2D20 System SRD: Action and Conflict

System Resource Document for 2D20 System RPGS, 2022 Edition

This Chapter expands upon the core rules of the **2D20 System**, providing additional content for dealing with high-stakes action scenes and situations where conflict arises.

Conflict scenes are high-stakes and fast-paced, requiring quick decision-making and decisive action. They are intended to model situations where events happen in quick succession, typically with two opposing sides clashing to achieve mutually-exclusive goals.

Action Order

During a conflict scene, characters perform actions in a specific order. Each character takes a **turn**, during which they make take a **major action** and a **minor action** (and maybe more). Once each character in the conflict has taken a turn, a single **round** is completed, and a new round begins. This repeats until the conflict ends.

At the start of the first round, the gamemaster selects a single character to take the first turn. This will *typically* be whichever character started the conflict—whomever fires the first shot, strikes the first blow, makes the first move, etc—but if this is unclear, then the GM will select a player character, or spend 2 Threat to select an NPC.

Once a character has finished their turn, they hand over to an opposing side, who choose one of their characters to act. Characters may instead **keep the initiative** by spending 2 points of Momentum or adding 2 to Threat (enemy NPCs spend 2 Threat instead). If they keep the initiative, they allow an allied character to take a turn immediately before handing over to the enemy. Once a side has chosen to keep the initiative, they *must* allow an enemy character to take a turn before they can keep the initiative again.

Each time a new character is chosen to act, the character chosen must be someone who has not yet taken a turn in the current round. If there are no characters left on a side who haven't yet taken a turn, that side must pass and immediately nominate another opposing side. If only one side in the conflict has characters left to act, then they may all act, one at a time, until every character has acted that round.

Once all characters have taken a turn, the round ends. The character who acted last must nominate an opposing side to take the first turn in the next round or spend 2 Momentum/add 2 to Threat (NPCs spend 2 Threat) to allow their side to take the first turn next round.

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Variant: Initiative Scores

Some groups may prefer a more structured action order, determined less by player choice and more by a character's stats.

In this variant, characters have a set Initiative score, which determines the order in which they act during a conflict scene. When a conflict scene begins, the character who initiated the conflict takes first

turn, but after they have acted, all remaining characters act in order of their initiative scores, from highest to lowest. Once the round is complete, the next round begins with the character with the highest initiative score.

If two characters on the same side have the same initiative score, they choose the order in which they act amongst themselves. If two characters on opposing sides have the same initiative score, then a PC will act before any NPCs, but the GM may spend 1 Threat to have an NPC act before a PC instead.

Characters have an initiative score equal to the higher of their Agility or Insight scores. If fixed initiative scores like this are used, the option must be provided for characters to interrupt the order: a player character may add 2 to Threat to act earlier in the round than their initiative score would normally allow (NPCs can spend 2 Threat to do the same).

As an alternative to this, you may have *random* initiative scores: each character rolls [CD] equal to the higher of their Agility or Insight scores, and use the total as their initiative score for that scene. If one side has a significant advantage over the other, such as an ambush, then each Icon rolled adds an additional +1 to their total. The GM may, at their discretion, allow other benefits to come from Icons rolled, perhaps as a result of Talents.

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Variant: Narrative First

This variant, rather than adding or altering rules, places the responsibility for the action order squarely in the Gamemaster's hands.

At the start of each Round, the Gamemaster chooses a single character to take the first Turn. Once that character's Turn has finished, the Gamemaster selects another character to take a Turn, until every character has taken a Turn, at which point the round ends and a new round begins. As normal, each character can take only a single Turn.

This version is the simplest, but it also places the weight of responsibility entirely upon the Gamemaster, who may have plenty to deal with, or who may not want the burden of choosing who acts when.

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Variant: Player Priority

Some games may prefer to make use of a simpler action order. This lacks the inherent back-and-forth dynamic of the standard method, but it is more straightforward, and favours the Player Characters. The Gamemaster may interrupt this order, but only by spending Threat.

In each Round, the players choose a single Player Character, who takes the first Turn of the Round. After that, each Player Character takes a Turn, one at a time, in whichever order they choose. Once all the

Player Characters have taken a Turn, the NPCs may take their Turns, again one at a time in whichever order they choose. Once every character has taken a Turn, the Round ends, and a new Round begins.

As normal, no character may take more than one Turn each Round.

The Gamemaster may spend 1 Threat, before any Player Character takes their Turn, to select a single NPC to take a Turn instead, essentially interrupting the action order; this NPC may not take another turn later. Once this NPC has finished their Turn, the action returns to the Player Characters, unless the Gamemaster spends additional Threat.

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Actions

In each Turn, a character can attempt a single Major Action, and a Minor Action. Different types of Conflict may have their own kinds of Action, and there are a few common Actions that apply to every kind of Conflict.

Major Actions

A character can attempt a single Major Action every Turn. There are a few ways that a character can attempt a second Major Action during their Turn, but regardless of the method used, a character cannot attempt more than two Major Actions in any Round.

The following Major Actions are common to all kinds of Conflict:

- **Aid:** The character tends to a character within Reach. This is a **Coordination + Survive Test** or a **Will + Survive Test** with a Difficulty of 2. Success means that the patient—the character being tended to—removes Stress equal to the aiding character's Survive score, plus 2 per Momentum spent.
- **Assist:** The character performs an activity that will grant an ally some benefit. The character selects a single ally they can communicate with, and declares how they are assisting, including which Attribute, Skill, and Focus (if any) they are assisting with. When the selected ally attempts their Skill Test, the assisting character assists in the manner chosen.

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Timing Assistance

The Assist task works a little differently than most other tasks in combat. In these situations, you can choose to assist when another character declares the task you wish to assist, even though it isn't your turn. However, you can only provide this assistance if you have not already acted this round, and assisting means that you will not take a turn of your own later in the round – assisting takes up your turn instead.

While this may seem a little more complex on the surface, in play it makes teamwork and assistance easier to resolve: you don't have to plan in advance if you want to assist someone, you simply declare it at the moment it becomes relevant, so long as you're not doing anything else that round.

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- **Attack:** The character attacks an enemy or other viable target. See **Attacks and Damage** for details.
- **Create Advantage:** The character attempts to create a favourable circumstance that benefits them or their allies. This is a Skill Test with a Difficulty of 2, using an Attribute, Skill, and Focus (if any) appropriate to how they are attempting to gain an advantage. If successful, the character creates a Trait which helps them in some way, or which hinders the enemy in some way.
- **Overcome:** the character attempts a skill test as part of an extended task. The attribute and skill used, and the difficult, are determined by the extended task. If successful, the character rolls [CD] to determine how much stress they cause on the extended task, as described later in this chapter.
- **Pass:** The character chooses not to attempt a Major Action. If the character takes no Minor Actions this Turn as well, then the character does not count as having taken a Turn, and may act later in the Round instead.
- **Protect:** The character takes up a defensive stance, finds a defensible position, or otherwise makes themselves ready for attack. This requires a **Coordination + Survive Test**, or an **Insight + Survive Test**, with a Difficulty of 1, though the Difficulty is reduced by 1 if the character is in cover. Success increases the Difficulty of any attacks made against the character by +1 until the start of that character's next Turn. A character can confer the benefits of this Action to an ally within Close Range instead of themselves; this increases the Difficulty of the Skill Test by +1, and the benefit lasts until the start of that ally's next Turn.
- **Ready:** The character declares that they are waiting for a specific situation or event to occur before attempting a Major action. This situation or event must be chosen when Ready is declared, as must the Major Action to be attempted when that situation or event occurs. When this triggering event occurs, the character with the readied Major Action temporarily interrupts the acting character's Turn to resolve the readied Major Action. Once the readied Major Action has resolve, play proceeds as normal. If the triggering event does not occur before the character's next Turn, the readied Major Action is lost. Characters who take the Ready Major Action can still perform Minor Actions during their Turn as normal.
- **Recover:** The character takes a moment to regain their breath, clear their mind, and ready themselves for further conflict. This is a **Will + Survive Test** with a Difficulty of 2 (reduce Difficulty by 1 if the character is in cover). Success means that the character removes Stress equal to their Survive score, plus two more per Momentum spent). The character may also re-roll any number of conditional Resistance dice, for either Cover or Morale.
- **Rush:** The character attempts a Difficulty 0 **Agility + Move Skill Test**. Success means that the character moves one zone (to any point in Medium range), and one additional zone per Movement spent. A character may not attempt this Task more than once per Round, and not at all if the character has performed the Movement Minor Action. Terrain and other factors may increase the Difficulty of this Skill Test, and this Skill Test always allows Success at Cost.
- **Skill Test:** The character performs another activity that requires a Skill Test. The limits of this ability are left to the discretion of the Gamemaster.

Minor Actions

Minor Actions are extra, small activities a character can undertake that do not require a Skill Test. They are often taken in support of Major Actions, such as moving into position before attempting a Skill Test.

A character may perform one Minor Action during their Turn and may perform it before or after the characters' Major Actions, at their discretion.

A character may attempt additional Minor Actions during the Turn, costing one Momentum each, or adding 1 to Threat for each. Unless otherwise noted, a character may not perform a Minor Action outside of their Turn.

Each Minor Action can only be performed once per Turn. The following Minor Actions are common to all kinds of Conflict:

- **Aim:** The character may re-roll a single d20 made on an Attack before the start of their next Turn.
- **Bolster:** The character tries to psych themselves up, or to reassure an ally within Close range. The character, or the ally they're reassuring, gains +2[CD] Morale.
- **Defend:** The character defends themselves or an ally within Reach from attack. The character, or the ally they are defending, gains +2[CD] Cover.
- **Disengage:** This action can only be taken if the character is within Reach of an enemy. The character moves to anywhere within their current zone. The character may not use any action to move into Reach of an enemy during this Turn.
- **Draw Item:** The character may pick up an item within Reach, or draw an item carried on their person. If an item does not require a Major Action to use, it can be used immediately, allowing the character to draw and use the item with a single Minor Action.
- **Drop Prone/Stand:** The character immediately drops to the ground, making themselves a smaller target, or stands from prone. While prone, the Difficulty of all ranged attacks against the character from Medium or greater range by +1. However, melee attacks and ranged attacks at Close range gain 1 bonus Momentum against a prone character, and prone characters cannot attempt any movement-related Major Actions. Being Prone also allows the character to re-roll any conditional Resistance (Cover or Morale). A character who stands loses all benefits and disadvantages of being prone. A character may not Drop Prone and Stand in the same Turn.
- **Interact:** The character interacts with an object in the environment. Particularly complex actions may require a Major Action instead.
- **Movement:** The character moves to any point within Medium range. This Minor Action cannot be taken if the character performs any movement-related Tasks. This movement is slow and careful enough to move through hazardous or difficult terrain without problems. If there are enemies within Reach of the character, this Action cannot be taken.
- **Prepare:** The character prepares for, or spends time setting up, another activity. Some Major Actions require this preparation before they can be attempted.

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Variant: No Minor Actions
Some games may not need the more granular structure of major and minor actions.

In this variant, a character receives a single Action on each turn; the Major actions list covers the actions a character can choose, but the GM should be flexible in how these are applied. Minor actions are ignored entirely. Any activity that a character could do as part of a minor action is included in the

character's normal action; if a character wants to do a lot of these minor activities in their turn, the GM may either increase the difficulty of the character's action, or they might decide that the player has to break up their action over several turns.

This works well with the Narrative First action order variant.

[End Sidebar]

Free Actions

Some activities are not considered to be a Major or Minor Action. These are Free Actions: Actions which do not take any meaningful time or effort. A character may take any number of Free Actions during a Round, both during their Turn, and on other characters' Turns. However, a character may not take a Free Action if something would prevent them from taking any Actions.

A Free Action never includes a Skill Test, under any circumstances.

- **Drop:** The character drops an item held in their hand(s).
- **Shift:** The character can move to anywhere within their current zone. This may only be done once during the character's Turn, and only if the character does not use any other action to move.
- **Speak:** The character speaks, though this does not cover any speech or conversation that would involve or require a Skill Test of some kind.

Reactions

In addition to their own actions taken on their Turns, characters have some ability to respond to the actions of others, especially if those actions are dangerous or aggressive. Thus, characters may attempt Reactions in response to actions taken outside of their own Turn.

A character may attempt one reaction during each round, and they may not perform it during their own Turn.

Reactions each have a specific condition or circumstance that allow them to be used, and they must be declared immediately as soon as that condition applies. If responding to another character's Major Action, it must be declared when the Action is declared, but before any dice are rolled for Skill Tests.

One reaction is available to all characters. Characters may gain other reactions from Talents or other special abilities:

- **Hit the Dirt:** When you are the target of a ranged attack, but before any dice are rolled for the attack, you dive to the ground bracing yourself. You can immediately move to any point within Close range and drop prone (adding +1 to the difficulty of ranged attacks). In addition to the normal effects of being prone, you gain +2[CD] Cover and +2[CD] Morale resistance until the start of your next turn.

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Variant: Defensive Reactions

A common variant to this used in some older **2d20 System** games, this variant adds some rolling and some extra complexity to attacks, and can slow down play, but it can make combat feel more visceral and desperate.

In this variant, all attacks are ordinary skill tests made against a difficulty of 1. When attacked, a character may take a Reaction to make that skill test into an opposed test—dodging ranged attacks (Agility + Move), parrying melee attacks (Coordination + Fight), resisting mental attacks (Will + Survive).

If using this variant, you may also wish to increase the number of reactions a character may perform each Round: rather than only allowing a character to perform one reaction per turn, they may perform any number of reactions, but the first reaction adds 1 to Threat, the second one adds 2 to Threat, the third one adds 3, and so forth. NPC enemies pay Threat instead of adding to it.

[End Sidebar]

Environments and Zones

In a conflict, knowing where everyone is can be of vital importance, and determining both absolute position (where you are) and relative position (how far you are from others) is important. Rather than track everything in precise distances, however, the **2D20 System** resolves this matter using abstract zones.

An environment represents the "battlefield" – in short, whatever location the conflict is taking place within. This may be a building, a city street, an area of wilderness, part of a ship, or other such areas. An environment is divided into several zones based on the terrain features or natural divisions present in the area. For example, a building or ship interior may treat individual rooms as distinct zones, using the internal walls, doorways, and other solid structures as natural divisions, while a city street may focus zones around features like parked vehicles, the fronts of buildings, alleyways, and so forth. Zones are often defined in three dimensions, so the Gamemaster may choose to map multiple floors of a building, connected by stairs and elevators, or consider a few 'empty' zones above the battlefield for flying objects. A relatively simple battlefield may consist of three to five significant zones, while complex environments may have many more. More zones are often more interesting than fewer, as they provide a greater variety of movement options and tactical opportunities, but this can take more planning on the part of the Gamemaster.

Because zones are of no fixed size, they can be varied to accommodate the Gamemaster's preferences for a given scene, and to represent certain other factors. For example, a battle in a forest may be divided into many small zones amongst the trees, and a couple of larger zones representing clearings. The larger size of the "clearing" zones helps convey quicker movement and easier target acquisition in open areas, while the smaller zones convey cramped conditions and short lines of sight. However, zones should not be too complex a consideration under most circumstances — a few seconds to describe zones and their relative positions, or to sketch out a rough map on a piece of spare paper, is all that's needed for most situations. Of course, this doesn't prevent the Gamemaster from coming up with elaborate environments if he wishes to spend more time coming up with maps.

Individual zones can — and often should — have terrain effects defined when the Gamemaster creates them. This may be as simple as providing cover, or imposing difficult terrain, but the Gamemaster is welcome to devise other terrain effects, such as objects that can be interacted with, hazards to overcome, or even terrain that changes under specific circumstances, such as the expenditure of Threat. Some zones may be defined more by the absence of terrain than its presence, and some environments are enhanced by a few 'empty' zones between obstacles to add a greater sense or space or distance.

Similarly, individual zones – or the environment as a whole – may have one or more Traits that define them in different ways. This is often a useful way to codify terrain: a zone with a *Loose Gravel* trait is naturally distinct from a zone that is *Piled High with Crates*.

Gamemasters who desire concrete values rather than abstract ranges are encouraged to set specific sizes and shapes for individual zones, essentially using them as a large grid. More detailed guidance for this is presented later.

Characters and Zones

To help Players visualize their characters' place in a conflict, and to manage that conflict effectively, it's important to keep track of which zone characters are in at any given moment. This should be relatively easy in most cases. As zones are defined by the terrain and around them, tracking a character can be a matter of simple description — an enemy might be 'behind the control panel' or 'standing by the blue car'. This has the advantage of relying on natural language and intuitive concepts, rather than specific game terms, and avoids the tracking of relative distances which can become fiddly where there are many characters present.

Larger or particularly complex scenes may become tricky to track purely by memory, so the Gamemaster may wish to use something extra to help remind everyone of which character is where. If you're already using a sketched map, then marking character positions in pencil (so they can be easily erased and redrawn) is a simple approach, as is using tokens or miniatures, and moving them around as required.

Distances

Movement and ranged attacks need some sense of distance to make them meaningful. In combat, the relative placement of zones determines this distance. To keep things simple, range is measured in four categories, and one state.

- The state of **Reach** is when an object or character is within arm's length of the character. Characters enter Reach to interact with objects manually, to attack in close combat, and to perform any other actions where they may need to touch the target or subject of their action. Reach isn't a specific range, but rather is a state that a character can declare when he moves — that is, when a character moves into or within a zone, he may freely declare that he is moving into or out of Reach of a given object or character. Being within Reach of an enemy is quite disruptive and distracting, adding +2 to the Difficulty of any Skill Test that isn't a Melee Attack or Mental Attack.
- **Close** range is defined as the zone the character is within at the time. Moving within Close range is a trivial affair. Close range is, in essence, a distance of 0 zones.
- **Medium** range is defined as any zone adjacent to the character's current zone. Medium range is a distance of 1 zone.

- **Long** range is defined as objects and creatures two zones away from a character's current zone. Long range is a distance of 2 zones.
- **Extreme** range is any creatures and objects beyond Long range. Extreme range is a distance of 3 or more zones.

Distance and Perception

The further away something is, the harder it is to notice. In game terms, this means that characters in distant zones are harder to observe or identify than those nearby. A character increases the Difficulty of Tasks to try and notice creatures or objects by one step at Medium range, by two when dealing with creatures and objects at Long range, and by three when trying to discern things at Extreme range. A creature that isn't trying to avoid notice requires a Difficulty 0 Task under normal circumstances, while attempting a Task to avoid notice makes things more difficult. Creatures or objects that are particularly noticeable — someone firing a gun, shouting, or a fast-moving or brightly-coloured object — may reduce the Difficulty further.

Similarly, characters will want to communicate during a conflict — calls for help, battle-cries, and other dialogue can abound in tense situations. In most cases, characters can converse normally within Close range — they're near enough to one another to be heard and to make themselves understood without raising their voices.

A character at Medium range can be communicated with, but only at a raised volume — shouting, rather than talking. At Long and Extreme range, you can shout to draw attention, but conveying any meaning or understanding someone is unlikely. Radios, phones, and similar technologies can make distance less of a consideration.

Movement and Terrain

Moving to anywhere within Medium range is trivial – a minor action. Moving further than this requires a Skill Test (an action), though this has a Difficulty of 0 under normal circumstances.

Moving as a Task increases in Difficulty if the terrain in any of the zones to be moved through is rough, hindering, or hazardous in any way – as denoted by any terrain effects the Gamemaster has defined, or by that area's Traits. The consequences of failure vary based on the nature of the terrain: failure may result in the character's movement stopping prematurely outside of the difficult terrain, the character falling prone, or suffering the effects of hazardous terrain, which may include damage or injury.

Movement may take many different forms on this scale; walking, running, jumping across gaps or down sheer drops, swimming through bodies of water, climbing steep or sheer surfaces, and so forth. The Difficulty of these activities should be evaluated separately.

There are a range of other terrain effects that might be present in a zone, beyond just difficult terrain. The most common are discussed below.

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Variant: Terrain Momentum
This variant can be used to speed play where combat involves a lot of hindering terrain.

In this variant, all obstacles and all areas of difficult terrain have a Momentum cost. When a character wishes to cross that obstacle, or move from that area of difficult terrain, they must spend the amount of Momentum listed. If they cannot pay the cost, they cannot cross that obstacle or move from that difficult terrain.

With this variant, it can be especially useful to allow players to make Difficulty 0 skill tests to build up Momentum to allow movement—an Agility + Move test, for example. This variant also allows characters to help one another more easily with terrain, as characters can generate Momentum to allow others to cross terrain.

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Cover is one of most common terrain effects, representing objects that interfere with a character's ability to see or attack a target clearly. Cover provides conditional Resistance against physical attacks, as described in the **Damage** section, above. A zone will either provide cover universally (granting the benefits of that Cover to any creature in the zone), or the Gamemaster may denote features within the zone that grant Cover (requiring that the character be within Reach of that feature to benefit).

Interactive Objects are any object or terrain feature that a character could conceivably interact with. Doors and windows are a common example, as are control panels and computer terminals. Interacting with these objects may take little time or effort under normal circumstances (a minor action), but a complex system might need a Skill Test (and an action) to interact with properly.

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The Shape of Battle
Different kinds of environments will suit different approaches to combat. Large open spaces with clear lines of sight favour snipers, heavy weapons, and other sources of heavy firepower, while confined spaces and close quarters favours short-ranged weaponry and melee combat instead. Dense terrain hinders and directs movement, while clear spaces allow characters to move freely. Mixtures of these factors in a single environment can result in a battlefield that has a specific shape or flow and encourages certain tactics – an empty street may allow easy movement, but if it lacks cover, it may also be a sniper's hunting ground, compared to a slower, but safer route.

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Attacks and Damage
During a Conflict, characters seldom emerge unscathed, often suffering pain, fatigue, or lasting harm because of the battles – physical, mental, and social alike – they engage in. This section deals with how this damage might come about, what effects it has, and how characters may recover from it.

Making an Attack
An attack is any action made with the intention of harming another character or inflicting damage upon an object. For physical attacks, this normally involves weapons: the tools for inflicting damage. For

mental attacks, it may involve different forms of threats and intimidation, or even supernatural effects, depending on the nature of your game.

This section deals with how characters go about making attacks of different kinds.

There are two distinct forms of attack available to characters: **physical**, and **mental**. Physical attacks are further broken up into **melee** attacks and **ranged** attacks, each of which have their own considerations, but both are still physical attacks for the purposes of how they inflict damage.

1. **Attacker declares attack:** The attacker decides that they wish to make an attack and chooses how. Many means of attacking can be used for more than one form of attack: a knife can be used in melee, it can be thrown to attack at range, or it can be used to threaten. In these cases, choose one form of attack the method can be used for.
    a. If a melee weapon is chosen, the attack is a melee attack.
    b. If a ranged weapon is chosen, the attack is a ranged attack.
    c. If the attack would affect the mind or emotions of the target, the attack is a mental attack.
2. **Attacker chooses target:** The attacker chooses a target for the attack. This can be any creature or object which can be damaged by the attack.
    a. A melee attack can be used against a target within Reach (see page ##) of the attacker.
    b. A ranged attack can be used against any target visible to the attacker (the GM may allow some concealed targets as well).
    c. A mental attack can be used against any target that can understand the attack.
3. **Skill Test:** The attacker attempts a Skill Test, determined by the form of attack. Each type of attack may have further adjustments to Difficulty.
    a. **Melee:** The attacker attempts an **Agility + Fight Test**, with a Difficulty of 1, opposed by the target's **Coordination + Fight** (also Difficulty 1).
    b. **Ranged:** The attacker attempts a **Coordination + Fight Test**, with a Difficulty of 2.
    c. **Mental:** The attacker attempts a **Will + Fight Test** or a **Will + Talk Test** (depending on the nature of the mental attack) with a Difficulty of 1, opposed by the target's **Will + Survive** (also Difficulty 1).
4. **Outcome:** If the Skill Test succeeds, or if the attacker won their opposed test, then the attack inflicts damage, as described below. If the Skill Test fails, or the target won the opposed test, then the attack inflicts no damage, and may have an additional consequence.
    a. **Melee:** The target of the attack may either Disengage as per the minor action, or, if they reacted to the attack, they may inflict damage as if they had made a successful attack.
    b. **Ranged:** No additional consequence.
    c. **Mental:** The targeted enemy cannot be the target of a mental attack again during this scene.

Variant: Reach and Guard
The ebb and flow of melee combat is shaped by the combatants and the weapons they use. Different weapons are suited to different situations, and a fight will play out differently if the combatants are using

daggers than if they were using spears. This variant is useful in fantasy and historical games where melee combat is more prevalent than shooting.

Guard

A character is said to have Guard if they are aware of their attackers and able to defend themselves. They must also be standing or crouching.

A character loses Guard if they are knocked prone, become stunned, if they are unaware of attackers, or if they are incapable of defending themselves. Characters may also be forced to lose Guard because of a Complication, or from attackers spending Momentum to remove their target's Guard (discussed below).

If you start your turn without Guard, you can gain Guard as a free action if there are no enemies within Reach. If there are enemies within Reach, it takes a Minor Action instead.

Reach and Attacking

Each melee weapon has a Reach rating, typically from 1 to 3, with higher ratings representing longer weapons.

When you make a melee attack against an enemy, check to see whether the enemy has Guard:

If your enemy has Guard, the difficulty of your attack increases by +1 if their weapon has a longer Reach. If you succeed at a melee attack against an enemy with Guard, you may spend 2 Momentum after the attack to force your target to lose Guard.

If your enemy does not have Guard, then the attack is a normal skill test, rather than an opposed test, if your weapon has a shorter reach: that is, the defender does not get to roll to defend themselves.

If a character is wielding two weapons at once (i.e., one in each hand), the weapon used to determine which side has longer reach must also be used to determine damage if they win the opposed test.

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Range

Ranged attacks, and some mental attacks, are performed at a distance, but not all such attacks are made equal. Some are ideal for close ranges, such as within the same room, while others are precision implements made to deal death from much further away.

Ranged weapons, and other methods of attack that can be used at range, will have a Range category. This denotes the weapon's ideal range – the range at which it is most effective. When making an attack with the weapon, determine the range category (Close, Medium, Long, or Extreme) the target is in, relative to the attacker.

If the target is within the weapon's Range category, then the attack proceeds as normal. If the target is outside the weapon's Range category – either nearer, or further away – increase the Difficulty by 1 for each category outside the weapon's Range, as described below:

- A ranged attack where the target is at the weapon's Range has no modifier for range: the Difficulty remains at 1.

- If the target is one range category closer or more distant, then the Difficulty of the attack increases by 1.
- If the target is two range categories closer or more distant, the Difficulty of the attack increases by 2.
- If the target is three range categories closer or more distant, the Difficulty of the attack increases by 3.

Weapon's Range	Range to Target			
	Close	Medium	Long	Extreme
Close	+0	+1	+2	+3
Medium	+1	+0	+1	+2
Long	+2	+1	+0	+1
Extreme	+3	+2	+1	+0

Burst

Different ranged weapons can attack at different rates, from bows, crossbows, and hunting rifles that need to be loaded or otherwise operated between shots, to heavy machine guns that can spew hundreds of rounds per minute. This is all factored into the weapon's Burst value, which is a number between 0 and 6.

Each weapon will be accompanied by several Reloads – quantities of ammunition, such as a magazine or similar. A character does not have to use any Reloads when attacking with the weapon, but they may spend Reloads to gain a bonus if they wish: the character chooses how many Reloads they wish to spend, if any, before rolling any dice for the attack.

A character may not spend a greater number of Reloads on one attack than the weapon's Burst value, and each Reload spent grants one bonus Momentum on that attack. As normal with bonus Momentum, this cannot be saved.

In addition, some weapons may list an M next to their Reload value. This indicates that the weapon *must* spend at least one Reload per attack. This mandatory reload does not provide its normal benefit, but it does count towards the maximum number that may be spent on the attack (so a weapon with a Burst of 1M must spend one Reload per attack, and gains no other benefit from doing so, while a weapon with 3M must spend 1 Reload, and gets the normal benefits from the second and third Reloads spent).

[Begin Sidebar]

Variant: Salvo Attacks

An alternative way to handle reloads and ammunition is Salvo Attacks.

When using this variant, each ranged weapon has a specific Salvo Effect. When a character makes an attack with a weapon, they may spend one Reload as part of the attack, before rolling to see if the attack is successful.

If the attack succeeds, then the weapon's Salvo Effect is added to that attack: i.e., a weapon with a Salvo Effect of Piercing 1 would count the attack as having a Piercing 1 effect if the firer spent one Reload, but would not gain that benefit if they *didn't* spend the reload.

Some weapons may have multiple listed Salvo Effects. In these cases, choose which Salvo Effect is desired from those listed when spending the Reload.

[End Sidebar]

[Begin Sidebar]

Variant: Simplified Ammunition

Some games and settings may have little use for this level of detail or with tracking ammunition in general. In such games, assume that a weapon's normal attack is a single shot or burst of fire as appropriate to the weapon, and assume that all characters carry enough ammo to last the adventure. Weapons running out of ammunition can be represents by complications suffered by characters: gaining an *Out of Ammo* complication on an attack can be a considerable hindrance, and removing it requires finding another source of munitions.

[End Sidebar]

Mental Attacks

Unlike physical forms of attack, mental attacks are somewhat more abstract and nebulous in their methods. Some games may not make use of them, preferring to ignore the psychological side of conflict, or to reserve it for unnatural or supernatural forces rather than allowing all characters to attempt it. This section assumes that mental attacks are in use as a routine part of play.

A character may always use a weapon to perform a mental attack – essentially, threatening someone with that weapon. If this is a melee weapon, it requires being within Reach, while ranged weapons are subject to their normal rules for Range (and can benefit from Reloads spent; the suppressive fire from a machine gun on full-auto can be terrifying). A character making a mental attack with a weapon uses **Will + Fight** for their Skill Test – Fight is the most appropriate skill when threatening violence.

Mental attacks made without weapons are not immediate threats of violence, and are often more nuanced and subtle. They don't have a specific range, beyond a range at which they can be communicated. This will be at shorter ranges for challenges and threatening words spoken face-to-face (as the target needs to be able to hear and understand the attack), but there are many methods of communication, and range is less of a factor for a phone call, an ominous note, or a lurking shadow. These will normally use **Will + Talk** (as effective communication is the most important thing), but other combinations are possible at the GM's discretion.

The efficacy of such mental attacks varies, and how they deal damage, will be covered later in this chapter.

Damage and Stress

Whenever a character is successfully attacked, the attack will inflict damage. Some environmental effects can also inflict damage, such as being set on fire, or encountering something terrifying. Characters have a limited ability to resist and withstand the damage inflicted upon them, but this cannot protect them forever, and they can suffer lasting harm as a result.

Regardless of the form of attack, the process for damage works the same way: the attacker (or the GM, if the damage is coming from the environment) rolls some Challenge Dice to determine how much stress is dealt, the target reduces that stress with any Resistance they possess. The target then marks down any stress remaining and may even become Harm if enough stress is suffered. Different forms of attack adjust this process a little, mainly in the type of Resistance applied, and in effects of Harm.

Damage

Each weapon, environmental effect, and other means of dealing damage determines how that damage is dealt in the same way. Each source of damage has a base Damage Rating, expressed as one or more Challenge Dice. For example, an unarmed attack has a basic damage rating of 1[CD].

Characters inflict bonus damage based on their Skills. A character with a high Fight inflicts extra damage on attacks with weapons, while a character with high Talk increases the damage of mental attacks that don't involve weaponry. Other Skills may apply depending on the circumstances – a character operating a vehicle or heavy machinery to attack may use their Operate instead. Whatever Skill is used, it provides extra Challenge Dice equal to the Skill's rating, so a character with Fight 3 adds +3[CD] to attacks with their weapons.

[Begin Sidebar]

Variant: Attribute Bonus Damage

Rather than inflicting bonus damage based on skills, it may be fitting for characters to inflict extra damage based on having a high attribute score. Melee attacks gain bonus damage from a high **Brawn**. Ranged attacks gain bonus damage from a high **Insight**. Mental attacks gain bonus damage from a high **Will**. Other forms of attack and damage—perhaps from other variants or add-ons to the game, such as hacking—gain bonus damage from different attributes as determined when the game is created: for example, hacking may gain bonus damage from **Reason**, while magical attacks might gain bonus damage from **Will**.

- If the character's attribute score is 9, the character gains +1[CD].
- If the character's attribute score is 10 or 11, the character gains +2[CD].
- If the character's attribute score is 12 or 13, the character gains +3[CD].
- If the character's attribute score is 14 or 15, the character gains +4[CD].
- If the character's attribute score is 16 or higher, the character gains +5[CD].

If you are using this variant, it replaces the bonus damage characters receive from their Skills, but the base damage of all attacks should be increased by +1[CD].

[End Sidebar]

There are a few other factors that may apply as well:

- **Momentum:** A character may spend Momentum on a successful attack to add more damage to the attack; each Momentum spent adds +1[CD] to the damage rating. A character may also spend 1 Momentum to re-roll any number of Challenge Dice from the damage roll. These uses of

Momentum occur after the damage dice have been rolled. This includes bonus Momentum from Reloads spent, if using the normal **Burst** rules.

- **Advantages or Complications:** The GM may rule that an Advantage or Complication that affects the attacker or target (respectively) influences damage, if they haven't already applied to the Skill Test. This adds +2[CD] damage or may allow the attack to ignore 2 Resistance per Icon rolled or add +1 to the damage total for each Icon, at the GM's discretion.

Once these factors have all been accounted for, the attacker rolls all the Challenge Dice for the attack; the total rolled is the amount of damage inflicted.

There is one other factor when it comes to a damage rating: damage effects. Damage effects are special rules that occur whenever an Icon, or [!] is rolled on the attack or hazard's Challenge Dice, and they can have a considerable influence on the result. The most common damage effects are below.

Some damage effects are listed with an X. This is replaced by the rating of that damage effect in each case. If an attack or effect would gain a rated effect that it already has, only the higher rated of the two applies.

- **Area:** The attack or hazard automatically hits everyone within Reach of the initial target, plus one additional target within Close range for every [!] rolled. Secondary may use the Hit the Dirt reaction as if they were the primary target, even though the attack has already hit.
- **Destructive:** The attack or hazard can quickly overcome conditional Resistance, such as Cover or Morale. For each [!] rolled, the target's current instance of conditional Resistance is reduced by 1[CD]. If this reduces that instance to 0 dice, then it is destroyed and can no longer provide protection.
- **Drain:** The attack or hazard is especially debilitating. The character hit suffers one Fatigue for each [!] rolled.
- **Intense:** The attack has an especially potent effect. If one or more [!] are rolled, and the attack inflicts one or more Harms, the attack inflicts one additional Harm.
- **Knockdown:** The attack or hazard causes the target to stumble or fall. If a number of [!] are rolled that equals or exceeds the target's Move skill, the target is knocked prone.
- **Persistent X:** The attack or hazard has a lingering effect. If one or more [!] are rolled, the target suffers X[CD] damage (of the same type as the initial attack or hazard) at the end of the affected character's Turn, for Rounds equal to the number of [!] rolled.
- **Perilous:** The attack or hazard escalates problems. It adds 1 to Threat for each [!] rolled. If used by an NPC adversary, this instead removes 1 from Threat per [!] rolled, to a minimum of 0 Threat remaining.
- **Piercing X:** The attack or hazard is especially good at overcoming Resistance. When resolving damage, ignore X Resistance for each [!] rolled.
- **Snare:** The attack or hazard can entangle and bind the target. If one or more [!] are rolled, then the target is entangled and cannot take any actions of a type determined by the type of attack or hazard (physical actions for physical attacks, etc) other than to try and break free. It requires a Skill Test with a Difficulty equal to the number of [!] rolled to break free.
- **Stun:** The attack or hazard leaves the target momentarily unable to act. If a number of [!] are rolled that equals or exceeds the target's Survive skill, the target may not take any actions in their next Turn. This does not stack.

- **Vicious:** The attack or hazard is especially potent. Add +1 to the stress inflicted for each [**!**] rolled.

Resistance

Characters are not entirely defenceless, and may make use of a variety of factors to protect themselves. This protection is called Resistance, and it reduces the amount of stress inflicted.

Resistance comes in two forms: **persistent** and **conditional**. Persistent Resistance always comes in the form of a simple number, while conditional Resistance comes in the form of Challenge Dice. After the damage has been rolled for an attack, the character rolls any dice they have from conditional Resistance, and adds the total rolled to any persistent Resistance they have. Then, the total stress inflicted is reduced by an amount equal to the total Resistance. If this final total is 0 or less, the attack has no further effect. If the final total is 1 or higher, then some stress has gotten through.

- Against **physical attacks**, a character gets persistent Resistance from **Armour**, and conditional Resistance from **Cover**. Armour is, naturally, something the character wears (or is innate to the character's body), while Cover normally comes from terrain the character can hide behind (or from hand-held shields).
- Against **mental attacks**, a character gets persistent Resistance from **Courage**, and conditional Resistance from **Morale**. Courage is innate to the character, normally coming from a Talent, while Morale is circumstantial, coming from being in safe or inspiring places, or the encouragement and leadership of others.

Conditional Resistance normally takes the form of 1-4 Challenge Dice – a wooden fence may provide 1[CD] of Cover, for example – but the GM may rule that a specific instance is different in some way, by applying one or more of the following effects:

- **Sturdy:** the conditional Resistance grants an additional +1 to total Resistance rolled for each [**!**] rolled.
- **Fragile:** the conditional Resistance is fleeting, and each [**!**] rolled reduces the number of Challenge Dice it provides in future by 1. If this reduces the number of Challenge Dice to 0, then that instance of conditional Resistance is destroyed.
- **Uncertain:** the conditional Resistance may be troublesome later, adding 1 to Threat for each [**!**] rolled.
- **Volatile X:** the conditional Resistance is dangerous, and risky to use. If one or more [**!**] are rolled, the character suffers X[CD] damage (physical or mental at the GM's discretion) and the conditional Resistance is destroyed.

[Begin Sidebar]

Conditional Resistance Effects

The various effects that can be applied to conditional Resistance can represent a few different things, depending on the nature of the Resistance itself.

For Cover – physical Resistance – the **Sturdy** and **Fragile** effects seem self-explanatory, representing especially cover that holds up well or which crumbles under attack. **Uncertain** Cover may represent protection from something load-bearing or important, which could have consequences later. **Volatile** Cover could represent containers of something explosive or flammable, or something that could collapse

(if it does physical damage) or Cover that seems solid but collapses swiftly and shockingly (if it does mental damage).

For Morale – mental Resistance – **Sturdy** can easily represent a state of inspiration or fearlessness, while **Fragile** might be a tenuous confidence that vanishes quickly. **Uncertain** Morale might come from foolishness or deception, with consequences when the truth is discovered. **Volatile** Morale is like Fragile Morale but more severe, turning from resolve to panic in an instant.

[End Sidebar]

[Begin Sidebar]

Variant: Flat Conditional Resistance

In some games, it may be desirable to have conditional resistance, such as cover or morale, provide a flat bonus to Resistance rather than the roll of one or more [CD]. In this variant, don't adjust how much Cover or Morale something provides: simply have the source provide +1 Resistance for every [CD] that would have been rolled.

[End Sidebar]

[Begin Sidebar]

Variant: Personal Resistance

In some games, it may be prudent or necessary for characters to have some innate protection provided by their attributes, to represent basic resilience and durability under stress. A character with a high **Brawn** may gain additional Armour resistance (representing pain tolerance and the like). A character with a high **Will** might have additional Courage. Other forms of attack and damage—perhaps from other variants or add-ons to the game, such as hacking—gain bonus resistance against different types of attack as determined when the game is created: for example, a character's Security, used against hacking, may gain bonus damage from **Reason**.

- If the character's attribute score is 9, the character gains +1 resistance.
- If the character's attribute score is 10 or 11, the character gains +2 resistance.
- If the character's attribute score is 12 or 13, the character gains +3 resistance.
- If the character's attribute score is 14 or 15, the character gains +4 resistance.
- If the character's attribute score is 16 or higher, the character gains +5 resistance.

[End Sidebar]

Stress and Harm

Beneath their armour, and behind their courage, characters can withstand a degree of punishment before any lasting injury is caused. This ability to endure is represented by the character's ability to take **Stress**, while any lasting injury they do suffer is called **Harm**.

Once any reductions have been made for Resistance, any damage remaining affects the target, turning into Stress. Each point of damage on the damage roll, after reductions, adds a single point of Stress. A character can only take a finite amount of Stress at any one time, however: a character's maximum Stress is equal to the highest of their Brawn or their Will, plus their Survive score. Characters may be able to increase their maximum Stress through other means as well, such as Talents.

If an attack or hazard causes five or more stress, after reduction from Resistance, or the character reaches their maximum Stress because of the attack or hazard, they immediately suffer **Harm** as well. If both these things happen, then the character suffers two Harms instead of one.

If a character is already at maximum Stress, then any amount of stress will instead cause 1 Harm, while five or more damage will cause an additional Harm, for a total of two.

Having any Stress does not, by itself, cause any problem for the character: it imposes no penalty, nor does it impair a character's actions or choices.

Harm, however, does cause a problem for the character.

Harms caused by physical attacks are called **Wounds**, and they represent significant amounts of physical injury. Harms caused by mental attacks are called **Traumas**, and they represent significant effects of psychological and emotional distress, including fear, extreme anxiety and doubt, and panic.

Each Harm is a trait (as described in **Chapter 1: Core Rules**), reflecting the way in which the character has been harmed. This may make some actions more difficult, or even impossible, depending on what the Harm itself represents. When a character suffers a Harm, the character's player may suggest the nature of the Harm, but the GM's ruling on a Harm is final.

Once a character has suffered three Harms, in any combination, they are **Defeated** (see sidebar). If a character is Defeated and has more Wounds than Traumas, they are also Dying: their injuries are severe, and they will die at the end of the scene unless they receive medical attention first (this is explained in Recovering from Damage, below).

[Begin Sidebar]

Inanimate Objects

Objects can be damaged, just as characters can be, and use largely the same rules. Objects have Stress, representing their basic structure and solidity, though naturally an object can only take damage from physical attacks. They will also have Resistance from Armour, representing hardness and ability to withstand severe impacts, and can benefit from Cover as well.

Harms suffered by an object are called **Breaks**, representing serious damage that compromises the object's function. As with other Harms, these are Traits that the GM may use to impede the object's function.

The number of Breaks an object can withstand before it is destroyed depends on the object itself: a flimsy interior door may collapse after a single Break, while a sturdy wall may take several.

[End Sidebar]

[Begin Sidebar]

Defeated

When a character becomes Defeated, they are incapacitated and unable to act. A Defeated character immediately falls prone and may only take a single Free Action each Turn, normally to talk, call for help, or crawl to safety. They are still somewhat aware of their surroundings, however.

If a Defeated character suffers another Wound, they will die. If a Defeated character suffers another Trauma, they suffer a mental break and are either driven insane or fall into a coma; either way they are no longer a playable character.

A Defeated character may spend a single point of Fortune to remove their Defeated state. Alternatively, a character may attempt a Skill Test to revive a Defeated ally (Difficulty 3, Attribute and Skill at GM's discretion). The character still suffers the effects of their Harms, but they may otherwise act normally. If the character suffers another Harm of any kind, they will be Defeated once again.

[End Sidebar]

[Begin Sidebar]

Voluntary Defeat

Whenever a player character suffers one or more Harms, they may choose to become Defeated immediately. If the character does so, then they suffer a single Harm (any after the first inflicted are ignored), become Defeated, and immediately receive one Fortune point.

A character who accepts Defeat voluntarily does not start Dying, regardless of how many Wounds they have. However, they cannot be revived by an ally during the scene, and they cannot spend Fortune to recover from being Defeated during this scene.

[End Sidebar]

[Begin Sidebar]

Fatigue

Some things can wear on a character's ability to endure, from intense heat, extreme cold, thirst or starvation, abject despair, sleep deprivation, and overexertion. These problems can mount, and though they are not as severe as a Harm, they can still pose a problem to characters.

When a character suffers Fatigue, it reduces their maximum Stress by 1 for each point of Fatigue suffered. If a character's maximum Stress is reduced to 0, any further Fatigue means the character falls

unconscious – this is the same as being Defeated, except the character cannot take Free Actions, and is no longer aware of their surroundings. If the character suffers any more fatigue while unconscious from exhaustion, they die.

A character can remove Fatigue with a **Brawn + Survive Test**, or a **Will + Survive Test** with a Difficulty of 1, once they have removed themselves from any sources of Fatigue (for example, if you took Fatigue from sleep deprivation and starvation, getting a hot meal and a good night's sleep allows the character to try and remove that Fatigue). Success removes one point of Fatigue, plus one more for every Momentum spent.

[End Sidebar]

Recovering from Damage

Unless they die, a character can recover from the damage they suffer.

At the end of a scene, a character removes all the Stress they've accumulated. Some actions allow a character to remove Stress (their own, or someone else's) during a scene.

Harm cannot be removed as easily.

A character may attempt to treat their Harms, or those of another character, with a Skill Test. Wounds are treated with a **Coordination + Survive Test**, while Traumas are treated with an **Insight + Talk Test**; in either case, the Difficulty is 2. Success means that a single Wound, or a single Trauma, is treated, plus one additional Wound or Trauma for every Momentum spent. Once treated, a Harm is renamed to represent the way it was treated, and no longer imposes a penalty.

If a character suffers any Wounds while they have treated Wounds, then the treated Wounds stop being treated – bandaged injuries and stitches are torn open – and return with full effect. Similarly, if a character suffers any Traumas while they have one or more treated Traumas, then the treated Traumas return to full effect and are no longer treated.

Full healing takes longer: under normal circumstances, a character can only heal Harms fully between adventures, as full healing takes time as well as treatment.

If a character is dying, then another character can provide medical attention with a **Coordination + Survive Test** with a Difficulty of 2. If this succeeds, the dying character's condition is stabilised – they are no longer at immediate risk of dying – but they remain Defeated.

[Begin Sidebar]

Basic Attacks

Even without weapons at hand, all characters have a basic means of attacking others.

- **Unarmed/Improvised Strike:** This is a basic strike with a body part, or whatever object comes to hand. An Unarmed Strike can be used for melee and ranged attacks, with a Reach of 1, and base damage of 1[CD] with the Stun effect. When used as a ranged attack, it has a Range of Close, but the same damage and effects; as a ranged attack, it has a Burst score of 0, and does not use or benefit from Reloads – it represents a thrown rock or something similar.

- **Threaten:** This is a basic attempt to scare or demoralise foes, using a mixture of spoken threats and body language. Threaten can be used for mental attacks. It has a range of Close and inflicts 1[CD] damage with the Stun effect.

[End Sidebar]

Common Conflict Momentum

In the following list, any Momentum options where the cost lists an R can be used repeatedly.

Option	Cost	Effect
Bonus Damage	1 R	Increase the damage inflicted by a successful attack. Each Momentum spent adds +1[CD] damage.
Confidence	1 R	The character gains 1[CD] Morale (to a maximum of 4[CD]) until the end of the scene.
Create Advantage	2	Create a trait that benefits yourself or an ally, or one which hinders an enemy.
Disarm	2-3	One weapon held by the target is knocked away and falls to the ground within Reach. This costs 2 Momentum if the target is holding the weapon in one hand, or 3 Momentum if the weapon is held in two hands.
Minor Action	1 R	The character may attempt one additional Minor Action.
Penetration	1 R	The damage inflicted by the current attack ignores 2 Resistance per Momentum spent
Re-roll Damage	1	Any number of [CD] from the character's current attack may be re-rolled.
Second Wind	1 R	The character recovers 1 Stress per Momentum spent.
Secondary Target	2	A second target within Reach of the primary target is also affected by the attack, suffering half the attack's damage, rounding up.
Subdue	1	Any Harms the attack inflicts are temporary, and will be recovered automatically at the start of the next scene.
Swift Action	2	The character gains an extra Major Action, but any Skill Test that action requires is increased by +1.
Trip	1	Must be used before damage dice are rolled; the attack gains the Knockdown damage effect.

Damage, Stress, and Harm Variants

Depending on the nature of the game you're creating, you may wish to adjust the damage and stress rules in a few ways. These variants can all change the feel and tone of combats and conflicts in your game, making games more brutal, more heroic, more gritty, more visceral, or more cinematic.

Number of Harms

One of the simplest changes is to alter how many Harms a character can suffer before they are Defeated. More durable characters can withstand a greater number of Harms, while more fragile ones can withstand fewer.

This variant can take a few different forms:

- Absolute Harms mean that all characters can withstand the same number of Harms. This is often commonplace in games where characters are defeated after suffering a single Harm, which can make for very quick, decisive conflicts.
- Scaled Harms can be used where different characters and creatures can withstand different amounts of Harm, perhaps based on their size or potency: a towering monster or a gigantic war machine might require more Harms to defeat than a person, for example.

Non-Lethal Harm

Some games may allow, or even encourage, non-lethal damage as an alternative to lethal force, perhaps as a feature of specific weapons or types of attack, or as a default option that everyone has. This variant is especially suited for heroic games where the protagonists do not resort to lethal force without good cause or may even refrain from killing entirely.

If you wish to inflict a non-lethal Harm, you must declare that you are doing so when you declare your attack, before rolling any dice. A non-lethal Harm functions slightly differently to other Harms: if a character would be defeated and the last Harm they suffered was non-lethal, the character is rendered unconscious. However, at the end of the current scene, the character removes any non-lethal Harms they have suffered entirely.

If non-lethal Harm is an option available to all characters all the time, then it is useful to apply a cost to differentiate it from lethal force. We suggest using one or both of the following costs:

- Lethal force tends to escalate situations and provoke further violence; each time you make a lethal attack, add +1 to Threat. NPCs making lethal attacks must spend 1 Threat instead.
- Non-Lethal methods are trickier to achieve than lethal ones, and a non-lethal attack has a difficulty 1 higher than normal.

Stress Threshold

It may be useful in some games to alter how much Stress an attack needs to inflict before the victim suffers Harm. This can be used to depict more durable or more fragile foes, or foes of different sizes.

- One version of this applies a size category, or Scale, to all creatures, vehicles, and other objects, with human-sized creatures and vehicles at Scale 0; smaller creatures have a lower Scale (-1, -2, etc), while larger ones have a higher Scale. A Scale 0 creature takes one Harm if they suffer 5+ Stress in one attack, and the amount of Stress needed to inflict Harm on larger or smaller creatures changes by an amount equal to their Scale: a Scale 2 creature takes 1 Harm after 7+ Stress, for example.
- Threshold by durability: some grittier or deadlier games may use the resilience and durability of a creature or object to affect its threshold, often as a replacement for resistance. In this variant, wearing armour doesn't reduce damage taken, but rather increases the amount of Stress needed to inflict a Harm. This will mean that even the most heavily-armoured of characters will still be vulnerable to being worn down by enemy attacks, reducing how effective armour is overall.

No Stress

In this variant, characters simply do not have a Stress track at all. This is suitable for deadlier games, and ones with quicker, more decisive conflicts, though there are other variants (such as **Avoiding Injury**,

below) which can alter this somewhat. This can be useful in games where direct conflict is an absolute last resort, feared by all, especially when paired with a reduced number of Harms: if there's no stress tracks and characters can only take one Harm, conflicts end *very* quickly.

When using this variant, a character suffers a Harm after any successful attack. No damage roll, no stress inflicted, no resistance: a successful attack inflicts one Harm.

This variant may require some alternative approaches to things such as armour, cover, and other forms of resistance. It may be fitting that armour allows you to count one Harm as non-lethal or allows you to sacrifice it (causing the armour to be damaged or destroyed) to ignore a Harm. Cover might increase the difficulty of attacks against you.

Multiple Types of Stress

Some games may suit having different kinds of damage divided amongst several Stress tracks, representing different forms of resistance to attack and harm.

This may be a matter of having each type of damage—physical and mental, and perhaps others according to the game's needs—have a distinct Stress track, perhaps with distinct names (perhaps Vigour for physical stress and Resolve for mental stress). When a character suffers stress from a physical attack, it is applied to their physical stress track, while mental stress is applied to the character's mental stress track. This can make characters tougher, as physical and mental attacks are separated and affect characters differently, so it can be useful to have Damage Effects which can allow physical attacks to inflict a little bit of mental stress, and vice versa, so that potent attacks can affect both mind and body.

Alternatively, characters—or vehicles, or spacecraft—might have multiple layered forms of Stress that are all used against the same damage type, such as layers of shields and ablative armour. This can be more complex but can easily represent characters who can withstand a considerable amount of incoming firepower. Layered stress tracks are arranged in an order according to which will be affected first—this first layer is the 'top' of the character's protection. If the character takes damage, then this is applied to the top layer. If that track takes 5+ stress, or is filled, then any remaining damage is applied to the next layer down, and so on until all the damage has been applied. If the bottom track takes 5+ Stress or is filled, then the character takes a Harm.

Layered stress tracks work better when characters can take fewer Harms—perhaps only one—as the complexity of the damage mechanics has been moved to the layered defences. Different layers may also be recovered differently: protective force fields may recover fast when not under fire, while ablative armour or physical resilience might take more time or effort to restore.

Avoiding Injury

Some variants may feel too deadly or too sudden without giving players *some* ability to withstand or avoid incoming Harm. This is especially the case when characters can only take a single Harm before being defeated, and ones where there is no Stress track.

In this variant, once per scene when a character suffers a Harm, they may choose to **Avoid Injury**. This has a cost, which can vary based on your tastes and preferences for the game. As noted, a character can only Avoid Injury once per scene, though certain actions—the Recover major action, listed on p XX—may allow a character to regain the ability to Avoid Injury. NPCs can also Avoid Injury, but often at different

rates: minor NPCs cannot Avoid Injury, notable NPCs can do so once, and major NPCs can do so as many times as they wish.

The cost to avoid Injury could be one of the following:

1. The character spends 2 Momentum or adds 2 to Threat to avoid the Injury. NPCs spend 2 Threat. Any character may waive this cost by suffering a Complication instead.
2. The character adds 2 to Threat and suffers a Complication (which may be a trait representing a minor injury or other inconvenience). NPCs spend 2 Threat and suffer a Complication instead.
3. The character spends Momentum or adds to Threat equal to a cost determined by the attack. NPCs pay Threat equal to the attack's cost.

The first option works alongside short stress tracks and characters able to withstand only a single Harm, functioning as a last-ditch option to save themselves.

The second option is somewhat grittier and more visceral, as the character always suffers at least some effect even if they avoid the full impact of a Harm.

The third option requires some extra work, assigning costs to different attacks, where a more deadly attack costs more to avoid. As a rule of thumb, if converting from another game using these rules, take the number of [CD} the weapon uses for damage as the cost (before any modifiers for the wielder's skill or attributes). It works well in games where a Stress track isn't used, as it provides an alternative way to differentiate between weapons.

Combat

Combat covers any kind of Conflict where physical violence is used by one or more sides. Key to this, naturally, are various forms of attack: striking enemies in melee duels, or blasting away at them in firefights.

Combat is perhaps the most straightforward form of conflict, using the rules already covered in this chapter. This section describes additional considerations and concepts that are useful when constructing Combat scenes.

Objectives

As good screenwriters and other creators of fiction may know, all the best action scenes are *about something*. They serve a purpose beyond spectacle and violence. And this purpose is best served by establishing goals for those involved. Conflict occurs where two sides have mutually exclusive goals. Combat happens when those goals are worth killing for, or worth dying for, for at least one side of the conflict.

Because of this, each side of the combat should have a clear objective, with either victory or failure conditions, or both. The victory conditions should be short-term, covering purely what each side wishes to achieve within that scene, and it could be one goal, or several, akin to a Challenge. Alternatively, failure conditions can often indicate what could cause a side to give up and retreat – very few people are willing to fight to the death for a lost cause – and these will normally come when one or more of the goals are impossible to achieve. At the very simplest level, one side's defeat may be the other side's victory.

The GM may wish to keep the objective of some adversaries a secret – indeed, discovering the enemies' plans may be a crucial part of the adventure – but they should be known, and they should be something that defines how those characters act.

Common objectives include the following, but these can also be reversed, requiring a side to *prevent* these objectives being met:

- Destroy a specific object or kill a specific creature
- Capture a specific creature and remove it from the area
- Capture an important location
- Move an item to or from a specific location
- Use a specific item on a specific object or creature
- Perform a specific activity in a specific location

In any of these cases, there may often be time limits involved. This is best expressed as a few rounds, or until a specific event occurs, and should naturally reflect something in the narrative: holding a location until help arrives is a simple example of this, but it could also be the time required for an objective to be completed, such as retrieving information, repairing a machine, or something else dependent upon the characters' actions.

[Begin Sidebar]

Ticking Clock

Time limits – or something that concludes a combat – add pressure to an objective, and to a combat overall. They can be invaluable in ensuring that a combat doesn't drag on too long, and to ensure that characters are compelled to move and take risks.

If the combat is something the characters need to survive, then the time limit represents respite: an end to a dangerous situation. This is best thought of as working on an objective "*until…*" a time limit, and could represent the arrival of allies or a means of escape, or achieving something that forces the enemy to withdraw. In these cases, the danger posed by the enemies can grow with each passing round until the time limit, adding to the tension, such as by adding enemy reinforcements each round.

If the combat is something the characters need to end quickly, then the time limit represents a point of deadly escalation: a situation growing immeasurably worse. This is best thought of as trying to achieve an objective "*before…*" a time limit, and can represent the arrival of more enemies, a bomb detonating, or some other disaster that the characters need to prevent or avoid. In these cases, the time limit may be represented by adding to Threat every round, or with a specific enemy's action, building towards a big spend. Alternatively, the time limit may be something variable or uncertain, such as an alarm being sounded to call enemy reinforcements, in which case, the rounds limit remaining can be reduced by spending Threat (at least 5 points).

[End Sidebar]

Extended Tasks

Sometimes, how a situation progresses is uncertain, and an objective or goal may require a complex task to be completed, such as arming or disarming a bomb, disabling a trap, radioing for help, performing a

ritual, or similar prolonged activities. These tasks are delicate, require continual effort, and take time to complete, especially in dangerous situations.

Such situations can be represented by treating them like attacks and damage: a character 'attacks' a problem, inflicting Stress and Harms until the problem has been defeated.

The GM determines the maximum Stress for the problem, and characters who succeed at an appropriate Skill Test to try and overcome the problem may make a damage roll (normally 2[CD], plus extra [CD] equal to the Skill used for the Skill Test), inflicting Stress as a result. If the problem is especially tricky, delicate, or arduous, the GM may give it Resistance to reduce the characters' damage rolls. Having the right kinds of tools, or the right talents, or some other edge, may grant the characters damage effects on their damage roll, again at the GM's discretion.

The Harms inflicted on a problem are called **Breakthroughs**, and each problem will require a different number of them, depending on the scale and scope of the situation. When enough Breakthroughs have been inflicted to defeat the problem, the GM describes what happens. Before that point, individual Breakthroughs may have one of the following effects, at the GM's discretion.

- **Easier from Here:** any remaining Skill Tests made to overcome the problem are reduced in Difficulty by 1.
- **Removed a Hindrance:** the problem's Resistance is reduced by 2.
- **Making Progress:** the next damage roll made against the problem gains +1[CD], or an extra damage effect.
- **Effect on the Scene:** the problem reduces the Difficulty of Skill Test to do something else in the scene, or increases the Difficulty of an enemy's Skill Tests to do something.
- **Event:** the problem is tied to specific occurrences in the scene, with each Breakthrough altering the state of the scene. This could be positive, negative, or a little of both – perhaps enemies grow more numerous, desperate, or dangerous with each Breakthrough until the problem is defeated.

Extended Consequences

Like using Stress and Harm to represent problems to overcome, the same mechanics can be used to represent consequences that need to be avoided. This consequence can scale or escalate because of the action, and normally accompany some urgent objective. This consequence could represent a crumbling ruin that deteriorates around the characters, or the alertness of a patrol or other enemy group.

The GM establishes the nature of the consequence: what it is, what causes it to get worse, and how to avoid it. Most importantly, the GM should determine what conditions affect the consequence, because this is how characters interact with it.

The consequence has a maximum Stress, representing how far the situation can be pushed before it becomes disastrous. Characters who meet the conditions for the consequence – often a Complication on certain Skill Tests, a failed Skill Test of a specific type, or performing a certain kind of action – the GM makes a damage roll. The GM should determine the base damage rating for this, which is used each time the condition is met (4 or 5[CD] is a good baseline for this). If the consequence is especially stable, or difficult to affect, it may have Resistance to reflect this.

The Harm for a consequence is called a **Setback**, and the GM determines how may Setbacks the problem requires before it becomes disastrous. The GM should determine what happens when enough Setbacks have been inflicted. Depending on what the consequence reflects, characters may be able to spend Momentum or attempt Skill Tests to lessen the consequence's effects, essentially recovering its Stress. Setbacks, however, cannot be recovered.

Before that, however, the GM may impose an effect or penalty for each Setback. This is likely to be one of the following:

- **Uncertainty:** some Skill Tests suffer +1 Complication range per Setback.
- **Difficulty:** a type of Skill Test related to the consequence increases in Difficulty by +1 per Setback.
- **Instability:** the consequence's Resistance is reduced by 2, or the damage roll made against it is 1[CD] or gains a damage effect.
- **Escalation:** each Setback adds 2 to Threat, either used immediately or soon after to escalate the scene, such as with reinforcements.
- **Effect on the Scene:** each Setback has a cumulative effect on the scene, in the form of a trait that hinders the PCs or helps the enemy; this may represent a heightened state of alert.
- **Event:** each Setback signals a specific event, such as the arrival or departure of specific individuals, a change in enemy tactics, or a new instance of damage or danger.

Combat Variant: Grid and Granular Distances

Some groups may dislike abstract zones or might wish to have greater detail when handling character movement and distances. This variant replaces zones with concrete distances, allowing for more precision.

The normal range bands are still used. However, they now apply to specific distances, as explained below. Distances are given in meters and feet—choose which measurement you'll use for the game, as these are not exact conversions but conveniently rounded numbers.

- Reach is anything within two meters/six feet of a character.
- Close Range is anything outside of Reach, but within ten meters/thirty feet of a character.
- Medium Range is anything outside of Close Range, but within twenty-five meters/80 feet of a character.
- Long Range is anything outside of Medium range, but within fifty meters/160 feet of a character.
- Extreme Range is anything more than fifty meters/160 feet away from a character.

These distances are used for all physical environments, such as modifiers for perception, ability to communicate, and determining range for certain forms of attack and special ability. The only thing that these range categories are not used for is movement.

Movement instead is handled in the following manner:

All characters have a Speed, which is their Agility Attribute plus their Move Skill in meters (so, a character with Agility 9 and Move 3 can move 12 meters); multiply this by three if measuring in feet. A character may always choose to move less than the full distance allowed. At the GM's discretion, some Traits or Talents may increase a character's speed.

- A character who uses the *Move* Minor Action can move their Speed.
- A character who succeeds at the *Rush* Major Action can move up to their Speed, plus their Speed again for every Momentum spent (Repeatable).
- Any other forms of movement a character may use, allow the character to move their Speed once for each zone that action would allow them to move.

Chases and Pursuit

A chase is like combat in many ways: it's a physical conflict scene, filled with movement and action. However, the biggest difference is in outcomes: a chase is about movement, specifically one character or group of characters reaching a place of safety before they can be caught.

A chase can use the normal Conflict rules already described, with the distinction between chase and combat blurring as characters snap off shots while running, riding, driving, etc. This often creates a sort of running battle, where the environment is long, thin, and has countless twists, turns, obstacles, and tricky short-cuts.

However, a chase can also be run in a more abstract manner, focussed on the narrative beats, obstacles, and sequential events of a pursuit rather than on the moment-to-moment action.

Both these approaches are discussed in this section

Running Battles

The most direct approach is to simply use the existing rules for zones and environments. While this can be satisfying, it does require a considerable degree of planning on the part of the GM. An environment well-suited to a pursuit is long and narrow – perhaps 15 or so zones long, and 2-3 zones wide in most places – and overall represents a route (or several routes) to an important destination. The goal, then, is simple: if the pursued party reaches the destination first, they succeed; if they are stopped before they can reach their destination, they have failed.

Populating that environment, however, is the important part. Most zones should contain some manner of obstacle or hazard that makes it more difficult to traverse at speed, at which point the skill of both the pursuer and the pursued become important, as it allows them to overcome these problems and travel more swiftly. At the simplest level, these obstacles and hazards can be the physical terrain itself -

It is important not to make the route too linear – twists and turns are good, as are alternate-but-parallel routes, such as being on two different sections of road headed the same way. Often, the GM may wish to include shortcuts – zones that allow for faster travel or bypassing a section of the route – but these should only be accessible by overcoming a more difficult or dangerous obstacle, granting swift progress in exchange for a greater risk. This might be a tight alleyway inaccessible that allows a motorcycle to pass but not a car, or an impromptu ramp onto a nearby rooftop, or driving over the side of an overpass to get onto the road below, or something similarly impactful.

Similarly, the GM may wish to include extra interactive elements: these are features that characters on either side can influence to change the situation, such as causing traffic to collide, or similar activities to add or remove obstacles from the route.

Crucially, it is important not to get too bogged down in peripheral matters. Bystanders and traffic should be abstracted into obstacles and terrain features, rather than treated as individual vehicles and characters, as this allows the GM to be more cinematic in their descriptions as well as keep the important part of the scene – the pursuit itself – in central focus.

Note that, as this uses the normal rules for environments, that characters can still attempt all the things they'd normally be able to do during an action scene, such as attacking. This can make for exciting running battles, mixing gunfire with high-speed pursuit.

Abstract Pursuit

A more abstract way to handle pursuits is the Pursuit Track, which borrows a few concepts from the stress and harm mechanics (and from Extended Tasks and Extended Consequences) and repurposes them to represent how the pursuer and the pursued gain and lose distance. This doesn't require as much forward planning and requires no mapping – simply a few numbers that will adjust in response to skill tests.

This is designed for a single pursuer, and a single quarry – the character being pursued. If there's more than one character on a side, choose a 'lead' for that side, and then have the others assist: several pursuers can encircle and corner a single quarry, while a quarry with allies can split up and create distractions and diversions that make them difficult to follow.

A pursuit track is composed of several components:

- **Pace:** The Pace score for a Pursuit Track is akin to the maximum Stress for a character. As Pace changes, the advantage shifts between the pursuer and the quarry – the pursuer benefits when Pace increases, while the quarry benefits when Pace decreases. A Pursuit Track normally has a maximum Pace of between 8 and 20, and the starting Pace will be half that, rounded as the GM sees fit.
- **Distance:** The Pursuit Track has several points of Distance, representing the space between the Pursuer and the Pursued. The Pursuer will attempt to reduce Distance, while the Pursued will attempt to increase it. If the Distance reaches 0, then the Pursuer has caught the Pursued. If the Distance exceeds the maximum (normally 5), then the Pursued has managed to escape. The starting Distance should be about half-way between 0 and the maximum.
- **Resistance:** The Pursuit Track will have Resistance that represents the obstacles along the route that could slow down and impede movement. 0 Resistance represents a clear path between, while higher Resistance represents increasingly difficult terrain and other impediments.

When the GM lays out the Pursuit Track, they must define three things: the maximum (and starting) Pace, the maximum and starting Distance, and the Resistance.

Resolving the Pursuit

The Pursuit Track is resolved as a series of opposed skill tests between the pursuer and the quarry, with both rolling **Agility + Move Tests** with a Difficulty of 0.

Whichever side wins the opposed skill test then makes a pursuit roll – in essence, a damage roll. In the case of a draw, neither side makes any progress. A pursuit roll is 2[CD], with additional [CD] equal to the character's Move. The total of the pursuit roll is then reduced by one for each point of Resistance. This final total is then applied to the Pace on the Pursuit Track.

- If the Pursuer was the winner, then increase the Pace by 1 for each point of the final total. If the final total was five or more, if the Pace increases to the maximum, or if the Pace was already at the maximum before the pursuit roll was made, then reduce the Distance by 1. If multiple of those conditions occur, reduce the Distance by 1 for each.
- If the Pursued was the winner, then reduce the Pace by 1 for each point of the final total. If the final total was five or more, if the Pace reduces to 0, or if the Pace was already at 0 before the pursuit roll was made, then increase the Distance by 1. If multiple of those conditions occur, increase the Distance by 1 for each.

If the Distance increases beyond the maximum, then the quarry escapes and the pursuit is over. If the distance is reduced to 0, then the pursuer catches up with their quarry, and the pursuit is over.

Pursuit Roll Momentum

Option	Cost	Effect
Bonus Pace	1	A character can increase the total from the pursuit roll. Each Momentum spent increases the total of the pursuit roll by +1.
Evasion	1	The Obstacle Soak against this pursuit roll is reduced by 2 per Momentum spent.
Reroll Pursuit	1	The player may reroll any number of [CD] from the current pursuit roll.
Create Hindrance	1	Increase the Resistance of the Pursuit Track by +1 per Momentum Spent; this only affects the opponent's next pursuit roll, and lasts only for that roll.

Stealth and Infiltration

Some of the tensest conflicts can revolve around avoiding the enemy, rather than confronting them. A Stealth scene revolves around characters' ability to avoid notice and escape detection, and upon their enemies' ability to detect and locate intruders.

Key to this is making stealth and observation less "all-or-nothing" than they might be otherwise – a character who fails a Skill Test to be stealthy is not automatically discovered, but may instead have drawn attention to themselves, making things more difficult or forcing them to make a choice about how to proceed.

If a scene consists only of attempts to move stealthily, the GM may choose to use the **Extended Consequences** rules, above. However, if the scene is likely to include a mixture of stealth and other forms of conflict – such as combat – then the method described here may be more appropriate.

Stealth States

Stealth is not purely a matter of remaining hidden or being quiet, but of managing the attention of those who are nearby. A skilled infiltrator learns to move unnoticed at will, rather than relying purely on shadows and silence, while an inexperienced sneak assumes that any amount of noise or light can foil them.

There are three states a character can switch between as they attempt to pass unnoticed, which influence and are influenced by the actions characters take as they move around. These are as follows:

- A **revealed** character is one whose presence and location are known to the opposition. This might be because stealth has already failed, or because the character has not even attempted to move unnoticed. A character may even be trying to draw attention to themselves to distract enemies and give an opportunity for allies.
- A **detected** character is one whose presence is known to enemies, but whose precise location remains unknown. The enemy may know a detected character's rough location, or even know where the detected character was last seen, but they don't know where the character is *right now*.
- A **hidden** character is one who the enemy does not know the location of at all. They may even be unaware of the character's presence entirely, if the character has not yet been detected.

At any given moment, a sneaking character will be in one of these three states. Characters who aren't attempting to sneak will be in the revealed state unless otherwise noted by the GM.

[Begin Sidebar]

Stealth Tests

There is no one way to succeed with stealth, and characters seeking to avoid notice should be flexible in how they avoid notice. A character attempting to remain unseen, or to escape from enemy attention when detected, may be called upon to use one of the following combinations:

- **Agility + Move:** Use this combination when moving rapidly, or scaling is most important.
- **Coordination + Move:** Use this combination when moving precisely and carefully is most important.
- **Insight + Move:** Use this combination when the character tries to be observant about enemy movements when timing their movement.
- **Reason + Move:** Use this combination when the character's movement relies on methodical planning and careful timing.

Where the Stealth rules call for a Stealth Test, any of these combinations may be appropriate, though the GM has the final say as to which is the most fitting.

[End Sidebar]

Changing Stealth State

A character's stealth state is liable to change periodically during a scene. A stealth state can be reduced, moving to a worse state, or increased, moving to a better one.

A hidden character whose stealth state is reduced will normally become detected: enemies become aware of the character's presence and have an idea as to the sneaking character's location. A hidden character's stealth state cannot be increased.

A detected character whose stealth state is reduced will become revealed: enemies discover the character's actual location. A detected character cannot become revealed if no enemy is able to see the character – no amount of observation can see through a solid wall. A detected character whose stealth state is increased will become hidden, as enemies lose track of the character's location.

A revealed character's stealth state can't be reduced. A revealed character whose stealth state is increased becomes detected, as enemies know that an enemy is nearby, but can't accurately determine *where*.

A variety of circumstances – described in the sections below – will cause a character's stealth state to be reduced. A character's stealth state can be increased in only a few ways, however. A character may, as a Major Action, attempt a Stealth Test when in a zone that fulfils the following criteria: there must not be any enemies in that zone, enemies cannot see clearly into the zone, and it cannot be the zone where the character last entered the detected state (that is, you must move somewhere away from enemies and away from your 'last known position'). Alternatively, if a character is detected in a scene, and no enemies remain (because they're dead, unconscious, or have left the area), the character may automatically choose to become either hidden or revealed should new enemies (or returning ones) arrive.

Stealth States and Actions

Whenever a sneaking character takes an action, the character's stealth state needs to be considered in how the action is undertaken, and how the action affects the character's stealth state.

Actions come in three rough categories, which determine the way they interact with a character's stealth state.

Silent actions don't particularly generate noise or draw attention; they don't change the stealth state of a character performing them.

Sneaky actions can generate noise or draw attention, but skill and cunning can minimise the amount of disturbance they cause. When a character attempts a Sneaky action, they may choose to increase the Difficulty of any associated Skill Test by +1 to try and perform the action silently; this also increases the Complication range by 1. Choosing not to take this Difficulty increase, or taking the Difficulty increase but rolling a Complication, means the character reduces their stealth state at the end of the action.

Noisy actions always generate noise or draw attention, and no amount of skill or cunning can change that. When a character attempts a Noisy action, their stealth state is reduced at the end of the action. Reactions are always Noisy – such is the cost of such rapid, desperate responses.

Which actions fall into which categories is detailed on the table below. Instances where the action is marked * have additional considerations, described later in this section. In all cases, the GM may overrule the category provided on the table if the circumstances dictate – for example, while dropping an item is listed as silent, if the item being dropped would make a significant noise (say, it's a bag of coins being dropped onto a hard floor), the GM is free to change the action to a noisy one.

Free Actions	Stealth Category	Major Actions	Stealth Category
Drop	Silent	Aid	Sneaky
Shift	Silent	Assist	As Action Assisted
Speak	Noisy*	Attack	Noisy*
Minor Actions	**Stealth Category**	Create Advantage	Sneaky
Aim	Silent	Pass	Silent
Bolster	Silent (self)/Noisy (ally)	Protect	Sneaky
Defend	Silent (self)/Noisy (ally)	Ready	Silent
Disengage	Noisy	Recover	Silent

Draw Item	Silent	Rush	Sneaky
Drop Prone/Stand	Silent	Skill Test	GM's Discretion
Interact	GM's Discretion		
Movement	Silent		
Prepare	Silent		

Speak

Under normal circumstances, speaking is a noisy action. However, if the character is speaking with someone within Reach, they may choose to whisper instead; this counts the Speak action as Silent instead.

Attack

Attacking from stealth has extra considerations:

- If the attacker is hidden, the defender may not attempt a reaction against that attack, and is considered exposed and vulnerable.
- If the attacker is detected, the defender increases the Difficulty of reactions against the attack by two.
- Melee attacks, and mental attacks made with melee weapons, are Sneaky instead; however, if the target of the attack is not Defeated, then they will automatically become aware of the attacker, and the attacker will become revealed immediately.

Skill Test

Individual skill tests not covered by other actions should be categorised as Noisy, Sneaky, or Silent by the GM on a case-by-case basis, though the GM should aim to be consistent in this.

Sprint

Note that the Sprint action increases the difficulty of skill tests attempted until the start of the character's next turn; this includes the Stealth test to avoid reducing the character's stealth state – sprinting is difficult to do without drawing attention.

[Sidebar]

Hide and Seek

These rules assume that, most of the time, a scene involving stealth will have one side sneaking and the other observing them. This might be player characters searching for hidden foes, or player characters trying to sneak past sentries or guards, but in either case, the sides have clear roles.

That doesn't have to be the case. Two hidden groups, both seeking the other while remaining unseen themselves, can be an interesting way to approach these rules. In such a situation, characters need to consider both sides of the process – spending actions both moving around stealthily, as well as to search for their opponents.

This creates an extra degree of tension and uncertainty, as the situation calls for as many as twice as many skill tests, and thus far more opportunity for successes, failures, and complications. It can also be more complex for the GM to run, so this possibility should be used sparingly.

[End Sidebar]

Observers

Stealth isn't a purely one-sided matter; it's easy to move unnoticed through an area where nobody else is present. Thus, the opposition in a location makes a variety of Stealth tests necessary in the first place. Further, these observers can also provide more direct opposition to sneaking characters, actively searching for them and turning normal tests into opposed tests.

Whenever a sneaking character attempts a Stealth test – to increase the character's stealth state, or to avoid reducing it – a nearby opponent may spend 1 Momentum (or spend 1 Threat) to make this into an opposed test if they are sufficiently alert or wary. Normally, this will be the nearest opponent to the sneaking character, or otherwise the one best positioned to see or hear where the sneaking character is (such as a guard on a watch tower with a good vantage). However, doing this requires spending Momentum (or Threat, for adversaries). If the Threat Pool is large, this means that NPC adversaries may be alert and vigilant, making it harder to sneak around, while a diminished Threat Pool makes for dull-witted and inattentive NPCS.

During the observing characters' own turns, they may spend a Major Action searching; the observing character nominates a single zone that they can perceive. If there is a sneaking character in that zone, then the character attempts an Observation test, with a Difficulty of 0, modified as normal by distance and environmental factors. If this is successful, then the sneaking character's stealth state is immediately reduced. The sneaking character may make a last-ditch attempt to hide themselves by adding 1 to Threat, turning the Observation test into an opposed test, resisted by the sneaking character's Stealth test.

[Begin Sidebar]

Observation Tests

Just as there is no one way to succeed with stealth, being observant and watchful is not defined by a single Skill. Characters observe the world, and interpret that information, differently, and those different approaches can all be valuable. A character attempting to locate a hidden enemy may be called upon to use one of the following combinations:

- **Insight + Fight:** Use this combination when watching for or searching for ambushers or attackers.
- **Insight + Move:** Use this combination when watching or searching by looking for places a person could hide.
- **Insight + Operate:** Use this combination to survey an area by technological means.
- **Insight + Survive:** Use this combination to rely on instincts and gut feeling to anticipate a threat or hazard.
- **Reason + Survive:** Use this combination to study an area thoroughly or search it methodically.

Where the Stealth rules call for an Observation Test, any of these combinations (or others, at GM's discretion) may be appropriate, though the GM has the final say as to which is the most fitting.

[End Sidebar]

[Sidebar]

Tracking

If there isn't a sneaking character in the target zone when an observing character searches, there is still a chance of noticing the traces they've left. This only applies if the observing character is using sight or smell to locate the character – you can't hear sounds after the fact.

The Difficulty of the test is one higher than it would normally be, though this can be reduced if the target has left tracks or other traces left behind, such as by suffering a Complication on a previous Skill Test. Success on this test provides proof that the sneaking character was nearby recently, and spending one Momentum can determine the direction the sneaking character went. This doesn't affect the sneaking character's stealth state, and it cannot be resisted directly with a Reaction, but it does give the observers a better idea of where to look next.

This only covers the most basic form of tracking; spotting a sign and getting a direction from it. Gaining any more meaningful information, or tracking over longer distances, is a more involved prospect, normally requiring a **Reason + Survive Test**, and using the *Obtain Information* Momentum option to learn more about their target.

[End Sidebar]

In either case, an observing character can spend two Momentum from a successful Observation test made to locate a sneaking character to reduce the sneaking character's stealth state one additional time. Similarly, a sneaking character who wins an opposed test against a search may spend two Momentum to increase their stealth state, evading detection so deftly that their very presence is in doubt.

Senses and Environmental Factors

For people, sight and hearing are the predominant ways of perceiving their surroundings, and thus remaining unseen and unheard are the typical ways of avoiding detection. However, they're not the only senses that matter; dogs and other animals rely as much on scent as they do upon sight and hearing and are quite capable of tracking by smells too faint for a human nose to detect.

Each sense, naturally, has distinct factors that affect their performance and their use. Skilled sneaks know how to best capitalise on the factors that benefit them, while trackers, hunters, and vigilant guards know what advantages they can capitalise on. These factors will affect the difficulty of Stealth and Observation tests that characters and creatures attempt.

Whenever a character attempts a Stealth Test or an Observation Test, that character should declare which sense they are primarily relying upon – a sneaking character takes different actions to remain unheard than those undertaken to remain unseen. This choice of sense applies to the character's test, and any test made to oppose it in an opposed test, and it determines the factors that will determine the difficulty of the test.

One common factor that applies regardless of the sense is distance. Another common factor that should be considered as well is whether the observer is paying attention; inattentive characters increase the difficulty of Observation tests by one or more depending on how much focus they're paying to their surroundings. These are summarised on the table below.

Distance	Observation Difficulty
Target is within Reach	-1

Target is within Close range	–
Target is within Medium range	+1
Target is within Long range	+2
Target is beyond Long range	+3
Attention	**Observation Difficulty**
Observer is focussed and attentive	-1
Observer is not distracted	–
Observer is slightly distracted or bored	+1
Observer is lazy, distracted, or doesn't care	+2
Observer is drunk or otherwise paying little attention	+3
Observer is unconscious, asleep, or completely oblivious.	+4

[Sidebar]

Stacked Traits

Many of the factors described in this section can be strengthened or exaggerated by stacking multiple identical traits. This can have a much greater effect on test difficulties, but it also means that the trait is more resilient and more resistant to being cancelled out, as each trait in the stack must be cancelled separately. This allows a stack of traits to represent a factor that must be eliminated bit-by-bit, and which lessens in intensity with each trait in the stack removed, such as a dense crowd dispersing over time, or light levels rising or lowering.

[End Sidebar]

Sight

Sight is most dependent upon light and other factors that impact visibility.

Traits that represent lighting or darkness will most often affect Difficulty of the observers' tests. A sudden change of lighting – going from darkness to light, or vice versa – has an increased effect, adding +1 Difficulty to the observers' test as their eyes struggle to adjust. Mist and fog are like darkness, but cannot be countered by light and have little effect over shorter distances.

Traits that represent the presence of things that will conceal a character, however, will affect the Difficulty of Stealth Tests; objects to hide behind or crowds to move through are good examples of Traits that will make Stealth easier, while an area devoid of objects or people, a distinctive appearance, an area being closely scrutinised, or moving in a disruptive manner (disrupting surroundings, moving against a crowd, drawing attention) can make Stealth more difficult. As with any trait, stacking extra copies of these traits can represent greater effects.

Sound

Awareness of sound is important when moving stealthily, and when keeping watch; a sound can alert you to things outside of your field of vision, and being wary of the sounds around you can be crucial.

Traits that represent background noise – noises going on around the scene – make observation more difficult. The sounds of a crowded city, a busy restaurant, or calamitous battlefield can all drown out the sounds of intruders; the noisier the environment, the more traits are stacked to represent it.

Conversely, environments that make a lot of noise when moved through – such as hard floors, dry leaves, shallow water, gravel, breaking glass, and so forth – make stealth more difficult, as each motion creates noises that could draw attention to a sneaking character's presence. Such effects can make a path impossible to cross silently, or require time or effort to clear out or circumvent.

Smell

While not a significant concern for people, who can typically only detect odours that are very close, particularly pungent, or both, many animals rely on their noses to find prey as much as they do their eyes and ears.

For player characters and other people, a scent can't be detected unless it is especially strong or distinctive – and worth representing by a trait – and this can often be masked by other strong smells nearby (scene traits in their own right).

For animals like dogs, however, scent is a key component of the way they perceive their environment. Their ability to detect smells allows them to detect and track others in the area in ways that people cannot.

Morale and Psychological Warfare

Fear has been a significant part of conflict for as long as people have clashed with one another. Threats and intimidation can turn the tide of a conflict bloodlessly, scaring foes away or causing them to back down from a fight.

In the *2d20 System*, this is handled using mental attacks and damage. As discussed in the **Attacks and Damage** section, mental attacks can be made using physical weaponry – threatening adversaries with a knife or gun, or using suppressing fire or "warning shots" to dissuade an opponent – but these are not the only means of making a mental attack.

Most non-violent mental attacks use **Will + Talk Tests** to make the attack. The Difficulty of that attack is normally 1, but may be modified by other factors, discussed in this section.

[Begin Sidebar]

Psychological Warfare against Player Characters

For obvious reasons, player characters may not be especially receptive to NPC intimidation. Players are not their characters, and they may not feel the same sense of urgency or anxiety that their characters feel when threatened, because the players know that it's all fictional. Further, some players may not like the idea of their character being fearful, panicking, or doubtful, as it takes control of the character away from them. This is all reasonable. However, fear is very much about loss of control, so having things affect a character in ways they can't control is fitting.

However, while Trauma from mental attacks imposes a specific penalty, it does not require any specific behaviour. A character suffering Trauma may be fearful or panicky, or they could be angry and grow increasingly aggressive. The effects of the Trauma increase the character's Complication range, so their actions will be less reliable, but this could come as easily from reckless aggression as from frightened hesitation. Encourage players to choose how their character reacts to fear or panic and embrace it as a part of roleplaying.

Handling being Defeated by Traumas in much the same way: they don't have to mean that the character has fled, or has curled up into a foetal ball, only that the character is removed from the action in some way.

Regardless, if players wish to play characters who laugh in the face of fear, they should probably invest some character resources in increasing their Courage.

[End Sidebar]

Medium and Range

There are many ways to deliver a threat, ranging from the most direct face-to-face confrontations, to more indirect means. In theory, so long as the message can reach the target, a threat can be delivered, though it is rarely so straightforward, and as distance increases, the impact may be lessened, or the threat may need to become less specific or more elaborate to have an effect.

In all cases, the target must be able to understand the threat being issued.

- **Face-to-face threats** are specific, immediate, and direct forms of intimidation. They function as normal attacks, with a Range of Close – as distance increases, it becomes harder for the attacker to make themselves understood. They rely on the nuances of speech and body language to be effective.
- **Remote threats** are like face-to-face ones, but carried over radio, video, telephone, or some other means of transmitting them live. They circumvent the issue of range, but their immediacy and directness are diminished by the fact that the attacker isn't in the same place as the target; this makes them easier to dismiss as harassment rather than genuine. Remote threats ignore any modifiers for range, but always add +1 Difficulty.
- **Remote, delayed threats** use the same medium as remote threats, but the messages are recorded and then sent. The target does not receive the threat immediately, preventing a Reaction, but the distance and delay make it more difficult to make the threat impactful. Remote, delayed threats ignore modifiers for range, and do not allow a Reaction, but always add +2 Difficulty. The target may, upon receipt of the message, attempt a Difficulty 1 **Will + Survive Test** to avoid the damage. Each Momentum spent by the attacker upon making the attack adds +1 to the Difficulty of this test.
- **Written threats** are text on a page, on a screen, or otherwise written somewhere that the target will see it. The target doesn't receive the threat immediately, preventing a Reaction, but the distance and delay make it more difficult to make the threat impactful, even more so than a recorded message. Written threats ignore modifiers for range, and do not allow a Reaction, but always add +2 Difficulty and +1 to the Complication range. The target may, upon receipt of the message, attempt a Difficulty 1 **Will + Survive Test** to avoid the damage. Each Momentum spent by the attacker upon making the attack adds +1 to the Difficulty of this test.
- **Abstract threats** do not involve conventional means of communication, but rather "send a message" through some unusual means, such as staging an accident. They can only be performed at GM's discretion, and the GM will determine the Difficulty and any other factors.

Damage

The content, circumstances, and nature of a mental attack determines the damage it inflicts, and any other effects it may have.

As a baseline, all mental attacks have a damage rating of 1[CD], plus additional [CD] equal to the attacker's Talk skill. Other factors may add [CD] to the damage rating, they may add a damage effect, or they may do both. These are described below, though this list is not exhaustive, and the GM is free to alter and adjust these effects to represent unusual circumstances. These factors stack, but the GM may put a limit on how many can apply to a given situation.

The GM may also use these rules as guidelines for determining the damage of hazards that inflict mental damage as well.

- **Awe-inspiring** threats are ones where the attacker demonstrates their prowess or capability. This differs from evidence in that it is a direct demonstration of ability, rather than an item or object that proves it, though this also limits this effect to face-to-face threats. This adds +2[CD] to the attack's damage rating, though it may add more at the GM's discretion if the demonstration is particularly impressive.
- **Evidence** covers any objects or items which support or confirm the threat. This could range from incriminating materials to grisly trophies taken in battle: regardless, evidence should always demonstrate the attacker's ability to carry out whatever they are threatening to do. This adds +1[CD] to the attack's damage rating, and the *Vicious 1* damage effect.
- **Horrifying** threats are ones where the nature of the threat is gruesome, vile, or unthinkable, and they can linger in the target's memory for a while after. This adds the *Drain* damage effect to the attack.
- **Obvious and dramatic** threats are grand and flashy, or loud, or otherwise so clear and obvious that they are liable to affect multiple targets, but their lack of subtlety means that they can have unintended consequences. This adds the *Area* and *Perilous* damage effects to the attack.
- **Personal** threats play upon the specific fears and doubts of the target, making their effect particularly strong. This adds the *Intense* damage effect to the attack.
- **Revelatory** threats reveal or present something that is uncomfortable for the target to think about, often undermining their confidence. This adds the *Destructive* damage effect to the attack.
- **Shocking** threats are sudden, unexpected, especially unpleasant, or otherwise likely to make an enemy stumble or give them pause. This adds the *Knockdown* and *Stun* damage effects to the attack.
- **Status or authority**, which includes being part of a powerful group known to the target (including being part of a law enforcement agency). This adds +1[CD] to the attack's damage rating. The GM may increase this further if the character's status or authority is especially significant.
- **Unnatural** threats are ones which seem to have come from an inhuman source, and their nature can often unman even the bravest individuals. This adds the *Piercing 2* damage effect to the attack.

Social Conflict

Sometimes, a conflict is fought with words, rather than with weapons. Disputes, challenges, and dangers can sometimes be overcome by talking, and knowing how and when to apply this sort of interpersonal skill to a problem can be vital.

Social conflict is the collective term for Skill Tests, Challenges and problems that are resolved through deception, diplomacy, bargaining, intimidation, and a range of other social skills. Not all personal interactions are social conflict, but all social conflict is driven by these interactions, especially those where each side has different goals or may not wish to yield to the desires of another.

Social conflict differs from psychological warfare in that psychological warfare is entirely about provoking fear and panic, while social conflict considers fear and panic to be means to an end, possible tools in a toolbox that can allow characters to manipulate or coerce their opponents.

At the heart of social conflict is a desire or goal, which takes the form of a request: one side wants something, and the other side is either able to grant that request, or they are standing in the way of that goal. At its very simplest, it comes down to one character asking another a question.

There are a few different responses to that question, and the character being asked may respond in one of two ways:

- **Yield:** The character receiving the request agrees to it, and grants that request as far as they are able. A character won't inconvenience themselves to do this, nor will they do more than is reasonably necessary to help. This is automatic and requires no skill test.
- **Resist:** The character receiving the request refuses to grant it. Regardless, the character denies the request outright, but they may face consequences for resisting.

Regardless of any other consequences, if a character resists a request in a social conflict, then that request cannot be made again without being changed, or without some other change of context.

As persuasion is driven by context, what is impossible in one situation may be entirely feasible in another. It may be useful, then, to break up a goal into smaller, more reasonable requests, each resolved separately, pursuing a greater objective piece by piece.

This is also where **social tools** come in. Social tools allow a character to alter the context or circumstances of persuasion, normally in the form of applying Traits or other factors, and they can be used individually or collectively to shape a social conflict.

During a social conflict, each side may have different goals, meaning that each side will engage in their own actions to further those goals. Even in something as seemingly one-directional as an interrogation, the interrogator will be trying to get information, while the interrogated party may have a goal of their own, such as trying to prove their own innocence.

Resisting Persuasion

If a character resists when faced with a request, this becomes an opposed test. The Difficulties for both the asking and resisting characters are normally 1, but these can be altered by factors such as Traits, and at GM's discretion based on how reasonable the request is (less reasonable requests increase the asking character's Difficulty) and how wary, defiant, or suspicious the resisting character is (the more reluctant they are to help, the lower their Difficulty).

The asking character will normally use **Reason + Talk** or **Will + Talk** for this, unless another combination is more suitable. The resisting character will normally use **Insight + Talk** or **Will + Talk**, again unless another combination is more suitable.

- **If the resisting character wins**, then the request is not granted, and there is no further effect.
- **If the asking character wins**, then the resisting character is put under pressure, and suffers damage as per a mental attack. The asking character's damage roll is 1[CD], plus additional [CD] equal to their Talk skill.

If this damage would cause Harm, it instead causes the resisting character to suffer a Complication. This Complication should reflect some problem or consequence that comes from resisting the request.

[Begin Sidebar]

Overwhelming Consequences

If the resisting character would, because of resisting, suffer a third or subsequent Complication, then they are overwhelmed, and no longer able to act within that scene. The character is still alive and well, but they're stressed out, and probably frustrated or agitated, and they may even have stormed off and left the area entirely.

A character who is overwhelmed in this manner hasn't given in to the request, though they may no longer be able to prevent the asking character from getting their way, depending on what the request was.

Whenever a player character suffers a Complication from resisting, they may choose to become overwhelmed immediately, even if they have fewer then three Complications from resisting. In exchange for making this choice, the character gains one Fortune immediately.

[End Sidebar]

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Social Skills

The skill tests used for Social Conflict can vary, typically by determining the intent and the method used. The following combinations should provide a basis for judging this. While any use of the Talk skill is a social skill – that is what Talk covers, after all – there are a few other combinations that can be useful.

- **Insight + Fight** is useful mainly in sizing up someone's ability in a fight, being able to discern training and capability by subtle cues taken from body language, the way they carry themselves, the way they move, the way they talk, or even the way wear their clothes. This can reveal useful information during a social conflict, but it isn't a particularly broad use.
- **Insight + Know** is useful for close observation of others, which can be invaluable in spotting a liar or seeing through a ruse, but also for more active techniques like cold reading.
- **Reason + Know** is less a matter of observation and more of logic and deduction, like reaching a conclusion based on previously-known facts. This combination is also crucial for persuasion that relies on facts and evidence.
- **Reason + Survive** is often used to find holes or logical flaws in a situation, making it useful for spotting lies, particularly elaborate ones.

[End Sidebar]

Deception

Falsehood and deceit can be a powerful tool in the hands of the cunning, but they are dangerous if mishandled. Deception can be used by itself to make a request seem more reasonable or palatable, or it can be used in conjunction with other tools to create a more significant impact. Effective deception requires skill, cunning, and an understanding of who is being lied to.

Deception requires an opposed skill test, with the deceiver's Difficulty based on how reasonable or believable the lie is to the target, and the target's Difficulty being determined by their suspicions. Successfully deceiving someone convinces them of some fact or facts which are not true, and subsequent persuasion tests ae resolved with those fictions in mind. Deception cannot convince someone of something which is blatantly untrue, or which contradict their worldview, but in turn, deception that plays into the beliefs and preconceptions of the target can be especially effective.

The deceiving character will normally use **Reason + Talk** for their test, while the character being lied to will normally use **Insight + Talk**. Other combinations are possible for different approaches, as normal.

Usefully, deception can be used to establish lies that are the foundation for other social tools as well. Empty threats can intimidate a foe with a peril they believe is real, and history is full of scams, cons, and tricks where people bargained with things they didn't own.

The problem with deception is, of course, that it's all a lie. If the target discovers that they were deceived, they will hesitate to trust the deceiver in future, and may even seek recompense or retribution. Further, Complications suffered while lying may reveal flaws in a lie, making the target suspicious.

Successful deception also adds +1[CD] per successful lie to the damage roll after a persuade opposed test. However, it also increases the deceiver's Complication Range by 1 for each lie as well, as lies can become entangled and complicated.

[Begin Sidebar]

Deception against Player Characters

For obvious reasons, player characters may not be especially receptive to NPCs lying to them. This can make the deception part of social conflict tricky to use against player characters, particularly as picking up the dice and making a skill test can signal that an adversary is lying, regardless of the result.

In these situations, there are a couple of possible approaches.

- Play the rules entirely straight, with the players knowing things that their characters cannot always detect. It may be worth occasionally offering Fortune to players to convince them to play along with an NPC's lie.
- Keep NPC lies secret during play, and let the player decide if they think an NPC is lying to them rather than rolling. If they suspect deceit, let them make a skill test to see if their character notices anything. If the players ask to roll too frequently – like asking for a skill test with everything said by every NPC – then treat suspicion as **escalation**, so each time they make a skill test to find if an NPC is lying, it adds 1 to Threat, as NPCs notice and are insulted by the unfair scrutiny.

[End Sidebar]

Evidence

The counterpoint to deception is evidence – offering something that provides certainty and proof of a character's claims. In many cases, providing evidence may be a straightforward affair, automatically successful, but convincing someone that the evidence is legitimate may be difficult, particularly if that person expects deception, which may require a skill test to overcome. In some cases, some kinds of evidence may have a contrary effect: a police badge may get cooperation from some people, but cause others to flee rather than stay and talk. Each piece of evidence is a Trait, each of which represents a single piece of evidence and the facts that it proves.

Proving that evidence is legitimate will normally use **Reason + Know** or **Reason + Talk**, though evidence that pertains to other skills may make other combinations useful (for example, **Reason + Fight** could explain details about weapons, fighting styles, or the aftermath of a battle).

Evidence can be used in conjunction with any of the other social conflict tools, and their use often drives uses of those tools: providing proof of your ability to carry out a threat can be vital when intimidating someone, while giving evidence of ownership or wealth can smooth along negotiations, and forged documents can serve as fake "proof" to support deception.

Each relevant piece of evidence that the target is willing to accept also adds +1[CD] to the damage roll after a persuade opposed test. If the character has one or more pieces of evidence that apply especially well to the situation, it also adds the *Vicious 1* effect to the damage roll.

Intimidation

A direct and crude method of coercion is to inspire fear, doubt, and uncertainty. Intimidation is the practice of using threats to compel action or compliance, often by convincing others that non-compliance will be met with force.

Intimidating someone uses the normal rules for Psychological Warfare and mental attacks (page @@), and each Trauma the target suffers increases the difficulty of that character's skill test during a persuade opposing test, while failing to intimidate someone increases the difficulty of further attempts to intimidate them, as with any failed mental attacks.

The drawback of intimidation is that it is inherently hostile, which can cause problems of its own. Employing intimidation creates an antagonistic tension between the two sides that can worsen other interactions, cause lingering resentment, or even provoke a target to aggression.

Negotiation

Negotiation is a fine art, requiring a keen and perceptive mind and a strong will. Negotiation involves the offering of compensation in exchange for granting a request, and this compensation can take many forms, with different people and different circumstances susceptible to different offers.

Regardless of circumstance, negotiation means creating an Advantage that represents a favourable position created by the offer, and a Complication that represents the cost of that offer. Each new offer is considered a new change of circumstances for the persuasion test as well. Negotiation doesn't require a skill test by itself – it is more a process of trial and error.

Negotiations may involve a lot of position shifting from both sides, as they make and retract offers, or discover that the other party doesn't have what they want. This may make skill tests valuable to try and

discern the price that the other side is willing to pay, or what they're really looking to gain. In some situations, numerous sessions of negotiation may be needed to obtain what one party wants from someone else to progress.

The drawback to negotiation is the cost of success – characters may find themselves offering more than they wanted to give up, or they may find what they obtained was worth far less than the price they paid for it. Failing to provide what was offered can produce serious problems of its own, which can be particularly significant if the negotiations are based on a lie.

In some ways, negotiation is the antithesis of intimidation; achieving a goal through offering something productive rather than threatening something destructive. Certainly, few people will be amenable to trade and negotiation with those they've been threatened by, and such trades may have a steeper cost because of previous hostilities.

Each advantage gained through negotiations reduces the persuading character's difficulty on the persuasion opposed test or increases the resisting character's difficulty. In addition, the damage roll gains Piercing X, where X is the number of advantages gained from negotiation.

[Begin Sidebar]

Reading a Target

A key element of most social conflicts is understanding your target. Everyone has places where they're strong, and places where they're weak, and success in social conflict often relies on learning how to discover or spot these details. This normally requires some effort to achieve, but the results can be extremely rewarding.

Insight + Know and **Insight + Talk** tests are often a good basis for trying to learn about a target (either in advance, or while encountering them), though more in-depth research or analysis may use **Reason + Know** instead. The base difficulty for this is 0, with Momentum generated being spent to ask questions with the *Obtain Information* Momentum option. The difficulty will increase if the target is particularly secretive or inscrutable, and if they know or expect someone to try and read them, they may turn the skill test into an opposed test (using **Reason + Know** to hide traces of them that can be researched, or **Coordination + Talk** to control their body language and other signs that could be read).

Useful questions to ask include "what do they fear?", "what do they seek to protect?", "what do they desire?", and "what do they believe", but less-direct questions about a person's background, history, and accomplishments are also potentially useful.

[End Sidebar]