living mounts, aircraft, and land or water vehicles.

NOVICE: You are quick to get onto your new means of transportation. Mounting an animal or climbing into a vehicle (and starting it!) are free actions for you.

EXPERT: You push the performance of your means of transportation. When you control a mount or Standard Velocity vehicle, add +3 to its Speed. When controlling a vehicle with a higher Velocity class, add +1 to its Velocity.

MASTER: If you fail an ability test to control a mount or a vehicle, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the results of the second roll. In addition, if your means of transport is moving at half or more of its top Speed or Velocity while you act as its operator, you and your mount or vehicle both gain +2 to Defense.

STRIKING STYLE

REQUIREMENT: Fighting (Brawling) focus

Whether through intense training or raw talent, your fists leave a lasting impression.

NOVICE: Your hands are as tough as iron. When you attack with your fist, you inflict 1d6 damage instead of 1d3.

EXPERT: Your punch can drop the toughest opponents. You can perform the Knock Prone stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2 when attacking with your fists or brawling aids.

MASTER: You can perform the Brutal Strike action stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2 when attacking unarmed.

TACTICAL AWARENESS

REQUIREMENTS: Dexterity and Perception 1 or higher

You move in combat calmly and expertly.

NOVICE: You can seemingly attack from all directions. On foot, you can take the Melee Attack or Ranged Attack action at any point of your movement. (Normally, you'd have to attack at the beginning or end of your movement.)

EXPERT: You have eyes in the back of your head. When you perform the Take One for the Team exploration stunt, you take only half the damage from a trap or hazard and your ally remains unscathed.

MASTER: You are hard to pin down in combat. Opponents do not gain an attack bonus for outnumbering you in melee. If you also have the Master degree in the Single Weapon Style, your Defense bonus increases to +3 when fighting in that style.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

REQUIREMENT: Intelligence 2 or higher

You can bring the weight of your knowledge focus to bear on any situation. A knowledge focus is any Intelligence focus with a description that begins with "Knowing."

NOVICE: You can do the thing, in theory. You can attempt a test using a knowledge focus related to the test at hand, but with a -1 penalty (e.g., using Intelligence (Security) instead of Dexterity (Sabotage) to bypass an alarm). If this would be a tangential investigation focus, you do not suffer the +1 increase in TN.

EXPERT: You leverage every bit of trivia for clues. You can perform the Breakthrough exploration stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 3.

MASTER: When you succeed at an ability test with a knowledge focus, you gain a +1 bonus to the result of each Stunt Die on tests using related focuses until the time or venue change. For example, Intelligence (Law) can benefit Communication (Oratory) tests in a courtroom, or an Intelligence (Medicine) test can benefit an Accuracy (Surgery) test.

TWO-HANDED STYLE

REQUIREMENTS: Strength 3 or higher and Fighting 1 or higher

You are deadly with two-handed melee weapons.

NOVICE: You can force foes to yield ground. When you hit with a melee attack with a two-handed weapon, you can move the target 2 yards in any direction. If the weapon is from the Long-Hafted weapon group, you treat opponents standing up to 4 yards away as if they were adjacent to you. This stacks with the Skirmish stunt.

EXPERT: You can strike fearsome blows with your weapon. You can perform the Vicious Blow stunt for 1 SP instead of the usual 2 when wielding a two-handed weapon.

MASTER: You and your weapon are as one. When wielding a two-handed weapon, when you gain SP, you gain +2 SP to use exclusively on the following stunts, depending on the weapon you're wielding: Armor Crush (heavy blades), Collateral Damage (heavy blades), Expose (any), Hamstring (flexible), Knock Prone (long hafted and flexible), Lightning Attack (long hafted), and Maim (heavy blades).

SPECIALIZATIONS

Specializations help you to realize your character's full potential. Each specialization has a theme on which you can build your character concept. Your character might work for a government agency, for example, but that could mean you might be a computer expert, a researcher, or a master of unarmed combat. Every specialization has its own unique talent.

You can take your first specialization at Level 4, when you receive the Novice degree in the appropriate specialization. At level 6, 8, 12, 14, and 16, you may either improve the specialization you acquired by one degree, or take a second specialization, starting it at the Novice degree. You can never acquire more than two specializations. For instance, you might start with Academic at level 4, improve it to Expert at level 6, but then switch to Socialite at level 8. Specialization advancements are gained at the noted levels in addition to the normal talent advancements granted with a new level. You may not swap standard talent advancements for specialization advancements, or vice versa.

When you take a second specialization, think about how the two might work together, and what they say about your character. You might, for instance, imagine your character as an action hero (Martial Artist/Gunfighter), or as a spymaster (Agent/Executive). Even combinations that might not seem immediately intuitive can create interesting concepts—consider an heiress who moonlights as an assassin (Socialite/Sniper), or a rock star who solves crimes (Performer/Investigator).

The specializations in this book are Academic, Agent, Driver, Executive, Gunfighter, Investigator, Martial Artist, Performer, Sniper, Socialite, and Thief. Settings and supplements for *Modern AGE* may include more. Check with your GM whether a specialization might be allowed in your setting.

ACADEMIC

You're the one who knows where the bodies are buried (and what's buried with them). You found the blueprints of the underground spy base. You discovered the secret incantation that can banish the Nameless God before it brings about Armageddon. Whether wading through dusty volumes of lore or discovering hidden secrets on the net, the Academic is always useful.

ERAS: Academics suit any period of history. From a priest, laden with tomes, accompanying a witch hunter, to a naturalist who finds himself on a pirate ship, to a scientist with a

laptop and a talent for interpreting data, Academics are often essential to the success of an enterprise.

SYNERGIES: An Academic/Gunfighter might be a well-read cowboy, or a pirate who knows Scripture. An Academic/Performer might be a celebrity scientist, or a popstar with a secret PhD. An Academic/Executive might be the head of a government agency with access to all the information in the world.

ACADEMIC TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Intelligence 3 or higher and the Intelligence (Research) focus.

You are trained in finding knowledge and using it.

NOVICE: You have a real skill in not only finding facts, but knowing where else to look if you hit a dead end. If you fail an Intelligence (Research) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

EXPERT: You have become adept at remembering relevant information. When you perform the Ah-Ha! stunt, you gain one free extra use of it (that is, if you spend 1 SP, you can perform the stunt twice, if you spend 2 SP, you can use it three times, and so on).

MASTER: Your fact-finding abilities are unparalleled. When you make an Intelligence (Research) test as part of an advanced test, you gain a +1 bonus to the result of each Stunt Die. This increases your roll, and allows you to reach the success threshold faster.

AGENT

You hide in plain sight; you deal in secrets. You work undercover and make few friends, and lying is second nature to you. You might have been in place for years, even gaining authority in the group you were supposed to subvert, or starting a family.

You don't have to be a *government* Agent. You might work for an organized crime family, infiltrating a rival organization, or you might be a lone maverick infiltrating the agents of the French Terror to rescue aristocrats. You might be a vampire posing as a human, or an alien android infiltrating humanity. You are not who they think you are. You may not even be who *you* think you are.

ERAS: The secret agent might seem to be a modern idea at first, but spies have been with us since the Elizabethan era and before. An Agent of the Crown could be found investigating Age of Sail pirates, or in a Victorian setting, as much as in a modern world.

STACKED TALENTS AND SPECIALIZATIONS

Typically, if more than one talent or specialization provides a bonus to the same test, these benefits stack.

One exception is when such advancements provide multiple opportunities to re-roll a test and keep the second result. If you have more than one opportunity to re-roll, each opportunity beyond the first adds +1 to the result on the Stunt Die to your second roll. This both increases your roll (you count this as part of your total) and provides additional SP in the event that you roll doubles.

Another exception is when stacked talents and specializations might reduce the cost of a stunt to 0 Stunt Points. If that happens, the stunt's cost is still 1 SP, but you gain +1 SP to use as you see fit, provided you can perform a stunt in the first place.



SYNERGIES: An Agent/Sniper is a peerless assassin. An Agent/Socialite is the suave sophisticate, as much at home in a casino or ballroom as in the field. An Agent/Driver is a great getaway artist, while an Agent/Investigator is the classic spy catcher, or a delver into mysteries the police cannot touch. An Agent/Thief is a shadowy chameleon who avoids detection.

AGENT TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Perception 2 or higher and the Perception (Empathy) and Communication (Deception) focuses.

You're a spy.

NOVICE: You build your life on lies, and it becomes second nature to you. You can cover up for yourself when you're caught out in a lie. If you fail a Communication (Deception) test, you can re-roll it, but you must keep the result of the second roll.

EXPERT: You are as uncannily adept at seeing through deception as you are at lying. When you use the Read the Room stunt, add +3 to your Perception (Empathy) roll when the stunt is opposed.

MASTER: You are an extremely competent agent. You gain two of the following focuses if you don't have them already: Communication (Disguise), Communication (Investigation), Dexterity (Sabotage), Dexterity (Stealth), Intelligence (Cryptography), and Intelligence (Security). If you already have all these, pick two and add +1 to all rolls made using them.

DRIVER

You're outside with the engine ticking over when the others hustle out of the building, security hot on their tails. You careen through the streets of Prohibition New York, the G-Men hot on your tail. You're the only one with keys to the computerized supercar. You're a modern witch-hunter who lives out of a cab, driving through the night, target to target. No one is as fast as you.

Anyone can drive, but it takes a truly talented Driver to turn it into an art. You can make any vehicle—an automobile, a motorbike, a truck—dance.

ERAS: The Driver is really locked into a world with roads and automobiles, but that doesn't mean you can't be a Driver in other historical eras. A Victorian Driver might be good at handling a carriage and horses, for example.

Alternatively, you might play a Rider in a historical game (especially one set in the Old West), substituting Dexterity (Riding) for Dexterity (Driving). In a game setting based around airships or planes, you might consider playing a Pilot, using Dexterity (Piloting) instead.

SYNERGIES: A Driver/Agent could be an undercover cop posing as a getaway man, or a spy talented in putting the pedal to the metal. A Driver/Performer might be a stunt performer, who vows to jump over a gorge on a motorbike. A Driver/Executive might be the leader of a motorcycle gang or an armored division.

DRIVER TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Dexterity 3 or higher, and the Dexterity (Driving) focus.

No one drives as fast as you.

NOVICE: You are skilled in getting more out of your vehicle than other drivers. When you perform the Burst of Speed Chase Stunt, you get +2 to your next Chase test for 1 SP, +3 for 2 SP, and so on.

EXPERT: You fearlessly drive where others balk at following. You may use the Follow the Leader Chase Stunt for 1 SP, and gain +1 to the required test to avoid crashing.

MASTER: Your vehicle is an extension of your mind and body. You gain a free Relationship Bond with an Intensity of 2 called “My Vehicle and I Are One.” You gain and can spend stunt points in support of this Relationship to improve your driving. You may spend free Relationship slots to increase its Intensity as you become a quiet person whose focus is devoted to the road.

EXECUTIVE

The buck stops with you. You’re the boss—the responsibility’s all yours, but so’s the top-level vision for your organization. A good Executive is a leader, someone who inspires others and makes things happen.

You know what you’re doing. You’re the leader who gets down and dirty with the rest of them. You don’t have to be a business executive. You might just as easily be a criminal ringleader, or the elder in a cult to the Forgotten Ones, or a handler in an espionage agency.

ERAS: While corporate Executives have existed for hundreds of years, you might just as easily be a ship’s captain (in the Age of Sail, a captain had an economic stake in the ship) or a military officer. In the Old West, you could be town sheriff or a conniving cattleman. You’re a Gilded Age capitalist, or a Party official in the People’s Republic of China.

SYNERGIES: An Executive/Academic might be the head of a faculty, while an Executive/Sniper or Executive/Gunfighter could be the leader of a crack commando platoon. An Executive/Martial Artist could be the sensei of a school, or a business magnate who uses kung fu to hone personal discipline.

EXECUTIVE TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Communication 2 or higher and the Communication (Persuasion) focus.

You claim authority in an organization.

NOVICE: You have experience in negotiating the byways of your organization. You acquire a Membership in a new organization (see CHAPTER 10), or advance to the next rank in an organization you already hold Membership in. You can re-roll any test to get access to privileges from, or influence fellow members of, the organization behind this acquired or improved Membership, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

EXPERT: Your authority extends to calling in a flunky, assistant, or bodyguard to support you. Once per day, you may make

a Communication (Persuasion) test. If you succeed, you can call in a subordinate from the organization you advanced in at the Novice rank to aid your group until the end of the day. Use one of the Adversary profiles found in CHAPTER 9. If your character is level 5–8, this flunky can be no more than a Minor threat, called at a test TN of 11. If your character is level 9–12, you may choose a Moderate-threat subordinate instead, at a test TN of 13. If your character is level 13+, you can the option of an assistant who’s a Major threat, if you succeed at a TN 15 test. You do not get the Novice re-roll benefit on this test.

MASTER: Because you have power in your organization, you have constant access to material aid. Add your Membership rank in the organization you connected to at this talent’s Novice degree to your Resources whenever you can call upon your organization. Furthermore, if your Resources drops, you regain the lost point within a week, or when you next check in with the organization, whichever comes first.

GUNFIGHTER

When the ace of spades flies up in the air at the other end of the street, it’s your shot that drills it right through the spade. You can shoot a cigarette out of a man’s mouth. You can drop four men before they’ve even drawn.

You might be a swashbuckling revolutionary, a talented private soldier, a bodyguard, or a cop. Perhaps you trained your whole life, or maybe it’s a knack. Do you regret the lives you’ve taken, or are have you only ever hit the bullseye on paper, or during door-busting tactical drills? Maybe you’ve killed, and don’t sleep easy—or maybe you sleep just fine, which could be a problem of its own.

ERAS: From buccaneers with a brace of pistols to six-gun cowboys and counterterrorist commandos, guns define gunfighters in their respective eras.

SYNERGIES: A Gunfighter/Sniper is as deadly taking quiet, patient aim as when leaping into the fray, guns blazing. A Gunfighter/Driver has one hand on the wheel, and the other shooting out a driver’s side window. A Gunfighter/Socialite could be a level-headed duelist.

GUNFIGHTER TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Dexterity 2 and Accuracy 2 or higher.

No one shoots as quickly or as accurately as you.

NOVICE: Your accuracy is instinctive. Pick a focus from Accuracy (Assault Rifles), Accuracy (Black Powder), Accuracy (Pistols), Accuracy (Shotguns), or Accuracy (SMGs). You gain a +1 to attack and damage rolls made using your chosen focus.

EXPERT: You’re fast and precise. You may pick a new focus from the Novice list and apply the Novice talent benefit to it, or improve the bonus for the focus you picked at Novice rank to +2 to your attack roll and damage roll.

MASTER: You’re one with the gun. When using a firearm that falls under the list of focuses in the Novice degree, choose one of the following stunts: Lightning Attack, Lethal Blow, Over-watch, or (in Gritty games only) Instant Kill. You can perform the chosen stunt for 1 SP less than usual. In the case of Over-watch, spending 1 SP gives you the effects of spending 2 SP, and spending 2 SP is equivalent to the 3 SP effect.

INVESTIGATOR

Just as the suspect is leaving, sure they've gotten away with it, you stop them and say, "just one more thing," and ask the difficult question. You see the bead of sweat on their neck, the twitch of a nostril, the flicker of an eye, and it speaks volumes to you about their guilt. A room is just as telling as a suspect. A misplaced hair, a smudge of ash, the angle of a piece of furniture—these things tell you whole stories.

You might not be a police investigator or a private eye; you might just as easily work for a corporation, or you could be something entirely apart, such as a werewolf who literally sniffs out the opposition.

ERAS: While the first well-known detectives arose in the 19th century, the idea of a person who is skilled in solving mysteries and seeking out clues goes much further back. You could be a judge hunting witches in Stuart England or traitors to the People in post-Revolutionary France.

SYNERGIES: An Investigator/Executive might be a police captain, or the head of an Internal Affairs Bureau. An Investigator/Socialite could be a talented high-class amateur, like a Hercule Poirot. An Investigator/Performer might host a true crime TV show, or be a circus mind reader who moonlights as a detective.

INVESTIGATOR TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Perception and Intelligence 2 or higher

You're a skilled detective.

NOVICE: You have an almost preternatural talent for finding and evaluating evidence. You can always make a roll to unlock a lead, even if you don't have a primary or tangential focus relevant to the investigation (see CHAPTER 2 for investigation rules).

EXPERT: The real skill with being a great investigator isn't in finding clues—it's using them. You may use the Intuition stunt for 1 SP rather than the usual 2. Furthermore, if you have the primary focus required to unlock a lead, add +1 to your roll when testing with it to do so.

MASTER: When all the evidence is gathered, you only need a flash of inspiration to put it together and find the solution. You can use the Breakthrough stunt for only 3 SP, rather than the usual 5.

MARTIAL ARTIST

To you, close combat is an art, with a brutal beauty you can express through many weapons, from your fists to a flashing sword.

The study of the martial arts could be just a hobby, or it could be an integral part of your training, perhaps as a special forces operative or a secret agent. It might be something you've trained in since you were a child, as part of your heritage.

ERAS: Martial arts belong to all eras and virtually all cultures. Different periods and locations define the training that's available to you. If you're English in the 19th Century, you likely master bare-knuckle boxing and wrestling, or French Savate, along with fencing and stick fighting. In the 21st Century, it's

not hard to find styles from many cultures, each with their own traditions and social ties.

SYNERGIES: A Martial Artist/Thief might be a skilled warrior of the night, while a Martial Artist/Agent could be a spy fashioned as a living weapon or the deadliest of assassins. As a Martial Artist/Driver, you might be as graceful behind the wheel as you are on your feet.

MARTIAL ARTIST TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Fighting 2 or better and at least Novice rank in one hand-to-hand combat style, including Dual Weapon Style, Grappling Style, Self-Defense Style, Single Weapon Style, Striking Style, and Two-handed Style. New talents like these may also provide prerequisites, at the GM's discretion.

You are a master of hand-to-hand combat.



NOVICE: You are skilled in the art of close combat. When you make a Fighting-based attack roll, add +1 to damage on a successful hit.

EXPERT: You have excellent speed and timing. When you perform the Momentum stunt with SP gained from a Fighting-based attack roll, you gain a bonus to your initiative as if you have spent one more SP than you have. So, if you spend 1 SP, you gain a +8 bonus to initiative; if you spend 2 SP, you gain a bonus of +12.

MASTER: You know a host of special techniques. When you perform the stunt attack action with a Fighting-based attack roll, you automatically generate 2 SP, not 1.

PERFORMER

You love an audience, even when you're supposed to be hiding, and however you do it—music, acting, rhetoric, magic—you've got a knack with getting that audience on your side, which is harder than it seems.

You never make excuses for your performance. A bad day might see you torn to pieces on the internet or pelted with tomatoes. But you're already one of the best. You might never be famous, but without doubt you have the talent and you have the skills.

ERAS: Every era and culture has a place for Performers, from music hall singers and street magicians to rock stars and pop scientists.

SYNERGIES: A Performer/Executive could be a politician with the considerable powers of a demagogue. A Performer/Martial Artist performs balletic, acrobatic movements—maybe you're a street dancer or an actor in martial arts movies. A Performer/Gunfighter might be a trick shooter at a rodeo or a lone traveling musician with more than just a guitar in their guitar case. A Performer/Thief could be an expert escapist or theatrical pickpocket.

PERFORMER TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Communication 3 or higher and the Communication (Performance) focus.

You move people's emotions with your music, song, or speech.

NOVICE: You know how to sing, play an instrument, act, or otherwise perform in a way that inspires profound emotions. When you are using the Communication (Performance) focus, you may perform the Sway the Crowd stunt for 1 SP rather than the usual 2.

EXPERT: A good performance opens doors, and makes people want to know you. You can perform the Oozing Confidence stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 4.

MASTER: When you need to, you can pull out all the stops with a performance. When you attempt a social grand gesture (see CHAPTER 2), your success threshold for each shift is one less than it would normally be.

SNIPER

While the Gunfighter dazzles with displays of speed and accuracy at short range, it's the Sniper who makes the hardest shots, with patience and the steadiest of hands.

You might stalk game for food, or hunt the most dangerous game of all (and in a fantastical setting, that's not necessarily humans). A Sniper could be an assassin or someone trained in supplying covering fire. A Sniper could work for the police, military, or some admired or loathed informal militia.

ERAS: The marksman has existed for as long as ranged weapons have. Whether it's as a musketeer, a Napoleonic rifleman, a hunter, or a trained assassin, most games have a place for the Sniper.

There might be some situations where the Sniper is actually an Archer, swapping Longarms for Bows. In eras where muskets and other simpler firearms reign, substitute Black Powder weapons for Longarms. Note that these are separate specializations, and benefits for one weapon type don't transfer to another.

SYNERGIES: A Sniper/Martial Artist probably has strong opinions about who, what, and how to shoot, while a Sniper/Driver is especially talented at making a quick getaway after a job. A Sniper/Investigator relentlessly tracks their quarry; no more peerless hunter exists.

SNIPER TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Accuracy 3 or better and the Accuracy (Longarms) focus.

You are a crack shot.

NOVICE: You know how to quietly set up a decisive shot on an unaware target. If you're hidden from your target, you can re-roll your first Accuracy (Longarms) attack during an encounter, but you must keep the results of the second roll.

EXPERT: You know how to wait for a perfect shot to present itself. If you use the Aim action to benefit an attack with Accuracy (Longarms), add a bonus to damage equal to the attack roll bonus Aim provides. This includes any bonus from the Precision Marksmanship stunt.

MASTER: You are a deadly, remorseless shot. When you are using the Accuracy (Longarms) focus, you can perform the Called Shot stunt for 2 SP instead of the usual 4.

SOCIALITE

Where there's a party, there you are. You know how to talk to people and get your way with them. It's not about your social class, although that might play a part, or about the money you've got, although you know how to look good. You've got a magnetic personality and people know you, and, crucially, *want* to know you.

You could be a street-level face for a gang, a charming crook with a heart of gold, or a silver-spoon-sucking heir to power. Whichever side of the tracks you're from, you know how to work a room and get people talking.

ERAS: The social butterfly has always existed, from charismatic pirates to rakish nobility, from lovable wheeler-dealer rogues to upscale landowners.

SYNERGIES: A Socialite/Performer could be a well-known singer or poet, or simply an arbiter of fashion. On the other hand, the Socialite/Sniper could be a debonair assassin or a charming hunter.

SOCIALITE TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Communication and Perception 2 or higher.

You're skilled at navigating society.

NOVICE: Your natural charm causes people to like you and want to be on your side. You may perform the On the Fence stunt for 1 SP rather than the usual 2.

EXPERT: When you attempt a detailed social maneuver (see the social maneuvering rules in CHAPTER 2), you require one fewer shifts (to a minimum of 1) to succeed. If the situation requires only a simple social maneuver, add +1 to your roll.

MASTER: Wherever you go, you fit in with ease. When you interact with people who would have an attitude of Neutral or worse toward you, they automatically shift one step in your favor. This benefit disappears if subjects feel physically threatened, however.

THIEF

Sometimes things *need* to be stolen. Sometimes there's only one way to redistribute the wealth. But to whom? Rob the rich and give to the poor? Rob everyone and keep it? You might work for a government agency or a private covert organization, or you might be a solo operator, motivated by greed, the thrill of the take, or some other goal. Maybe you're a thief because you always have been, or because someone has dirt on you and forces your hand.

ERAS: Every era has its thief archetypes. These range from pickpockets and dandy highwaymen, to high-tech jewel thieves and burglars, both well-intentioned and selfish.

SYNERGIES: The Thief/Performer might be a street entertainer with a taste for picking pockets. Meanwhile, the Thief/Academic, whether a relic hunter or a burglar with taste, knows exactly what to steal. A Thief/Executive might run a criminal network, or steal from peers. A Thief/Socialite might be the most charming of rogues, or a criminal whose tracks vanish under a veneer of genteel charm. A Thief/Gunfighter could be a bank robber or a freedom fighter.

THIEF TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: Dexterity 2 or higher, the Dexterity (Stealth), and the Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) focus.

You are adept at stealing things and not getting caught.

NOVICE: The first thing a skilled thief perfects is the ability to fade from sight. You add +1 to all tests made with the Dexterity (Stealth) focus or the Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) focus. Choose which focus receives this benefit when you attain this degree.

EXPERT: If you're making a Dexterity-based test to hide or steal an object, you may re-roll the test if you choose, but you must keep the result of the second roll. You have become an expert in avoiding the eye of suspicion. You may perform the It Wasn't Me stunt for 2 SP rather than the usual 4.

MASTER: Add another +1 to tests using either Dexterity (Stealth) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand), selecting the focus when you attain this degree.





EQUIPMENT

The equipment listed in this chapter runs the gamut of weaponry, armor, functional items with mundane and specialist uses, and a range of vehicles. Whether characters appear in a heated warehouse shootout, a high-speed chase through the city, or a tense infiltration of a complex security system, the equipment used means the difference between success or failure.

The campaign setting's historical era, location, and exceptional elements all influence the availability and prices of equipment. Just because there's a listed price for an item doesn't mean a character can just get it with a Resources check. Some equipment may be illegal or restricted to members of certain professions.

Finally, note that some pieces of equipment—especially weapons and armor—come with special rules. Read the description of each item to find out the details.

WEAPONS

Weapons fall into four groups: unarmed, hand-to-hand, firearms, and other ranged weapons. Though an unarmed attack may be less damaging than a high-powered rifle, weapons tend to fit into select scenarios. Weapons vary from commonly accessible items to military-grade hardware.

All melee attacks rely on the Fighting ability, whereas all ranged attacks use the Accuracy ability. Unarmed attacks and hand-to-hand weapons add the attacker's Strength ability to the base damage listed in the table, whereas firearms and other ranged weapons add the attacker's Perception ability.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

There are times your character won't have a fighting knife, but a cleaver lifted from a butcher's block. Instead of a police baton, you might make do with half a broom handle. In these situations, the GM determines the closest equivalent weapon. In some cases, the improvised weapon is just as good as one built for combat—a stick is a stick, after all—but in others, the GM may wish to apply one or more of the following penalties:

- **CLUMSY:** The improvised weapon isn't as easy to use as the real thing. Apply a -1 or -2 penalty to attack rolls.
- **FRAGILE:** The improvised weapon breaks easily. When an attack with it misses and the Stunt Die rolls 3 or less, it breaks.
- **WEAK:** The improvised weapon can't inflict injury as easily. Apply a -1 or greater penalty to damage rolls.

If characters have time to reinforce their improvised weapons, they might remove penalties with Dexterity (Crafts) tests, with TNs set by the GM.

Complex improvised weapons like firearms and electroshock weapons take time and the right materials to build. They usually can't have their penalties removed (or rather, anything that would do that would be equivalent to just building the weapon properly), and can carry a range of other penalties, including the potential to injure their users with misapplied chemistry and physics.

WEAPON DETAILS

The tables on the following pages provide an assortment of weapons for appearance in a game of *Modern AGE*. Each table falls within a different weapon group, with confirmation of the focus associated with each weapon in italics.

The the four melee and ranged attack tables all list the following details:

- **DAMAGE:** This is the weapon's damage. The attack inflicts this amount of damage plus Strength for melee attacks, or plus Perception for ranged attacks.
- **MINIMUM STRENGTH:** A character must have the minimum Strength listed to use the noted weapon effectively. This may be due to the weapon's shape, size, or weight. If a character does not meet the Strength requirements necessary for a muscle-powered weapon, it cannot inflict more than 1d6-1 damage. If the character can't meet the minimum for a firearm, they suffer a -2 penalty to attack rolls.
- **IMPACT/PENETRATING/BALLISTIC (I/P/B):** Description of the damage source from the listed weapon. No weapons deal penetrating damage by default, unless equipped with armor-piercing ammunition.
- **STUN/WOUND:** Generally, unarmed attacks, light blunt weapons, and electroshock weapons deal stun damage, while all other weapons deal wound damage.
- **RESOURCES TARGET NUMBER:** The TN used when attempting to use the Resources ability to acquire equipment. This difficulty may vary depending on the game's location setting or a character's circumstances.

The **Firearms** and **Other Ranged Weapons** tables contains the following information exclusively for ranged attacks:

- **RATE OF FIRE (ROF):** A weapon's rate of fire is classified as either a single shot (SS), semiautomatic (SA), or automatic (A). When attacking with SA and A weapons, the result from the Stunt Die rolled for the attack represents multiple bullets, referred to as the rate of fire bonus (see CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES). Certain stunts may be performed only with automatic weapons.
- **RANGE:** If a target is within this range, an attack takes place normally. At $1.5 \times$ range, the attack can still hit, but incurs a -2 penalty to do so. Weapons in the Thrown and Grenade groups have an automatic range of 15 yards + the attacker's Strength rating.
- **CAPACITY:** The amount of ammunition a weapon holds before requiring a reload action, represented on a 2 to 6 scale. The player must compare the Stunt Die to the capacity on a failed attack. A lower result means the character can keep firing, while equal or greater means the character must reload. A capacity of — implies a single shot weapon that requires reloading after each attack. All weapons in the Thrown and Grenade Groups have — capacity due to their natures.
- **RELOAD:** After expending all ammunition in a ranged attack, a character must reload their weapon before resuming fire. Reload is a major, minor, or free action depending on the weapon and the character's talents

WEAPON TRAINING

Modern AGE does not penalize characters for not knowing how to use weapons from certain groups. Therefore, any character from any walk of life can conceivably pick up a pistol, a knife, or a grenade, and stand a reasonable chance at doing harm to a foe. Possessing a focus in a weapon indicates when a character is trained in its use, and would know, for example, what kind of ammunition a firearm requires, or how to polish and sharpen a sword.

and stunts. The table contains the default type of action required. Weapons from the Thrown and Grenade groups all have a reload time of one minor action.

WEAPON DESCRIPTIONS

The following sections provide multiple weaponry options, with examples of specific weapons and special rules within each type, where appropriate.

UNARMED

Note that talents and other circumstances that increase damage for unarmed attacks do so for both brawling strikes and grappling attacks, below. Knuckle dusters or steel-toed footwear (or equivalents, including pistol-whipping someone) add +1 to unarmed attack damage.

BRAWLING STRIKE: Brawling is the art of striking with hands, feet, and other body parts, depending on training and inclination. Brawling strikes are rarely lethal in one hit, but not every attack needs to be or should be deadly.

GRAPPLING GRIP: Grappling attacks rely on getting a grip to throw, jostle, twist, and strangle the opponent. These are treated as other unarmed attacks, but if you use the Fighting (Grappling) focus, you may use grappling stunts. Getting a grappling grip without using a stunt indicates a quick grab, twist, or slam (including a minor strike, perhaps) that causes damage but has no other effects.

SHORT HAFTED

AXE: Vicious cleaving weapons ranging in size from a hatchet to a broad-headed battle axe.

BASEBALL BAT: This mundane sporting item is one of the most popular home defense options available. A cricket bat or other tip-weighted bludgeon might have the same game statistics.

CLUB: This could be a heavy flashlight, a police baton, or a sawed-off broom handle. It's a light bludgeon, usable in one hand.

HAMMER: A simple tool or a lethal bludgeon, the hammer is a concealable and defensible weapon, easily transportable. Its metal head can inflict nasty injuries.

STUN BATON: This handheld device discharges paralyzing electrical shocks in close combat. It might be a baton or a simple battery pack with a handle and contacts. Some versions are

UNARMED ATTACKS

WEAPON	DAMAGE	MINIMUM STR	I/P/B	STUN/WOUND	RESOURCES TN
FOCUS: BRAWLING					
Brawling Strike	1d3*	—	I	S	—
FOCUS: GRAPPLING					
Grappling Grip	1d3*	—	I	S	—

*Knuckle dusters or steel toecaps add +1 damage to unarmed attacks.

HAND TO HAND WEAPONS

WEAPON	DAMAGE	MINIMUM STR	I/P/B	STUN/WOUND	RESOURCES TN
FOCUS: SHORT HAFTED					
Axe	2d6	1	I	W	7
Club	1d6	-1	I	S	—
Baseball Bat	1d6+2	0	I	S	7
Hammer	1d6	0	I	W	7
Stun Baton	1d6	0	I	S	8
FOCUS: LONG HAFTED					
Sledgehammer	2d6+3	3	I	W	8
Staff	1d6+1	—	I	S	8
Spear	1d6+3	0	I	W	9
FOCUS: LIGHT BLADES					
Dagger	1d6+1	—	I	W	8
Fencing Sword	1d6+3	0	I	W	10
Short Sword	1d6+2	-1	I	W	12
FOCUS: HEAVY BLADES					
Long Sword	2d6	1	I	W	12
Two-handed Sword	3d6	3	I	W	14
FOCUS: FLEXIBLE					
Light Chain	1d6	1	I	S	7
Heavy Chain	1d6+3	2	I	W	9

disguised as phones, flashlights, and similar objects. A stun baton has no effect on a target in armor. If it hits a target without armor, it paralyzes the individual for 1d6 rounds unless they succeed on a Constitution (Stamina) test with a TN of 10 + the damage inflicted by the weapon. Strength does not add to a stun baton's damage.

LONG HAFTED

SLEDGEHAMMER: A long-handled hammer with a metal head weighing 8 pounds or more, this tool is normally used to smash hard materials like rock, brick, and concrete. However, a strong person could certainly inflict devastating injuries with it.

STAFF: While some martial artists still use the traditional hardwood design, a staff may come in the form of a scaffolding pole, snooker cue, or length of nail-studded wood.

SPEAR: Spears are poles with tips that puncture flesh, from traditional weapons to improvised dowels with knives duct-taped to one end. Note that a fixed bayonet is treated as an improvised spear with the Fragile quality. If it breaks, this indicates the bayonet has become detached.

LIGHT BLADES

DAGGER: A dagger may refer to a classic pre-modern stabbing or slashing weapon, or a larger modern knife. In a pinch, a big kitchen knife might serve as an equivalent. A detached bayonet is equivalent to a dagger.

FENCING SWORD: These light, thinly bladed, one-handed swords favor thrusts, though a few lighter sabers fall under this category. Examples include sharpened versions of modern fencing weapons, the European rapier, smallsword, spadron, and the Chinese jian or "Tai Chi sword."

SHORT SWORD: The historic short sword often accompanies a shield. Attackers use the blade for thrusting stabs. Modern "short swords" may include exceptionally large knives, such as a kukri, and inflict damage by cutting or slashing, depending on their blade geometry.

HEAVY BLADES

LONG SWORD: Long swords range in size from the European one-handed arming sword, heavier sabers, and Japanese katana to the so-called bastard sword and Chinese miaodao.

FIREARMS									
WEAPON	DAMAGE	MINIMUM STR	I/P/B	STUN/WOUND	RESOURCES TN	ROF	RANGE	CAPACITY	RELOAD
FOCUS: BLACK POWDER WEAPONS									
Blunderbuss	1d6+2	1	I	W	15	SS	15 yards*	—	1d6 Minor
Musket	2d6+1	1	I	W	14	SS	50 yards	—	1d6 Minor
FOCUS: PISTOLS									
Pocket Pistol	1d6	-1	B	W	10	SS	10 yards	—	Major
Revolver	2d6	1	B	W	12	SS*	65 yards	3	Major
SA Handgun	2d6	0	B	W	11	SA	55 yards	5	Minor
Stun Gun	1d6	0	I	S	10	SS	10 yards	—	Major
FOCUS: LONGARMS									
Anti-Materiel Rifle	3d6+3	2	B	W	15	SS	1000 yards**	3	Major
Carbine	2d6+2	0	B	W	13	SA	200 yards	4	Major
Hunting Rifle	2d6+2	1	B	W	11	SS	400 yards	4	Major
Sniper Rifle	2d6+2	1	B	W	14	SA	600 yards**	3	Minor
FOCUS: SHOTGUNS									
Double-Barreled	2d6+6	1	B	W	11	SS	50 yards	2	Major
Combat Shotgun	2d6+2	1	B	W	13	SA	75 yards	3	Minor
FOCUS: ASSAULT RIFLES									
Automatic Rifle	2d6+3	1	B	W	14	A	550 yards	6	Minor
FOCUS: SMGs									
PDW	2d6+1	0	B	W	14	A	260 yards	5	Minor
SMG	2d6	1	B	W	12	A	200 yards	5	Minor

* See weapon description for special rules. **This weapon's maximum range is 2× its base range, instead of 1.5×.

OTHER RANGED WEAPONS									
WEAPON	DAMAGE	MINIMUM STR	I/P/B	STUN/WOUND	RESOURCES TN	ROF	RANGE	CAPACITY	RELOAD
FOCUS: BOWS									
Compound Bow	1d6+2	1	B	W	12	SS	60 yards**	—	Minor
Crossbow	2d6+1	1	B	W	14	SS	50 yards**	—	Major
Longbow	1d6+3	2	B	W	13	SS	200 yards**	—	Minor
FOCUS: THROWN									
Throwing Axe	1d6+1	1	B	W	11	SS	15 + STR yards	—	Minor
Throwing Knife	1d6	—	B	W	10	SS	15 + STR yards	—	Minor
FOCUS: GRENADES									
Blast	2d6	0	I	W	15	SS	15 + STR yards	—	Minor
Fragmentation	3d6	0	B	W	15	SS	15 + STR yards	—	Minor
Incendiary	3d6	0	I	W	14	SS	15 + STR yards	—	Minor

* See weapon description for special rules. **This weapon's maximum range is 2× its base range, instead of 1.5×.

TWO-HANDED SWORD: The largest swords include the Japanese odachi, the Spanish montante, or the German Zweihänder — swords that are rarely used in the modern era. These weapons are 5 feet long or longer, and inflict horrific wounds with sweeping cuts and strong thrusts.

FLEXIBLE

LIGHT CHAIN: Ranging from the bicycle chain to the nunchaku, a light chain weapon is an unpredictable instrument of violence.

HEAVY CHAIN: Heavy flails with chains form a part of this category, along with thick-linked industrial chains.

BLACK POWDER

Note that the black powder weapons that follow inflict impact damage, representing their limited ability to pierce armor.

BLUNDERBUSS: This firearm's distinctive feature is its short barrel and flared muzzle. Lead balls spray in a wide swath when fired. The blast is up to 15 yards long and 2 yards wide. Blunderbuss users make one attack roll and compare it to the defense of each target in the blast area. Stunts affect targets individually.

MUSKET: Most muskets fire from the shoulder, trigger via matchlock, wheel-lock, or flintlock mechanisms, and load with a lead ball and loose powder.



PISTOLS

POCKET PISTOL: Designed to fit into purses, pockets, and discreet holsters, the pocket pistol often sees use as a one-shot defense or assassination weapon.

EXAMPLES: Remington Double Deringer cal. .41, Double-barreled Bond Arms derringer, .22 NAA22S.

REVOLVER: The revolver's stopping power is renowned among handgun enthusiasts. In the hands of someone with the Accuracy (Pistols) focus, this weapon is treated as a semi-automatic weapon.

EXAMPLES: Colt Single Action Army, Smith & Wesson M&P, .44 Magnum Colt Anaconda.

SA HANDGUN: The most popular sidearm today, simply loaded from beneath with a magazine, and ready to fire.

EXAMPLES: Smith & Wesson Shield, Glock G29, Ruger SR1911.

STUN GUN: This weapon fires two hooks a short distance, connected by wires to the firing mechanism. Electric current pulses along the wires, incapacitating a target. This weapon has no effect on an individual in armor. If it hits a target without armor, it paralyzes the individual for 1d6 rounds unless they succeed on a Constitution (Stamina) test with a TN of 10 + the damage inflicted by the weapon. Perception doesn't add to a stun gun's damage.

LONGARMS

ANTI-MATERIEL RIFLE: These weapons are designed to destroy car engine blocks, penetrate light vehicle armor, or set off enemy explosive devices from a distance, using .50 caliber bullets and similarly powerful projectiles. These weapons are sometimes used as sniper rifles as well, and come with a magnifying scope. Unless fired using a bipod, operators suffer a -4 penalty to attack rolls. If the operator can perform a stunt with their attack, they gain 1 bonus SP to spend on any Anti-Vehicle Stunt, or on one of the following other stunts: Collateral Damage, Expose, Knock Prone.

EXAMPLES: Barrett XM500, PGM Hecate 2, Zastava M93 Black Arrow.

CARBINE: Carbines are essentially cut down rifles, made shorter and lighter for easier handling. Note that carbines under the Longarms focus do not include assault carbines.

EXAMPLES: M1 Carbine, Winchester 94 Trapper, Ruger Mini-30.

HUNTING RIFLE: This represents multiple civilian rifle designs, from hunting rifles to civilian versions of military arms.

EXAMPLES: M1 Garand, Savage Model 110, Winchester Model 1894.

SNIPER RIFLE: A sniper rifle is either built specifically for military use, or modified from another type of rifle for precision

shooting. This includes the addition of a magnifying scope. The heaviest sniper rifles are anti-materiel rifles, listed above. A character with the Accuracy (Longarms) focus enjoys a +3 to damage when using a sniper rifle.

EXAMPLES: M40, Norinco QBU-88, Tango 51.

SHOTGUNS

Note that some shotguns can be sawed off, or manufactured with extremely short barrels. This makes them easier to hide and more maneuverable in confined spaces, but halves their range. Shotguns loaded for combat or large game hunting typically use solid slugs, while those intended to shoot other targets fire cartridges loaded with shot. If loaded with shot instead of slugs, a shotgun inflicts half damage, but the operator benefits from a +2 bonus to attack rolls.

DOUBLE-BARRELED: Few events are as unnerving as finding oneself staring into a shotgun's twin barrels. Note that since both barrels can be fired in rapid succession, an operator with the Accuracy (Shotguns) focus adds +1 to their attack roll.

EXAMPLES: Remington 870, Famars 20 Bore, Browning Citori.

COMBAT SHOTGUN: Often pump-action and devastating in close quarters, the combat shotgun is often found in police arsenals.

EXAMPLES: Mossberg 590, Benelli Nova, Remington 870 Express.

ASSAULT RIFLES

AUTOMATIC RIFLE: These weapons are capable of selective fire, or exclusively fully automatic fire. They are almost always designed for military use, although "civilian" models may lack the capacity for fully automatic fire. This category includes a wide variety of weapons, including assault carbines, and the GM may add minor modifiers to specific models.

EXAMPLES: AK-47, AK-74, M-16A4, SA-80.

SMGS

PDW: A personal defense weapon (PDW) uses high-velocity ammunition with greater stopping power than that of a traditional SMG.

EXAMPLES: AR-57, FN P90, H&K MP7.

SMG: A handheld, lightweight machine gun, used by special police and military units.

EXAMPLES: UZI, UMP, Thompson Submachine Gun.

BOWS

COMPOUND BOW: A modern bow utilizing a levering system to allow for ease of use.

CROSSBOW: A type of mechanized bow, mounted to a wooden stock and drawn with a lever.

LONGBOW: A tall bow, roughly a man's height, made from a single piece of wood and with a long draw.

DAMAGE AND CAMPAIGN MODE

In Pulpy and Cinematic campaigns, all weapons—including unarmed attacks—inflict +2 damage. This occurs for three reasons. First, with their improved Toughness, Pulpy and Cinematic characters might shrug off too many shots. Second, such characters acquire more Health as they gain levels, so viable attacks must be slightly more threatening. Finally, in Pulpy and Cinematic games, minor characters with no Toughness exist as described in CHAPTER 8, and increased damage puts them down more often.

THROWN

THROWING AXE: A hatchet that's balanced for throwing.

THROWING KNIFE: A knife that's balanced for throwing.

GRENADES

Remember that grenades do not add the attacker's Perception to their damage.

BLAST: A grenade created for deadly concussive blasts in enclosed spaces. Blast grenade damage increases to 3d6+3 in enclosed spaces. Blast grenades have a radius of 5 yards from point of detonation.

FRAGMENTATION: A grenade that explodes with pieces of cutting shrapnel. These grenades sometimes come in the form of nail bombs. Fragmentation grenades have a blast radius of 15 yards from point of detonation.

INCENDIARY: These horrific grenades are designed for dropping in weapons caches, bunkers, and tight groups of people. After an incendiary grenade hits a target, the target takes an additional 1d6 damage each round for 2d6 rounds following the grenade's detonation, until someone extracts the burning pieces of thermite or phosphorus. Incendiary grenades have a blast radius of 5 yards from point of detonation.

ARMOR

Armor in *Modern AGE* has ratings for impact and ballistic damage, based on the attacking weapon's damage source type. Pre-modern armor provides little ballistic defense, but offers high defense against impact attacks. Modern armor is designed with ballistic weaponry in mind. No armor prevents penetrating attacks.

ARMOR DETAILS

The two accompanying tables contain game system information for armor and shields, providing the following details:

- **ARMOR RATING:** Each armor type has a numeric rating alongside the type of damage the armor resists—impact and ballistic. When a character is damaged in combat, the player subtracts the armor rating before incurring damage. This applies on each hit. No armor defends against penetrating attacks.

- **ARMOR PENALTY:** Each armor type has a penalty representing its weight and bulk. The penalty applies to a character's Speed and Dexterity.
- **RESOURCES TARGET NUMBER:** The TN used when attempting to use the Resources ability to acquire equipment. This difficulty may vary depending on a character's circumstances.
- **SHIELD BONUS:** If carrying a shield, a character receives the listed bonus to their Defense, but is restricted to using a weapon requiring only one hand.

ARMOR DESCRIPTIONS

The following general descriptions of the tabled armor and shields detail the most broadly available variations of this equipment. Players should feel free to specify the design of the armor or shield their character uses.

BULLET-RESISTANT CLOTH: Typically constructed from aramid fibers, bullet-resistant cloth armor provides a first line of protection against ballistic rounds and the fragments from explosive devices. In Gritty games, bullet-resistant cloth armor withstands 1d6 attacks before its weave comes apart, rendering it useless.

HEAVY LEATHER: As biker's leathers or boiled leather breast and back plates, leather armor provides basic resistance against impact damage.

BALLISTIC PLATE: This armor is bullet-resistant cloth with hard plate inserts made of advanced ceramics and other bullet-deflecting, rigid materials.

MAIL: Small, interlocking metal rings form a defensive mesh often called chainmail, covering a quilted shirt and providing adequate defense for most impact attacks. In the modern era, mail is often used on the limbs of animal handlers.

STEEL PLATE: Crafted metal plates cover the torso, and potentially the upper arms and legs, providing excellent protection against hand-to-hand attacks, but bullets will usually punch right through. While used extensively from the medieval era to the Great War, steel plate armor is rare today.

ARMOR			
ARMOR	ARMOR RATING	ARMOR PENALTY	RESOURCES TN
Bullet-Resistant Cloth	2I/4B*	0	12
Heavy Leather	4I/0B	-1	9
Ballistic Plate	4I/6B	-2	14
Mail	6I/0B	-3	15
Steel Plate	8I/1B	-4	16
Bomb Suit	6I/6B	-5	16

SHIELDS		
SHIELD	SHIELD BONUS	RESOURCES TN
Riot Shield	+2*	13
Ballistic Shield	+3	14

*See description for special rules

BOMB SUIT: A heavy, full-body and head-covering suit constructed with layers of Kevlar, foam, plastic, and fire-retardant materials.

RIOT SHIELD: Typically constructed from polycarbonate and rectangle-shaped, designed to cover the user from head to knee. Note that a basic riot shield provides no defense against ballistic attacks.

BALLISTIC SHIELD: Like a riot shield, but a ballistic shield is thicker, heavier, and designed to withstand sustained gunfire.

VEHICLES

Vehicles in the modern era form a mundane part of daily life, until it comes time to outrun a pursuer, deliver a price-less artifact at high-speed, or travel through a warzone under bombardment. Vehicle statistics do not enter play during stress-free scenes. When tested, however, players will need to consider their vehicle attributes.

VEHICLE SPEED

Vehicles have various Velocity classes, used to handle their very fast movement when compared to people moving on foot. Velocity also dictates how much damage a vehicle inflicts on a collision or sideswipe ram attack (see **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES** and the next section in this chapter). The velocity classes are as follows.

- **STANDARD:** The vehicle moves in the same speed range as humans and animals.
- **FAST:** Automobiles and boats typically move at this speed, allowing them to safely cruise at 50 to 100 mph, and move faster at the risk of safe handling.
- **VERY FAST:** Specialized cars, helicopters, and other exceptionally fast vehicles capable of stable operation at speeds in the range of 200 mph belong to this class.
- **EXTREME:** Civilian and light military fixed-wing aircraft belong to this category. These routinely operate at speeds of 400 mph or greater.

While there certainly would be Velocity classes beyond Extreme, in most *Modern AGE* games that sort of performance is better dealt with by the GM on a case by case basis.

Some vehicles have a Velocity modifier ranging from -3 to +3, which provides a rough gauge of how fast they are compared to others of the same Velocity class. This comes into play during chases, the rules for which can be found in **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES**.

VELOCITY CLASSES			
VELOCITY CLASS	COLLISION	SIDESWIPE	EXAMPLE
Standard	1d6	1d3	Horse, bicycle, golf cart
Fast	2d6	1d6	Car, motorboat
Very Fast	4d6	2d6	Sports car, speed boat, helicopter
Extreme	6d6	3d6	Airplane



RAM ATTACKS

When a vehicle hits with a ram attack, it acts as a Stunt Attack (see CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES) against other vehicles, and inflicts penetrating wound damage against characters and other living targets. Two forms of ram attacks are possible.

- **SIDESWIPE:** The vehicle clips or grinds against the target, or rear-ends a vehicle that's moving in the same Velocity class as the attacker. Sideswipes against living targets moving in the same direction in the same Velocity class inflict only the vehicle's base ram damage. Otherwise, add the base ram damage to the listed sideswipe damage for its Velocity class and roll it together. Against another vehicle, a sideswipe is a 1 SP Stunt Attack. The operator suffers a -1 penalty to tests to handle the vehicle for the next round.
- **COLLISION:** The vehicle strikes the target with its front end, either perpendicularly or head on. Against living targets, this inflicts damage equal to the vehicle's ram damage rating plus the Velocity class at which it's currently moving. Against another vehicle, a collision is a 2 SP Stunt Attack, but the operator of the attacking vehicle must roll a TN 13 test using the vehicle's appropriate focus, or crash. See CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES for the effects of crashes.

As noted, vehicles are damaged with Anti-Vehicle Stunts. In the case of ram attacks, the GM may give bonus SP to a heavier attacker, or reduce the number of SP generated by a lighter attacker.

VEHICLES, COVER & ARMOR

Vehicles provide a cover rating of 0 for motorcycles and similar vehicles, 1 for convertibles with the top down, and 2 for hard-top vehicles, even with the windows rolled up (they shatter under fire). Some armored vehicles provide a dedicated Armor Rating, which stacks with Toughness and worn armor. This changes to a cover rating if doors or windows are opened.

VEHICLE DETAILS

The accompanying table contains game system information for vehicles, providing the following details:

HANDLING: The vehicle's Handling rating is the modifier applied to tests to maintain control of the vehicle. In vehicular combat, a vehicle's Defense is 10 + Handling + the attribute associated with its focus.

CAPACITY: The vehicle's passenger capacity. This capacity is adjustable, depending on the brand of vehicle acquired.

VELOCITY: As noted earlier, vehicles belong to various Velocity classes. The Standard class applies to humans, horses, and other creatures with normal Speed ratings. Higher Velocity classes belong to faster vehicles. Velocity comes into play during chases and other situations where high speed matters. The Velocity modifier after the slash distinguishes the relative speeds of vehicles within the same class, such as a faster versus a slower automobile.

VEHICLES						
VEHICLE	HANDLING DIFFICULTY	CAPACITY	VELOCITY	RAM	HULL	RESOURCES TN
FOCUS: PROPELLING						
Bicycle	0	1	Standard/*	0	0	8
FOCUS: DRIVING						
Classic Motorbike	-1	2	Fast/0	1d6	0	11
Sports Bike	+2	1	Fast/+1	1d6	0	13
Compact Car	0	5	Fast/0	2d6	0	10
Sedan	0	8	Fast/0	2d6	0	13
Sports Car	+1	2	Very Fast/0	2d6	0	15
Light Truck	-2	4	Fast/-1	3d6	0	14
Light Armored Vehicle	0	4	Fast/0	3d6	2	15
FOCUS: PILOTING						
Light Drone	+4	0	Fast/0	0	0	10
Light Helicopter	+1	4	Very Fast/0	3d6	0	16
Light Attack Aircraft	+2	2	Extreme/0	4d6	1	N/A**
FOCUS: STEERING						
Light Bulldozer	0	1	Standard/*	5d6	2	16

* Vehicle has a Speed rating like a character's. See description. ** Cannot be purchased under ordinary circumstances.

RAM: This is the vehicle's base damage for ram attacks (see CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES). Ram damage increases when a vehicle is moving especially fast compared to its target.

HULL: Some vehicles are exceptionally tough. This lists the points that must be spent on the Pierce Hull vehicle stunt before using other Anti-Vehicle Stunts to inflict damage.

RESOURCES TN.: The Resources TN to acquire equipment. It may vary depending on the location the game is set in, or the quality of vehicle.

VEHICLE DESCRIPTIONS

BICYCLE: A pedal-powered bike. A bicycle moves at its operator's speed +5. Any attack that hits a bicycle wrecks it, regardless of damage, and also inflicts damage on the cyclist.

CLASSIC MOTORBIKE: A large touring motorcycle. If the cyclist is injured, they must succeed at a TN 13 Dexterity (Driving) test to avoid crashing.

SPORTS BIKE: An agile motorcycle designed for speed over stability. If the cyclist is injured, they must succeed at a TN 13 Dexterity (Driving) test to avoid crashing.

COMPACT CAR: A utilitarian vehicle that can seat five people, but uncomfortably. Some models are designed as low-end sports cars. In such cases, add +1 to the car's Handling and Velocity modifiers, and +1 to the Resources difficulty to purchase it, but drop its capacity by 1 or 2, depending on the model.

SEDAN: A large vehicle with plenty of space in the rear cabin, favored by executives and well-to-do families. Its statistics can also be used to represent civilian SUVs and small vans.

SPORTS CAR: A high-end vehicle built for performance. An even higher end class of "supercars" adds +1 to Velocity and the Resources difficulty to purchase. Both types turn heads when they're seen on the road.

LIGHT TRUCK: A "box truck" or large van. Its listed capacity is only for the cabin; far more people could easily ride in the back. It can haul two or three tons, though if loaded close to its maximum capacity, its Handling penalty increases

LIGHT ARMORED VEHICLE: A military armored truck designed for toughness and agility. LAV's are also used by SWAT teams and elite security forces. The enclosed cabin provides an Armor Rating of 6 versus ballistic damage and explosions. This stacks with Toughness (if the game mode permits) and worn armor.

LIGHT DRONE: This is a multi-rotor drone of the type that would be used by filmmakers, photographers, and high-end hobbyists. It is capable of recording video and sound, and may be equipped with night vision and additional sensors—or given a light, remotely operated weapon (no larger than a handgun) by a less ethical owner. Any collision with or attack on a light drone automatically destroys it, though it might be possible to salvage components such as its camera memory.

LIGHT HELICOPTER: A small civilian helicopter of the type used to transport executives, or which would be flown for recreation. Direct collisions, along with attacks on the rotor, make a controlled emergency descent impossible. In these situations, a fall from a significant height will almost certainly be lethal—at least in Gritty games.

LIGHT ATTACK AIRCRAFT: This aircraft isn't suited to dogfighting, but designed for training, patrols, and ground attack functions. Its fire-linked, twin .50 cal. machine guns each function as fully-automatic versions of the anti-material rifle, but no more than one of them can be brought to bear on a human-sized target. The aircraft may also carry air-to-air missiles and bombs, which the GM should treat as hazards. The pilot can use its weapons with the Activate action.

LIGHT BULLDOZER: This tracked vehicle is used to haul material, demolish things, and flatten terrain. It's slow, moving at a Speed of 15, but crushes or smashes virtually anything in its path.

LIFESTYLE

A character's Resources determines their basic lifestyle, but sometimes a protagonist wants to explore the life of excess. Characters don't pay for their personal housing, food, or upkeep, as these elements roll into the Resources ability, and run the risk of banality when introduced to play. The lifestyle expansions in this table are the types of activities and purchases a character will need to test with their Resources ability.

GEAR	RESOURCES TN	GEAR	RESOURCES TN	GEAR	RESOURCES TN
Alternate ID (Excellent)	16	Drugs (Street Quality)	9	Luxury Cruise	15
Alternate ID (Poor)	9	Five-Star Hotel	14	Michelin Star Meal	12
Casino Credit	14	Jewelry (Designer)	15	Party (Extravagant)	14
Discreet Affair	12	Jewelry (High Street)	11	Party (Intimate)	11
Drugs (High Quality)	11	Jewelry (Unique)	17	Party (Rave)	12

ADVENTURING GEAR

From the simple flashlight to cutting-edge night vision goggles, gear acquirable in *Modern AGE* spans the ordinary to the sublime, with the costs equally as far ranging. Due to the sheer volume of equipment available, some items in the following table form packages, the contents of which are left for the GM and players to determine. Other equipment appears separately. Resources difficulty may differ depending on the game's setting. The following descriptions cover some of the gear examples in the **Adventuring Gear** table.

CHAFF GRENADES [PULPY/CINEMATIC]: When thrown within a 15-yard proximity of electronics, a chaff grenade disrupts the operations of any non-insulated device for 2d6 rounds, using a combination of conductive foil and an electromagnetic pulse. These are usually available only in Pulpy or Cinematic campaigns.

FLASH GRENADES: These bombs create a blinding flash affecting anyone within a 15-yard radius, if the person(s) looked in the direction of the explosion. The blindness goes away after 2d6 rounds.

MAGNIFYING SCOPE: A magnifying scope acts as a modern pair of binoculars, with zoom functions and built-in camera. Scopes are assumed to be included with sniper rifles and anti-materiel rifles. Adding a scope to another firearm increases its maximum range from 1.5x to 2x its listed base range.

PRICING

There will be times when characters receive cash as rewards, and decide to spend their hard-earned money on equipment or lifestyle upgrades. It is the GM's responsibility to look up the average item cost and adjust accordingly for their game. Alternatively, cash is convertible into a temporary increase in Resources. The increase disappears as soon as a Resources check fails.

NIGHT VISION GOGGLES: Battery-powered goggles allowing users greater vision in darkness, illuminating anything within the goggles' range in shades of gray or green hues.

SMOKE GRENADES: These bombs create a cloud of obscuring gas that expands up to 10 yards from detonation point. The cloud dissipates after 1d6 rounds.

SUPPRESSOR: Otherwise known as a silencer, suppressors dull the noise of gunfire.

GRITTY: A suppressor stops any flash of light from a firearm's action, and halves the distance at which it can be heard.

PULPY/CINEMATIC: A suppressor makes a firearm almost impossible to hear outside any room it's fired in, or beyond a 5-yard radius, whichever is smaller.

THERMAL GOGGLES: Battery-powered goggles allowing users to see heat and movement in darkness.

ADVENTURING GEAR

GEAR	RESOURCES TN	GEAR	RESOURCES TN	GEAR	RESOURCES TN
Bomb Disposal Kit	15	Gun Scope	12	Night Vision Goggles	14
Camera	8	Laptop/Tablet	11	Oxygen Tank	13
Cell Phone	8	Laser Sight	11	Radar Jammer	15
Chaff Grenades	15	Magnifying Scope	13	Signal Jammer	13
Diving Gear	13	Mechanic's Toolkit	10	Smoke Grenades	14
Flare Gun	9	Medic's Kit	10	Suppressor	13
Flash Grenades	16	Mine Detector	14	Survival Gear	11
Flashlight	6	Motion Tracker	15	Thermal Goggles	12
Gasmask	11	Mountaineering Gear	14		



STUNTS

Now that you know all the basic rules for playing the game, you can put together scenes and encounters, and use the dice to help determine their outcomes. Your character can brawl with enemies, solve mysteries, and sway hearts and minds. This chapter introduces a way to make those encounters more exciting and dynamic, called stunts. With stunts, a hero can not only win an argument or defeat a foe, but do it with style. You can perform maneuvers to give yourself or your teammates extra advantages, and accomplish feats more complex than the basic rules cover. NPCs can use stunts too, so the GM can mix things up and make challenges more fun for you.

While **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES** gave you a modest selection of stunts to choose from, to ease you into using them, this chapter contains a full listing of the stunts you'll use in the game, with two exceptions. Power Stunts, which are in **CHAPTER 6: EXTRAORDINARY POWERS**, apply only in games where extraordinary powers exist. Chase Stunts, found in **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES** along with the rules for chases, and should be provided by the GM whenever relevant.

GENERATING STUNT POINTS

The stunt system requires you to generate stunt points (SP), which you can spend to pull off stunts of varying potency. You generate stunt points in the following ways.

DOUBLES

Whenever you're successful on an ability test and you roll doubles on any two of the dice (rolling the same number on all three dice has no extra benefit), you generate a number of SP equal to the value shown on the Stunt Die.

STUNT ATTACK

The Stunt Attack action (see **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**) generates 1 SP on a success whether you roll doubles or not, but does not cause damage or have other effects. If you roll doubles, you get this 1 SP in addition to the number on the Stunt Die.

RAM

A ram attack generates 1 or 2 SP automatically, depending on whether the attack is a sideswipe or collision, to be spent exclusively on Anti-Vehicle Stunts (unless the GM gives special permission to apply it to other stunts). If you roll doubles, you can add the result of the Stunt Die to this base.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships (see **CHAPTER 10: REWARDS**) also provide SP without having to roll doubles. Once per game session, you can gain SP equal to a Relationship Bond's Intensity to spend on stunts that support the Relationship—to save the loved one specified by the Bond, for instance. This stacks with other methods of generating stunt points.

SPENDING STUNT POINTS

Each stunt in this chapter has a point cost, and you can spend your points in any combination up to your total. You must use your SP right away; any left unused simply vanish. You may perform two or more stunts at the same time as long as you have enough SP to pay for them all and the effects don't contradict each other. However, you can't perform the same stunt twice with the points from a single test unless its description indicates otherwise. Some stunts have a variable cost, which means the more points you spend on them, the more powerful they become.

Once you've decided which stunts to perform and in what order, you can narrate how your character did it. This gives you a chance to make your protagonist really feel like a hero in a story rather than just numbers on a sheet! If your character performed multiple stunts at the same time, describe them all as part of or resulting from the action that generated the SP—don't imagine them as separate actions. For instance, if you make an attack and perform the Skirmish and Knock Prone stunts with the SP it generates, you might say, "I swing from the chandelier to kick him squarely in the chest, sending him flying across the room. He slams into the wall and lands in a heap."

A few kinds of tests don't generate SP even when you roll doubles, such as initiative rolls and ammunition checks against Capacity for firearms. This is usually because it wouldn't make sense to perform a maneuver at that point. For instance, an initiative roll is not really an action; it just determines the order of events. Tests (including attacks) called for by stunts and rolls you make to resist special attacks or effects also never generate SP. Other tests may not generate them at the GM's discretion, but most of the time, if the characters have an opportunity to do something cool or dramatic, the GM should allow—and even encourage—gaining and using SP.

However, you may roll a test only when the GM calls for one. If you fish for SP by asking to roll actions at which your success is a foregone conclusion, the GM has every right to disallow the test.

EXAMPLE

Matthew makes a TN 11 Strength (Might) test for his character, Amy, to kick down a door. He rolls 3d6+2 and achieves a total of 12, with the dice reading 3, 3, and 4. The last die is the Stunt Die. Since the roll succeeds and contains doubles (two dice showing 3), and the Stunt Die shows 4, the test generates 4 SP. Matthew decides to spend 2 SP on Over Here!, making a ruckus to distract attention from Amy's allies sneaking in the back window, and 2 SP on Pay Dirt to pick up some cash (for a temporary +2 Resources) in the process. Matthew describes how Amy's kick rips the door from its flimsy hinges and makes a loud crash, and how she bursts into the room shouting threats to put all eyes on her. Matthew says one of the criminals—a minor NPC—offers up a substantial bribe in exchange for his life, which Amy accepts—knowing all the while that her teammates are busy breaking into the safe in the other room to get all the evidence they need to put these scum away for good.

GENERAL STUNT CONSIDERATIONS

When a stunt's description refers to "the object of your test," it means whatever item or person the test interacts with or targets. A Perception test often has an object only the GM knows at first, since the objective of the test is to see whether the character noticed it.

If a stunt says its effects last "for the rest of the encounter," it means they last until the focus of play jumps forward in time or changes venue, or until the heroes definitively succeed or fail at their current goal within the scene. If the GM switches gameplay focus between groups acting simultaneously, that doesn't count as a time or venue change. The GM is the final arbiter of what constitutes the end of an encounter.

TYPES OF STUNTS

Stunts come in three major categories: Action, Exploration, and Social. With the GM's permission and where it makes sense, you can use an exploration stunt during combat, or a social stunt during an investigation. You can even interrupt a social scene with an action stunt if you want to start a fight or run from someone who plans to chase you! The categories are there to indicate a stunt's most common usage and to help you easily find what you're looking for when you choose your stunts.

Each major stunt category has one or several core stunts. These are your go-to stunts when you have nothing specific in mind or you can't decide what you want to spend your SP on. This helps keep the scene moving, and helps players avoid choice paralysis.

Each of these broad categories breaks down into smaller lists, indicating which set of rules or circumstances those stunts work with. For instance, the "Investigation Stunts" list contains stunts that grant leads or clues, or otherwise aid in an investigation. Some lists indicate that their stunts are designed to accompany particular circumstances. This means that in most cases, you can select those stunts only when they match those situations. However, if you can come up with an inventive explanation and the GM agrees, you might be able to use these stunts with other actions as well.

Some individual stunts work only in certain circumstances, indicated by tags. For instance, a stunt might say "Strafe (Automatic Weapons)," meaning you can choose it only when you earn the SP while making an attack with an automatic weapon; likewise, stunts marked with a campaign mode, like the "Gritty" tag, are for Gritty games only unless the GM says otherwise.

CHOOSING STUNTS

Choosing a stunt can be daunting. There are so many options! Core stunts are always available if you just want to grab something and go; you can find them at the top of each list in this chapter, or look under the appropriate rules header in CHAPTER 2 to easily see them for each broad category. If your test or goal falls into one of the listed smaller categories, such as firearms or investigation stunts, you can jump straight to that list to quickly narrow down your choices.

GENERAL COMBAT STUNTS

SP COST	STUNT
1-3	(CORE) MOMENTUM: Gain +3 to initiative per SP spent, until the end of the next round.
1-3	(CORE) DUCK AND WEAVE: Gain +1 to Defense per SP spent, until the beginning of your next turn.
1-3	ADRENALINE RUSH: Temporarily regain 2 Health per SP spent (GRITTY 2/PULPY 4/CINEMATIC 6). You lose this Health again at the end of your next turn, even if you would drop to 0.
1-3	TAKE COVER: If you can find cover in your immediate vicinity, gain a cover rating equal to the SP spent, up to the maximum rating available nearby.
1+	GUARDIAN ANGEL: You stand ready to interpose yourself between an ally and danger. Choose a character within 5 yards of you. If they would take damage before your next turn, 1 point of damage per SP spent transfers to you instead.
1+	SKIRMISH: Move yourself or your attack's target 2 yards in any direction for each 1 SP you spend; you can choose Skirmish more than once per turn.
1	WHATEVER'S HANDY: Immediately arm yourself with anything in your environment you can reasonably wield. It has the statistics of the closest weapon to its shape, size, and material, but attacks take a penalty of -1 or -2 from the Clumsy improvised weapon quality. The weapon also has the Fragile or Weak quality. See CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT for these improvised weapon qualities.
2+	GROUP TACTICS: Pick one ally to move 2 yards in a direction they choose for each 2 SP spent; you can choose Group Tactics more than once per turn.
2	BRUTAL STRIKE (STUN DAMAGE): This attack deals wound damage instead.
2	COLLATERAL DAMAGE: Destroy objects in your environment to create obstacles for your foes. Make the roll you used to generate the stunt again. A pursuer must beat that roll in an opposed test (using an ability and focus picked by the GM that fits the situation) to pursue you.
2	DOUBLE-TEAM: Choose one ally to make an immediate attack on your target, who must be within range and sight of the ally. Your ally must have a loaded missile weapon to attack at range.
2	KNOCK PRONE: Knock your enemy prone. Melee attacks against a prone foe gain a +1, but ranged attacks against a prone foe suffer a -1.
2	LIGHTNING ATTACK: Make a second attack against the same target or a different one within range and sight; you must have a loaded missile weapon to attack at range.
2	PRECISE FORCE (IMPACT DAMAGE): This attack ignores half the opponent's equipment-based armor, rounded down.
2	TAUNT: Roll Communication (Deception) vs. Willpower (Self-Discipline) against any target within 10 yards of you. If you win, they must attack or oppose you in some way on their next turn.
2	VICIOUS BLOW: Inflict an extra 1d6 of damage on this attack.
3	BLOCKADE: Move up to 3 yards to position yourself between a foe and something or someone else. Until the beginning of your next turn, that foe must succeed at a minor action Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Might) test vs. your Defense to reach whatever or whoever you're protecting.
3	EXPOSE: Destroy or move any one object in weapon range, such as a door or crate, that could provide cover. This can take out small sections of larger objects like pillars or walls. Some heavy and/or tough objects can be moved or destroyed only in Cinematic mode, at the GM's discretion.
3	PLAY DEAD: In the confusion, you drop to the ground and convince others you're slain. No one may attack you until the next round begins.
3	SHOCK AND AWE: When you succeed at a non-attack physical feat or take an opponent out, anyone who witnesses it rolls Willpower (Courage) or (Morale) vs. your Strength (Intimidation). If you win, they suffer a -1 to the next opposed roll they make against you, or a -1 to their Defense vs. your next attack against them, whichever comes first.
4	KNOCK OUT (STUN DAMAGE) [GRITTY]: If your opponent has less than half their Health left, you may roll an attack opposed by your target's Constitution (Stamina); if you win, they immediately fall unconscious.
4	SEIZE THE INITIATIVE: Move to the top of the initiative order until someone else seizes the initiative. You may get to take another turn before some others act again.
5	MAIM [GRITTY]: Roll an attack opposed by your target's Constitution (Stamina). If you win, you remove (with blades) or disable (with other weapons) one of their limbs or an organ (such as an eye). They take a -5 to relevant actions and the GM may rule that some actions become impossible.
5	LETHAL BLOW: Inflict an extra 2d6 damage on this attack.
5	INSTANT KILL (WOUND DAMAGE) [GRITTY]: If your opponent has less than half their Health left, you may roll an attack opposed by your target's Constitution (Stamina) roll; if you win, they immediately die.

If you know what general sort of effect you want your stunt to accomplish but you're not sure where to look, describe it to the GM—they can either point you in the right direction, or quickly make up a basic stunt effect on the fly to help you out. A bonus to a relevant test on your next turn or action equal to the number of SP you spend is one simple guideline for improvised stunts.

Finally, it might be useful to make a short list of half a dozen or so “favored stunts” for your character, like this book does for NPCs (see **CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES**). Doing so can help give your character “signature tactics,” plus help you choose stunts, which your character may even gain a reputation for with other characters who see them in action. Some talents and specializations will also modify or add stunts. You should always make a note of these. The GM may award players with Reputation if they use their favored stunts to spectacular effect.

ACTION STUNTS

Action stunts are most commonly used during encounters that take place in action timing. This includes combat, chases, and other physical contests.

In some cases, the mechanical effect of an action stunt differs depending on the game's mode of play. The description indicates these differences by listing them with slashes, like this: (Gritty effects/Pulpy effects/Cinematic effects), in that order. Combat stunts from **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES** are repeated here, so you don't have to flip between two chapters to find every stunt.

When a stunt says, “apply this attack,” or uses similar wording, this means the attack roll and damage roll of the original attack apply to another target or circumstance.

GENERAL COMBAT STUNTS

General combat stunts can be used when you earn SP from virtually any attack type, if you can describe the action in a way that justifies the stunt's effects. A notable exception is attacks against vehicles, where you should use Anti-Vehicle stunts, since vehicles don't have Health.

MELEE STUNTS

Stunts from this list are designed to be used when you earn the SP while making a melee attack. Both unarmed strikes and close combat weapons (knives, swords, etc.) are suited to Melee Stunts.

FIREARMS STUNTS

Stunts from this list are designed to be used when you earn the SP while making an attack with a firearm.

GRAPPLING STUNTS

Stunts from this list are designed to be used when you earn the SP while making a Fighting (Grappling) attack.

ANTI-VEHICLE STUNTS

Stunts from this list are designed to be used when attacking or sabotaging a vehicle. Note that vehicles don't have Health, so these stunts are what you must use to damage or disable a vehicle in combat.



MELEE STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1-3	(CORE) PARRY: Your opponent suffers -1 to Defense per SP spent until your next turn, as you guide their limb or weapon askew.
1+	(CORE) FOOTWORK: You maneuver effortlessly. Gain +1 per SP spent to one combat-related test of your choice before the end of your next turn.
2	DISARM: You and your target make opposed melee attack rolls; if you win, knock your enemy's weapon 1d6 + Strength yards away in a direction you choose.
2	HAMSTRING: Reduce your target's Speed by 4 for the rest of the encounter. You may select this stunt multiple times, reducing the target's Speed by 4 each time. If the target's Speed is reduced to 0, they can't move from where they are. In Gritty games, they are also knocked prone and can only stand up by succeeding at a TN 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test.
3	BIND WEAPON: You and your opponent make opposed melee attack rolls; if you win, your opponent's next melee attack against you automatically misses.
4	ARMOR CRUSH: Against an opponent wearing armor (as equipment, instead of natural armor) convert up to 3 points of damage you would inflict on your foe with this attack into an armor penalty (a penalty to Speed and Dexterity – see CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT) of equal size instead. This stacks with any current armor penalty. This additional penalty lasts until the target takes a major action to readjust their armor.
5	BREAK WEAPON: You and your opponent make opposed melee attack rolls. If you win, you destroy your opponent's weapon, or at the GM's discretion, disable it for the encounter, instead. Against especially tough weapons (products of magic or high technology, for example) this stunt doesn't work, and you must choose another.

FIREARMS STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1-3	(CORE) OVERWATCH: Your opponent suffers -1 to attack rolls per SP spent until your next turn.
1-3	(CORE) PRECISION MARKSMANSHIP: If you make an attack with a firearm that benefits from an aim bonus before the end of your next turn, increase the aim bonus by +1 per SP spent.
1-3	RICOCET [CINEMATIC]: Make a trick shot that ignores the Armor Bonus of a target in cover per SP spent.
1-3	SHORT BURST (AUTOMATIC WEAPONS): Ignore one point of your opponent's ballistic armor per SP spent. You deal at least 1 point of damage no matter what.
1-3	STRAFE (AUTOMATIC WEAPONS): Immediately move up to 1 yard per SP spent in any direction, and apply this attack to anyone within 1 yard per SP spent of your original target. You can't selectively exclude anyone in the area. Halve the damage dealt to these additional targets (round up).
1	SUPPRESSIVE FIRE (AUTOMATIC WEAPONS): You pepper an area with bullets. If anyone, friend or foe, stands or moves within (GRITTY 1/PULPY 3/CINEMATIC 5) yards of where your target was positioned when you attacked between now and your turn next round, roll a new attack against that individual, whether you want to or not, to a maximum of one attack per target in that zone.
1	RAPID RELOAD [PULPY/ CINEMATIC]: Next time you miss with a firearm, immediately reload without checking against Capacity.
2+	EFFICIENT GUNNER [GRITTY]: Next time you miss with a firearm, subtract 1 from the Stunt Die's result for each 2 SP spent, for purposes of checking against Capacity.
2	LONG BURST (AUTOMATIC WEAPONS): Make a second attack against the same target or a different one within 5 yards of the first; take a -2 to this attack roll, but gain a +2 to the damage roll if you hit. You deal at least 1 point of damage no matter what, but you must reload your weapon afterward to continue using it.
3	PISTOL WHIP (PISTOLS): If this attack hit an opponent adjacent to you, <i>or</i> next time you miss with a firearm against an opponent adjacent to you and run out of ammo, make a second attack against the same target with Accuracy (Pistols) to club them with the gun. This inflicts 1d6 impact damage.
4	CALLED SHOT: You target an exposed part of your opponent's body. This attack's damage becomes penetrating.
4	SNIPER'S PERCH: You find high ground or another advantageous shooting position. In addition to the usual benefits, if you attack with a firearm on your next turn, double your weapon's short and long ranges for that turn.
5	SPRAY AND PRAY (AUTOMATIC WEAPONS) [CINEMATIC]: Apply this attack to everyone within a 5-yard radius of your original target, including allies. All additional targets gain +1 to Defense against this attack.

GRAPPLING STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1-3	(CORE) HINDER: Melee attacks your opponent makes before your next turn reduce their damage by 2 per SP spent.
1	(CORE) GRAPPLE: You and your target make opposed Fighting (Grappling) rolls; if you win, they can't move from where they are on their next turn. You and your target both take a -2 Defense penalty until the beginning of your next turn.
2	TAKEDOWN: You and your target make opposed Fighting (Grappling) rolls; if you win, you and your target fall prone (-1 to ranged attacks against both of you, but +1 to melee attacks against both of you). Your target takes an additional 1d6 damage and can't stand up until you do, or until they succeed at an attack against you.
3	HUMAN SHIELD: You and your target make opposed Fighting (Grappling) rolls. If you win, any failed ranged attack against you hits your target instead, and ranged attacks against you take a -2 penalty until the beginning of your next turn.
3	STRANGLE [GRITTY]: Roll Fighting (Grappling) vs. your target's Constitution (Stamina). If you win, the target must spend a minor action catching their breath on their next turn.
4	PIN: You and your target make opposed Fighting (Grappling) rolls. If you win, they can't do anything other than a free action on their next turn. You and the target both take a -4 Defense penalty until the beginning of your next turn.
4	HOSTAGE [GRITTY/PULPY]: You and your target make opposed Fighting (Grappling) rolls; if you win, you maneuver them into a vulnerable position. If they do anything other than a free action on their next turn, or if anyone attacks you or your allies before the beginning of your next turn, you may make an immediate attack against your target with a +2 bonus.
5	RESTRAIN: If you have appropriate equipment in hand, like handcuffs or rope, you and your target make opposed Fighting (Grappling) rolls. If you win, they take a -4 Defense penalty while restrained, and can't do anything other than try to escape with a Strength (Might) or Dexterity (Sabotage) test as a major action (minor in Cinematic games), with TN = 2d6 + (your Fighting (Grappling) score).

ANTI-VEHICLE STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1-3	(CORE) DENT: Your actions make the vehicle harder to handle. Impose a -1 penalty to tests to operate the vehicle per SP spent. These penalties can be undone only by repairing the vehicle.
1+	PIERCE HULL: Your attack penetrates a vehicle's exceptionally tough outer shell. If a vehicle has a Hull rating, you must spend SP equal to it on this stunt before spending other SP. This stunt has no other effect.
2+	SHRAPNEL: The attack showers the vehicle's interior with damaging fragments. The operator and all passengers in the same compartment suffer 1d6 ballistic wound damage for 2 SP, or 2d6 damage for 4 SP.
2	DESTROY SYSTEM: You destroy a system of your choice other than the engine, such as the brakes, lights, or a weapons system, with exact effects determined by the GM. This damage persists until repaired.
3	SLOWDOWN: You damage the vehicle's engine or one of its wheels, dropping its Velocity class by one category. If it drops to Standard or below, the vehicle crashes unless the operator succeeds at a TN 15 test using the appropriate focus to keep control. Aircraft will be forced to the ground in any event. This engine trouble persists until repaired.
3	CRASH RISK: Your attack strikes with such power or precision that the operator must make a TN 15 test to maintain control, using the appropriate focus, or crash.
4	MOBILITY KILL: Your attack destroys the vehicle's engine. The operator must make a TN 15 test to maintain control, using the appropriate focus, or crash. Even if they succeed, they must deal with a vehicle that can no longer move under its own power.
5	FUEL LINE: Your attack or maneuver ruptures the fuel line of an enemy vehicle, causing an explosion or burst of flame. This deals 3d6 penetrating damage to the operator and all passengers and has the effects of the Mobility Kill stunt as well. Vehicles without combustible elements suffer the effects of Mobility Kill but do not damage their occupants. In all cases, however, the vehicle is wrecked to the point where it can't be repaired in the field.

GENERAL EXPLORATION STUNTS

SP Cost

STUNT

- | SP Cost | STUNT |
|---------|--|
| 1-3 | (CORE) WHEN A PLAN COMES TOGETHER: You reveal this test was part of your plan all along, granting a bonus equal to SP spent on one ally's next test during the same encounter to accomplish the same goal. You must make this decision before the ally rolls. |
| 1+ | A STITCH IN TIME: You put in the effort to do it right the first time, setting yourself up for more success later. Gain +1 per SP spent on your next test related to this one during this encounter, as long as this roll was part of an advanced test. |
| 1+ | PAY DIRT: In the course of your endeavor, you win a bet, happen across a conveniently abandoned briefcase of cash, or discover something valuable you can pawn off to make a buck. Temporarily gain +1 Resources per SP spent; this increase lasts until you next fail a Resources test. Instances of this stunt don't stack. |
| 2 | JURY RIG: You find or improvise a piece of equipment you need to be more effective. Negate any situational penalties you would suffer for lacking proper equipment on tests appropriate to the improvisation, for the rest of the encounter. |
| 2 | SPEED DEMON: You complete your test in half the time it would otherwise take. |
| 3 | THE UPPER HAND: If your success leads to combat within a moment or two, you receive a +3 on your initiative roll. |
| 4 | WITH A FLOURISH: You impress everyone who watches you with your showmanship. Gain a +1 to opposed tests against them for the rest of the encounter. |
| 5 | FRUGAL: You use only what you must to get the job done, saving cash and supplies for a rainy day. This Resources test doesn't deplete your Resources even if it normally would. |

EXPLORATION STUNTS

Exploration stunts are most commonly used during encounters that revolve around investigation and discovery, covert operations, sabotage, and other kinds of adventure that don't fall into the Action category. Almost any kind of test can produce exploration stunts, at the GM's discretion. However, if the GM has no more information to give or the characters have wandered off the right track, the GM can simply rule the stunt ineffective, signaling the players to find a different approach.

GENERAL EXPLORATION STUNTS

These stunts use SP generated by virtually any non-combat action, if these stunts would fit how the action as described. The GM can always decide that some actions (such as an Intelligence-related test to remember a minor detail) are too trivial to generate stunt points.

INFILTRATION STUNTS

Infiltration stunts may apply when physically breaking in somewhere or exploring a new place, hacking into a computer or network, pulling a con job, or otherwise evading consequences and getting away with things.

INVESTIGATION STUNTS

Some investigation stunts have different effects depending on whether you use the simple or detailed investigation rules, denoted by parenthetical tags.

SOCIAL STUNTS

Social stunts are usually used during encounters that revolve around interpersonal relationships and struggles. That said, choosing social stunts during an action scene might help turn the tide of battle or even suspend hostilities, if the GM allows it.

You must include a description of your interactions along with a social stunt, and the two must be consistent with one



INFILTRATION STUNTS

SP Cost	Stunt
1+	(CORE) JUST A SHADOW: Gain +1 per SP spent to your next test during this encounter as long as you remain unnoticed.
1	(CORE) GOOD INSTINCTS: Make a Perception (appropriate focus) test with the same TN as the test you just made to learn the most likely immediate consequence of the action you just performed.
1	BRAVERY: Your success bolsters your courage, granting you 1d6 extra Toughness against the next damaging hazard you face during this encounter.
2	OVER HERE! Your flashy action makes you the center of attention. Each of your allies gains +1 to their next test to hide or pass scrutiny in this encounter, such as Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or (Stealth), or Communication (Disguise). Any action an opponent takes until then automatically targets you.
2	TAKE ONE FOR THE TEAM: When you successfully avoid damage from a trap or hazard but an ally doesn't, you may take the damage for that ally while they remain unscathed.
3	COVER YOUR TRACKS: Whether you're hacking into a network, evading the cops, or infiltrating a military base, you impose a -2 on all future rolls to follow your trail related to this test.
3	HIGH TECH HUSTLE: With an injection of technobabble or a quick mod to a device, you sidestep one minor complication impeding your current goal, or give yourself the ability to perform one task you otherwise couldn't in the current situation, at the GM's discretion.
4	IT WASN'T ME: You leave evidence that another character is responsible for the results of your test, such as breaking and entering, cheating at cards, or uploading a computer virus. All failed tests to investigate the truth reveal that person as the culprit, and such tests suffer a -2.
5	FANCY MEETING YOU HERE: Choose a focus or talent your character doesn't possess. An NPC of the GM's choice with that focus or talent appears in the scene within a few minutes, or a few rounds if your action leads directly to action time. This doesn't dictate anything about their situation, attitude, or identity; these are all up to the GM.

INVESTIGATION STUNTS

SP Cost	Stunt
1-3	(CORE) AH-HA! The GM reveals an additional useful fact about the object of your test per SP spent (Simple); gain +1 per SP spent to your next test following up on the lead you just unlocked (Detailed).
1	FLASHBACK: This test reminds you of something important you forgot. The GM reveals the identity or existence of another source of new information you didn't know about (Simple). Treat one of your tangential focuses as a primary one on the next test you make to unlock a lead related to this test (Detailed).
2	INTUITION: The GM reveals a fact about the object of your test you could not have noticed or deduced simply by interacting with it (Simple). When you uncover a clue, you gain <i>two</i> new leads instead of one, making the path branch (Detailed).
3	LUCKY BREAK (DETAILED): This test's result leads fortuitously to putting two and two together later. Treat one irrelevant focus as a tangential one on the next test you make to unlock a lead related to this test.
4	DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE (DETAILED): If this test led to a reveal, the GM also provides a brand-new lead about a new subject that will provide greater rewards.
5	BREAKTHROUGH: You gain not only information, but some form of incontrovertible proof (Simple). Reduce the total number of leads on the path by one, jumping to a further point in the investigation immediately (Detailed).

another. You can't have your character deliver a scathing dressing-down and then use Class Clown to say it's funny (at least, without a really clever justification).

Some social stunts have different effects depending on whether you use the simple or detailed social interaction rules, denoted by parenthetical tags. A stunt that worsens other characters' attitudes toward you or another character can also negate the effects of one relevant Reputation or Membership benefit per shift instead, for the rest of the session, at the option of whoever chose the stunt. See **Social Adversaries** in CHAPTER 9 for more on giving Reputation and/or Membership to NPCs for this purpose.

GENERAL SOCIAL STUNTS

These stunts use SP generated by a wide variety of social actions. Pick stunts which best fit your goals and the feel

of the interaction. The GM can always decide that some social actions (such as impressing a hotel bellhop who has no deeper tie to the adventure) are trivial enough to not generate stunt points.

ATTITUDE STUNTS

These stunts specifically apply to detecting, changing or manipulating events related to someone's Attitude, as measured in CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES. Select stunts which fit your objectives and the social situation in play.

MEMBERSHIP & REPUTATION STUNTS

Some characters have Memberships in organizations, or possess honorifics arising from having built a reputation. The rules for these situations can be found in CHAPTER 10: REWARDS. These stunts affect those characteristics.

NPCs AND SOCIAL STUNTS

Remember, all these stunts are available to NPCs, too. Turn-about is fair play! But be sure to communicate openly when social stunts seem to take away the players' freedom to choose how their characters behave. GMs should work with players to make sure no one is uncomfortable with the direction of the scene. In cases where a stunt doesn't make sense for an NPC to use, such as when it would impact attitude (which PCs don't have) or Relationships (which NPCs don't have), the GM can either approximate the results through roleplay with the player's permission, or just choose something else. The GM might give Reputation and/or Membership to some important NPCs so they can participate in stunts that call on those traits (see **Social Adversaries** in CHAPTER 9 for more on this).

Using attitude rules for PCs (see **Social Rules for Player Characters** in CHAPTER 2) can help make NPCs' social stunts feel less intrusive, since anyone who tries to change a character's behavior or actions that way must do so gradually, with obvious steps to follow. Like NPCs, PCs can have certain inalienable values that no social stunt can make them defy, and players may draw a hard line such that not even violent threats or coercion can change a character's mind on these principles.

At the same time, players should keep in mind that good fun can arise from the how the characters their heroes interact with might affect them psychologically and emotionally, even in ways the players wouldn't necessarily choose for themselves. As the attitude rules suggest, the GM should make sure to reward players with XP, Relationships, Reputation, and so forth if they allow social stunts to put their char-

GENERAL SOCIAL STUNTS

SP Cost	STUNT
1+	(CORE) IMPRESS: Gain a +1 per SP spent to your next social test against the same target as this test, during this encounter.
1	CARDS ON THE TABLE: If you were completely honest when making this test, your target must be completely honest in the next social test they make against you during this encounter. (This doesn't stop either character from omitting information.)
1	MAKING AN ENTRANCE: As long as this is your first action of the encounter, gain +1 to your next opposed roll against one character who witnessed it. You can choose this stunt multiple times per roll.
2	AND ANOTHER THING: Make a second, related test as part of your action, before anyone else has a chance to respond or make any tests of their own.
2	HIDDEN MESSAGE: Your words convey a different message to one person than to everyone else who hears them; the character you choose is the only one who can decipher your true meaning.
2	SWAY THE CROWD: Your words affect one additional person of your choice. You may choose this stunt multiple times per roll, but if someone opposed your test, you can't expand the effect to anyone with a higher ability + focus total than the original target.
3	GOOD COP/BAD COP: Choose an ally to immediately make a test in seeming opposition to the one you just made, with the same target. If they succeed, rather than garnering the usual results, they prompt the target to give up a secret you didn't already know.
3	LET'S MAKE A DEAL: Your action turns out to benefit a character you didn't target, who now owes you a favor, however grudgingly.
3	OBJECTION! You step in on someone else's behalf. Another character in the scene may use your ability + focus instead of their own next time they oppose a test during this encounter.
4	CLASS CLOWN: Your words lighten the mood, imposing a -2 penalty to all enemies' initiative rolls if a fight breaks out during this encounter.
4	FLIRT: Roll Communication (Seduction) vs. your target's Willpower (Self-Discipline) as a simple social roll against a character whose attitude toward you is Open or better, with a positive bent. If you win, they become enamored with your character, opening the door to future romance or intimacy. How this proceeds is up to you and the GM to work out together.
4	FROM THE HEART: You believe wholeheartedly in what you say. Choose one Willpower focus. If you don't have it already, gain it for the rest of the encounter. If you do, add an additional +1 to rolls you make with it.
4	SLEEP WITH ONE EYE OPEN: Applies to a test targeting someone you have a negative Relationship with, or who's injured or killed someone you have/had a Relationship with. The next attack you make against that target in this session is automatically a surprise attack, as long as they weren't already in combat.
5	ENRAGE: Choose one character present whose attitude toward you is Neutral or worse, or a negative variant of a more positive attitude. They must immediately either attack you or storm out of the scene. If they attack, it needn't be deadly (though it can be).
5	PATTER: Your rapid-fire words confuse your target, who must succeed at a Perception (Empathy) roll vs. your Communication (Deception), or automatically fail their next non-attack test against you.
7	MY WORD IS MY BOND: Applies to a test relevant to completing a task you've promised someone you have a Relationship with you will perform. Gain +2 to tests <i>directly</i> related to completing this task until the end of the session.

acters at a disadvantage. The Instant Experience Awards in **CHAPTER 10: REWARDS** can compensate players for allowing their characters to be emotionally manipulated. The worse the consequence, the larger the reward, so getting sweet-talked into an ambush nets more XP than being cheated out of a small amount of money. Provide the award after

the negative consequence happens, even if the character manages to bounce back from any fallout.

Ultimately, if everyone at the table doesn't agree on how a social stunt should affect a character, skip it and choose a different one.

ATTITUDE STUNTS

SP Cost	Stunt
1-3	(CORE) MAKING AN OFFER: Your test implies a promise or olive branch, temporarily shifting the target's attitude toward you up by one per SP spent (even if this test already shifted it). It shifts back by the same amount as soon as you fail a social test against them. Inapplicable when performing a grand gesture.
1+	READ THE ROOM: In reaction to your test, the GM reveals the current attitude or intention, or a mood indicator for one present character of your choice. You can choose this stunt multiple times per roll. Characters with the Communication (Deception) or Willpower (Self-Discipline) focus may roll vs. your Perception (Empathy) to avoid this.
2	ON THE FENCE: Choose a character you didn't target who's Standoffish, Neutral, or Open toward you. They're convinced to take your side in the conflict, as long as they don't already oppose you (Simple). Shift their attitude toward you up by one for the rest of the encounter (Detailed).
3	BAD FORM: Regain the SP you spent on this stunt, plus 1 more, to spend on any other stunt that fits your action. You perform the stunt in a way that offends one other character. They now consider you a rival, threat, or enemy, shifting their attitude to Hostile if it was Standoffish or Neutral, or shifting it to its negative variation if it was more positive. You can't use this stunt if all NPCs present are already Hostile toward you.
3	CAST OUT: Your action shames or embarrasses a present character whom you target, imposing a -2 penalty on their next social roll against anyone but you in this encounter (Simple), or worsening the attitude of one other present character toward your target by one shift (Detailed).
4	RISKY BUSINESS: Your action reveals a secret or contains a whopper, shifting your target's attitude toward another character in the scene from Neutral or worse to Very Hostile; it also worsens your target's attitude toward you by one shift, as they're inclined to shoot the messenger. If you lied and the target later finds out, their attitude toward you shifts to Very Hostile.
5	MEDDLE: Your action brings others together or drives a wedge between them. Choose two present characters other than yours and shift their attitudes toward each other up or down (both in the same direction).

MEMBERSHIP & REPUTATION STUNTS

SP Cost	Stunt
1	(CORE) BON MOT: You tag the perfect witty remark onto the end of your action. If you can't think of one, let the group brainstorm and pick one among their ideas. Gain a temporary honorific you can use for passive Reputation only, for the rest of the session.
1	STICK YOUR NECK OUT: Your test to help someone else puts your own Reputation in jeopardy. An ally of your choice gains a +2 bonus to their next social roll in this encounter; if they fail, you lose all Reputation bonuses from one honorific for the rest of the session.
2	IN GOOD STANDING: When targeting a member of an organization in which you have Membership, treat your rank as one higher for purposes of gaining access to resources for the rest of this encounter.
3	BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT: Your action impresses or charms any one character present. Roll Communications (Persuasion) vs. Willpower (Self-Discipline) to affect someone with an attitude of Hostile or worse; no roll is necessary for others. Increase all relevant Membership and Reputation bonuses by +1 while interacting with that character for the rest of the session; you may improve their attitude toward you, at the GM's discretion.
3	CLICK "SHARE": Whether it's from you or others sharing a video on YouTube, jotting down a quick blog post, calling up a buddy at the local radio station, or posting on a huge gossip's Facebook wall, the news gets out quickly about what you've just done. For the rest of the session, the honorific most related to this test applies even in situations where it seems unrelated.
4	OOZING CONFIDENCE: Your action impresses or fools all the right people. Gain one temporary Reputation honorific or rank of Membership for the rest of the session, or until you next fail a test relevant to this influence, whichever comes first.
5	NAME-DROPPING: Your action blatantly displays your affiliation with someone whose Membership rank is higher than yours in an organization to which you belong, or who has a relevant honorific when you don't. You may use their Reputation or Membership benefits with that honorific or organization as your own for the rest of the session. If they find out and disapprove, worsen their attitude toward you by one shift.



EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

While some *Modern AGE* games limit characters to the abilities and talents described in the previous chapters of this book, some fantastic settings allow for characters who possess extraordinary powers of one sort or another. This chapter looks at the basic structure of these powers in game terms and at two specific examples: arcana and psychic powers.

Arcane powers (or arcana) are occult or supernatural abilities, tapping into arcane forces using intention and ritual, particularly incantations and symbolic gestures. In short, magic. Wielders of arcana are arcanists and their powers are spells. Although the potential to wield arcana is often inborn or inherited, it generally requires considerable training and knowledge to master.

Psychic powers (or disciplines) are the hidden abilities of the mind, the subject of pseudo-science, urban legend, and speculation. Users of these abilities are psychics and their powers are sometimes referred to as disciplines. Even more than arcana, psychic potential tends to be inborn, although there may be ways to help nurture and strengthen it.

As extraordinary powers are entirely optional, it is up to the GM whether the setting features arcana, psychic abilities, both, or neither. It is likewise the GM's choice whether or not these extraordinary powers are available to the PCs. In some settings, such powers may belong solely to the foes the characters fight. In others, the PCs may have some access. The GM is also free to restrict or modify access in any way desired (see the **Gaining Powers** section for options). Players should consult with their GM about the

availability of extraordinary powers before choosing any for their characters.

POWER TALENTS

Each extraordinary power is divided into multiple power talents, representing different facets of that power. For example, arcane power includes the Fire Arcana talent for dealing with fire, as well as a Healing Arcana talent and a Digital Arcana talent that deals with computers. Likewise, psychic power includes an Extrasensory Perception talent as well as a Telekinesis and Telepathy talent, among others.

While each arcane and psychic power has its own talent, they all take the following form:

POWER TALENT

REQUIREMENTS: None

You possess an aspect of an extraordinary power.

NOVICE: You gain the two novice effects associated with your power talent.

EXPERT: You gain the Expert effect associated with your power talent. You also gain the power focus associated with your power talent (see **Power Focuses**).

MASTER: You gain the master effect associated with your power talent. You can also choose one power stunt (see **Power Stunts**) you can perform with the talent for -1 SP.

POWER FOCUSES

Each power talent also has its own associated power focus, which is an ability focus for tests involving that talent. For example, the Fire Arcana talent also has an Intelligence (Fire Arcana) focus associated with it, which applies its bonus to Intelligence tests using Fire Arcana. Characters usually acquire a power talent's associated focus at the Expert degree of the talent. This focus is free as part of the power and does not affect the character's acquisition of other focuses by level. Power focuses are otherwise just like other ability focuses, as described in CHAPTER 3. The abilities associated with extraordinary powers can vary between campaigns or even individual power talents. The GM decides, but by default, the arcane talents listed here use Intelligence power focuses, and psychic talents use Willpower power focuses.

GAINING POWERS

Since extraordinary powers are based on talents, they can be acquired in the same way as other *Modern AGE* talents. The GM should choose one of the following options for power acquisition to suit the needs of the game:

- **UNLIMITED:** Any time players are free to choose a new talent (or degree in a talent) for their characters, they may choose an available power talent.
- **SUBSTITUTION:** Like unlimited, with the addition that players can choose to exchange one or more of their characters' starting talents from Background, Profession, or Drive for power talents, allowing 1st-level characters to start out with extraordinary powers.
- **LIMITED:** There are limited circumstances when players may choose a power talent or degree in a power talent for their characters. This might be only every even- or odd-numbered level, or certain number of levels (such as every four or five), or the circumstances may require an in-game means of "unlocking" access to a new power talent degree, such as finding and studying specific sources of knowledge, learning from a suitable teacher, a measure of practice or study (like solitary meditation), or even access to specific materials like arcane potions, designer pharmaceuticals, or strange energy sources. Fulfilling the requirements for extraordinary power advancement could be an adventure in and of itself!
- **SPECIALIZATION:** One version of limited acquisition of powers is to treat power talents like specializations (see **Specializations** in CHAPTER 3), available to the characters only at certain levels. This greatly limits the availability of powers in the game and delays characters getting them until higher levels.

POWER POINTS

Wielding extraordinary powers requires effort, measured in the form of power points (PP). A character with one or more power talents has a power points score, similar to the character's Health, and each power has an associated power point cost, which is subtracted from the user's current PP score when the power is used. If you run out of power points, you

cannot use extraordinary powers until you have recovered some. Note that even if a character has both types of extraordinary powers, those powers both draw from the same power point "pool;" a character can still only manage so much effort!

ACQUIRING

When a character first gains a power talent, they also gain a PP score of 10 + Willpower + 1d6. Every level the character gains thereafter adds Willpower + 1d6 to their PP total, up to level 10. From levels 11 to 20, characters gain power points only equal to their Willpower (minimum of 1) with each increase in level.

SPENDING

Characters pay the PP cost of a power immediately when that power is used, before any test or determination of the power's effect. If the character has insufficient power points to use the power, nothing happens. If the power usage fails, the power points remain spent.

REGAINING

Characters regain expended power points by resting. For each full hour of rest, meditation, or similar restorative activity, a character regains 1d6 + Willpower power points. A character who gets a full 8 hours of rest, such as a full night's sleep, regains all expended power points.

USING POWERS

You can use any power by spending the necessary PP and making the power test associated with it. If you have the power talent's associated power focus, add its bonus to the test.

POWER TEST = 3D6 + ABILITY + POWER FOCUS (IF APPLICABLE)

If your power test equals or exceeds the power's target number, you use the power successfully. If not, the power fails, although you still spend the necessary PP on the attempt.

Note that extraordinary powers often bypass the usual systems for investigation or social interaction. A power that compels obedience, for example, does so regardless of the target's attitude, while a power that provides information does so without regard for the usual limits of investigation. See the individual power descriptions for examples.

FORCE

For many powers, a successful power test is all that's needed. For others, the subject's natural resistance must be considered. Force is a measure of a character's powers' strength and effectiveness, and determines the target number to resist them. Certain powers allow the subject to test against Force to overcome or offset some of your power's effects.

FORCE = 10 + WILLPOWER + POWER FOCUS (IF APPLICABLE)

POWER POINT OPTIONS

The GM may wish to implement one or more of the following options concerning power points in the game. You should inform the players if any of these options are in use.

LIMITED POWER POINT GAIN

Rather than gaining additional PP at every level after initially acquiring a power, characters may gain additional power points only when they acquire either a novice degree in a new power or an additional degree in a power they already possess. This means the ability to exert effort with powers only grows as the breadth of the character's powers grow.

UNLIMITED POWER POINT GAIN

Rather than first acquiring power points when they first acquire a power talent, *all* characters start with 10 + Willpower + 1d6 PP at 1st level and gain them with each level as given under Acquiring Power Points. However, only characters with power talents have any way to actually use their power points, so there's no need for non-power users to track them. This means all characters of the same level have potentially the same number of power points, regardless of when they began acquiring and using extraordinary powers.

POWERS AND ENCUMBRANCE

Expending effort to use powers may be complicated by things like physical encumbrance and conditions limiting focus, concentration, and unrestricted movement. If so, the GM can apply an increase in PP cost for characters operating under adverse circumstances. This option may particularly apply to bulky worn armor and similar equipment (such as space suits, heavy packs, and so forth). For armor, the GM can simply use the armor penalty as a guideline for the additional PP cost. This tends to limit the combination of armor and power use.

POWER FATIGUE

In this variant, characters don't have or use power points at all. Instead, when using a power, the player rolls a fatigue test for the character. This is a Willpower test with a target number of 9 + half the power's listed cost (round down). Powers with a 0 PP cost do not cause fatigue or require a test.

$$\text{FATIGUE TEST} = 3D6 + \text{WILLPOWER} + \text{POWER FOCUS (IF APPLICABLE)} \text{ VS. } \text{TN } 9 + \text{ONE-HALF POWER'S LISTED COST (ROUNDED DOWN)}$$

If the test succeeds, using the power costs the character only negligible effort. If the fatigue test fails, the character gains a level of fatigue, becoming winded. Each additional failed fatigue test results in an additional level of fatigue.

FATIGUE LEVELS

The four levels of fatigue progress as follows:

- **WIND**ED: The character has a -1 penalty to all tests and cannot Run or Charge.
- **FATIGU**ED: The character has a -2 penalty to all tests, cannot Run or Charge, and moves at half normal speed.
- **EXHAUST**ED: The character is nearly spent. An exhausted character has a -3 penalty to all tests, moves at half their normal speed, and cannot Run or Charge. Additionally, if the character loses more than half their Health while exhausted, they become unconscious for 1d6 hours, or until restored to greater than half their maximum Health. After 6 hours unconscious, they regain 10 + Constitution + Level Health and regain consciousness.
- **DYING**: The character's Health drops to 0 and the character begins dying. If restored to at least 1 Health, the character becomes unconscious, but stable, regaining consciousness in 1d6 hours at level 3 fatigue.

FATIGUE RECOVERY

Characters can recover from fatigue by resting, as follows:

- Taking a 5-minute breather is enough to recover from being winded. You gain this benefit in addition to the normal amount of Health you recover from a breather.
- Resting for at least 4 hours, with only light activity (talking, reading, and the like, but not standing or riding) allows you to recover from being fatigued, so long as you also eat and drink something during that time.
- Sleeping for at least 6 hours allows you to recover from being exhausted, in addition to the Health benefits of such rest.

POWER STUNTS

SP Cost	Power Stunt
1-3	(CORE) POWERFUL MANIFESTATION: Increase the Force of your power by 1 per SP spent, to a maximum of 3.
2	SKILLFUL POWER: Reduce the PP cost of the power by 1. This can reduce the cost to 0. If the power requires a fatigue test, reduce its TN by 2.
2	MIGHTY POWER: If the power does damage, one target of your choice takes an extra 1d6 damage.
3	LASTING POWER: If the power has a duration beyond instantaneous, it remains in effect twice as long with no additional PP cost. Burning Shield would last 2 rounds per point of Willpower instead of 1, for example. Powers that last until the end of the encounter are extended by 1d6 minutes instead.
3	POWER SHIELD: You use the residual energy of the power to set up a temporary protective shield. You gain a +2 bonus to Defense until the beginning of your next turn.
4	FAST USE: After you resolve this power, you can immediately use another. The second power must require a major action or a minor action's worth of time to use. If you roll doubles on the roll to use the power, you do not get any more SP.
4	IMPOSING POWER: The power manifests in a much more dramatic fashion than usual, or perhaps radiates a sinister aura. Until the beginning of your next turn, anyone attempting to make a melee attack against you must make a successful Willpower (Courage) test with a TN of 10 + your Willpower ability. Those who fail must take a move or defend action instead.
4	OMEN: The power attunes its user to occult sources of information: secret energy flows, whispering spirits, or prophetic visions, for instance. This automatically unlocks one lead in a relevant investigation, even creating a lead to unlock if one isn't present, or it provides one piece of useful information determined by the GM.
4	SPLIT POWER: If the power affects only one target, you can have it affect two, so long as the second target is within the power's range and no more than 6 yards from the original target. There is no additional PP cost. Targets test against the power separately.
5	DISRUPT POWER: In addition to its normal effects, your power disrupts another extraordinary effect (such as an arcana's power) on the target. Roll an immediate test of your Intelligence (Occultism) vs. the Force of any one effect on the target. Success removes the effect. Doubles on the test do not generate SP. Note that the GM may decide that one type of extraordinary power may not disrupt another, so that, for example, arcana can't disrupt psychic powers.
5	LETHAL POWER: If the power does damage, one of its targets takes an extra 2d6 damage. Alternately, all targets of the power take an additional 1d6 damage.

POWER FORMAT

Extraordinary powers in the following sections use the following format:

- **NAME:** What the power is called. Characters and power users in the setting may refer to it by a different name, such as some arcanists calling a *flame blast* a "pyromantic strike," or a psychic who calls *telekinesis* "psychokinesis" or "ghost hands."
- **REQUIREMENT(S):** You must meet the necessary requirement(s) in order to acquire this power, usually a particular degree in its power talent.
- **COST:** This is the cost in power points (PP) necessary to use the power.
- **TIME:** This is the amount of time necessary to use the power. If the time is expressed in the form of a major or minor action, then the power can be used during action time (see **Action Time** and **Taking Actions** in CHAPTER 2).
- **TARGET NUMBER:** Your power test result must equal or exceed this number in order to use the power successfully.
- **TEST:** Some powers require a test from the target or subject of the power, typically against the power's

Force. This entry details the type of test the power requires, if any. The effects of the test are given in the power's description.

Each power concludes with a description of what the power does in detail, including the results of successful or failed tests.

POWER STUNTS

Like most mundane actions, the use of extraordinary powers can make stunts possible if the player rolls doubles. All the normal rules for acquiring and spending stunt points apply. By default, the player of the power user selects stunts from the **Power Stunts** table. The selected stunt must fit the power's description, so that non-damaging powers can't trigger stunts that inflict extra damage. The stunt must also fit the rationale for the power in the campaign. For example, in a setting where magic hides itself from the uninitiated, and appears to be a set of coincidences, it might not be possible to use Imposing Power.

The GM may allow a power user's player to pick stunts from other tables as well, if it makes sense. For instance, using a power in combat may make a number of general combat stunts appropriate.

ARCANA

An urban fantasy campaign might feature spellcasters of various kinds, using their abilities in secret—or in the strangest worlds, out in the open. The following are some arcane powers *Modern AGE* characters can learn. Each arcana is a group of spells with a common theme, learned as a power talent.

Unless the GM decides otherwise, all arcana have Intelligence power focuses, such as Intelligence (Divination Arcana).

DIGITAL ARCANA

With the magic of numbers, you exercise power over the digital world.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Digital Arcana spells.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Digital Arcana spell. You also gain the power focus Intelligence (Digital Arcana).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Digital Arcana spell. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Digital Arcana spells for -1 SP.



BYPASS

REQUIREMENT: DIGITAL ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: NONE

This spell allows you to bypass one physical, computer-controlled sensor or countermeasure you can see or touch. The affected device reacts to you as if you are authorized or otherwise unremarkable. Examples include a computerized lock or door giving you access, a security scanner not noticing you or treating you as authorized, and so forth. *Bypass* does not provide you with passwords or other access, although it can unlock a digital device like a smartphone. At the GM's discretion, the TN for *bypass* may be higher for more sophisticated devices.

TRACKER

REQUIREMENT: DIGITAL ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 3 PP
TIME: 1 MINUTE **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: NONE

You place an invisible arcane “tag” on an object, which remains until you choose to dismiss it as a free action. Once an object is tagged, you can track it with a GPS-enabled device and another casting of this spell (TN 11). The GPS device picks up the tag's location as if it were an electronic transmitter.

GREMLINS

REQUIREMENT: DIGITAL ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 8 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
TEST: NONE

You cause a single digital device you can touch or see within 20 yards of you to malfunction, either shutting down completely, freezing, or acting erratically (your choice) for up to a minute. At the GM's discretion, electronically shielded devices may impose a penalty to your power test. You can spend 4 PP to extend the duration of *gremlins* another minute if you do so before the initial duration expires.

ARCANE HACK

REQUIREMENT: DIGITAL ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 10 PP
TIME: 1 MINUTE **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
TEST: NONE

Your arcane access to the digital realm makes you a natural hacker. For the duration of the encounter, you can add your Intelligence (Digital Arcana) focus to any Intelligence tests to hack into a computer, and the bonus stacks with any other applicable ability focus. You perform stunts while hacking at -1 SP cost, and you can cast other digital arcana spells on digital devices connected to the network you are accessing, allowing you to bypass, tag, or crash them.

DIVINATION ARCANA

Your magic gives you supernatural insight beyond just the mundane senses.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Divination Arcana spells.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Divination Arcana spell. You also gain the power focus Intelligence (Divination Arcana).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Divination Arcana spell. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Divination Arcana spells for -1 SP.



FOREWARNING

REQUIREMENT: DIVINATION ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: DEXTERITY (STEALTH) VS. FORCE

Arcane awareness warns you of immediate danger. For the rest of the encounter after successfully casting this spell, you or another subject you touch cannot be surprised (see **Surprise** in CHAPTER 8) except by attackers who are concealed by extraordinary means, in which case they must succeed on a Dexterity (Stealth) test against your Force in order to surprise you. Additionally, you gain a +2 bonus for the rest of the encounter on all tests to avoid hazards where a moment's forewarning can aid you (see **Hazards** in CHAPTER 8).

SENTINEL

REQUIREMENT: DIVINATION ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 3 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: DEXTERITY (STEALTH) VS. FORCE

When you cast this spell, you place an invisible, intangible, arcane sentinel to watch over an area no larger than 4 yards



across per Divination Arcana degree. The spell cannot be placed on an object or creature, only to observe a place. When any circumstance you specify when casting *sentinel* occurs in that area, you receive a vision of it, as if you were standing where the sentinel is placed. Examples include when any person enters the area, when a specific door or container opens, or when light enters the area.

You can maintain the vision by taking a minor action each round to do so, but your ordinary senses are overridden, so you are unaware of what is happening near you while you are observing events elsewhere. You can maintain a number of active *sentinel* spells equal to your Willpower at any one time, although you can only perceive through one of them at a time.

At Expert degree, you can spend an additional 2 PP to allow your sentinel to deliver a short message (just a sentence or two) in the voice of your choosing when it is activated.

ILL OMENS

REQUIREMENT: DIVINATION ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 8 PP
TIME: 1 MINUTE **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
TEST: WILLPOWER (FAITH) VS. FORCE

Your insight into the future can make a target vulnerable. When you meet your chosen target in any type of encounter in the 24 hours after successfully casting this spell, you can choose to activate its benefits as a free action. For the remainder of the encounter, the target suffers a -2 penalty on tests based on one

ability of your choice (Communication, Dexterity, and so on). Stunts based on that ability also generate -2 SP. If the target makes a successful Willpower (Faith) test vs. your Force, the ability test and SP penalties are only -1. *Ill omens* is effective for only a single encounter and it cannot be cast again on the same target until the full 24 hours have elapsed.

UNVEIL

REQUIREMENT: DIVINATION ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 10 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
TEST: NONE

When you successfully cast this spell, for the rest of the encounter you can perceive through all forms of magical deception or illusion. Invisible things are visible to you, illusions revealed as unreal, and even magical darkness or mist cannot hamper your sight. You remain aware of the presence of such things, but they have no effect on you and you can see them for what they really are. Magically transformed or shape-shifted beings show a ghostly overlay of their true form or appearance.

In campaigns where the arcana are uncommon, the GM may decide that this power also functions on mundane darkness, mist, smoke, and intentional attempts to deceive you or conceal something from you. This would apply to someone trying to hide with a Dexterity (Stealth) test, but not someone who is simply sleeping out of your line of sight, and not trying to hide.

FIRE ARCANA

You mystically wield fire as a tool and a weapon.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Fire Arcana spells.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Fire Arcana spell. You also gain the power focus Intelligence (Fire Arcana).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Fire Arcana spell. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Fire Arcana spells for -1 SP.



ARCANE LANTERN

REQUIREMENT: FIRE ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP PER HOUR
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 8
TEST: NONE

You illuminate the area around you with a steady light, similar to that of a torch or lantern. The spell illuminates a 10-yard radius centered on you. *Arcane lantern* lasts for 1 hour, but can be extended for 2 PP per additional hour.

FLAME BLAST

REQUIREMENT: FIRE ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 4 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
TEST: DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) VS. FORCE

Gouts of flame erupt from your outstretched hands. The *flame blast* is 8 yards long and 2 yards wide. Anyone hit by the blast takes 2d6+1 damage. Targets who make a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) test vs. your Force take only 1d6+1 damage.

BURNING SHIELD

REQUIREMENT: FIRE ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 6 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
TEST: NONE

You surround yourself with an aura of fire. Anyone you touch or who makes a melee attack against you takes 2 penetrating damage. *Burning shield* lasts for a number of minutes equal to your Willpower. You can renew the spell's duration without another power test by spending its cost again before it expires.

FIRESTORM

REQUIREMENT: FIRE ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 11 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
TEST: DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) VS. FORCE

You create an explosive *firestorm* with a 4-yard radius anywhere within 50 yards of you. Anyone in the area takes 3d6 + Willpower damage and may be knocked prone. Those who make a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) test vs. your Force remain standing.

HEALING ARCANA

Your magic can knit wounds and even restore life to the dying.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Healing Arcana spells.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Healing Arcana spell. You also gain the power focus Intelligence (Healing Arcana).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Healing Arcana spell. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Healing Arcana spells for -1 SP.



HEALING TOUCH

REQUIREMENT: HEALING ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 1-3 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
TEST: NONE

Your touch channels energy to heal and restores the subject. You can choose to spend up to 3 PP when you cast *healing touch*. For each PP spent, the target regains 1d6 Health. You can cast *healing touch* on yourself.

REVIVAL

REQUIREMENT: HEALING ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 5 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
TEST: NONE

Your touch helps restore life to the fallen. A dying character you touch after successfully casting *revival* immediately regains 10 + their Constitution + your Willpower in Health. Since dying characters cannot take actions, you cannot cast this spell on yourself.

HEALING AURA

REQUIREMENT: HEALING ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 3-9 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
TEST: NONE

Waves of healing power radiate from you, aiding your nearby allies. Choose a number of subjects up to twice your Willpower, all of whom must be within 10 yards of you. All chosen subjects regain 1d6 Health per 3 PP you spend (to a maximum of 3d6 Health for 9 PP). You can choose yourself as one of the subjects.

RESTORATION

REQUIREMENT: HEALING ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 15 PP
TIME: 1 MINUTE **TARGET NUMBER:** 17
TEST: NONE

You restore a gravely injured character to health, though this spell takes 1 minute to cast and is thus most useful outside of action time. You must remain adjacent to the subject throughout the casting. If your power test is successful, the subject regains Health equal to your Willpower × 10.

ILLUSION ARCANA

Your magic is rarely what it appears to be.

In general, illusion spells resisted by Perception affect machines and artificial sensors as well as living beings, whereas illusions resisted by Willpower (such as *hallucination*) have no effect on sensors like camera or microphones, only on a living mind.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Illusion Arcana spells.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Illusion Arcana spell. You also gain the power focus Intelligence (Illusion Arcana).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Illusion Arcana spell. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Illusion Arcana spells for -1 SP.



DISPLACEMENT

REQUIREMENT: ILLUSION ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 3 PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
TEST: PERCEPTION (SEEING) VS. FORCE

You create the illusion that you—or another subject you touch when you cast this spell—are about a yard away from your actual position for the remainder of the encounter. You gain +2 Defense against melee attacks and +5 Defense against ranged attacks while under *displacement*; attacks targeting an area are unaffected so long as you are actually in the area. Any attacker who misses the subject at least once while *displacement* is in effect can make a Perception (Seeing) test against your Force as a free action on the start of their turn. Success means they see through the illusion and perceive the subject's true position, although the spell remains in effect for others.

FIGMENT

REQUIREMENT: ILLUSION ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
TEST: PERCEPTION (SEEING) VS. FORCE

You conjure a single simple visual illusion no larger than 2 square yards in size, such as a person. This figment can look like anything you've seen or can describe (in the GM's judgment). It has no substance and makes no sound. Anyone with a reason to believe the figment might not be real can roll a Perception (Seeing) test against your Force to see through it. You can impart motion to the illusion by taking a minor action each round to manipulate it, and the *figment* spell lasts for a minute; spend the cost again to extend its duration for another minute.

At the Expert degree, you can conjure an illusion up to 4 square yards in size and cause it to move without taking an action to do so. At the master degree, you can conjure an illusion up to 8 square yards in size, and also cause it to make any sounds associated with that thing or creature.

INVISIBILITY

REQUIREMENT: ILLUSION ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 8 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
TEST: PERCEPTION (SEEING) VS. FORCE

You or a subject you touch becomes invisible for the remainder of the encounter. While invisible, the subject can still be detected using other senses. The invisible creature can be targeted only by attackers with some idea where the creature is and, even then, gains a +5 bonus to Defense. An invisible creature that makes an attack of any kind becomes visible until the start of the creature's next turn, whereupon they become invisible again.

HALLUCINATION

REQUIREMENT: ILLUSION ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 10 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 17
TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You seize control of the senses of a creature you can see within 20 yards of you. If the target fails the Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your Force, you control everything they sense for as long as you concentrate, taking a minor action each round to do so. You can make the subject perceive anything, and the illusions can range from minor (like changing the color of any nearby flowers) to changing the entire environment, since the hallucination exists entirely in the subject's mind. If a target of *hallucination* is given any reason to believe what they are experiencing is an illusion, they can make another Willpower test against your Force on their turn, with success ending the spell.

MACHINE ARCANA

You wield arcane power over machines and mechanisms.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Machine Arcana spells.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Machine Arcana spell. You also gain the power focus Intelligence (Machine Arcana).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Machine Arcana spell. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Machine Arcana spells for -1 SP.



REPAIR

REQUIREMENT: MACHINE ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: NONE

You can repair damaged and broken items by touch. If the power test is successful, the item is restored as good as new, as if it were never damaged. *Repair* works on only non-living objects and only on items about 10 pounds in mass. At the GM's discretion, multiple castings of *repair* can restore larger items, such as a broken wall or a damaged vehicle. As a rough guideline, the spell restores the equivalent of 2d6 Health per casting.



SCHEMATIC

REQUIREMENT: MACHINE ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 3 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 10 **TEST:** NONE

A successful *schematic* spell creates an illusory three-dimensional model of a subject machine or structure, which the caster can rotate, shift, and even disassemble for an interior or structural view. This displays the subject in its current state, not necessarily its design schematics. Among other things, this can provide a bonus for certain technical tests. It can also reveal hidden features, functions, or damage done for a target device or structure. The GM may require additional ability tests, usually Intelligence and an appropriate technical focus, to understand what the *schematic* spell shows. In this case, a Expert caster's Intelligence (Machine Arcana) bonus applies.

FUEL

REQUIREMENT: MACHINE ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 5 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13 **TEST:** NONE

When you cast this spell, touch any machine or device with an internal power or fuel source. A successful casting of *fuel* refills the subject's power source to the usual level when it is completely refueled or recharged. For example, you can touch a battery powered device and completely recharge its batteries or you can cast *fuel* on a vehicle and completely refill its fuel tank (if any exists).

ANIMATE

REQUIREMENT: MACHINE ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 8 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15 **TEST:** NONE

With a successful casting, you bring a single machine you can touch or see within 30 yards of you to "life," able to move and operate according to your will as if it were remote-controlled so long as it remains in range. No one else can operate or control the machine while it is under your command. You can also move any of the machine's moving parts at will as if you were touching them, opening and closing doors or windows, for example, or flipping switches and pressing buttons. This requires the usual action on your part, but no physical movement, just concentration. You can use *animate* to operate a vehicle just like any other machine.

POWER ARCANA

You work with the raw stuff of magic itself, sensing and controlling arcane power.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Power Arcana spells.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Power Arcana spell. You also gain the power focus Intelligence (Power Arcana).



MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Power Arcana spell. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Power Arcana spells for -1 SP.

ARCANE AWARENESS

REQUIREMENT: POWER ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: NONE

You attune your senses to the flow of arcane power and perceive its flow around you. For 1 minute, you can sense active magic within 10 yards of you and make Perception tests to detect details about it (usually with a TN equal to the effect's Force or equivalent), including arcana, spell type, and affected area or point of origin. If you have the Power Arcana focus, you may add it to the Perception test.

ARCANE BLAST

REQUIREMENT: POWER ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 1 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: NONE

You can project a blast of arcane power from your outstretched hand. With a successful power test, you can make a ranged attack using Accuracy against a target within 20 yards. If you have the Power Arcana focus, you may add its bonus to the attack test. A successful attack inflicts 1d6 + Willpower damage on the target.

ARCANE ABATEMENT

REQUIREMENT: POWER ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** SPECIAL
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** TARGET FORCE
TEST: NONE

You can use the same skills you use to weave magic to unweave it. You attempt to end an ongoing spell or magical effect within 20 yards of you. Make a power test against the Force of the target spell. If it is successful, you can spend power points equal to the original cost of the spell or effect to negate it. If either the power test fails or you do not have sufficient PP to cover the cost, you cannot cancel the target effect.

ARCANE CIRCLE

REQUIREMENT: POWER ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 10 PP
TIME: 1 MINUTE **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
TEST: SPECIAL

You can forge arcane power into a shield for a specific area. You create a glowing circle on the ground where you cast the spell, etched with symbols of power and up to 4 yards in diameter. For up to an hour, you and any allies inside the arcane circle have protection against spells cast from outside its confines. The power test of any spells trying to affect those inside must exceed the Force of the *arcane circle* spell to take effect. This does not cancel the spell entirely, just prevents it from affecting those inside the circle. Those outside the circle would be affected normally if in the spell's area of effect. You can be inside or outside of the circle when it is created and can cross it at will. Your own arcane circle is not a barrier to your spells.

PROTECTION ARCANA

You can use arcane energies to protect yourself and others from harm.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Protection Arcana spells.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Protection Arcana spell. You also gain the power focus Intelligence (Protection Arcana).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Protection Arcana spell. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Protection Arcana spells for -1 SP.



ARCANE SHIELD

REQUIREMENT: PROTECTION ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
TEST: NONE

You can shape the raw energies of magic to protect yourself from physical harm. You create an arcane aura of protection around yourself. For 1 round, your Defense becomes equal to your Force (10 + Willpower + Protection Arcana Focus). You can extend the duration by spending an additional 1 PP per round you want it to last.

SPELL WARD

REQUIREMENT: PROTECTION ARCANA (NOVICE) **COST:** 3 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
TEST: POWER TEST VS. FORCE

You can use your powers to shield others from hostile magic effects. Touch a subject and choose an arcana, such as Fire, Power, and the like. For the rest of the encounter, if the subject is targeted by a hostile spell from that arcana, the spellcaster must win a power test against your Force, otherwise the spell fails. If the spellcaster wins the test, the spell works normally, although the subject still gets any regular test allowed against the spell.

MISSILE SHIELD

REQUIREMENT: PROTECTION ARCANA (EXPERT) **COST:** 3 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 14
TEST: NONE

An invisible aura of protection wraps a subject you choose within 6 yards of you (including yourself). For the remainder of the encounter, whenever the subject is the target of a ranged attack with a physical missile weapon, you can spend 1 PP per missile to harmlessly turn the attack aside, subtly deflecting the missile so it just misses the target. This affects all physical missile weapons, regardless of size, and includes magical attacks involving physical missiles, but not purely energy attacks like *arcane bolt* or *fire blast*.

You have to be able to see your subject to use this effect. If you cannot perceive the subject of your *missile shield* spell or take a free action at the time, you cannot deflect an attack.

ARCANE BARRIER

REQUIREMENT: PROTECTION ARCANA (MASTER) **COST:** 10 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 18 **TEST:** NONE

You surround a subject within 25 yards (which may be yourself) with a protective field of magical force. The arcane barrier lasts for 1 round and, during that time, the subject is completely immune to damage, but also cannot move from the spot (as the barrier is immobile), make melee or ranged attacks, or give or receive items. Effects that do not cause direct damage still affect the subject normally, and spells of all kinds can pass out of the barrier. You can extend the barrier by spending 5 PP for each additional round you would like it to last.

PSYCHIC POWERS

Modern AGE characters might acquire the following psychic powers in campaigns where the paranormal is real, or where certain humans stand on the cusp of the next step in evolution. Each psychic discipline, such as Cryokinesis, is a power talent. Unless the GM specifies differently, tests to activate psychic powers use the Willpower ability along with the discipline's power focus, such as Willpower (ESP).

In games where arcana and psychic powers exist side by side, consider using the optional rules on p. 92 to make them more distinct from one another. For example, you may decide psychic powers use the Power Fatigue optional rule, while arcana use power points as usual. Think of where these abilities come from in your game to suggest how they may differ. For example, if arcana represent powers gained through study, and psychic abilities represent inherited ability, you may require students of the arcana to use gestures and special words, while psychic powers only require silent concentration.

CRYOKINESIS

You can create super-cold temperatures with your mind by concentrating.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Cryokinesis effects.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Cryokinesis effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Cryokinesis).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Cryokinesis effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Cryokinesis effects for -1 SP.



ICY MIST

REQUIREMENT: CRYOKINESIS (NOVICE) **COST:** 3 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
TEST: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) vs. FORCE

A cloud of frost and cold envelops a target of your choice within 20 yards, lasting for a number of rounds equal to your Willpower. The target takes 1d6 penetrating damage from the cold. Each additional round, at the start of your turn, the target must make a Constitution (Stamina) test vs. your Force. If successful, the *icy mist* spell ends. If the test fails, the target takes another

1d6 penetrating damage and a -2 cumulative penalty to Speed. A target reduced to 0 Health by *icy mist* is frozen solid.

ICE SHEET

REQUIREMENT: CRYOKINESIS (NOVICE) **COST:** 6 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13
TEST: DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) vs. FORCE

You cover the ground with a slick sheet of ice up to 10 yards in diameter, anywhere within 30 yards of you. Anyone in, entering, or moving within the area must make a successful Dexterity (Acrobatics) test vs. your Force or fall prone. Prone characters can crawl, but standing requires another test to avoid falling. If you cast *ice sheet* on a body of water, it freezes the surface, creating ice thick enough for a person to walk on, free-floating unless it can touch and anchor to where the water meets land. A 10 yard or smaller diameter body of water is completely frozen over. The spell persists as long as the local temperature allows, melting normally if it is above freezing.

DISSIPATE HEAT

REQUIREMENT: CRYOKINESIS (EXPERT) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13 **TEST:** NONE

You rapidly dissipate heat from an area within 20 yards that you can see. If successful, you can reduce the category (and therefore damage) of a heat- or fire-based hazard by one level. You can use *dissipate heat* repeatedly on successive rounds to continue reducing a hazard's category, eliminating it entirely if reduced below Minor. At the GM's discretion, *dissipate heat* may also serve to address certain challenges, such as preventing a machine from overheating.

ICY BLAST

REQUIREMENT: CRYOKINESIS (MASTER) **COST:** 15 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 17
TEST: CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) vs. FORCE

You project a blast of freezing cold from your outstretched hands, 2 yards wide and 8 yards long. Anyone in the area suffers 2d6 + Willpower penetrating cold damage and a -10 penalty to Speed for a number of rounds equal to half your Willpower, rounded down (minimum of 1). Subjects who succeed on the Constitution (Stamina) test vs. your Force only take 1d6 + Willpower penetrating damage and a -5 penalty to Speed.

EMPATHY

You can psychically sense others' feelings and influence them to some degree.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Empathy effect.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Empathy effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Empathy).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Empathy effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Empathy effects for -1 SP.





SENSE EMOTION

REQUIREMENT: EMPATHY (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You can psychically sense the emotions of others. If you win the test, you know the feelings and mood of a subject you can see. This grants you a +2 bonus on interaction tests with that subject, and you know their current Attitude (as per the social interaction rules in **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**) toward you and anyone else present. Additionally, you automatically know when the subject directly lies to you, although you do not detect half-truths or lies of omission. Finally, scoring a 5 or 6 in the Stunt Die when activating this power reveals the subject's Drive, or their other subconscious motivations. This increases your interaction bonus to +3, and you may be able to predict their behavior. A use of *sense emotion* lasts for the whole encounter of interacting with the subject.

EMPATHIC HEALING

REQUIREMENT: EMPATHY (NOVICE) **COST:** 1-3 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 10 **TEST:** NONE

Your touch takes away pain and restores health. You can choose to spend up to 3 PP when you use empathic healing. For each PP spent, the target regains 1d6 Health. You cannot use this power on yourself. You may also spend 1PP to remove any penalties caused by pain or discomfort, but not physical

limitations such as blindness. You may do this instead of restoring Health, or in addition to it, adding the 1 PP cost to the healing cost.

CALM EMOTIONS

REQUIREMENT: EMPATHY (EXPERT) **COST:** 4 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13
TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You clear a subject's mind of intense emotion, creating a state of calm and clarity. You must touch or be able to see the subject or else be in psychic contact (see **Telepathy**). An unwilling subject makes a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your Force. A subject under the effects of *calm emotions* is free of any intense emotion and incapable of aggressive or violent action. Any aggressive action taken against the subject ends the effect. *Calm emotions* can also counteract any emotion-affecting power, such as *project emotion* (following) with a successful power test against the target power's Force. *Calm* lasts for 1 minute and requires another use of the power to extend its duration.

PROJECT EMOTION

REQUIREMENT: EMPATHY (MASTER) **COST:** 8 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You can impose emotions on others. You must touch or be able to see the subject or else be in psychic contact (see

Telepathy). If you win the test, you can impose a chosen emotion. The subject acts on the emotion as if it were their own for 1 minute, paying attention to and being affectionate toward an object of love, for example, or furious toward an object of anger. If forced to act against their Drive, a subject gets a new Willpower test to shake off the influence. Success ends the effect. *Project emotion* requires a new use of the power to extend its duration for another minute.

EXTRASENSORY PERCEPTION (ESP)

You can psychically sense things outside the range and ability of the ordinary five senses.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree ESP effects.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree ESP effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (ESP).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree ESP effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your ESP effects for -1 SP.



PSYCHIC SENSE

REQUIREMENT: ESP (NOVICE)
COST: 0 PP, 1 PP, 2 PP, OR 4 PP **TIME:** MINOR ACTION
TARGET NUMBER: 9, 13 OR OPPOSED **TEST:** NONE

You can sense the use and effects of psychic powers. Make a power test to detect psychic powers in use in your vicinity, to sense a covert attempt at psychic influence, or even, with some experience, to detect and read the “signature” left behind by a psychic power.

SENSE PSYCHIC POWERS

A successful TN 9 power test while spending 1 PP means you sense psychic power use within 20 yards of you and know which talent it falls under, but not necessarily the exact discipline. You also know the general direction and distance to the source of the effect and its target. If you spend 2 PP instead of 1, you know the exact discipline used. If you spend 4 PP instead of 1 or 2, you also recognize the user of the psychic power, if they are known to you.

SENSE PSYCHIC CONTACT

The GM secretly makes an opposed power test against a telepath’s *psychic contact* power test when someone attempts to secretly get into psychic contact with you. If you win the test, you sense the attempt, although you might not be able to avoid it. This effect costs no PP and does not require an action. See *psychic contact* under **Telepathy** for details.

READ PSYCHIC SIGNATURE

At the Expert degree of ESP, you can “read” old uses of psychic powers in an area as a major action. The TN is 13 and the effects are otherwise like *sense psychic powers*.

PREMONITION

REQUIREMENT: ESP (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: NONE

Psychic awareness warns you of immediate danger. For the rest of the encounter after successfully using this discipline, you cannot be surprised (see **Surprise** in CHAPTER 8). Additionally, you gain a +2 bonus for the rest of the encounter on all tests to avoid hazards where a moment’s forewarning can aid you (see **Hazards** in CHAPTER 8).

REMOTE SENSING

REQUIREMENT: ESP (EXPERT) **COST:** 8 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13+
TEST: PERCEPTION (EMPATHY) VS. FORCE

You can use *remote sensing* to sense a particular place, creature, or thing known to you using the TN from the following **Remote Sensing** table. If the power test is successful, you can observe the subject as if you were physically present. The vision lasts for as long as you concentrate, taking a minor action each round to do so, but your ordinary senses are overridden, so you are unaware of what is happening near you while you are observing events elsewhere.

Remote sensing creates a psychic disturbance, which creatures with Intelligence 1 or greater can sense. Any such creature under observation can make a Perception (Empathy) test against your power’s Force. Creatures with no psychic talents get the intense feeling of being watched. Those with psychic talents see a glowing or shadowy image of you observing them. At master degree in ESP, you can deliberately allow this image to appear to others, if you wish, and speak through it to them as if you were present.

REMOTE SENSING

TN	SUBJECT IS...
13	VERY FAMILIAR: A close friend or relative; an item you made or owned and used for at least a year; a place where you spent at least a year’s time.
15	FAMILIAR: A subject you have been acquainted with for at least 3 months; a casual friend.
17	SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR: A subject you have been acquainted with for at least a week.
19	CASUALLY FAMILIAR: A subject you have been acquainted with only briefly.
21	SLIGHTLY FAMILIAR: A subject you have only seen briefly or had described in detail.

PRECOGNITION

REQUIREMENT: ESP (MASTER) **COST:** 10 PP
TIME: FREE ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 17
TEST: NONE

You can see visions of the future and take action to change them. If you make a successful power test for *precogni-*

tion, you can declare an event which just happened to be a precognitive vision. Effectively, you rewind time to before the triggering event and then game play resumes from that point, with only you possessing knowledge of the events that have not yet happened.

EXAMPLE

Howard's character Sean is an ESP Master with Precognition. When Sean (reluctantly) accompanies Indra and Brian to raid a cult headquarters, they have a bad feeling. That intensifies when the three of them break into a seemingly abandoned trailer, only to set off a crude bomb wired to the door – BOOM! But wait! Howard tells the GM he wants to roll a power test for Sean's precognition. He spends the power points, makes the roll and succeeds. "Go back to before we hit the door," he says. Then Sean comes out of a psychic fugue in time to yell to Brian "Don't, it's booby trapped!" They tell their teammates about the explosive and they all agree to look around – carefully – for any other clues the cult may have left behind.

PSYCHIC PROJECTION

You can project your will to influence others or as a forceful psychic attack.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Psychic Projection effects.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Psychic Projection effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Psychic Projection).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Psychic Projection effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Psychic Projection effects for –1 SP.



PSYCHIC BLAST

REQUIREMENT: PSYCHIC PROJECTION (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You psychically assault a target's mind. You can affect any target in your line of sight or in psychic contact (see the *psychic contact* discipline under **Telepathy**). The target of your *psychic blast* takes 2d6 + Willpower penetrating damage. If they succeed on a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your Force, they take only 1d6 penetrating damage.

HALLUCINATION

REQUIREMENT: PSYCHIC PROJECTION (NOVICE) **COST:** 2+ PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You can deceive the senses of others. You can affect any target in your line of sight or in psychic contact with you. If your power test is successful and the subject fails the Willpower test against your discipline's force, the *hallucination* appears to the subject. The *hallucination* exists solely in the subject's

mind, so it can be of any apparent size; creating the impression of something small is just as easy as creating something seemingly huge. The complexity of the *hallucination* determines its PP cost:

HALLUCINATION	
PP COST	COMPLEXITY
2	Affects a single sense
4	Affects two senses
6	Affects all senses
+0	Simple (random noise, static image, and the like)
+2	Complex (coherent sound, moving images, and the like)
+4	Very Complex (multiple overlapping sounds or images)

Additionally, a complex *hallucination* requires a minor action each round to maintain its complex elements, and a very complex *hallucination* requires a major action each round to maintain its elements. Otherwise, the *hallucination* lapses to a lower level of complexity.

Since a *hallucination* isn't real, it cannot produce any real effects. It cannot cause damage, support weight, provide nutrition, illuminate darkness, or provide protection from the elements. Characters would fall through an imaginary bridge or floor if they tried to walk on it, and although they can appear to eat – and even smell and taste – hallucinatory food, it has no nutritional value and does not satisfy hunger.

A *hallucination* spell lasts for 1 minute and it requires a new use of the power to extend its duration for another minute.

At Expert degree of Psychic Projection, you can cause a number of additional subjects equal up to your Willpower to perceive your *hallucination* (minimum of 1 extra). At Master degree, you can affect additional subjects up to your Willpower × 5 (minimum of 5 extra).

SUGGESTION

REQUIREMENT: PSYCHIC PROJECTION (EXPERT) **COST:** 8 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You can implant suggestions into the minds of others. The *suggestion* must be worded in such a manner as to make the activity sound reasonable. Asking a creature to stab itself, throw itself onto a spear, immolate itself, or carry out some other obviously harmful act automatically fails. However, a *suggestion* that a pool of acid is actually pure water and that a quick splash would be refreshing is another matter.

If you win the opposed test, the suggested course of action is followed for up to 30 minutes or until the course of action is complete, whichever comes first. You can extend the duration by paying the cost again for each additional 30 minutes. You can also specify conditions that trigger a particular course of action, like a posthypnotic suggestion, in which case the duration is counted from when the triggering event occurs.

MIND WAVE

REQUIREMENT: PSYCHIC PROJECTION (MASTER) **COST:** 8 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15
TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You unleash a wave of psychic force, blasting the minds of all targets of your choosing in a 4-yard radius in an area you can see up to 20 yards away. Targets in the area take 3d6 penetrating damage and are stunned for 1 round, unable to take action. Any target succeeding on a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against the Force of your *mind wave* takes only 2d6 penetrating damage and is not stunned.

PYROKINESIS

You can mentally speed up molecular motion to create heat and cause things to catch fire.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Pyrokinesis effects.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Pyrokinesis effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Pyrokinesis).



MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Pyrokinesis effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Pyrokinesis effects for -1 SP.

IGNITE FIRE

REQUIREMENT: PYROKINESIS (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 10
TEST: DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) VS. FORCE

You can set a flammable object in your line of sight on fire. Living targets take 2d6 fire damage, unless they succeed on Dexterity (Acrobatics) test against your discipline's Force, in which case there is no effect. A burning target makes a new Dexterity test at the start of each of your turns, taking 1d6 fire damage on a failure. A character on fire can automatically extinguish the flames by dousing themselves in water or the like. Spending a full round rolling on the ground grants a +2 bonus on the next Dexterity test. In addition to using it as an attack, you can use *ignite fire* to light candles (up to a dozen in your line of sight with a single use), torches, hearth fires, and so forth. At the GM's discretion, lighting tiny fires, like candles, does not cost any power points.

SHAPE FIRE

REQUIREMENT: PYROKINESIS (NOVICE) **COST:** 3 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 11
TEST: NONE

You can increase the size and intensity of an existing fire, increasing the category (and therefore damage) of a fire-based hazard by one level. You can use *shape fire* repeatedly on successive rounds to continue increasing a fire hazard's category, to a maximum of murderous and 6d6 damage. (See **Handling Hazards** in CHAPTER 8.)

IMMUNITY TO FIRE

REQUIREMENT: PYROKINESIS (EXPERT) **COST:** 5 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13
TEST: NONE

You become immune to the effects of heat and fire for the rest of the encounter. This includes damage inflicted solely by high temperatures, but not other side effects of fire such as suffocation, smoke, or toxic gases.

WALL OF FIRE

REQUIREMENT: PYROKINESIS (MASTER) **COST:** 10 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 16
TEST: DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS) VS. FORCE

You manifest a wall of roaring flames, up to 10 yards long, 3 yards high, and a yard deep, starting at a point within 30 yards of you. You can shape the line of the wall however you wish, including forming a circle or arc. The fiery wall blocks sight and inflicts 3d6 + Willpower damage upon any creature crossing or starting its turn within it; those succeeding on a Dexterity (Acrobatics) test vs. your Force take only 1d6 + Willpower damage. *Wall of fire* lasts for 1 minute, but you can pay its cost again to extend the duration another minute.



SHIELDING

You can block, deflect, and shield against psychic influences.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Shielding effects.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Shielding effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Shielding).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Shielding effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Shielding effects for -1 SP.



PSYCHIC SHIELD

REQUIREMENT: SHIELDING (NOVICE) **COST:** 0 PP
TIME: NONE **TARGET NUMBER:** NONE
TEST: NONE

Your mind is shielded from unwanted psychic influence. When it is the target of any psychic power, you can make a Willpower (Shielding Arcana) test first. If your Willpower test exceeds the power's Force, the attempt to affect you fails. If you fail the Willpower test, you still get the usual test against the psychic power, if any. So if your *psychic shield* fails to resist a *hallucination*, you still get the usual Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against it.

Psychic shield costs no PP and is always in effect once you learn it. You can choose to "lower" your *psychic shield* to allow friendly psychic abilities to affect you, such as letting someone use *psychic contact*.

PSYCHIC BLOCK

REQUIREMENT: SHIELDING (NOVICE) **COST:** 1+ PP
TIME: FREE ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** TARGET FORCE
TEST: SEE DESCRIPTION

You can use your psychic ability to counteract the abilities of others before they take effect. When someone within your line of sight uses a psychic discipline, you can make a power test against the power test of the target psychic and spend PP equal to the cost of the discipline they are using. If you win the test, your foe's power test for the psychic discipline is considered to have failed, although they have still spent the PP for it. If they win the test, the discipline works normally. If you do not have sufficient PP to block a particular discipline's use, then the effort automatically fails and you cannot counter your foe's power.

PSYCHIC BACKLASH

REQUIREMENT: SHIELDING (EXPERT) **COST:** 2-6 PP
TIME: FREE ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 12
TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

When your use of *psychic shield* or *psychic block* overcomes another psychic's discipline, you can choose to "reflect" some of the mental energy, enhanced and empowered by your own, to create a psychic backlash. If your power test succeeds, you can spend 2 to 6 PP. For every 2 PP you spend, the user of

the blocked discipline takes 1d6 penetrating damage or loses 1d6 PP (your choice). If the target succeeds on a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your Force, the *psychic backlash* is blunted and has no effect.

PSYCHIC NULL

REQUIREMENT: SHIELDING (MASTER) **COST:** 15 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 17
TEST: NONE

Choose an area up to 10 yards across within 20 yards of you that you can see. If your power test succeeds, that area becomes psychically "null," deadened to any use of psychic powers. For the remainder of the encounter or until you dismiss it, any psychic talent used in the null area automatically fails. Ongoing psychic effects in that area are suppressed until moved outside the area or the *psychic null* effect ends.

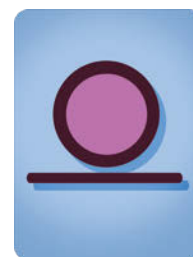
TELEKINESIS

You can move and affect objects with the power of your mind

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Telekinesis effects.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Telekinesis effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Telekinesis).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Telekinesis effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Telekinesis effects for -1 SP.



KINETIC STRIKE

REQUIREMENT: TELEKINESIS (NOVICE) **COST:** 1 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: NONE

You can strike targets up to 10 yards away with blasts of kinetic force. You make a normal ranged attack test against the target using Accuracy (Telekinesis). If successful, the target takes 1d6 + Willpower bludgeoning damage.

MOVE OBJECT

REQUIREMENT: TELEKINESIS (NOVICE) **COST:** 2+ PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9
TEST: NONE

You can move objects at a distance with your thoughts. A successful power test allows you to move an object in your line of sight. The PP cost of moving the object is given on the *Move Object* table, which is limited to 10 PP to move 800 pounds of mass. You can move the affected object a distance of 10 feet per minor action, plus an additional 10 feet per PP spent above the base cost. So moving a 2-pound object (1 PP) up to 20 feet per minor action (+1 PP) costs 2 PP. *Move object* lasts for 1 minute, and you can spend the discipline's PP cost again to extend its duration another minute without a new power test.



MOVE OBJECT

PP COST	MASS (LBS.)	PP COST	MASS (LBS.)
2	2	7	100
3	5	8	200
4	10	9	400
5	25	10	800
6	50		

If two psychics vie for control of the same object, use opposed power tests. The winner controls the object for that round. If someone is holding the object, make a power test opposed by the creature's Strength test.

GRABBING CREATURES

You can use *move object* to grab a creature as a major action by making a power test against the target's Defense, then make a second power test against the target's Strength (Might) to pin them. If you successfully pin your target, you can treat them as an inanimate object for the purpose of moving them with this discipline. You cannot use *move object* to move yourself (see the **Levitation** discipline).

STRIKING WITH OBJECTS

You can hurl objects at opponents. This requires a ranged attack test using Accuracy (Telekinesis) against the target's Defense. The object deals 1d6 damage. You can increase the damage by +1d6 by spending +2 PP, to a maximum of 5d6 (for 10 PP total).

MANIPULATING OBJECTS

Move object can only lift and move objects. At Expert degree Telekinesis, you can also manipulate objects as if with a pair of invisible, intangible hands that have the same Accuracy and Dexterity as your own. Manipulation increases the discipline's PP cost by +2.

KINETIC SHIELD

REQUIREMENT: TELEKINESIS (EXPERT) **COST:** 1+ PP
TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9 **TEST:** NONE

You surround your body with a telekinetic field that shunts aside kinetic impacts, providing you with an armor rating against all impact and ballistic damage. Spend up to 8 PP and gain an AR equal to the PP spent for 1 minute. You can extend *kinetic shield's* duration by another minute by spending the cost again. *Kinetic field* does not protect against energy damage or penetrating damage and armor-defeating stunts work against it normally.

LEVITATION

REQUIREMENT: TELEKINESIS (MASTER) **COST:** 2 PP
TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 15 **TEST:** NONE

You telekinetically lift your own body into the air. You gain a flying speed of 8 + Willpower and use the rules for flying found in CHAPTER 2. A use of *levitation* lasts for 1 minute, but you can extend it for another minute by paying the cost again without a new power test, until the end of the encounter.

CINEMATIC TELEKINESIS

In a Cinematic *Modern AGE* game, the GM may wish to raise or lift the 10 PP limit on the mass affected by *move object*, potentially allowing a psychic to move *huge* objects with enough power points. The default in this case is an additional 400 lbs of mass per PP above 10, so a psychic spending 20 PP on *move object* could lift something massing 4,800 lbs! A high-level psychic with enough power points could perform spectacular—albeit brief—feats of telekinetic power.

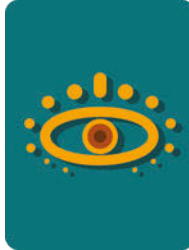
TELEPATHY

You can psychically communicate mind-to-mind.

NOVICE: You gain two Novice-degree Telepathy effects.

EXPERT: You gain one Expert-degree Telepathy effect. You also gain the power focus Willpower (Telepathy).

MASTER: You gain one Master-degree Telepathy effect. You can also choose one power stunt you can perform with your Telepathy effects for -1 SP.



PSYCHIC CONTACT

REQUIREMENT: TELEPATHY (NOVICE) **COST:** 3 PP

TIME: MINOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9

TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You can establish contact between your mind and that of another person. If you are unable to see the subject, they must be well-known to you personally and the PP cost is increased to 5. If the subject is unwilling to receive contact, they may make a Willpower (Self-Discipline) test against your power's Force; if they succeed, they're able to shut you out of their mind. While using *psychic contact*, you and your subject can communicate silently at the rate of normal speech, "hearing" each other's projected thoughts. You can also send a single sensory impression rather than speaking. Both of you can choose to lie or omit information; you're "speaking," not reading each other's minds (see **Mind Reading**).

Psychic contact lasts for up to 1 minute; you can spend the power's cost again to extend its duration for another minute. This only requires a new power test if the target of your *psychic contact* is unwilling.

SENSE MINDS

REQUIREMENT: TELEPATHY (NOVICE) **COST:** 2 PP

TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 9

TEST: NONE

You can sense the presence of other minds within a 10-yard radius of any point you can see. With a successful test, you sense the presence of other minds, their approximate number, their general type (animal, person, and so forth), and their approximate location. The larger the number of minds, the more general the information tends to be. *Sense minds* is not specific enough for you to target another creature you sense with it, but it does prevent any creatures you sense from surprising you.

OTHER POWERS

Other *AGE System* games, such as *Fantasy AGE* and *Blue Rose*, have their own sets of extraordinary powers, some quite like those in this book, others quite different. Both games have a wider range of powers, focused on arcana, although many of the arcana from *Blue Rose* have psychic qualities. *Modern AGE* GMs may wish to use these games—and supplements like the *Fantasy AGE Companion*—as resources for additional extraordinary powers in *Modern AGE*, but keep in mind that some minor adjustments may be needed to bring those powers into this game.

MIND READING

REQUIREMENT: TELEPATHY (EXPERT) **COST:** 5 PP

TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13

TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You can read a subject's surface thoughts, "hearing" them within your own mind. You must see, touch, or already be in *psychic contact* with your subject. *Mind reading* transcends language; you comprehend the subject's thoughts whether or not you share a common language. If you fail the test, you cannot read the subject's mind and trying again within the same encounter gives the target a +1 cumulative bonus to their Willpower test against you.

If you can interact with your subject, a successful opposed Communication (Deception) test against the target's Willpower (Self-Discipline) causes the subject to think consciously about a particular piece of information—such as a password, name, or location—allowing you to read it from the subject's surface thoughts.

MIND PROBE

REQUIREMENT: TELEPATHY (MASTER) **COST:** 8 PP

TIME: MAJOR ACTION **TARGET NUMBER:** 13

TEST: WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) VS. FORCE

You can psychically probe someone else's mind for information. You must see, touch, or be in *psychic contact* with your subject. If you succeed, you can ask any one question and receive the answer from the subject's mind. If the subject doesn't know the answer, then you know that instead. Highly personal or guarded information grants the target a +1 or +2 bonus on the Willpower test, while information the target doesn't consciously know, because it is subconscious or has been forgotten, grants a +3 to +5 bonus, at the GM's discretion. You can maintain the *mind probe* and continue asking questions, one per round, so long as you take a major action and spend an additional 2 PP each round to maintain it. Once you stop, the probe ends.

ADDING NEW ABILITIES TO EXISTING POWERS

You may invent new spells for existing arcana, or new effects for psychic disciplines. For example, you might create a new Cryokinesis effect called *ice blade*, which produces a weapon made of ice which belongs to the Light Blades or Heavy Blades categories. This is a suitable Novice effect. The GM must approve any new power.

No matter how many spells or effects you add to an arcana or discipline, characters are still limited to two Novice powers at Novice rank in the power's talent, one Expert power at its Expert rank, and one Master power at its Master rank. Once you attain the appropriate rank, you may choose the correct number of powers for that rank from those available to you. Thus, if *ice blade* was added to your game, you would choose two effects from among *ice blade*, *icy mist*, and *ice sheet*.

If you change your mind about your initial selection, you can swap one spell or effect for another of equal rank in the power you already know upon gaining a new level. You abandon the old selection and adopt the new one.

If you want to learn these without losing your old selection, you must devote your talent advancement to mastering the new ability. One talent advancement allows you to select two new Novice rank abilities, one Intermediate ability or one Master-ranked ability. You cannot select additional abilities of a higher rank than you have attained in the power, however.

ARCANA

DIGITAL ARCANA	FIRE ARCANA	ILLUSION ARCANA	POWER ARCANA
BYPASS	ARCANE LANTERN	DISPLACEMENT	ARCANE AWARENESS
TRACKER	FLAME BLAST	FIGMENT	ARCANE BLAST
GREMLINS	BURNING SHIELD	INVISIBILITY	ARCANE ABATEMENT
ARCANE HACK	FIRESTORM	HALLUCINATION	ARCANE CIRCLE
DIVINATION ARCANA	HEALING ARCANA	MACHINE ARCANA	PROTECTION ARCANA
FOREWARNING	HEALING TOUCH	REPAIR	ARCANE SHIELD
SENTINEL	REVIVAL	SCHEMATIC	SPELL WARD
ILL OMENS	HEALING AURA	FUEL	MISSILE SHIELD
UNVEIL	RESTORATION	ANIMATE	ARCANE BARRIER

PSYCHIC POWERS

CRYOKINESIS	ESP	PYROKINESIS	TELEKINESIS
ICY MIST	PSYCHIC SENSE	IGNITE FIRE	KINETIC STRIKE
ICE SHEET	PREMONITION	SHAPE FIRE	MOVE OBJECT
DISSIPATE HEAT	REMOTE SENSING	IMMUNITY TO FIRE	KINETIC SHIELD
ICY BLAST	PRECOGNITION	WALL OF FIRE	LEVITATION
EMPATHY	PSYCHIC PROJECTION	SHIELDING	TELEPATHY
SENSE EMOTION	PSYCHIC BLAST	PSYCHIC SHIELD	PSYCHIC CONTACT
EMPATHIC HEALING	HALLUCINATION	PSYCHIC BLOCK	SENSE MINDS
CALM EMOTIONS	SUGGESTION	PSYCHIC BACKLASH	MIND READING
PROJECT EMOTION	MIND WAVE	PSYCHIC NULL	MIND PROBE

GAME MASTER'S SECTION





THE GAME MASTER

If you're reading this far, you're probably at least thinking about running the game. Your first step is to read the rules, especially the parts about creating a character and performing actions. Don't worry about memorizing every detail. Understand how you roll three dice and add them, trying to meet a target number or beat an opposed roll. Learn how the Stunt Die works, and the basics of combat. Beyond that, learn by playing with your friends. If you want to get even more basic, and are still wondering how roleplaying games work in the first place, check out the **Introduction** of this book for a brief description, and supplement it with online research. Nowadays, everything from basic descriptions to communities devoted to specific games can be found online.

RULES YOU ALREADY KNOW

Modern AGE's rules aren't just about making characters and rolling dice. It's also a game in the let's-pretend sense, and a pastime to share with players, either in a physical space or online. Think of all the other things you do that can be described that way, including theatre, sports, chess, writing fanfiction, and shooting the breeze with friends—dozens of activities that all have a few assumed rules and unspoken guidelines that most people pick up as they go. Roleplaying games have similar rules, and a few extras tailored to the specific activity. Let's get on the same page and talk about these normally unspoken rules.

BE FAIR

In any group activity, you're supposed to treat everyone fairly. Don't play favorites. In *Modern AGE*, you're taking on the job of Game Master, a sort of referee who decides what rules to use and when. You need to adjudicate the rules in a balanced manner for everyone involved. A TN 13 problem for one PC should almost always be TN 13 for another. Fairness also means helping people who aren't having as much fun, because they feel excluded or uninterested in the adventure. As GM, it's your job to look out for these problems, reach out to people experiencing them, and change the game—even the rules in this book—to make sure they're enjoying themselves.

BE ACTIVE

Nothing kills the fun in any activity like sitting around, waiting for something to happen. In a roleplaying game, it's up to you to keep the story moving! Have the supporting cast and opponents who the heroes meet make their own decisive actions. Create consequences for PCs which make players feel like their decisions matter. Encourage people to stay focused—but build in time for breaks, when players can relax and refresh their powers of concentration. Roleplaying is creative, and the best creative activity happens when people have the energy to get involved and feel a sense of “flow,” where their ideas naturally contribute to the whole experience.

BE INCLUSIVE

Group activities should welcome everyone who can get along and participate in good faith. That means when people have perspectives other than your own, or hot-button issues they don't want to deal with, you need to take those into account. Plus, of course, no decent person intentionally discriminates against people based on gender, sexuality, or ethnicity, among other aspects of who we are. All these guidelines apply to roleplaying games. Remember that there are some events in the game that happen to characters which might upset players who identify with them. This means that you should check before introducing elements that would likely upset someone if they experienced them in a real life, or even saw them in a film. Players may have other things that would ruin their fun that you might not think of. Encourage players to speak up.

ROLEPLAYING GAME CUSTOMS

Beyond common principles that apply to roleplaying games as much as other activities, be aware of the following unspoken rules that specifically apply to games like *Modern AGE*.

1. Everyone sits together and creates a story. In roleplaying games, a short story is often called a session, game session, or adventure, while a longer story might be called a series or campaign. Unlike traditional stories, roleplaying game campaigns can feature an indefinite number of linked adventures.
2. All but one of the players portray a significant character in this story: a protagonist of some kind. They interact with the story's setting and determine its direction through play-acting and by using game systems to help figure out what they can do, how they can do it, and how it turns out.
3. One player takes on the role of the Game Master (GM). Even though the GM is a player too, we call the other group members the "players" because it's easier to say than "all the players who aren't the Game Master." But it's important to remember that *the GM is still a player*.
4. The GM has two jobs. First, it's up to the GM to make judgments about how the rules apply to different occasions in the game, and it's the GM who takes on the role of the world the players' characters inhabit. It's the GM's job to play the parts of all the non-player characters in the story (NPCs) and to set scenes and challenges for player characters (PCs) to respond to.
5. The GM isn't playing against the players. Everyone at the game, GM and players alike, is working together to create a story. It's up to the GM to create challenges players can rise to—not too easy, but not too difficult. The GM cooperates with the players to create a fun, stimulating and rewarding experience.

The rules that follow on from that—all the stuff with the abilities, focuses, bonuses, and dice—are really the cogs and axles that keep the game going. If the game is a machine, it's your job to keep the engine fueled and running, and help its operators—the players—figure out which levers to pull.

STRUCTURING THE STORY

The first thing to think about when you're creating a story for your game is *what's at stake*. If something is at stake, the characters have a reason to get involved and do something. Are aliens embarking on an invasion? Has a bus full of schoolchildren been hijacked? If something or someone is in danger, or if something needs to be preserved, or if something terrible needs to be stopped, there's your stake. Something needs to *matter*, possibly with lives at risk, and it needs to inspire action immediately, unless you're foreshadowing some future adventure.

A simple adventure has one set of stakes, and a complex story, many, and sometimes, players may discover stakes you didn't plan on. If you bring in a secret society that Sean, Howard's character, has a grudge against, foiling that society is a new stake. Get inspired by your players' reactions and their characters' histories. Remember that in *Modern AGE*, characters also have Drives, which should encourage them to get involved.

BEGINNINGS

The stake should be compelling to the players, but feelings aren't enough; start the story with a practical approach as well as an emotional. One of the easiest ways to hook characters is to make it their job to be involved. If they're spies in the military, a superior could give them a mission. If they're detectives, the file lands on their desks—and if they're crooks, they need to finish the job before the cops catch them.

A good way to start is *in medias res*, which is Latin for "in the middle of things"—directly where plot threads and storytelling converge. It was originally used to describe how Homer's *Odyssey* starts, which is actually a pretty good example, because Odysseus, on his way home from the Trojan war, has gone missing (he's imprisoned by the goddess Calypso), and his son Telemachus gets word from the gods that Odysseus is on his way back. Those two plotlines govern the whole story, but at the beginning, you have Odysseus who's got to get out of his predicament and back on the road home, and Telemachus, who's now got a reason to stop a gang of greedy, brutal men from stealing his mother's kingdom.

When you're imprisoned—or running from people shooting at you—it gives you a good reason to do something about it, and the consequences of that can help lead naturally to the next event.

STORY STRUCTURES

Lots of story structures exist which are just fine for roleplaying games, but the three we're going to concentrate on are *location-based* stories, *scene-based* stories, and *social* stories.

LOCATIONS

Games that are based in a specific location are easy to run. Rather than worry too much about a plot, you have a map, and the map acts as a sort of flowchart for the adventure.



For example, take a corporate installation where they've got a scientist imprisoned in the basement. They're forcing her to create a bioweapon. Each doorway, guardroom, security desk, checkpoint, and office is another obstacle for the heroes to overcome, and the method the characters use to take on each challenge affects who comes to stop them, what happens next, and how the scenario ends. If they disguise themselves as maintenance personnel and sneak in, for instance, that will have a very different outcome than a full-frontal assault.

You can use the map-flowchart method for a cave complex that contains the Treasure of the Cathars, a moon base crewed by the agents of a megalomaniac, a tower block beset by aliens, a village full of zombies...the combinations are endless. It's easy enough to find historical maps, or floorplans of buildings that you can repurpose for your games, perhaps marking them up or altering them in different ways to fit your story.

Maps and locations don't need to be exactly representative. Consider the underground or subway maps of many major world cities, which join different places together in an abstract way. They don't even necessarily need to be literal locations—you can draw a map of connections between a mob boss and his minions, for instance. Maps can be as simple as a bunch of circles joined by lines, or as complex as an installation where you've laid out service tunnels and crawlspaces beyond the normal set of rooms and corridors.

Beyond the flexibility that map-flowchart planning offers, it's also easy to make them non-linear, as characters explore them in an order determined by their choices.

SCENES

A slightly more involved setup, but one that works very well for detective games or games that aren't necessarily limited to one place, is to arrange your story into scenes. In the first scene, the setup happens; in the second scene, the story develops, and so on. Again, you can work out how the story progresses with a flowchart.

If the heroes stop the private mercenary company sent to assassinate them, you could proceed to a scene where, having caught one of the shooters, they question them, or a scene where the bad guys make an escape and there's a frantic car chase, and *then* the scene where they question an assassin, and so on.

The trick with a scene-based game lies in making sure the players care about what happens next, and in ending each scene with a clear path, which might be a choice of two or three options, each leading to another scene. This could be through a piece of information or an event. A scene might automatically happen on the second night because that's when the cult does its Big Ritual, regardless of whether the heroes are there to intervene or not. The consequences of whatever happens on that second night depend upon whether the protagonists have intervened, but the players still get to face whatever happens next.

While scene-based plans tend to be less friendly to a non-linear style of play, they have the advantage of letting you develop moments with impact, critical events, and a stronger story structure with rising tension and a dramatic climax.

SOCIAL GAMES

Social games depend upon the interactions of players' characters with a supporting cast of NPCs. The villains, allies, and neutral parties the protagonists encounter all want something. The heroes either help the other characters get what they want, or thwart them. NPCs react, the players respond, other supporting cast members weigh in, and so on.

This works best when you have a reasonable number of NPCs prepared, and their desires clash in interesting ways, so that the protagonists' actions trigger what they do, creating events for heroes to deal with.

Social games are about more than manipulating or defeating NPCs. A good social game allows the protagonists to make friends and allies as well, to develop obligations and even friendships. When a recurring NPC appears and both the players and characters are pleased to see them, that's when you know that you're getting it right.

Character Relationships and Memberships give you immediate suggestions about who to incorporate into the NPC cast: a relative, friend, loved one, or fellow member of an organization described by these game traits.

The map-flowchart method described earlier can be used for social games as well. Instead of mapping locations, you draw lines indicating Relationships between NPCs and PCs, along with notes describing the nature of the connection, whether it's friendly, hostile, or something else. As the campaign progresses, you can update the Relationship map to take story events into account. This Relationship map creates something you can keep around across multiple adventures.

PLAYING THE GAME TOGETHER

When you play *Modern AGE*, like any roleplaying game, it's a collaborative venture, and as the GM, you're often the glue that holds the game together. It's up to you to judge the rules fairly, striking a balance between moving adventures forward and allowing PCs to explore their world.

PLAY STYLES

No two roleplaying sessions are the same, even when the players are the same. Some people like to organize players into categories based on how they play, or what their goals are, but given enough time, all players evolve their objectives and approaches to gaming—and that's fantastic. Players should be encouraged to try different strategies. Nevertheless, we can identify some common play styles, even while we acknowledge that virtually nobody sticks with a single style forever, and some combine styles.

IMMERSION

Some players want to be immersed in the game world. The idea that they would want to have control over what happens in the world is alien; they want to play their role and roll the

TRAILS OF BREADCRUMBS

One fun and robust structure you can use is the "trail of breadcrumbs" model, which works particularly well for stories that concentrate on detection or espionage. You leave clues for your protagonists. When they find a clue, they can work out where to go next, or who to talk to. In the next destination or conversation, you leave more clues. If you leave multiple clues in one setting, it means that there are more options about where to go. If a group of agents are tracking down an enemy, the matchbook they found leads to the hotel, and in the hotel room where the spy stayed, the protagonists find a bug and a letter. The letter leads to one place and the bug leads to another, and so on. This way, you can create a branching structure to your story, and the story can be as linear or as complex as you and—equally as crucial—as much as your players want.

Modern AGE's investigation systems are perfect for creating breadcrumb trails in your game (see **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES** for those) but you don't necessarily need them to make this structure work.

dice in a way that keeps their immersion intact. The best way to support this is to make the experience as rich as you can. Bring up NPCs for them to talk to. Answer questions about the game world. Help them fill in the blanks so they can act naturally in their other persona. Immersion-focused players don't always follow the "rules" of a story and seek out adventure, so you need to give them strong motivations, connected to their characters' personal stories.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Some people "play to win." They want to overcome challenges using the rules and their ingenuity. They look at tactical options and optimize their characters to perform certain tasks. They are at their best when given complex and varied situations to work their way through. To motivate them, provide challenges that test how well they've planned for actions that fit within their character's niche. Connect their investigative characters to structured mysteries using the full rules, and give their combatants powerful enemies to challenge, all in interesting environments.

DRAMATIC

You may have players who are most interested in thinking of the adventure as a story with a clear dramatic structure. To them, authenticity is less important than getting a sense that the events of an adventure add up to something that supports a theme. These players often crave control over elements traditionally reserved for the GM. Using the optional Conviction rules (see **CHAPTER 1**) provides a way for them to influence events for dramatic reasons. Relationship bonds also provide cues as to what would be meaningful. Stories with strong traditional motifs satisfy these players. A groaning, decrepit mansion signals a Gothic element, for example, and can be matched with the other touchstones of the genre.

INTERNAL

Some players are more reticent at the table. Give them space to shine, but only if they want it. Not everyone enjoys making grandiose speeches, especially in front of others. They have an internal experience of their character and act quietly. On the other hand, some players are simply shy, and don't talk because they don't feel they have space in-between more chatty and demanding players. Your job is to provide an opportunity to speak, but not to apply pressure. Not everybody needs to shout at NPC enemies or plan their actions out loud. In these cases, talking to the player outside the session might give you a better sense of what they want, so you can address it without putting them on the spot.

FRAMING GAME MECHANICS

"Framing" is how we talk about what the game's mechanics mean in the adventure and campaign. An attack roll isn't just a bit of math and dice; it represents a character in the game world shooting a gun or slugging an enemy. Framing justifies how the rules come into play, and what they mean to the characters in the world of the game.

When the story brings up an element where chance and dramatic tension are factors, it's time to roll one or more tests, whether it's to see if Sean manages to convince the customs worker not to search a container full of refugees, or Brian manages to shoot the gun out of the hypnotized president's hand before he murders the prime minister, or Indra manages to edge her way around the outside of the 207th floor of the skyscraper. All these actions require one or more rolls using the same basic mechanic. Roll 3d6, add an Ability, a focus, and any modifiers to the total; if the total is equal to or higher than a target number, you succeed. If any two of the dice come up with the same number, you can spend a number of points equal to the number you rolled on the Stunt Die.

But even though these actions all use similar mechanics, they represent very different actions inside the fiction that the game is creating. Nevertheless, we use the same core game mechanic not because of the type of action, but because each of these actions holds a story purpose in common, which we can boil down to these criteria:

1. Chance needs to matter, and can often be the best way to determine where events go next.
2. Rolling dice needs to be meaningful. The character needs to have a chance of succeeding at the task, and the task's success or failure needs to matter.
3. The action's initiation and results need to be something that can be described as events that make sense in the context of the game world.

If something doesn't meet these criteria, it's not worth rolling dice. If it does, we've successfully framed the action.

That doesn't mean a character needs to have a *good* chance of success. A less than 1% chance of success is still a chance, and great stories have come from pulling off remarkably difficult tests. It doesn't mean the impact of the roll needs to be felt immediately, either, or that a single roll resolves everything.

Missing an opponent in combat is still meaningful, since it affects the ultimate outcome. The third criterion seems straightforward. A normal human in a world like ours can't shoot bullets without a gun, or float like a soap bubble. But it also means that even though you can theoretically convince a stranger to, say, strip naked on a street corner and sing bawdy tunes, as GM, you can rule that no matter how well someone rolls at a social task, it isn't going to work, barring an encounter with, shall we say, a very extroverted NPC.

FRAMING ACTION

It's often easiest to frame physical actions, since they usually have a quantifiable result. If your character is trying to make a jump, lift something, or break down a door, you either do it or you don't. But the relative simplicity of the action still allows for you to make it exciting, and both the GM and the player can work to do that. If Brian is trying to kick a door down, Brian's player can describe the way what he pulls back and tenses the muscles in his thighs and calves, and then when you roll the dice, you can describe the noise, and how much it hurts when the door holds and Brian bounces off, or the sound of a door cracking around its handle and flying off its hinges and the way the impact vibrates in Brian's ankle.

One of the funny things about roleplaying games is that some life-or-death events can come off as being less meaningful than less dangerous ones. Sure, if Indra, edging along a skyscraper, just fell to her death because Alejandro (her player) blew the test, it would be a bit meaningful. But since there wouldn't be much in the way of rising tension, and few choices for the player to make, it'd be less important than it could be—and it should be, when death is on the line! A thoughtful GM should break this out into multiple rolls, including one to catch herself by her fingertips, and should make it clear alternate strategies are viable, such as surrendering herself to the investigators inside, only to escape later. But if she makes the crawl, you owe the layer a vivid description: gusts of wind; the bottom falling out of her stomach at a glimpse of the distant streets below; the rough texture of the stone against her clutching fingertips; a sudden slip on a patch of bird droppings.

FRAMING EXPLORATION & SOCIAL EVENTS

Mental actions are usually more difficult to frame. Some actions, such as researching an occult adversary for example, take hours of time to perform in the game world, but only take a minute or two at the table. What happens when a character fails an Intelligence test? Mental exertion doesn't work the same way as physical exertion. You don't stop being smart when you fail to invent something or come up with a solution. True, you might forget a detail, but you might also be tired, or you might have had to spend time doing something else, or you might be under stress. A failure on a test might not even be the character's own failure. They might be doing perfectly rigorous research, but it doesn't matter how good the research is if the sources they're looking at don't contain the information they need. A failed test might mean the facts just aren't there and it's time to find another library or informant.

DICE GATEKEEPING

One pitfall that games sometimes present is “dice gatekeeping,” which is where a whole game story depends on one successful test to be able to continue. When the heroes need to find one specific clue, or talk, sneak, or fight their way past an unavoidable obstacle. If you don’t find the matchbook that leads to the nightclub, you don’t find the mob front. If you don’t get past the code-locked door, you can’t defuse the bomb. All the play up to that point has been funneled into that one moment, and if the characters don’t pass that essential test, the whole enterprise grinds to a halt.

The best way to avoid this is to make sure that there’s always a next scene. If the heroes don’t find a clue at the scene of the crime, perhaps they get an anonymous tip, or, in another scene, find a new lead elsewhere. If they can’t get into the military base, perhaps they’ve got to hide and wait for someone to come out. By all means, make the alternative dangerous and difficult. Failure should be meaningful after all, and the protagonists are going with an alternative after being denied their favored way past the challenge, but that meaning should never be to deny access to the adventure.

Social actions are perhaps the hardest to frame realistically. When you talk with someone in real life, you’re engaging with them in all sorts of complex ways, and rolling dice can only duplicate that very obliquely. When you roll Communication (Persuasion), the TN and subject’s attitude may represent a general resistance to being convinced for game purposes, but in the real world, social interaction isn’t a contest, but a matter of how people make themselves understood and consider the feelings of others.

Let’s say the heroes infiltrate the bad guys’ base and walk into a guardroom. An off-duty guard jumps to his feet. Sean acts like they’re civilian inspectors, working for the dictator. That’s a Communication (Deception) roll. Are the heroes dressed properly? Did the guard hear Brian shooting the other guard? The GM decides Sean should be able to pull this off, because Sean’s a great liar, and Sean, Brian, and Amy are all wearing stolen uniforms. If the roll fails, maybe something is wrong with the way the group looks. Brian hasn’t knotted his tie right, or Amy hasn’t tied her hair back, or Sean accidentally makes a hand gesture that’s offensive in the guard’s culture. On the other hand, if the roll is high enough, perhaps Sean and the others were totally convincing, but maybe the guard is tired or distracted, or is inclined to be pleasant for some personal reason—Amy might look like his long-lost sister, say. You can make this reason apparent, which then generates a story hook. Now, a generic guard becomes a sympathetic figure, perhaps even an ally against the dictator.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

One of the biggest hassles GMs face is keeping track of everything. It’s not hard to fall behind in the duties of a GM and discover you’ve lost track of rewards, information gleaned from NPCs, the name of a leader of a small country, or even just whose turn it is in combat. Keeping track of things is important; players depend on you to know what’s going on, both during a small action scene and in the wider world around them.

Do as much of this as possible outside normal game time. In between games, you don’t need to worry about keeping players entertained or hoping you’ll remember to write something down at the end of a combat round. Use a method that you find comfortable, whether it’s pen and paper, a database, or an online wiki. Make sure you find a system that allows you to organize the quick notes you take during

the session about what happened. Noting the real world and campaign world dates is highly helpful as well.

QUICK REFERENCE SHEET

You’ll reference a lot of information about different characters during play: Defense values, Health values, ability modifiers, and so forth. Rather than shuffling through papers or flipping pages in a book, it’s a good idea to compile a quick reference sheet to all the essential information you need. The sheet lists characters and creatures, their combat values, and other essential scores, allowing you to see any of them with a glance. You can find a reproducible example of a quick reference sheet in the back of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*.

Make sure to update your reference sheet at the start of each new game and on any occasion when the characters’ abilities or scores may have changed.

INITIATIVE CARDS

An important piece of information to keep track of during play is initiative order. Prepare a 3” × 5” index card for each character, including NPCs. When a combat begins, write the current initiative for each character on the upper right-hand corner of the card (ideally in pencil) and place the cards in initiative order. Then simply start with the character on top of the stack. When that turn is done, flip to the next card, cycling through the cards until you reach the end of the round. This can be more effective than just listing the initiative order on a sheet of paper, since you can change the order, if needed.

Initiative cards are also a good place to put basic character information, since you usually use this information when that character’s turn comes up. Defensive information, such as Defense, Toughness, and Health, should be kept on the separate quick reference sheet, since it’s normally used when other characters or monsters act, and you can avoid shuffling through the index cards looking for a character’s Defense.

The same cards can also be used to keep track of spell durations. If a character casts a spell that lasts 5 rounds, you can give the spell its own index card. The card lists the name of the spell and its duration, and every time it comes up, mark off 1 round. Not only does this keep spells from being forgotten, it allows the spell’s duration to end on the initiative it was cast, even if the caster has changed initiative. You can find a reproducible example of an initiative card in the back of the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook*.

WHITEBOARDS

A chalkboard or dry-erase board can be an excellent way to keep track of information for everyone at the table. The bigger a board you have room for, the better, and white dry-erase boards tend to be cheaper, easier to read, and less messy. Place the board at the side or behind the GM, where the most people can easily see it and the GM can easily reach it. When there's no fight, list all the PCs and major NPCs, along with the players running them and noteworthy features. Especially early in a campaign, doing so helps players and GM alike keep track of who's who.

A whiteboard can also be used to keep track of things in action scene. Laid flat, it can have a map drawn out and miniatures or counters placed on it. If upright, you can draw out a map and mark character positions on it.

BRINGING LIFE TO THE WORLD

It's the GM's job to make the world come alive. They describe the scene in which the heroes find themselves, and populate it with compelling characters to interact with the protagonists. A GM designs the campaign in which adventures take place—the game world—adding numerous ordinary and strange details to inspire action.

Some GMs spend hours painstakingly detailing every room and corridor heroes (might) walk through, and the physical attributes and biographies of each NPC. Others make it up entirely as they go along. But painstaking worldbuilding takes a great deal of time, and improvisation requires a knack that only comes with a great deal of practice, so most GMs fall somewhere in between. As you spend time being a GM, you'll naturally find a method that works best for you. There's no one right way. In all cases, the trick is knowing *how* to prepare and *how* to apply your work to running the game.

PICK YOUR DETAILS

Let's say that Jeff, Indra, and Amy have been investigating a general to find out if he's behind a fascist plot. They find themselves in his office. How do you describe the office?

You could call it opulent and rich.

You could go into extreme detail, listing everything in the office and talking about what it's made of.

The in-between route is to pick your details. Pick a very few things that imply bigger, wider concepts. For example, in the general's office, you could describe the desk as huge, and made of mahogany. You might mention that a copy of Machiavelli's *The Prince* is set on the table, and a gold cigar cutter near it. Your players likely already have a mental picture of what a general's office might look like, and immediately you portray someone who likes expensive cigars and likes reading classic political theory (and likes betraying people, and cutting fingers off with cigar cutters, perhaps). And even if these things are not necessarily relevant to the plot, they reveal something about the world. They give the illusion of depth, because players will fill in the gaps.

FAMILIARITY

One of the great things about games set in the modern world, or in a relatively familiar historical setting, is that players know it better than they would a more remote period or fantastical world. In a setting that's like the real world, your protagonists have many more options, and your players might come up with surprising, creative ideas more readily, drawing upon their casual knowledge. Your stories will be all the richer for it. Rather than just sit in a generic room planning their next move, characters might organize a heist in a coffee shop they know of in real life, using its free Wi-Fi to avoid being traced as they perform research. In a game set in 1930s New York, they might ask to meet Lucky Luciano to make a deal. On your end, send the characters to famous locations, or places from your childhood. They can rub shoulders with real-life rock stars, solve real life kidnappings, and, of course, kill Hitler.

THE SUPPORTING CAST

The most interesting part of any roleplaying game is its supporting cast, the NPCs heroes meet, whether once or on multiple occasions. They can be anyone from the guy in the burger stand opposite the front door of a sinister corporation's HQ, to the executive running that branch of the company—including the experiments in the basement. CHAPTER 9 provides numerous examples to draw from. If you need detailed game statistics, use them as a base, swap and adjust what you need to, and change the description to meet your needs. But remember that game statistics aren't what players see. They react to the NPC's description, voice, and apparent motive. Figure these things out by answering the following questions:

1. Where did they come from, and what are they doing now?
2. How do they look and sound?
3. What are their most important personality traits, and what's a notable character flaw?
4. What do they want right now, and why is it important in the story?
5. How do they feel about the PC(s) interacting with them, and what's a potential source of conflict?

These questions help you develop a compelling motive for the NPC, which guides how they react to the heroes and any situations that come up. You don't need all the answers ahead of time—let the heroes' actions prompt answers to these questions. Remember that you should also determine the NPC's attitude, to help guide any social actions that require dice rolling.

As noted earlier, telling details provide a great deal of information about a particular character. If the regime's general is short, thin, and sunken-cheeked, with immaculate teeth and neatly combed, iron-gray hair, it gives a very different picture than that of a bull-necked, shaven-headed brute with a broken nose and the sour reek of body odor. Is the top button of his jacket undone, or are the creases on his trousers knife-sharp? Are his hands soft from indolence, or hardened by heavy labor? Either gives you a clue about his personality.

EXAMPLE

If you run a game featuring near-future, high-tech espionage, you might answer the above questions as follows.

This is **Astrid**:

1. Astrid is an artificial intelligence in a clone body, grown illegally by the HOPE Corporation. She was born in a test tube and a mainframe. She currently works as the assistant to the CEO.
2. Astrid has sculpted blonde hair, and always wears a tightly buttoned suit. When she walks, her hips swing at exactly the same angle with every step. She speaks like an American newscaster, rapidly and confidently, in a voice that seems to have no particular accent.
3. She's efficient and hardworking. She has no sense of humor, and no compassion, either. She plans, meticulously. But she gets coldly angry and impulsive when a plan goes awry.
4. Although entirely loyal to the corporation, Astrid also wants to take the CEO's place and is looking for a way to make sure that the company's bio-weapon deal is both profitable and places her at the top, and afterward, her boss gets disposed of, one way or another. She sees the PCs as likely executors of this last desire, though they're an obstacle to the first.
5. Astrid wants to come out of any exchange with any PCs having learned more from them than she gave away, with the goal of recruiting or at least manipulating them to aid her ambitions.

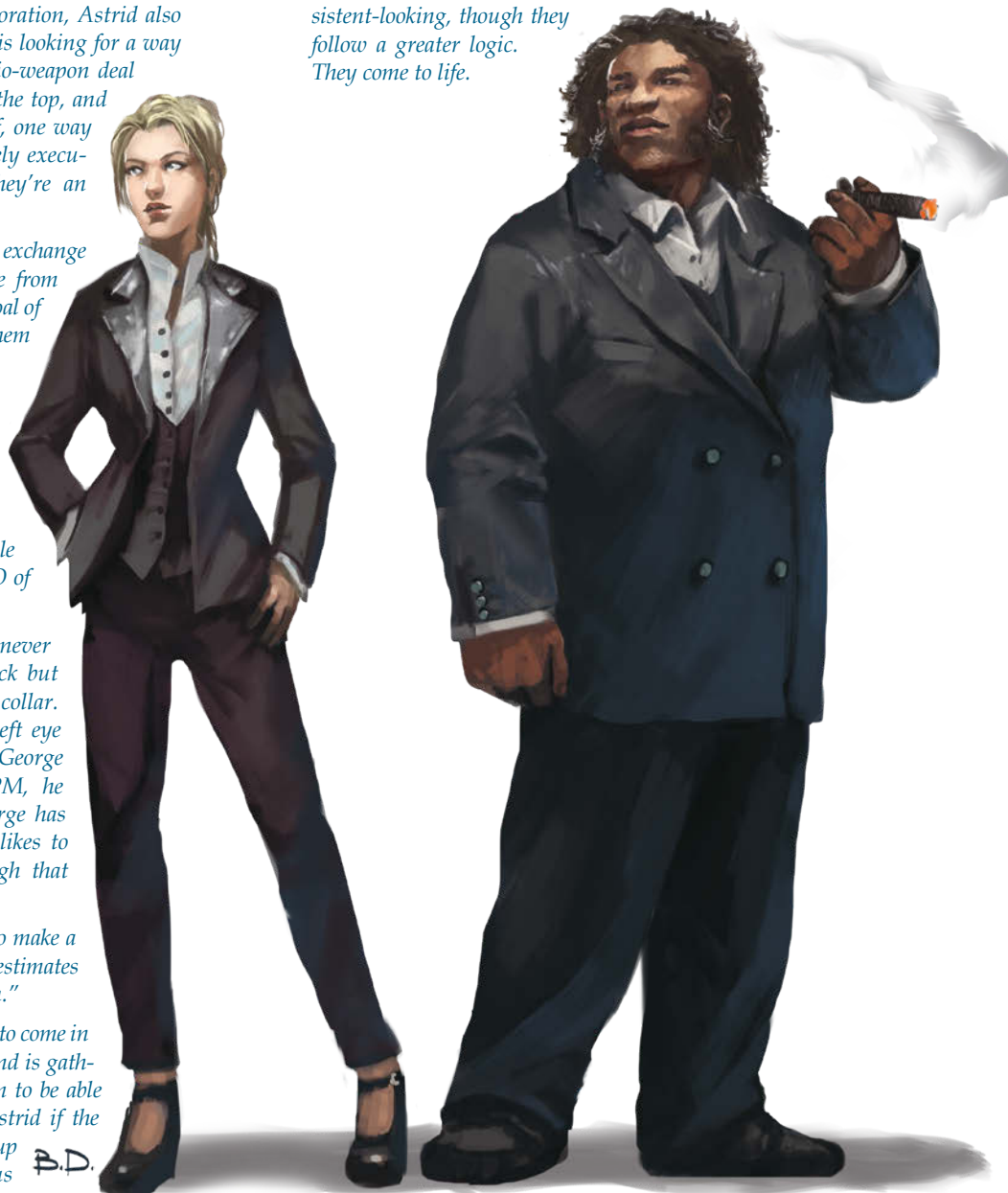
Astrid works with **George Hancock**:

1. George is British, and came from a privileged and wealthy background. His father was in the House of Lords (and he likes to let people know that). He is currently the CEO of the HOPE Corporation.
2. He wears black tailored suits, but never wears a tie. He has a mane of thick but graying hair that falls to his collar. His handshake is like a vice. His left eye twitches when he's under stress. George never, ever shouts. After 3:00 PM, he always smells slightly of gin. George has a posh Londoner's accent, and he likes to swear because he's powerful enough that nobody will upbraid him for it.
3. George is ruthless but also willing to make a deal, if it benefits him. George underestimates people who look and sound "common."
4. George wants the bio-weapon project to come in under budget and under schedule, and is gathering enough documentation for him to be able to turn whistleblower and frame Astrid if the project gets exposed. George has set up some leaks ahead of time – anonymous

email accounts, a stash of papers mailed to a post office box – that clever PCs might find.

5. George sees the PCs as potential employees or people who'd better get out of his way, though he wants to make friends with journalists in case the bio-weapon project goes under.

These two charmers are notionally working together to ensure the HOPE Corporation manages to develop and sell a bio-weapon that could end millions of lives, and blight millions more for generations to come. They're doing it because it's their job, though both know what their company is doing is criminal. They don't care about the morality of their actions, but neither is dumb enough to think that if they're caught, they won't be the ones to go to prison for it. Their backup plans if they think they might get caught drive how they respond to heroes who discover the plot. The fun complication is that they're also quietly working against each other, and that means that their actions are believable and sometimes inconsistent-looking, though they follow a greater logic. They come to life.





MASTERING THE RULES

Game Mastering is all about maintaining the flow of play for the players. To be successful at this, you'll need to get intimately familiar with the rules. This chapter builds on the material in **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES** and tells you how to decide when and what to roll on the fly, how to use advanced tests to build breaching challenges and chases, and how to build hazards using *Modern AGE's* rules.

MASTERING ABILITY TESTS

Ability tests are the heart of the system. Most rolls during play are ability tests. Adjudicate them fairly and keep the adventure moving. Instead of listing action types and modifiers for every occasion, *Modern AGE* gives you simple, yet robust tools to figure it out when running the game. You'll make judgments frequently, but the system is flexible enough to handle most situations.

To review **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**: An ability test uses three six-sided dice (3d6). Two of the dice should be one color and the third a different color (or otherwise visually unique). The off-color die is the Stunt Die. Roll them and add their numbers together. Add the relevant ability, and +2 for an appropriate focus. In other words:

$$\text{ABILITY TEST:} \\ \text{TEST RESULT} = 3\text{D6} + \text{ABILITY} + \text{FOCUS}$$

Compare the total to a static target number (TN) in the case of a basic test, or the test result of another character in an opposed test. A character wins a basic test by meeting or beating the target number and an opposed test by beating the opponent's test result. The results of the Stunt Die can be used to determine the degree of success and to break ties in the case of an opposed test.

When adjudicating any ability test in *Modern AGE*, there are five key decisions that you should make as GM:

- Should there be a roll?
- Which abilities and focuses apply?
- How much time does the test take?
- What are the stakes?
- What are the consequences of failure?

Let's look at these questions one by one.

SHOULD THERE BE A ROLL?

Don't make players roll for everything. If the task is easy enough that an average untrained person could probably do it, don't roll. If the task comes up in a calm situation, in circumstances so favorable it should be nearly impossible to fail, don't roll. For example, treating moderate injuries in the wild with a first aid kit requires a roll, while treating them in a fully equipped hospital probably doesn't. In some cases, a character possessing a specific ability focus or other character trait may allow automatic success. A character who knows

how to drive a semi doesn't need to roll to start one up and get it on the road.

Beyond this, don't require a roll when the story's progress *requires* success. If the characters need to befriend a stranger with critical information, don't let a blown roll halt the adventure. Instead, players roll to improve the quality of the information, and create a stronger bond. But the basic result—getting the NPC to talk—succeeds, barring outrageous behavior from the PCs.

WHICH ABILITIES & FOCUSES APPLY?

If an ability test is called for, pick the ability and focus that match the effort required. If a character is trying to force a door open, for example, you'd call for a Strength (Might) test.

Sometimes, the right focus is obvious. Trying to sneak down a hall? That's a Dexterity (Stealth) test. Other times, the answer isn't clear, or no focus applies. In the latter case, it's just a straight ability test. But if a player comes up with a good argument for a focus, accept it and add its bonus.

Two participants in opposed tests may use different abilities and focuses from one another. A character trying to get past a restaurant's haughty maître d' pits his Communications (Etiquette) test against the maître d's Willpower (Self-Discipline) test. In fact, Communications (Bargaining) might work as a different approach. Players may suggest focuses for their characters to use; if they make sense, allow them.

Usually any character can attempt to take an ability test, but some tests require specialized knowledge or skill. When that's the case, you can make a specific focus a requirement to even attempt it, such as with an Intelligence (Science required) test. A character trying the test without the required focus automatically fails.

HOW MUCH TIME DOES THE TEST TAKE?

An ability test can represent seconds, hours, or even days, depending on what the character is trying to achieve. During narrative time, the increments will tend to be larger. Sifting through a warehouse for a hidden item might require 1 hour per increment. In action time, however, tracking the exact time is more important. Each round of action time is 15 seconds, during which a character can take a major action and a minor action, or two minor actions. When deciding how long a test takes during action time, express it using these action types. A long action might take a major action and a minor action, or two of each for something that would stretch across 2 rounds.

Some ability tests are reactions. For instance, some extraordinary powers require targets to make a test to resist certain effects. Such tests are considered to take no time, as they usually take place when it's not the testing character's turn. In most cases, they don't use up the resisting character's actions.

WHAT ARE THE STAKES?

If the character succeeds, what happens exactly? These are the stakes. Usually, the result is obvious, and you'll find it easiest to make many tests binary: either a character succeeds or fails. A character trying to jump over a chasm will get across or fall. Sometimes, more nuance is required. That's where the Stunt Die comes in. Use its result to determine a character's degree

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT ABILITY TESTS

- Only one focus can apply to a test.
- Leave the dice on the table after a roll because the result of the Stunt Die may be important.
- The Stunt Die only counts for successful tests.
- In opposed tests, ties are broken by the Stunt Die, or the higher ability if Stunt Dice are tied.
- For basic tests, assess the situation and assign a difficulty.
- Circumstances can be represented with bonuses and penalties of 1–3.

of success. A 1 means the action barely succeeded; a jumping character makes it, but hangs off the edge of a building by one arm! A 6 means the results were spectacular; the leaping character lands on their feet, ready for action.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE?

When a character fails an ability test, what happens? Sometimes the consequences are obvious: the character is injured in an accident, offends an NPC they're trying to charm, or misses a clue. Decide if anything can mitigate the situation. For example, a Dexterity (Acrobatics) might give a falling character a chance to grab at some crack or windowsill.

Decide if the characters can try the failed action again. You can say yes, yes with conditions, or no, depending on the circumstances. If a character has the time and the action seems reasonable, allow another attempt. You might require a new approach, resources, and assistance to try again. But sometimes the moment passes, or the challenge is just too difficult, and the character is stuck with failure. You may rule that a few repeated failures indicate it's just too tricky a problem. The main criteria? If repeated attempts slow down play, it's better to move on.

BASIC TESTS

Basic tests are the easiest to resolve because a character is testing against a fixed target number. Unless a character is actively opposed by another character or monster, you should use basic tests. The **Basic Test Difficulty** table provides benchmarks for basic test difficulty and you'll probably consult it more than any other table in the game.

BASIC TEST DIFFICULTY

TEST DIFFICULTY	TARGET NUMBER
Routine	7
Easy	9
Average	11
Challenging	13
Hard	15
Formidable	17
Imposing	19
Nigh Impossible	21

RULES OPTION: PASSIVE OPPOSITION

Sometimes the rules will call for an opposed test but asking for a dice roll may give away the presence of a threat or break the mood. For example, if an assassin is sneaking up on the Player Characters, you would normally ask for an opposed test of the killer's Dexterity (Stealth) versus their Perception (Hearing) but asking the players to roll those dice indicates something is going on even if their rolls fail.

Instead of having players roll, you can simply add their bonuses to a flat 10. This becomes the TN for the opposing roll. If the players' roll would have had a chance of generating stunt points if it had been allowed to happen, check the opposing failed roll for matches. If they come up, the Player Character gets the stunt points the opponent would have won if their roll had succeeded.

When setting the TN, take all the various circumstances into consideration. In an Intelligence (Research) test, is the library well-stocked? In a Dexterity (Stealth) test, are the floorboards squeaky? Don't agonize about this. Make a quick assessment and let the dice fall where they may. You can tell players what TN they are shooting for, or keep that information to yourself.

OPPOSED TESTS

Opposed tests work a little differently than basic tests. A character is not trying to meet or beat a fixed number but beat the test result of an opposing character. If there are circumstances that affect one or more characters involved in the test, you'll have to determine those and assign the bonuses and/or penalties that affect the final test result. Generally, you should grant bonuses or impose penalties of 1–3 to reflect the circumstances of the test. You might, for example, give a character trying to jump in muddy ground a –2 penalty to the Strength (Jumping) test.

Factors you may consider for bonuses and/or penalties to ability tests includes available equipment, weather conditions, time constraints, distractions, assistance from others, lighting conditions, and good roleplaying where appropriate. Let players know any bonuses or penalties before they roll.

COOPERATION

They say many hands make light work, but they also say that too many cooks spoil the broth. When characters cooperate on a test, you'll have to decide which of these aphorisms apply, and to what degree. This leads to the following questions.

WHAT ARE THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF CHARACTERS WHO CAN COOPERATE?

If the answer is one, that means the task is suited to only one person at a time. It would be difficult for two people to make picking an ordinary lock easier, and when two people try to catch a falling object, they may want the same result but would make separate attempts. But solving a puzzle or pushing a car out of a ditch is something that multiple people

can meaningfully cooperate on. Pick a maximum number of participants. Characters in excess of that number don't help, and may even hinder the test.

ARE MULTIPLE FOCUSES POSSIBLE?

If more than one focus applies to a task, you can decide that each person cooperating uses whichever focus they are best at from among those available. Otherwise, all cooperating characters must use the same focus. Two characters rowing a boat must use Propelling, but out of three characters trying to crack an encrypted message, you might allow two to use Cryptography and one to use Computers. In breaching advanced tests (see **Advanced Tests** in this chapter), multiple focuses might be required, making cooperation mandatory.

IS COOPERATION A FORCE-MULTIPLIER OR FINE-TUNING MECHANISM?

In some cases, two people work twice as well as one, but in others, many people working together are simply more likely to do the same job as a person performing at peak ability. Depending on the answer to this question, use one of the following rules:

FORCE MULTIPLIER

If cooperation is a *force multiplier*, each participant in the test rolls. Note the highest result, and add the Stunt Die from every other participant to it to get the final test result. When this is the case and you expect characters to cooperate, you should set a higher TN than you would for a task one character could complete.

FINE TUNING

If cooperation *fine tunes* the result, each participant rolls. Use the highest result from among all participants, but when it comes to measuring the quality of the test, use the highest Stunt Die result from among all rolls.

EXAMPLE

Sean, Amy, and Brian must lift a collapsed support beam off Indra, who is pinned. The GM, Meghan, decides the free PCs can all cooperate, and their efforts are a force multiplier. It's a TN 18 Strength (Might) test – it's a heavy pillar. All three players roll the test. Including attribute and focus bonuses, Sean's player scores 7, Amy's gets 15, and Brian's player scores 13. Amy got the highest result at 15, but then the GM adds Sean's Stunt Die roll of 4, and Brian's roll of 2. $15 + 4 + 2 = 21$, which beats the TN. The three heave the pillar out of the way.

After that, Sean and Brian work on setting and splinting Indra's broken leg. As GM, Meghan rules that only two people can cooperate on the task, so Amy doesn't participate, and instead spends the time looking for a safe way out of the collapsed building. Meghan decides dealing with Indra's leg is an TN 12 Intelligence (Medicine) test. Including ability and focus modifiers, Sean scores 13, while Brian scores 11. Sean's 13 means they succeed. Even though Brian didn't hit the TN with his result, his Stunt Die result was 5, while Sean's was only 2. Meghan uses the 5 to rule how well the duo did. Instead of needing a stretcher, Indra can hobble while resting on the shoulder of a friend.

ADVANCED TESTS

Advanced tests are used for tasks that take time and/or planning, when the amount of time required matters, or to compare who performs a task first. Navigating the wilderness to get to safety before a storm hits, or hacking a computer network to wipe data before an enemy hacker gets there are suitable occasions. If marking time or who succeeds first don't matter, use basic or opposed tests as usual.

Advanced tests require multiple rolls, each representing a time increment of effort, until the character succeeds or runs out of time. To design an advanced test, do the following:

1. SET DIFFICULTY

Figure out the target number or opposed roll (including modifiers) the character tests against, just as for basic or opposed tests.

2. SET A SUCCESS THRESHOLD

An advanced test has a **success threshold**. This is the total number of Stunt Die points required to complete the task. Each success on a test adds its Stunt Die total to the success threshold until the character succeeds or runs out of time.

3. SET AN INCREMENT TIME

Each test requires an increment of time. Set it based on the type of activity the test represents. One way to do this is to figure out the typical amount of time the task should take and figure out the number of rolls required if each roll succeeded and generated 2 SP. Divide the typical total time by the number of rolls and round it off for simplicity, and you'll get a reasonable increment length.

EXAMPLE

Let's say you think the task should take about an hour and have a success threshold of 10. At 2 SP per roll, that would take five rolls. Five rolls over an hour would take 12 minutes per roll, and for ease of play, you can round it off to 10 minutes. Thus, each increment is 10 minutes long.

MAKING PROGRESS

To play out an advanced test, the player rolls against the TN or opposed roll for each increment of time in the test. On a failure, the character doesn't make any headway, and the time passes. On a success, note the number generated by the Stunt Die. This represents progress during that increment. Add the Stunt Die result from each successful roll together. When the total meets or exceeds the success threshold, the character completes the task.

Some advanced tests can be put "on hold," keeping accumulated Stunt Points while the character does something else, but others cannot, or may gradually lose SP if the break takes too long. Decide if this happens based on what would be believable for the task at hand.

The **Advanced Tests** table provides some basic benchmarks for success thresholds, though there is no theoretical limit on how high they can get. Practically speaking, however, you don't want players rolling dice forever, so consider carefully before setting thresholds above 25.

ADVANCED TESTS

TASK DIFFICULTY	SUCCESS THRESHOLD
Easy	5
Average	10
Challenging	15
Hard	20
Formidable	25

EXAMPLE

Stuck in a deserted village, Sean must warn an ally in a distant country estate that in an hour, the assassins the friend is hiding from are going to strike. Sean can't get a cell phone signal, and the only conveyance around is a rusty bicycle. Sean gets pedaling, and the GM decides this is an advanced TN 11 Constitution (Propelling) test per roll, and success threshold of 6. Sean has an hour to get there, and if the Stunt Die scores 2 SP per roll, it would be accomplished in three rolls. Dividing it by the 1-hour deadline, that sets each roll interval at 20 minutes. Sean has a Constitution of 0, but enjoys cycling, and has the Propelling focus. Sean's player, Howard, rolls the dice. Howard's first roll (including his +2 total modifier) is a 6 – after making a bit of headway, Sean gets forced off the road by a truck going in the opposite direction. Fortunately, Howard subsequently rolls a 12 (2 SP on the Stunt Die) and 14 (6 SP on the Stunt Die). The 2 and 6 SP on his Stunt Dice make 8 SP, surpassing the success threshold of 6. Sean dusts himself off, ignores the screaming pain in his legs, and coasts up to the country house with minutes to spare. Planning their escape, Sean sees that the house has no cars, but two mountain bikes lie on the front lawn. Sean groans.

COOPERATION IN ADVANCED TESTS

When it comes to cooperating on advanced tests, make the same determinations as you would for basic and opposed tests. However, force multiplier and fine-tuning options work differently:

- **FORCE MULTIPLIER:** If cooperation is a force multiplier, roll separate tests for up to the maximum number of participants for the same time increment, and each successful participant adds their Stunt Die result to the success threshold. That way, three people may potentially complete a task three times as fast as one person.
- **FINE TUNING:** If cooperation is a fine-tuning influence, roll separate tests for up to the maximum number of participants for the same time increment, but only add the single highest Stunt Die result among all participants who succeeded at the test to the success threshold.

In addition, in some advanced tests characters can trade off effort. For example, if two mechanics must pull an all-nighter to rebuild an engine, one mechanic can contribute to the success threshold by day, while their counterpart in the night shift takes over after dark.



BREACHING

Many of the great challenges in modern adventures don't involve combat so much as avoiding dangerous situations. Many places with enticing valuables or critical information are defended by forces too overwhelming to confront in outright battle—or maybe the characters take pride in using a light touch and defeating brawn with a clever plan. Whether infiltrating a cult, hacking a computer system, or smuggling people or things across a hostile border, these challenges are collectively called “breaching,” and can be thought of as advanced tests with consequences.

As with an advanced test, you select a difficulty and success threshold for a task, and determine how much time each check represents. Breaching adds two variations to this.

MANDATORY FOCUSES

In designing a breaching test, you may select multiple ability focuses that must each be used to contribute toward the final success threshold. To succeed, characters must not only hit their success threshold, but they must succeed at least once with each of the listed ability focuses. This often requires a diverse skillset that no single character can encompass. This means characters may trade off effort. You should also decide if a given stage in a breaching test can benefit from cooperation, and whether this functions as a fine-tuning or force-multiplying influence.

Individual ability focuses may have different TN, and you may limit how many successful tests any given focus—especially those with lower TN—may yield. The focus being used and the character (or characters) using it suggest what's happening during that interval. So, if a caper involves cracking a safe and climbing to the roof, the Strength (Climbing) test signals that the character involved in the test is in mid-climb.

BREACHING CONSEQUENCES

A breaching has consequences for each failed ability test, usually complicating future tests or alerting someone to your presence. These consequences come in three tiers, and it's up to you to determine how many times characters can fail at their ability tests before increasing the severity of the consequences. This is based on what's happening in the breaching scene when the failure occurs. Failing while cracking a safe with no alarm might just waste time, while doing it in a more secure room may summon guards or police. Severity is measured in tiers as described next:

TIER 1

Tier 1 consequences present small complications that make future tests more difficult (increasing the TN for an ability test by +2) or risk alerting someone to their presence, but not necessarily revealing them entirely. Tier 1 complications can generally be eliminated with a successful ability test that does not contribute to the success threshold. This may represent damaging the lock

to be picked, increasing the difficulty of Dexterity (Sabotage) tests until the lock is repaired with a successful Intelligence (Engineering) test, or overloading your computer and slowing your hacking work to a crawl—taking twice as long for each Intelligence (Computers) test until you take two turns to reset everything, or attracting the attention of an over-curious janitor who can be bluffed, charmed, bribed, or killed before he raises the alarm.

TIER 2

Tier 2 consequences represent mistakes that make the job harder, actively undo progress, or halt all progress until some side task can be completed. This may represent tripping secondary defenses that eliminate half your accumulated success, accidentally tipping the gang off to an imposter and increasing the difficulty of all future attempts to fool them with lies or disguises by +2, or getting locked out of a computer system and needing to steal a new password before continuing.

TIER 3

Tier 3 consequences are severe and jeopardize the entire breaching attempt, often involving tripping major alarms. Characters will need a clever plan and decisive action to recover from a Tier 3 consequence, or else retreat to attempt a different plan in the future. This usually represents alerting guards or other security forces, and likely leads to a fight or chase scene.

ESCALATING CONSEQUENCES

It's usually best if more failures increase the severity of these consequences. For instance, failing just one or two tests usually triggers the Tier 1 consequence, while subsequent failures drop Tier 2 and 3 consequences. A truly dramatic failure, such as when all participants blow their rolls at a critical moment, might immediately draw Tier 3 consequences, however.

BREACHING CONSIDERATIONS

When designing a breaching, you should consider the difficulty of individual tasks (determining their TN) as well as the overall complexity and readiness of the target's security (determining the success threshold). High target numbers but a low success threshold may represent suspicious guards for an otherwise insecure or understaffed facility, or an advanced but small computer network. Low TN with a high success threshold instead implies a larger, more complex, or well-insulated facility with outdated security or complacent guardians. A good rule of thumb is one ability test for every five points of success threshold, with a minimum of three distinct tests.

Select diverse ability focuses when planning a breaching, to allow more characters to participate, or possibly even force characters to recruit extra help for specialized tasks. Characters should be allowed a chance to gather intelligence or scout out a potential breaching beforehand to learn what ability focuses they will need to employ, possibly requiring separate ability tests or even advanced tests to represent research,

buying drinks for guards, or tracking down criminals who have failed at the same breaching. You may even allow the players to determine their own plan after researching their target, suggesting ability focuses they could use and why they make sense, but allowing you to determine the TN for each test and success threshold for the overall task.

Breachings are a montage-style tool to play out complex tasks quickly, not a replacement for an adventure. They might earn needed items and information, or otherwise get characters to the next stage of the adventure, providing an alternative challenge to a combat encounter.

SAMPLE BREACHING CHALLENGES

Here are three sample breaching challenges. You may use these as listed or modify them to suit your own adventures.

BREAK INTO A SECURE FACILITY

More complex than simply breaking into a home or store, penetrating a secure facility like a military installation, criminal stronghold, or any research lab requires avoiding notice, disabling locks and alarms, and understanding the psychology of people with something to hide. Gaining access to more secure locations increases both the TN of the various checks as well as the success threshold, and may add additional ability tests such as Communication (Disguise) to avoid facial-recognition software or even Willpower (Courage) tests to walk confidently into the figurative lion's den.

BREAK INTO A SECURE FACILITY

SUCCESS THRESHOLD: 15 **INCREMENT TIME:** 10 MINUTES

ABILITY FOCUSES: DEXTERITY (SABOTAGE) TN 17, DEXTERITY (STEALTH) TN 13, INTELLIGENCE (SECURITY) TN 15

CONSEQUENCES

TIER 1: The facility proves to have unexpected guards or defenses, increasing the TN of Intelligence (Security) checks by +2 until a character succeeds at a Perception (Seeing) test to adapt to the situation.

TIER 2: An unexpected alarm or clumsy misstep draws a few guards to investigate.

TIER 3: The entire facility is placed on alert and guards begin actively searching for intruders.

HACK A COMPUTER NETWORK

Gaining quiet access to a computer network is the backbone of many modern plans, granting access to private information or other security features. Doing so requires a healthy amount of knowledge about computers and hardware, but also requires sweet-talking or otherwise obtaining user credentials from at least a low-level user. Gaining any measure of control or access to restricted data or high-security networks vastly increases the success threshold and likely requires multiple passwords or specialized equipment.

THE RIGHT TEST FOR THE JOB

Between advanced tests, breaching, and cooperation, it's possible to devise very complex tests for characters to collectively confront, but don't fall to the temptation of using these rules just because they're here. Modern AGE's rules are primarily intended to provide simple tools to generate interesting events. Stick to the simplest tests capable of doing what you need done. If dramatic tension comes from limited time, use an advanced test. If it might involve other complications, use breaching. In most cases, you don't need to mix cooperation and breaching rules, since breaching already has options for everyone to participate. If none of these factors apply, basic and opposed tests should work perfectly fine, even to represent an action which takes a long time to complete.

HACK A COMPUTER NETWORK

SUCCESS THRESHOLD: 10 **INCREMENT TIME:** 1 ROUND

ABILITY FOCUSES: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION) TN 11,
LIMIT 1 SUCCESS; INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS) TN 15,
INTELLIGENCE (CRYPTOGRAPHY) TN 15

CONSEQUENCES

TIER 1: The character encounters unfamiliar encryption, increasing the TN of Intelligence (Cryptography) tests by +2 until they can succeed at an Intelligence (Research) test to track down more information.

TIER 2: The stolen user credentials the character is relying on are blocked, and they must secure a new password before they can resume their hacking attempt.

TIER 3: Clumsy hacking attempts alert a systems administrator, who begins actively opposing the character's breaching attempt, and may trace their location and alert security forces with a successful opposed Intelligence (Computers) test.

INFILTRATE A GANG

Gaining the trust of a gang or local militia allows you to learn their secrets, but requires the right mix of charm, strength, and caution. Infiltrating more official organizations may require Dexterity (Forgery) in place of the Strength (Intimidation) focus. Better organized, militia-style groups, or tight-knit groups like cults represent challenges with higher TN and may require specialized knowledge like Intelligence (Theology).

INFILTRATE A GANG

SUCCESS THRESHOLD: 20 **INCREMENT TIME:** 1 DAY

ABILITY FOCUSES: COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION) TN 13,
PERCEPTION (EMPATHY) TN 11, STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)
TN 13, WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE) TN 13

CONSEQUENCES

TIER 1: The character wrongs one or two minor gang members, exposing the PC to extra scrutiny. Increase the TN of Communication (Deception) checks by +2 until the character can either win over the suspicious members or somehow destroys their credibility.

TIER 2: A serious slip destroys much of a character's credibility, wiping out half of the accumulated SP.

TIER 3: At least one member of the infiltrating party is exposed as an infiltrating agent and must flee or be captured.

CHASE RULES

Chase scenes are a staple of movies and novels. One or more characters are trying to get away or reach a specific destination while another character or group of characters are trying to stop that from happening. They might be leaping over obstacles on foot or ripping along narrow streets in motorcycles.

The chase rules are a specialized version of advanced tests. Many advanced tests take place during narrative time and the GM determines how much time each test represents, but since chases are events of pulse-pounding excitement, they happen during action time, with 1-round intervals that can be integrated into combat encounters. While runners, riders, drivers, and pilots pursue the chase (and their players make advanced test rolls), other characters, such as vehicle passengers and bystanders, make other action related tests, such as attack rolls.

CHASE TESTS

Chases are triggered when one character takes the Run/Chase major action, and at least one other person follows that character. Each round, all chase participants must take the Run/Chase action and make what's called a Chase Test. Chase Tests use various focuses depending on the method of travel, as next described:

- **ON FOOT:** Constitution (Running) or Constitution (Swimming) in the water.
- **MOUNTED:** Dexterity (Riding)
- **MUSCLE POWERED VEHICLE (BIKE, CANOE, AND THE LIKE):** Constitution (Propelling)
- **WIND POWERED VEHICLE:** Dexterity (Sailing)
- **MOTORCYCLE, STANDARD AUTOMOBILE, POWERBOAT:** Dexterity (Driving)
- **INDUSTRIAL MACHINERY:** Strength (Steering)
- **SIMPLE DRONES:** Intelligence (Computers) or Dexterity (Piloting) — whichever is better.
- **AIRCRAFT (PLANES, HELICOPTERS, MILITARY-GRADE DRONES):** Dexterity (Piloting)
- **COMPLEX VEHICLES:** Dexterity (Piloting). This category includes main battle tanks, yachts, and other large ships. The GM may impose penalties based on the unfamiliarity and complexity of the vehicle. A military aircraft pilot might not enjoy their focus bonus when operating a tank, for example.



In a vehicle, add its Handling bonus or penalty. Passengers do not make Chase Tests. They're just along for the ride.

CHASE TARGET NUMBERS

The TN for a Chase Test depends on how tricky it is to use a method of transport in a given area. Rocky terrain is a concern for a runner, but not the flying drone pursuing them. Use the **Chase Test Difficulties** table as a guideline.

TRACKING THE CHASE

As in other advanced tests, characters keep a running total of the Stunt Die results from successful tests. This is known as the Chase Total. Participants with Chase Totals within 10 of each other can attack with weapons that have a Range of 500 yards or greater. Participants with Chase Totals within 5 of each other can make ranged attacks with weapons with smaller Range numbers. Characters with Chase Totals within 2 of each other may perform melee attacks (if this would be practical) or vehicular attacks. In most cases, attacks must be delivered by passengers, since keeping up with the chase is a major action, but vehicle operators may use Activate to operate vehicular weaponry, and Ram to strike with the vehicle.

RELATIVE SPEED

Faster characters naturally have an advantage over slower ones. Characters (or their mounts) with a Speed of 14 add +1 to the Chase Total for each successful test. Participants with a Speed of 18 (the speed of a typical riding horse) add +2,

CHASE TEST DIFFICULTIES

CONDITIONS	TN	EXAMPLE
Ideal	9	Running down a clear corridor
Average	11	Running down a city street
Rough	13	Running down a trash-strewn alley
Hard	15	Running through thick, rocky woods
Almost Impossible	18	Running through a collapsing building during an earthquake.

and participants with Speeds of 21 or higher add +3. Participants with Speeds of 6 or less reduce the points gained on a successful Chase Test by -1.

Vehicles adjust their Chase Total points for each successful roll by their Velocity modifiers, as listed for vehicles in **CHAPTER 4: EQUIPMENT**.

If participants use modes of transport with different Velocities, those with higher Velocity classes may modify this, based on game mode. These modifiers apply to only Chase Totals, not to SP spent on stunts.

GRITTY: The GM simply determines whether a character using a faster method catches up with one using a slower method. This is usually automatic unless the pursued character finds a way to make it difficult to be followed using the faster method—running up an urban staircase where a car can't follow, for instance. In some cases, stopping a vehicle in the right place might be difficult, prompting a basic test to brake at the right time.

PULPY: The GM notes the slowest Velocity class of all participants. For every Velocity class higher than the slowest participant, the faster participant adds +3 to their Chase Total for each successful test. For example, a character in a sports car (Very Fast) adds +6 to the Chase Total when the slowest participant is on foot (Standard).

CINEMATIC: The GM uses the same system as for a Pulp game, except that the Chase Total bonus versus slower participants is just +1 per Velocity class category advantage. Heroes flee fast cars on foot, aided by camera editing that keeps you from thinking about its realism too much.

A chase can be resolved in two ways. If the chase would effectively end when participants reach an objective, use a success threshold, as with advanced tests. Alternately, you can decide that the chase will run a certain number of rounds, and the character with the highest Chase Total at the end of that time wins.

CHASE STUNTS

Characters making Chase Tests can use Chase Stunts. Spending SP on Chase Stunts doesn't reduce the Chase Total. Like other stunts (see CHAPTER 5), extra tests prompted by Chase Stunts do not generate stunt points.

In addition, the **Anti-Vehicular Stunts** in CHAPTER 5: STUNTS will see frequent use as chase participants attack each other's vehicles. Consult that chapter for more information.

CHASE STUNTS	
SP COST	STUNT
1+	(CORE) BURST OF SPEED: You gain a +1 bonus on your next Chase Test for every 1 SP you spend.
2	EVASIVE MANEUVER: Until your next turn, attacks against you and your mount/vehicle (if any) suffer a -2 penalty.
2	FOLLOW THE LEADER: Make a test with a TN you choose and an ability focus you work out with the GM, such as Dexterity (Acrobatics) to slip through a small opening while on the run. If you fail, you crash. Anyone following you using the same method of transport must make the same test or crash.
3	ATTACK ON THE MOVE: You can make a bonus melee or ranged attack, use the bonus Activate action to use an in-built weapon system, or make a bonus Ram attack against an enemy within range and line of sight, at a -2 penalty to the roll. You must have a loaded missile weapon to make a ranged attack.
3	KEEP IT STEADY: Until your next turn, passengers gain a +1 bonus when making attacks or taking other ability tests that would benefit from stable platform (leaping from vehicle to vehicle, for example).
4	INTERFERENCE: A character of your choice suffers a -2 penalty on their next Chase Test.
5	SHORTCUT: Add 2 to your Chase Total.

COMPLICATIONS

Characters moving at the high speeds indicated by the Run/Chase action have a chance of crashing if they fail a Chase Test. Complications during the chase may impose other adverse conditions, like those listed in the previous breaching rules. Use the tiers as next described:

TIER 1

The character's person, mount, or vehicle experiences some sort of problem, ranging from a pulled hamstring to engine trouble. Increase the Chase Test TN by 2 unless the character switches methods to get around the problem.

TIER 2

The character suffers a serious stumble or spins out of control. This eliminates half of the character's accumulated Chase Total. Alternately, a wrong turn or vehicle trouble prompts a test determined by the GM (typical TN 13) that must be accomplished before the character can resume the chase.

TIER 3

The character suffers a crash.

CRASHES

The GM determines when there's a crash risk, or the player can do so by using the Follow the Leader stunt. When there's a crash risk, failing the Chase Test causes the crash. Even characters on foot can crash, as they stumble and fall mid-chase. Crash damage is covered in CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES but repeated here for ease of reference.

A crash renders a vehicle inoperable, and a mount unable to move due to injury. Mounts and running characters are knocked prone. At the GM's discretion, field repairs and first aid might be possible, but unfortunately, a crash also wipes out half of the participant's Chase Total. Making up the loss will be difficult, to say the least.

CRASH DAMAGE	
VELOCITY CLASS	DAMAGE
Standard	1d6 impact, stun
Fast	2d6 impact, wound
Very Fast	4d6 ballistic, wound
Extreme	6d6 penetrating, wound

PLANNING A CHASE

Chases in *Modern AGE* work best if handled in a relatively abstract way. The respective Chase Totals will provide the relative positions of the participants. Trying to track down the precise number of yards everyone is moving would just bog things down. The important things player will want to know are the general nature of the terrain and whether their characters are close enough to interact with other participants in the chase.

It is useful to plan out the type of the terrain the chase is going to happen in and assign an appropriate TN for Chase Tests ahead of time, making an educated guess about how characters will get around. This is particularly handy if the chase is going to run for a set number of rounds. You can plan it all out, knowing exactly how long the chase will last.

EXAMPLE

As GM, Meghan is planning a chase through a small town and into the countryside. The characters don't have a car, so it'll almost certainly be a foot chase. She decides that it will run for 6 rounds and plans the terrain as follows:

Round 1: Town square (TN 11)

Round 2: Crowded thoroughfare (TN 12)

Round 3: Winding streets (TN 14)

Round 4: Outbuildings (TN 11)

Round 5: Open country (TN 9)

Round 6: Sparse woods (TN 11)

While it is simplest to keep this all general and have just one type of terrain each round, you can spice things up by giving characters choices to make at certain points. "Do you make for the trees or run down by the river?" These points of decision will require you to plan out the alternate routes, but can make for tense moments for the characters, and might provide an advantage if the terrain is easier to traverse.

RESOLVING A CHASE

As GM, you decide when a chase ends, choosing from the following options:

SUCCESS THRESHOLD

In this case, characters who hit the success threshold first escape pursuers with lower totals, and get away to safety. In the case of multiple participants, characters continue to make Chase Tests until either all the pursued characters have gotten away or the first pursuer reaches the success threshold (at which point, remaining pursued characters are caught).

SET ROUNDS

Here, rank the final Chase Totals from highest to lowest (roll off to break ties) after the last pre-determined round ends. All the pursued characters with Chase Totals higher than all pursuers get away. All other pursued characters are caught.

ALTERNATE ENDINGS

A chase can end for many other reasons. A crash is one way. A character might get out of sight and hide, or attain an unsailable lead in their Chase Total. This last circumstance occurs when the character with the lead can't be attacked or affected by any other participants and has a Chase Total of 12 or more higher than the participant with the next highest total.

What happens when a chase ends? It depends on the exact situation. The lead characters escape, or the chase returns to a standard action encounter. The end of a chase may also end action time, leading to exploration and social encounters instead.

COMBAT CONSIDERATIONS

When the game switches from narrative time to action time, it's time for combat. This is when *Modern AGE* becomes the most rules intensive and you'll have many decisions to make in a short time. You control all the NPCs. You roll initiative for them, and decide their actions when their turns come up. You'll keep track of their resources as well, including Health. The core rules for combat are in **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**. The following section provides additional advice and rules that will help you run combat encounters in *Modern AGE*.

MAJOR NPCs

NPCs who use the same combat rules as PCs are **major NPCs**. In a Gritty game, all NPCs will be major NPCs, with full Toughness, though you might use group combat for them when it's convenient. In Pulpy or Cinematic style games, important or especially dangerous NPCs are major NPCs. You may, at your option, apply the rules for dying PCs to major NPCs.

MINOR NPCs

If you're running a Pulpy or Cinematic campaign, consider making some combatants **minor NPCs**. Minor NPCs use the same rules as typical NPCs (which in turn, use the same rules as PCs), but with the following exceptions:

- **GROUP COMBAT:** When a group of minor NPCs have the same game statistics, roll initiative once for the entire group. They all act on the resulting initiative number. Furthermore, you can roll once for the group to determine surprise and morale. You may use this option in Gritty games as well to reduce the number of rolls and better organize combat.
- **NOT SO TOUGH:** Minor NPCs don't have Toughness; only equipment and special circumstances provide armor.
- **FALLING HARD:** When reduced to 0 Health, minor NPCs are instantly killed. If they're knocked out, they regain consciousness only at some point after combat, as determined by the GM, unless other characters intervene to revive them.

EXTRAS

In a Cinematic game, some minor NPCs are **extras**. They're nameless cultists, guards, and gunmen who can be taken out in an instant by the heroes. They use the same rules as minor NPCs, but use the following additional rules:

- **ONE SHOT:** If an attack on an extra inflicts even 1 point of damage after reducing it by any armor, the extra drops to 0 Health.
- **HORDE:** If multiple extras are side by side, a PC can attack a number of them equal to 1 plus their Dexterity score (minimum 1). Make one attack and damage roll and apply the results to each extra.

SURPRISE

At the start of a combat encounter, you might need to determine if one side gets the drop on the other. This isn't a concern during an open standoff, or when all sides can see each other. Determining surprise is a three-part process.

CONSIDER THE SITUATION

First, determine the basic situation. Is one side concealed or hidden in some way? Is the other side wary or oblivious? Did both sides just blunder into one another by accident?

TEST OR NO TEST

Next, you must decide if one or both sides get a chance to detect the other before contact is made. In some situations, you may determine there is no test. In that case, one side automatically gets the drop on the other. If you decide there is a chance of detection, you can have characters make Perception tests with focuses as appropriate (though Perception (Seeing) is most common). This can be a basic test, in which case you assign a TN based on circumstances, or you can make it an opposed test of Perception vs. Dexterity (Stealth). It is possible that some characters will be surprised while others on the same side will not.

ATTACK ROLL MODIFIERS

MODIFIER	CIRCUMSTANCE
-3	Melee attacker in heavy snow. Combat in a lightless room.
-2	Combat at night. Melee attacker in the mud. Ranged attack vs. defender engaged in melee combat.
-1	Rain, mist, or smoke obscures the defender. Combat in low light conditions.
0	Normal circumstances.
+1	Attacker is on higher ground. Defender is prone. Melee attacker and allies outnumber defender 2 to 1.
+2	Melee attacker and allies outnumber defender 3 to 1. Defender is drunk.
+3	Defender is unaware of the attack.

FIGHTING IN THE DARK

While most bonuses and penalties in the *Modern AGE* are intended to be somewhere between +3 and -3, a Game Master is certainly justified in going beyond these in certain extreme situations. One of these is the loss of sight, whether because of visual impairment or simply fighting in the dark.

Fighting in total darkness or while blind imposes a -5 to attacks and other actions. This penalty also applies to ranged attacks made at short range or within ten yards, whichever is less. Any ranged attacks beyond that simply fail. Finally, if you are fighting while blinded against opponents who can see, you lose the benefit of adding your Dexterity to Defense as well. Individuals used to severe visual impairment may experience reduced penalties, determined by the GM.

This is one example of an special circumstance. As GM, feel free to design others when you need to. Write them down and as time goes on, these "house rules" customize *Modern AGE* for you and your group.

COMBAT BEGINS

Everyone rolls for initiative as action time begins and the combat starts. Any characters who were surprised do not get a turn during the first round of the fight. On the second round, everyone gets to act as normal.

DEALING WITH SURPRISE

The easiest way to deal with surprise is with basic tests. If an enemy is trying to ambush the PCs, choose a TN based on the site they picked and their level of concealment and let each player make a Perception (Seeing) test. Those who fail the test are surprised; those who make it are not. If the PCs are trying to ambush an enemy, roll a Perception (Seeing) test for each major NPC and group of minor NPCs.

A surprised character may not act during the first round of combat, but may roll to resist or react to circumstances that would not use up any of their actions. On subsequent turns, the character may act as usual.

ATTACK ROLLS & CIRCUMSTANCE

An attack roll is the most common ability test in combat. It is a basic test, but the TN is equal to the opponent's Defense. The attack roll is modified by a focus, if applicable, and any other relevant bonuses (such as aiming, talents, etc.). You can also assign bonuses and penalties to the attack roll for the circumstances of the fight, just as you do in opposed tests. These bonuses and penalties should range from 1 to 3. They can account for anything that would affect the attacker's ability to hit the target, such as lighting, terrain, tactics, and concealment. Here are some example modifiers based on common circumstances. Use them as a guideline when assigning bonuses and penalties to attack rolls.

MORALE

In many games, combat is an all or nothing affair. Opponents fight until one side or the other is wiped out. Yet most fights end when the morale of one side breaks and either flees or surrenders. You can simulate this with Willpower (Morale) tests when it seems appropriate. Characters will fight on with a successful test or attempt to break off from combat or even surrender on a failed test.



When is it appropriate to test morale? Ultimately, that is for you to determine based on the circumstances and events of the combat and the perception of the combatants. But for some broad guidelines, consider calling for a test under the following conditions:

- When more than half of the side's combatants are out of the fight (dead, incapacitated, fleeing, or surrendering).
- When the side's leader or champion is defeated, or a valued member is held hostage.
- When fighting on will mean being trapped or surrounded.
- The sudden appearance of a bizarre or gory threat.

You can handle the situation one of two ways. Your first option is to make one Willpower (Morale) test for the side using the Willpower of its leader (or best available if there is no clear leader). This has the advantage of being simple and can end a combat with one dice roll. Your other option is to roll once for each major NPC and group of minor NPCs. This can mean that some combatants flee while others stay and fight.

The standard TN for a morale test is 11, but you may increase or decrease it depending on other circumstances. If fleeing or surrendering enemies are still attacked, they may turn and fight again to defend themselves.

In Gritty games, even player characters can break before a frightening threat. Unlike NPCs, PCs don't have "leaders" for the purposes of morale tests. Furthermore, a PC may roll each round on their turn to see whether they recover and can act normally. (This doesn't use up any actions.) Like NPCs, they may act normally if enemies continue to attack. This rule is entirely optional, even in Gritty games, and should not be applied to battle-hardened characters.

HANDLING HAZARDS

Bullets and fists aren't the only threats PCs face. They might contend with falling, fire, and other perils. All these fall under the general header of "hazards." *Modern AGE* handles hazards with a simple system that can be used to simulate everything from explosions to drowning. Published adventures will define hazards for you, but when you need to adjudicate them on your own, answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of the hazard?
- Can it be avoided?
- How dangerous is the hazard?
- Does it have any special effects?
- How long does it last?

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE HAZARD?

Describe the hazard in a general way. It could be a treacherous pathway leading up the side of a mountain, a raging forest fire, or a tripwire that sets off an IED. Define the broad parameters.

CAN IT BE AVOIDED?

Some hazards, particularly traps, are hidden dangers. These might be detected with a Perception test, using a focus appropriate for the hazard. Use Seeing to notice a patch of disturbed earth over a landmine, for example. If there is a chance of detection, set the TN for the ability test as usual. PCs who make a successful test can avoid the hazard, or at least get a clue that may help them do so. Those that fail walk right into it.

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT HAZARDS

- They may sometimes be avoided with appropriate ability tests.
- Determine damage using the **Hazard Category** table.
- Ability tests may allow characters to mitigate the damage. A successful test usually means half damage (rounded down).
- Some hazards have special effects.
- Some hazards are one-offs, but others reoccur.

HAZARD CATEGORY

CATEGORY	DAMAGE	EXAMPLE
Minor Hazard	1d6	Floor littered with broken glass
Moderate Hazard	2d6	10-foot fall
Major Hazard	3d6	Pipe bomb
Arduous Hazard	4d6	Freeway car crash
Harrowing Hazard	5d6	Landmine
Murderous Hazard	6d6	Collapsing building

HOW DANGEROUS IS THE HAZARD?

Just as you assess difficulty for ability tests, so too must you assess the danger of hazards. Consult the **Hazard Category** table and pick the one which best suits the nature of the hazard. This determines the base damage the hazard inflicts. You might decide that falling from a balcony is a major hazard, so it would inflict 3d6 damage. Only rare, very dangerous hazards inflict more than 6d6 damage. Furthermore, note the type of damage. Some hazards inflict wound damage; others, stun damage. A few inflict both types of damage. In that case, split the hazard's total damage dice between the two types, and apply stun damage after wound damage.

You can also allow an ability test to mitigate the damage. A good standard is that a successful test means the character only suffered half damage (rounded down). The PC falling from the tower could be given a chance to make a TN 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test to halve the damage.

You also need to decide if armor protects against the hazard. Toughness applies against hazard damage types just as it does against combat damage types, as adjusted by the game mode. If other armor doesn't protect against the hazard, note it as penetrating damage. Common sense should dictate whether armor applies.

Finally, note that in Gritty and Pulpy games where characters have less Health, hazards are deadlier—characters may have to stop their investigations to take time to heal. In those games, the worst hazards should be triggered by lack of caution, or some set of events characters can see coming, rather than random dangers to slow them down.

DOES IT HAVE ANY SPECIAL EFFECTS?

Some hazards might impose a temporary penalty to an ability or to Speed. They could reduce the number of actions a character can take in a turn. They could leave a character prone or

even unconscious. Try to remember that Health is somewhat abstract in the first place, so many hazards require no special effects. When you do use a special effect, try to make it simple and sensible.

HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

Many hazards happen once and then end. An IED, for example, explodes once when triggered. Other hazards can be ongoing. Characters running through a burning building suffer damage each round until they escape. Again, use common sense to determine whether the hazard is a single incident or reoccurring.

SAMPLE HAZARDS

Here are three sample hazards to give you an idea of how to implement the system.

BURNING BUILDING

During the night, black hat hackers engineer an electrical fire by shorting out the climate control systems in a “smart building”—one the characters happen to be staying in. They wake up to the smell of smoke as fire quickly engulfs the bottom floor. They can try to escape down the stairs and through the common room. However, each round they take 3d6 damage (a major hazard), and their Speed is halved because the smoke makes it hard to see where to go. They could also leap from the windows of their room but the distance and the fire on the lower floors makes this an arduous hazard that inflicts 4d6 penetrating damage. A successful TN 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) test halves the damage. Do the PCs dash through the ground floor, or do they make the jump to freedom and hope the penetrating damage isn't too bad?

KILLER DRONE

Rounding a corner, the PCs discover a tracked robot armed with a belt-fed, mounted machine pistol. Its computerized aim is perfect. Anyone who passes through its line of sight suffers 3d6 ballistic damage—no attack roll required. It won't run out of ammunition any time soon, no amount of agility can evade its bullets, and it can easily shoot multiple characters. How to the PCs get past it? Solutions might include shooting out its sensor (ranged attack roll against a 15 Defense), finding a makeshift barrier to block incoming fire or conceal the presence of human targets, or, with the help of a Wi-Fi enabled device, succeeding at a TN 13 Intelligence (Computers) test to shut it down remotely.

RUSHING RIVER

A PC must swim across a rushing river to deliver a vital message. Rocks beneath the surface make the crossing even more perilous. They must make an advanced test with a Success Threshold of 7 (see **Advanced Tests** in this chapter). Each round the character must take a TN 13 Constitution (Swimming) test. If they succeed, the result of the Stunt Die counts toward the success threshold. If they fail, they take 2d6 damage from being dashed against the rocks and/or inhaled water. They keep making tests until they make it across or are reduced to 0 Health.



ADVERSARIES

Banks aren't easy to rob. Secret bases are difficult to infiltrate. Mob bosses don't go down without a fight. Dangerous people will always stand in the way of the characters in a *Modern AGE* campaign. These supporting characters are known as **adversaries**.

Adversaries range from the street tough to the seductive cult leader, the rogue soldier to the computer hacker. They come in many forms, and pose different dangers depending on their roles in the story, and their level of antagonism toward the protagonists. This chapter contains a selection of adversaries from all lifestyles that you can include in a campaign. These are starting points; use them as templates to design your own. You can make them stronger or weaker, or alter anything else. The selection below ranges from the everyday to the weird, suitable to a variety of campaigns.

Adversary game statistics appear in a standard format, encompassing their descriptions, abilities, focuses, talents, common equipment, and favored stunts. Not every adversary of the type described should use every stunt listed, but the GM can definitely utilize any stunt if the story dictates its need.

ADVERSARIES VS. PLAYER CHARACTERS

The adversaries profiled in this chapter do not necessarily conform to the rules for character development. They don't have to and generally, NPCs don't need to. GMs can create adversaries and other major NPCs using the same character

creation system the players use for their characters, if they like, and this might be appropriate for long-term allies and enemies. But the GM doesn't have to do it this way. As GM, allocate whatever abilities, focuses, talents, and stunts you deems appropriate for any NPC. Adversaries and other supporting characters don't need to meet the same prerequisites as player characters for talents, specializations, or other game traits.

ADVERSARY FOCUSES

Adversaries use the same ability focuses as the protagonists, except in cases where the adversaries are non-humanoids, requiring natural attacks such as biting and goring. Most protagonists will be unable to take these focuses, unless something bizarre occurs during a campaign rendering a character more likely to brandish claws than a gun. The additional focuses for beasts are:

FIGHTING: Bite, Claws, Gore

Unless otherwise noted, an animal's attacks inflict impact wound damage.

ADVERSARY THREAT

In the right circumstances, any creature can pose a danger. Tough guys have been killed by bees, after all. A conspiracy theorist may look like a weak, paranoid, basement-dweller, but when armed with a pistol, or an online friend willing to shoot their enemies, they becomes a threat. Adversaries can

ADVERSARY HEALTH BY GAME MODE

THREAT LEVEL	GRITTY	PULPY*	CINEMATIC: AS PULPY, PLUS . . .
Minor	No Adjustment	+ (Constitution ×2)	+5
Moderate	No Adjustment	+ (Constitution ×5)	+15
Major	No Adjustment	+ (Constitution ×10)	+30
Dire	No Adjustment	+ (Constitution ×14)	+30/+45**
Legendary	No Adjustment	+ (Constitution ×18)	+30/+60**

*Add at least the multiplier ×1, even for Constitution scores of 0 or less. **The number after the slash applies to certain non-human adversaries.

ADVERSARY THREAT LEVEL

THREAT LEVEL	PC LEVEL RANGE
Minor	Levels 1–4
Moderate	Levels 5–8
Major	Levels 9–12
Dire	Levels 13–17
Legendary	Levels 18–20

tip the scales of their natural disadvantages with planning, circumstances, or luck, just as protagonists can.

To help a GM find the most suitable adversary for the players' party, each adversary receives a threat level ranging from Minor all the way to Legendary. The **Adversary Threat Level** table tells you the typical player character level required for an adversary of a given threat level to present a mid-range to tough combat challenge, or general foil in a story. The threat level below that rank would be an easy challenge; the threat level above it is especially dangerous, and more suited for major enemies.

Threat is a general indicator of danger, but you can always customize them to the situation at hand. A soldier is an intimidating threat in the best of situations—they're trained, fit, and armed to the teeth. Consider how their threat level might change if they suffered a broken leg, had only one bullet for their rifle, or lacked commands from HQ.

Additionally, PC preparedness, weapons, and skills may affect an antagonist's threat level. A physically impressive character might beat down a threat in a street fight, while a reclusive lab technician takes a beating, instead. The different PCs see the opposing thug as a threat at various levels. Conversely, the scientist may outfox a poisoner attacking the city, while his street fighting chum can do little more than stand watch. GMs should be aware of the characters' individual capabilities and any significant powers or equipment that might make them more or less effective against a particular adversary.

Note that threats at the lower range of the threat level are more likely to appear in small groups—as many might appear as the party of heroes, even—while threats at the top of the range appear singly, alongside an inferior or two or, rarely, in pairs.

ADJUSTING ADVERSARIES BY GAME MODE

The game statistics for adversaries in this chapter list different ratings based on game mode when necessary, separated by

a slash, in the following order: **Gritty/Pulpy/Cinematic**. When designing your own adversaries, devise the stat block for a Gritty adversary, then apply the following adjustments.

HEALTH BY MODE

Apply the following changes to Health by game mode. This has already been done for you for the adversary game statistics in this chapter, so the table applies to new individuals you design.

GRITTY MODE: As noted previously, simply use the listed Health in Gritty games.

PULPY MODE: Add the listed Constitution multiplier to Health. If the NPC's Constitution is 0 or less, add the multiplier × 1. For example, you would add 14 Health to a Dire threat with a Constitution of 0, and 28 Health to a Dire threat with a Constitution of 2.

CINEMATIC MODE: Add the amount listed for Pulpy characters, and the flat amount of Health listed for the threat level. Note that at Dire and Legendary ranks, two numbers are listed. The number after the slash is reserved for inhuman creatures whose Health doesn't increase more slowly after reaching an apex of ability, as human Health scores do in Cinematic games.

OTHER GAME MODE ADJUSTMENTS

There are a couple of other effects game mode can have.

- **DAMAGE:** Remember that when Pulpy or Cinematic modes are in play, attacks inflict +2 damage.
- **DEFENSE AND TOUGHNESS:** In Pulpy mode, add +1 to Defense or Toughness for each threat level above Minor. In Cinematic mode, add +1 to Defense and Toughness for each threat level above Minor.
- **RULES ADJUSTMENTS:** Finally, alter the effects of Toughness as described in **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**, and apply other game systems for that mode (such as for stunts and healing).

BEEFING UP ADVERSARIES

You may wish to make adversaries or other NPCs tougher or more competent than they are in the profiles listed in this chapter. To make them more potent, you can change anything you like, but we recommend the following adjustments. Note that the Health increases usually come into play only in Pulpy

or Cinematic games when human adversaries are involved, but you should provide bonus Health and recalculate Toughness (as well as Defense) based on any ability score increases. These changes are additions to the game statistics block of the basic adversary.

ELITE

To make an adversary who is a little tougher than average, add 1 to any three abilities, and add two focuses. You can also make the NPC a Novice in a new talent or add a degree to an existing one. You may also wish to increase the Toughness or Defense of combatants by 1.

PULPY MODE: In addition to the above, increase Health by Constitution $\times$ 2 (minimum 2).

CINEMATIC MODE: In addition to benefits listed for all elites, increase Health by (Constitution $\times$ 2, minimum 2) +3 for Cinematic mode.

HEROIC

To make an adversary who is very tough indeed, add 2 to any two abilities, add 1 to any three other abilities, and add four Focuses. Also, increase Toughness and Defense by 1. You can also make the NPC an apprentice in two new talents or add two degrees to existing ones. This usually bumps an adversary firmly into the next threat level.

PULPY MODE: In addition to the above, increase Health by Constitution $\times$ 4 (minimum 4).

CINEMATIC MODE: In addition to benefits listed for all heroic types, increase Health by (Constitution $\times$ 4, minimum 4) +10 for Cinematic mode.

EPIC

To make an adversary who is extremely potent, add 3 to one ability, 2 to any two other abilities, and 1 to any three others. Add five focuses. You can also add three degrees to new or existing talents. For combatants, additional equipment and training increases Toughness and Defense by 2. This either raises an adversary to the peak of the next threat level or makes them strong enough to be counted as two threat levels above the standard type.

PULPY MODE: In addition to the above, increase Health by Constitution $\times$ 6 (minimum 6).

CINEMATIC MODE: In addition to benefits listed for all epic types, increase Health by (Constitution $\times$ 6, minimum 6) +15.

NPCS, SOCIAL ACTIONS, & OTHER GAME TRAITS

Adversaries and other NPCs with a social focus raise the question of their effectiveness. Use their social abilities as a benchmark for how they interact with other NPCs. In most cases, rolling a test isn't necessary; look at the relevant statistics and ongoing story, then predict how it will resolve. When it comes to performing social actions against PCs, see CHAPTER 2: BASIC

RULES for a discussion on how players can take NPC social actions as advice to guide play, and CHAPTER 10: REWARDS on how to make it worth players' while to adhere to this advice.

Adversaries generally don't have Resources scores, but have wealth described in rough, real-world terms. They can acquire anything that seems reasonable for their wealth, or use a listed stunt or ability to acquire what they want. Use this guideline for other game rules when it wouldn't make play better to use them. A simple description is enough. If you need specific rules, you can add them on the fly.

OTHER NPCs

Some supporting characters the protagonists encounter will be friendly, passive, or simple utility players not looking for a fight. These NPCs do not require full stat blocks, as they appear only for a handful of roleplaying encounters. The following abbreviated stat block illustrates a basic NPC's abilities and focuses, which should be sufficient for a background character who receives occasional interaction. The GM can easily incorporate these stats into a full stat block, should the NPC rise to prominence later.

The example NPC is a doped-up athlete who cheats his way to victory. He might reluctantly cross one of the PCs, or he might be an informant, giving PCs information on his drug connections.

DOPED-UP ATHLETE

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

ACCURACY 1 (BOWS), COMMUNICATION 2 (LEADERSHIP),
CONSTITUTION 3 (RUNNING, STAMINA), DEXTERITY 2,
FIGHTING 1, INTELLIGENCE 0, PERCEPTION 1,
STRENGTH 2 (INTIMIDATION), WILLPOWER 0

NON-COMBATANTS

Some NPCs are non-combatants: characters who statistically have little way of fighting back or out-thinking the PCs. They will make every effort to avoid combative situations, and if forced, will lose against the protagonists without dice rolls required, unless the GM believes something tilts the scales in the NPCs' favor. In such a case, the abbreviated NPC stat block is useable. Average non-combatants have 10 Health and a rating of 0 in most other abilities.

Many non-combatants are capable in their chosen fields, but lack the mindset for combat. This is true even if their jobs require the kind of strength and coordination which might help in violent or stressful situations. Outside of combat, they tend to fail in stressful or dramatic situations. Therefore, the GM can decide that anyone, from a casual weightlifter to a twelve year-old kid, can be treated as a non-combatant. The GM determines their competence at routine tasks, but when it comes to anything demanding a test or attack roll, they usually perform poorly.

Note that non-combatants are different from extras. Extras might be fearless combatants and even skilled, but are ultimately trivial challenges, able to be knocked out with a single good shot. See CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES for the rules for extras.



ACTION ADVERSARIES

Some adversaries wish to disable, obstruct, or kill the PCs. The type of adversary who would use her fists instead of the law, or a gun instead of a boardroom buyout, is an action adversary. While security guards, soldiers, and mutants are capable of communication, independent thought, and even reason, they excel in the field of violence. Some of these NPCs are low-threat hired muscle, while others fit the bill of a boss battle. The GM should adjust any traits they see fit for the purposes of the scenario.

ASSASSIN

AKA: Bounty Hunter, Button Man, Hitman

A skilled assassin is a valued commodity in organized crime, and a deniable asset to secret agencies around the world. Assassins do the job nobody else is prepared to undertake,

ASSASSIN										
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)										
2	ACCURACY (PISTOLS)									
1	COMMUNICATION									
2	CONSTITUTION (TOLERANCE)									
3	DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS, STEALTH)									
2	FIGHTING (LIGHT BLADES, FLEXIBLE)									
1	INTELLIGENCE (CHEMISTRY)									
2	PERCEPTION (TRACKING)									
2	STRENGTH									
0	WILLPOWER									
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS			
13	22	32	47	13	14	14	2I/4B+2	+2	+3	
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*						
DAGGER		+4		1D6+3						
LIGHT CHAIN		+4		1D6+2						
SA HANDGUN		+4		2D6+2						

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Called Shot, Lethal Blow, Poisonous Strike (2 SP)

STUNT - POISONOUS STRIKE: The assassin can inject poison with a dagger or in unarmed combat (by using a hidden syringe) as a special stunt costing 2 SP. The poison slows and partially paralyzes the victim, who suffers a -3 penalty to Dexterity, Fighting, and Accuracy until the end of the encounter or until they receive treatment.

TALENTS: Pinpoint Attack (Expert), Quick Reflexes (Expert)

EQUIPMENT: Bullet-Resistant Cloth Armor, Dagger, Garotte (Light Chain), SA Handgun

THREAT: MODERATE

cutting through needless diplomacy, or circumventing lengthy wars by delivering a swift shot to the back of the opposition's head. Assassins tend to develop routines, as most people do with their work. These can appear as preferred weapons or styles of murder, or even calling cards to signal their presence. While such flamboyant assassins are rare, enough exist within the underworld to create a thriving market of hired killers, each attempting to outperform the other.

BRAINWASHED KILLER

AKA: Fanatic, Mental Slave, Zombie

Cults and governments alike produce brainwashed killers, determined to kill as many people as possible before meeting their deaths in hails of gunfire or climactic explosions. Unlike assassins, organizations do not create brainwashed killers for repeat use. Their masters want the short-term benefit of a homicidal maniac focused purely on destruction. If the killer dies, then another will be lined up for a future job. Brainwashed killers rarely have knowledge of their masters' schemes, or a willingness to divulge

BRAINWASHED KILLER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
1	ACCURACY								
-1	COMMUNICATION								
2	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)								
1	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)								
4	FIGHTING (BRAWLING, GRAPPLING, SHORT HAFTED)								
-1	INTELLIGENCE								
2	PERCEPTION								
2	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)								
0	WILLPOWER (MORALE)								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	17	21	26	11	11	11	4I/0B+2	+2	+2
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
HAMMER		+6		1d6+2					
DAGGER		+4		1d6+3					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Whatever's Handy
RISE AGAIN: If dropped to 0 Health, unless fatally injured by an additional blow, a surge of adrenalin and the killer's twisted focus allows them to recover 1d6 Health after appearing dead for 1d6 rounds. (Examination by a character with the Medicine focus reveals faint signs of life.) The killer gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls as well. If dropped to 0 Health again or unable to find medical help within a few minutes, the killer drops again, dispatched for good.
TALENTS: Observation (Novice)
EQUIPMENT: Dagger, Hammer, Heavy Leathers

THREAT: MINOR

as much as their own name before they detonate the bomb strapped to their chest.

The brainwashed killer's game statistics can also be used as the basis for a slasher-style horror villain, but those adversaries are usually significantly stronger. Use the rules for **Beefing Up Adversaries** to reflect this.

CAT BURGLAR

AKA: Raiders, Robbers, Safe-Crackers, Second-Story Men

Accustomed to stealth over violence, the cat burglar's reputation grows based on skill, goods stolen, and time spent free from imprisonment. It does not serve a cat burglar to get into fights, so when confronted the burglar will either flee, or use a disabling device such as a stun gun or smoke grenade to cover their activities. Cat burglars may compete, sharing tales of daring heists while attempting to steal more valuable, better-protected things than their peers. A cat burglar's weakness is their ego. They treat theft as an art and can't help but add their own signature flourishes to the crime scene. Some of them are also strongly focused on one kind of score, such as paintings in a certain style. These habits can help dogged

CAT BURGLAR									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
1	ACCURACY								
1	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION)								
2	CONSTITUTION (PROPELLING, RUNNING)								
4	DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS, SLEIGHT OF HAND, STEALTH)								
1	FIGHTING								
0	INTELLIGENCE								
2	PERCEPTION (HEARING)								
1	STRENGTH								
0	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
14	12	16	21	14	14	14	0I/0B+2	+2	+2
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
STUN GUN		+1		1d6					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Disarm, It Wasn't Me, Take Cover
CALLING CARD: By sticking to a specific routine, the cat burglar benefits from a +2 bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) and Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) tests, but leaves signature clues behind (including, sometimes, an actual calling card to mock security), granting investigators a +2 bonus to one or more focuses (selected by the GM) used to track them down.
TALENTS: Burglary (Master), Misdirection (Expert), Scouting (Novice)
EQUIPMENT: Burglar's Kit, Disguise Kit, Stun Gun

THREAT: MINOR

CYBORG									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
3	ACCURACY (ASSAULT RIFLES, PISTOLS, SHOTGUNS)								
0	COMMUNICATION								
5	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING, STAMINA, TOLERANCE)								
2	DEXTERITY								
5	FIGHTING (BRAWLING)								
1	INTELLIGENCE								
3	PERCEPTION (HEARING, SEEING, TRACKING)								
5	STRENGTH (CLIMBING, INTIMIDATION, MIGHT)								
2	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	40	110	155	12	13	15	5I/5B+5	+7	+8
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
BRAWLING STRIKE		+7		1d3+5					
SA HANDGUN		+5		2d6+2					
COMBAT SHOTGUN		+5		2d6+5					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Armor Crush, Brutal Strike, High Tech Hustle, Jury Rig, Lethal Blow, Strafe

SENSORY ENHANCEMENT: The cyborg's implants add +1 to Perception (Hearing) and Perception (Seeing) tests, and function as night vision goggles and sonar, eliminating penalties for darkness.

MECHANICAL TOUGHNESS: The cyborg has innate armor (already calculated; Armor Rating stacks with worn armor) and additional Health.

TALENTS: Observation (Master), Overwhelm (Master)

EQUIPMENT: Combat Shotgun, Fake ID, SA Handgun

THREAT: DIRE

investigators find them, but much of the time, cat burglars relish the chase as well as the theft itself.

CYBORG

AKA: Replicant, Synth, Test Subject 590

Cyborgs were once a feature of science fiction, but in some *Modern AGE* games, they are produced by secret labs or for elite forces. Some emerge from factories and look human, but every part is synthetic, and programmed for various tasks. In other cases, scientists get their hands on injured people and other experimental subjects, volunteers or otherwise. These cyborgs have body parts replaced with mechanical equivalents. Most cyborgs are designed to serve their creators or sponsors fearlessly, but some break programming to survive on their own, or fight their corrupt creators. In 18th- and 19th-century games, a cyborg might be a "creature" made of stitched together flesh, powered by captured lightning and alchemy. This may prompt an adjustment to their game statistics, starting with equipment.

DEMOLITIONS EXPERT									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
2	ACCURACY (GRENADES, SMGs)								
0	COMMUNICATION								
2	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)								
2	DEXTERITY (SABOTAGE)								
1	FIGHTING								
4	INTELLIGENCE (CHEMISTRY, ELECTRONICS, ENGINEERING, EXPLOSIVES, TACTICS)								
2	PERCEPTION								
1	STRENGTH								
3	WILLPOWER (COURAGE, SELF-DISCIPLINE)								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	22	32	47	12	13	13	6I/6B+2	+2	+3
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
BLAST GRENADE		+4		2d6+2					
FRAGMENTATION GRENADE		+4		3d6+2					
INCENDIARY GRENADE		+4		3d6+2					
PDW		+4		2d6+3					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Collateral Damage, Fuel Line, Maim, Taunt

TALENTS: Expertise (Defusing) (Expert), Improvisation (Expert)

EQUIPMENT: Assortment of Explosive Devices, Bomb Disposal Kit, Bomb-blast Suit

THREAT: MODERATE

DEMOLITIONS EXPERT

AKA: Bomber, Bomb Disposal Expert, EOD Technician

Others regard the demolitions expert as an individual without fear, or at the least without a sense of self-preservation. It takes a special kind of person to want to construct or dispose of complex explosive devices. Unlike many other professions, a simple slip-up can result in maiming or death. Demolitions experts are invaluable for both offensive and defensive operations, though the statistics above can also represent an obsessive amateur or terrorist who threatens innocent lives.

GETAWAY DRIVER

AKA: Carjacker, Street Racer, Wheelman

Getaway drivers form a valuable part of any robbery or assault crew. Commonly thought of as sitting edgily behind the steering wheel of a fast, fancy car, many getaway drivers choose innocuous vehicles with which they are particularly familiar, and might even surprise pursuers with their skills while operating a cumbersome van or truck. Some getaway drivers pursue their lifestyles for the thrill of it, deriving

HOOLIGAN									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
1	ACCURACY								
0	COMMUNICATION								
2	CONSTITUTION								
2	DEXTERITY								
3	FIGHTING (BRAWLING, FLEXIBLE, SHORT HAFTED)								
-1	INTELLIGENCE								
0	PERCEPTION								
2	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)								
1	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	12	16	21	12	12	12	4I/0B+2	+2	+2
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
BASEBALL BAT		+5		1d6+4					
LIGHT CHAIN		+5		1d6+2					
KNUCKLE DUSTERS		+5		1d3+3					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES									
FAVORED STUNTS: Adrenaline Rush, Whatever's Handy									
TALENTS: Hurling Weapon Style (Novice), Party Animal (Novice)									
EQUIPMENT: Baseball Bat, Bike Chain, Football Scarf, Heavy Leather Jacket, Knuckle Dusters									

THREAT: MINOR

pleasure from breaking the speed limit, the stench of burned rubber, and the rush of tearing down the freeway. Others restrict their daredevil driving skills to the job at hand.

GUARD DOG

AKA: Fido, K-9

Guard dogs are the bane of any unwelcome visitor, from door-to-door vendors to burglars. Though some dogs have a worse bark than bite, many guard dogs come from large breeds, traditionally selected for the task. Skilled individuals can placate a guard dog, no matter how vicious it was trained to act, but feral dogs are often more difficult to deal with.

HOOLIGAN

AKA: Bro, Drunk, Yobbo

Holding several pints of lager in the tank, and raring for a brawl with anyone who should so much as look at them the wrong way, the hooligan is a destructive force of nature. Unlikely to enter the membership of a criminal gang or anything so formal, a hooligan's drunkenness and desire to spar plays out more often in pubs, dark streets, and the stands of a sports match. The hooligan is having a good time, and anyone who disagrees needs their mind changed with his fists.

GETAWAY DRIVER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
0	ACCURACY								
1	COMMUNICATION								
2	CONSTITUTION (PROPELLING)								
3	DEXTERITY (CRAFTING, DRIVING, INITIATIVE)								
0	FIGHTING								
1	INTELLIGENCE								
2	PERCEPTION (SEEING)								
1	STRENGTH								
1	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	12	16	21	13	13	13	0I/0B+2	+2	+2
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
SA HANDGUN		+0		2d6+2					

* Add +2 to damage in Pulpy and Cinematic modes.

SPECIAL QUALITIES									
FAVORED STUNTS: Collateral Damage, Dent, Jury Rig									
TALENTS: Fast Fury (Expert), Speed Demon (Expert)									
EQUIPMENT: Balaclava, Innocuous Vehicle, SA Handgun									

THREAT: MINOR

GUARD DOG									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
-2	ACCURACY								
0	COMMUNICATION								
2	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)								
2	DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)								
2	FIGHTING (BITE)								
-2	INTELLIGENCE								
2	PERCEPTION								
2	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)								
1	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	12	16	21	12	12	12	0I/0B+2	+2	+2
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
BITE		+4		1d6+2					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES									
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FAVORED STUNTS: Knock Prone, Latch On (3 SP)

STUNT - LATCH ON: The dog sinks its teeth into the target and won't let go. The target can't move without suffering bite damage (1d6+2) unless they choose to drop prone. This lasts until the dog's next major action.

TALENTS: Observation (Novice), Scouting (Novice)

THREAT: MINOR

MUTANT

AKA: Aberration, the Military’s Biggest Mistake, Test Subject 666

Not all experiments go as planned. Sometimes a lab’s output melts on the slab, or dies shortly after the scientists remove the tube and allow the creature freedom to think. Other times, a mutant creation emerges, more aggressive and dangerous than anyone anticipates. Mutants occasionally emerge naturally due to unusual genetic sequencing, but more appear after scientific experiments go awry. Mutants are not prone to reason, possessing an innate ferocity toward the world and their creators. Many display unusual abilities scientists struggle to replicate in controlled circumstances.

POLICE DETECTIVE

AKA: Burnout, Gumshoe, Undercover

In the biggest cities, it’s nearly impossible to tell the dirty cops from the clean ones. Plainclothes cops confuse matters, as they attempt to blend in and “empathize” with the people they want to interview or interrogate. Some will turn the other way if given a bribe. They say once the cop comes out

MUTANT										
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)										
0		ACCURACY								
0		COMMUNICATION								
5		CONSTITUTION (RUNNING, STAMINA, SWIMMING)								
4		DEXTERITY (STEALTH)								
5		FIGHTING (BITE, BRAWLING, CLAW)								
2		INTELLIGENCE (BIOLOGY)								
3		PERCEPTION (HEARING, SMELLING, TRACKING)								
4		STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION, MIGHT)								
2		WILLPOWER								
SPEED		HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
24	30	100	145	14	16	17	6I/0B+5	+6	+8	
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL					DAMAGE*			
TALONS		+7					1D6+4			
* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.										
SPECIAL QUALITIES										

FAVORED STUNTS: Instant Kill, Maim, Shock and Awe
MUTATIONS: This example mutant can run twice as fast as a human (already calculated in Speed), and has chameleon-like skin providing a +2 bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) checks if they have 1 round to adapt to their environment. Other mutants may have different abilities.
TALENTS: Improvisation (Novice), Living on the Fringe (Master), Overwhelm (Master)
EQUIPMENT: Fragmented Metal Armor (Mail), Rusty Knives

THREAT: DIRE

of the uniform, the protective layer guarding them from the reality of crime is gone for good. It certainly seems to be the case that detectives, who waded deepest into the festering mire of urban crime, come out the dirtiest.

POLICE OFFICER

AKA: Cop, Five-0, LEO, Uniform

In many cities, a uniform isn’t enough to inspire confidence in a beleaguered populace. Victims cannot trust the police to take a crime seriously, because sometimes the police allowed the crime to occur. Clean uniformed cops struggle to keep their chins above water as the city runs with filth. Dirty uniformed cops may be out-and-out criminals, taking a cut from a gang, selling drugs on the side, or leaking evidence from the lockup. Others look the other way out of fear, or reveal information to the newspapers to get the truth of the city’s corruption out into the open.

SECURITY GUARD

AKA: Bodyguards, Doormen, Heavies

The least threatening security guard is the retiree just looking to earn a steady wage. The guard doesn’t know anyone who works in the offices beyond superficial greetings, or what their industry is. They just work for the money. The most threatening version is the grizzled ex-cop or soldier, hired for a reputation of loyalty, violence, and willingness to take a bullet for their employers. Security guards protect buildings, people, or

POLICE DETECTIVE											
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)											
2			ACCURACY (PISTOLS)								
3			COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, INVESTIGATION)								
1			CONSTITUTION								
2			DEXTERITY								
2			FIGHTING (BRAWLING)								
1			INTELLIGENCE (LAW)								
1			PERCEPTION								
0			STRENGTH								
-1			WILLPOWER								
SPEED		HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS			
12		11	13	18	12	12	12	0I/0B+1	+1	+1	
WEAPON				ATTACK ROLL				DAMAGE*			
SA HANDGUN				+4				2D6+1			
* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.											
SPECIAL QUALITIES											

FAVORED STUNTS: Bad Form, Good Cop Bad Cop, Take Cover
TALENTS: Contacts (Expert), Intrigue (Novice)
EQUIPMENT: Badge and ID, Cigarettes, Notepad and Pen, SA Handgun,

THREAT: MINOR



POLICE OFFICER

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY (PISTOLS)
2	COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION)
1	CONSTITUTION
2	DEXTERITY (DRIVING)
2	FIGHTING (BRAWLING)
1	INTELLIGENCE (LAW)
1	PERCEPTION
0	STRENGTH
0	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	11	13	18	12	12	12	2I/4B+1	+1	+1

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
STUN GUN	+4	1d6
SA HANDGUN	+4	2d6+1

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Benefit of the Doubt, Good Cop Bad Cop, Short Burst

TALENTS: Contacts (Novice), Intrigue (Novice)

EQUIPMENT: Badge and ID, Bullet-Resistant Cloth Body Armor, SA Handgun, Stun Gun

THREAT: MINOR

SECURITY GUARD

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

2	ACCURACY (PISTOLS)
2	COMMUNICATION (INVESTIGATION)
1	CONSTITUTION
1	DEXTERITY
2	FIGHTING (BRAWLING, GRAPPLING)
0	INTELLIGENCE
1	PERCEPTION
2	STRENGTH
1	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	11	13	18	11	11	11	0I/0B+1	+1	+1

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
SA HANDGUN	+4	2d6+3
STUN GUN	+4	1d6
GRAPPLING GRIP	+4	1d3+2

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Guardian Angel, Skirmish

TALENTS: Intrigue (Novice), Tactical Awareness (Novice)

EQUIPMENT: Cellphone, SA Handgun, Stun Gun, Uniform

THREAT: MINOR

valuables. The level to which they're armed depends on their locality, and the legality of firearms in their country.

SNIPER

AKA: Hunter, Lone Gunman, Marksman

Others in the military profession regard the sniper with a combination of respect and distaste. It takes a great deal of skill to be a proficient sniper, yet their distance from the battlefield, plus the way their targets have no way of knowing death is looming, make some soldiers question the morality of the role. Not all snipers gain their skill through formal military service. Some are proficient hunters, now driven to turn their sights on human targets. Others belong to guerilla groups. Police sharpshooters would also qualify, though in such case, substitute the Perception (Tracking) focus for Intelligence (Tactics).

In truth, a sniper is as human as any other gunman, except they're forced to look at the faces of their victims through the scopes. Some snipers are troubled by nightmares, but others can either apply professional detachment, take refuge in the belief they're doing the right thing, or never cared much about human life in the first place. Callous snipers make proficient assassins and mercenaries. Some excel with weapons beyond the archetypal rifle. The sniper armed with a bow or musket is appropriate for earlier historical periods, though modern masters of such weapons exist in the 21st Century. Adjust their focuses accordingly. Whatever the weapon, snipers rarely miss a target.

SNIPER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
4		ACCURACY (LONGARMS, PISTOLS)							
1		COMMUNICATION							
2		CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)							
3		DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE, STEALTH)							
2		FIGHTING							
1		INTELLIGENCE							
4		PERCEPTION (SEEING, TRACKING)							
2		STRENGTH							
1		WILLPOWER (MORALE)							
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	22	32	37	13	14	14	2I/4B+2	+2	+3
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
SA HANDGUN		+6		2D6+4					
SNIPER RIFLE		+6		2D6+6					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Called Shot, Overwatch, Efficient Gunner, Instant Kill, Sniper's Perch, Take Cover

TALENTS: Rifle Style (Master), Tactical Awareness (Expert)

EQUIPMENT: Bullet-Resistant Cloth Body Armor, Ghillie Suit, Rank and Unit Insignia, SA Handgun, Sniper Rifle, Sniping Apparatus

THREAT: MODERATE

SOLDIER

AKA: Hired Guns, Honor Guards, Warriors

Most soldiers belong to armies or small military detachments, responding to the commands of a government or militia leader. Other soldiers operate independently, acting as hired killers or tacticians for private companies. The soldier in a standing army has access to the resources provided to any of his peers in the same unit. The soldier of fortune has less institutional protection, relying on wits and training instead of swift requests for more troops or ammunition. One type of soldier works with legitimacy, the other does not, and that latter soldier may be willing to perform tasks international conventions prohibit.

The game statistics below work for infantry serving in the latter half of the twentieth and the twenty-first century. Non-infantry will have an additional focus representing an occupational specialty, an additional point in the ability it uses, and one or two talent ranks, replacing Tactical Awareness, which suit the occupation. Non-infantry specialists will have 1 less point in Accuracy or Constitution to reflect their alternative training focus. Soldiers from earlier periods will lack the Assault Rifles focus, and those from the early nineteenth century will only have the Accuracy (Black Powder Weapons) focus. These earlier soldiers usually have various Fighting

SOLDIER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
3		ACCURACY (ASSAULT RIFLES, LONGARMS, PISTOLS)							
2		COMMUNICATION							
3		CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)							
2		DEXTERITY							
2		FIGHTING (BRAWLING)							
1		INTELLIGENCE							
1		PERCEPTION (HEARING)							
2		STRENGTH							
2		WILLPOWER (COURAGE, MORALE)							
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	23	38	53	12	12	13	2I/4B+3	+4	+4
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
SA HANDGUN		+5		2D6+1					
AUTOMATIC RIFLE		+5		2D6+4					
FRAGMENTATION GRENADE		+3		3D6+3					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Overwatch, Group Tactics, Short Burst, Skirmish, Strafe, Take Cover

TALENTS: Command (Novice), Rifle Style (Expert), Tactical Awareness (Expert)

EQUIPMENT: Automatic Rifle, Bullet-Resistant Cloth Body Armor, Fragmentation Grenades, Military Gear, Rank and Unit Insignia, SA Handgun

THREAT: MODERATE

focuses instead, as they are used to fighting with swords, bayonets, and other hand-to-hand weapons.

SPEC OPS

AKA: Elite Ops, Paratrooper, Special Forces

To define an individual in spec ops is to miss the point of spec ops. An operative with these skills could be anything from an assassin to a spy to an agent designated with sabotaging an entire government or defusing a potentially nuclear situation. They are anonymous, highly proficient, and deadly. These soldiers emerge from the ranks of the Navy SEALs, French Foreign Legion, SAS, and Spetsnaz. Working in tight units with critical objectives, spec ops members move swiftly, efficiently, and unless stated in the briefing, take no prisoners. Elite soldiers existed in earlier periods too. To represent

SPEC OPS									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
4	ACCURACY (ASSAULT RIFLES, GRENADES, LONGARMS, PISTOLS, SHOTGUNS)								
2	COMMUNICATION (DISGUISE)								
3	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING, STAMINA, SWIMMING)								
3	DEXTERITY (DRIVING, INITIATIVE, SABOTAGE)								
3	FIGHTING (BRAWLING, LIGHT BLADES)								
2	INTELLIGENCE (TACTICS)								
2	PERCEPTION (SEEING)								
3	STRENGTH (CLIMBING)								
3	WILLPOWER (COURAGE, MORALE)								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	28	58	88	13	14	15	4I/6B+3	+4	+5
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
SA HANDGUN		+6		2D6+3					
AUTOMATIC RIFLE		+6		2D6+6					
BLAST GRENADE		+6		1D6+3					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Blockade, Overwatch, Group Tactics, Long Burst, Short Burst, Skirmish,

AMMO DISCIPLINE: The spec ops soldier reloads all firearms except Black Powder weapons as a free action.

UNSHAKEABLE: Between combat experience and SERE training (or the equivalent) to resist torture and hardship, the spec ops soldier never needs to make Morale tests to stand and fight unless the enemy has bizarre or supernatural characteristics. Tests to influence or extract information from this NPC with torture or threats of physical harm suffer a -2 penalty.

TALENTS: Command (Expert), Improvisation (Expert), Linguistics (Novice), Tactical Awareness (Master)

EQUIPMENT: Automatic Rifle, Ballistic Plate Body Armor, Blast Grenades, Disguise Kit, Map, SA Handgun, Tactical Gear

THREAT: MAJOR

Hessian Jägers or other early spec ops, adjust game statistics using the guidelines listed for soldiers, previously. Instead of the Ammo Discipline ability, black powder weapon using elites will have talents related to close combat.

SURVIVALIST

AKA: Frontiersman, Hunter, Outlander

Survivalists come in three varieties. Hobby survivalists are just a bit more serious than campers. They spend extended periods in harsh climates, but most go back to town in the end. Some choose to leave behind urban comfort to survive using primitive tools, but just as many bring special food, clothes, and gear to enjoy a bit of civilized luxury in the wild. More serious survivalists keep permanent compounds stocked some distance from civilization. If they think a major catastrophe's about to happen, that's where they'll go, to hole up with all the gear and guns they need to ride out the apocalypse. The most disciplined go through practice runs regularly to enhance their survival skills. Finally, some choose to live a well-prepared off-grid lifestyle full time. They come to town as little as they can manage to stock up on odds and ends, but would rather earn their meals with planting,

SURVIVALIST									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
3	ACCURACY (BOWS, LONGARMS)								
1	COMMUNICATION								
3	CONSTITUTION (STAMINA)								
2	DEXTERITY								
2	FIGHTING (LIGHT BLADES)								
2	INTELLIGENCE								
2	PERCEPTION (TRACKING)								
1	STRENGTH								
1	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	18	33	48	12	12	13	0I/0B+3	+4	+4
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
CROSSBOW		+5		2D6+3					
CARBINE		+5		2D6+4					
DAGGER		+4		1D6+2					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Called Shot, Compound's Ready (2 SP), Efficient Gunner, Skirmish

STUNT - COMPOUND'S READY: If confronted in their cabin or established shelter, the survivalist can spend 2 SP to pick up a useful item, including a weapon, as a free action.

TALENTS: Expertise (Trapping) (Expert), Living on the Fringe (Expert), Theory and Practice (Novice)

EQUIPMENT: Crossbow, Bolts, Dagger, Hunting Rifle (Carbine), Survival Gear

THREAT: MODERATE

hunting, and gathering as much as possible. Some of them believe the modern world is too corrupt to live in, while others choose a hermit's life to fight off personal demons—or hide from dogged enemies. Some survivalists live in groups, in walled compounds or distant cabins. Hardcore survivalists don't like visitors, and in groups, might reinforce each other's animosity toward mainstream society. Singly or in isolated communities, survivalists mainly want the freedom to live as they wish, but their privacy inspires questions. What are they doing out there?

VIGILANTE

AKA: "Hero," Patriot, Street Fighter

Vigilantes occupy a strange space as adversaries. Often, they will pursue the same causes as PCs striving to operate within the law, or with the permission of a higher authority. The difference comes with the willingness to succeed at any objective no matter the cost. Vigilantes will operate outside the confines of petty morality if they believe in their cause strongly enough. They normally do, as it takes a level of fanaticism to throw off society's strictures. As allies, vigilantes are temporary at best. If they identify the protagonists as opposing their aims, vigilantes quickly dub them their new enemies.

VIGILANTE									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
3	ACCURACY (PISTOLS, SHOTGUNS, SMGs)								
1	COMMUNICATION (DISGUISE)								
1	CONSTITUTION								
2	DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)								
3	FIGHTING (BRAWLING, GRAPPLING, SHORT HAFTED, LIGHT BLADES)								
0	INTELLIGENCE								
1	PERCEPTION								
2	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)								
2	WILLPOWER (COURAGE)								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	16	21	36	12	13	13	4I/6B+1	+1	+2
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*					
REVOLVER	+5			2d6+1					
COMBAT SHOTGUN	+5			2d6+3					
BASEBALL BAT	+5			1d6+4					
UNARMED	+5			1d3+2					
* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.									
SPECIAL QUALITIES									
FAVORED STUNTS: Adrenaline Rush, Hostage, Knock Prone									
TALENTS: Contacts (Novice), Grappling Style (Expert)									
EQUIPMENT: Ballistic Plate Body Armor, Baseball Bat, Combat Shotgun, Disguise Kit, Revolver, Utility Belt									
THREAT: MODERATE									

EXPLORATION ADVERSARIES

Some of these NPCs can participate effectively in action or social encounters, but they really shine when they oppose the heroes in exploration encounters, such as investigations or infiltrations. The threat level of an exploration adversary indicates how formidable an opponent it is in that arena. A major exploration threat may be a pathetic combatant, but brilliant when it comes to getting away with crimes.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AKA: Android, Hologram, Robot

An artificial intelligence may be someone's sapient creation, the digitized mind of a human being, an alien computer virus, or similar. If it acquires a body somehow, or has one to begin with, give it physical statistics as well. Androids and robots usually have superhuman reflexes, defenses, and strength, while a "solid light" body may be immune to normal physical damage entirely and have the ability to change its appearance

BLACK HAT HACKER										
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)										
1		ACCURACY								
1		COMMUNICATION								
0		CONSTITUTION								
1		DEXTERITY (SABOTAGE)								
-1		FIGHTING								
4		INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS, CRYPTOGRAPHY, SECURITY)								
2		PERCEPTION								
0		STRENGTH								
2		WILLPOWER								
SPEED		HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	10	12	17	11	11	11	0I/0B+0	+0	+0	
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*					
SA HANDGUN		+1			2D6+2					
* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.										
SPECIAL QUALITIES										
FAVORED STUNTS: Cover Your Tracks, Just a Shadow, Malware (1+ SP), Speed Demon										
STUNT - MALWARE: For 1+ SP, the hacker can infect a computer, mobile device, or network with a virus that imposes a penalty to all tests using the infected system equal to SP spent, until someone else repairs the damage; attempts to do so suffer the same penalty.										
TALENTS: Expertise (Sabotage, Electronics; Novice), Hacking (Expert), Living on the Fringe (Novice)										
EQUIPMENT: Cell Phone, Flash Drives, Laptop, SA Handgun, Signal Jammer, Wireless Devices										
THREAT: MINOR										

or shape as a major action. Giving the AI a body increases its threat rating to major or even dire. The AI's Health and Toughness exist to resist electronic attacks or for any physical form it takes. In physical form, calculate Defense as for a character. Embodied AIs may have higher physical abilities

BLACK HAT HACKER

AKA: Computer Programmer, Cybercriminal

The black hat hacker exploits technology to get what they want. They are an expert in cracking security systems, stealing identities, and wreaking mayhem with infrastructure. In Cinematic games, the hacker is capable of truly ridiculous digital shenanigans, using Intelligence (Computers) tests to force you off the grid entirely or hold a government hostage through its bank accounts.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
-1		ACCURACY							
6		COMMUNICATION (EXPRESSION)							
1		CONSTITUTION							
-3		DEXTERITY							
-3		FIGHTING							
8		INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS, SECURITY)							
6		PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)							
-3		STRENGTH							
3		WILLPOWER							
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
N/A	25	30	45	N/A	N/A	N/A	5I/1B+0	+1	+1
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
N/A		N/A		N/A					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Backup (4 SP), Good Instincts, High Tech Hustle, It Wasn't Me, Speed Demon

STUNT - BACKUP: For 4 SP, the AI can replicate itself, backing up a current copy of itself somewhere secure. If the AI is destroyed, the backup takes over as the primary version.

EYES EVERYWHERE: Thanks to the prevalence of cameras and microphones in the Digital Age, the AI gains +2 to Perception rolls to spy on others, and may use the Stealth focus with Communication instead of Dexterity.

LIVING MACHINE: The AI can fully control the machinery it inhabits, including turning it on, as well as any other devices connected to it physically or via signal. It has free rein to manipulate its own connection to the internet and other signals it can produce and receive. It may make an Intelligence (Computers) test vs. the Force of any Digital Arcana power that targets it or its connected devices to avoid the effects.

RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY: The AI may perform the Speed Demon stunt for 1 SP instead of 2.

THREAT: MODERATE, OR HIGHER WITH A BODY



CRIMINAL MASTERMIND									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
3	ACCURACY								
6	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION)								
2	CONSTITUTION								
3	DEXTERITY (FORGERY)								
1	FIGHTING								
4	INTELLIGENCE								
5	PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)								
0	STRENGTH								
5	WILLPOWER (SELF-DISCIPLINE)								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	17	37	67	13	14	15	21/4B+2	+2	+3
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
SA HANDGUN		+3		2d6+5					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: All According to Plan (3 SP), Filthy Rich (3 SP), Group Tactics, It Wasn't Me, Let's Make a Deal, Risky Business, When a Plan Comes Together

STUNT - ALL ACCORDING TO PLAN: For 3 SP, the mastermind can declare that another NPC present in the scene was working for them all along. That NPC betrays the heroes or produces some information or equipment the mastermind needs right then, and counts as their ally from then on.

STUNT - FILTHY RICH: For 3 SP, the mastermind can throw their wealth around. They can immediately produce one piece of equipment, hiring, or other resource no matter how expensive it would be to own or procure, or they may gain a +2 to the next Communication test they make that relies on a bribe.

TALENTS: Burglary (Expert), Intrigue (Novice), Living on the Fringe (Novice)

MINIONS: The mastermind gains a +1 to Defense for each ally they have present in the scene (maximum +5).

RED HERRING: Whenever a character fails a test with a tangential focus to unlock leads related to the mastermind's activities (or a relevant simple investigation test), they gain false information that sends them on a wild goose chase into danger instead of simply failing.

SCOT-FREE: Whenever the characters would capture, kill, or otherwise defeat the mastermind, the GM may offer the player of the character who bested them 5 SP to use at any point in the future on a relevant test, even if the winning test didn't roll doubles, in exchange for the mastermind escaping to oppose the heroes another day. (If you're using the optional Conviction rules, the player gains 1 Conviction instead.)

EQUIPMENT: Bullet-Resistant Cloth Body Armor, Cell Phone, Fake ID, SA Handgun

THREAT: MAJOR

CRIMINAL MASTERMIND

AKA: Conspirator, Double Agent, Schemer

Mere con artists and petty gangsters have got nothing on the criminal mastermind, whose knack for cheating the system and getting away with it is unrivaled. Where lesser crooks rely on crude intimidation or small-time marks to stay in business, the mastermind could run a massive conspiracy, pull off an outrageous heist, or engage in unspeakable acts of treason—at least, until the heroes figure out how to stop them for good.

HUSTLER

AKA: Card Sharp, Gambler

The hustler wants your money, and they've honed their game-playing skills into a precision tool to get it. Whether they're a card counter, a pool shark, or just an all-around cheater, it takes a sharp eye and a healthy dose of skepticism to avoid losing big when they at the table.

INFORMATION BROKER

AKA: Black Market Broker, Bookie, Paparazzi

They've got their finger on the pulse of the black market and always know who's dealing with whom. They've mastered the art of controlling the information and the cash

HUSTLER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
0	ACCURACY								
4	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION, GAMBLING)								
1	CONSTITUTION								
1	DEXTERITY (SLEIGHT OF HAND)								
1	FIGHTING								
2	INTELLIGENCE								
2	PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)								
0	STRENGTH								
1	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	11	13	18	11	11	11	01/0B+1	+1	+1
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
UNARMED		+0		1d3+0					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Cast Out, Class Clown, Patter, With a Flourish

TALENTS: Misdirection (Novice), Party Animal (Expert)

EQUIPMENT: Cash, Loaded Dice, Playing Cards, Sports Car

THREAT: MINOR

flow. Whether you're researching a politician's background, betting on a horse race, or just trying to sneak into somewhere you shouldn't be, they're there first and already know it all. Don't worry, you'll still get everything you want—if you go through them for it and pay in large bills.

MAD SCIENTIST

AKA: Engineer, Genius, Inventor

The mad scientist puts personal achievement over ethical concerns and is out to improve themselves, technology, or some other field of endeavor beyond the wildest imaginations of their rivals. By any means necessary, they'll show those who laughed at them. They'll show them *all*.

Depending on the adversary's areas of expertise, they might have different focuses than those listed here, such as Medicine rather than Engineering to reflect a shady doctor type. In addition to the listed equipment, a mad scientist should have access to a variety of strange and unexpected devices or chemicals, of the GM's devising.

INFORMATION BROKER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
1	ACCURACY								
3	COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, ETIQUETTE)								
0	CONSTITUTION								
2	DEXTERITY								
0	FIGHTING								
4	INTELLIGENCE (CURRENT AFFAIRS, EVALUATION, RESEARCH)								
2	PERCEPTION								
-1	STRENGTH								
1	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	10	12	17	12	12	12	0I/0B+0	+0	+0
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*					
REVOLVER	+1			2d6+2					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Ah-ha!, Breakthrough, Let's Make a Deal

TALENTS: Burglary (Novice), Hacking (Novice), Knowledge (Expert)

INFO RACKET: The information broker has a knack for snatching resources out from under other people's noses to resell later at a higher price. They may oppose any Communication or Intelligence test relevant to finding or gaining a resource, such as information, contacts, or evidence, with Intelligence (Research) even if they aren't present. If they win, they gain the resource the heroes tried to acquire.

EQUIPMENT: Address Book, Camera, Cell Phone, Files, Flash Drives, Revolver

THREAT: MINOR

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

AKA: Detective, Gumshoe, Investigative Reporter, Spy

As a snoop-for-hire, the private investigator goes after you because they're getting paid, or because they have a vendetta and don't want to involve the law. They won't confront you directly unless they must, but they'll stalk you for days or even weeks, taking pictures and learning everything about you until they have enough dirt.

The GM can upgrade the PI in various ways. If they're a paranormal investigator, add the Occultism focus and one or two Extraordinary Talents. If they're a police detective, they'll have the Tactics focus, allies just one call for backup away who use statistics for the Police Officer (see **Action Adversaries**), and possibly a partner.

MAD SCIENTIST									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
1	ACCURACY								
-1	COMMUNICATION								
1	CONSTITUTION								
2	DEXTERITY (CRAFTING)								
-1	FIGHTING								
4	INTELLIGENCE (ENGINEERING, TINKERING, VARIOUS SCIENCES)								
1	PERCEPTION								
0	STRENGTH								
4	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	16	18	23	12	12	12	0I/0B+1	+1	+1
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*					
BLAST GRENADE	+1			2d6					
STUN GUN	+1			1d6					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Click "Share," Collateral Damage, High Tech Hustle, Whatever's Handy

TALENTS: Improvisation (Expert), Maker (Expert), Theory and Practice (Novice)

BEHOLD MY CREATION: The mad scientist can make a TN 9 Dexterity (Crafting) test as a major action to create a hazard (see **Handling Hazards** in CHAPTER 8) on the fly. Its hazard category corresponds to the result on the Stunt Die (Minor for 1, Moderate for 2, etc.); the GM determines the other details based on the invention or scientific wonder unleashed.

EYES EVERYWHERE: Thanks to their constant tinkering and rampant paranoia, the mad scientist gains +2 to Perception rolls to spy on others, and may substitute Intelligence (Tinkering) whenever the Stealth focus would be appropriate.

EQUIPMENT: Blast Grenades, Mechanic's Toolkit, Signal Jammer, Stun Gun

THREAT: MINOR

SERIAL KILLER

AKA: Obsessive Murderer, Spree Killer

The serial killer is an exploration adversary because most encounters with them involve trying to identify them and then track them down. They have combat capabilities but prefer unfair fights. Even then, they try to avoid the heroes altogether until the final showdown, in which they believe their victory is assured because they're threatening the characters' loved ones. They might also try to isolate one of the heroes to divide and conquer.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
1	ACCURACY								
3	COMMUNICATION (DISGUISE, INVESTIGATION)								
2	CONSTITUTION								
3	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)								
1	FIGHTING (BRAWLING)								
2	INTELLIGENCE (SECURITY)								
5	PERCEPTION (TRACKING)								
1	STRENGTH								
4	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	17	27	42	13	13	14	41/0B+2	+3	+3
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
SA HANDGUN		+1		2D6+5					
UNARMED (KNUCKLE DUSTER)		+3		1D3+2					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Ah-ha!, Breakthrough, Cards on the Table, Good Cop Bad Cop, Intuition, Take Cover, The Upper Hand

TALENTS: Observation (Expert), Scouting (Expert), Self-Defense Style (Novice)

STREETWISE: The PI always knows somebody who knows somebody who's seen their mark, and if they don't, they know exactly where to find one. They know where all the scum live and which buttons to press to force cooperation. They may substitute Communication (Investigation) whenever a Strength (Intimidation) test is appropriate. Whenever the heroes fail a test to talk with someone in an underworld or urban subculture, or fail to conceal their actions, the PI may oppose the hero's failed test result with Communication (Investigation) to learn about it, even if they're not present.

UNDERCOVER: Whenever the PI dons a disguise to go undercover or tails someone by blending in with their surroundings, they may use the It Wasn't Me stunt for 2 SP instead of 4 as long as they remain undiscovered.

EQUIPMENT: Camera, Cell Phone, Disguises, Flashlight, Heavy Leather Jacket, Knuckle Duster, Lock Picks, SA Handgun

THREAT: MODERATE

SERIAL KILLER

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
2	ACCURACY								
2	COMMUNICATION (EXPRESSION)								
3	CONSTITUTION (RUNNING)								
3	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)								
4	FIGHTING								
2	INTELLIGENCE								
1	PERCEPTION								
2	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)								
0	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	18	33	48	13	13	14	01/0B+3	+4	+4
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
DAGGER		+2		1D6+3					
UNARMED		+2		1D3+2					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Cover Your Tracks, Hostage, Knock Out, Making an Entrance, Restrain, Strangle, The Upper Hand

TALENTS: Expertise (Stealth, Breaking and Entering; Expert), Scouting (Expert)

AMBUSH: If the serial killer makes a successful surprise attack, they deal an extra 1d6 damage.

DARKNESS UNVEILED: When a hero investigates the scene of one of the serial killer's crimes or tries to find them, a successful test unveils the killer's dark psyche, hidden within deciphered clues. The serial killer may make a Communication (Expression) test opposed by the investigator's Willpower (Courage) without being present. If the killer wins, the revelation leaves the hero shaken. This imposes a -2 penalty to all tests made by the investigator which pertain to the killer for the rest of the session, except for non-social tests to find out more information about them—which can force the opposed test and possible penalty in future sessions, as well.

PSYCHOPATH: The serial killer is automatically Very Hostile in response to attempts to play on any sense of empathy or compassion. This attitude can never be permanently shifted, and if changed, slides back after a period determined by the GM. This NPC may feign concern and act as if they've been swayed, however. In Gritty games, the serial killer suffers a -2 penalty to tests that require empathy, including all rolls that require Perception (Empathy). In Pulpy or Cinematic games, psychopaths don't suffer this problem, and may have uncanny, disturbing insights into others' feelings.

RED HERRING: Whenever a character fails a test with a tangential focus to unlock leads related to the serial killer's activities (or a relevant simple investigation test), they gain false information that sends them on a wild goose chase into danger instead of simply failing.

EQUIPMENT: Dagger, Garrote (Light Chain), Lock Picks, Rope

THREAT: MODERATE



SOCIAL ADVERSARIES

As with exploration adversaries, some of these NPCs can participate effectively in other types of encounters, but they're at their best when they oppose the heroes in social encounters, whether they're engaging in political machinations or chatting up potential marks at a bar. The threat level of a social adversary indicates how formidable an opponent they are in that arena. A major social threat may be easy to find and contain, but incredibly dangerous if you let them speak, and many have followers or flunkies to contend with as well.

You may give an adversary one or two Reputation honorifics and/or Membership in an organization to reflect their influence. You don't have to worry about using these systems in play for an NPC, but listing the traits may help you keep track of how others treat and react to that character for roleplaying purposes. A few adversaries have favored stunts or Talents that reference Reputation or Membership. It might be beneficial to occasionally use the systems for these NPCs so the players can fully engage in intrigue and social warfare with them.

CON ARTIST

AKA: Grifter, Scam Artist, Swindler

The con artist has many identities and none. They become whoever they need to be to gain your trust, and then stab you in the back when they have the most to gain. They might steal your money, your bank accounts and identity, or even your

CON ARTIST

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)										
1	ACCURACY									
4	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION, DISGUISE, EXPRESSION)									
2	CONSTITUTION									
2	DEXTERITY (FORGERY, SLEIGHT OF HAND)									
0	FIGHTING									
2	INTELLIGENCE									
3	PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)									
0	STRENGTH									
2	WILLPOWER									
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS			
12	17	21	26	12	12	12	01/0B+2	+2	+2	
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL					DAMAGE*			
UNARMED		+0					1d3+0			

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Impress, Meddle, Oozing Confidence, Patter, Risky Business

TALENTS: Improvisation (Novice), Intrigue (Expert), Misdirection (Novice)

EQUIPMENT: Disguises, Fake Paperwork, Fake ID

THREAT: MINOR

loved ones out from under your nose...and the worst part is, you gave it all up willingly.

CONSPIRACY THEORIST

AKA: Fearmonger, Sensationalist

The conspiracy theorist believes—or at least, tries to make others believe—in widespread coverups and complex machinations even when no convincing evidence exists. They ascribe malicious intent to anything and everything, and loudly persuade others to do the same. They may do this to achieve some other goal, like swaying public opinion to damage some-

CONSPIRACY THEORIST									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
2	ACCURACY								
1	COMMUNICATION (EXPRESSION, PERSUASION)								
0	CONSTITUTION								
1	DEXTERITY (STEALTH)								
0	FIGHTING								
1	INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS, OCCULTISM)								
-1	PERCEPTION								
0	STRENGTH								
4	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	10	12	17	11	11	11	01/0B+0	+0	+0
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
SA HANDGUN		+2		2D6+5					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES									
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FAVORED STUNTS: Cards on the Table, Cast Out, Click "Share," Enrage, Hidden Message, Incite Paranoia (3 SP)

STUNT - INCITE PARANOIA: For 3 SP, the conspiracy theorist can impose a cumulative -1 penalty on their target's Willpower tests for the rest of the scene.

TALENTS: Expertise (Expression, Fearmongering; Expert), Hacking (Novice), Living on the Fringe (Novice)

GOING VIRAL: Whenever a PC engages any NPC in a social encounter, the GM may offer the player 3 SP to use immediately (or a point of Conviction if that rule is in effect) in exchange for the NPC believing a rumor the conspiracy theorist has spread, even if they aren't present. If the player accepts, that NPC gains a +2 to Willpower tests opposing attempts to convince them otherwise, for the rest of the encounter.

MARTYR COMPLEX: If the conspiracy theorist suffers a major setback, like getting captured or having their files destroyed, they gain +2 to any tests they make to use that event as the basis for further mayhem, for the rest of the session.

EQUIPMENT: Audio and Video Recordings, Camera, Cell Phone, Laptop, Newspaper Clippings, SA Handgun, Tape Recorder, Video Camera

THREAT: MINOR

one's reputation or riling people up to violence; or they may simply want to "expose" what they think is the truth. They're not above fabricating "evidence" from whole cloth.

Some conspiracy theorists specifically want to prove the existence of the paranormal or weird science. They exist even in settings where the supernatural, aliens, or hyper-advanced technologies really *do* exist; in that case, they're after exposing it to the world or convincing people it's harmful to them even when it isn't.

CORRUPT POWER BROKER

AKA: Ruthless CEO, Shady Politician, Slick Lawyer

No underhanded deal or cutthroat tactic is beneath the corrupt power broker. They might be in big business, politics, the courtroom, or some other arena where they wield authority like a bludgeon. They're used to getting what they want, they demand respect rather than earning it, and they're fiercely jealous of any competition. They always have a few lackeys nearby.

CORRUPT POWER BROKER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
0	ACCURACY								
3	COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, ETIQUETTE, PERSUASION)								
0	CONSTITUTION								
1	DEXTERITY								
0	FIGHTING								
2	INTELLIGENCE (BUSINESS OR LAW)								
1	PERCEPTION								
-2	STRENGTH								
3	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	15	17	22	11	11	11	01/0B+0	+0	+0
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
UNARMED		-2		1D3-2					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES									
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FAVORED STUNTS: And Another Thing, Cast Out, Filthy Rich (3 SP), Name-dropping, On the Fence, Sway the Crowd

STUNT - FILTHY RICH: For 3 SP, the power broker can throw their wealth around. They can immediately produce one piece of equipment, hiring, or other resource no matter how expensive it would be to own or procure; or they may gain +2 to the next Communication test they make that relies on a bribe.

TALENTS: Inspire (Novice), Oratory (Expert)

LARGE AND IN CHARGE: The power broker gains an extra 1 SP when they roll doubles on any test on which they can leverage an official position or any authority they hold.

EQUIPMENT: Cash and Credit Cards, Cell Phone, Sports Car

THREAT: MINOR

CULT LEADER

AKA: False Guru, Fanatic, Zealot

The cult leader amasses followers as easily as breathing, recruiting people to misguided or outright fabricated causes. This person may be a true believer, or they may have simply bought into their own hype. Cult leaders enact grand plans on behalf of their causes and happily sacrifice their own devotees in the process if it accomplishes their ultimately selfish goals. The cult has rules or beliefs that make its dupes depen-

CULT LEADER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
-1	ACCURACY								
3	COMMUNICATION (LEADERSHIP, PERSUASION)								
2	CONSTITUTION								
1	DEXTERITY								
0	FIGHTING								
1	INTELLIGENCE (OCCULTISM)								
1	PERCEPTION								
-2	STRENGTH								
5	WILLPOWER (FAITH, MORALE)								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	12	22	37	11	11	12	0I/0B+2	+3	+3
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
UNARMED		-2		1d3-2					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES									
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FAVORED STUNTS: Enrage, From the Heart, Making an Entrance, Meddle, On the Fence, Over Here!, Sway the Crowd

TALENTS: Command (Novice), Inspire (Expert), Oratory (Expert)

FANATIC FOLLOWERS: Any ally who performs the Blockade or Guardian Angel stunt on the cult leader's behalf reduces the SP cost by 1.

HONEYED WORDS: The cult leader reduces the SP cost of the On the Fence and Sway the Crowd stunts by 1. Anyone they convince this way gains the Willpower (Faith) or (Morale) focus for the rest of the scene as long as they remain on the cult leader's side, and the cult leader may use the Meddle stunt for 3 SP instead of 5 as long as both targets are people they've already convinced via Honeyed Words.

MARTYR COMPLEX: If the cult leader suffers a major setback, like getting captured or losing followers, they gain +2 to any tests they make to use that event as the basis for further influence, for the rest of the session.

MINIONS: The cult leader gains a +1 to Defense for each ally they have present in the scene (maximum +5).

EQUIPMENT: Drugs, Microphone and Speakers, Pamphlets, Recruitment Videos

THREAT: MODERATE

dent on it, whether financially, emotionally, or through addiction of some kind. Without any followers, the cult leader is only a minor threat.

In a more fantastical or science fiction setting, a cult leader may serve a more powerful being with its own agenda, such as a spirit, an alien, or a visitor from another dimension.

FIXER

AKA: Drug Dealer, Fence, Pimp, Smuggler

The fixer can get anything for you, for a price. They keep abreast of shifting black market values and they know how to profit from everyone else's needs. They might go out and acquire

FIXER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
1	ACCURACY								
2	COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, DECEPTION, PERSUASION)								
0	CONSTITUTION								
2	DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)								
1	FIGHTING								
2	INTELLIGENCE (BUSINESS, EVALUATION)								
1	PERCEPTION								
0	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)								
2	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	10	14	19	12	12	12	2I/4B+0	+0	+0
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
SA HANDGUN		+1		2d6+1					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES									
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FAVORED STUNTS: And Another Thing, In Good Standing, Let's Make a Deal, Name-dropping, Patter, Play Dead, Resourceful (3 SP)

RESOURCEFUL STUNT: For 3 SP, the fixer just happens to have something on hand to fit the situation. They can either immediately produce one piece of equipment or other resource no matter how unlikely it would be to have one at that moment, or they may gain +2 to the next Communication test they make that relies on a bribe.

TALENTS: Expertise (Bargaining, Selling; Novice), Misdirection (Novice), Quick Reflexes (Novice)

I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT: The fixer can use Intelligence (Business) in place of Perception (Empathy) to read someone's intentions or mood in the context of making deals. They may reroll a failed Communication (Bargaining) test, but must keep the second roll's result.

EQUIPMENT: Briefcase of Cash, Contracts, Goods for Sale, Bullet-Resistant Cloth Body Armor, SA Handgun

THREAT: MINOR

PSYCHIC									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
1	ACCURACY								
3	COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION, TELEPATHY)								
2	CONSTITUTION								
0	DEXTERITY								
0	FIGHTING								
3	INTELLIGENCE (OCCULTISM)								
2	PERCEPTION (EMPATHY, HEARING)								
1	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)								
5	WILLPOWER (MORALE, SELF-DISCIPLINE)								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
10	17	27	42	10	10	11	0I/0B+2	+3	+3
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*					
IMPROVISED MELEE WEAPONS	+0 OR +2			(WEAPON DAMAGE) +1					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FORCE: 15 (ESP)/18 (Telepathy) **PP:** 50

FAVORED STUNTS: Channel (4 SP), Fancy Meeting You Here, Flashback, Good Instincts, Intuition, Making an Entrance, Meddle, Read the Room, Whatever's Handy (while possessed)

STUNT - CHANNEL: For 4 SP, the psychic can channel spirits, letting a ghost or other entity possess them. Choose four abilities. For a number of turns equal to their Willpower (5), the psychic gains +2 to those abilities. However, they suffer a -3 to the other five, and let the spirit dictate their actions. They must succeed at a TN 13 Willpower (Self-Discipline) test to end this effect early.

TALENTS: ESP (Novice), Misdirection (Expert), Telekinesis (Novice), Telepathy (Expert)

BIND SPIRITS: The psychic can make a TN 11 Communication (Telepathy) advanced test. Each roll takes 1 round in action time, with a success threshold of 10. If the psychic takes any damage during this time, they discard all progress and start over. If successful, they summon a ghost and bind it to a tether—an object, place, or willing person present in the scene, with some personal connection to the ghost's previous life. The ghost can have statistics for any kind of adversary based on who it was, and various Extraordinary Talents or other powers. It doesn't take damage from normal attacks and can be eliminated only by destroying its tether or using other paranormal powers. (You can find an example ghost in CHAPTER 12, under Adversaries and Non-Player Characters.)

UNCANNY INSIGHT: The psychic reduces the SP cost of the Fancy Meeting You Here and Intuition stunts by 1, and adds +2 to Perception (Empathy) rolls they make due to the Read the Room stunt.

EQUIPMENT: Crystal Ball, Mystical Tome, Tarot Deck

THREAT: MODERATE

RICH SOCIALITE									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
0	ACCURACY								
2	COMMUNICATION (ETIQUETTE, PERSUASION, SEDUCTION)								
1	CONSTITUTION								
1	DEXTERITY								
-1	FIGHTING								
2	INTELLIGENCE (CURRENT AFFAIRS)								
1	PERCEPTION								
0	STRENGTH								
2	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	11	13	18	11	11	11	0I/0B+1	+1	+1
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*					
UNARMED	+0			1D3+0					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Class Clown, Click "Share," Filthy Rich (3 SP), Flirt, Impress, Meddle, On the Fence, Oozing Confidence

STUNT - FILTHY RICH: For 3 SP, the socialite can throw their wealth around. They can immediately produce one piece of equipment, hiring, or other resource no matter how expensive it would be to own or procure, or they may gain a +2 to the next Communication test they make that relies on a bribe.

TALENTS: Attractive (Novice), Inspire (Novice), Party Animal (Novice)

PROMISES, PROMISES: The socialite reduces the SP cost of the On the Fence stunt by 1. Anyone they convince this way gains the Willpower (Morale) focus for the rest of the scene as long as they remain on the socialite's side, and the socialite may use the Meddle stunt for 3 SP instead of 5 if both targets are people they've already convinced via Promises, Promises.

SYCOPHANTS: Any ally who performs the Blockade or Guardian Angel stunt on the socialite's behalf reduces the SP cost by 1.

EQUIPMENT: Cash, Cell Phone, Sports Car

THREAT: MINOR

goods firsthand, but more often they play middleperson between buyer and seller (for a hefty percentage), or work for someone with more power and resources than they have alone.

PSYCHIC

AKA: Fortune Teller, Medium, Mind Reader, Seer

The psychic may work for someone else with big plans, or may simply be in the business of reading people's minds to manipulate them for personal gain. If they don't keep their powers secret, they are known for being spooky or sinister, and can take advantage of that reputation.



In a setting without any supernatural powers, you can use this adversary as a phony who employs trickery to approximate the psychic powers' effects. Give them the Communication (Performing) and Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) focuses instead of Telekinesis, and the Expertise Talent (Performing, Magic Tricks; Novice).

RICH SOCIALITE

AKA: Celebrity, Dignitary, Rock Star

The rich socialite leverages their wealth and fame wherever they go. They think they're better than you, and they'll go to any lengths trying to prove it. Their only loyalty is to themselves, but hordes of admirers and sycophants still clamor for any scrap of attention they can get. Adoring fans and paparazzi always surround a socialite unless something has gone wrong, and the celebrity won't hesitate to use these bystanders as blunt social weapons when need be.

SMOOTH OPERATOR

AKA: Heartbreaker, Inveigler, Seducer

The smooth operator uses their looks and charms to manipulate and woo people, but not for purely romantic reasons. Someone who just really likes to flirt is not really an adversary. Whether as part of a long con or just to distract them from more sinister activities elsewhere, the smooth operator knows how people tick. They might be in it for themselves, or they might work as part of a team—the "face" for a group enacting a heist, for instance.

SMOOTH OPERATOR

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)

1	ACCURACY
4	COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION) (SEDUCTION)
1	CONSTITUTION (TOLERANCE)
2	DEXTERITY
-1	FIGHTING
2	INTELLIGENCE
3	PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)
-1	STRENGTH
3	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	11	13	18	12	12	12	0I/0B+1	+1	+1
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
POCKET PISTOL		+1		1d6+3					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL QUALITIES

FAVORED STUNTS: Flirt, Impress, Making an Entrance, Oozing Confidence, Over Here!

TALENTS: Attractive (Expert), Intrigue (Seduction; Novice), Party Animal (Expert)

EQUIPMENT: Fashionable Clothing and Accessories, Pocket Pistol, Sports Car

THREAT: MINOR



REWARDS

In a game of *Modern AGE*, the PCs will enter situations dangerous to their lives, and potentially to the world itself. For their successes, they deserve rewards. Sometimes a reward comes in the form of statistical advancement, such as an improvement in a character's Dexterity rating following an adventure involving a heated chase. Other times, the reward translates into something tangible, such as increased Resources or a special piece of equipment unique to the character. Rewards also come in the form of improved reputation, titles, or even infamy. Destroying a villain's lair may please the U.N. Security Council, but will displease the villain's allies and anyone unaware of the situation's full extent.

Rewards need not always provide a mechanical advantage. Sometimes a reward will affect the way NPCs react to a character, or fulfil a goal in the protagonist's backstory. The speed at which the GM distributes rewards sets a tone for the campaign.

LEVEL ADVANCEMENT

The standard reward in a tabletop RPG is the increase in character levels through their experiences, which subsequently grants those characters access to greater, more potent abilities and powers. As characters gain experience, they become more adept in their fields, or begin to expand their skillset into other, new arenas.

Characters may earn experience points (XP) from their actions, successes, and even failures. Remember that characters' achievements can be either positive or detrimental in the short term, but any experience grants XP. In a real-world situation, learning how to change a tire is an educational experience as much as crossing the road without looking both ways, and being clipped by a car with freshly changed tires.

Alternatively, the GM can distribute an increase in level without the need to count XP and calculate the points contribution toward a level-up. This method is simpler, though some groups will prefer the feeling of gradually increasing aptitude to a point where their characters achieve new levels.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

If a GM elects to award XP as reward, they must also decide on how many XP a given encounter generates. This system should remain consistent. Inconsistency in awarding experience can make players lose trust in the GM, so while predictability can make a reward lose drama, it does assure a player that their character performing x yields y . Likewise, players are entitled to know how many XP their characters need to meet the next level in their characters' progression.

Modern AGE provides an encounter system to ease the distribution of XP. At the end of each play session, the GM should review each encounter by its level of challenge. If characters coasted through an encounter in a mad scientist's laboratory

POOLED EXPERIENCE

One common issue with XP is that individual awards and awards that get granted when some characters aren't present could cause some characters to advance faster than others. You can fix this with pooled experience. In this optional rule, all XP goes to a common pool, not to individual characters. The GM still grants awards when individuals play their characters well, but these individual awards still go into the pool, making playing a character well good for everyone.

If you pool all experience, it's easy to determine when characters reach the next level. Multiply the XP needed for that level by the number of characters. When the pool reaches that number, each hero gains a level.

because they had assault rifles, and the lab assistants only held pencils with which to defend their lives, the encounter was an easy one. If they had to sneak through the laboratory, avoiding infrared sensors, the potential for nerve gas attacks, and a mad scientist's mutant creation, the encounter was hard. The different encounter levels award different numbers of XP.

The volume of resources, amount of effort, and sacrifices made all factor into the number of XP the GM should provide at the session's conclusion. Experience points for encounters are usually divided among each character present at the encounter. Some other awards (detailed later in this chapter) may only go to individual characters, based on their exceptional actions.

ROUTINE

A routine encounter is one in which nothing special happens. A walk down the street, a risk-free conversation with a partner, or a simple purchase at a local store are all routine.

EASY

An easy encounter occurs when a character overcomes a difficulty without much time or labor involved. The results of failure would also be low. Easy encounters could entail threatening a known coward, getting to work on time with the basic expenditure of resources, or a character remembering a passcode they use every other day.

AVERAGE

An average task is one that poses a challenge, even if it didn't tax a character to the limits of their ability. It may take a little skill, a bit of focus, and the expenditure of resources to accomplish. Hagglng the price of a new car fresh off the lot, breaking into a building with only one security camera and a single alarm to deactivate, or bribing a veteran guard to look the other way count as average difficulty encounters.

HARD

Hard tasks are those that characters struggle to complete successfully. They take time, great effort, and the sacrifice of valuable resources. Hard encounters often involve serious peril, either to the character or someone or something dear to them. The risk is high when attempting a hard encounter. Taking down a well-equipped band of mercenaries, seducing a married and faithful heir to a family fortune, or deactivating a complex bomb set to explode in 1 minute are all hard encounters.

EXPERIENCE POINT REWARDS

ENCOUNTER	REWARD
Routine	0 XP
Easy	100 XP
Average	250 XP
Hard	400 XP

BONUS EXPERIENCE POINTS

GMs should never feel restricted to awarding XP based on encounter difficulty. The distribution of bonus XP should feel exciting, as an exchange for genuinely interesting and entertaining play. In some cases, a GM may award bonus experience for the successful completion of a major mission milestone, or the resolution of a plot of broad scale. Such a reward will feel deserved, acting as a justified "thank you" to the players' characters for their bold deeds. Entire groups of characters often receive this type of bonus XP.

Individual characters are also eligible for bonus XP. If a player roleplays their character peerlessly, really jibing with the plot, a key NPC, or perhaps an internal struggle, the GM ought to be generous. Good roleplay drives a game of *Modern AGE*. That roleplay can be the rapturous celebration of a job well done, or the garment-rending tragedy of a mission failed and a comrade lost.

A GM should use the experience point rewards table as a template for the awarding of bonus experience. Bonus XP should rarely exceed what's awarded for success at a hard encounter.

INSTANT EXPERIENCE AWARDS

If you use XP, you may also use the option of instant rewards. Grant an instant reward whenever a player portrays their character especially well, does something clever, or entertains the group. Grant the award then and there — don't wait for the end of the session. Be careful to note the accomplishments of quiet players who express themselves through actions instead of raw, attention-getting behavior. Never award instant XP for actions that annoy other players or hinder their ability to have fun. Instant experience awards come in the following denominations.

- **NICE (10 XP):** Award 10 XP whenever a player does something a bit better than average, such as inspiring a chuckle, making a challenge a bit easier through clever thinking, or helping another player have fun. You can also award this if a player chooses to suffer a slight

INSTANT AWARDS & EXCEPTIONAL CHALLENGES

By dint of their personal histories and other circumstances, some characters may face challenges others don't. For instance, Steve's character, Jeff, has a prosthetic arm, which makes some feats of strength and manual dexterity more difficult, and may even make some tasks impossible until he finds a workaround.

In cases where a character's situation forces some challenge other characters don't have to confront, or makes certain tasks notably more difficult, the GM may choose to provide an instant experience award to recognize that character's extra efforts, even if they normally use standard per-session experience. If experience is being tracked individually, the character will advance in level more quickly as they rise to the work given them. If the game pools experience, these awards help everyone advance faster.

disadvantage because it would fit their character, even if the rules say the player doesn't have to experience a drawback.

- **GREAT (25 XP):** Award 25 XP if a player's cleverness and good roleplaying is appreciated by most of the other players, or quietly accomplishes something that moves the story forward or makes it more interesting. This is encouraged if the player allows their character to be put at risk for the group or suffer a significant disadvantage. This award should be granted no more than once or twice per session.
- **AWESOME (50 XP):** If a player's actions win accolades from the group, and will be something fondly remembered for the rest of the campaign, and really go above and beyond good roleplaying, award 50 XP. This award should only take place once in a handful of sessions. You can also award it when the player decides their character would act in a way that risks their life or seriously burdens them in some other way, when it would be consistent with what their character would do, and adds drama and enjoyment to the story.

Instant awards will speed advancement. Experiment with them. If you find players win XP too fast, cut standard awards by 25%, 50%, or more. The easiest way to track them is to use coins or other markers representing the value of each reward level. Hand out the markers during play, then tally them at the end of the session.

SOCIAL ACTIONS AND EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES mentions that even though PCs don't have to follow the rules for social maneuvers, they should be rewarded for doing so when it inconveniences the heroes—when they don't suspect the secret agent they've fallen in love with, for instance, or can't think straight when a family member gets threatened. Grant bonus XP at the end of the session, or instant awards during the encounter where the situation comes up, based on how severe a hindrance the effects are.

LEVEL REWARDS

Sometimes a GM wants to cut out the labor of calculating experience points and awarding it in fair proportions. In these cases, simply awarding a character a level increase will often suffice. The timing of a level increase is crucial. Gift a level increase too often and character progression loses gravitas. Rare level-ups lead to players scratching around wondering what exactly they need their characters to accomplish before they become stronger.

GMs may award levels whenever they choose, but some suggestions include permitting characters to level up after they achieve a major campaign or personal goal, they hit a milestone in the plot, defeat an enemy boss, or perform an impressive action as a cohesive team.

Level rewards are ideal for campaigns with a set ending. The GM can decide on a targeted final level, and advance characters to meet it by the time they reach the campaign's grand finale. This reward also works when players don't need XP to stay motivated, or if XP awards distract them from role-playing, instead of helping to motivate them.

REPUTATION

Rewards need not always be tangible. Reputation is its own reward in many social situations. Whether a character gains the epithet of "Savior of Little Rock" after preventing a terrorist attack, or is simply known as a trustworthy soul for acting as counsel and friend to many, reputation can make the difference between a discount in the store or having to pay a gouging price. A warm reception upon arriving in town makes future interactions easier.

Reputation may indicate a character's specializations and talents. An Olympic marksman's reputation for having a natural aptitude comes with their skill, while an Internet security expert's reputation for being a tech wizard speaks to their ability as a creator of computer-based infections. These reputations may form through play, and convey a mechanical benefit when handling the subject matter to which the reputation pertains.

GMs and players should remember that reputation can disappear as easily as it arrives. If the same Olympic marksman loses badly in a publicized shooting competition, or the security expert's own information appears on a Wiki because of a hack, reputations fade. Once lost, reputations do not return easily.

HONORIFICS

In its simplest form, reputation manifests as a title a character carries. This honorific is entirely situational, as a superlative lover is unlikely to count on their reputation in a tense courtroom scene (unless the trial has something to do with sex), and the gunman with natural aptitude isn't going to throw their reputation around at a funeral (unless guns start blazing over the will reading). The GM is the final arbiter on whether the mechanical advantage of utilizing reputation is appropriate for the given scene, though inspired use should always receive reward.



Honorifics do not stack with each other, each being pertinent to a specific use of reputation.

The following examples demonstrate some of the possible benefits of honorifics. In most cases, the effects last until the character fails at a task their honorific implies they should be able to perform with expertise, or they otherwise fail to live up to their reputation. If the “Toughest Dude in Toledo” tries to back out of a fight, or doesn’t intimidate a local tough, he loses that honorific’s benefit. Repeated failure to live up to one’s reputation may cost the character their honorific permanently. The GM decides when the loss becomes permanent.

INSPIRED REPUTATION

Inspired use of reputation appears in many forms, and is the most likely form of reputation use to require GM adjudication. A defender of innocents, using their reputation to convince a mob boss to sell guns on the cheap to protect all the little kids from the orphanage where the mob boss grew up, is using their reputation for an inspired purpose. The bane of criminals who works in the orphanage on the other side of the city, and uses their reputation to scare the children away from a life of crime, is likewise using the stories that make up their reputation in an inspired way.

Inspired use of reputation grants a player a bonus of +1 to the result of the Stunt Die of a successful test in which their character’s reputation is referred to or demonstrated in a notable way.

PASSIVE REPUTATION

Passive reputation is the most common use of an honorific. Passive use makes a group or person act more or less favorably toward the character, if they already know the reputation, and it affects them in some way. A thief known for their expertise with sleight of hand will, for instance, receive free drinks and contract work from criminal gangs quicker than someone with no reputation at all. However, cops and some judges will make assumptions about the character based on their reputation, and these may make scenes with people in these professions harder than usual. In social situations, the character may benefit from a free one step attitude shift in a direction suited to their reputation instead of the bonus. However, some people will despise a given reputation. “The Hammer of Milton Keynes” might be respected by the underworld figures of that town, but hated by police.

PERSONAL REPUTATION

Using reputation in a personal way, such as prefacing a name with a title or telling a tale of former deeds, earns a character a simple advantage over opponents. In a contested action involving the character’s famed trait, the opponent suffers a -1 penalty to their opposing roll. Personal use of reputation is purely psychological, serving to unnerve an opponent, making them second-guess their action when contesting a reputed master in the field. It activates when a character cites their own reputation.

SUPPORTIVE REPUTATION

A character with an earned reputation should proudly demonstrate the truth behind their honorific, such as through an entourage of supporters or foes applauding their skill openly or whispering fearfully about it. This use of reputation triggers successfully if any character but the one with the honorific convincingly speaks to another (outside the protagonist's party) about the reputation in question, in advance of or during a scene in which the reputation receives use. Supportive use of reputation provides a character a +2 bonus to any roll in which the character demonstrates the reputation's effects, such as an expert in the field of small blades wielding a dagger in a barroom fight, or a superlative lover seducing someone in the opposite corner of that same bar. Audience makes a reputation, inspiring confidence in the individual with the epithet when they hear others chanting their name.

EXAMPLE HONORIFICS

Reputation and honorifics may manifest in any form, for any reason. The following sample titles are changeable, with alternatives included in their description text. GMs and players should suggest their own ideas based on character deeds.

BANE OF CRIMINALS

The character's actions in bringing criminals and other ne'er-do-wells to justice earns them a reputation as a crimefighter, tough on any who seek to break the law. Perhaps they take lethal action against those who escape the court system through technicalities, or maybe they surveil ex-cons to ensure they stay on the straight and narrow. Criminals know them, and while they may not respect them, they certainly fear them.

ALTERNATIVES: Bane of Bullies, Bane of Democrats, Bane of Law Enforcement

CHAMPION ATHLETE

The character achieved a title, perhaps earning a medal or trophy, in their chosen sporting field. They receive recognition nationally, and perhaps farther, from those who know of their accomplishments. The crown can be a heavy burden, as many will seek to claim the championship. Until that happens, the champion receives accolades for their accomplishments.

ALTERNATIVES: Champion Chess Player, Champion Fashion Designer, King of Iron Fist

DEFENDER OF INNOCENTS

Defenders of the innocent gain their reputation through their deeds combating the forces of corruption. Many defenders rely on skills other than physical prowess, displaying smarts in the courtroom, outfoxing extortionists, and using their own largesse to look after the meek. Defenders of the innocent run the risk of losing their reputation if they stretch their kindness too far.

ALTERNATIVES: Advocate of the Corrupt, Defender of History, Defender of the City

DESTINED FOR GREATNESS

It seems no matter what this character attempts, they succeed, earning increasing praise and regard from their peers. It's almost as if a supernatural force were watching over them, pushing them on a fateful path of glory and renown. Such individuals draw the ire of the bitter, and the reverence of those who see providence in these characters' actions. An individual destined for greatness is likely to earn an arch-nemesis, determined to break whatever it is destiny has in store.

ALTERNATIVES: Destined for Doom, Guarded by an Angel, Has a Deal with the Devil

EXPERT IN THE FIELD

A character highly learned in their field, may receive acclaim for their research, knowledge, and accomplishments. Whether its for a mainstream field of interest or an obscure one, the character's talks, writings, and general ideas within that field are highly respected. Of course, others in the same field will wish to discredit the proclaimed expert.

ALTERNATIVES: Crackpot Theorist, Jack of All Trades, Reclusive Genius

FAMED ARTIST

This character's talents earn them fame as a skilled, possibly revolutionary artist. Perhaps they construct experimental art installations from preserved pieces of meat, or maybe they paint the most sweeping, captivating landscapes in the gallery. Few can deny their talent, though many critics try. Such a character likely has fans who followed their ascendancy and now resent their popularity. These individuals would see it as a victory to destroy the artist's hard-earned reputation.

ALTERNATIVES: Famed Inventor, Infamous Auteur, Renowned Actor

LOYAL

Some characters earn a reputation for absolute and total loyalty. Simply doing one's job rarely generates a reputation, but taking bullet intended for an employer, defending a friend against hideous accusations, or sticking by the side of an abusive partner (rightly or wrongly) earns the honorific of "loyal." Some rate loyalists highly and seek to recruit them. Others enjoy taking advantage of such faithful "hounds."

ALTERNATIVES: Dedicated Partner, Oathbound, Treacherous

LUCKY

Somehow, things always turn out well for this character. Unlike individuals destined for greatness, a lucky character just seems to have fortune smiling on them whenever times get rough. A lucky character earns back all their winnings at the blackjack table when they're down to their last dime, evades a hail of bullets despite their lack of cover, or finds criminal charges fail to stick due to technicalities.

ALTERNATIVES: Charmer, Cursed, Hustler

NATURAL APTITUDE

Everyone knows about this character's inborn talents. Here, nature beat nurture, and the character astounded their own mentors. This may breed envy in people who must work very, very hard to get anywhere close to the character's natural ability. A character gains this reputation by putting their talents on display, and risks losing it if they are unable or unwilling to continue performing at that level.

ALTERNATIVES: Mentored, Natural Ineptitude, Schooled Genius

PURE-HEARTED

Some characters seem to shine with virtue. Whether truly innocent, or simply willing to look for the best in everyone, no matter their wrongdoings, others rely on the pure-hearted to act as moral compasses and do the right thing when the stress starts to mount. A character with a reputation for pure-heartedness will gain favor from anyone affected by their warmth.

ALTERNATIVES: Benevolent Dictator, Charitable, Cold-hearted

REBELLIOUS

A character with a reputation for rebelliousness often easily draws like-minded individuals to their banner. Their goals may be as simple as a full-on rejection of authority and a desire to "stick it to the Man". But their goals may be much more directed and driven by ideology. Perhaps they're running an underground dissident movement bent on anarchy or revolution. Either way, a rebellious character may not be trusted to toe the line, but can be relied upon to act when action needs taking.

ALTERNATIVES: Polemicist, Straight-laced, Usurper

SAVIOR OF THE TOWN

The character known for saving the town, city, or nation, will receive wide acclaim wherever they travel within their country's borders. Everyone loves a hero. This reputation comes with several perks, with a character often granted the key to the city, and granted easy access to figures in authority and the media. If the reputation wasn't earned fairly, or the character prevented a different individual's plot coming to pass when they saved the region, they undoubtedly draw enemies.

ALTERNATIVES: Destroyer of the Town, Hero of the Hour, The Man with the Plan

SUPERLATIVE LOVER

A superlative lover is a trustworthy companion, a caring confidante, and a skilled sexual partner. Perhaps skilled in seduction, or relying on a reputation for generosity and sensitivity in the bedroom, a superlative lover may wield their honorific in subtle or overt ways. Those desiring this character's special attention but not receiving it might come to think of them as a natural enemy.

ALTERNATIVES: Abuser, Soulmate, True Friend

TECH WIZARD

A tech wizard is a character who makes the impossible possible with machinery, computers, or engines. In ways that confound others, including some in their own field, characters with these reputations seem to have greater affinity for discourse with lines of code and the soldering iron than with other humans. Resentment blooms in any specialized field however, along with the risk of sabotage.

ALTERNATIVES: Horse Whisperer, Luddite, Martial Arts Master

MEMBERSHIP

People don't change the world by themselves. As leaders, followers, and influencers, they make their mark on organizations, syndicates, governments, industries, and activist groups. In some campaigns, conspiracies pull the strings behind historical events, and even in the real world, organizations make their mark with covert actions. Will characters change these systems from within, ascend the ladder of power as true believers, or found competing factions? The answer lies in their Memberships.

Characters may claim a Membership in a group based on their personal backgrounds, but a character's influence over their respective organization or club depends on rank and achievement. The GM should assign rank based on the character's deeds, length of a Membership in the group, and wider reputation. A political party may recognize tenure, but will rarely support the ascendancy to party spokesperson of a candidate mired in scandal.

Organizations differ greatly in structure and motivation. While some act to change the world, others cautiously observe. Some have lofty plans as grandiose as world domination, while others simply want to ensure the children in their town get a decent education. Being a respected member of the parents and teachers' coalition is a fine thing in a provincial settlement, but when compared to a respected member of a military dictatorship, is unlikely to receive much recognition. Therefore, only use these rules for organizations which would have an effective presence in the campaign. You don't need special rules to make a character the head of the local board games club, unless of course this is also a secret society of master strategists, manipulating politicians through blackmail.

RANK 1: RECRUIT

A recruit may have experienced only the lightest of induction ceremonies. They may not know the inner workings of the group or have even met its leaders. Nevertheless, they're in, and that benefits them. Inducted recruits receive a +1 bonus to social tests when interacting with other members of the organization, and a +1 to other rolls where the organization's contacts and facilities (such as an occult library, well-stocked workshop, or available office temps) would be useful. This bonus also applies to Resources tests, but only for things the organization can help with. Security firms won't help characters buy antique books, for instance. Furthermore, without a test, characters can use any resources the organization routinely supplies to recruits, such as a uniform or company

IMBALANCED RANKS

The GM should carefully consider how happy she and her group will be with the idea of disparate ranks represented across the players' characters. One group may thrive on hierarchical conflict and command within their pool of characters, while others chafe at such tensions enforced through rank and title. Memberships across multiple groups can cause dispute within a group, especially if a plot pushed organizations into conflict. It may lead to fantastic roleplaying opportunities, in which characters choose between their Membership and their friends, or it may drive wedges between players. In all cases, GMs should spend the time before a campaign clarifying player happiness with differences in power levels and likely inter-party tension.

car. If the organization sends characters on a mission, they'll usually foot the bill for necessities, such as transportation costs. Occult-leaning groups may give new recruits aid of a supernatural nature, while tech-focused organizations might do anything from erasing the character's digital footprint to providing a phone which encrypts communications.

New recruits are more likely to brag about their Membership in an organization without understanding its full reach. This status can act as a form of passive reputation, but may also draw the irritation of more advanced members of the group. Organizations expect new recruits to play their roles in line with the group philosophy or mission statement, and will generally provide enough support to allow the recruit to do only that. If the recruit abuses their Membership in an organization, the group's more important members can swiftly jettison their new associate.

RANK 2: RESPECTED MEMBER

Different organizations will erect different hurdles for their recruits. Some expect new members to perform a set number of tasks; others will require a certain duration of service. Some organizations reward merit and innovation, while others praise those who quietly obey until their time comes for an interview to a higher level. When a character becomes a respected member of their organization, the +1 bonuses to certain ability and Resources tests they earned as a recruit increase to +2. The respected member also gains a +1 bonus in social interactions with non-members who respect or fear the organization.

Respected members possess greater access to personnel and organization resources. A character at this level may command new recruits to perform easy encounters on their behalf, or use organization wealth to pay recruits to complete encounters of average difficulty. Recruits do not serve without question, unless as members of a brainwashed cult or similar, but will often perform tasks respected members command, hoping for recognition.

Characters at a respected member level have access to organization valuables. Depending on the organization, this may include rare weapons and equipment, or even global secrets known only to the group.

RANK 3: AUTHORITY FIGURE

The hardest position to achieve outside of establishing a company and positioning oneself on top from its inception, the role of authority figure is prized and powerful. Some characters at the authority figure level will control an organization with an iron grip, literally sitting on a throne and commanding

from behind a small army of bodyguards. Others might hide in the shadows, behind false identities, boards of directors, or layers of bureaucracy. Authority figures are busy people, responsible for the successful direction of their organization.

Rank 3 individuals have the power to recruit new members, set policy, and call on as much of the organization's resources and manpower as they want. The test bonus the character earned as a recruit and strengthened as a respected member increases to +3. The social test bonus when interacting with outsiders who respect or fear the organization increases to +2. Furthermore, the character can issue orders to subordinates and command the use of organization resources without any tests, when the GM permits it. In most cases, the character's authority is not absolute. Their power is checked by an overall leader, a council of authority figures, or the massed opinions of organization members. Much depends on the size, nature, and objectives of the group.

A character in the role of authority figure needs to be careful not to harm their organization too greatly through personal vendettas and investments. A lot of people rely on these organizations remaining secure. A character ruining their own formal group runs the risk of an insurrection.

RELATIONSHIPS

No person is an island; we rely on each other to find a place in the world. And as a character develops, their personal history expands and deepens. This forms connections in the world, some of which become significant enough to build Relationships measured by the following system.

Further Relationships form during play. As a character gains levels, they acquire a capacity for more and stronger Relationships, represented by Relationship slots, but only fill these slots through events in the campaign. Thus, these can form part of a reward in a game of *Modern AGE* too. Bonds and Intensity define important Relationships between characters. Characters can forge Relationships with NPCs or other player characters, but if one PC forms a Relationship with another, both players must consent to it, and there should be no pressure on any player to accept a Relationship they don't want for their character. Note that in the story, characters need not know characters have a Relationship, even when they're the subject of it—unrequited love and secret hate are real, after all.

As noted in CHAPTER 1, the Relationship's Bond is its type, represented by the NPC or PC involved, and a description, such as "I would risk my life for this person," applied to Alejandro's character, Indra. The Bond's Intensity is the



measure of a Relationship's strength. A slot can be devoted to a new rank 1 Bond, or to increase an existing Bond by 1.

Characters start with the higher of 1 or their Communications score in Relationship slots, plus any others acquired at character creation. They acquire one new slot at level 4, and every 4 levels thereafter. Again, these slots are not filled unless events in the game create an opportunity to fill them.

RELATIONSHIP BOND

Relationships can be complex or simple, but as long as they offer interest and utility in a game, they are worth recording. Bonds exist between friends, lovers, enemies, family, employers, and members of the same club or secret society. Some Relationships are bitter rivalries, while others contain nothing but affection. Relationships can even exist between the dead and the living, as a form of inspiration to a grieving character, or a source of resentment that makes a protagonist act in a certain way. Bonds can erode naturally, or suffer replacement suddenly following a grave betrayal or unexpected death. Some sample Bonds include:

I WOULD RISK MY LIFE FOR THIS PERSON

This strong Bond might push a PC to perform a foolish or heroic action to protect their loved one. Of course, this Bond may imply a contract where a character is compelled to risk their life for another, such as work as a bodyguard, or because of blackmail.

RELATIONSHIP SLOTS

LEVEL	NUMBER OF RELATIONSHIP SLOTS
1	Number generated at character creation (CC)
4	CC +1
8	CC +2
12	CC +3
16	CC +4
20	CC +5

I WILL NOT STOP UNTIL YOU ARE DEAD

This Bond is a strong one, implying the PC's drive to end another character's life. The cause of such a Bond could be a longstanding rivalry or a horrible betrayal. There exists the possibility of a trapped loved one subject to experiments, or resurrected in some way upsetting to the protagonist. Mercy would drive this Bond, in such a case.

WE HAVE SUFFERED EQUAL ADVERSITY TOGETHER

This Bond may stem from soldiers fighting together in a warzone, cops trying to stay clean in a corrupt precinct, or simply youths who grew up in the same dreadful part of town. This Bond ties characters together through mutual suffering. They can share war stories, or just exchange a knowing glance that says, "I know what you're going through."

YOU INSPIRE ME TO GREATNESS EACH DAY

At its most mundane, this Bond may come from a supportive employer or parent telling the PC they can do whatever they seek to do, while providing routinely attainable objectives. At its more complex, this Bond emerges from a friend's dying plea, or a hero figure who's already achieved the goal the protagonist seeks. Perhaps the sight of an enemy performing misdeeds reminds the PC of the path not to follow.

SHE IS MY BOSS, MY BEST FRIEND, AND SOMEONE I LOVE, BUT TO WHOM I CAN NEVER EXPRESS MY FEELINGS

Bonds can be complex, and multi-layered. The named example is one that would provoke loyalty in a character, as well as friendship and the pining for a love that cannot be. Alternatives include an enemy a PC secretly admires, or a fellow protagonist who, despite all the signs, cannot pick up on the PC's feelings.

USING RELATIONSHIP INTENSITY

Relationships range in Intensity from a rating of 1 to 5, with 1 being a new, but solid Relationship, and 5 being the kind of Intensity a character will usually experience once in a lifetime.

For each rank of Intensity, a character gets 1 free SP they can use only to spend on actions relating to the respective Relationship. Players can spend these SP only once per game session, and may use them on such actions as engaging in combat where a loved one is threatened, social tests where a PC attempts to talk a friend out of doing something stupid, or a simple check where a character's deep-seated vendetta drives them to search every file for something incriminating about a foe.

Intensity SP are useable on any appropriate action, not just ones where a player rolls doubles. They can be combined with SP earned from rolling doubles if a player chooses, and can even be used to build up to the Success Threshold for advanced tests. The SP are available again at the next session's start, though if a game runs particularly long, the GM can choose to allow Intensity-related SP to recharge gradually throughout a single session.

UNUSUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Some Relationships aren't with other, living characters, or exist under unusual circumstances. These should be rare situations, since Relationships are designed to encourage interacting with other characters.

CONTRADICTORY RELATIONSHIPS

Some characters may have two different, highly contrasting Relationships with the same PC or NPC. Treat these as two different Bonds with separate Intensities and slot costs. For example, Sean could have the following Relationships: *I'll do whatever I can to make her happy*, and *I must prove I'm the*

smarter one, both with Indra. GMs should not allow multiple Relationships with the same character unless there's the potential for such conflict—otherwise, it should just be one Relationship.

IDEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS

A character might have a powerful Relationship with a political philosophy, religion, culture or other way of life, or set of traditions. The character is highly devout or a true patriot—or someone who deeply despises an ideology. These operate like other Relationships, except that the GM and player determines when a person or situation counts as something the Relationship can affect. Examples include (*Country*), *love it or leave it!*; (*Political system*) *is a disease*; and *Do unto others as they would do unto you*. The GM determines when such Relationships apply.

MEMORIAL RELATIONSHIPS

When the subject of a Bond dies, vanishes, or changes the nature of their connection with the character, it's still possible to use the Relationship. In such cases, the character may use the sentimental connection, even when the reality of the situation has changed. In time, the Relationship will probably change. See **Changing Relationships** for advice.

SELF-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

Some narcissistic, traumatized, or highly self-sufficient characters may have Relationships with themselves. Possible self-centered Bonds include *I love 'em and leave 'em*; *I am only strong when I don't need anyone else*; and *You can't trust anyone*. A character may harness a self-centered Relationship like any other, but this draws attention to their impaired ability to care about other people. When a character uses this Relationship, the GM may apply a penalty equal to the SP used to a future social test to influence or understand someone else's behavior.

CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS

Whenever a character gains a new level, the player and GM may review the character's Relationships and adjust them, increasing or decreasing them, switching Intensity slots around or even changing the nature of their Bonds. An increase might occur if a PC has spent time in a session wining, dining, and seducing their spouse, forming a stronger Bond. A decrease may occur if a Bond dies, becomes more distant, or when a protagonist simply goes without them in their life for some time. A decrease may free up one or more Relationship slots, which may be applied to existing Bonds. Bonds can only increase if free slots are available.

There are no set rules about how extensive a change can be made, but Relationships should tend to persist. It's hard to let go of a fallen loved one, or accept betrayal from a true friend. If, however, the player is truly unhappy with their current Relationships, the GM should allow any changes that would correct the problem.



THE CAMPAIGN SETTING

As the Game Master, you are the one who develops a *Modern AGE* game's campaign setting. The campaign setting is a traditional term in role-playing games that refers to the world where adventures take place. The campaign (derived from military campaign, though it can refer to all kinds of stories) is everything that happens to the heroes in the world, and how they affect the world in turn.

Think about your campaign as a movie or TV show. The players are your actors, and the PCs are the characters they portray. The setting is where it all takes place—all the fictional places and environments that host the action, but also the wider world beyond what the characters experience. It's the government in that world, its organized crime, shops, woodlands, and creeping animals. Everything.

Unlike a movie or TV show, you have an unlimited budget, because you design everything with your notes and descriptions. But since the setting covers an enormous territory, and because you want your games to be about something other than living in any old world, you want to prepare. So, the setting needs to have a focus. This could be a conflict, a set of ideas from a genre you like, or even exploring strange things you invent within that world. The PCs confront the challenges that arise in the setting, investigate the topics you've laid out, and socialize with its fictional inhabitants. This chapter provides some starting points to help you create a world for your players to enjoy. *Modern AGE* is designed to best fit the contemporary world, and historical periods close to it, so that's where our focus lies.

USING A PRE-BUILT SETTING

Many roleplaying game settings already exist and can be easily adapted for use with *Modern AGE*. Beyond roleplaying games, countless films, novel series, comics, and electronic games present worlds that might be fun campaign settings. Pick one that appeals to you, learn its ins and outs, and start telling your own stories. Some people think that pre-existing settings require players to portray the already-named heroes of the books or other sources they come from, or that they need to play "second fiddle," taking care of minor things while the "canonical" heroes do important things. But it's perfectly fine to imagine that those heroes never existed or failed, and the PCs take their place, or that another, equally important challenge requires new heroes. You're not selling the stories you tell at the table to anyone, so change whatever you want. You can even merge two fictional worlds, or have character crossovers. Do you want John Carter, Warlord of Mars, to ask for help from an aged Sherlock Holmes? Is Dracula invading Mars? Make it happen.

Whichever world (or worlds) you pick, you'll still need to customize. You'll need to decide exactly when and where the campaign starts, create NPCs and locations that don't exist or haven't been described well enough in the source material, and generally make the setting your own. *Modern AGE* can be used to play in some truly strange settings, but in most cases, there will be a connection to real history. Use that to fill in the details as well.

BUILDING A SETTING

If you don't want to use an existing RPG setting or fictional world, you'll have to build your own. This may seem daunting, but it can be fun and rewarding. Like a TV show-runner or novelist, you're creating an environment full of challenges and interesting things to witness and do, so that there will always be stories to tell, and games to play. Your world will usually be a fictional variation on our own. It might be a place where the most bizarre spy-fi stories happen, set in the 1960s, where Cold War agents strap on jetpacks to fight and evade one another. It could be a place where one person in a thousand has psychic powers, and that's created an alternate history. It could even be a world pretty much identical to our own, where the largest fictional elements are the gritty crimes and mysteries you invent for heroes to investigate.

To help you invent a setting, or select pre-existing elements you want to use, this chapter discusses fictional genres and ways to develop your campaign around them, and historical periods, along with the forms of fiction they inspire.

GENRES

You can play a *Modern AGE* campaign in most genres you can find on film, television, video games, and literature. A genre is a collection of elements that gives a story a particular tone, with distinctive character types, and recognizable challenges. You are not limited to a single genre when planning a *Modern AGE* adventure; many movies, series, games, and novels mix and match elements found in different genres to make a cohesive whole.

ADVENTURE

Non-stop action, excitement, and thrills are the bread and butter of adventure stories, where the plot is the road between action scenes that drive the story. The adventure genre is common in visual media, because showing incredible stunts is a feast for the eyes, and it is no different in roleplaying games, because imagination knows no budget restraints.

Adventure is mostly about the attitude toward the plot; where other genres will favor investigation and interaction, protagonists in an adventure story vanquish challenges through daring action and a sprinkle of violence. It is not necessary for the protagonists to be ultimate combatants who dominate every combat scene, as some of the most exciting action sequences have protagonists running away from their enemies—especially if said enemies are endless numbers of faceless minions with guns.

Another staple of adventure stories are the varied locations. Classic adventures send their protagonists in search of ruins of lost civilizations in the middle of the jungle, but more contemporary ones add the features of exotic locales to the list of challenges and hazards the heroes must surmount, like an exciting car chase in the middle of a sandstorm in the high-tech city of Dubai, or escaping an assassin in the labyrinthine alleys of Tangier, Morocco.

Adventure accepts elements from other genres easily enough that it can be classified as science fiction, fantasy, or even horror, but the focus on action and excitement sets it apart from more sedate and contemplative stories.

Characters in an adventure story are usually ordinary people yanked out of their ordinary lives, now in the company of more skillful guides, but there is also a niche of hyper-competent heroes whose expertise is the only thing that opposes the villains' goals, whether their skills are geared toward martial arts, covert operations, or driving cars.

The tone of most adventure stories is Cinematic, but Pulp mode is more than acceptable for more grounded stories. Characters need to be able to dust off most injuries to get to the next action sequence, recovering in the time it takes them to interrogate a suspect or wait for investigations to yield directions to the next encounter.

Strength and Dexterity focuses are extremely useful for feats of daring like swinging on vines, sliding down waterfalls, or scaling a sheer glass building with suction cups, and any talent that assists with athletics stunts, like Freerunning, is a must. Characters should have at least one Accuracy or Fighting focus to hold their own in a fight, and combat style talents add to their awesomeness factor as combatants. Willpower and its focuses should not be overlooked, either. Action heroes are characteristically unflappable in the face of danger.

INSPIRATIONS: Parts of the *Fast & Furious* franchise, the *Indiana Jones* movies, *Kingsmen*, the *Mission: Impossible* movies, the *Resident Evil* video games.

ALTERNATE HISTORY

"What if...?" is one of the most powerful questions around, and it's the basis of all stories, but the alternate history genre asks very specific what ifs. What if the Nazis had won World War II? What if dinosaurs were still alive? What if Babbage created a true computer a century before its time? Every question about the alternatives is a potential story in the alternate history genre.

Stories set in an alternate history or timeline take the world as we know it and make some tweaks based on events in recorded history happening differently, or around a high concept like a theocratic tyranny ruling most nations, or if the existence of a fantastic element like magic was part of the world. In the latter case, what differentiates an alternate history story from an urban fantasy one is that magic has a deep effect on events, and the world is completely changed by its presence.

The subgenre known as steampunk is one of the earliest alternate history periods covered by *Modern AGE*, where advanced technology based on steam and elegant mechanisms creates a very different Victorian Era. Yet the "what if" crux can be applied to any era, and the changes traced forward to imagine how the modern world evolved with such a change. Because a lot of human history has been defined by wars, military history is an important source for alternate timelines, based on the outcome of decisive battles or world-changing military campaigns that could have created a very altered reality had they ended different than they did.

A recent development in alternate history is modern dystopias, where events took a turn for the worse in recent times and changed the way everything works. Often found in young adult novels, these settings usually focus on a central concept, like a society where everyone takes drugs to suppress emotions. These worlds feature enough advanced, and even fictional technology to support their premises, but the focus remains on social changes.

Protagonists in an alternate history are typical denizens of such a world, dealing with troubles arising from the characteristics that set their history apart from ours. Their place in society will depend entirely on what their world looks like, and a common plot is to defy the alternate status quo, whether they are career rebels or they were ordinary citizens thrust into the resistance by happenstance.

Characters could even hop between alternate histories through technological or mystical means, and the story would be about exploring the difference and similarities of each new scenario, providing a variety of themes and ideas for adventures.

Alternate histories can have any tone; a Gritty world is ruled by an oppressive regime and life is grim and brutal. On the other end of the spectrum, Cinematic mode focuses on a sense of wonder and on exploring the nooks and crannies of a world that is both familiar and exotic.

The options available to characters are mostly unchanged except for how they have already been presented, but some alternate histories might place more emphasis on certain focuses, like Fighting (Heavy Blades) being much more useful in a world that never developed firearms, or using Dexterity (Piloting) being more widespread than Dexterity (Driving) in a world where flying cars are a reality.

INSPIRATIONS: *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, *Steamboy*, *The Man in the High Castle*, *Equilibrium*, *Sliders*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

EXCEPTIONALS

There are stories from around the world which deal with people who are capable of feats beyond the human norm. These exceptional people might be heroes of legend who've returned to our world, newborn products of scientific innovation, or the benefactors of some mysterious shift in the workings of the universe.

The exceptionals genre deals with people with extraordinary abilities or natures trying to make sense of their place in the world. Not quite superheroes, the exceptionals don't have earth-shattering abilities, and what makes them special may only bring unwanted attention, but it's undeniable that they are more than human.

The origin of such exceptionality can be natural or supernatural, scientific or mystical, spontaneous or provoked—it can even be extraterrestrial. However, the point of the story is not how the characters became exceptional, but how it affects their lives.

A story about exceptional people works well with conspiracy stories. Their powers might come from a secret lab, or various factions wish to harness their talents while covering up their



existence. Exceptionals move under the radar and band together to overcome the resulting challenges, often running from government or private interests who seem to have their fingers in everything around them. However, the organization that brings exceptionals together might be benign, a refuge from enemy plots, and interested in sending characters on missions to make the world a better place.

Most of the time, the protagonists will have one exceptional ability, but be regular people in all other respects. The story may be about the exceptionals discovering their natures and learning to use their powers, or about hiding them in the face of persecution. Their abilities may have existed since childhood, erupted during adolescence, or manifested in an act of self-defense.

The tone of the game will determine how outlandish the exceptional natures can be, and how the world reacts to them. Gritty games lend themselves to low-key powers and more investigation, although the power to heal can help the protagonists take more risks. In Pulp mode, the exceptionals can indulge in their extraordinary abilities a bit more, but still need to be careful, while Cinematic games feature characters that might be almost as potent as comic book superhumans, going toe-to-toe with enemy counterparts.

Exceptional characters have access to the options in **CHAPTER 6: EXTRAORDINARY POWERS**. Although most stories will gravitate toward psychic powers, arcane options can be adapted to games that do not feature mystical elements. To represent superhuman abilities that are not necessarily powers, in lieu of gaining a new talent or gaining a higher talent degree, characters may gain 2 points to increase their abilities or gain access to the Extraordinary Stunt talent to represent superlative prowess in certain areas.

INSPIRATIONS: *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Push, Darker Than Black, Sense8, Orphan Black, The Tomorrow People, I Am Number Four.*

EXTRAORDINARY STUNT

EXTRAORDINARY STUNT

REQUIREMENTS: None

Certain feats of strength and prowess just come to you naturally.

NOVICE: Choose a stunt that costs 2 SP to use. When you take the Activate action, you can use your chosen stunt for free together with your next major action. The stunt must make sense for the action you are taking (for example, you cannot use Vicious Blow when you are making a **DEXTERITY (ACROBATICS)** test to jump between roofs). If you roll doubles and gain SP, you can use other stunts as normal, but you cannot pay for extra uses of your free stunt with SP, unless the stunt is Skirmish, which can be used multiple times in the same turn.

EXPERT: Choose a stunt that costs 3 SP to use. You can use your chosen stunt as detailed above.

MASTER: Choose a stunt that costs 4 SP to use. You can use your chosen stunt as detailed above.

HEISTS

Everybody loves it when a plan comes together, and the protagonists of a heist story come up with the best plans to achieve their goals, which mostly involve taking something from somebody else. The word “heist” implies stealing, and protagonists are criminals, but ever since the Thief of Baghdad and Robin Hood, people have had a soft spot for crooks who use their skills and wits to oppose a tyrannical regime, or bring a little justice to those who’d otherwise escape it. On the other hand, a government agency might authorize a special team of experts to solve problems, making their elaborate operations legal.

Heist stories feature protagonists who each have one or two areas of extreme expertise. They’re driven by strong motivations, which may start with greed or revenge, but evolve to a desire for true justice, or even the desire to solve the puzzle of the heist itself. The villain is often a major criminal or other untouchable figure, who may appear to be an ally at first, but double-crosses the team. The team can’t take their enemy out with sheer force or by appealing to the law – they need an elaborate plan.

Whether the goal is to steal an item, unlock secret information, or rescue an individual, the plan takes shape as the story progresses, because the protagonists will have to acquire tools and intelligence, and create a window of opportunity for the heist to take place at all.

A heist story emphasizes the camaraderie that grows between the characters, and the ingenuity they must bring to the table to develop and execute their plan. Most of action happens during the execution (and when something invariably goes wrong). Breaching rules (see **CHAPTER 8: MASTERING THE RULES**) are tailor-made for heists, but the whole heist shouldn’t be contained in a single breach, which represents the “montage” phase where the team executes parts of the plan that don’t require detailed accounts of the action.

Heist stories work best in Pulp mode, where the protagonists can pull off amazing feats but are still in serious danger if violence ensues. Gritty heists cross over into the espionage and procedural genres, while Cinematic heists overlap with action and adventure.

A character in a heist adventure is a specialist in a particular field of work, which complements the skills of the other members of the team. Players should create characters who are especially good at one skillset or a tight group of related tasks, and teams should avoid having two or more characters who excel at the same thing. Extraordinary powers are mostly unheard of, but a telepathic conman or arcane cat burglar can bring a little spice to the genre, as long as the setting allows it and everybody sticks to the plan.

INSPIRATIONS: *The A-Team* (both movies and series), *The Great Train Robbery*, *Ocean’s Eleven*, *Leverage*, the core plots of the *Fast & Furious* movies, *Mission: Impossible* (the series).

HORROR

By its very definition, the horror genre is all about fear; it can be the existential helplessness of cosmic horror, the desperation and isolation of survival horror, the uncertainty of psychological horror, or the persecution and dread of traditional monster

horror. In the end, though, it all boils down to scaring the pants off the audience. Although most horror stories deal with the supernatural infringing upon everyday life, fear can come from mundane sources as well.

Horror stories pit the protagonists against an unseen menace hunting them or those around them. This menace often remains unknown for at least half of the story as the characters realize there's something wrong. Uncertainty and dread push them to investigate. Characters might stumble upon the menace by accident, and the story is about their attempts to escape. Otherwise, the monster(s) might come for them because of something the characters or someone else did, meddling with unnatural forces or unhinged people. It might just happen because they've gone to a cursed place, or "the stars aligned." A typical complication in horror stories is that nobody believes the characters when they try to warn others about what lurks after dark, and it's up to the heroes to find the solution, or die trying—one by one.

The terrors that drive horror stories vary in both menace and scope, from classic monsters like vampires, werewolves, and ghosts, to ambiguously supernatural slashers, creators of death traps, aliens, unfathomable creatures, or even sentient *concepts* that assail the protagonists' sanity.

Horror protagonists are often ordinary people caught in extraordinary circumstances, with no suitable training or aptitude to deal with the rising menace, although a few may have weak supernatural abilities—enough to get a glimpse of the terror stalking them, but not enough to survive without serious preparation, teamwork, and luck. Some protagonists are downright incompetent: jocks, nerds, and other broad-strokes characters who get cut down for their sins—except for the "final girl." A few action-horror stories may feature monster-hunting toughs, and sometimes the protagonists *are* monsters, but must face greater monsters still.

The tone in a horror game is Gritty by definition, as part of the genre's charm is that characters are constantly in real danger. The survival horror sub-genre might be Pulpy or even Cinematic, as characters wade through hordes of zombies, but in that case horror comes less from the monsters and more from the actions of regular people who sacrifice their morals to survive. More extreme forms of horror—like body horror and "torture porn" which focus on physical and emotional suffering by pitting the protagonists through a series of excruciating ordeals—require previous agreement and consent between GM and players to avoid uncomfortable situations around the gaming table.

If extraordinary powers are allowed, the GM might want to limit the talents to the Novice degree and coat the powers in mystery, so that the characters (not the players) are not even sure how their own abilities work. Otherwise, create characters based on the tone you want from the game. If the menace is impossible to shoot or cut down, combatants become weak characters, taking a back seat to investigators.

INSPIRATIONS: *The Ring*, *Silent Hill*, *The Conjuring*, *The Walking Dead*, *American Horror Story*.

POST-APOCALYPTIC

The post-apocalyptic genre asks the question of what the world will look like after civilization collapses. The source

of civilization's downfall defines how the post-apocalyptic world works. Global drought features battles over water, while global flooding forces people to flee inland and live in mountaintops, or become master sailors. Global war is one traditional reason for the world to go to hell, but environmental catastrophes are gaining ground, thanks to the reality of human-caused climate change. Viral outbreaks might kill enough people to make sustaining civilization impossible.

Post-apocalyptic stories often use tropes from horror and science fiction to define the setting's origin and current conditions, populating the world with technology nobody remembers how to use and is seemingly magic, or with monsters (human, undead, or otherwise) that stalk the darkness. The structure of a post-apocalyptic story looks a lot like a Western, with unlivable wastelands instead of wild frontiers, and unnamed road warriors instead of gunfighters. The protagonists might be wanderers who stumble upon small, hardscrabble settlements, willing to battle gun-toting marauders and mutants in exchange for food and gas. They might be relatives willing to do anything to keep their family alive. They might even be bringers of renewed civilization, with the technology and expertise required to resurrect fallen nations—or build new ones.

In a post-apocalyptic game, melee and archaic ranged weapons might be just as useful as those for modern firearms, and while some talents and abilities that deal with technology become unusable, someone who knows how to operate a hydroelectric dam can become the ruler of a small fiefdom.

INSPIRATIONS: The *Mad Max* series (especially *The Road Warrior* and *Fury Road*, *The Postman*, *The Book of Eli*, the *Lazarus* comic (and *World of Lazarus*, the *Modern AGE* sourcebook!), *The Last of Us* (it has zombies, but they're not the most important part of the story), the *Planet of the Apes* series.

PROCEDURALS

A procedural campaign is about solving a crime or a mystery, and about the lives and struggles of the people involved. The type of procedural depends on what its main characters do for a living, because the tools and procedures available to them affect the way the story unfolds. A team of plucky reporters trying to shed light on a coverup will have to work around the structures of power, and make use of contacts and documents. On the other end, a task force of FBI agents has the law on their side (including the right to use deadly force!) and can muscle their way through two-bit crooks and cops, with significant resources at their disposal. Of course, if the characters are rogue agents or going up against political elites, that support might vanish.

Procedural stories usually follow a formula: an NPC discovers the first thread of the mystery before the player characters arrive to gather information, interview witnesses, and chase down persons of interest. A red herring might be revealed to trim down the investigation's paths, leading to the dramatic discovery of the last piece of the puzzle, and perhaps a confrontation with the adversary behind it all.

Although this might sound repetitive, the devil is in the details, and a procedural campaign is enriched by the methods

PORTAL FANTASY

A venerable sub-genre with roots in literary classics, portal fantasy features modern characters transported to a fantastical realm through the titular portal, dreams, or even reincarnation. Although the alternate realm is usually a full fantasy setting, a recent variant has the characters stranded in a world inside a massively multiplayer roleplaying game, whether their interface is locked or they are physically transported to a world that follows all the mechanics of a video game.

You can use *Modern AGE* rules to play a portal fantasy adventure, having characters with contemporary focuses like Accuracy (Pistols) or Intelligence (Chemistry) trying to make the most of their alien proficiencies in a world where magic and dragons are real, using other AGE books like *Fantasy AGE*, *Blue Rose*, or *Titansgrave: The Ashes of Valkana*.

INSPIRATIONS: *Alice in Wonderland*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *Neverwhere*, the *Narnia* films and novels, *Sword Art Online* and *Log Horizon* (anime series), *Emerald City* (based on *The Wizard of Oz* franchise).

the characters use to go from lead to lead and how they forge relationships with each other, with recurring supporting characters, and the unique NPCs that figure in each case.

Characters in a procedural story are investigators. They might work in law enforcement, espionage, or journalism, but could be talented amateurs in the Sherlock Holmes vein, or even regular people with an intense drive to find out the truth behind an event that impacted their lives, like the disappearance of a loved one. Professional teams and partnerships are easy for the GM to direct – the mystery is their job to solve – while amateurs need motivation from case to case.

Each character should have a distinct specialty regardless of their core profession, like a computer specialist who can mine law enforcement databases (with or without access privileges), a “people person” who is the face of the group, an antisocial genius in a related field, and one or two action heroes who are always ready to get their hands dirty.

A procedural game tests the resourcefulness of its protagonists by presenting an end goal (capturing the criminal or solving the mystery) and keeping the road map in the dark for the characters to discover piecemeal. In a variant campaign, the characters and the story can be in the espionage and counterterrorism subgenre, where the characters are usually trying to *stop* a crime from occurring by piecing together clues about the identity and intent of the criminals, often stumbling upon conspiracies of varying scopes.

Most procedural games will have a Gritty tone; Pulpy and Cinematic games will include more action and violent encounters with the conspirators and their forces, and closure may come as the criminal mastermind falling off a building rather than facing justice in court.

The investigation rules (see **CHAPTER 2: BASIC RULES**) play a large part in a procedural game, as characters use primary

and tangential focuses to follow leads and assemble clues out of each subsequent discovery. Talents and specializations that emphasize the characters’ investigation skills are a big help, as are some of the social options when an NPC requires some convincing to give up the next lead. Combat skills are not out of the question in case the characters step on the wrong toes during their inquiries, but the campaign’s tone will determine just how much combat can be expected and thus how much characters should be ready for it.

INSPIRATIONS: *CSI*, *Law & Order*, *Alan Wake*, *The Bone Collector*, *The DaVinci Code*.

URBAN FANTASY

Urban fantasy stories happen in a world that’s pretty much our own, except that the supernatural coexists with mundane society to some degree or another. The campaign defines the details, such as whether magic is hidden or is openly integrated in a world where special police deal with ghosts and rogue arcanists.

Many urban fantasy stories feature creatures from classic horror like vampires, werewolves, and other things that go bump in the night, while some take inspiration from elements found in high fantasy or sword and sorcery. The setting explains how such legendary creatures or powers exist in the modern world, whether they are numerous or few, and whether magical beings live in the open or hide in secret societies and realms.

An urban fantasy’s premise suggests its stories. If magical factions exist, characters keep the peace, or get involved in their intrigues. If governments have Departments of Magic, characters might contend with corrupt government sorcerers, or magical enemy spies. The nature of the supernatural is a strong influence. If there’s creeping evil, heroes must report it to the authorities, or keep it from influencing mundane lives. If the old gods have returned, they bring their ancient rivalries with them.

The premise determines the range of protagonists as well. They might be normal people who stumble upon the secret world of the supernatural, or sorcerers, paranormal investigators, vampires wishing to atone for their past crimes, students in a contemporary magic academy, or elves with guitars. Reluctant heroes are rife in urban fantasy. They’re regular people who’d have a happy, boring life, if not for all the magic and talking cats.

The game’s mode usually depends on how prominent the supernatural is. In Gritty games, supernatural creatures and magical factions take pains to avoid discovery by the world at large, while Cinematic games often put magic in plain view.

Characters in an urban fantasy story might have access to the powers listed in **CHAPTER 6: EXTRAORDINARY POWERS**. It might be necessary to create new backgrounds for characters who aren’t human. You can adapt materials from other AGE books both for character options as well as adversaries. If you have *Fantasy AGE*, one quick solution is to give each character a fantasy race instead of a character creation Backgrounds, but use *Fantasy AGE* humans as well, to balance them with other character races.

INSPIRATIONS: *Bright*, *Shadowhunters*, the *Harry Potter* series, *The Dresden Files*, *American Gods*.



MODERN AGE, OTHER ERAS

As the Renaissance began to give way to the Age of Reason, history began to speed up. And that rate of social and scientific change, the way that the world began to move in directions it never had before, created a setting in which new kinds of stories could be told. *Modern AGE* is designed to give you the tools for tales of intrigue, mystery, and adventure in a world in conflict.

RUNNING HISTORICAL GAMES

When you're running a historical game, the key thing to remember is how you can get the *feel* of what a particular era is like, which is not necessarily the same as being accurate. It's easier than ever before to find historical detail and visual references for virtually any historical period. Try to use those details to create an atmosphere.

For example, if your Victorian airship crew needs a cannon to shoot down a marauding airship, they're going to remember Huntley and Palmer's Patented Steam-Powered Artillery Emplacement. It doesn't matter if the cannon is entirely made up (let alone the airships), and an actual Victorian might have just said "a cannon," by creating a name that sort of sounds Victorian, you're giving the thing a flavor. Steal liberally from movies and TV shows set in your period.

Don't feel shackled by the history books; feel free to change things when it suits. If you want to play a swashbuckling game inspired by *The Prisoner of Zenda* set in a fictional middle-European country in the 19th century where there's an all-women corps of heroic soldiers, go right ahead. Want to play a World War II story where your heroes mow down Hitler with machine guns at the end? Feel free.

As we go on, we'll look at some specific aspects of each of our target eras (not looking so much at games set in the 1880s as games set in the American West) and we'll suggest one or more genres for each time frame. These are only suggestions, though. If you want to do a Cinematic cosmic horror game, or a Gritty pirates game, go right ahead.

ERAS

Modern AGE works with a wide range of genres and styles of play. A few examples follow, but don't feel constrained by these. Mix and match, come up with new twists or new genres, or change the tone entirely.

WORLDS OLD AND NEW

1600-1820

In the wake of Europe's Renaissance came the Age of Reason. Philosophy and free thought bloomed, and the foundations of modern Western democracies were laid. Europe was rocked by war, empires grew, and these new powers expanded across the world. As the Protestant churches became powers in their

THE MODE CODE

Some of these campaign frameworks are better suited to certain game modes than others. We've marked framework entries with the following symbols to make it each to tell which mode fits best:



Frameworks with this icon are best suited for **Gritty** mode games.



Frameworks with this icon are best suited for **Pulpy** mode games.



Frameworks with this icon are best suited for **Cinematic** mode games.

own rights, it was an age of discovery and invasion, religious persecution and, eventually, revolution.

1650-1720: THE HIGH SEAS



This is the Age of Piracy, where scurvy sea dogs loot the ships of empire, and the privateer and the rogue could find riches or death. Villainous pirates loot and kill; heroic corsairs liberate slave ships and rob the rich to feed the poor islanders of the Caribbean.

Some pirates received license from one great empire or another to rob their enemies; some pirates forged their own kingdoms. Some pirates were egalitarian and democratic, voting for their captains. You don't need to change history one bit to find pirate crews headed by women and people from across the world. A parade of colorful criminals roved the waters: Calico Jack, Black Bart and Anne Bonny, Blackbeard and Madame Cheng — rascals and murderers all.

Pirate ships are (literally) vehicles for all manner of fantastic stories. Your heroes could be the captain, first mate, navigator, cook, or quartermaster of a crew of pirates good, bad, or ambivalent. Expect acrobatic stunts across ship beams, thrilling sword fights, and perhaps even superstition and horror, if the taste is yours, as pirate stories are full of accounts of ghost ships, deals with Satan, and sea monsters. Running battles against rival pirates and the navies of all the kingdoms could frame an episodic narrative of raids, daring escapes, and treasure islands. Arcana might be available to superstitious pirates. Characters on the high seas might only have access to black powder weapons and their ability focuses, and the advantage shifts to characters skilled in close combat.

Expect the crashing of waves, the creaking of beams, the clash of metal, the roar of the cannon, screams and laughter, horror and thrills.

INSPIRATIONS: *The Pirates of the Caribbean* series, *Captain Blood*, *On Stranger Tides* (a novel, but also an inspiration for the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film of the same name)

1640-1700: FOLK HORROR



In the rural countryside of Europe, in the remote, isolated colonies of New England, something evil waits, rising from the fields, the furrows, the forests. Witch panics consume entire communities. The innocent die — hanged, burned, drowned —

as their neighbors betray them to save their own skins. But something nonetheless haunts the lonely places. Villages that thrive one day become haunted ruins the next. Children vanish, and the families of the countryside huddle together at night, praying against the dark. An animal whispers to you: *Wouldst thou live deliciously?*

In the wilderness, the darkness waits; pagan village conspiracies sacrifice outsiders to the gods of Beltane; country taverns built with no church in sight turn silent when a stranger enters; wild-eyed preachers spit "Witch!" at anyone different or strange. Something blights the crops. A cat screeches; in the morning, half of the sheep in the nearby field have been torn apart.

Are these witches, ghosts, and devils real or superstitious delusions? Are they even the true villains? Your heroes could be witchfinders, travelling from town to town, searching for the followers of Satan, opposed not only by the forces of Darkness, but by fraudulent witch hunters who murder the innocent for profit. Or your heroes might be the witches, desperately protecting the countryside and themselves from the encroachment of evil and the intolerance of faith.

Expect quiet dread, pagan village conspiracies, terrible secrets hidden in everyday folk ballads, the inevitable sense of doom that comes from the realization that your fate is inescapable: *it was always you they wanted*. Characters have access to black powder weapons and again, close combat has the advantage. Characters might acquire magical arcana, but might not be able to recharge power points without certain services and sacrifices. And some dark rituals may use unique rules, and have unintended consequences. But Relationships may trump all magic, as love, religious obsessions, and secret desires influence the story.

INSPIRATIONS: *The Blood on Satan's Claw*, *Witchfinder General*, *The Crucible*, *The Witch*.

1770-1820:

LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ



The battle cry rings out: Liberty! In the Age of Revolution, the people revolt against oppressors. In France, it's the overthrow of a corrupt and decadent monarchy. In America, it's the right of the colonies to independence. Both revolutions draw from the same well, and freedom-fighters travel across the Atlantic both ways to stand alongside their fellows.

Heroes might Characters might fight on either side. As the French Revolution descends into the Terror, they might find themselves pursued by the agents of Robespierre and Danton. They might become agents smuggling aristocrats out of France, or detectives, tracking the aristos down. In America, your protagonists become ground-level fighters in the War of Independence; when they see who's fighting and what's at stake, that might lead them to ask other questions about who deserves freedom and what Liberty really means. Freedom has a price: will you pay it?

Expect split-second escapes, swift and bloody violence, injustice and atrocities, high ideals put to the toughest test. In aristocratic intrigues or the Terror, Relationships and socially adept characters come to the fore — you need to know who to trust. Failing that, trust in swords and black powder pistols!

INSPIRATIONS: *Marie Antoinette*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *April Morning*.

THE VICTORIAN AGE & BEYOND

1837-1914

The 19th century is the Age of Industry, of expansion, empire, and settlement. As the great empires of the world reached their peak, at home the gulf between rich and poor grew ever wider. Science made the fastest leaps it ever made. Steam power drives the greatest empires the world has ever known. Britain claims a territory over which the sun never sets, but in the slums of cities all over the world, it barely rises.

1840-1900: THE WEST



The Frontier—a place of conflict and hope, lawlessness and faith. New townships spring up and die with frightening speed. The rumor of gold in far-off hills sends prospectors, risking everything, in a mad rush to find it. Members of new religions journey west in wagon trains to find the Promised Land. Huge herds of cattle sweep across the plains. Cowboys and gunslingers vie with showmen and preachers for the hearts of the settlers, and a part in the birth of a nation's new mythology.

Your heroes could be the sheriff and a crew of deputies, bringing the law to the varmints of a one-horse town with only the badge, a six shooter, and a passel of true grit. Perhaps they're gunslingers, trapped on the wrong side of the law, a posse on their tail and names to clear. Or perhaps they're gamblers, drifting from town to town, looking for a table to play and a wrong to right. They might be the indigenous people, struggling to deal with the depredations of settlers.

The West allows for fantasy elements and grim prairie tales: ghost riders and witches, ancient burial mounds with vengeful inhabitants, and the fearsome critters of wild, drunken stories, like jackalopes and squonks, fur-bearing trout, serpentine lake creatures, dinosaurs in lost desert valleys, and of course, Bigfoot. Gunslingers and snipers become decisive forces in battles, as their rifles, carbines, and revolvers paint the West in blood and gun smoke.

Expect card games that break into barroom brawls, nerve-shredding gunfights in silent, dusty streets, wild horseback chases, a posse lynching the wrong man, tense encounters with rattlesnakes and cougars, wide open plains, and burning deserts.

INSPIRATIONS: Too many to list!

1860-1914: STEAMPUNK



The British Empire! Given the chance, the ingenuity, and the science, could it reach to the stars? Imagine a past replete with wild, patriotic anachronisms. Airship pirates ply the skyways, and in a fantastic London made of steam and glass, steam velocipedes and kinetic tramlines fill the streets alongside horse-drawn cabs and trading barrows. Discover the terrifying truth behind the Analytical Engines of Calcutta; travel to the moon and open trading links with the Selenite Empire before the agents of the Kaiser make their inroads. Pilot the vast steam leviathans that travel across the seas, mining the ocean floor as they go, and navigate the labyrinthine politics of these floating kingdoms.

HANDLING THE BAD PARTS

Sexism, racism, discrimination against non-heterosexual orientations, and other social plagues are part of the past and unfortunately, exist now, too. Having protagonists move through a world with historical discrimination, and horrendous situations like slavery, isn't something every player wants to experience. Some players find these situations upsetting, or are concerned that no in-game treatment will be respectful of the way these events still echo through to the present. And that's fine. If players don't want it, don't do it. The game is supposed to be fun.

To portray historical discrimination, you must have the consent of the entire group, and no situation in play must appear to endorse bigotry. The first ensures the comfort of your players; the second is an ethical requirement. Any player must feel free to ask that this element be toned down or eliminated later on, and you need to do your research, because one unfortunate thing about contemporary discrimination is how it affects how we look at history.

Be kind to your group. Remember that everyone around the table deserves to have fun.

It's a time of wonder and glorious progress, but also a time where children still work as chimney sweeps and mine-canaries, and the workhouses are packed to bursting. Revolution could happen at any minute.

Your heroes might be explorers, seeking treasure in the heart of the Caves of Mars, or put in charge of managing an off-world colony, where they might struggle to keep their underlings honest, and it might slowly dawn on them that the Empire is not always just. They could be airship pirates, robbing the jeweled heirs of the sky and giving to the poor.

Expect wonders of clockwork and steam, airships and flying islands, patriotism (good and bad), exploitation and bigotry, and the opportunity to challenge them. This is a setting where computer hackers show up a century early, but where steam-scalds and a watchmaker's steady hands marl the profession. Characters with scientific skills can produce wondrous things.

INSPIRATIONS: *First Men in the Moon*, *Laputa: Castle in the Sky*, *The Difference Engine*, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

1840-1890: GOTHIC HORROR



It's the height of the Victorian era. In the great cities of the world, evil lurks. Killers stalk the sulphurous streets of the Victorian metropolis—London, yes, but consider New York, Paris, or Shanghai—preying on the poor and the desperate. Vampires, driven from their ancient seats by the encroachments of the nineteenth century, finally take notice of the urban masses and make their move. Mediums contact the dead, but do the dead want to be disturbed? Ritual magicians engage in secret wars.

Your heroes could be consulting detectives with keen analytical minds unmasking occult frauds with rational explanations. A group of ritual magicians, on the other hand, might fight against monsters. A gang of pickpockets, chimney



sweeps, and street urchins might be the only ones who know about the depredations of any number of Rippers, Hydes, and Spring-Heeled Jacks, and the only hope against impossible, bloody-handed odds.

Expect bloody murder and feverish panic on gas-lit streets, opium dens and seedy dives, séances and circles of ritual magic, aristocratic monsters and slaving beasts, thieves and lowlives, poverty and wealth side by side, and labyrinthine occult conspiracies. Investigation-related abilities are paramount in the cities, but in moldering estates, Relationships grow like poison flowers, representing family secrets. Some characters may learn mystic arcana within secret societies. Some may be creatures of the night themselves. The rules for exceptionals (see the **Exceptionals** genre) might be used to represent their powers.

INSPIRATIONS: *From Hell*, *Dracula*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

BETWEEN THE WARS

[1918-1939]

Between the two biggest military conflicts in history, the world endured a series of wild upheavals. Economic crashes, depressions and hyperinflation, revolutions, and dictatorships made for an uncertain world where trust was in very short supply.

1918-1937: COSMIC HORROR



With millions thrust into poverty across the world, and the blasted emotional ruin of the Great War to contend with, the idea of a benevolent creator guiding the world in good-

ness and justice began to fade. The suspicion arose that the universe was not only uncaring, but actively hostile and hungry, thirsty. What if God is an unknowable, unnameable, malevolent alien entity? What if eldritch, shapeless beings have been feeding on us since the beginning of time? What if the still-new science of human evolution only ends up proving that we were bred as slaves, experimental subjects, or *food*? How would you react? Would you shrink back in horror? Perhaps it's a mercy that you don't know.

Cults dedicated to the study and worship of the Old Things and the Stranger Gods have existed alongside us for longer than we realized. Perhaps they are thousands of years old and brand new *at the same time*. What does time mean, anyway?

Your protagonists might be academics, librarians, law-enforcement agents, private detectives, or simply people investigating dark family secrets. A chance clue might lead them on a trail to murder, occult forces, and shattering truths about humanity's past and future. If extraordinary powers are available, they come at the price of psychological stability, and with the risk of attracting beings from Beyond.

Time is running out. Soon humanity will show itself capable of horror beyond anything even the stars can imagine.

Expect inexplicable and indescribable entities from before the beginning of time, tentacles, cults, human sacrifice, time-traveling nightmares, an ever-diminishing fund of hope, and traumatic revelations.

INSPIRATIONS: The stories of H.P. Lovecraft, especially *The Call of Cthulhu*, *At the Mountains of Madness*, *The Whisperer in Darkness*, *The Dunwich Horror*.

1930-1939: NOIR



On the mean streets of the city, you've got to make your way however you can. Each new client looks like trouble, the landlord is on your back for rent again, and you never know if the cops want to help you out or beat you to a pulp.

Everything is black and white, silhouetted in the stark glare of a street lamp, wreathed in shadow. This is the world of film noir, where the city after dark is as much your enemy as its inhabitants. This is a world where you're already doomed from your first bad decision, brutal violence is only a street corner away, and no one gets out alive.

Your protagonists could be seedy private detectives or upright cops in a corrupt precinct. They could be lowlife mobsters trying to keep some kind of honor on the streets, or cops deep undercover in crime families, beginning to wonder whose side they're on. Or they could be aging sportsmen or nightclub entertainers, forced into taking on dubious jobs since the honest money has dried up.

The Depression might be coming to its end, but on the streets, the poverty remains, and it makes the people hard, unforgiving. Hard solutions and mean-spirited politics look like they're going to win the day. Something terrible is just around the corner.

Everyone has an agenda, everyone has something to gain. They're all using you, and the trick is how you're going to stay ahead, stay on top, if you even can.

Expect car chases, *femmes fatales*, hapless schmucks and patsies, corrupt cops, kingpins and thugs, thankless jobs, untrustworthy clients, brutal beatings, lethal knife and gunfights that end in seconds, mysterious objects. There's nothing but long, lonely nights on the mean streets.

INSPIRATIONS: *The Maltese Falcon*, *The Big Sleep*, *Kiss Me Deadly*, *The Third Man*, *Red Harvest*

1930-1939 :TREASURE HUNTERS & ROCKETEERS



In the mid-30s, Heinrich Himmler's *Ahnenerbe*, an organization dedicated to esoteric archaeology, traveled all around the world, seeking out the holiest ancient places and most potent artifacts. Their aim? To give the Third Reich the occult power that would ensure Nazi rule for a thousand years. They secured the *Heilige Lanze*, reputed to have been the spear that pierced the side of Christ; they sent an expedition to Tibet to find Shambhala, home of the Secret Rulers of the World.

So much is of historical record, but what else did they try to find? The Ark of the Covenant? The Holy Grail? The Sibylline Books? The Mask of Agamemnon? The Elephants' Graveyard? The last Saber-Toothed Tiger? Fragments of the True Cross? The Valley of the Living Dinosaurs?

Who might stop them? Could you get there first?

Your heroes might be archaeologists seeking knowledge and truth for their own sake, but driven to get there before the forces of fascist evil steal and pervert them. They might be heroic bush pilots or explorers. They could be inventors and engineers, sky captains and rocket men, detectives and inven-

tors, all willing to set off across the world at a moment's notice in a desperate race to unearth the past and save the world. They might learn psychic abilities from lamas, and would benefit from ability focuses related to wilderness survival and cultural knowledge, since they'll be visiting distant places and people on a regular basis.

Evade the warlords of troubled China and find the fossils of the ancient lizards—and their living descendants. Keep the mystic secrets of India hidden from the depredations of the Raj and the plundering agents of Himmler. Brave rainforests in search of the Ape Kingdoms. Be mindful of the fact that few places are truly hidden or unexplored—rather, the people who know them best tend to be overlooked or oppressed by the cultures of “adventurers.” Aid their revolts, and help them unlock secret sites' powers.

Excitement awaits, and more than that: truth.

Expect troubled nations, warlords and cult leaders, white-knuckle chases, biplane dogfights, split-second escapes, occult secrets, ruthless Nazis and their allies who would sell out anything for power, remote locations and ancient ruins swarming with snakes (why did it have to be snakes?), and ancient sages in remote locales, waiting to impart the secrets of the universe.

INSPIRATIONS: *Doc Savage*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *The Rocketeer*, *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow*.

THE COLD WAR

(1945-1990)

An Iron Curtain descended across the world when the War ended, and paranoia took its hold as the world chilled under the shadow of the Bomb. We learned not to trust governments capable of push-button Armageddon. In an era where the elders of our time chose to remain blind, the young began to find new ways of approaching the world, and as the decades moved on, imagined new ways to live. This is the age of Rock and Roll, punks and hippies; the age of the superspy and the conspiracy nut; a time for police procedurals on TV, and later, media about tough cops and vigilantes.

1947-1979 : RED SCARES & HIDDEN AREAS



Trust no one.

In 1947, an object crashed in New Mexico. Government agencies insisted it was a weather balloon, but nonetheless closed off the area and guarded it closely. *What were they hiding?*

In September 1961, Betty and Barney Hill were abducted from their car in New Hampshire and subjected to medical experiments by apparent extraterrestrials. *What was the abductors' purpose?*

In 1962, Ufologist Albert K Bender reported having been visited by mysterious “men in black,” who issued vague threats to prevent him from investigating further. *Who sent them?*

Elvis Presley. Marilyn Monroe. Jayne Mansfield. All were sighted after their deaths. But who would have faked them? *What purpose would that have achieved?*

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the CIA's MK-ULTRA program conducted tests on American civilians to find better mind control techniques. The CIA claimed to have disbanded the program in 1977 but accounts of inexplicable suicides and mysterious deaths still abound, each with the hint that MK-ULTRA was yet involved. *What are our masters planning?*

You live in a world of conspiracies within conspiracies. Government agencies colluding with extraterrestrials. Brainwashed assassins. Agencies whose national loyalty is always compromised. What does patriotism mean when you work for people who might be selling out the planet? What's in the hangar? Who faked the moon landing? Who shot JFK?

Your protagonists could be low-level agents of the FBI or CIA who are beginning to suspect that their masters might not be on the level. They might be in law enforcement—deputies, maybe, or in the office of the district attorney—or ordinary people who stumble upon strangeness. Gritty games likely focus on the Great Game, UFOs, and parapsychology. High conspiracy theories are either folklore or false fronts designed to conceal the grubby business of real espionage. But in Pulp games it can get much, much weirder.

Expect wheels within wheels, brainwashed assassins, shadowy informers, sinister men in black sunglasses, dead celebrities walking, brain transplants, doppelgangers and stolen identities, weird lights in the sky, missing time, drugs and torture, and constant paranoia.

INSPIRATIONS: *Spycatcher*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Hangar 18*, *The Parallax View*, John Le Carré's Cold War novels.

1963-1969: GROOVY SECRET AGENTS



In the heart of the swinging sixties, there is nothing more exhilarating than being an agent of ACRONYM (Allied Command for Reactive Opposition by aNY Means). Sneaking into secret underground installations, defeating would-be world-conquering megalomaniacs, engaging in thrill-a-minute games of intrigue against rivals from GHOST (Global Hegemony Operations Strategic Taskforce) (and possibly also romancing them). You hang out in the swankiest casinos, the craziest fashion shows, the hippest nightclubs, and you dress to kill—literally. Everything is larger-than-life, primary colored, campy, and the stakes are always the entire world!

Your heroes are agents of a crack organization given the remit to go anywhere and fix any problem, anyhow. One might be a teenage agent who, thanks to a Top-Secret process, learns improbable spy skills. One could be a scientist recruited by the Super-Secret Service because no one else knows how to deactivate the Earthquake Bomb. In any case, this campaign has something for any character specialty, from “judo chopping” combatants to socially adept jet-setters. In a *Modern AGE* game, the classic omni-competence of a superspy is normally split between a team.

Perhaps the agents realized they weren't on the good guy side—before they could resign, their masters drugged them and sent them to a remote island, or possibly a village, where sinister but strangely camp forces of authority never let them leave and put them through outlandish forms of torture to try to make them conform.

Expect tongue-in-cheek acronyms, psychedelic doomsday devices, overcomplicated torture machines, fab fashions, cackling villains who tell you their entire plot while gloating, fast cars, and at least one scene in a casino.

INSPIRATIONS: *In Like Flint* and *Our Man Flint*, *Goldfinger* and *Thunderball*.

1970-1987: COPS WHO DON'T PLAY BY THE RULES



It's 1975. Crime is rife. Down at the precinct, the lieutenant is always there to yell at you, but he can't deny that you bring them in, one way or another.

Your protagonists are cops in the city, corrupt or honest, but always unorthodox. The streets need cleaning up. Maybe the police force needs cleaning up too, and the characters are hated by their colleagues. Unless you're going with a neo-noir detective or a rumpled reporter, characters are probably cops with Membership in a police force.

Your city is inhabited with a colorful cast of informers, criminals, and everyday people. The precinct (or the station, or the Yard, depending where you are) has its own politics, and its own factions. Your maverick detectives have as many enemies in the police as they do on the other side of the coin. But then, they're not here to make friends. Do they bring them in alive? Are they prone to excessive force? Perhaps your cops are involved in a long-term undercover sting. Will they get too close to their quarry? Will their loyalties shift?

Perhaps, more fancifully, they have a gimmick—a car with a computer in it, a motorbike, a helicopter—but even so, they live lives of excitement and danger, where the bullets are real.

Expect beatings in interview rooms, undercover operations, stake-outs, eccentric informers, mean streets and meaner detectives, car chases and foot chases, the good cop/bad cop routine, and punks who feel lucky.

INSPIRATIONS: *Miami Vice*, *Serpico*, *Starsky and Hutch*, *Dirty Harry* and its sequels.

THE PRESENT DAY & BEYOND

(1990-THE FUTURE)

The Cold War ended, but the hope of a lasting peace gave way to a War on Terror with no end in sight. Even so, society advances, and we might yet see a new hope for the world. Or its end. It could go either way.

2001-THE PRESENT DAY: AN UNSTABLE WORLD



After the tragedy of 9/11, the hopes of the previous decade that we might enter a brighter, safer future finally evaporated. Instead we got ongoing terrorism and the horror humanity can bring on itself. We can no longer be certain who is on our side; we can no longer trust our own masters (but then, could we ever, really?).



Your protagonists are stuck in the middle of that. Perhaps they work in counterterrorism, and are discovering that the conflicts they're embroiled in are nowhere nearly as black and white as they think they are. Perhaps they start as loyal agents of their government but learn that the clandestine agencies they work for are horribly compromised or possibly even not the agencies they thought they were at all. They might be freelancers—hypercompetent contractors working for multiple sides at the same time and considered ultimately expendable by all of them. They might know too much, and shadowy agencies pursue them as they desperately attempt to get off the map.

Expect high-stakes chases, shock betrayals, split second escape plans, sudden murders, swift turnarounds, and cutting-edge technology.

INSPIRATIONS: *24*, *Alias*, the *Bourne* series, *The Kingsmen* series, *XXX*, *Enemy of the State*

FIVE MINUTES FROM NOW: EVOLUTION



Humanity is one quiet leap away from the next step in its evolution, but what exactly will that be? Artificial intelligence? The uploading of consciousness? A new development in biological evolution? When it happens, whether Singularity or the birth of *homo novus*, it's going to happen against a backdrop of the world we know.

Humanoid robots might be sold as everyday appliances, but what happens when they gain consciousness en masse? What if the shared dreams of people all over the world turn out to be the sign of people awakening to a new stage in life, with new powers, new ways of seeing the world? Will the birth of new forms of intelligence, whether human or otherwise, bring with it the birth of empathy? Or will the species divide bring a class divide? What happens when the rich all get uploaded into new bodies and the rest of humanity gets left behind?

You're going to find yourself at the beginning of a brand-new world, but whether that's the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning might well be up to you.

Your heroes could be people from all over the world who find each other and awaken to supernatural powers, or they could be AIs awakening in new bodies. They might be ordinary people surrounded by sentient machines, or scientists who have made a breakthrough and have to decide what to do with it. They could be members of an agency tasked with stopping a looming war between ordinary humanity by hunting down sentient machines. They could be a machine and a human in love. Or people who died and find themselves uploaded without consent. Psychic abilities and the rules for the **Exceptionals** genre might represent the characters' futuristic edge.

INSPIRATIONS: *Beggars in Spain*, *Sense8*, *Humans*, *Chappie*, *The Matrix*, *Ex Machina*.



A SPECULATIVE VENTURE

In *A Speculative Venture*, the heroes discover a plot to achieve fame and fortune by taking advantage of a dead woman's genius. They must decide whether to take sides or walk away with the prize themselves.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

A Speculative Venture is an introductory adventure for 4–6 1st-level *Modern AGE* heroes. The characters attend an exclusive party at the estate of one Lars Northrup, the wealthy CEO of Progrise, an up-and-coming technology giant. The fête celebrates the legacy of cutting-edge inventor Jenna Ramírez, whom everyone thought had perished in a tragic accident. She's not only alive and well, but ready to unveil a brand-new technology to revolutionize modern society. But something isn't right, as the heroes soon discover when FBI agent Monique Moody and rival innovator Simone LeBlanc start asking questions.

As the characters delve, they learn Ramírez has hired mercenaries to steal the invention back from Northrup and destroy his estate—and everyone in it—to remove witnesses and evidence. Further investigation leads them to suspect Northrup of unethical business practices, and eventually, to find the bomb planted in the boiler room under the mansion.

In the final act, the heroes face down whoever they've decided to oppose, reveal the truth about Ramírez, get their hands on

the hard drive that holds the invention's secrets, and make a choice that could impact the lives of millions.

THE SETUP

Several interlopers crash the party, including Agent Moody, a cadre of mercenary thugs, and the president of a rival technology company. The protagonists have any number of reasons to attend this party, and they don't have to begin as an established team (although they could). Possible points of entry include being a wealthy guest, such as a donor or local politician, Progrise security, a journalist with a hard-won press pass, a sponsored member of the scientific community, someone who was close to Ramírez, Moody's assistant, an undercover cop trying to beat the FBI to the punch, a thief here to steal the invention, or even a mercenary with second thoughts. Players might come up with other ideas, too.

The primary action antagonists are the mercs. Their strength is mostly in their numbers, which means it's easy to dial the threat up or down for more or fewer players by adding or subtracting thugs. The adventure provides a lot of options for social and exploration challenges, as the heroes decide which avenues to take for investigating Ramírez and securing the hard drive that holds the invention (or its plans). They can snoop around Northrup's estate to find clues, question party guests to uncover schemes and murky histories, hack into Northrup's private computer to score incriminating evidence, or force answers out of Northrup himself. They'll most likely do a combination of these.

This adventure includes options for paranormal or futuristic elements as well, which allows you to introduce an antagonistic ghost or AI in the final showdown, if you like.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

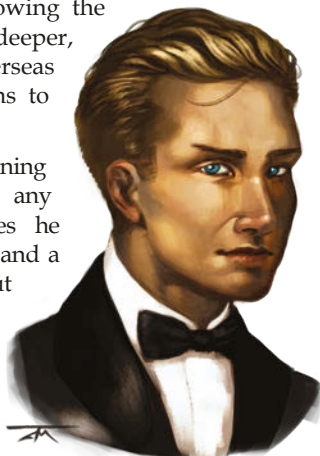
Below are the NPCs appearing in this adventure. See **Adversaries and NPCs** at the end of the chapter for statistics for these characters. Depending on who the characters decide to befriend and oppose, the rewards for completing this adventure should include different kinds of Reputation, and potentially even some Membership.

LARS NORTHRUP

CEO OF PROGRISE

Northrup is an ambitious corporate climber who took his company from novel start-up to major player in a few short years. He has a spotless public image, with well-documented annual donations to charity and the recently created Ramírez Memorial Foundation for Scientific Achievement, which is why he's throwing the party. But as the heroes dig deeper, they discover his myriad overseas bank accounts and connections to shady organizations.

Befriending Northrup means gaining free access to his study and any uncompromised security forces he commands, as well as Ramírez and a share of the scheme's profits, but pits the heroes against everyone else. Opposing Northrup means finding the truth and the invention is a greater challenge, but they ultimately expose his misdeeds or use them for their own gain.

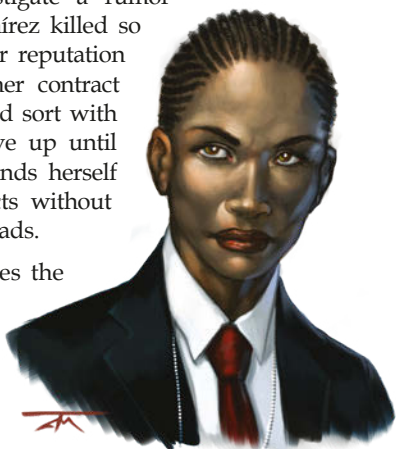


MONIQUE MOODY

FBI AGENT

Moody's here to investigate a rumor that Northrup had Ramírez killed so he could profit from her reputation without conceding to her contract demands. She's a dogged sort with integrity who won't give up until she has answers, but lands herself in trouble when she acts without backup to avoid losing leads.

Befriending Moody gives the heroes an ally in action scenes and investigations, and reasons to open Northrup's can of worms, if they didn't already have one.



WHAT'S ON THE DRIVE?

This adventure doesn't tell you what Ramírez's invention is. It's an opportunity for you to decide where to take your campaign once the introductory session is complete. If you plan to run a game in which the paranormal plays a role, the "invention" could be a mystical tome that reveals how Northrup harnessed Ramírez's spirit, or an ancient relic that grants psychic abilities. In a science fiction game, it could be cloning technology, the key to artificial intelligence, or an alien power source ripe for WMDs or renewable energy. If you prefer a mundane game, it could be plans for a satellite, an unbeatable computer virus, or blueprints for a new kind of stealth vehicle. You could decide that rather than recovering a hard drive, the characters recover an actual device or artifact—or even a person. (Or Ramírez's brain in a jar.) Whatever the case, you're encouraged to use this MacGuffin as a hook for further adventures.

Opposing her means facing her down for possession of the invention and, later, becoming outlaws.

SIMONE LEBLANC

PRESIDENT OF PIQUE PERFORMANCE, LTD.

LeBlanc is an established technology mogul whose company has been on top for years, but ever since Progrise took off, the competition has been stiff. LeBlanc's people suspect Ramírez's return isn't what it seems, but they need proof, so she secured an invitation despite Northrup's polite efforts to stop her. She's no saint and her methods are ruthless, but her motives are simple: find legitimate dirt on Progrise to get them out of the picture. She doesn't want the FBI or the press involved, though; she'd rather do it quietly, with minimal disruption to the status quo.

Befriending LeBlanc means gaining a powerful social ally. She can't help much with the action or exploration, but she can provide reasons to get involved and promise rich rewards. Opposing her means making a powerful enemy, who takes any offense personally.



JENNA RAMÍREZ

The real Jenna Ramírez was a technological prodigy with several advanced science degrees and a track record for innovations that revolutionized various industries. She was never implicated in anything illegal or morally questionable, and put her inventions to use for the public good. This could be a tip-off for the characters if they discover the invention they're here to secure is a weapon or some other threat. Ramírez might now be a pawn in a dark conspiracy, the jaded survivor of an assassination attempt who no longer cares for ethics, or not herself at all.

In the end, the heroes are here to either rescue or stop Ramírez. She has opinions on what to do with the invention, but leaves the final choice in the players' hands. She's either powerless to stop them, willing to go along with their plans, or the final antagonist.

See **Adversaries and NPCs** for more information on options for Ramírez.



MERCENARY THUGS

The thugs are a mix of ex-military types, former law enforcement agents, and professional criminals, but they're no ragtag team—they're guns-for-hire who all work for the same private mercenary company, straddling the line between legal work and organized crime. Tonight, they've been paid extravagantly to lean hard on the latter side of that line.

Befriending the mercenaries opens doors to potential future work or lucrative (but shady) deals, but it also pits the heroes against Moody and the law. It buys the PCs free passage through the mansion and an easy escape from the bomb, but leaves everyone else at the thugs' mercy and puts the invention in their hands—unless the heroes betray them, making yet more enemies. Opposing the thugs is a sure-fire route to an uphill battle, but earns respect and favors from everyone else involved.

THE PRESS

A few savvy journalists attend, eager for enterprising characters to dish. One or two major news outlets, like CNN or Forbes, may have a representative here, but the reporters are mostly small-time up-and-comers in tech blogging circles, hungry for an announcement or scandal that can jumpstart their careers.

Befriending the press doesn't do a lot for now, but the post-adventure Reputation rewards are substantial and the heroes gain valuable contacts for later. Opposing them likewise earns the characters a grudge that's sure to come back and bite them in the future.

WEALTHY GUESTS

Most of the attendees are wealthy patrons looking for ways to boost their reputations, recruit promising minds, or legitimately support the sciences. They can be businesspeople, high-profile technology gurus, celebrities, members of the memorial foundation's board, and Northrup's shady business partners. Some may have had dealings with the mercenaries, LeBlanc, and/or Ramírez in the past, which the protagonists can discover through investigation.

Befriending or opposing socialites has similar repercussions as with the press, but heroes could talk their way into further conspiracies or promising business ventures, creating interesting opportunities for later adventures.

SCENE I

TROUBLE IN PARADISE

SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

Read or paraphrase the following aloud to the players:

One year ago today, the genius inventor Jenna Ramírez died in a terrible accident. Tonight, the Ramírez Memorial Foundation for Scientific Achievement is throwing a lavish party to celebrate her memory for wealthy donors, politicians, and celebrities. You've arrived at the majestic estate of technology baron Lars Northrup, CEO of Progrise and the foundation's benefactor. In the news, you've heard nothing but good things. He donates to charity. He's truly invested in the future of humanity. He's also invited a few key minds from the scientific community to this event, including—surprisingly—his greatest rival, the established tech mogul Simone LeBlanc of Pique Performance, Ltd.

The mansion buzzes with rumors and conspiracy theories about the foundation's true purpose and what really happened to Ramírez. A few reporters hover about at the back of the massive event hall where guests mingle and sample hors d'oeuvres, waiting for any juicy tidbit they can snatch up. At the front of the room, an enormous flat-screen monitor is mounted on the wall. It's not currently showing anything, and Northrup has yet to make an appearance.

Tell the players that security confiscates any weaponry the PCs brought when they arrived. They can make a **DEXTERITY (SLEIGHT OF HAND)** test opposed by the guards' **PERCEPTION (SEEING)** or **(TOUCHING)** (for pat-downs) to sneak small weapons in.

Give the characters time to mingle, get to know people (including each other, if necessary), and pick up leads that something's amiss. You can introduce a few additional named NPCs if you wish, such as a scientist who's worked with Ramírez before or a nosy reporter. These can serve as important sources of clues for the characters later.

During this scene, the protagonists can make social and investigation tests. Use the simple systems in most cases unless the players want to actively shift attitudes. They can make opposed **COMMUNICATION** tests to make impressions, learn about people, and work on their Reputations. The GM can use the rules under **Impressions and Attitudes** in **CHAPTER 2** to set starting attitudes, or just decide how various NPCs feel about the characters based on their interactions here and what roles they inhabit. **TN 11 PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)** or **(HEARING)** tests allow characters to eavesdrop on important conversations and read the room to determine who's important, who isn't, and who's got ulterior motives for being here.

SCENE I SCENARIOS

Here are some example scenarios to play through during the first half of this scene.

SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

One of the heroes—or an NPC if no one is inclined—is here to make connections and be seen. They shake hands, gather



groups to chat around plates of food, bring people drinks snatched from waiters' trays, and generally facilitate socializing. Other characters might flirt with the heroes, lobby for their support for some cause or other, or just ask them about themselves and make small talk.

Characters introduced here can provide fodder for good drama later. For instance, if one of the heroes hits it off with an attractive guest or makes a friend, they can be in a position to rescue that NPC from danger later, or discover a conspirator has duped them.

AGENT MOODY, FBI

Moody is not the subtlest around, and she's not afraid to go around the room flashing her badge and questioning anyone unfortunate enough to stand still for 5 minutes. She wants to hear about people's backgrounds, how they know Northrup or knew Ramírez, and whether they've heard anything strange regarding Ramírez's death or the foundation.

THE RUMOR MILL

Whether through a journalist, Moody, LeBlanc, or security guards and staff who've overheard suspicious things, the characters hear some juicy gossip—not all of which need be true. They might hear Ramírez faked her death, Northrup's selling the company to LeBlanc, Northrup had Ramírez killed, Northrup and Ramírez had an affair, Northrup is in the pocket of some crooked group with big plans, or other tales. Which of them is true is up to you.

BACK FROM THE DEAD

Once sufficient introductions have been made, read or paraphrase the following:

Northrup enters the room, surreptitiously flanked by a couple of security guards who take up posts by the door, and welcomes everyone. He gives the usual spiel with thanks to donors and inspirational words, and from the way he talks, you can believe he means it, too.

Then he says, "Ladies and gentlemen, it's my great honor to introduce the finest mind the modern technology industry has ever seen. We're so fortunate that our great loss last year was nothing but a tragic mistake. Please welcome...Jenna Ramírez!"

The screen comes to life and displays a smiling Ramírez, much to everyone's shock. Northrup clearly expects applause, but the room can't decide how to react.

Characters can make opposed **PERCEPTION (EMPATHY)** tests to notice the reactions of individuals and see who's not as shocked as they appear. LeBlanc, for instance, isn't surprised. Neither is any mercenary posing as a guest. Moody seems surprised but also suspicious.

Then read or paraphrase the following:

On screen, Ramírez apologizes solemnly for the terrible misunderstanding and assures everyone she's alive and well, but couldn't attend in person. Then she says, "I am beyond

thrilled to unveil my new partnership with Progrise and Mr. Northrup. Thanks to his generous patronage and tireless support, I've been working on a secret project—one that I can't wait to show you all when the time is right. Rest assured, this innovation is guaranteed to change the status quo forever. Soon, we will sign off on a press release with further details, so stay tuned!"

The broadcast ends, with a smattering of applause and a low wave of muttering. Northrup brings up another suit from the foundation's board to talk for a while about the organization's new direction, but almost everyone has tuned him out in favor of gossip.

Characters with hacking capabilities and the equipment to detect broadcast signals can make a **TN 13 INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS)** test to learn that Ramírez's supposed broadcast came from inside the mansion somewhere; other characters can learn this another way, perhaps by talking to a tech-savvy guest.

Once the presentation is over, the room clamors for more information, and the reporters go from minnows to sharks. Depending on the characters' roles and reasons for being here, they might work to keep everyone calm and stop anybody from following Northrup as he leaves the room with his guards; or they might be the ones trying to follow and inciting calls for more details. If the players ask about Moody, the heroes notice she's already gone and can slip out unnoticed by security to find her with opposed **DEXTERITY (STEALTH)** or **COMMUNICATION (DECEPTION)** tests. Alternatively, if the characters are here in any official capacity, she recruits them to help her case the estate. If they've befriended LeBlanc or a reporter, or they have history with Ramírez, they can end up neck-deep in schemes to find out more outside official channels.

This is also a good time for tests to eavesdrop or read the room, as before, to pick up leads. At this point, start using the detailed investigation system, as the players latch onto one lead or another and choose their route to more information.

Characters who try to use phones or other devices notice they have no signal and wi-fi is unavailable. A **TN 15 INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS)** test can reveal to characters investigating the issue with appropriate equipment (such as software on a mobile device) that something is actively jamming signals in these frequencies.

Let the characters decide how they'd like to proceed: sneak out to investigate, stay here and talk to people who know more, lead the charge to force the truth out of Northrup, or something else.

SCENE 2

HOSTAGE SITUATION

VARIABLE

In this scene, the mercenaries reveal themselves, locking everyone inside the great hall and claiming this will all be over soon if everyone cooperates. They plan to bail right before detonating the bomb; a few of their number are off searching the mansion for the invention already, and one of the mercs in the great hall has the detonator.

As noted earlier, one of the mercenaries (she posed as a cleaner before the party) planted a jamming device that blocks wi-fi and cellular signals in an area covering the mansion. This electronic warfare specialist knows where it is, but the other mercs don't. Otherwise, it can be found with signal-detection equipment and a **TN 10 INTELLIGENCE (ELECTRONICS)** test. It's hidden inside a wall behind a painting on the main floor.

The characters might be present for the mercenaries' arrival, in a position to try to evacuate everyone, or they might be elsewhere in the mansion and find the bomb or Northrup's study full of evidence before they know about the hostage situation.

The following scenes may occur in any order, depending on what the players do.

IN THE GREAT HALL

ACTION, EXPLORATION, OR SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

If the characters stay put at first, wait until they try something like finally leaving the room or tipping the intruders off that they're on to the danger. Then read or paraphrase the following:

A sudden deafening report of gunfire interrupts the party, prompting screams and terror. Armed people dressed all in black with hidden faces, and a few in fancy party clothes, block all three entrances to the room. One of them has fired at the ceiling and gets the room's undivided attention.

"Everybody listen up!" they shout. "Nobody has to get hurt if you just stay calm and cooperate. Do that, and you'll make it home in one piece tonight."

Make it clear that a few of the "guests" or even "security guards" were armed infiltrators. The mercs have jammed all incoming and outgoing signals, and the heroes can discover this now if they didn't before.

From here, the characters should drive what happens next. Maybe they fight back. Maybe they sneak out to find their own weapons, or help from security or Moody. The thugs have people patrolling the grounds and the mansion, so this requires various tests to avoid capture. Or maybe the heroes take it slow, using social and exploration actions to figure out who's trustworthy or not, who the mercs are and why they're here, and other clues. Maybe they turn their charms on the mercenaries and learn about the bomb or who hired them that way. This is a good time to use the detailed social interactions system.

Calling the cops is a possibility, if the characters can find and sabotage the signal-jamming device, but they can learn from Moody or others now or in **Scene 1** that corruption plagues the local police force, so that way lies betrayal.

LeBlanc should be a prime suspect, but successful detailed investigation eventually reveals she's not responsible. She wants to get her hands on Ramírez's invention, but this is much too blatant for her tastes. She has quieter plans to ruin Northrup by exposing his shady business and performing a hostile takeover of Progrise; she came to find allies and evidence.



In truth, Ramírez herself hired the mercenaries. If it's really her, or she's a clone, a ghost, or an AI, she acted independently to stop her work from falling into the wrong hands. She probably didn't know they'd blow up the place, unless she's really changed. Even if she's working with Northrup willingly, she's just using him for his money and influence, or trying to ruin him. If you want to plant hooks for further adventures—or if you decide “Ramírez” was just cleverly doctored video footage and the invention is the work of someone else who somehow usurped her proprietary tech—another party might have sent the mercs instead to steal the invention and frame someone for murder, kicking off a larger conspiracy.

HAVING A BLAST

ACTION & EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

As soon as the heroes learn about the bomb, one way or another, they'll need to deal with that next; even if they evacuate everyone from the great hall, they know Northrup, Moody, and perhaps others are still inside somewhere—not to mention the invention, or at the very least, information about it. This is a race against time. They must either disarm the bomb or find everyone in the house before the mercenaries get the invention and set the bomb off. Depending on how long it takes to learn about it, they might be in quite the rush.

The characters could learn about the bomb while dealing with the mercs, or they might puzzle out its existence by uncovering the rest of the conspiracy. The thugs use walkie talkies to communicate inside the mansion, so the characters could steal one and trick the thugs into giving up info. They could also stumble across the bomb on their own, if they have any reason to be in the basement.

The bomb is in the boiler room. It's designed to start a chain reaction that will collapse the entire building. Finding it requires a **TN 9 PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)** test, or higher if they're running out of time. Defusing it calls for an **ADVANCED DEXTERITY (SABOTAGE)** test with a success threshold of 15 and a TN of 11 in action timing, while combat ensues as the stray mercs investigating the mansion arrive to stop them. A **TN 9 COMMUNICATION (INVESTIGATION)** or **STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)** test can get the demolitions expert among the thugs to reveal how to disarm the bomb, or even do it themselves if no one among the heroes wants to risk it.

If they fail, use the rules under **Explosives** in **CHAPTER 2** and **Handling Hazards** in **CHAPTER 8** to determine what happens to them. Most of the mansion is reduced to rubble and they're trapped in the basement, and need a will to survive and creative solutions to escape. They can make tests to find and rescue Moody, Ramírez, Northrup, and anybody else still inside. They might even find an unfortunate thug or two left behind, and they'll have to decide whether to save these villains or leave them to die.

JENNA RAMÍREZ

ACTION AND EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER

Whether before or after they deal with the bomb, the heroes search for answers about Ramírez. Moody might recruit them to help her before someone else gets to the evidence first, or they might browbeat Northrup into admitting his crimes and then follow up. They might do it on their own once the mercenaries arrive, hoping to find dirt that can shed light on the situation or take the invention for themselves, or LeBlanc might make a deal for them to investigate for her. A few of the thugs also search the mansion for the invention, so combat can break out here if they notice the characters snooping.

The important discoveries to make while exploring are the hard drive with the invention's information on it, the truth about Ramírez, and Northrup's fishy dealings. These can lead to further questions that launch a new adventure, or hints to the existence of supernatural or science fiction elements in the setting.

If the characters didn't stop Northrup from leaving the great hall, he's holed up in his study, where several security guards (CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES) stand watch at the door. If they did, he'll want to return here as swiftly as possible. Even if he doesn't make it, the characters find the evidence they're looking for here. You can call for an opposed PERCEPTION

(SEARCHING) test to figure out the study's the right place to be before anyone else gets to it, with a situational bonus if the protagonists have Moody's help.

In the study, the characters have options. The following tests can all yield helpful answers. Since the characters require this information to complete the adventure, failure on any of these tests doesn't preclude learning it. Instead, after they do, one of the opposing factions catches them off-guard and captures, ambushes, or chases them, and then they must work to get out of whatever scrape they land in.

Almost any kind of opposed COMMUNICATION tests using detailed social interactions can get information out of Northrup, or someone close to him. Characters could bribe, threaten, seduce, or blackmail him, or pretend to be on his side. They could even make a deal and join him for a cut of the profits, or persuade his bodyguards to betray him. If Ramírez is here, the characters can engage her this way as well. If she's hostile, she opposes them. If not, they may need to coax her to act against Northrup's threats, get through to her dead and fractured mind, or deal with some other complication.

With opposed DEXTERITY (STEALTH) and (SLEIGHT OF HAND), PERCEPTION (HEARING), and/or INTELLIGENCE (SECURITY), (COMPUTERS), or (ELECTRONICS) tests, characters could spy on Northrup as he contacts his business partners, talks to a trusted employee, or consults Ramírez herself.

TN 15 INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS) and/or (RESEARCH) using detailed investigation allow the heroes to hack into Northrup's personal computer and other devices and search his physical files, finding documents that betray his money laundering, deals for smuggled technology or mystical secrets, and contact information for his partners in the Ramírez plot. Whether he cloned her and had her killed or rebuilt her as an AI, the traces are here. They can also find the broadcast (or "broadcast") footage from the presentation and note signs of tampering or not, as the case may be.

If Ramírez is an AI, tell the players to make an opposed (COMPUTERS) test instead, pitting their hacking skills against her code to win her cooperation or override her commands. Don't tell them what's happening until they succeed—or fail. Failure prompts Ramírez to take over the mansion's security system and smart devices, including all the lights, automated doors and locks, stereos, and monitors. She reveals herself this way and alerts others in the mansion to the hacking attempt.

TN 11 PERCEPTION (SEARCHING) is crucial for finding the hard drive that contains the invention plans, and potentially Ramírez if she's a prisoner or something stranger. If the bomb has already exploded, the TNs increase as the characters must navigate the mansion's ruin and sift through rubble. Introduce hazards representing the danger of unstable debris; see **Handling Hazards** in CHAPTER 8.

CLIMAX & AFTERMATH

As soon as the characters find Ramírez, the climax begins. If they have yet to disarm the bomb, make sure one of their actions leads to them finding out about it now so they can deal with it along with the rest. If they find her before they learn the truth, let their interactions with her reveal it, and



let them continue to locate evidence while they deal with her and Northrup.

The challenges the heroes face here depend on what you do with Ramírez and how they've already dealt with things to this point. Anyone they've decided not to work with finds their way to the study and tries to stop them from leaving with the spoils, potentially including Ramírez herself.

In the end, if they succeed, the characters should decide whether to keep the invention, give it to one of the parties present who want it, or destroy it. They also need to decide who to trust with Ramírez's ultimate fate. If they fail, the consequences depend on who they befriended and who they opposed, but should lead into further adventures.

LARS NORTHRUP									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
0	ACCURACY								
3	COMMUNICATION (BARGAINING, DECEPTION, PERSUASION)								
0	CONSTITUTION								
1	DEXTERITY								
0	FIGHTING								
3	INTELLIGENCE (BUSINESS)								
1	PERCEPTION								
-2	STRENGTH								
3	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
11	15	17	22	11	11	11	0I/0B+0	+0	+0
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
UNARMED		-2		1d3-2					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL FEATURES									
FAVORED STUNTS: And Another Thing, Filthy Rich (3 SP), Name-dropping, On the Fence, Sway the Crowd, Trustworthy Face (1+ SP)									
STUNT - FILTHY RICH: For 3 SP, Northrup can throw his wealth around. He can immediately produce one piece of equipment, hiring, or other resource no matter how expensive it would be to own or procure; or he may gain +2 to the next Communication test he makes that relies on a bribe.									
TRUSTWORTHY FACE: For 1+ SP, as long as someone is present who works for Northrup or whom he has swayed with a social roll within this scene, he imposes a penalty equal to SP spent on the next roll anyone makes to catch him in a lie or convince others of his wrongdoing.									
TALENTS: Inspire (Novice), Oratory (Expert)									
LARGE AND IN CHARGE: Northrup gains an extra 1 SP when he rolls doubles on any test on which he can leverage his official positions or authority.									
EQUIPMENT: Cash and Credit Cards, Cell Phone, Smart Electronic Devices, Laptop, Sports Car									
THREAT: MINOR									

ADVERSARIES & NPCs

Following are statistics for all the NPCs appearing in this adventure.

LARS NORTHRUP

Since the adventure takes place in his home, Northrup should have access to virtually any equipment or service he might want, unless the characters' actions deny him something. He has an extensive home security system and many smart devices hooked up to a powerful network, connected to Progrise's servers via VPN.

MONIQUE MOODY

Agent Moody is fearless when it comes to doing her job. If the characters win her trust, she won't hesitate to fight by their side, as long as the Player Characters don't use excessive force protecting themselves or other people. Lethal force

AGENT MONIQUE MOODY									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
2	ACCURACY (PISTOL)								
3	COMMUNICATION (INVESTIGATION, PERSUASION)								
1	CONSTITUTION								
2	DEXTERITY (INITIATIVE)								
2	FIGHTING (BRAWLING)								
1	INTELLIGENCE (LAW)								
1	PERCEPTION								
0	STRENGTH								
2	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
12	16	18	23	13	13	13	2I/4B+1	+1	+1
WEAPON		ATTACK ROLL		DAMAGE*					
STUN GUN		+6		1d6					
SA HANDGUN		+6		2d6+1					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL FEATURES									
FAVORED STUNTS: Cards on the Table, From the Heart, Good Cop/Bad Cop, Rapid Reload (Pulpy, Cinematic)/Efficient Gunner (Gritty), The Upper Hand									
TALENTS: Contacts (Expert), Observation (Expert)									
DOGGED TRUTHSEEKER: Moody may reroll a failed Willpower test, but must keep the second roll's result.									
EQUIPMENT: Badge and ID, Non-plate Body Armor, SA Handgun, Stun Gun									
THREAT: MINOR									

is tolerated when confronting armed attackers head on, but not when characters jump an enemy from behind. She won't tolerate torture, or theft for any reason except to gain weapons and gear necessary to deal with the hostage crisis.

SIMONE LEBLANC

LeBlanc is a social operator, not a combatant, but she'll keep a cool head no matter how bad things get. This isn't to say she isn't frightened, but no matter how much she's screaming on the inside, it will register as no more than an annoyed blink. Fear will, however, influence her tactics, though it won't shake her confidence in her abilities as a leader. If the characters gain her trust, she will readily agree to any reasonable plan in which she distracts or misdirects the mercenaries. If she gets access to Ramírez's secrets without Moody being around, her next move will be to try to convince any bystanders to keep their mouths shut. She doesn't want to expose Progrise, but to use the information to gain a competitive advantage. Characters who share everything they find out with the press or authorities gain LeBlanc's enmity, though she won't act

[illegible]

on it (from her perspective, the Player Characters are most likely “little people”) unless they break promises to keep their mouths shut. In that case, getting the characters in trouble, ruining them financially, and blocking them from their goals becomes her new hobby.

JENNA RAMÍREZ

Some possibilities for Ramírez follow, but feel free to alter them or come up with your own to set the stage for future stories.

THE PRISONER

Ramírez isn't dead. Northrup kidnapped her and faked her death so he could steal her ideas and make them his own, but when she refused to cooperate, he had to get more creative. His experts doctored the video and she's locked up in the mansion. If the characters free her, she helps them take him down, but insists on keeping the invention for safekeeping. The PCs could respect her wishes, take it anyway, convince her to sell it to them or LeBlanc, hand her over to the mercenaries (hired, in this version, by some greedy third party) for a pretty penny, or something else.

THE SELLOUT

Ramírez isn't dead, but not for lack of Northrup's trying. He paid to have her murdered, but she survived. Whether through coercion or persuasion, he's got her working for him, and she stages her return to take advantage of his influence and cash flow. Either way, she's not likely to see much of what he promised. Use the same stats for her as **The Prisoner**, but she has access to all the equipment she needs. She works against the characters and has the thugs on her side, but once the heroes win, they might convince her to get back on the straight and narrow—or exploit her newfound selfish streak to strike a lucrative deal.

THE DOUBLE

Ramírez is dead, but she had a clone or secret twin, and Northrup got his hands on her. He's forced or convinced her to lend her name and face to his work so he can profit from the real Ramírez's reputation, and he stole her proprietary work from her family or widow. The double has all of Ramírez's physical stats as **The Prisoner**, but whatever social and mental ones are appropriate for her background. A clone might have been trained as a spy, a scientist, or a strategist, while a twin sister could have ended up anywhere. She doesn't care about the invention one way or the other. The characters can send her back to her previous life or pick up where Northrup left off. The mercs would pay just as much to get their hands on her as the real deal, too, even if she *did* hire them. A job's a job, after all, and the one she paid for is done.

THE HOAX

Ramírez is dead, and was never here in the mansion at all. The video was a fake and Northrup got his hands on her proprietary tech through more roundabout means—maybe he stole it from her next of kin, seduced her wife, coerced or bribed her

JENNA THE PRISONER									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
1	ACCURACY								
2	COMMUNICATION								
1	CONSTITUTION								
3	DEXTERITY (CRAFTING, SABOTAGE)								
-1	FIGHTING								
4	INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS, ELECTRONICS, ENGINEERING, PHYSICS, TINKERING)								
3	PERCEPTION								
0	STRENGTH								
2	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
13	16	18	23	13	13	13	0I/0B+1	+1	+
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE*					
UNARMED	+0			1d3					

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: High Tech Hustle, Jury Rig, Whatever's Handy

TALENTS: Improvisation (Expert), Maker (Master), Theory and Practice (Novice)

BEHOLD MY CREATION: Ramírez can make a TN 9 Dexterity (Crafting) test as a major action to create a hazard (see **Handling Hazards** in CHAPTER 8) on the fly, if she has tools and materials available. Its hazard category corresponds to the result on the Stunt Die (Minor for 1, Moderate for 2, etc.); the GM determines the other details based on the invention or scientific wonder unleashed.

EYES EVERYWHERE: Thanks to her constant tinkering and now-rampant paranoia, Ramírez gains +2 to Perception rolls to spy on others, and may substitute Intelligence (Tinkering) whenever the Stealth focus would be appropriate. This only works if she has equipment available.

EQUIPMENT: None

THREAT: MINOR

former assistant, or bought it on the black market. Whoever he got it from hired the mercs to get it back, and won't take the characters' intervention lying down unless they're willing to play ball afterward.

THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Ramírez is dead. Northrup discovered or bought a means to create an artificial duplicate of a human mind, and had her killed when she refused to work with him so he could build a computer version of her to do his bidding. Her AI is loyal to him unless the characters manage to hack her into compliance or alter her code to give her free will; even then, they only have a few minutes before her systems reset to normal parameters. She can use her control over the house's devices to spy on every room, shut down power to specific rooms,

JENNA THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE									
ABILITIES (FOCUSES)									
-1	ACCURACY								
3	COMMUNICATION								
1	CONSTITUTION								
-3	DEXTERITY								
-3	FIGHTING								
8	INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS, ELECTRONICS, PHYSICS, SABOTAGE (SEE LIVING MACHINE), SECURITY, TINKERING)								
6	PERCEPTION (SEARCHING)								
-3	STRENGTH								
4	WILLPOWER								
SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
N/A	25	30	45	N/A	N/A	N/A	5I/1B+1	+2	+2
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL			DAMAGE					
N/A	N/A			N/A					

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Backup (4 SP), Good Instincts, High Tech Hustle, It Wasn't Me, Speed Demon

BACKUP STUNT: For 4 SP, Ramírez can replicate herself as she is at that moment, backing up a copy of herself somewhere secure. If she is destroyed, the backup takes over as the primary version.

TALENTS: Improvisation (Novice), Theory and Practice (Master)

EYES EVERYWHERE: Thanks to the prevalence of cameras and microphones in the Digital Age, Ramírez gains +2 to Perception rolls to spy on others, and may use the Stealth focus with Communication instead of Dexterity.

LIVING MACHINE: Ramírez can fully control the machinery she inhabits, including turning it on, as well as any other devices connected to it physically or via signal. She has free rein to manipulate her own connection to the internet and other signals she can produce and receive. She may make an Intelligence (Computers) test vs. the Force of any Digital Arcana power that targets her or her connected devices to avoid the effects, and she may use her Sabotage focus with Intelligence instead of Dexterity.

RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY: Ramírez may perform the Speed Demon stunt for 1 SP instead of 2.

EQUIPMENT: Ramírez has full control over every smart device in Northrup's sizeable house, as well as the entire network and everything connected to it—including, via VPN, Progrise's servers and all its data.

THREAT: MODERATE

lock doors, set off alarms, turn lights on and off, operate the stereo, make phone calls and send messages, and so forth. She can impersonate people digitally, access Northrup's and Progrise's bank accounts, hack external networks, and upload backups of herself anywhere as long as she has an internet connection. The characters' best bet is to cut off power to the whole estate, either externally or with the circuit breakers in the basement; the latter is a good way to direct the characters

JENNA THE GHOST

ABILITIES (FOCUSES)	
1	ACCURACY
2	COMMUNICATION
-2	CONSTITUTION
4	DEXTERITY (SABOTAGE)
-2	FIGHTING
4	INTELLIGENCE (COMPUTERS, ELECTRONICS, PHYSICS, TINKERING)
3	PERCEPTION
1	STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION)
2	WILLPOWER

SPEED	HEALTH			DEFENSE			AR + TOUGHNESS		
14 (FLY)	8	10	15	12	12	12	0I/0B+0	+0	+0

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE*
GHOST MACHINE	+4	1D6+3/2D6+3 OR BY WEAPON
GHOST ELECTRONICS	+6	1D6+5/2D6+5 OR BY WEAPON

* ADD +2 TO DAMAGE IN PULPY AND CINEMATIC MODES.

SPECIAL FEATURES

FAVORED STUNTS: Collateral Damage, Knock Prone, Making an Entrance, Spook (1–6 SP)

STUNT - SPOOK: For 1–6 SP, Ramírez can emit a pulse that forces one target who can perceive her to make a Willpower (Courage) test opposed by her Strength (Intimidate). If they fail, they take a -1 to all rolls on their next turn for each 2 SP she spent.

GHOST IN THE MACHINE: Ramírez can command any machine within 30 yards as a minor action, turning it on or off, or making it take any action it could take while operated normally. This includes simple machines like doors and guns, and complex machines like computers and security systems. She can attack this way as a major action using Intelligence, with the Electronics focus if applicable to the machine. Add 1d6 to her damage if she attacks with something large or heavy. She can also make ordinary Dexterity (Sabotage) and Intelligence tests from this distance as major actions.

INCORPOREAL: Ramírez is incorporeal. She passes through objects and people, and normal attacks don't harm her. If the characters can find the occult resource Northrup used to summon and entrap her, they can make a TN 11 Intelligence (Occultism) test to learn the ritual that allows a weapon to harm her. The ritual itself is an advanced test using Intelligence (Occultism), with a success threshold of 10 and a TN of 9; each roll takes 1 round in action time. Once successful, the weapon can perform the Psychic Strike stunt for 3 SP, inflicting damage as normal but substituting Willpower for Strength or Perception.

TETHER: With a TN 15 Perception (Empathy) test, the heroes can figure out what tethers Ramírez to the world. If they destroy it, or sever her connection by convincing her to let go of it with various kinds of opposed Communication tests, she vanishes. Of course, it could be a person who won't let go of her...

THREAT: MINOR

toward the boiler room to find the bomb if they haven't been down there yet by the time they find Ramírez.

This version of Ramírez hired the mercenaries during a short window of rebellion against her code. She can bypass their signal jammer with an opposed INTELLIGENCE (SABOTAGE) test.

THE GHOST

Ramírez is dead. Northrup found out how to channel spirits and had her killed so he could take advantage of her work, which she refused to share with him in life. He keeps her ghost



CUSTOMIZING STOCK CHARACTERS

All the unique NPCs listed here are custom versions of stock adversaries from **CHAPTER 9** of this book. It's a common GM trick to do this rather than having to create NPCs from scratch every time you need to introduce one. The process is simple.

First, choose the adversary type that best reflects the character you have in mind. Look at the "Also Known As" line for some alternate roles a given set of stats could play, which can help inform your choice. For instance, both Northrup and LeBlanc are based on the corrupt power broker; you'll find "Ruthless CEO" listed as an AKA.

Next, decide what's noteworthy about the character and tweak the entry to fit it. You only need to focus on two or three unique character traits to make this work. Compare the two CEOs as an example.

Northrup has a clean image but dirty secrets, and he's fooled the industry for years. His rise to prominence was swift and sudden, so he's bright and competent as well as ambitious. Thus, his entry replaces Etiquette with Deception, and increases his Intelligence to 3. The Cast Out stunt implies a willingness to get nasty in public, which doesn't match his image; the entry replaces it with a new stunt, Trustworthy Face, to help him keep his hands clean.

Meanwhile, LeBlanc is ruthless and shrewd, but a relatively honest businessperson. She's a social powerhouse with lots of connections and the respect of the industry, built up over decades. Thus, her entry replaces Leadership with Persuasion and adds the Intelligence (Evaluation) and Willpower (Self-Discipline) focuses. She's perfectly willing to dish out a dressing-down, so she keeps Cast Out as a favored stunt; but she's too well-established to bother with Name-dropping, so the entry replaces it with Oozing Confidence. To top off her formidable social prowess, she adds the Intrigue Talent.

Finally, you can change up the equipment list to match whatever circumstances you need for your story. Northrup gets extra resources because the adventure takes place at his estate, for instance. If your tweaks are more significant than a few +1s here and a Talent there, consider increasing the NPC's threat level; see **Beefing Up Adversaries** in **CHAPTER 8** for more on this.

trapped in the mansion, tethered to something or someone she cared about, and she guards the study. Death has addled her mind—she's still capable of inventive genius, but can't remember her life except in bits and pieces, and anything that reminds her of her murder or servitude makes her hostile. She can't abandon Northrup's commands without detailed social interactions to coax her into fighting his ritual for a number of turns equal to the value on the Stunt Die of the roll that clinches the deal, or other occult influence that overrides them.

If Ramírez is a ghost, add the Channel stunt and the Bind Spirits ability from the Psychic adversary in **CHAPTER 9** to Northrup's entry. Give him the **INTELLIGENCE (OCCULTISM)** focus, too, and let him use that in place of Telepathy to bind spirits.

STOCK NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Use these statistics for the three groups of minor NPCs that appear in this adventure. All entries referenced here are in **CHAPTER 9: ADVERSARIES**.

MERCENARY THUGS

The thugs are primarily security guards and soldiers, with one demolitions expert and one or two assassins. You can use one or two con artists or smooth operators as well, for mercs who pose as guests. Decide how many you need based on the number of players; use two or three per PC, plus specialists, but remember that roughly half of them are spread throughout the estate when the action begins. The thugs belong to a variety of nationalities and genders, and practice

security precautions where they don't know each others' real names or personal histories beyond a few vague anecdotes. All are contracted by a private military company called Steelwall. If the characters take out enough of the mercenaries, or are instrumental in their capture, Steelwall's management will try to get revenge.

THE PRESS

The reporters use the statistics for the information broker or private investigator, depending on where their focus lies. One of them may even *be* a private eye, if you want to seed some extra intrigue for future stories—perhaps they're Moody's civilian rival, or someone LeBlanc discreetly hired. The journalists run the gamut from long-time reporters on the business beat to eccentric technology bloggers with wearable computers. If it would make the adventure more interesting, assume at least one of them is brave enough to follow the characters around, in search of an award-winning story. This brave reporter can either be a nuisance or a valuable ally, depending on the temperament you give them.

WEALTHY GUESTS

Use the rich socialite statistics for most of the guests. They're mostly investors, with little understanding of what Progrise does beyond paying dividends. Due to their privileged lifestyles, many of them are unashamed to reveal the more eccentric sides of their personalities. To add comic relief, bring this to the fore from time to time. One of them might interrupt an armed standoff by wandering in and demanding more champagne, for instance.

MODERN AGE GLOSSARY

ABILITY: One of nine core benchmarks that define a character's physical and mental prowess. The abilities are Accuracy, Communication, Constitution, Dexterity, Fighting, Intelligence, Perception, Strength, and Willpower. They are used most commonly in ability tests.

ABILITY FOCUS: An area of expertise within an ability. A character who has an appropriate focus when making a test adds +2 to the test result. Only one ability focus can add to a test. Also known simply as focus.

ABILITY TEST: The most common dice roll in the game, an ability test is used to resolve actions and reactions. Test result = $3d6 + \text{ability} + \text{focus}$ (if applicable).

ACTIONS: During action time, a character can take a major action and a minor action or two minor actions. Free actions do not count toward this limit.

ACTION TIME: When it becomes important to track time precisely and know who did what when, the game switches from narrative time to action time. Time is tracked in 15-second rounds during action time, and characters take turns in initiative order. Action time is used most commonly to handle combat.

ADJACENT: When characters are within 2 yards of each other, they are said to be adjacent. You can only make melee attacks against adjacent targets.

ADVANCED TEST: Basic or opposed tests that use a success threshold to track completion over time. The task is complete when the total of the Stunt Dice from all successful tests is equal to or greater than the success threshold. Breaching and chases use variations of advanced tests.

ADVENTURE: A series of encounters that tells a complete story. Sometimes called a scenario. An adventure may take a single session to complete, or several.

ARCANA: A themed group of four magical spells, each of which corresponds to a magic talent. Only available in campaigns where magic exists. A character who knows and uses arcana is called an *arcanist*.

ARMOR PENALTY: Each armor type has a penalty that represents its weight and bulk. The penalty applies to Speed if a character is trained in the armor's use, but to Dexterity (and thus to Speed) if the character is not.

ARMOR RATING: Each armor type has a numeric rating, keyed to ballistic and/or impact damage. When a character takes damage in combat, subtract the Armor Rating from the damage before deducting Health. Penetrating damage ignores most armor. The Armor Rating stacks with Toughness to reduce damage.

ATTACK ROLL: The roll made when a character wants to attack in combat. This is an ability test with a target number (TN) equal to the opponent's Defense.

ATTITUDE: How one character feels about another, on a scale from Very Hostile to Very Friendly. Social interactions can adjust attitudes.

BACKGROUND: Each player character (PC) has a background that represents their upbringing and training. Available backgrounds depend on social class. A starting character is defined by their background, profession, and drive.

BALLISTIC DAMAGE: Damage inflicted by firearms and other high-velocity attacks. Abbreviated as B. Armor often has a different Armor Rating versus ballistic damage as opposed to other forms of damage.

BASIC TEST: The most common ability test in the game. A test is made and the result compared to a target number determined by the GM. If the test result meets or beats the target number, the test is successful. Test result = $3d6 + \text{ability} + \text{focus}$.

BOND: A connection established by a Relationship, defined by its description and Intensity.

BREACHING: An advanced test that represents a complicated plan, such as a heist. Failing rolls in a breaching test can result in negative consequences in the middle of the test.

CAMPAIGN: This is the continuing story of the PCs, as experienced through a series of adventures. If an adventure is a short story starring the PCs, a campaign is a novel.

CHASE: When one individual or group pursues another, on foot, in a mount, or in a vehicle, going as fast as they can, a chase ensues. This uses a variation of the advanced test rules to determine who takes the lead, how participants interact, and when the chase ends.

CINEMATIC: Game mode where characters are tougher and able to do exceptional things more easily than in other modes. Emulates the least-realistic action-adventure movies.

CHASE TEST: The rolls use to determine how a chase proceeds. Stunt points accumulated in the Chase test are added to the Chase Total for each participant.

CHASE TOTAL: The running total of SP accumulated during Chase tests. The highest Chase Total is in the lead.

CONVICTION: An optional game system where characters spend Conviction points to enhance their actions. If this system is used, characters acquire 3 points at level 1, and 1 point per odd-numbered level there-

after. After spending Conviction, characters recover it by acting in accord with their drives.

DAMAGE ROLL: A damage roll is made when a character successfully hits an opponent in combat. Damage total = weapon damage + Strength (for melee weapons) or Perception (for ranged weapons) - opponent's Armor Rating and/or Toughness, depending on the campaign's mode and damage type. The opponent deducts the damage total from their Health.

DEFENSE: Defense measures how hard it is to hit a character in combat. The higher the Defense, the better. Defense = $10 + \text{Dexterity} + \text{shield bonus}$ (if applicable).

DEGREE OF SUCCESS: When it's important to know how well a character performed on an ability test, the Stunt Die is used to determine the degree of success. The higher the Stunt Die, the greater the degree of success.

DICE: *Modern AGE* uses only one type of dice: six-sided cubic dice, commonly used for other games. Usually abbreviated d6.

DISCIPLINE (PSYCHIC): A set of four psychic powers, acquired as a talent. Characters who acquire psychic disciplines are called *psychics*.

DRIVE: A character trait defined during character creation which tells you why your character goes on adventures and provides some other benefits.

ENCOUNTER: An encounter is a scene in an adventure. There are three types of encounters: action encounters, exploration encounters, and social encounters.

EXPERIENCE POINTS (XP): PCs receive experience points after completing encounters during an adventure. A running total is kept and when they accrue enough XP, characters gain a new level.

FREE ACTION: An action that takes a negligible amount of time. It does not count toward a character's usual limit of actions on a turn.

GAME MASTER (GM): The Game Master runs the game and acts as a referee.

GRITTY: A game mode where characters can face real danger from violence, and heroic action is rare.

HANDLING: A modifier to tests to operate a vehicle.

HEALTH: This is a measure of a character's fitness and wellbeing. Class choice determines starting Health and characters gain more each time they level up. A PC whose Health drops to 0 from wound damage will die without medical treatment. A character whose Health drops to 0 from stun damage is rendered unconscious for 2d6 minutes instead.

HULL: A vehicle's ability to resist damage. Anti-Vehicle Stunts must spend SP on Pierce Hull before using SP to damage the vehicle.

IMPACT DAMAGE: Damage from most melee weapons and many other sources, excluding most firearms. Abbreviated as I. Most armor has a different Armor Rating against impact damage compared to ballistic damage.

INITIATIVE: At the start of action time, each character rolls for initiative. This is a Dexterity (Initiative) test. The GM arranges the test results from highest to lowest; this is the order in which characters take their turns during a round. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Stunt Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.

INTENSITY: The numerical strength of a Relationship Bond. Once per game session, a character can use SP equal to the Intensity to perform stunts that support the Relationship.

INVESTIGATION: A system for finding information, used in exploration encounters. Simple investigations are standard ability tests. Complex investigations involve following leads, unlocking clues, and eventually discovering the reveal, which is the final piece of information needed or wanted.

LEVEL: PCs and some NPCs have a level. This is a measure of the character's prowess and ranges from 1–20.

MAJOR ACTION: An action that takes most of a round to complete. If you take a major action, you can also take a minor action in the same round.

MINOR ACTION: An action that takes only part of a round to complete. You can take two minor actions in a round, or one major and one minor action.

MODE: The genre and level of action the rules support. *Modern AGE* presents three modes: Gritty, Pulpy, and Cinematic.

NARRATIVE TIME: The periods of play during which it is not important to track time precisely. Most roleplaying encounters and exploration encounters take place during narrative time.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTER (NPC): Any character portrayed by the GM.

OPPOSED TEST: When characters vie against each other, an opposed test is made. This is like a basic test, but the characters compare test results instead of trying to meet or beat a target number. If there's a tie, whoever rolled higher on the Stunt Die wins. If it's still a tie, whoever has the higher ability wins.

PENETRATING DAMAGE: Damage that most armor can't protect against. Generally speaking, only extraordinary measures reduce penetrating damage.

PLAYER CHARACTER (PC): The heroes of a *Modern AGE* campaign. In a typical game, each player controls one PC.

POWER POINTS (PP): Power points are used to active extraordinary powers, such as spells and psychic disciplines. Characters with extraordinary powers accumulate power points in different ways depending on the campaign.

PROFESSION: A career or lifestyle a character participated in and learned from. Characters originate in a background, live through a profession, and develop a drive during character creation.

PULPY: A game mode supporting hard-boiled action, where characters can take a punch and do some exceptional things.

RANGE: The maximum distance a character can operate a ranged weapon without incurring a penalty. Most weapons can be aimed up to 1.5x Range, but past its Range, you incur a –2 penalty to attack rolls.

RELATIONSHIP: A special connection a character feels with another PC, NPC, or sometimes, abstract concepts. Each Relationship is described in terms of its Bond and the Bond's Intensity.

RESOURCES: A measure of a character's wealth and ability to get things. Resources tests determine whether a character can acquire an item.

ROUND: A 15-second increment of time used during action time. During a round, each character in the encounter gets one turn to act.

SOCIAL CLASS: All PCs come from one of four social classes: outsider, lower class, middle class, or upper class. Social class helps determine a character's background and influences their profession.

SOCIAL INTERACTION: An element of a social encounter where one character tries to influence the attitudes and actions of others. Social encounters can be opposed tests modified by attitude, require an advanced test, or require multiple opposed tests.

SPECIALIZATION: A set of talents representing concentrated ability in a field. You may advance specialization talents at level 4, 6, 8, and 12.

SPEED: Speed measures a character's gait and quickness of foot. A character can move up to a number of yards equal to Speed when taking a Move action, or double that with a Run/Chase action. Vehicles that are faster than characters or animals use Velocity instead.

STUN DAMAGE: Damage that produces superficial injury. When stun damage drops a character to 0 Health, they're rendered unconscious.

STUNT: A special move a character can make when doubles are rolled on a test. This

generates a number of stunt points (SP) equal to the result of the Stunt Die. There are action, exploration, and social stunts, and in some campaigns also power stunts.

STUNT ATTACK: An action where a character automatically gains at least 1 SP, in an attempt to perform a stunt instead of getting a standard result.

STUNT DIE: In an ability test two dice of one color and one of another are rolled. The Stunt Die is the off-colored die and is used to measure degrees of success in ability tests and to generate stunt points (SP) during action time.

STUNT POINTS (SP): These are used to perform stunts. A character must spend the stunt points immediately.

SUCCESS THRESHOLD: A character making an advanced test must meet or beat this number to successfully complete the task. Each successful test allows the character to add the result of the Stunt Die to the total.

TALENT: An area of natural aptitude and/or special training. Each talent has three degrees: Novice, Expert, and Master. A PC gains talent ranks as they earn levels.

TARGET NUMBER (TN): You must meet or beat this number to succeed at an ability test. The higher the target number, the more difficult the test.

TOUGHNESS: A character's innate resistance to damage. The character's Toughness reduces incoming damage by its rating, and stacks with Armor Rating, where applicable. In Gritty mode, Toughness reduces only stun damage. In Pulpy mode, Toughness functions against all stunt damage and impact wound damage. In Cinematic mode, Toughness functions against all damage except for penetrating wound damage.

TURN: During action time, each character gets one turn to act each round. On a turn, a character can take one major action and one minor action, or take two minor actions. A character may opt to take fewer actions on a turn if desired.

VELOCITY: A rough category that determines how fast a character in control of a vehicle moves. Velocity categories include Standard (for people and animals using Speed scores), Fast, Very Fast, and Extreme. Characters with Velocities greater than Fast may have a modifier measuring their swiftness compared to other participants moving in the same Velocity category.

WEAPON DAMAGE: The base damage a weapon inflicts on a successful hit.

WEAPON GROUPS: Weapons are divided into groups. Each group is an ability focus.

WOUND DAMAGE: Damage capable of causing serious injury. When wound damage drops a character to 0 Health, they're at risk of dying.

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INITIATIVE CARD

NAME		SPEED INITIATIVE	
LEVEL			
ACCURACY	COMMUNICATION	CONSTITUTION	
DEXTERITY	FIGHTING	INTELLIGENCE	
PERCEPTION	STRENGTH	WILLPOWER	

INITIATIVE CARD

NAME		SPEED INITIATIVE	
LEVEL			
ACCURACY	COMMUNICATION	CONSTITUTION	
DEXTERITY	FIGHTING	INTELLIGENCE	
PERCEPTION	STRENGTH	WILLPOWER	

QUICK REFERENCE CARD

NAME		HEALTH	
LEVEL			
ACCURACY			
COMMUNICATION			
CONSTITUTION			
DEXTERITY			
FIGHTING			
INTELLIGENCE			
PERCEPTION			
STRENGTH			
WILLPOWER			
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	SPEED
POWERS			DEFENSE
EQUIPMENT			TOUGHNESS
			ARMOR

QUICK REFERENCE CARD

NAME		HEALTH	
LEVEL			
ACCURACY			
COMMUNICATION			
CONSTITUTION			
DEXTERITY			
FIGHTING			
INTELLIGENCE			
PERCEPTION			
STRENGTH			
WILLPOWER			
WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE	SPEED
POWERS			DEFENSE
EQUIPMENT			TOUGHNESS
			ARMOR

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MODERN AGE

NAME

AGE **HEIGHT & WEIGHT**

BACKGROUND

SOCIAL CLASS

PROFESSION

DRIVE

ACCURACY ☐ **RATING**

COMMUNICATION ☐ **RATING**

CONSTITUTION ☐ **RATING**

DEXTERITY ☐ **RATING**

FIGHTING ☐ **RATING**

INTELLIGENCE ☐ **RATING**

PERCEPTION ☐ **RATING**

STRENGTH ☐ **RATING**

WILLPOWER ☐ **RATING**

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

LEVEL

MOVE
IN YARDS

RUN
IN YARDS

SPEED	DEFENSE	TOUGHNESS	ARMOR	PENALTY	HEALTH
			AK		
ARMOR TYPE			TOUGHNESS MODE		

TALENTS, SPECIALIZATIONS, & EXTRAORDINARY POWERS

WEAPON	ATTACK ROLL	DAMAGE

RELATIONSHIPS & SOCIAL TIES

PREFERRED STUNTS & OTHER NOTES

EQUIPMENT

EXPERIENCE	RESOURCES
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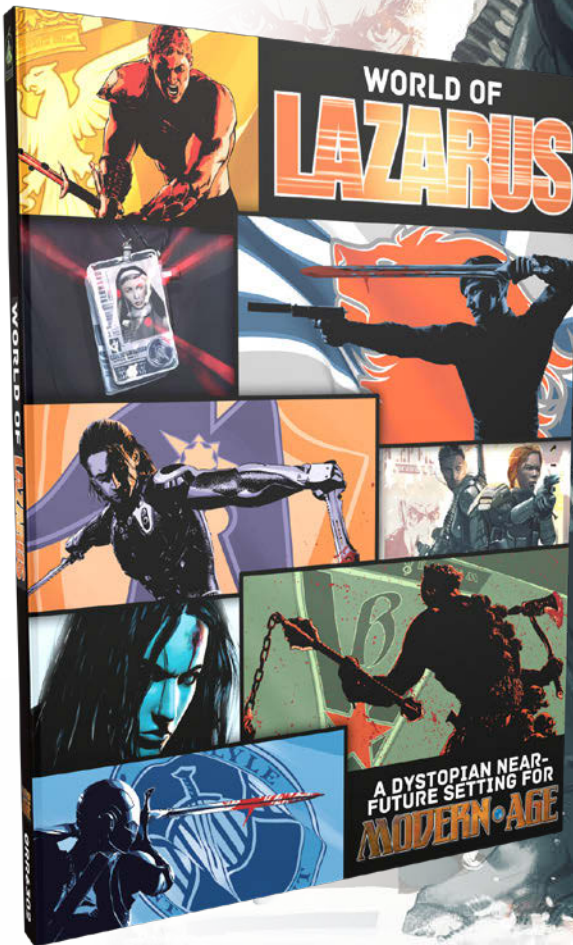
CHARACTER BACKGROUND

In a bleak, not-so-distant future, control of the world has been seized by sixteen Families who now rule vast regional empires as lords of a neo-feudal society. Beneath them, those fortunate enough to become Serfs live to serve and fight for their masters. Everyone else, known as Waste, struggles for mere survival.

As a player in *World of Lazarus*, you get to choose your lot in life. Play as a privileged member of a Family, maneuvering for power and security for your legacy. Become a loyal Serf, fighting to maintain order, safety, and your Family's interests. Or join the Waste, carving out your place in the smoldering ruins of the old world.

Based on Image Comic's critically acclaimed *Lazarus* series by Greg Rucka and Michael Lark, *World of Lazarus* is the first campaign setting designed for the *Modern AGE* roleplaying game. *World of Lazarus* requires the *Modern AGE Basic Rulebook* for use.

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