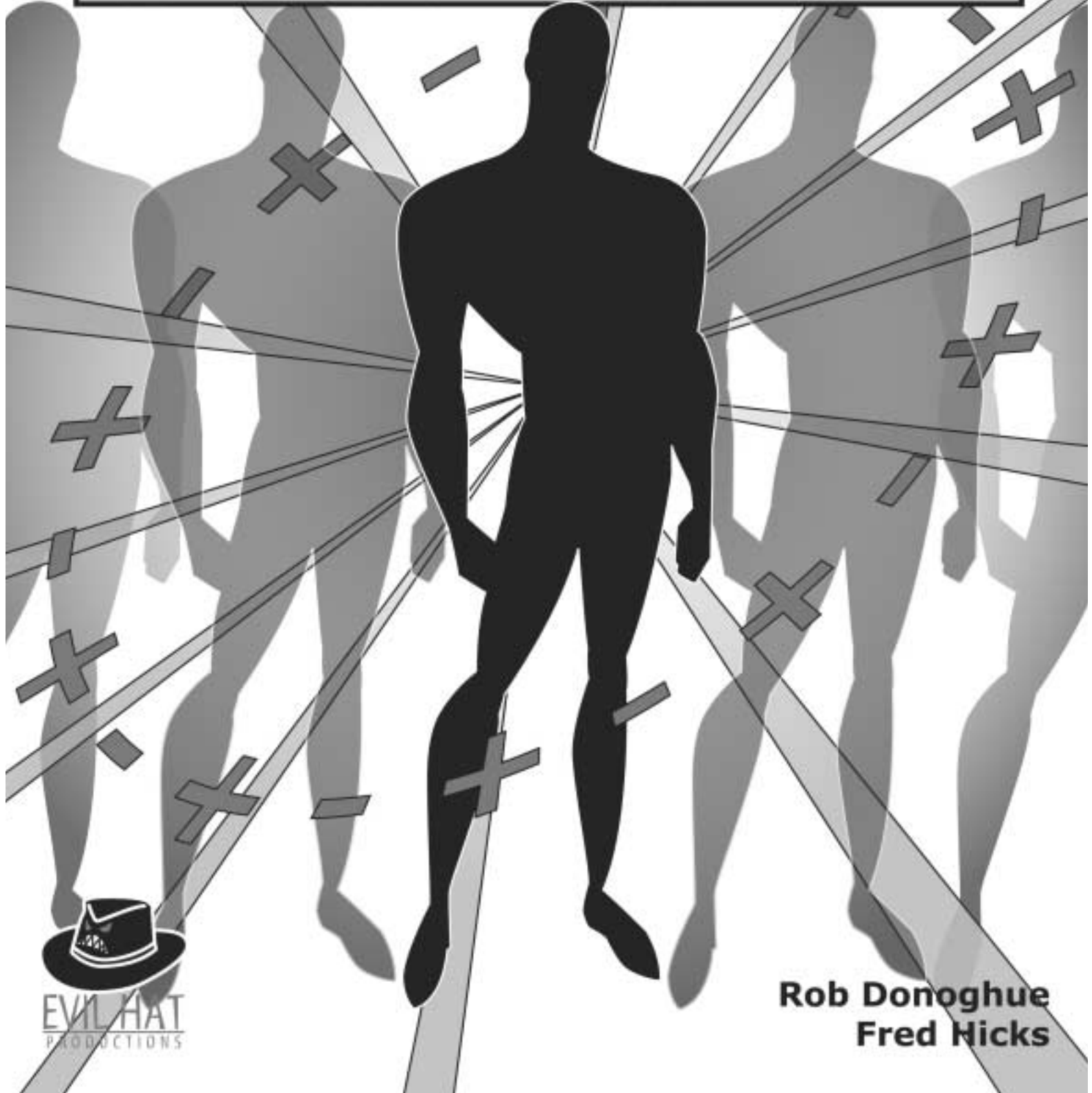


FATE

FUDGE ADVENTURES IN TABLETOP ENTERTAINMENT



**Rob Donoghue
Fred Hicks**

About Fudge

FUDGE is a role-playing game written by Steffan O'Sullivan, with extensive input from the Usenet community of rec.games.design. The basic rules of FUDGE are available on the internet at <http://www.fudgerpg.com> and in book form from Grey Ghost Games, P.O. Box 838, Randolph, MA 02368. They may be used with any gaming genre. While an individual work derived from FUDGE may specify certain attributes and skills, many more are possible with FUDGE. Every Game Master using FUDGE is encouraged to add or ignore any character traits. Anyone who wishes to distribute such material for free may do so—merely include this ABOUT FUDGE notice and disclaimer (complete with FUDGE copyright notice). If you wish to charge a fee for such material, other than as an article in a magazine or other periodical, you must first obtain a royalty-free license from the author of FUDGE, Steffan O'Sullivan, P.O. Box 465, Plymouth, NH 03264.

Disclaimer

The following materials based on FUDGE, entitled Fate: Fudge Adventures in Tabletop Entertainment, are created by, made available by, and Copyright (C) 2002 by Robert Donoghue and Fred Hicks, and are not necessarily endorsed in any way by Steffan O'Sullivan or any publisher of other FUDGE materials. Neither Steffan O'Sullivan nor any publisher of other FUDGE materials is in any way responsible for the content of these materials unless specifically credited. Original FUDGE materials Copyright (C)1992-1995 by Steffan O'Sullivan, All Rights Reserved.

The Fudge System Logo is a trademark of Steffan O'Sullivan, used under license. Fudge System Logo design by Daniel M. Davis.

Anyone who wishes to distribute this material for free may do so - merely include notice and disclaimer (complete with Fudge copyright notice).



Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....1

- The Adjectives 1
- Rolling the Dice 1
- Success and Failure. 1

2. Character Creation2

- GM Overview 2
- Consider Characters 2
- Phases 2
- Fudge Points 3
- Select Character Goal 3
- Sample Creation 3
- GM Overview 3
- Think about and discuss the character 4
- Phases 4
 - Phase 14
 - Phase 24
 - Phase 34
 - Phase 44
 - Phase 54
- GM assigns fudge points 4
- Select Character Goal 4

3. Playing the Game.....5

- Aspects 5
- Using Aspects 5
- Other Uses of Aspects 5
- Refreshing Aspects 6
- Fudge Points 6
- Advancement 6

4. Aspect Options.....7

- Negative Aspects 7
- Aspect Contests 7
- Other Uses 7
- Allies, Contacts and Minions as Aspects 7
 - Contacts7
 - Allies8
 - Minions8
- Contacting 9
- Items as Aspects 9
- Special Characteristics 10
- Handling Powerful Items 11
- Other Unique Aspects 11
- Faceless Minions 11

5. Character Creation Options 13

- Aspects as Plot Hooks13
- Potential13
- Destiny14
- Achieving Destiny14
- Structured Creation14
- Geographic Structure14
- Pursuit Structure15
- Career Structure15
- Talented Novices16

6. GM's Toolbox..... 17

- Aspect and NPCs17
- Difficult Skills17
- Advancement17
- Off Screen Advancement17
- Fudge Points as Rewards18
- Alternate Advancement18
- Skill Column18
- Aspect Caps18

7. Combat 19

- Scene Based Fights20
 - Injuries and Penalties20
- Exchange Based Fights21
 - Injuries and Penalties21
- Turn Based Fights22
- Injuries and Advantages22
- Changing Wound Boxes23
- The Death Spiral23
- Non-Lethal Damage23
- Combat Options23
- Dramatic Weapons and Armor23
- Simple Weapons and Armor23
- Advanced Weapons and Armor24
 - Armor24
 - Weapons24
- Other Combat Modifiers25
- The Drop25
- Multiple Opponents25
- Defense25

8. Combat Options 26

- Swashbuckling and Armor26
- Cinematic Combat26
- The Lazy GM Rule26
- Toughness26

Running up the Spear	26
Last Stand	26
9. Magic and Supernormal Powers...28	
The Great Library	28
The Brass Compass	28
The Door to Shadow	30
Research	31
Feedback	31
Sorcery on a Budget	32
Age of Stone and Steel	33
Skin Dance	33
Path of a Thousand Steps	34
10. Utilities37	
Sample Skill List	37
Non-Combat Skills	37
Option 1: Weapon Based Combat Skills	39
Option 2: Style Based Combat Skills	39
Option 3: Thematic Combat Skills	39
Conversion Notes	39
Level Based Systems	40
Risus	40
Over the Edge	40
Pyramid Shorthand	40
Appendix 1. One Page Fudge.....41	
The Classic Ladder	41
The Dice	41
How Baseline Fudge is Different	41
Appendix 2. Design Notes.....42	
Why Aspects?	42
Taking the Focus	42
Intrinsic Balance	42
The Essential Differences	42
An Origin Story	43
Final Words	43
Appendix 3. Sample Creation44	
The Sheets	48
Appendix 4. Reference.....49	
Fudge Resources	49
Other Resources	49

Fate:

Fudge Adventures in Tabletop Entertainment

Authors: Robert Donoghue and Fred Hicks

Editor: Fred Hicks

Kibbutzing and General Input: Cameron Banks, Deborah Donoghue, Michael Ellis, Christopher Hatty, Bernard Hsiung, Lydia Leong, Scott McComas and Lisa Soto

Playtesters: Cameron Banks (“Fluffers!”), Deborah Donoghue (“I will give you a queen of spades. It does not taste like anything”), Caroline Elliot, Jeanne Goldfein, Bernard Hsiung, Lydia Leong (“I continue to advocate violence as a solution”), Scott McComas (“The Dark Powers are *always* willing to help”), Jarrod Norton (“I give him the psychic eyebrows”) and Shai Norton (“I suppose regular exposure to violence would be bad”)

Additional Thanks to:

- Our wives and our boss, for their generally tolerant natures.
- Genevieve, who we’re sure will get around to reading this someday.
- Wee Connor Banks, for his existence

All images were acquired from the royalty free clip art collection at www.clipart.com and are copyright the same. It’s an amazing resource, and well worth checking out.

This document was prepared using Adobe Framemaker, and makes use of the Garamond, Advertiser, Optimum , Zapf Dingbats and Fudge Dice fonts.

This document is currently Version 1.0.

Released 1/15/03

1. Introduction

Fate is a variation on Fudge, an RPG by Steffan O’Sullivan. As such, it assumes the reader is familiar with Fudge, and while everything necessary to play is included, any interested player is strongly encouraged to acquire a copy of Fudge, either at your local gamestore, or for free online at fudgerpg.com. Those interested in starting right out may wish to check out “One Page Fudge” on page 41.

The Adjectives

The most important thing to understand about Fudge is how it describes things. Rather than assigning numerical values to elements like skills it uses adjectives, which are ranked as follows: Abysmal, Terrible, Poor, Mediocre, Average, Fair, Good, Great, Superb, Epic, and Legendary¹. Consider, a bodyguard might be a **good** swordsman but have **mediocre** social skills. He’ll probably win a fight with an artist who’s a **superb** painter but a **poor** swordsman. Almost anything can be described using this ladder — an empire may field a **superb** army or a spaceship may be limping by with a **poor** engine.

Rolling the Dice

To roll dice for Fudge, pick your starting level (say, good) and roll four six-sided dice. For each 1 or 2, move down one step, and for each 5 or 6 move up one. Lets say we rolled 2,3,5 and 5. Go down a step because of the 2, from good to fair, but then go up a step thanks to the first 5 (from fair to good) and again from the second 5 (from good to great) for a final outcome of great.

Another way to look at the dice is as if they rolled either +1, 0 or -1. From that perspective, rolling 2,3,5,5 is the same as rolling -1,0,+1,+1, which is

1. This differs from the traditional fudge ladder, which is normally Terrible, Poor, Mediocre, Fair, Good, Great, Superb

easier to deal with, since that just becomes good + 1, which is great. Visualize it like this:

Table 1: The Ladder

Value	Descriptor
+6	Legendary
+5	Epic
+4	Superb
+3	Great
+2	Good
+1	Fair
0	Average
-1	Mediocre
-2	Poor
-3	Terrible
-4	Abysmal

There are special dice available for Fudge that have plus (+), minus (-) and blank (■) faces to make rolling easier, and we use them to clarify examples.

Success and Failure.

When the dice come out, there is usually a target difficulty described according to the ladder, like a steep wall requiring a good climbing effort to get over it. To face these challenges, the player consults the appropriate skill, rolls the dice, and compares the outcome to the difficulty. If the outcome is equal to or higher than the difficulty, it’s a success, and if not’s it’s a failure. The difference between the difficulty and the outcome is called the **margin of success** (or failure), MoS or MoF respectively. It is often used to determine how well the character succeeded or how badly they failed.

Example of a Roll

Cyrus needs to pick a lock. He has a fair (i.e. +1) lockpick skill, and the lock requires an average (i.e. 0) roll to open it. He rolls the dice and gets ++-■, which adds up to +1. He adds the result to his skill and gets a good result (fair + 1 = good). He succeeds with a margin of success of 2 (the difference between good and fair), and opens the lock easily.

2. Character Creation

Character creation is very interactive, and ideally an entire group will be creating characters in the presence of the GM. This is not to say that the methods below couldn't be adapted to a more abstract approach, but in doing so it would lose many of its benefits. Character creation consists of a small number of simple steps.

1. **Review** with GM.
2. **Consider** the character.
3. Phases. In each phase:
 - a. **Select** an aspect.
 - b. **Choose** 4 skill ranks based on that aspect.
4. **Assign** fudge points.
5. **Select** character goal.

GM OVERVIEW

Any character generation should begin with the GM talking to the players about the game and what the players should expect. The GM should address any rules considerations, such as how many phases there will be (see below). More importantly she should make sure that everyone gets a clear idea of the theme and tone of the game, as well as any background information they should have. If all of the players want a game of courtly intrigue and the GM is planning to run a hack and slash adventure, this is a good time to find that out.

Consider Characters

It's often helpful for players to get a sense of the sort of character they'd like to play. A lot of things can happen during the phases, so it's easiest to start with a simple idea, and build on it over character generation. Once everyone has a concept, players should feel free to discuss unless the GM says otherwise. No player is obliged to discuss, and in fact, no player is even obliged to have an idea at this point. However, doing so allows players to get a sense of what direction their fellow players want to take things, and it gives the GM a sense of what the group dynamic might look like.

Phases

Creation will have a number of phases set by the GM. The default is five, but it can really be any number. A phase is defined as a period of time wherein some events of note took place, but the specifics vary from game to game. A game of high school monster hunters might consider each school year a phase, while a game of immortal swordsmen might have a phase for every 50 years. Whatever the duration, the GM gives the players a sense of what was going on at the time, and the players figure out what their character was doing at the time. Based on this, each player selects an **aspect** for the phase.

Aspects are elements for describing the character that can be used to describe almost anything. Aspects include things like attributes (Strong, Weak, Agile, Charisma, Endurance, Fast, Slow), descriptors (Duty, Charming, Alert, Dramatic), careers (Knight, Mercenary, Musketeer, Cutthroat) or even ties to the setting (Merry Man of Sherwood, Initiate of the Blue Wind, Fiodario Fencing Academy). Aspects may be good, bad or both but they should always reflect some important element of the character.

When an aspect is chosen the character gains one level of that aspect, noted as follows:

Knight (fair)

An aspect may be chosen again on a subsequent phase, in which case it goes up a level and is noted as:

Knight (good)

And then

Knight (great)

The GM sets the maximum number of levels that can be chosen in a given aspect, but a good rule of thumb is a third to a half of the total number of phases.

Once the aspect is chosen, the player then picks four skill ranks appropriate to the aspect. If the player had chosen the Knight aspect, then skills like swords, riding or heraldry would probably be

appropriate, while skills like garrotte or needlework would not (barring a very odd order of knighthood).

Skills are described according to the adjective ladder, and default to mediocre. Spending one skill rank increases a skill to average, spending a second increases it to fair, spending another increases it to good and so on. Players may spend those four skill ranks any way they like with only one limitation: There must always be one more skill in the next rank down. This means that a character must have two skills at fair to have a skill at good (and must have three skills at Average to have the two skills at fair!). Because of how this diagrams, it is referred to as the **skill pyramid**. When the rules are observed, the pyramid is considered to be “balanced”, and the pyramid must be balanced at the end of every phase.

Buying Skills with Aspects

Cyrus’ first aspect is Sailor, and he puts 1 rank in sailing, 1 rank in drinking and 2 ranks in brawling. He now has:

- Sailor 1 (Fair)
 - Sailing: Average (0)
 - Drinking: Average (0)
 - Brawling: Fair (+1)

Finn’s first aspect is Larcenous. He wants to buy ranks in pickpocket, pick locks, alertness and swords. The GM is fine with the first two, but he asks Finn’s player to justify the latter two in terms of the Larcenous aspect. Finn’s player explains that he had to stay on his toes while pursuing his criminal career, and he needed to be able to defend himself, as well as have something to mug people with. The GM considers that an appropriate explanation for alertness, but feels that sword is inappropriate, and suggests something more appropriate, like knife or club. Finn’s player agrees to change sword to knife, and ends up with:

- Larcenous 1 (Fair)
 - Pick Locks: Average (0)
 - Pick Pockets: Average (0)
 - Alertness: Average (0)
 - Knife: Average (0)

This process is repeated on each phase.

Fudge Points

Fudge points are points which may be spent by a player to grant a bonus to an action or to influence the game in some way. The GM gives each player a certain number of them at the game’s start, usually equal to half the number of phases. See “Fudge Points” on page 6 for more details.



Jirelle Montgard, Explorer

- Well-Educated (Good)
- Adventurous (Good)
- Well Travelled (Good)

Select Character Goal

Finally, the player should pick what direction they want the character to go in next. This is expressed as a goal, which should be the next aspect the player would like for the character. It’s possible that the player will not have an idea, and that’s fine, but the goals help tell the GM the sorts of things the players are interested in. See “Advancement” on page 6 for more information.

Sample Creation

GM Overview

The GM explains that the game is going to be a standard fantasy game with a slightly urban and low magic flavor, and that character generation will be five phases.

Think about and discuss the character

Deborah decides to make Sybil, who she thinks is going to be something of a trickster, but she hasn't got much more than that.

Phases

The phases break down as follows.

Phase 1

This phase covers a number of years, including Sybil's youth in the village of Simbul. She's raised by the village medicine woman, and she takes the aspect "Herbalist" and ranks in Knife, Healing, Herb Lore and Alertness.

Phase 1

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 1	Fair
Knife	Average (0)
Herb Lore	Average (0)
Healing	Average (0)
Alertness	Average (0)

Phase 2

Sybil runs off with a gypsy troupe, and travels the realm. She takes the aspect "Gypsy" and ranks in Knife, Bluff, Pickpocket and Healing.

Phase 2

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 2	Fair
<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy 1	Fair
Knife	Fair (+1)
Healing	Fair (+1)
Herb Lore	Average (0)
Alertness	Average (0)
Bluff	Average (0)
Pickpocket	Average (0)

Phase 3

Sybil continues to spend time with the gypsies, acting as a healer. She takes another rank in the Gypsy aspect, and ranks in Knife, Bluff, Alertness and Move Silently.

Phase 3

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 1	Fair
<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy 2	Good
Knife	Good (+2)
Bluff	Fair (+1)
Healing	Fair (+1)
Herb Lore	Average (0)
Alertness	Average (0)
Pickpocket	Average (0)
Move Silently	Average (0)

Phase 4

Leaving the troupe, she heads to the big city to pursue a career as a thief. She joins the guild and takes the aspect "Guild Thief" and learns the skills Pick Locks, Pickpocket, Bluff and Hide.

Phase 4

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 1	Fair
<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy 2	Good
<input type="checkbox"/> Guild Thief 1	Fair
Knife	Good (+2)
Bluff	Good (+2)
Healing	Fair (+1)
Pickpocket	Fair (+1)
Pick Locks	Fair (+1)
Herb Lore	Average (0)
Alertness	Average (0)
Hide	Average (0)
Move Silently	Average (0)

Phase 5

As a result of a big haul that she fails to share with the guild, she ends up with the black mark on her, and a price on her head. She takes the aspect "Hunted" and buys ranks in Knife, Bluff, Alertness and Streetwise.

Phase 5

<input type="checkbox"/> Herbalist 1 (Fair)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy 2 (Good)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Guild Thief 1 (Fair)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hunted 1 (Fair)	
Knife	Great (+3)
Hide	Good (+2)
Bluff	Good (+2)
Healing	Fair (+1)
Pickpocket	Fair (+1)
Alertness	Fair (+1)
Herb Lore	Average (0)
Pick Locks	Average (0)
Streetwise	Average (0)
Move Silently	Average (0)

GM assigns fudge points

The GM gives Sybil 3 fudge points to start the game.

Select Character Goal

Deborah likes the idea of Sybil being on the run, so she's planning on another aspect of Hunted, so she chooses that as the goal for Sybil.

For a little bit more of a sense of how a group character creation session flows, check out "Sample Creation" on page 44.

3. Playing the Game

Aspects

Aspects represent elements of the character that are not reflected by their skills, including things like the character's advantages, disadvantages, connections and even attributes.

The exact form aspects can take in a game depends on the taste of the players. At their simplest, they are a dramatic replacement for more traditional attributes like strength or intelligence. Used to their full advantage, they can represent the character's ties to the game world in a manner that bears directly on play.

Some Sample Aspects

- Duty
- Self-Destructive
- Strong
- Weak
- Tirrinelli Fencing Academy
- Knighthood
- Bob, the talking skull



Elfred The Easily Bruised

- Weak (Good)
- Cowardly (Fair)
- Lackey (Good)

Using Aspects

Aspects have a number of uses, but the most common is to gain a reroll. After the character makes a roll that is germane to the aspect (such as a joust with the Knight aspect, or a sword fight with the Strong aspect), the player describes how the aspect helps their character out, checks off a box of the aspect and either:

1. pick up all four dice and reroll them all
- or
2. choose a single die and change its value to a **+**.

As such, it only takes a single reroll to try to undo a terrible roll, but it may take many rerolls to try to get a really good roll. And that's fine - if the player's been explaining each element, this is probably a pretty dramatic roll.

When you reroll, you are stuck with the outcome of the new roll, unless you want to use another reroll.

Rerolls

Cyrus is engaged in a bar brawl and rolls **■■■■** (-3). Not wanting to eat the broken bottle coming his way, he checks off a box of his Brawler aspect and tries to land a low blow. He rerolls all four dice, and gets **■■■+** (-1). Better, but still not good enough - the dirty trick he tried was one his opponent was clearly already familiar with. He checks off his second box of Brawler and describes it as throwing a chair to knock off his opponent's aim, and he turns one of the **■** dice into a **+**, changing his result from **■■■+** (-1) into **■+■■** (+1), which is enough to save his bacon

Checking off and using an aspect in this way is referred to as a **voluntary invocation**.

Other Uses of Aspects

Aspects also provide a passive bonus that the GM needs to keep in mind. A Strong character is by definition stronger than one who is not, and a Slow character just doesn't get around that fast. In rare circumstances, it may be necessary to roll the aspect. Mechanically, this is no different than rolling for a skill.

The other common use of aspects is **involuntary invocation**. This is done by the GM when she thinks the character's aspects would be detrimental or at odds with the action they have taken. In those situations, the GM declares that she's invoking the aspect (it's **not** checked off) and the player has 2 options: act in accordance with the aspect and gain a number of fudge points equal to the aspect level or pay a number of fudge points equal to the aspect level to overcome the aspect.

Involuntary Aspect Invocation

Cyrus is faced with the opportunity to stand and fight against an onrushing horde or to hop on his horse and flee to safety. The GM looks at this situation and decides that this is a pretty good time to invoke Cyrus' Self Destructive aspect. Cyrus has the aspect at level 2, so he has 2 options - he can pay 2 Fudge points to the GM to go against his nature, or he can stand and fight, in which case the GM awards him with 2 Fudge points.

Not all situations are so dire. Cyrus' partner Finn has the Larcenous aspect at level 1, and at a party full of rich nobles, his fingers are just itching to pick a pocket or two. He could spend a Fudge point to resist the urge, or he could play to his nature and get a bonus Fudge point (and risk getting caught).

Refreshing Aspects

Since aspects are a narrative convenience, they operate on a narrative timeline. As such, they become **unchecked** at appropriate breaks in the narrative, most commonly between game sessions. Unless the GM determines otherwise, aspects are unchecked at the end of every session. That said, GMs are entitled to apply whatever schema they consider most appropriate - allowing aspects to reset after every scene may appeal to some, while others may require significant downtime.

Fudge Points

In addition to their use with aspects, players may use fudge points in three other ways.

They may spend a fudge point to receive +1 on any roll. This may be spent before or after the roll, or even after any aspects have been invoked. Only one point may be spent in this fashion, unless it's countered (see below). This is the only possible way to increase the outcome of a roll to +5.

They may spend a fudge point for minor narrative control of a situation. Common uses for this include finding a convenient item, knowing someone in a particular town, or showing up at just the right moment in another scene. Effectively, this expenditure allows the player to take the role of GM for a moment. The GM has full veto rights on any such expenditures, in which case the point is not spent.

They may be spent to cancel someone else spending a fudge point. If this happens, both fudge points are spent, but the person who spent the original point may spend another point to try again. This process can repeat as many times as people are willing to spend the points.

Advancement

Each advancement period, the player may gain 1 skill rank, which can be spent or saved in accordance with the normal rules (i.e. the pyramid must be maintained). Four periods compose an **arc** and along with the fourth skill, the character gets a new aspect that reflects their experience and the skills they purchased.

Fudge points may also be granted as non-advancement rewards.

For a much more detailed treatment of advancement, see "Advancement" on page 17.



Kendra Loire

- Way of the Sword (Great)
- Awareness (Good)
- Grace (Fair)
- Temper (Good)

4. Aspect Options

Negative Aspects

A character may have any number of aspects, and each aspect may have multiple levels. In general, this is expressed as follows:

☐☐ Strong 2 (Good)

This is how a player would denote that their character has 2 levels of the Strong aspect.

Now, it's worth noting that they can also look like this:

☐☐☐ Weak 3 (Great)

Obviously, this character is very weak, even though it is described as great, a positive descriptor. This is an important example, illustrating that the level of the aspect is the magnitude of that aspect. As such, a character with Weak 3 is weaker than one with Weak 2.

That's not always a simple thing to get one's head around, especially for those with a long familiarity with Fudge - in that case the solution is simple. If you consider the attribute to be a negative one, treat the levels as a negative number. As such:

☐☐☐ Weak -3 (Terrible)

While this is an entirely valid approach, it's use is ultimately a matter of taste.

Aspect Contests

On occasion, you may need to apply an aspect directly to play. This generally occurs under one of two circumstances - the character is involved in a contest purely within the domain of the aspect, or the character is engaging in an extended activity that calls upon multiple skills.

Simple contests are the rarest, and the easiest to adjudicate. In a pure contest of strength, if one character has a Strong aspect and the other does not, there is not even a need to roll - one is stronger than the other. In the case that both are strong, or they have similar but different aspects (such as Brute vs. Strong), the outcome is decided by a roll against the

aspect with the greatest margin of success gaining victory. In contests like this, aspects can be used to grant rerolls (see "Using Aspects" on page 5).

Other Uses

Aspects may also be used to simplify extended actions. A character with a Ranger aspect may want to spend a few weeks hunting in the woods, getting the lay of the land, and looking for huffalump tracks. Rather than require multiple rolls for that, a simple roll on the Ranger aspect can sum up the outcome.

Allies, Contacts and Minions as Aspects

Friendly people (or other creatures) can be represented in three main ways.

Contacts are people with whom the character has a connection (in the form of an aspect), but who operate primarily outside of the scope of the character.

Allies are people whom the player has bought an aspect in and whom they've also invested skill ranks in.

Minions are minor associates who do not have an aspect associated with them, but in whom the player has invested a few skill ranks.

The basic breakdown is as follows.

Table 2: Contacts, Allies & Minions

	Costs Aspects	Costs Skill Ranks
Contact	Yes	No
Ally	Yes	Yes
Minion	No	Yes

Contacts

Contacts require no additional rules - they're just like any other aspect, they just happen to have a friendly

face attached. A contact's attitude towards the character is generally determined at the time the aspect is bought, and though it may be influenced by events in play, it will remain their natural inclination. Depending on circumstance, the contact may be available to the player, but contacts have their own agendas, and are only available to players at their convenience. In general, the more levels in the aspect, the closer the bond between the character and the contact. Good examples of contacts include mentors, teachers or family members.

Sample Contact

During one phase, Finn chooses the aspect Anton Dore: Guildmaster of Thieves. Anton is something of a mentor, a source of advice, information and training, and is best represented as a contact. Finn buys ranks in the skills Anton would have taught him - pickpocket, alertness, streetwise and contacting. He also now has introduced a potentially important NPC into the game who the GM is entitled to stat as she considers appropriate.

Allies

Allies are much more tightly tied to the character, and will figure in most stories told about him. Allies are bought as aspects: the player describes the ally to the GM, and invests a number of skill ranks. The GM then builds the ally as a character with a number of aspects equal to the number of ranks invested.

As a rule of thumb, players should not be allowed to invest more ranks into an ally than they have aspects. Additionally, while the GM should generally build allies according to the usual rules, exceptions are appropriate in some cases. The GM's decision is final, and it's worth noting that the GM is under no obligation to reveal the details of the ally's sheet.

Allies are, generally speaking, available to the player at the player's convenience. They have their own interests and agendas, but in one way or another they are bound to the character. This is a suitable option for folks like bodyguards or sarcastic familiars.

Sample Ally

Later, during a particularly flush period, Finn takes on Lucan, a valet. Finn earned Lucan's loyalty by rescuing him from slavery, and because Finn's player thinks Lucan should be pretty important to Finn's story. He buys the aspect Lucan. Looking over the four skill ranks he's getting with that aspect, he buys a rank of lockpicking to represent the effort taken to free Lucan, and he invests those other three skill ranks into Lucan. The GM makes a note that Lucan is a 3 aspect character, but holds off on detailing him until the end of things.

During a later phase, Finn invests another skill rank in Lucan. At the end of creation, Finn has invested 4 ranks in Lucan, which means the GM will construct him as a character with 4 aspects. Since Finn is an 8 phase character, that level is all right with the GM

Finn's player describes Lucan to the GM as the sort of valet who doubles as a spy, with a bit of a rough background. The GM thinks about that and assigns the aspects Spy, Innocuous, Cutthroat and Valet. Rather than take the time to build him phase-by-phase, the GM just checks "Pyramid Shorthand" on page 40 and chooses four skills at average (fashion, search, alertness and fencing), three at fair (knife, pick lock and etiquette) and two at good (sneak and eavesdrop). The GM gives Finn's player a general sense of what Lucan is good at, but is not obliged to actually share the details.

Minions

Minions are less closely tied to the character than allies. This is useful to represent low-level contacts: stool pigeons, a friend on the force or a friendly fence. They are a less central part of the characters story, and have no aspect associated with them. Instead they are bought through the simple expenditure of skill ranks.

Like any other skill purchase, minions must be tied to the phase's aspect in some way - so it would be appropriate to invest one point in an informant on the phase you buy the aspect Cop, but much less so if you buy an Artist aspect.

Like contacts, minions have their own agendas, and those may not always dovetail with the character's. In return for the reduced investment, the GM has much greater leeway in the behavior and availability of minions.

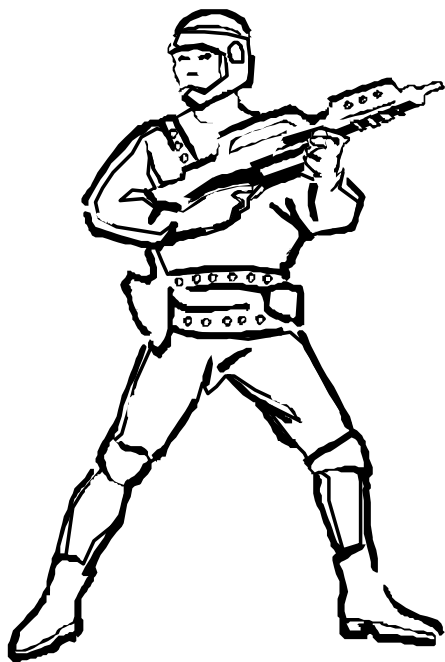
Sample Minions

During his final phase, Finn spends a lot of time in the city, and buys the aspect Man About Town. He buys 2 skill ranks in contacting and decides he's going to pick up some minions. He puts one skill rank into Trall, the pawnbroker and another into Franile the snitch. Each is now a one aspect character (1 skill point ⇒ 1 aspect) beholden to Finn. Trall is useful as a fence, and Franile as an informant.

The GM assigns the minions the aspects Fence and Informant respectively. The GM just opts for the aspect based shorthand with them - they roll their aspect level (fair) for anything pertaining to the aspect, and mediocre for anything else (see "Aspect and NPCs" on page 17.)

Contacting

Contacts, allies and minions are all generally available when the player needs them. Contacts and Allies are usually casually easy to contact (barring geography or other outstanding issues). In fact, an appropriate use of an aspect is to have the contact or ally conveniently arrive (with GM approval). While contracting minions may be a bit harder, unless there are extenuating circumstances, it's still fairly easy.



Space-Marshall Dan Dynamo

- Zap Gun (Fair)
- Vita-Might! (Good)
- Reckless (Fair)
- Space Marshal (Good)

Using Contacts, Allies and Minions

Finn has managed to impress the Black Circle Brothers with his razor sharp wit to such an extent that they are trying to kill him. The first thing he does is try to go to Anton for help, but Anton has gone to ground - he doesn't need war with the Brothers. Because his aspect is not available, Finn is awarded a Fudge point, cold comfort as it may be.

If he wanted, Finn could send Lucan out to try to gather some information about the Brothers, but the GM points out that doing so would put Lucan at risk, and if he goes missing as a result of Finn endangering him, there's not going to be any Fudge point payoff.

So he takes Lucan with him and hits the streets. First off he goes to his informant, Franile. Unfortunately, the Brothers got there first and Franile is nowhere to be found. Because Franile is only a minion, his absence provides no reward for Finn.

Hurrying to Trall's shop, Finn and Lucan arrive and find Trall being kidnapped by two Brothers. A fight ensues. Finn has a great knife skill, and Lucan has a fair one, while the Brothers are both good knife fighters. At one point in the fight, Finn botches a roll, but checks off his Lucan aspect for the reroll, because Lucan is also in the fight, describing it as Lucan distracting his opponent. Finn and Lucan manage to take the day, though Lucan is injured.

Trall is all right, but he doesn't know anything Finn does not - this sort of thing is really not his speciality. Still, he's willing to offer a place to hide for a day or two, but no amount of convincing will get him to pick up a sword and assume the role of bodyguard - he's a pawnbroker, not a fighter. Finn could leave Lucan here safely - in his injured state he's potentially more of a liability than a help. However, that would be a voluntary action on Finn's part, and would gain no reward. Being a heartless bastard, Finn still figures Lucan might make a good meat shield, and brings him along.

Finn and Lucan hit the streets again, hoping to figure out where the Brothers are operating out of, and from this point on, they're going to have to depend upon their skills. Things don't look so good for the home team.

Items as Aspects

The treatment of items is simple - each skill point invested in an item represents some special characteristic. The main question is whether the item is an aspect or not. If the item is also bought as an aspect, it is considered to be an intrinsic part of the character, and provides a reward (see "Other Uses of Aspects" on page 5) if it is not available. To draw some examples from fiction, one might look at Stormbringer, or Captain America's shield.

Non-aspect items are a little more at risk. The GM is entitled to damage, steal or otherwise mess around with the item. That said, if the GM is taking away the item every session, the player is getting hosed and should get the ranks reimbursed to reinvest in some fashion.

Assume that coincidence will conspire to return an item purchased with an aspect to the player, while it has no similar mercy for items bought solely with skills. Such items may be reasonably easily replaced during downtime, but if they are lost or used up over the course of a game, their absence earns no reward.

The GM is entitled to place whatever limits she desires on point expenditures for items - in the absence of any other guide, a max of 1 point per 2 player aspects per item is a good rule of thumb.

Characters can, of course, have whatever mundane equipment is appropriate without purchasing it with skills or aspects. However, such gear is of no narrative importance, and has no protection against plot events like theft or damage.

Special Characteristics

Exactly what special characteristics are appropriate for an item will depend heavily on the campaign. In a high-magic game, characteristics like Flaming, Dancing or Holy might be apt, but in a more subdued game Elf-Wrought or Warns of Goblins might be apt. Most characteristics should be self explanatory, and will generally not need a mechanic - a flaming sword is probably useful for illumination and lighting things on fire, as well as fighting ice based enemies. In the absence of a specific mechanic, consider characteristics to be very narrowly focused aspects, and use them to grant rerolls in appropriate circumstances.

Sample Characteristics

Concealable	God-Forged	Thundering
Cruel	Holy	Troll-Slaying
Elf-forged	Luminous	True Silver
Flaming	Poisoned	Unbreakable
Frost	Tainted	Vorpal

Sample Items

Cyrus inherited a sword from the father he never knew. It is an artifact of some power, but Cyrus doesn't yet know all of the details surrounding it. The sword is named *Anarnasil*, and Cyrus buys it as an aspect. He looks over how to spend the 4 skill ranks for that aspect. He spends one on his sword skill, since it's obviously justified. He invests 2 more of the ranks into the sword and needs to pick two descriptors. The GM has said this is a reasonably low-magic game, so Cyrus' player doesn't want anything overt, like flaming. As such, he selects god-forged and unbreakable. The GM thinks those sound pretty good, so all's well. However, Cyrus still has one more skill rank to spend, but he needs to tie it into the aspect somehow.

His player ends up coming up with a story of how the sword ended up in his hands, delivered by his father's ghost who had been bound to serve a necromancer who Cyrus killed, thereby saving his father. The GM allows that as a justification for Cyrus buying a rank of spirit lore.

in a later phase, Cyrus chooses the Cutthroat aspect, and purchases ranks in sword, knife and sneak. He takes the last rank and invests it in an item - he wants to have a hold out weapon, so he buys a boot knife, and chooses concealable as its sole descriptor (1 skill rank ⇔ 1 descriptor).

Sometime after play begins, Cyrus and Finn find themselves captured, disarmed and imprisoned for something they probably did.

They begin the scene in a cell, having been searched and locked up by the guards. All other things being equal, they should be completely disarmed. Now, Finn carries a number of concealed weapons on him as part of doing business, but the GM figures it was a fairly thorough search. As such, Finn is going to be completely disarmed unless he wants to spend a Fudge point or an appropriate aspect to tweak the plot (see "Fudge Points" on page 6). Of course, if they'd both been stripped naked, they'd be unarmed. There are practical limits to coincidence.

In contrast, Cyrus is still going to have the boot knife, without having to spend any Fudge points or aspects on it because he effectively already spent the points when he bought the item. However, Cyrus won't have *Anarnasil*, because it's rather harder to hide.

They manage to get free and overpower the guard. Coincidence works in their favor, and one of the next guards they take down turns out to be carrying *Anarnasil*, having decided it was nicer than his sword. Later still, Cyrus leaves the boot knife in the throat of a guard - he's not going to get it back until he has the opportunity to take some downtime to get a new one made.

Handling Powerful Items

It's possible to allow for items which are more powerful, but these should generally require the expenditure of more ranks. The GM should be most careful when dealing with powers which trump existing skills. An item that allows its user to fly can now outperform someone who has invested any number of ranks into things like climbing or jumping. Other abilities to watch out for include invisibility, telepathy, or the ability to render a foe completely helpless casually, such as sleep or paralysis.

This is not to say the GM should disallow these capabilities altogether. Instead, the GM is encouraged to find ways to make the power cool, yet playable. As an example of GM options:

Cloak of Invisibility

The GM may simply give the cloak an invisibility aspect of its own, based on the ranks invested. Thus, if the character spends a skill rank on the item, it is described as "Cloak of Invisibility (□ Invisible 1 (Fair)). It probably makes the user moderately transparent, or blend somewhat with the scenery - it requires a Fair perception check to spot the character. More ranks makes the item more potent, so it's important to keep spending limits in mind.

Alternately, the player and GM may decide to come up with something a bit less generic. If the player wants a cloak that draws the shadows around him, the GM may let the cloak provide a +1 to concealment rolls in deep shadows. If the player wants it to be more potent, he works it out with the GM how exactly it functions, and the GM can set whatever cost in ranks he considers appropriate.

Last, the GM could consider the narrative limitation approach. This is only appropriate for Items which have been bought as aspects. By this model, the Item may be very potent - one skill rank could buy full invisibility or shapechanging or nearly anything else. However, to use the item, the player must check off an aspect box for the item. This is a bit of narrative sleight of hand designed to model certain literary conventions. Few fictional characters use magical items at their disposal with the kind of reckless abandon that PCs tend to. This option allows the inclusion of powerful items that suit the setting's tone, without them overrunning the game.

Other Unique Aspects

The general model used for items and allies (investing skill ranks to make the aspect more potent) can be used to simulate other aspects as well, such as secret lairs, or extensive holdings. Naturally, any such aspect should be discussed with the GM. One example might be Faceless Minions:

Faceless Minions

This option is primarily useful for villains, but may also be useful for PCs who have a large number of NPCs reporting to them, such as an army.

Faceless minions are bought in the same fashion as allies, except they trade quality for numbers. They must be bought as an aspect, and skill ranks must be invested in them for quality. Each skill point invested purchases a single skill rank. Technically, faceless minions must balance their pyramid, but a generous GM might allow them to use the columnar balance (see above) for faceless minions with only a few skill ranks.

The number of faceless minions that the character will have available to him in a **given scene** is determined by the level of the aspect - 2 faceless minions at level 1, doubling with each subsequent aspect level. It's important to note that this is not necessarily the total number of faceless minions - that is determined by the description of the aspect. It is instead something of a numerical measure of their dramatic significance, demonstrated in terms of how many minions are potentially available for any given scene. As faceless minions, they are basically interchangeable, and the loss of any number of them is only an inconvenience as they are quickly replaced.

It's also worth noting that the character may also wish to invest some additional aspects in the larger group which the faceless minions are a part of, to reflect rank or influence within that group.

It is worth noting that this model is based on the assumption that armies are not defeated on the open field as much as they are in the dramatic fight in the Lord Marshal's rolling tower or its equivalent. As such, this option is probably not suited for games with a more tactical bent.

Example of a Unique Aspect

Cyrus has a period of off screen advancement (see "Off Screen Advancement" on page 17) and decides he's spent the time smuggling, and is captain of his own ship. He and the GM sit down and discuss what this means in game terms. Cyrus wants a smuggler's ship - moderately well armed, good storage capacity, and **fast**. The GM ponders this and she sketches out how the ship would be described in terms of aspects. A level 2 aspect of Smuggler's Ship covers most of the basics (Level 1 would have been a smaller vessel, and level 3 would be more in the ship of the line/man o war class). The GM rules that it includes light armament. Because the ship must be fast, a level 1 Fast aspect is also appropriate. So the ship itself is 3 aspects, but the issue of the crew remains. The GM is willing to accept that a minimal quality crew comes as part of the ship, but if Cyrus wants better quality - especially a crew that can handle itself in a fight, it will cost more. Cyrus wants a really rough and tumble crew, so he'd like to spend 2 skill ranks, to add the Crew aspect at level 2.

The final build puts the ship at 5 aspects which will cost 5 skill ranks, more than Cyrus can afford. However, the GM offers to cut a deal - Cyrus can have a plot bonus (see "Aspects as Plot Hooks" on page 13) if he takes on a major debt to a crime boss. Cyrus agrees and receives 5 skill ranks rather than the usual 4. He buys the aspect *Del Lupo* (the name of the ship) and spends all 5 skill ranks on it. Its expensive, but *Del Lupo* will likely prove more than worth it.

As a side note, Cyrus could buy the aspect Smuggler instead, and spend the skill ranks in the same way. However, that would mean that *Del Lupo* would be far more subject to the whims of fate. As it stands, *Del Lupo* has a captain Cyrus can trust in his absence and will generally end up in whatever port is most convenient. For this much of a skill rank investment, tying it to the character with an aspect is an excellent idea

Furthermore, Cyrus could have done this all much more inexpensively - a single skill rank or aspect level would have sufficed to provide him with a smuggling ship, it simply would not have been exceptional. The GM needs to realize that this sort of investment means that Cyrus' ship and crew need to show up with reasonable frequency. If the GM feels there's no way to work it into the story, she should let Cyrus have all he wants for as little as a single skill rank. It doesn't matter how cool the item is: if it's never going to show up, it shouldn't be costing the character much.



Del Lupo, Smuggling Ship

- Smuggling Ship 2 (Good)
- Fast 1 (Fair)
- Crew 2 (Good)

5. Character Creation Options

Aspects as Plot Hooks

Sometimes, the GM has certain goals during character generation. The GM may declare certain phases to have “plot” aspects - these will generally have events that the GM wants the PCs involved in, or may serve the campaign in some way. Common plot aspects include having everyone grow up in the same village, or having everyone end character creation in the same place.

Hooks may also be more general, such as the GM may want some or all of the PCs to have ties to a particular organization. They may even be used to enforce a theme: if PCs are characters from a fictional setting, the GM feels that certain aspects need to be bought to reflect the tone of the setting.

The GM is entirely entitled to declare plot aspects to be mandatory and leave it at that. However, if the GM takes too heavy a hand with that, the players are entirely entitled to give her a wedgie and go play something they’d actually enjoy.

It’s suggested that the GM take a more carrot than stick approach, and offer a reward for choosing a plot aspect. In general, plot aspects reward one more skill point than normal, but the GM is entitled to make the reward anything that she sees fit. This bonus skill rank is referred to as a **plot bonus**.

Sample Plot Hooks

In a game set in Secarda, a nation of city states ruled by 13 great houses, the GM offers a plot bonus to any character who takes one of the great houses as an aspect for their first phase (effectively denoting birth into one of the houses). No one is obliged to do so, but the offer is enough to entice the players.

The GM has plans to include the church in her plots, so she offers a general hook - the first character to take an aspect tying them strongly to the church will receive a plot bonus for it.

For the last phase of character generation, the GM mandates that all characters must end up in the capital city. While this is mandatory, she grants a plot bonus to everyone for complying.

Potential

In a game where the character creation phases are based on a strict timeline, it is possible that one character may be younger than the others, and thus have fewer phases. In that situation, the PC accumulates a point of potential during each phase they aren’t around.

Potential may be spent during any phase that the player buys an aspect, effectively granting them another phase. This is treated like a normal phase - an aspect and skills are bought and the pyramid is balanced. The only limitation is that the new aspect should be tied to the first aspect bought during that phase in some way. Any amount of potential can be spent on any phase.

Example of Potential

Kevin is playing a scrappy kid in a game with 5-year phases. Most of the rest of the characters are about 25 years old, but Kevin’s character, Mikah, is only 15. He accumulates 2 points of potential during the first 2 phases. In the first phase (ages 1-5) he buys the aspect Child of Prophecy without any real idea of what it means, but he figures the GM will think of something. He doesn’t spend the potential yet. In his second phase, he decides the prophecy is tied to him being a magical prodigy. He buys the aspect Sorcerer and 4 appropriate skill ranks. He also spends one of the points of potential to buy a second level of Sorcerer and 4 more skill ranks. This suits Kevin’s idea for the character, so he decides to hold off on spending the other point of potential, and moves onto the third phase.

In some games, it may be appropriate to grant all characters a number of rounds of potential to be spent in some specific way, such as on plot aspects, or on intrinsic aspects, like attributes. GMs who consider statistics and intrinsics to be very important may wish to consider allowing all players to take a few levels of potential, with the understanding the it will be spent on attributes and attribute-like aspects, such as Strong, Nimble or Magical Talent. See “Talented Novices” on page 16 for more on this idea.

Destiny

This is an optional rule designed to allow a player to create the lowly-farmboy-who-becomes-a-powerful-wizard sort of character, popular in fiction and film. During character creation, the player chooses the aspect “Destiny” and **does not purchase any skill ranks with it**. The nature of the destiny should be discussed with the GM to determine if it can be worked into the story (and if it’s appropriate). It’s even possible for the player to have an unknown destiny, in which case the GM determines the specifics.

The character may have multiple levels of the destiny aspect (called a **Grand Destiny**). This aspect can be used like any other aspect, specifically towards rolls that advance that destiny. At the end of any session where the character has not achieved their destiny (see below), they receive one Fudge point.

The player and GM should come to an agreement regarding the sort of things that allow a destiny to come to pass. In general, destinies are not casually achieved, so the GM is perfectly entitled to veto a destiny that is likely to be achieved within a handful of sessions.

Achieving Destiny

There are two possible ways for a destiny to be realized, and the destiny aspect to be “cashed in” for other aspects.

The first is dramatic - the PC is in a scene where the destiny is coming to a head. They may be facing down the killer of their father, or discovering the ancient ruins that prove they’re not a crackpot. The player informs the GM that they’re achieving their destiny, and if the GM agrees it’s appropriate (and the GM may not - she may know, for example, that the arch nemesis is really an imposter), it begins. The player is given 5 Fudge points, which may be used only for this scene, any left over are disposed of. The scene plays out however it goes, and at the end of that session, the player reduces their destiny by one level, and purchases an aspect that reflects the experience. With that aspect, they may buy 5 ranks of skills, just as if it was a plot aspect - which it effectively was, see “Aspects as Plot Hooks” on

page 13. It should be noted, a Grand Destiny requires several of these scenes to achieve.

The second option is narrative. At the end of an arc, when players achieve a new aspect, the player and the GM can sit down and discuss how the arc affected the destiny. Depending on the agreement, any number of levels of destiny may be turned into aspects, and reward 5 skill ranks per, as above.

It is also possible that the character may turn away from their destiny. This will generally occur when the player decides they are no longer interested in that direction for the character, or they are tired of waiting. This can be done during any advancement period, and allows those levels of destiny to be spent as aspects and skills. In this situation, the aspect only awards the usual 4 skill levels.

Structured Creation

The default assumption behind character creation is that things are pretty much wide open. Players are free to pick any aspects that they want and make any kind of story they want. The GM may provide a guiding hand in the form of plot hooks and the like, but overall, anything goes.

While this can work very well, it’s not something that’s going to work for every type of game. Sometimes, a little more structure is desired, whether to simulate career paths, environment or some particular development mechanic. The key to any of these is having well structured aspect and skill lists.

Most structured approaches are based around the simple idea of a limited list of aspects or skills, which expands as aspects are taken.

It’s assumed in these models that characters are still free to choose aspects like Strong or Cowardly, since intrinsics are easy to justify in almost any context. The GM is the ultimate authority on what aspects are available, and would be well served to provide a list to players in advance, if only to give them a starting point.

Geographic Structure

This method requires that the GM have a list of a few important locations in the setting, and a list of the aspects and skills that can be gained in that

location. During each phase, players declare their location, and choose aspects from the appropriate list. The exact nature of the places depends on the game: they could be towns, countries or even planets or dimensions. Depending upon how the geography is laid out, the GM may also put constraints upon how freely a character can move between phases. The GM might allow only moving between adjacent locations from phase to phase, or create a special “travelling” location where the character must spend a phase before moving on.

Geographic Creation

Devon begins his life as the son of a simple farming family in the village of Arrn. Devon hopes to become a duellist someday, but there’s no real opportunity for that in this backwater village. For that he needs to seek the duelling academies of Alverado. For his first phase, he may only gain aspects appropriate to Arrn, which the GM rules to include stats (which may be taken anywhere), domestic aspects, craft aspects or outdoors aspects. He takes the Hunter aspect, since it at least allows him to learn how to use a bow and knife.

For his next aspect, Devon wants to move on. The two nearby locations are the small city of Elsin, and the secluded mountain hold of the druids. Devon opts to move on to Elsin. In Elsin, he would have no opportunity to buy another level of his Hunter aspect, but he’s fine with that. He wants to get some sword skill under his belt. Sadly, Elsin is too small a city to have any duellists, so he takes the aspect Mercenary, which serves his needs.

Alverado is still far away, so Devon opts to spend his next phase travelling. He works for a travelling merchant whose wares are heading in that direction, so the GM allows him to take another level of Mercenary.

As such, Devon begins his next phase in Alverado, and if all else goes well, he can finally join one of the academies, and buy the aspect Duellist.

Pursuit Structure

The pursuit structure works in a manner very similar to the geographic one, except it replaces the character’s physical location with the characters current pursuit. Descriptors in this case tend to be very general: Rural, Wilderness, Underworld, Military and so on, but the GM may have very specific pursuits available. This can be a great model for a conspiratorial or faction based game - time spent working with a certain faction opens up aspects that might not otherwise be available.

Changing pursuits depends upon the logic of the setting. It’s very difficult to go from a Wilderness pursuit directly to High Society without at least an intervening Urban pursuit. However, the specific requirements will ultimately depend on the GM and the description of the events of the phase. Some pursuits, like secret societies, may even have special requirements, like certain skill levels or a certain number of phases spent in a particular pursuit.

Pursuit Creation:

Duvo is born the youngest son of a minor noble family. His initial phase is spent in the Society pursuit, receiving his education and taking the aspect Gentleman. With little prospect of an inheritance and less of a favorable marriage, he’s unable to take another Society pursuit. He’s a well educated young man of reasonable talents, and could easily turn to the pursuit of Business or Religion, but he opts for the Military. This allows a number of aspects options (Infantry, Cavalry, Engineer, Clerk, Marine) right out the door, and Duvo takes the aspect Infantry. He continues in the Military pursuit into his next phase, taking the aspect Infantry again.

Once again, he pursues the Military option, and with a third phase spent in the pursuit, a number of additional aspects become available, including Scout, Artillerist, Outrider and Spy. Duvo chooses to take the aspect Spy, and takes it again on his next phase.

He has now spent 4 phases in the Military. If he were to choose to leave at this point, he would have few options. Entering Business would be a shift of gears for him. An Urban lifestyle might be appropriate, selling his services as a bodyguard or the like. The greatest lure would probably be the Underworld, where a lot of ex-veterans end up.

In the face of such options, he takes another phase in the Military, and another aspect becomes available - Officer. Duvo takes that aspect and earns a commission. When his next phase comes around he has a new potential pursuit - Society always welcomes dashing young officers

Career Structure

Careers take some of the concepts in the Pursuit structure and folds them into the aspects themselves. The idea is that there are a certain number of careers available at the outset, and as those careers are pursued, new careers open up. Thus, if the Squire aspect is available at the outset, the Knight aspect might become available to any character who has taken 2 levels of Squire.

The progression need not be that simple either. If there are a variety of careers available, some careers may require a combination of other careers. As an

example, it may require a certain number of levels of the aspect Knight and a certain number of levels of the aspect Priest to make the aspect Knight Templar available.

This method can work very well when you have aspects which open up new skills or abilities. Some examples that might be useful can be found in “Magic and Supernormal Powers” on page 28.

Career Creation

Reana is beginning her adventuring career in a cut-and-paste fantasy setting. The initial careers are Thug, Sneak, Initiate or Scholar. Reana takes the aspect Scholar for her first phase. For her second phase, she finds the available options have expanded, and are now Thug, Sneak, Initiate, Scholar, Scribe or Apprentice Mage. She chooses Apprentice Mage.

For her third phase, the careers have not changed, so she takes another level of Apprentice Mage. Next phase, she finds that Mage has become an available aspect, and she chooses it.

Looking over her options now, Reana decides she wants to get a little martial training under her belt, and for the next phase, she takes the aspect Thug. In addition to giving her some skills she had no access to, it opens up the aspect Guard and Soldier. On her next phase, she takes the aspect Guard.

By having aspects in Mage and Guard, Reana has opened up a special aspect of Alecti, the elite order of magus bodyguards. That sounds promising, and Reana chooses that as her goal.

An Option: Windows of Opportunity

The one drawback to all of these structured systems is that they are a little predictable. They do not allow for the possibility of the drunken swordmaster having retired to the isolated village, or the corrupt clerk more interested in his criminal profits than his legitimate bureaucratic pursuits. To simulate the odd turns of fate that seem to follow heroes of fiction around, the GM may allow players to include one or more “windows of opportunity” in structured creation. They can use this opportunity to take an aspect that they should not otherwise be able to, provided they can come up with a good explanation. The exact number of windows of opportunity available is the GM’s decision, based on how strongly tied to structure she wishes creation to be. If the GM wishes, every phase could be a potential window of opportunity, provided the player has an interesting enough story.

Talented Novices

The phased creation system is designed to create characters with well-developed histories. For some games, that’s not the goal - many games begin with characters who are effectively nobodies, with their story waiting to be told. For a game like that, the best solution is to make 1 phase characters, but grant them as much potential as one considers appropriate. It’s not unreasonable for the GM to require that a certain amount of the potential be spent on intrinsic elements of the character, such as Strong or Stoic.

The GM may even grant a number of “freebie” aspects, which do not grant the character any skills, if she wishes to grant the characters a certain amount of advantage while still keeping them reasonably inexperienced.



Taevin: Sinister Cultist

- Sinister: Good
- Dark Powers: Good
- Scholar: Fair
- Familiar: Fair

6. GM's Toolbox

Aspect and NPCs

Aspects allow a GM to represent NPCs in a sort of shorthand. A GM may (and should for most minor characters) simply assign aspects, and use those for all rolls. Thus, a caravan guard might be represented simply as:

- Mercenary 2 (Good)
- Perceptive 1 (Fair)
- Horseman 1 (Fair)

In general, these aspects do not allow rerolls. It is suggested that the GM construct the aspects in a pyramid, much like what is done with skills, but that is more of a guideline than a hard and fast rule, especially for NPCs with few aspects.

Difficult Skills

While it is assumed that most skills default to mediocre, that is not necessarily be the case. Certain rare or esoteric skills may begin with a lower default, such as poor, terrible or even abysmal (which is practically the same as “none”). These skills are bought up like any other skill, except that it may take several ranks to get them up to average. The good news is, until those skills reach average, they are not counted for purposes of balancing the Pyramid.

Advancement

The key element to advancement is the character's goal. This is the aspect the character is looking to pursue next, such as Master Thief or Officer.

When it comes to the point in the story where it is appropriate to distribute advancement, the character gains a single skill rank. This skill rank should be spent on a skill appropriate to the goal.

These skill ranks should be distributed over the course of a game arc, with the goal of awarding the fourth skill rank when the arc concludes. When that fourth rank is achieved, the character achieves their goal, and may add the aspect to their character sheet. The player now selects the character's next goal.

It is important that the GM work the goals into the story arc so that the conclusion is satisfactory for everyone involved. If that is not feasible, the player and GM should sit down and discuss how to make the goal work, and if it's not workable the player should be allowed to pick a different goal. The player should not be penalized in situations like that.

Exactly how long an arc should be and how few and far between advancement sessions should be is a matter of taste, and should be suited to the specifics of the game in question. In general, err on the side of caution - characters may move from fighting killer midgets to demon princes over the course of some games, but it's a phenomenon rarely seen in literature.

It's worth noting, the pyramid needs only to be balanced when the character chooses a new goal - it may get unbalanced by the single skill point advancements. The GM should help the player keep track of this. That said, if the character reaches their goal and the pyramid is unbalanced, the situation needs to be rectified. Ideally the GM and player can come to some agreement, either modifying some skill levels or laying out exactly what the layout of subsequent expenditures is going to be to rectify the situation. The first time this happens, it is very important to try to work with the player, and not penalize them.

Of course, if the pattern repeats to the point of abuse penalties become more appropriate - specifically, the GM is now responsible for spending the player's advancement skill ranks on whatever she sees fit, until the pyramid is rebalanced.

Off Screen Advancement

Advancement can also occur during downtime. If the GM determines that an extended period of time should occur between story arcs, it may be appropriate to allow an advancement phase to occur. This is treated just like a normal phase in character generation. The character may choose to buy their goal aspect during this phase - if so they should pick a new goal. There is nothing that mandates this during downtime - it's just a nice option.

Fudge Points as Rewards

If advancement is slower than players are comfortable with, a good compromise is to award Fudge points in lieu of more traditional advancement. The exact pace they are awarded at is up to the GM, but even a single Fudge point per session (beyond those gained with aspects) can be a significant award.

Alternate Advancement

If the players are not comfortable with coming up with character goals, it is entirely reasonable to simply award skill advancement, and let them choose the aspect when they receive it.



Aelfyrth, The Guardian

- Guardian (Good)
- Animal-Friend (Good)
- Druid (Great)
- Skald (Fair)

Skill Column

The pyramid structure results in more low level skills, with greats and superbs being areas where the character truly excels. However, the model does not work for every genre - some games call for more highly skilled characters.

Games like that are better served following a columnar pattern, where you must have as many skills in the rank below to support the skill you like. As such, to have a superb skill, the character needs only have a great skill, a good skill, a fair skill and an average skill. Obviously this results in fewer, higher level skills. However, it's not as egregious as it initially appears: since the column must be checked each phase, it's impossible to build directly up to too high a spike without widening the base.

Aspect Caps

It is generally assumed that there is no hard cap on the number of ranks a character may have in any particular aspect. However, the GM is entitled to place caps on how high an aspect can be bought, either in a general sense (i.e. no aspects over 3) or on case-by-case basis (if you buy one more aspect in the Church, they'll make you pope, which is great for me, but not so much for the game). As with all things, common sense and good judgement are the watchwords. For those desperate for a hard and fast rule, try this: no more than half of a character's aspect ranks may be in a single aspect.

7. Combat

The first thing to determine in a given combat is its *pace*. This is a choice that is best determined by the dictates of circumstance and the tastes of the players involved. It's reasonable to decide that one pace or another is an appropriate default for a game, but there's no harm in occasionally running a fight at different pace if appropriate. The three paces available are *Scene Based*, *Exchange Based* and *Turn Based*.

In a scene based combat, each participant makes only a single roll, and the overall outcome is determined by the overall result. Exchange based combats are composed of multiple rolls, each representing an exchange of blows or maneuvers. A turn based combat breaks things down to the finest grain possible, with each roll representing an attack or defense.

All three paces operate on a similar mechanical principle - two rolls are compared, and the victor's margin of success is used to determine an outcome according to the table below.

Simple Combat

Jack and Bob have pulled knives, each intent on mugging the other. Both have the knife skill, Jack at great, Bob at fair. Both roll. Jack gets a **■■■+**, which is a superb result. Bob gets a **■+■■** which is a fair result. Jack wins the exchange by a margin of 3, which means a **hurt** outcome against Bob. Bob, seeing which way the wind is blowing, hands over his wallet and runs.

Table 3: Combat Outcomes

MOS	Effect
0	Scratched - A negligible result. A near miss, or a hit which fails to have any real impact.
+1	Clipped - A noticeable result. A hit or maneuver that provides a momentary advantage to the attacker, such as knocking a blade out of line or knocking your opponent back a step. In general, getting clipped applies a -1 penalty to the next action.
+2 - +4	Hurt - A palpable result. A hit or maneuver that grants a persistent advantage, such as a shallow cut or a disarm. Getting hurt usually applies a -1 penalty to all actions for the duration of the scene.
+5 - +6	Injured - A significant result. A hit or maneuver with impact that carries on beyond the immediate scene - a serious injury being the most obvious example. Injuries apply a -1 penalty to most actions until the injury is healed.
+7 & up	Taken Out - A decisive result. A hit or maneuver that ends the fight right there, either from a knockout or perhaps passing out from injuries. It's worth noting that this is not automatic death - that is left to out-of-combat decision.

Scene Based Fights

Scene based fights are, mechanically, the easiest fights to run. However, they can be very challenging to make interesting. As such, the two situations when it is best to use a scene-level pace are:

1. When players want to play out fights in a primarily narrative manner, and just want to get the mechanics out of the way.
2. The fight is tangential to the game, and is best resolved quickly, such as fights involving only one player which leave everyone else twiddling their thumbs.

At the beginning of the scene, everyone involved states their goals and how they're going to go about them, and the GM states the opposition's goals and methods in general terms, and everyone rolls and rerolls as normal. Ideally, the GM should be able to eyeball the results and work with the player's narrative to figure out how things went.

That sort of improvisation, while useful, is not always an option, and for those looking for guidelines, there are a couple of possibilities. The simplest is to look at the total numerical difference between the outcomes of each side, and determine the overall outcome based on the difference between those figures - the Combat Outcomes table on page 19 provides useful guidelines in that regard.

For a slightly more complicated resolution, consider pairing off the sides, either by player choice or based on the narrative, and resolve the larger fight as multiple sub-fights, using the same guidelines above.

However it's resolved, the fight should end in a way that allows things to move onto the next scene. It's generally assumed that if there was a safe way to retry the effort, it's done as part of the scene. As such, continually re-attacking a fortified position in hopes of getting lucky is not an option.

Example of a Scene Based Fight:

Cyrus and Finn are lost in the depths of the Blistered Citadel. Finally managing to find an exit, they need to get past the 4 guards blocking it. Finn's not much of a fighter, so he declares that his goal is to round the corner at a sprint and make it out past the guards before they have time to react. Cyrus is less subtle, and is just going to engage them, hoping the element of surprise will allow him to get the drop on them and get him the opportunity to get past. The GM declares that the guards will try to stop them.

Everyone rolls. Cyrus gets a great result on his sword skill, and Finn rolls badly and gets an average result for running. The GM rolls for the guards and they get two averages, a fair and a good. Cyrus looks at that and spends a Fudge point to increase his outcome to Superb. Finn checks off a box of his Athletic aspect and rerolls, bumping up to a good.

The GM looks at the factors involved - minor element of surprise, the discrepancy of numbers, the goals, and the skill rolls, and figures our heros are going to succeed, but not decisively. As the scene gets described, Cyrus draws their attention, allowing Finn to get free, and Finn in turn provides distraction enough for Cyrus to break free. One of the guards is down, but the other 3 are still up, which means they could potentially give chase, or raise the alarm (or both). All in all, it's taken more time to read this than it probably took to play it out.

Injuries and Penalties

The combat outcome table is a good yardstick for the sort of consequences a fight can have. However, the more minor outcomes (clipped and hurt) have less bearing, as they don't tend to extend beyond the scope of the scene. As such, treat those outcomes as follows:

Scratch - Close Thing. The character isn't particularly inconvenienced, but they're not particularly successful either.

Clipped - Minor Inconvenience. The character isn't badly hurt, but they look like they've been in a fight, and may have suffered minor wear and tear on gear, items or reputation.

Hurt - Major Inconvenience. As Clipped, but it's something that could be a real problem unless its dealt with - a damaged weapon or saddle, for example. Alternately, an injury that's too small to provide a blanket penalty, but which could cause a problem under specific circumstances (running, using the left hand, etc.). This generally creates a -1

penalty that the GM can apply in appropriate situations.

Injured or Taken Out - These are resolved normally, see “Injuries and Advantages” on page 22.

Exchange Based Fights

The exchange pace is considered the default for Fate. It’s well suited to striking a balance between drama and tactics, and allows tension to grow over the course of an extended fight. While it has many of the earmarks of traditional combat systems, it still falls strongly on the narrative end of the spectrum.

An exchange begins with all involved parties declaring their intended actions. These actions should only be things that take a few moments to perform, such as attacking someone, or jumping onto a rope and swinging to safety. Those involved roll their dice and compare them against whoever they are acting in opposition to (or against a GM determined difficulty if there’s no opponent). Those individual exchanges are resolved against the Combat Outcomes table. If the fight is still going on, a new exchange begins.



Ser Dylan the Humble

- Devout (Fair)
- Knight (Good)
- Proud (Good)

It’s worth noting that while that’s the theory, GMs are encouraged to play a little fast and loose with things. There’s nothing wrong with handling individual exchanges one at a time - the important thing is to keep the overall flow of things moving and not let anyone get bored.

Injuries and Penalties

A **clipped** result means taking a -1 to the next exchange, while a **hurt, injured** or **taken out** result mean the character is, well, hurt, injured or taken out (see “Injuries and Advantages” on page 22).

Example of an exchange based fight:

(Note: This fight uses the rules from “Other Combat Modifiers” on page 25) Cyrus and Finn have settled in for a pint when the three guards they got past burst in, swords drawn. Cyrus jumps from his seat and draws his sword to defend himself, and Finn dives under the nearest table. The guards split, two (A & B) of them going after Cyrus and one (C) chasing after Finn.



Cyrus rolls his swords skill and gets a great result, guard A gets a fair and guard B gets an average. Normally, this would allow him to damage one of them, but he was getting his sword out and defending himself, so he is simply successful. Finn is not so lucky - he only rolls a fair tumbling result, while guard C rolls a good. That’s a clipped result, and puts Finn at a -1 on his next roll. The GM rules that the guard pulled the table aside one handed, and Finn is now exposed.

The next exchange begins, with Cyrus mixing it up with his opponents, who are getting a +1 to their rolls for outnumbering him. Finn is in a tough spot, and decides he’s going to try to kick the guard and knock him away and buy himself some time. The guards simply continue attacking.

Cyrus gets a good, guard A also gets a good, and guard B gets a great - the good is just a scratch, but the great is a clipped result, so Cyrus is going to be at -1 next round - combined with the guard’s +1, that’s not very good for him. The GM describes that the guards have managed to move into flanking position. Meanwhile, guard C rolls a fair, and Finn rolls a great, modified to a good with the penalty. That would be enough for Finn’s kick to clip the guy, but he wants to really knock the guy back, which the GM has determined requires a Hurt result. As such, he spends a Fudge point to bring his roll back to great. That’s a hurt outcome, and Finn opts to knock him across the room and out of the fight for the next exchange or two rather than inflict the level of Hurt.

Cyrus knows he’s got a pile of pain coming his way and hoping Finn will cover his back. Finn obliges and takes advantage of the opportunity to pull out a knife and throw it at the back of one of the guards on

Exchange Based Fight, Continued

Cyrus. Cyrus rolls a good. It's modified down to a fair from the clipped result. A & B roll a good and a fair respectively. They get a +1 bonus beyond that, raising things to a great and a fair. Cyrus checks off a box of his Brawler aspect for a reroll. He turns one of his  dice into a  and manages to bump up to a great. He spends a Fudge point for a superb, and hurts one of the guards - he chooses guard A because his back is to Finn. Finn throws the knife at guard A, and the GM gives Finn a +1 on his roll because the guard is not expecting it. Finn rolls spectacularly, and gets an Epic result, which his +1 bonus brings up to Legendary. The knife is now sticking out of the Guard A's back, he is now injured **and** hurt, and thus at a -2 to all actions.

Cyrus smiles the smile of the psychotic as Finn throws another knife. The Guard who was knocked back is dragging himself to his feet this round. The injured guard can't safely disengage, so he and his buddy concentrate on Cyrus. Cyrus fights fully defensive this time, gaining a +1 to his roll. He gets a fair, which the bonus raises to a good. A&B get an average and a good. Both gain a +1 bonus for outnumbering Cyrus, but A also takes a -2 penalty (1 for being injured, 1 for being hurt), so their final results are a mediocre for guard A and a great for guard B. Cyrus is clipped by the great. Finn rolls a Great, but checks off a level of Underhanded to get a reroll, and pushes it to Superb. Guard A isn't outnumbering Finn, so he doesn't get to count the +1, and his mediocre drops to a poor. Superb vs. Poor is a MoS of 6, so Finn spends a Fudge point to bring his roll up to an epic (and a MoS of 7), and the guard is taken out.

The fight continues, but at least it's fair now...

Turn Based Fights




Turn based fights work similarly, except they require a lot more die rolling. Initiative is determined by rolling alertness, with ties broken by tactics skill, then the combat skill being used. Characters act in the order of initiative, each taking an action. The actor rolls dice to attack, and if they beat the defender's roll to defense, damage is dealt according to the combat outcome table. The only real difference is that **clipped** results affect the next attack roll, and have no effect on defense rolls. Obviously, since it has the most rolls, this method can burn through aspects very quickly.

This is generally not the recommended combat system for Fate, but there are many players who swear by it, so it's included for completeness.

Injuries and Advantages

The core of the wound system can be summarized with the following chart.

Table 4: Wound Track

MoS	Result	Track	Effect
0	Scratched		None
1	Clipped		-1 to next action
2-4	Hurt		-1 to actions for the scene
5-6	Injured		-1 per box checked
7+	Taken Out	X	Knocked out/ Disabled

Using the chart is simple: when the character suffers a particular result, mark off a box of the appropriate type. If there are no boxes of that type left, mark off a box of the next category down the chart. So if all three hurt boxes are marked off and a character takes another hurt result, mark off an injured results. Of course, this means if both injured boxes are full, the character goes directly to being taken out.

Clipped results generally result in a -1 to the next roll in the combat, but have little lasting effect beyond that. Clipped can be described as a very minor injury, but is better suited to some sort of momentary advantage. Practically speaking, there is rarely any need to actually mark off clipped boxes, since they go away so quickly. Multiple clipped results do not increase the penalty beyond -1, though they could conceivably spill up to a hurt result.

Hurt results generally put the character at a -1 to all actions for the duration of the scene. Generally, problems that qualify as Hurt may be bad, but can be taken care of with a bit of downtime - a small cut over the eyes, for example. As such, Hurt is the general yardstick for problems which can be remedied by action, such as a disarm or cutting someone's belt. If any hurt boxes are checked, the character is at a -1 to combat actions until the issue is resolved (generally the end of the scene).

Injured results generally mean the character has been hurt, and hurt badly. Characters take a -1 to actions for *each* injury. This -1 to all actions extends beyond the scene, and continues until the wound heals. How long a wound takes to heal depends greatly on the severity of the wound and the resources available. Assume it takes 2 weeks of rest or 3 weeks of light activity to heal a wound, with one day removed per MOS above average of an applied healing skill.

Taken Out is not killed. Killing generally should occur after the fight, be it by cutting throats or by leaving opponents to die. Characters tend to be sufficiently willing to kill themselves through their own enthusiasm that there's no need to help it along with a bad throw of the dice.

In general, use common sense when applying the wound penalty to rolls. If someone is bedridden with injuries, and people are bringing him books, there aren't at any penalties to read, converse or listen. The penalty comes in when the character would have to move.

Changing Wound Boxes

While the wound boxes as presented are the default for the system, there's no reason that they cannot be changed to make combats more or less brutal.

The Death Spiral

One effect of wounds overflowing into the next category is that over the course of a long fight, small injuries may accumulate to the point of becoming lethal. It also means that the more injured you are, the less well you'll be fighting and the more likely you are to be injured some more. The impact of these compound penalties is called "the death spiral" and while some players like the effect it has, others are very uncomfortable with it. In the latter case, the issue is easily addressed by adding more wound boxes, or simply removing overflow entirely.

Non-Lethal Damage

In certain circumstances, characters may deal or be dealt non-lethal damage, such as from fists or padded weapons. This has no impact on things during combat, but any injured results delivered in this fashion heal much faster, anywhere from at the

end of the scene to within a day or two, depending on their nature.

Combat Options

The exact rules for weapons and armor tend to be a matter of taste, so we have included a number of possible options. While we have broken these down into three categories (dramatic, simple and advanced), mixing and matching is encouraged. There's no reason one could not use Dramatic weapons with advanced armor, for example.

Dramatic Weapons and Armor

Weapons are not judged in terms of highly specific statistics, but in terms of the advantage they provide in combat. The rule is simple: superior weaponry provides a +1 bonus. As such, two combatants facing each other, one with a mace and the other with a sword, are on roughly equal footing, so no penalties are applied. Situation also plays into this - if one combatant has a sword and one has a knife, and there's lots of room to maneuver, the one with the sword gains a +1 advantage. If they have the same fight in a cramped sewer tunnel with no room to swing the sword, the dagger gains a +1.

Armor operates on a similar principle - superior armor grants a +1. In most circumstances, superior armor is easy to determine just by looking. The only exception is when armor becomes a true detriment, a such as underwater or in quicksand, in which case the lighter armor is superior. (Simply being in an open area is not enough to invoke "superior mobility".)

Simple Weapons and Armor

This approach introduces a finer degree of granularity to weapons and armor. Both have ratings, generally ranging from 0 to 4. After a successful attack (one which produces a **Scratch** result or better), add the weapon's rating, then subtract the armor's rating, and consult the Combat Outcome table on page 19 for a result.

For melee weapons, the weapon's rating equates to the penalty to carry it concealed. For armor, the rating translates into a penalty for activities requiring full mobility.

Sample Weapons

0	Unarmed
1	Knife, Small Club, Martial Arts Strikes
2	Sword, Mace, Club
3	2-handed Sword, Polearm
4	Ludicrously oversized 2-handed weapons

Sample Armor

0	None
1	Leather, Studded Leather
2	Chainmail, Ringmail
3	Partial Plate, Light Plate, Scale
4	A Wood Stove

These numbers are really just guidelines. A particularly deadly game might have much larger scales.

Simple Weapons & Armor:

Cyrus swings his broadsword (rating 2) at a thief in leather armor (Rating 1) - He succeeds by 1, which would normally be a **Clipped** result. However, he adds 2 for his sword and subtracts one for the armor and produces a MOS of 3 (1 + 2 - 1 = 3), a **Hurt** outcome.

Advanced Weapons and Armor

Armor

A somewhat more sophisticated model for armor breaks it down into general categories (roughly equivalent to the ratings of simple armor).

Table 5: Armor Types

Outcome	Armor Type				
	0	1	2	3	4
Scratch	0	0	0	0-1	0-1
Clipped	1	1-2	1-2	2-3	2-4
Hurt	2-4	3-4	3-5	4-5	5
Injured	5-6	5-6	6	6	6
Taken Out	7+	7+	7+	7+	7+

If someone wants to represent something beyond AL4:

Table 6: Special Armor Types

Outcome	Armor Type				
	4	5	6	7	8
Scratch	0-1	0-1	0-2	0-2	0-2
Clipped	2-4	2-4	3-5	3-6	3-6
Hurt	5	5-6	6-7	7-8	7-9
Injured	6	7	8	9	10
Taken Out	7+	8+	9+	10+	11+

Armor's protection is generally limited to preventing wounds. As such, it does not change the difficulty of maneuvers. When fighting someone in plate mail, it is easier to disarm them, a **hurt** outcome equivalent (AL 0, 2-4) than it is to actually hurt them (AL 3, 4-5).

Weapons

It is possible to have an even finer grain of difference between weapons by assigning specific attributes to them. For example:

Armor Piercing (AP) - Armor Piercing weapons reduce armor rating by 2, but are -1 to use. Extremely potent armor piercing weapons (**APx2**) reduce armor rating by 4, but suffer a -2 penalty.

Flexible (Flex) - Flexible weapons grant a +1 to maneuvers like disarms, but provide a -1 penalty in any fight where both parties have reasonable mobility.

Vicious (Vcs) - Vicious weapons are designed to rip and tear flesh, and increase their damage by 1 points. However, any armor greater than 0 is considered 2 levels higher against the attack. **Vcsx2** weapons increase damage by 2 but improves existing armor by 4.

Locking (Lock) - Weapon locks to the user's gauntlet (or is part of it). As such, the weapon cannot be disarmed, but it also takes a -1 penalty to any maneuvers requiring finesse.

Other Combat Modifiers

A number of other elements can affect the direction of a fight, including:

Superior Position - this is something of a catch-all to cover situational modifiers. Possible reasons for receiving this modifier include:

- Elevated position
- Cover
- Fighting from horseback

In general, these situations shouldn't provide more than a +1 bonus, save in the most egregious of circumstances.

Outnumbered - +1 bonus for outnumbering your opponent.

Flanked - +1 bonus for getting in a position where your opponent's back is exposed. Cumulative with Outnumbered.

Surrounded - +1 bonus for completely surrounding your opponent. This is cumulative with outnumbered and flanked - since it's hard to surround someone without outnumbering and flanking them, this generally means a +3 bonus total.

The Drop

If a character is not expecting an attack and has no reason to be on the defensive, the character's skill is considered to be mediocre or equal to their Alertness, whichever is higher.

Multiple Opponents

When fighting multiple opponents, a character still only makes one roll. All members of the attacking group who beat the character inflict damage as normal. If the character beats **all** members of the attacking group, he may select **one** opponent (usually the one who rolled worst) and inflict damage on them.

Defense

If a character is unarmed, or does not wish to attack, many physical skills (especially Tumbling or Acrobatics) can be used in lieu of their combat rolls. If the defender wins the exchange, no matter how much they win by, it's treated as a scratch, though the GM may allow some defensive maneuvers, if in

keeping with the skill - leaping out of the way of a sword blow is in keeping with leaping off a balcony.

If a character is using their combat skill and wishes to fight defensively, they may add +1 to their skill, but if they win the round, they inflict no damage and can perform no special maneuvers.

Fighting defensively must be declared before dice are rolled.

Fighting Defensively

Cyrus (great sword skill) is fighting a mirror image of himself (also great sword skill). Cyrus is hoping help will arrive soon, and chooses to fight defensively. Cyrus rolls a superb outcome, while his doppelganger rolls a good. Cyrus gains a +1 bonus for fighting defensively, and his outcome is bumped up to epic. Cyrus defeats the reflection by 3 (epic vs. good = 3), which would normally result in the copy being hurt. However, because Cyrus fought defensively, the outcome is reduced to a scratch.

Table 7: Default Combat Modifiers

Situation	Mod
Superior Weapons*	+1
Superior Armor*	+1
Superior Position	+1
Superior Numbers	+1
Flanking Opponent	+1
Surrounding Opponent	+1

* See simple (p. 23) and advanced (p. 24) rules for alternate arms and armor rules.

8. Combat Options

Swashbuckling and Armor

Armor is very rare in many swashbuckling settings. One reason for this is that it impairs the sort of derring-do that goes with the genre. As such, the following rule can apply to combatants in armor. When attempting to perform a maneuver, they treat the opponent as wearing the armor that they are using. As such, a combatant in full plate (AL 3) would need a 6 to disarm a foe, or perform most any maneuver.

Cinematic Combat

Many cinematic combat systems use different rules for named adversaries than they do for hordes of unnamed opponents. These opponents may be referred to as mooks, brutes, rabble or something else. We will refer to them as “mobs”. In cinematic combat, a hero is able to dispatch vast hordes of lesser foes before engaging the villain of the piece. To simulate this, when a named character (a PC or a villain) is fighting a mob, the mob is treated as one being, and as such gain no bonus for outnumbering their target (though they can receive the flanking and surrounded bonuses). The mob gets to roll an extra die for each member of the mob beyond the first, then keeps the best four. If the mob wins, the character is affected as normal. If the character wins, a number of opponents are taken out based on her MOS (1 for Clipped, 2 for Hurt, 3 for Injured, 4 for Taken Out), resulting in that many fewer dice.

If a mob and a named character are attacking, the rules for multiple opponents should be used, but the mob still only counts as one being for the purposes of the attack.

The Lazy GM Rule

In large combats, it can be a pain to keep track of the die rolls of multiple NPCs, and the GM is always entitled to reduce their work by treating some or all NPCs as if they had rolled 0. Alternately, the GM might use fewer dice, even just one, to represent NPC effort. This approach reduces the total possible variety of outcomes in return for greatly increased speed.

Toughness

If the GM allows, players may purchase a special aspect of Tough. Tough cannot be used to provide rerolls. Instead, whenever a hit overflows into the next category up, the player may check off a box of toughness rather than mark off the wound.

Running up the Spear

It's easier to hurt someone if you don't care about what happens to you. Attacking recklessly adds a +1 to the attacker's roll. However, they will be affected by an outcome as if they had rolled with a -2 penalty rather than a +1 bonus. That sounds more complicated than it is.

All Out Offense

Cyrus has managed to defeat a number of mad cultists, and the last one hurls himself at Cyrus recklessly. They both roll, and they tie up, each getting a good result - normally a scratch. However, the cultist gets a +1 for attacking recklessly, and wins with a MoS of 1, and Cyrus is clipped. However, because the cultist attacked recklessly, he receives an outcome as if he'd rolled with a -2. His good drops to an average, and he loses by a MoS of 2, and is hurt. Looks like it wasn't that good a plan, but heck, he is insane after all. The final results: Cyrus is clipped and the cultist is hurt.

Last Stand

Sometimes, a player wants their character to make a desperate last stand, throwing away their life to keep fighting with wounds that should have long since taken them down. This happens when a character receives an injury that would normally result in them being taken out. The player can declare that the character is going to die at the scene's end, and rather than check off the taken out box, they may check off an aspect, explaining how that is helping them keep on their feet. Each time the character takes a taken out result, they may check off another aspect, explaining it once again. As long as they have an aspect to check, they remain on their feet.

Almost any aspect is appropriate to use in this circumstance - abilities can help in the fight, contacts are people the character has a reason to

fight for, and even weaknesses are can be dramatically appropriate.

At the scene's end, nothing should be able to save the character - they're too far gone for healing magic or medicine. They may have time for final words, if the scene allows for it, but otherwise, that's it.

This is not an option to use casually. Character death is a serious matter, and should be treated as such. If the GM is unwilling to enforce the lethality of this option, then it should not be offered, as it otherwise runs the risk of simply turning death into a combat maneuver.

By the same token, this should not be a common event. If it occurs more than once per campaign, it cheapens the heroism of it. The GM may rule that this option is not available in any given scene unless the GM proposes it.



9. Magic and Supernormal Powers

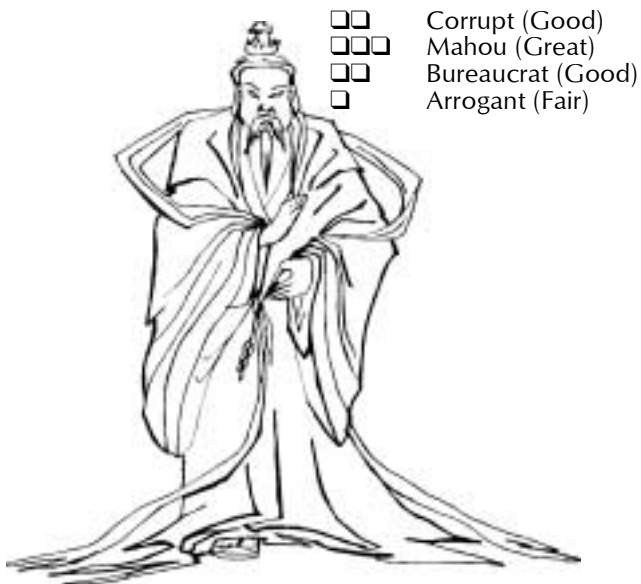
There are few things less satisfying than a truly generic magic system. Magic adds color, flavor and texture to any fantasy setting, and if those elements are generic, the impact on the setting is obvious. Because Fate is designed to be plugged into a setting and reflect its specifics, a generic system would hardly be appropriate. Instead, we've included a variety of sample systems to give a sense of some possible approaches. Any one of them is usable, but they are ultimately more useful as guidelines towards the sort of customization that will help bring out the specific feel of a setting.

Level Based Magic: The Great Library

In the world of Ald, magic is a structured, academic affair, and there is no greater center of magical learning than the Great Library. It is said that every spell ever written is somewhere in its miles and miles of bookshelves.

Characters looking to be mages must purchase a Magical Talent aspect. After that aspect is bought, the player may purchase a Cast Cantrips skill, as well as the aspect Magical Initiation. A character may potentially purchase up to 9 circles of Magical Initiation, and with each level a new "X circle spellcasting" skill is available.

The Most Puissant Black Wind of Death



Mages must prepare their spells at the beginning of the day by studying them from spellbooks. The number of spells in a given circle which the mage may have prepared is equal to the number of skill ranks invested in the skill (equal to the skill value +1). Once cast, spells are no longer available until prepared again.

By default, spells do not require a skill roll to cast. However, the skill roll may be called for to target a spell, or to try to cast it under particularly trying circumstances.

Ideas for adapting

This system assumes that there is a pre-existing spell list, broken into 10 levels from 0-9, and that a high degree of character advancement (enough to accumulate 10 aspects) is appropriate. If perchance no such system is available, it can easily be adapted to other level-based systems simply by changing the number of levels, usually reducing them. If an even larger list of spells is desired, it may be appropriate to have a single aspect represent a block of levels - in a 20 level system, for example, each aspect level might be 5 spell levels, while the skill level determines how many spells in that block can be spent each day.

Combinative Magic: The Brass Compass

The world is balanced perfectly between the four points: Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Hedge witches may claim some power over one element or another, but true mages know that power comes from the balance of the four, and the danger that comes of imbalance.

There are 4 magical aspects and 4 magical skills in this system. The Aspects are Initiate of Fire, Initiate of Earth, Initiate of Air and Initiate of Water, each representing a tie to the respective elemental force. To be a mage requires only one level of one of these aspects, but such a mage will have access to a far more limited range of power than a more well rounded practitioner of magic would.

The four magical skills (and their uses) are:

Evocation - Evocation is the preferred skill for combat, and is used for quick, usually forceful, expressions of power. For more sustained effects, summoning and mastery are usually more appropriate, but what it lacks in duration and finesse, it makes up in speed and power. Evocation is the favored skill of Fire Mages.

Summoning - The skill for bringing amounts of an element into existence and roughly shaping it (mastery is more useful for that, and the two skills are highly complementary). It is also useful for summoning creatures of the elements, but mastery is required to bind them. Summoning is favored by Earth Mages.

Mastery - Mastery is the ability to shape and control existing elements. It is arguably the most potent of the skills of magic, but it is also entirely dependant on the presence of material with which to work. Mastery is favored by Air Mages, who are rarely without a source of their element.

Dispelling - Beyond removing elemental matter, this is also the skill best suited to protection. While Mastery may allow a mage who takes his time to protect himself, only dispelling is fast enough to be usable in combat, and against evocations. Water mages favor this skill and its propensity to wear away any resistance with time.

Spellcasting is started by determining what element and skill is involved. Usually this is obvious, but in some cases more than one element may apply. In those situations, the GM may either allow a partial effect (such as destroying just the water in mud) or may rule that the mage must use their weakest aspect or skill. It is worth noting, living beings are considered to be a perfectly balanced combination of elements (Earth for form, Water for blood, Air for breath and Fire for life), so are very hard to target directly with any magics.

The next issue to determine is one of scope - how much of an element is summoned, shaped or dispelled, or how much force is deployed in an attack. The maximum scope is determined by the aspect level of the appropriate element. Scope is best judged roughly by the amount of material worked with, which breaks down according to Table 8: Elemental Magic.

After element and scope have been determined, the character rolls the appropriate skill against the difficulty listed in the table. If appropriate, that difficulty is also the number a target must roll against to resist an effect.

Table 8: Elemental Magic

Rank	Scope*	Difficulty
-	Spark	Average
1	Finger	Fair
2	Fist	Good
3	Body	Great
4	Horse	Superb
5	House	Epic
6	Castle	Legendary
* - Dispelling generally works as one level higher scope against summoned material. As such, 2 ranks of Fire magic could dispel a fist sized natural fire, or a body-sized magical one.		

The character may not generate an effect with a scope greater than their appropriate aspect level.

It is also possible for a mage to summon elementals. These are simple creatures defined by a single aspect - Elemental (of the appropriate type). The level of that aspect is equal to the rank required to summon one and sets its difficulty. Thus, a tiny fire elemental (Fire Elemental 1) is a difficulty of Fair.

To bind an elemental, the character must first summon it (roll summoning skill vs. difficulty) then bind it (mastery vs. difficulty). A Mage may only have one elemental bound at a time. It's worth noting that elementals are fairly obvious and have no real means to hide themselves. An elemental may be dispelled with a successful Dispel against their difficulty, using either their element or the opposed one (Fire v. Water, Earth v. Air).

Ideas for adapting

Long winded as it may be, the underlying principle is simple - a set of aspects and a set of skills, with aspects determining power and skills denoting, well, skill. What exactly the aspects and skills are is almost irrelevant. Elements were used in this example because they're a classic motif, but a solid magical system could be built off any logical (or mythical) combination. Imagine similar systems where the aspects are the Seven Deadly Sins, the Muses, the seasons, the phases of the moon, a different set of elements or anything else that strikes one's fancy.

Improvisational Magic The Door to Shadow

The gates have opened, and evil walks upon the earth in ways it has not for centuries. Around the corner and just out of the corner of your eye, it lurks, growing in power. Our only hope are those unlikely few, the mad, the destined and the unlucky, who have seen this threat for what it is and are fighting to stop it.

This is a simple, narrative system for playing a somewhat fast and loose game where magic is important, but it is not necessarily central. Mage characters need to purchase a Magical Talent aspect and a spellcasting skill. It is possible that those go under other names, such as Wicca or Thaumaturge with their Old Magick and Thaumaturgy skills. Generally speaking, this is just for color, but it may have some game effect (see below). The spellcasting skill (in whatever form it takes) can be bought without an appropriate aspect, but trying to use it to cast spells is exceptionally dangerous (see Feedback, below).

To cast a spell, simply determine its difficulty and make a spellcasting roll to meet or exceed the difficulty level, then mark off a level of the aspect. As such, yes, the aspect limits the number of spells that can be cast per day, and as such, it's dangerous to burn it for a reroll - as such, having another aspect to represent magical education, like Occult Studies or Ancient Lore can be quite useful, and what often allows a more experienced mage defeat a more powerful one.

Difficulty defaults to Average (0), and is increased or decreased by the effects of the spell as follows.

The spell's scope encompasses...

Nothing: +0
The Caster: +1
A room: +2
A building: +3
A town: +4
A state: +5

If the spell targets...

No One: +0 difficulty
1 Person: +1 difficulty
Small Group: +2 Difficulty
Neighborhood: +3 Difficulty
Town: +4 Difficulty

Note: Most spells either have a number of targets or a scope, not both. Thus, a spell to put everyone in a room to sleep would be based on targets, while one to illuminate the room would use scope. When in doubt, use the higher difficulty.

If the spell is...

Irritating or inconvenient: +1 Difficulty
Damaging: +2 Difficulty
Incapacitating: +3 Difficulty
Fully transformative: +4
Mind Altering: +2 (over and above other modifiers - mind control is effectively incapacitating and affects the mind)
Instantly Lethal: Impossible

If the Casting takes...

A few moments (i.e. in combat): +1
A few minutes: +0
A few Hours: -1
A few Days: -2

If the spell requires:

Nothing: +1
Easily acquirable, portable components: +0
Components are very inconvenient or hard to acquire: -1
Components are very inconvenient **and** hard to acquire: -2

Note: if the spell requires components, their exact nature is determined by the GM - it's cheating to decide that your spell needs a rare ingredient you just happen to have on hand. This drawback is generally only appropriate for researched spells (see below))

If the spell lasts...

- An instant (generally long enough for a combat attack): +0
- A few seconds: +1
- A few minutes: +2
- A few Hours: +3
- A few days: +4
- A few Months: +5
- A few Years: +6
- Forever: +7

Also, optionally for those with a more dramatic bent:

The spell affects the story by...

- Advancing the plot: -1
- Doing something someone could do with a mundane skill: +1
- Doing something that someone else in the party could do mundanely: +1 (in addition to mundane penalty)
- Jumping over a large amount of plot: +2 or more
- Bypassing an entire story: +4 or more

And lastly, one unique modifier:

Inconvenient Timing: -1 or more. Inconvenient timing is mostly just useful for villains, as it represents spells that can only occur under certain circumstances (“when the stars are right”). This generally gives a plot reason why a villain can be casting a world-destroying spell, but still be at a level that the PCs can manage.

Research

It is also possible to spend some time researching a spell in advance, either preparing it (which requires a magical toolkit of sorts, depending on the type of magic - a big cauldron for example) or researching it (which requires an occult library). In either case, a research roll is made against the difficulty of the spell, and if successful, subtract 1 from the difficulty of the spell. The GM may award additional bonuses for extreme degrees of success.

Researched spells are generally not re-usable. Duplicating an already researched spell requires another research roll.

Feedback

Magic is dangerous stuff. The number of aspects the character has represents the amount they can safely handle, but sometimes a caster needs to push themselves a little farther. If all of the caster’s Magical Talent aspects are checked off, and he still wishes to cast a spell, determine difficulty and roll skill as normal. If the spell is successful with at least a MOS of 1, all is well. However, if the spell fails, or succeeds exactly, the powers the character is working with get out of their control. This is treated as an attack on the character with a severity equal to the difficulty of the spell plus the degree by which the character failed (0, if the spell succeed). The character rolls to defend against this attack with their aspect level. Characters without a Magic Talent aspect default to Mediocre on this roll.

Ideas for adapting

As written, this system is functional but bland. Fortunately, it takes only a little tweaking to give it some flavor. For example, it’s possible to give the various magical schools some mechanical impact. Generally, it’s best to makes this a +1 to skill in certain circumstances and -1 in other circumstances. Try to make the circumstances roughly equal. For example, the Alchemists of Bin-Assam practice a magical tradition rich in potions, smokes and exotic ingredients. The receive a +1 bonus to skill when casting a spell with required components. However, they are given to ornate, overly complicated rituals, and take a -1 penalty to skill when trying to cast spells more quickly than over the course over a few hours.

Modifiers that reflect the “rules of magic” also add a lot to the flavor of a setting. Perhaps spells receive a bonus when you know the target’s true name, or have a symbolic link to the target, such as a voodoo doll. Perhaps spells are more powerful at dawn or dusk. Some rules don’t even need rules: something like “curses return threefold” is better played out than left to a mechanic.

Interpretive Magic SOPCERY ON a Budget

*HARRY DRESDEN - WIZARD
Lost Items Found. Paranormal Investigations.
Consulting. Advice. Reasonable Rates.
No Love Potions, Endless Purses, Parties or Other
Entertainment*

-Jim Butcher: Storm Front

Sometimes magic just isn't easy. Whether because of the overwhelming disbelief of the vast swell of humanity, or some natural protection that keeps the world from accepting the supernatural. Whatever the case, necessity has made magic both subtle and rare.

The single most important component of any spell is how blatant it is. Blatancy is mostly a measure of how flashy or obvious the working of power is - it's a measure of how **wrong** whatever is being done appears to any bystanders. This puts very practical limits on anything done with magic - more often than not, if a task can be done mundanely, it's much easier to do so. This is why most wizards carry guns.

When using magic, players are encouraged to describe effects in terms of how they would appear in the movie version of their story. Now, this method depends on the player wanting to describe things interestingly - if players are more interested in describing things as flatly as possible in an attempt to drive down difficulties, the GM should do two things - raise the difficulties to an appropriate level, and consider using a different magic system.

Magic using characters should have some sort of aspect to describe their type of magic. This can be as general as "Wizard" or as specific as "Mystical Master of Cheese". These give a general guideline as to the types of magic the character can perform, and the GM is perfectly entitled to grant bonuses when she feels a magical effect is particularly in keeping with the aspect, or nix one that seems to have nothing to do with it (unless, of course, there's a really good explanation). The level of this aspect represents the characters "special effects budget" for magic (to wit, the most powerful spell effect they can manage). The Character also has a spellcasting

skill, which they roll when casting and attempt to meet or exceed the difficulty level for the "budget."

Table 9: Magical Budget

Asp.	Difficulty	Description
1	Fair	A set of bongos and interpretive dance.
2	Good	Public access - a couple of guys with a camcorder.
3	Great	Cable Television Production
4	Superb	Television Mini-series Event
5	Epic	Blockbuster movie
6	Legendary	Steven Spielberg F/X extravaganza

Some budgetary notes:

- The more area or targets a spell effects, the more camera angles required, and in turn, the more budget.
- Remember, the target is part of the audience. As such, spells that quietly and invisibly choke someone or stop their heart won't work, because they won't notice them. You need to invest some in making them feel it. As such, the very least directly damaging spells require a minimum of a cable TV budget. Indirect damage (like burning someone by catching their house on fire) is a different beast entirely.

A character can temporarily boost their budget by checking off aspects. Each aspect checked off in this fashion raises the maximum budget for the next magical effect by one.

Sample

Harry wants to cast a spell to find a lost girl. Decides that the difficulty is going to be based on how much information Harry wants to get. A general sense of direction from casting the bones is fairly low budget (difficulty fair), whereas a series of grainy flash-cuts, of poor quality and moderate utility might be good difficulty. A full video montage is at least great difficulty.

Later, Harry wants to blast an oncoming troll with a firebolt. This troll is pretty big, and while Harry could usually get away with a Superb difficulty for this, he's worried that it won't be enough, so he guns for a serious apocalyptic, comet streaks from the sky sort of effect, which the GM deems of Epic difficulty.

Finally, Harry wants to protect himself from gunfire. In the movie, this would mean lots of little ripple effects around him as the bullets strike his shield. Cable TV can do it, but it'll look cheesy, and as such only provide moderate defense. For more serious defense, he's gaging to need a higher difficulty.

Ideas for adapting

Right off the bat, GMs may require that magical aspects be a little more specific, with the idea that a real wizard will have aspects in things like Evocation, Thaumaturgy or Summonings. However you think magic should work, toss it in there.

This is an odd system in that it is probably entirely unappealing to a large segment of gamers. It depends on a lot of trust between the players and GM and requires a lot of interpretation on the GM's part. If it doesn't work for you, don't worry about it. However, if this seems like your cup of tea, the possibilities for interpretation are probably already suggesting themselves.

Hedge Magic Age of Stone and Steel

It is a simple time, where a man's strength and skill can still shape his destiny, and the touch of the gods is still felt upon the earth. It is an age of wonders, and of rough, primal magics. There is magic in the forging of steel, magic in the paths among the trees and magic in this fire we gather around.

Magic is not a thing of spells or incantations. Instead it is a simple thing, tied to mundane actions. Magic is the difference between someone merely knowledgeable in the uses of herbs and a true healer. Magicians (they are never actually called that) can use their skills in ways that exceed simple mundane limitations.

It's important to note that the characters are not necessarily **better** at their skills, as that is determined by skill ranks. Instead, they may generally do more with their skills. For example:

Herb Lore can be used to heal wounds and disease with simple plant components, or even concoct useful compounds, like a sleep draught or itching powder.

A **Blacksmith** could produce goods of exceptional quality, resistant to rust and wear, several times as fast as his mundane counterpart.

A **Tracker** could follow a trail across otherwise impossible terrain, or discern seemingly impossible information from tracks (He's left handed, and is carrying two swords).

While this sort of magic can also be taken with combat skills, it's doubly important to remember

that while it does not provide a concrete bonus, it grants the character a lot more flexibility of action. A normal person could probably not knock an arrow out of the air with a sword, or shoot out the center of a playing card blindfolded, but someone with mastery of **Sword** or **Archery** could.

While actual mechanics are rarely appropriate for this type of magic - most of the benefits are narrative - those who feel the need for a mechanic can apply a simple formula. While there may be no bonuses, situational penalties may be reduced up to a level equal to the level of the aspect. Thus, if the aforementioned feat of archery suffers a -4 penalty for being a blind shot, the penalty is reduced to -1 for a character with Archery 3. Remember, this is limited to situational modifiers, like environment, not combat modifiers. If the card were (improbably) dodging, those penalties would not be reduced.

Ideas for adapting

Hedge magic is very useful in any setting where you want characters to be able to do cool things with skills. The main change in adaptation is the rationale for the power. In the example above, it is a result of a world saturated with magic, but one where formal sorcery has not yet been established. Other explanations might include ideas such as Zen abilities, or some means of tapping human potential.

It's worth noting that Hedge Magic was originally the brainchild of S. John Ross and was later adapted for Five Point Fudge by Steffan O'Sullivan. It's a great idea and worthy of further adapting, and I encourage anyone interested to check out the links in the reference section in the appendix.

Minor Powers Skin Dance

When the Weasel first talked to me I was so drunk that I just took it all at face value. Apparently, I agreed to some serious mojo-binding stuff, and in return I would get the Weasel's power. I guess I must have agreed, because I woke up that morning up inside my left pants leg.

In preparation for a threat only hinted at, the lords of the beasts have approached worthy humans and offered them the gift of skinchanging - the ability to turn into their patron creature. Despite the questionable value of some of these blessings, these skinchangers are prepared to use the little power at

their disposal to defend mankind...as soon as they figure out what they're defending it against.

Skinchangers buy an aspect in the appropriate animal, and gain the ability to transform into that animal. It's difficult for a human to adapt to the workings of the animal physiology, so it is necessary for them to buy ranks in a skill called (animal) mobility (weasel mobility or what have you). This is a difficult skill to master, so it defaults to poor (see "Difficult Skills" on page 17 for details on how to handle this). This skill is the general baseline for activity in the creature's form. If the creature can fly, things are doubly difficult, and default to terrible.

Many creatures have special abilities. Some are intrinsic- a weasel is small and a fish breathes underwater, and there's no need to reflect those with skills or aspects. Others have abilities better reflected with aspects - a bloodhound's keen senses or a ferret's speed. These aren't mandatory, but if the player wishes to take advantage of the animal's abilities, buying the appropriate aspects is a good idea. Some abilities are very specific to the creature, such as a skunk's spray. In those cases, the character should buy a skill to reflect that ability. That skill defaults to the same level as the mobility skill did, and can never be higher than the mobility skill.

Some animals are also better suited to combat than others. Any skinchanger can use their mobility skill to dodge, but those gifted with natural weapons should buy a combat skill to use them. This skill has the same starting default as mobility, and can never be bought higher than the current mobility score.

Lastly, any form capable of fine manipulation should buy a manipulation skill to represent it. As with other skills, it defaults to the same level mobility does and cannot be bought any higher than the current mobility skill level. This skill is appropriate for simians, but may also be appropriate for some small mammals and birds.

Characters should not have more than one animal form. If they do, the skills for one form do not translate to the other form, unless the forms are **very** similar, like a squirrel and a chipmunk.

Ideas for adapting

The underlying model here is simple - an aspect that introduces a minor power can work just fine if it

also requires at least one skill to use the ability. If the aspect is particularly useful, then it should require more skills. With that idea in mind, it's easy to model any sort of knack or gimmick, from ESP to Breath Control. This is also the idea behind a number of magic systems. This is a good model to simulate a genre with limited powers, like some urban fantasy or pulp.

Martial Arts Path of a Thousand Steps

There are three things you must learn if you wish to defeat me, my young pupil. First, you must look within yourself and find your core of strength. Second, your mind and body must be in perfect unison. Third...

WHACK

Third, stop listening when you should be fighting.

When the magistrates rose to power, they crushed temples across the land, claiming the long-protected rich lands they held. Numerous orders were destroyed entirely, their lore lost to all time. Others fled, taking their secrets with them into hiding. For generations, they have protected these secrets, and waited.

Their time has come. The magistrates war amongst themselves, and the people need hope. Monks and warriors of these ancient orders now walk among the peasantry, protecting them from the corrupt magistrates.

Martial artists trained in these ancient orders have learned to draw upon their own inner fire to perform seemingly impossible feats. This is reflected by the initial purchase of an Inner Fire aspect, representing their ability to draw upon their inner strength. Characters who have bought this aspect, may invest in a Chi Pool.

The Chi Pool is a special mechanic which represents the force available to the character. The pool starts at zero, and increases by one for each skill rank invested in it, in much the same way skill ranks can be invested in allies (see "Allies, Contacts and Minions as Aspects" on page 7). In general, skill ranks from any aspect related to martial arts or enlightenment can be invested into the Chi Pool.

Martial arts maneuvers have chi costs. When a character performs a maneuver, they check off a

number of points from the Chi Pool equal to the cost. If they don't have enough Chi, they cannot perform the maneuver. The Chi Pool refill between scenes.

Chi Example

The Fat Master has a Chi Pool of 3. He performs the Gentlest Touch maneuver, which has a 2 chi cost. He now has 1 point of chi left. If he wanted to perform the Gentlest Touch maneuver again, he would not be able to during that scene, since he does not have enough chi.

Martial Arts maneuvers also have requirements. One requirement is always the core skill - usually martial arts, but sometimes it's something else. To learn a maneuver, the character must usually have some combination of aspects and skills. For example, the Resplendent Backfist maneuver requires three levels of the Monkey School aspect, and a martial arts skill of superb or better. Some maneuvers, generally the more powerful ones, also require knowing other maneuvers.

Sample Aspects

Monkey School - The monkey school emphasizes maneuverability and unpredictability. Students of the monkey are trained in a variety of physical skills, like climbing and acrobatics, in addition to martial arts.

Tiger School - Long standing rival of the monkey school, the tiger school is a martial tradition first and foremost. Students are trained as soldiers, and are usually familiar with numerous weapons and other military skills.

Owl School - The scholastic nature of the owl school is reflected in its pupils. Rarely powerful fighters, they are instead scholars and savants of great skill, well trained in academic pursuits. Many great healers come from the owl school.

Kessen Do - While not a formal school, the followers of Kessen Do have been growing in number. Students of the semi-legendary wandering swordsman Ippen Kessen have taken up his wandering lifestyle, offering teaching in return for food and lodging. Formal instruction is limited, followers are expected to find their own path, and most are seasoned travellers as well as skilled bladesmen.

Sample Maneuvers

Iron Strike

Chi Cost: 1 Chi

Required Aspect: Tiger School 1 or Monkey School 1 or Owl School 2

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Fair

Other Requirements: None

The character channels their inner fire into their hands, turning them into lethal weapons. For the duration of the scene, the character's opponents gain no benefit for superior weapons against the character. The monkey school calls this maneuver Dancing Fist while the owl calls it the sublime hand.

Seeking Strikes

Chi Cost: Special (see Below)

Required Aspect: Tiger School 1

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Good

Other Requirements: Iron Strike

The character's lightning-fast blows find their way to weak points in armor. Each point of chi spent on this ability allows the character to ignore that many levels of an opponent's armor. (In the dramatic system, spending 1 point of chi is enough to result in the opponent being treated as unarmored by the character, which may allow a superior armor advantage.)

Breaking Blow

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Tiger School 2

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Good, Smith: Fair

Other Requirements: Seeking Strikes

The character strikes at an opponent's armor's weak points, striking buckles and joints and damaging the effectiveness of the armor. The character must declare that they are using this technique and spend the chi before attacking. They make the attack as if the opponent's armor level was 0, but rather than do damage, they reduce the armor's level by 1 for each level of success (1 for a scratch, 2 for clipped, etc.). In the dramatic system, a Hurt result is enough to reduce an opponent to being effectively unarmored.

Stunning Blow

Chi Cost: 1

Required Aspect: Tiger School 3 or Owl School 2

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Great, Medicine: Fair

Other Requirements: Iron Strike

Aiming for the pain centers (for the tiger school) or chi flows (for the owl school) of the body to render blows more incapacitating. The character spends the chi before launching the attack, and if the attack succeeds by more than necessary for a particular outcome, it also adds a Clipped result.

For example: The Fat Master performs a stunning blow on a corrupt magistrate. He succeeds by 3. Since a hurt result requires a MoS of 2-4, he successfully hurts the magistrate. Additionally, because he only needed to succeed by 2, he also clips the magistrate. Bad day for evil.

Scurry

Chi Cost: Special (see Below)

Required Aspect: Monkey School 1

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Fair

Other Requirements: None

The character's acrobatic dodges go a long way towards keeping them out of harm's way. For the duration of the scene the character replaces the usual +1 bonus for fighting defensively with a number equal to the amount of chi spent.

Scamper

Chi Cost: 3

Required Aspect: Monkey School 2

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Great, Acrobatics: Fair

Other Requirements: Scurry

The character's leaps and swings defy all logic as they fly furiously around the battlefield. For the duration of the scene, so long as the character has terrain to work with and enough space to move around (branches or rafters overhead, for example, or alley walls), they can gain a +1 superior position bonus as long as they can describe it.

Resplendent Backfist

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Monkey School 3

Required Skill: Martial Arts: Superb

Other Requirements: Iron Strike

The monkey learns to strike when his opponent least expects it. The character spends the chi when declaring a full defense. If the character beats their opponent by at least 2, then the opponent is clipped.

Rapid Falling Leaves

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Owl School 1

Required Skill: Research: Fair or an appropriate academic skill at good.

Other Requirements: None

The character may read a book in a quarter the time normally required.

Feast of Words

Chi Cost: 2 (or higher, see below)

Required Aspect: Owl School 2

Required Skill: Research: Good

Other Requirements: Rapid Falling Leaves

The character may go for day and a night without food or drink, provided that at least half of their waking hours are spent reading and researching works that they are not familiar with. Each day beyond the first that the character uses this ability increases the chi cost by one.

Gentlest Touch

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Owl School 1

Required Skill: Medicine: Good, Martial Arts: Good.

Other Requirements: None

Quick strikes to acupressure points can alleviate certain inconveniences, at least in the short term. The character spends the chi and touches the target (or themselves), and unchecks one hurt box. Gentlest touch may not be used on a target more than once per scene.

Cut the Swallow on the Wing

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Kessen Do 1

Required Skill: Sword: Good

Other Requirements: None

For the duration of the scene, he character may use their sword skill to defend against ranged attacks, including arrows.

Traveller's Broth

Chi Cost: 2

Required Aspect: Kessen Do 1

Required Skill: Cooking: Good

Other Requirements: A pot

Followers of Kessen know that hospitality is often limited by means - no one wants their family to go hungry just to be polite, but many feel obligated to do so. This old traveller's trick was originally the purview of the Laughing Monks, and it has survived the destruction of their order. The character needs only fill a pot with water and place some token, usually a stone, therein. Every person looking to eat needs to make some contribution to the pot, however small. The end result will be a tasty, filling gruel in sufficient quantity to feed everyone who contributed (up to the size of the pot).

Ideas for adapting

As strongly tied as the example is to martial arts, the idea is easily adaptable beyond that scope. There's no reason that there couldn't be sailing maneuvers, or observation maneuvers. In fact, if one replaced the martial arts schools with skills-as-aspects (like "Age of Stone and Steel" on page 33), every skill could have its own maneuver tree.

The only real limitation is GM creativity. The common theme among these maneuvers is that they do not simply provide a +1 to a roll, at least not without qualifications.

One other thought to consider: It's possible to introduce very powerful effects, especially if one wants to have anime-style conflicts, with combatants shouting the names of complex maneuvers amidst special effects extravaganzas. That's a reasonable goal, and it's possible to keep "Super Moves" in check by either increasing chi costs, or requiring that certain very powerful maneuvers require an aspect check-off.

10. Utilities

Sample Skill List

This skill list is designed for a fantasy game, and divided into Combat and Non-Combat lists. There are a number of possible options for the combat list, based on the style of the game.

Many skills (noted in *italics*) are described as having subskills. For example, the artist skill has subskills like dance or sing. In those cases, the subskills are the skills to be bought, and the category is there for convenience. As such, one may be a fair singer, but not a fair artist.

Non-Combat Skills

Administration - The ability to keep an organization going.

Alertness - This skill handles acts of perception when the character is not explicitly looking for anything.

Animal Handling - Training and handling animals.

Area Knowledge - Every area is potentially a different skill (for example, Area Knowledge: London, Area Knowledge: Europe). The larger the area, the more general the knowledge.

Artist - There are actually a great many skills that fall under this, which should be bought separately. They include but are not limited to: Dance, Painting, Musical Performance, Musical Composition and Writing.

Athletics - Sort of a catch-all of physical capability. It can be used in many situations, but suffers a -1 penalty when a specific skill, like running or climbing, would be more appropriate.

Bluff - Bluffing involves getting someone to believe something by every means short of actually lying to them - it primarily covers body language and appearance of behavior. Bluff is a useful skill, paired with the right

outfit, to make someone “look like they belong.”

Boating - This is the general skill for knowing your way around boats.

Bribery - The ability to bribe people.

Camping - Survival can help you survive in rough environments, but Camping helps keep it civilized. Very useful for pitching tents and making sure the rain doesn't ruin your supplies.

Climbing - The ability to climb things

Contacting - Generally this is the ability to stay abreast of people and events within a particular field. In general, the utility of the Contacting skill is tied to the users knowledge and contact with the field - the best glad-hander in the world will get no information out of a place where he knows no one.

Contortions - How far can you bend and twist?

Craft - This has a lot of subskills, all of which are skills related to making things. While there may be some overlap with the artist skill, craft skills tend to be more practical - a sculptor is an artist, but a stonemason is a craftsman. Subskills include: metalsmithing, woodcarving, carpentry, stonecutting, weaving, sewing and basket-weaving.

Detect Lies - Spot if someone is lying.

Diplomacy - The ability to keep a discussion civil, no matter how much the parties involved may be inclined to make it otherwise.

Direction Sense - Ability to guess which way you're going.

Disguise - The ability to look like something else, be it through costumes or makeup or both.

Drive - The ability to handle animal-powered vehicles.

Etiquette - Knowledge of the rules of behavior for polite society.

- Find Traps - The ability to discover devices designed to do you harm.
- First Aid - Simple medical attention that can be provided with minimal equipment.
- Forgery - The ability to make passable duplicates of official material, be it money or paperwork.
- Gambling - Knowledge of and skill with various games of chance, including the ability to finesse the odds a bit (thought serious cheating is more the domain of legerdemain).
- Hide - How not to be seen.
- Hide Tracks - The ability to travel without leaving any evidence.
- History* - Knowledge of the history of a place, group or idea. The various categories are each their own subskill.
- Juggling - The ability to keep multiple items in the air at once.
- Jumping - The ability to jump. Duh.
- Leadership - The quiet quality that makes underlings feel like it is right that they are underlings. Combines well with the oratory skill.
- Legerdemain - Feats of sleight of hand.
- Lie - Say something untrue with all sincerity. Combines well with bluff - a good lie convinces the listener you believe what you're saying, and a good bluff can make it possibly even seem plausible.
- Lip Reading - The ability to figure out what people are saying solely by watching them.
- Lore* - A fancy way to describe most knowledge subskills.
- Mechanation - The ability to build, fix and disable fine mechanical devices.
- Medicine - Knowledge of remedies and treatments required to oversee long term recovery from injuries or disease.
- Mimicry - The ability to duplicate sounds or voices.
- Navigation - The ability to figure out where you are and where you're going with the right tools.
- Observation - Catch all perception skill for when you're not surprised (that's alertness) or actively looking for something (that's search).
- Oratory - The ability to fear death more than public speaking.
- Pick Locks - The ability to open locks, ideally with the right tools, but sometimes with what's on hand.
- Pick Pockets - The ability to facilitate transfer of ownership without the other party noticing.
- Profession* - The catch-all for people who need training to not actually make anything. Subskills include thing like lawyer or merchant.
- Read/Write* - The ability to read and write in a particular language. Functional literacy comes at average, eloquence begins at good.
- Riding - The ability to not fall off a horse.
- Rope Use - Facility with knots and other interesting rope tricks.
- Running - The ability to go faster on foot. Again, duh.
- Sailing - Knowing your way around a ship.
- Scrounge - The ability to find useful junk. Well, you think it's useful at least.
- Seduction - The ability to convince someone that they want something. Usually it's sex, but there are lots of options.
- Shadow - The ability to follow someone without them spotting you. Generally requires surveillance to work over the long term.
- Sneak - The ability to move without being noticed.
- Speak* - The ability to speak coherently in another language. Stilted conversation is possible at average, reasonable fluency at good. There is no need to buy this for the speaker's native tongue.
- Streetwise - Knowing your way around street culture, and especially knowing how not to look like a mark. Works well with contacting.
- Surveillance - The ability to keep watching something over a long period of time.
- Survival* - The ability to scrape together the absolute basics of food and shelter to

survive in a particular environment. Each environment type is a subskill.

Swimming - How well and fast you swim.

Tactics - The ability to plan a fight as well as the ability to assess a fight as you watch it.

Teaching - The ability to share your wisdom, or what passes for it.

Tracking - The ability to follow and gather information from tracks.

Trapping - The ability to trap animals and build large traps outdoors.

Tumbling - General nimbleness, scrambling, diving and getting out of the way.

Use Poison - Use poisons without killing yourself.

Option 1: Weapon Based Combat Skills

This list breaks most skills into broad categories, and individual weapons are subskills. In many ways this is potentially the most comprehensive list.

Bows - Bows, Crossbows

Brawling - Improvised weapons

One Handed Edged - Swords, Knives, Axes

One Handed Blunt - Maces, Clubs

Polearm - Halberd, Spetum, Staff

Shield - Facility with a shield - grants an additional +1 if used as skill for an all out defense

Thrown - Knife, Shuriken

Two Handed - Two-Handed Sword, Greataxe

Unarmed Combat - Boxing, Wrestling, Martial arts

Option 2: Style Based Combat Skills

This list is based off fighting styles, with the reasoning that a sword and shield fighter is not much different from a mace and shield fighter, stylistically.

Archery - Bows and crossbows

Fencing - Fighting with light blades, knives, possibly cloaks and canes

Haft Weapon - Any weapon with a long haft, such as a spear, staff or polearm.

Improvisational - Fighting with whatever happens to be on hand.

Mounted - Fighting from horseback.

Single Weapon - Fighting with a weapon in one hand and nothing in particular in the other.

Thrown - Throwing things.

Two Handed - Non-hafted weapons large and heavy enough to require two hands.

Two Weapon - A Weapon in each hand. Other than looking cool, the main advantage of this style is the difficulty in disarming it.

Unarmed - Fighting unarmed, be it bare knuckle brawling or some manner of martial art.

Weapon and Shield - A one handed weapon in one hand, a shield in the other.

As such, a character with archery at good would be good with any bow or crossbow he picked up.

Option 3: Thematic Combat Skills

This list is divided along more stylistic lines, with each skill representing a group of weapons of combat styles joined by their thematic elements rather than any real tactical similarity.

Archer - Bows and daggers

Brawler - Improvised weapons and unarmed attacks.

Cavalry - Mounted use of swords and bows.

Cutthroat - Knives, saps, garrotes.

Duellist - Use of fencing weapons

Footman - Use of swords, shields and polearms

Knight - Mounted lances and swords, as well as swords afoot.

Martial Artist - Unarmed attacks and weapons like staves or oddly curved blades.

Pirate - Cutlasses and belaying pins.

Ranger - Bows and swords.

There are many more possibilities for skills, but they should be tied to the world in some fashion - for example one school of duellists may have a different skillset than another.

Conversion Notes

The aspects model makes conversion to or from many other systems fairly easy. In general, any system that has a single primary index, like levels, increments of 10 points or the like can convert that number into a like number of aspects. Similarly,

systems that have only a few elements can often turn those elements directly into aspects.

Level Based Systems

These are often the easiest to convert. One level equals one aspect, with the aspect type usually equating to the Aspect type. As such, a level 3 Thief would have 3 aspects of Thief, and the appropriate skills.

Risus

S. John Ross' excellent "comedy" system is a pretty flexible, pretty simple d6 based system that measures characters in the number of dice they have in various cliché's. These numbers of dice convert precisely into aspect levels, and vice versa.

Over the Edge

Another great d6 system, this time from Jonathan Tweet. The 4 descriptors (including the negative one) become aspects. By default, the aspect level is equal to the die level - 1 for advantages and 2 aspects for the drawbacks.

Pyramid Shorthand

Sometimes you need a detailed character on the fly and don't want to mess with the headache of tracking the pyramid. In those situations, the following guidelines may come in handy. These examples represent pyramids optimized to get high skill levels as quickly as possible.

Table 10: Pyramid Shorthand

Aspects	Skills
1	2 Average 1 Fair
2	4 Average 2 Fair
3	5 Average 2 Fair 1 Good
4	4 Average 3 Fair 2 Good
5	4 Average 3 Fair 2 Good 1 Great
6	6 Average 4 Fair 2 Good 1 Great
7	7 Average 4 Fair 3 Good 1 Great
8	7 Average 4 Fair 3 Good 2 Great
9	6 Average 4 Fair 3 Good 2 Great 1 Superb
10	8 Average 5 Fair 3 Good 2 Great 1 Superb

Appendix 1. One Page Fudge

Rather than attempt to present Fudge as a standalone game system separate from Fate, this appendix is here to cover the few concepts we are assuming as preexisting knowledge.

The Classic Ladder

When something is rated in Fudge it is expressed in terms of a descriptive adjective, instead of a traditional pure-numbers approach. The ladder looks like this:

+3	Superb
+2	Great
+1	Good
0	Fair
-1	Mediocre
-2	Poor
-3	Terrible

Some players will prefer to have the number listed next to the adjective, for easy margin-of-success calculation, while others may feel that the number detracts from the “plain language” advantage Fudge character sheets possess.

Many Fudge GMs prefer to bracket the ladder with a Legendary for +4 and an Awful or Abysmal for -4.

The Dice

Fudge dice - available online and at many gaming stores - appear as six-sided dice with two sides having a plus(+), two sides a minus(-), and two sides a blank(■). Four of these “dF” dice are rolled to produce a center-weighted result from -4 to +4 which is, in turn, applied to a relevant statistic from the ladder. Thus, rolling + + - + is a +2 on a standard 4dF roll. Using a skill rated as Good (+1), would give you a Superb (+3) result.

If finding Fudge dice is not convenient, a normal d6 will do, with 1-2 yielding a minus, and 5-6 yielding a plus. Colorizing or otherwise marking the sides may speed reading of the result; Fudge folk across the internet have all sorts of feelings about how best to do this, so if this is the route you're taking, it's worth looking around. If dice math is easy for you, the result is exactly equivalent to a 4d3-8 roll.

One variant worth noting is called 'dF.1', with the 1 referring to the number of sides that have a plus or minus on it (on normal dice, counting sixes and subtracting ones). There is a camp of Fudge players who prefer this method, as it makes the center-weighting much stronger -meaning that the character sheet more accurately reflects usual performance.

Example: Finn and Cyrus need to climb a high wall. The wall is rough stone, but quite tall, so the GM decides it will take a *good* climbing roll to get over it. Finn has a *great* climbing skill, and he rolls the dice and gets a ■+++, for a total of +1. *Great* +1 is *superb* - Finn climbs the wall quickly and easily. Cyrus only has a *fair* climbing skill, and he rolls a ---+ for a total of -2. *Fair* -2 is *poor*. Cyrus' attempt to climb is probably funny to watch, and ultimately futile. Looks like Finn is going to need to lower a rope.

How Baseline Fudge is Different

Aside from the compressed ladder (above), Fudge as it comes out of the box is a more “standard” game than Fate, having attributes, gifts, and flaws instead of Fate's aspects. The alters a few mechanics - for example, in vanilla Fudge, the default level for skill is poor - in Fate it's mediocre.

Fudge also tends to require a fair amount of customization at the start; some argue that Fudge is more framework than system, but there are a few standard builds that folks tend to use, such as “vanilla” Fudge, and Steffan O'Sullivan's 5 Point Fudge. Fudge points are also rarer and more potent in vanilla Fudge.

Fate is meant to join this crowd as a “standard build” in its own right for GMs who are looking for a little less front-loaded effort in their Fudge experience.

Appendix 2. Design Notes

Why Aspects?

Aspects are a dramatic departure from more traditional attribute systems, and not everyone is entirely comfortable with their use. In this section, we'll separate the underlayers of the aspects concept in an effort to make things a little more plain.

Taking the Focus

In a more traditional system, an attribute like strength would generally provide a modifier that would grant a bonus to all strength-related action. The logic is simple, in that the character is always strong, so it always matters.

Aspects are designed to model a more literary convention, whereby things like strength only matter when the character is doing something interesting and has the focus of the scene. In way of example, Porthos of the Three Musketeers was quite strong, and this strength helped him out of a number of situations. However, the books did not linger on how each of his mighty blows was that much more lethal than those of his compatriots.

That is the thinking aspects are designed to model — the character may always be strong, but it only matters when the camera focuses on them and they call upon that reserve of strength (or passion, or courage, or love of family, or anything else) to make a difference.

Intrinsic Balance

Since aspects can be used up through voluntary invocations within a session, there is a kind of balance that is struck across all aspects. The more player-useful an aspect is — the more likely it is to provide opportunities to reroll — the more quickly those rerolls will run out. In a way, this keeps particularly “powerful” aspects of characters from taking over the story.

Additionally, the more “positive” an aspect is, the less likely it is to incur an involuntary invocation from the GM. This helps to strike the balance against the more negative aspects, in that negative

ones are likely to generate a larger quantity of Fudge points for the player.

Thus, aspects provide an elegant “point balanced” method to express character qualities both great and small, without a chart of disparate costs. They serve to build a story where the sidekicks are as interesting as the stars, and the flawed members of the team prove to have hidden reserves of strength.

Finally, aspects handle “hybrid” situations fairly well. Suppose you are using an aspect to represent membership in a particular society. With that membership comes a host of obligations and enemies — but also access to privileges and resources. The ability to use aspects as a double-edged sword is one of their secret strengths.

The Essential Differences

In the end, Aspects are there to represent what sets the character apart from others.

This is why we do away with traditional attributes — an aspect is there to represent the deviation from the norm, whether that's in a positive (e.g., Dextrous) or a negative (e.g., Clumsy) direction. If someone lacks a Dextrous or Clumsy aspect, then they're like everyone else in the agility department.

What's possibly most confounding for newcomers to aspects, however, is the idea that they're all “valued” the same, level for level — even the “bad” ones, like Drunkard, Sickly, or Claustrophobic. And it's in this where the literary roots of aspects begin to show again.

Most RPG systems will offer you a payback for taking a flaw — a trade of a weakness for extra character points. And while there's no inherent problem with this set-up, it can at times seem artificial (as any one armed, one eyes honorable hydrophobic albino can tell you).

Aspects come to the table with the simple proposition that a quality of a character, regardless of whether it's positive or negative, is something that makes the character more interesting and better ties them to the story. In that light, we can look at a level

of Xander's Normal Guy aspect and one of Buffy's Slayer aspect as being on a kind of narrative equal footing. Both aspects bring the characters into the story, in a clear and thematic fashion.

In fact, it's often a character's weaknesses that make them so interesting, much more than the fact that they can kill vampires or fly or cast spells. We care more that they are Paranoid, or are Vulnerable to Kryptonite or have a Dark Secret in their past. Since such entertaining stories can be told around these weaknesses — indeed, some of the best GM's plots are born out of chosen character weaknesses — it almost seems we should be paying *more* for our weaknesses, if the yardstick used is story significance.

An Origin Story

The original ideas behind Fate came out of a long car ride to lake Tahoe, where Fred and I managed to drive our wives into the other car through excessive game geeking. Fred had run an amazing game of Amber using Fudge back on the east coast, and he was thinking of taking another swing at it. I'd played in his game, and while the system had worked out pretty well, he was looking to top his past performance.

One of the core ideas was to toss a fixed stat list out the window. The thought was that everyone was on roughly equal footing, statwise, and by default no stat was worth mentioning unless it was in some way exceptional. Any stat that a player wanted to pursue would be ranked on a three tiered system, for example, Strong, Stronger, Strongest. These were the first aspects, and after a little kicking around, we realized that these stats could be **anything**, and the wacky ideas started flowing (Drunk, Drunker, Drunkest!) and we realized the same mechanic could be used for almost everything that was not a skill. What's more, we had been sufficiently impressed with the 7th Sea model of charging points for drawbacks that this seemed a great way to reflect both the good and the bad.

The idea of phased based character creation had come out of some experimental games that had used cards to build characters, and it seemed to dovetail nicely with the aspects idea. The idea of the skill pyramid (originally a column) came out of a desire to

keep people from spiking their skills without an escalating cost model. We threw all this together and were pretty pleased with the outcome, and in the end it made for a great game.

There were a few bugs that needed ironing out. In initial tests, characters bought skills **or** aspects during each phase, and it resulted in some odd unevenness in the characters. Aspects originally provided bonuses to rolls, which resulted in some really scary outcomes, especially in situations where characters could invoke multiple aspects.

The idea of switching from bonuses to rerolls came out of a weekend of camping and considering games like Dying Earth and Trollbabe, which make good use of the mechanic. That and the idea of making aspects more central to character creation were the two ideas the final version of the game crystallized around.

Other bits have fallen into place since then, but ultimately, this remains the results of a crazy conversation about trying to tie story and character background a little more tightly to the mechanics.

Final Words

You may also notice that the majority of this book is examples of one sort or another—that's a conscious decision. We think it's much easier to understand how rules should be used with copious examples than with any amount of explanation.

There is a base assumption at work behind almost all of these rules, and that is this: A good rules system supports the preferred style of play. Our hope is not that people will run out and play a game of Fate, but rather that they will take the parts on hand and make a game that explicitly suits them.

Appendix 3. Sample Creation

Lydia: Okay, let's sit down and make the characters. There are a few key aspects that I want you all to be aware of going into this. As you know, this is going to be a multi-dimensional fantasy game, where your ties to the forces and philosophies of the universe can matter. So the first set of aspects available to you are kind of "alignment" based: Chaos, Order, Goodness, and Evil. I'd like you to take at least one aspect level in one of these, so the first one you pick will be treated as a plot hook and will be worth 5 skill levels.

John: Can we take both Chaos and Order?

Lydia: Sure, why not? But figure on me pulling you in both directions at once throughout the game.

John: Weird. Cool.

Lydia: Okay. The second set have to do with the elemental forces in the universe, which can be commanded by those who have the appropriate ancestry, from one of the six great houses which are rumored to be descended from the Elemental Princes themselves. The elements are: Fire, Earth, Water, Air, Wood, and Void. There are two kinds of elemental aspects. You can take a 'House' elemental aspect to represent your connection to and recognition by that house, even if you aren't part of the actual bloodline. You can also take an 'Ancestry' elemental aspect to represent actual possession of elemental powers and membership in the bloodline. The elemental powers granted by ancestry will be skills, bought like anything else, each of which will represent a particular trick that fits the theme of the element. These should be relatively minor; Fire might have 'Create Light', 'Provide Warmth', or 'Resist Flame'. Check with me to make sure the skill's in the right scope. Everyone clear on that?

Cass: Yeah, but what about other kinds of aspects — or are these the only ones?

Lydia: I was getting to that. Outside of these, it's pretty freeform. You can take aspects that are like classic attributes — Strength, Intelligence, that sort of thing — flaws, advantages, and connections to people and organizations outside

of the elemental houses. If you have an idea, let's talk it out.

Okay, I'm going to have you all be about the same age and tie each aspect phase to a bit of a timeline. We'll start with you all in your early teens, with each phase covering two years or so.

Bill: How many phases total?

Lydia: Five. Alright, we'll go around the table and have each of you say a few things about your character at this point — name, appearance if you like, and where you figure you'll be at this point in your life. Cass, you start.

Cass: Okay, my name is Tyrena, and I'm a member of the archivist caste in the Air house. I'm a bit absent-minded, and at age 14, I've been apprenticed in the house's interplanar library.

John: I'm Ro Garrik, a punk redheaded kid with more attitude than brains. I've had plans to enlist in the Earth house's military for a while yet, and while I'm not of age, I've faked it and managed to get into the army before my time.

Bill: Right. I'm gonna play a guy who's working on becoming a necromancer, what house would that be?

Lydia: Void.

Bill: Okay, so, I know I'm going to grow up a little spooky, but I haven't worked it all out yet. The name's Juram... I think I'm a bit lost on concept, here.

Lydia: That's okay, Fate handles 'discovering' your character just fine. I'll throw some circumstances at you from phase to phase and you can make your decisions in reaction to that. I think you'll start out with Gustav, your widower father, who's keeper of the catacombs at the Nexus of Worlds.

Bill: Sounds great!

Lydia: Okay, everyone, pick an aspect that fits their starting circumstances, and use four skill ranks on skills that fit that aspect. Remember the pyramid shape we talked about earlier!

John: Military Training for me.

Lydia: You don't want House of Earth, first?

John: I've just started in at this point. I'm planning on that for next phase.

Cass: House of Air, I think.

Bill: I want a strong relationship with my dad — Connection:Gustav.

Lydia: Sounds good. Take your skills.

John: Swordfighting Fair, Athletics and Alertness at Average.

Cass: I'll pick up four skills at Average—House Lore, History, Mythology, Interplanar Navigation.

Bill: Uh...

Lydia: Looking for a little help from Dad?

Bill: Yeah.

Lydia: Okay. As keeper, he's a quiet guy, tends to fade into the background a lot. He also has to watch out for interlopers, thievery, that sort of thing. He'd probably want you doing the same, to help him out around the place.

Bill: Cool. Okay, so, Stealth, Alertness, uh... Area Knowledge (Catacombs)?

Lydia: Sounds good. That's three, so you can put one at Fair and the other two at Average.

Bill: Stealth at Fair, then.

Lydia: Okay. So, these first two years are more about growing up than about the world around you. You all come out of this with a few of your rough edges polished off, but not a lot of world experience yet.

As we move into the next two years, there seems to be a rise in tensions across the whole nexus. Joram, Gustav is on higher alert, but won't say why — he's in regular contact with the other void folks, though. Tyrena and Private Garrik see signs of this as well — access to the library gets a bit more restricted, and Garrik, your platoon is kept on a higher state of alert. No news about why comes down from the higher-ups, though, in any of your cases.

Each of you should talk about what you're doing during this phase and then pick an appropriate aspect and skill set.

Cass: I figure that getting further into my studies works out just fine for me. I'm going to pick up my Ancestry of Air aspect at this point, and buy two elemental talents at Fair — Whispers on the Wind, for sending messages, and Lifting Breeze, for lifting and moving small objects and so on, are those okay?

Lydia: Perfect. Bill?

Bill: I think I'm a bit annoyed with Dad for keeping stuff to himself, so I'm going to help out less. Y'know, adolescent rebellion and stuff. What aspect should I take?

Lydia: Well, you haven't taken one of the alignment ones yet...

Bill: Rebellion's sorta Chaos oriented. You said that was a plot hook the first time?

Lydia: Yep, five skill ranks.

Bill: Let's do that, then... but what are the skills of Chaos?

Lydia: You should take skills that fit your circumstances and a chaotic theme. Chaos has a strong vibe of survival of the fittest, adaptability, and independent action...

Bill: Right, so I'll explore the catacombs some more, boosting up my Area Knowledge. I think I get lost for a while at some point... Survival: Underground sounds right. Uh, with those two skill levels spent, that gives me Area Knowledge and Stealth at Fair, and Alertness and Survival at Average. I need another average to keep the pyramid, and I'm rebelling, so how about a little Brawling at Average, too. But that leaves me with two skill ranks, and I don't see a way I think they should be spent, so now what?

Lydia: Well, you could always pick up some minions or items with those ranks.

Bill: Like an item I take from the catacombs? That'd really twist dad's tail!

Lydia: Right, and it should be chaos themed, so something twisting, winding...

Bill: How about a cloak that lets me change my appearance?

Lydia: Spending two skill levels? Sure, I'll let it provide you some disguise effects.

Bill: Cool, new toy!

Lydia: That's the spirit. Okay, Private Garrik...

John: House Earth, like I said. This is still part of me working with the military, and I'm trying for at least Lieutenant, so let's go with Leadership, Tactics at Average, and Crossbow at Fair.

Lydia: And a fine military career continues. Okay, if everyone's ready... the next two years come to pass. You all are moving out of late adolescence and into early adulthood, now. It comes out that all the tension and hubbub has to do with a war between angels and demons that some think is heading towards the nexus. The houses are definitely moving into a "protect their own" mode at this point; the whole place is jittery now, like world war two London before an air raid. Juram, Gustav sends you to Void House proper, saying that the Catacombs aren't safe enough.

Bill: Dang it!

Lydia: ... And guard duty becomes a very important job, Private. Tyrena...?

Cass: I like the idea that Tyrena sort of ends up untouched by it all with her head stuck in books through all this... Can I take Oblivious as an aspect?

Lydia: No problem, it'll be a good source of Fudge points for you as the game goes on, I suspect.

Cass: Yeah. Okay, so Oblivious, a Researching skill at average, House Lore up one to Fair — that puts me at three Fair, four Average. Concentration and Planar Zoology at Average.

Lydia: That fits. Ro, you can assume your promotion, so...?

John: Excellent. I'm going to take an aspect of Order at this point, if that's okay? I've had the punk kid bits drilled out of me, and it's a good time to come in to my own with that extra skill level. Okay, I've got four averages and two fairs to start. Let's take Military History at Average, Survival (Wilderness) at Fair, for three levels —

Lydia: I'm not sure Survival fits the orderly theme we're looking for, here.

John: I'll accept that. Okay, then, let's make that a promotion for Tactics to fair, so I'm at 4 averages and 3 fairs now, and I've got three levels left... can I get your permission to bump up Swordfighting?

Lydia: Hm. Sure, but note down that your training is founded in established forms and discipline. It's a flavor thing, but could be important.

John: Okay, so, yay, Swordfighting at Good, and two skill levels left over. Since I'm at 1/2/4 now, I can add in another Fair... I'll bump Leadership to Fair — but that's 1/3/3, so I need another Average — and pull in some Administration at Average to reflect the paperwork that comes with being an officer. I'm done.

Bill: Well, I said I wanted to be a necromancer of some kind, but I'm not sure if that still works.

Lydia: Well, you're around the House now, so picking up an Ancestry or House aspect would be appropriate.

Bill: Yeah. Okay, then, Ancestry of Void as the aspect... I've got two fair and three average, and four skill levels. I can buy a Good outright, how about Voices of the Dead, so I can talk to spirits?

Lydia: That's perfect.

Bill: And one skill level, which I've gotta spend. Time to learn more about my House, I guess... House Lore at Average.

Lydia: And so concludes the early coming of age stuff. We've got two phases left to go. In the next two years, the worst fears are realized. Angels and devils duke it out in the streets, across the planes. A number of interplanar gates are wrecked beyond functioning and the common man cowers in whatever dark corners he can find. The Houses themselves take some collateral damage during this period; as you exit this phase, the war will still be going on.

Bill: Crud, what's up with Dad?

Lydia: No word from him, and the House isn't letting anyone out.

Bill: Argh! Darn it, I'm going to go check on him anyway. Sneak out if I have to. I think another Chaos aspect is in order, to reflect the times.

Lydia: Okay. Just a normal aspect this time, no hook bonus.

Bill: No worries. Right, so, I've got one good, two fair, four average... I'm going to be a skulker here, so I'm going to bump my Stealth to Good and my Brawling to Fair... That puts me at two good, two fair, three average... I need another fair and another average, but that'd need three ranks, not two. Crud.

Lydia: Right, picking up another Good at this point would be tough, since you bought that item.

Bill: I can deal. Brawling to Fair still makes sense, and I'll add in Bribery at Average, to help me get out the gate without sneaking. Climbing at Average too, I think, and Intimidation when the soft touch fails me. How's Dad doing?

Lydia: He's turned the catacombs into a regular fortress, and is occasionally sheltering refugees. Got wounded early on, so he's developed something of a limp. He never says it, but you get the feeling he's glad you came along. Lieutenant Garrik...

John: Defending the house should only improve my ties to it, so I'm going to take another level of the House Earth aspect. I want some House Lore at Average, bump my Alertness up two to Good. That's 2/3/4, so the pyramid's balanced, and I have one skill level. I'll spend it on an Ally, in the sense that I've got a house guardsman who regularly works for me as a part of house military duty.

Lydia: I can run with that. We'll work out the details after the rest of character generation.

John: Righto.

Cass: I think this is where Tyrena snaps out of it for a while, studies some medicine, and helps with her house's wounded. I'm going to take a 'Healer' aspect. First Aid at Fair, Herbalism and Chirurgeon at Average.

Lydia: And now the final phase. The war between heavens and hells culminates with a bit of divine intervention. A titanic spear is driven into the

center of the Nexus, releasing vast energies and shattering the structure of the planes. Many house holdings are in ruins — yours particularly, so this leaves you all between jobs up to the point of starting the game — and for Gustav and Joram, the catacombs keep a steady crowd of refugees, eating up all of Gustav's time and probably a good bit of Joram's. Tyrena and the Lieutenant should work out how they come into contact with the folks at the catacombs during this time, since I'm going to use that as the launching point for the game...

John: My friend, the ally, he got wounded, and we'd lost our medics... maybe the catacombs were nearby...

Cass: Yeah, and I've probably gone into good samaritan mode at this point — I'm going to take an aspect of Goodness this phase — so maybe I'm the one who tends to your friend, having found my way there and helping the refugees...

Bill: And I'm drawn to you folks out of looking for ways to help Dad but wanting to be around folks my own age... Though I probably give off a bad first impression, what with the conversations I keep having with the ones who don't make it.

Cass: Creepy. Okay, with the 5 ranks from the plot hook bonus, I'm starting with 8 averages and 4 fairs. Bump First Aid and Chirurgeon to Good, for three ranks. I'm going to need to calm a lot of ragged nerves during this time too, so I think Diplomacy at Fair makes sense.

Lydia: I can see that all fitting in with your strong tie to Goodness. Lieutenant?

John: I'm one of the folks with military experience still around after this, and there are a lot of refugees. I think it's time for me to take on a Protector aspect.

Lydia: Juicy! I like it.

John: Sword to Great, one. Leadership to Good, two. Athletics to Fair, three. Barricading at Average, four. Done.

Bill: I've got a roomful of refugees and no idea what to do with them. Given my necromantic tendencies, I think I'll be the one who makes sure

that last wishes are carried out, and take another level of Void Ancestry.

Lydia: Okay...

Bill: Voices of the Dead is at Good and about where I want it, I think I'll pick up Sense Spirit Realm at Fair, for two, and put the other two into a couple spirit minions who decide to haunt me along the way, who can probably provide me knowledge and answers I wouldn't normally have access to...

Lydia: I could have fun with those, that works. Okay! Looks like we're done.

The Sheets

Juram

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Void Ancestry 2 | Good |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Chaos 2 | Good |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gustav the Keeper 1 | Fair |

Alertness	Average (0)
Survival (Underground)	Average (0)
House Lore (Void)	Average (0)
Climbing	Average (0)
Bribery	Average (0)
Intimidation	Average (0)
Stealth	Fair (+1)
Area Know.(Catacombs)	Fair (+1)
Brawling	Fair (+1)
Sense Spirit Realm	Fair (+1)
Voices of the Dead	Good (+2)

Other Elements

Item: Cloak of Faces (2 levels)
Appearance Changing, Concealment
 Minions: Spirit Guides (2 Levels)

Goal

Spooky

Tyrena

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goodness 1 | Fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healer 1 | Fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air Ancestry 1 | Fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Air House 1 | Fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oblivious 1 | Fair |

History	Average (0)
Mythology	Average (0)
Navigation	Average (0)
Researching	Average (0)
Concentration	Average (0)
Planar Zoology	Average (0)
Herbalism	Average (0)
Whispers on the Wind	Fair (+1)
Lifting Breeze	Fair (+1)
House Lore (Air)	Fair (+1)
Diplomacy	Fair (+1)
First Aid	Good (+2)
Chirurgeon	Good (+2)

Goal

Healer

Ro Gappik

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Order 1 | Fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> House Earth 1 | Good |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Military Training 1 | Fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protector 1 | Fair |

Military History	Average (0)
Administration	Average (0)
House Lore	Average (0)
Barricading	Average (0)
Tactics	Fair (+1)
Crossbow	Fair (+1)
Athletics	Fair (+1)
Alertness	Good (+2)
Leadership	Good (+2)
Sword	Great (+3)

Other Elements

Ally: Guardsman in House Earth: (1 level)

Goal

Champion

Appendix 4. Reference

Fudge Resources

www.fudgerpg.com

The main rules for fudge can be found here, along with links to most online Fudge resources.

www.panix.com/~sos/fudge.html

Homepage of Steffan O'Sullivan, father of Fudge.

www.roguepublishing.com

Publisher of numerous excellent Fudge products.

fudge.phoenix.net

Home of the Fudge mailing list.

www.evilbat.com

Home of Fate!

Other Resources

www.cumberlandgames.com

S. John Ross's publishing imprint.



A

Achieving Destiny	14
adjectives	1
Advanced Weapons and Armor	24
Advancement	6, 17
Goal	3
Off Screen	17
Advancement, Alternate	18
Advantages	5
Age of Stone and Steel	33
Allies	7, 8
Example	9
Alternate Advancement	18
Armor	23
Advanced	24
Simple	23
Special Types	24
Types	24
aspect	2
Aspects	
and NPCs	17
Caps	18
Contests	7
Items	9
Negative	7
Plot	13
Refreshing	6
Unique	11
aspects	5
attributes	5

B

bonus, plot	13
Brass Compass	28
Budget, Magical	32

C

Caps,Aspects	18
Careers	15
Character Creation	
Sample	44
Structured	14
character creation	2
Character Creation Shorthand	40
Character Goal	17
Clipped	22
Column,Skills	18
Combat	19
Advanced	24
Dramatic	23
Modifiers, Default	25
Outcomes	19
Simple	23

Combinative Magic	28
Compass,Brass	28
connections	5
Contacting	9
Contacts	7
Example	9
creation	2
Creation, Structured	28

D

Damage,Non-Lethal	23
Death Spiral	23
Design Notes	42
Destiny	14
Destiny, Achieving	14
Destiny, Grand	14
dice	1
Difficult Skills	7
disadvantages	5
Door to Shadow	30
Dramatic	23
Dramatic Weapons and Armor	23
Dresden, Harry	32

E

Exchange Based Pacing	21
Experience	17

F

Faceless Minions	11
Fudge	41
Fudge dice	1
Fudge Points	3
as Rewards	18
Fudge Resources	49

G

Geography	14
Goal	3, 17
Grand Destiny	14
Great Library	28

H

Handling Powerful Items	11
Harry Dresden	32
Hedge Magic	33
Hurt	22

I

Improvisational Magic	30
Injured	23
Injury	19, 22
Clipped	22
Hurt	22

Injured	23
Taken Out	23
Wound Boxes	23
Wound Track	22
Interpretive Magic	32
Invisibility	11
invocation	
voluntary	5
invocation, involuntary	6
involuntary invocation	6
Items	9
Characteristics	10
Example	10
Powerful	11

L

ladder	1
Level Based Magic	28
Library,Great	28
Limits,Aspects	18

M

Magic	28
Combinative	28
Hedge	33
Improvisational	30
Interpretive	32
Level Based	28
Martial Arts	34
Minor Powers	33
Supers	33
Magical Budget	32
Maneuvers	22
margin of success	1
Martial Arts	34
Minions	7, 8
Example	9
Faceless	11
Minor Powers	33

N

Negative Aspects	7
Non-Lethal Damage	23
Novice Characters	16
NPC Aspects	17

O

Off Screen Advancement	17
One Page Fudge	41
Opportunity, Windows of	16

P

Pace	19
Exchange	21



Scene Based	20
Turn Based	22
Path of a Thousand Steps	34
Period	6
phases	2
Plot Aspects	13
plot bonus	13
Points, Fudge	3
Potential	13
Powerful Items	11
Pursuits	15
Pyramid	3

Q

Quantum	33
---------------	----

R

Refreshing Aspects	6
Reroll	5
Resources,Fudge	49
Rewards	18

S

Sample Character Creation	3, 44
Scene Based Pacing	20
Shorthand, Character Creation	40
Simple Weapons and Armor	23
Skills	
Column	18
Default Level	3
Difficult	7
Pyramid	3
Skindance	33
Sorcery on a Budget	32
Special Characteristics	10
Spiral,Death	23
Stone and Steel	33
Stormfront	32
Structured Character Creation	14
Structured Creation	28
Careers	15
Geography	14
Pursuits	15
Subdual	23
success	1
Supers	33
Sybil	4

T

Tables

Armor Types	24
Character Creation Shorthand	40
Combat Modifiers	25
Combat Outcomes	19

Contacts, Allies & Minions	7
Elemental Magics	29
Magical Budget	32
Special Armor Types	24
Wound Track	22

tables

adjective ladder	1
Taken Out	23
Thousand Steps	34
Turned Based Pacing	22

U

Unique Aspects	11
----------------------	----

V

Vanilla Fudge	41
voluntary invocation	5

W

Weapons	23
Advanced	24
Simple	23
Weasels	33
Windows of Opportunity	16
Wound Boxes	23

Y

Younger Characters	13
--------------------------	----