

# NEMESIS

## Roleplaying in Worlds of Horror

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**And to all those who supported our work**

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## Welcome to NEMESIS

*NEMESIS* is designed to combine the speed and deadliness of the One Roll Engine (as seen in *GODLIKE* and *WILD TALENTS*) and the Madness Meter (as seen in *Unknown Armies*) to recreate an atmosphere found in horror classics. *NEMESIS* is dark horror, designed to emulate the works of H.P. Lovecraft, Stephen King, Ambrose Bierce, Brian Lumley, and William Peter Blatty, as well as settings such as *Delta Green* and the Gilchrist Trust, in a roleplaying game.

It is designed to cover every period of game play from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the modern day, and contains rules covering magic, monsters, vehicles and weaponry. It is a complete gaming resource for playing everything from a 1920s adventure into darkest Africa to a *Delta Green* investigation into a downed alien spacecraft. In short, it is a toolkit designed to answer the call for an updated horror game engine. We call this optimized engine *Dark ORE*.

### What You Need to Play NEMESIS

You don't need much to play *NEMESIS* besides the main rulebook. First, you need an adequate supply of ten-sided dice. You can find them at just about any game or comic shop. While you can play *NEMESIS* with only one ten-sided die (with some scratch paper or a good memory!), we recommend keeping at least 20 dice on hand. This allows several players to roll at the same time.

You need scratch paper and pencils for keeping notes and drawing maps and pictures.

You need photocopies of the *NEMESIS* character sheet, provided in the back of the book and on our Web site ([www.arcdream.com](http://www.arcdream.com)), on which you can write the statistics, powers, and possessions of your character.

If you're the Game Moderator (or GM, for short), since you'll be running the game, you need any information, maps, or statistics you have prepared for the adventure at hand.

Other than that, all you need to bring to the table is your imagination.

### What Makes a NEMESIS Character?

Before we get into the nuts and bolts of *NEMESIS*, let's explain the basics—the essential components of every character.

### Statistics

Statistics (stats for short) describe the basic qualities of every character. They tell you how strong and smart your character is, how coordinated and commanding, how relatable, and how aware. The stats are *Body*, *Coordination*, *Sense*, *Mind*, *Command* and *Empathy*. They're measured in dice. In normal humans they range from 1 die to 5 dice; in inhumans or supernaturally enhanced humans they can range up to 10 dice (see *The Supernatural* below).

### Skills

Skills are specific learned abilities such as driving a car or speaking Vietnamese. Like stats, skills are measured in dice; they range from 1 to 5 dice in normal humans, or up to 10 dice for inhumans or supernaturally enhanced humans (see *The Supernatural* below). Every skill is based on a stat. Driving a car fast around a corner requires balance and hand-eye coordination as well as the Driving skill, so the Driving skill is based on the Coordination stat. Picking out just the right phrase in Vietnamese requires quick thinking, so it's based on Mind. And so on.

### The Madness Meter

Each character begins with four categories of mental stability the four pillars upholding sane and productive thought—the Madness Meter. These categories are: *Violence*, *the Unnatural*, *Self* and *Helplessness*. Each represents a resistance to a certain kind of madness. When a character is subjected to such influences, he must resist or lose stability from one (or more) of these categories. Lose a bit, and you become unstable. Lose them all and you lose your mind.

### The Supernatural

While nearly every character has stats, skills and a Madness Meter, only particular characters have access to the supernatural—things man was not meant to know. There are three kinds of supernatural scores: boosted stats, boosted skills, and spells. (Inhuman creatures may have other supernatural abilities.) The term *supernatural* includes any and all of them—it means something beyond the common understanding of mankind. It refers to super-science just as much as the occult.

Supernatural stats and skills are ordinary stats and skills exaggerated to incredible levels—a Supernatural stat in *Body* grants you superhuman strength; a supernatural skill in guns makes your shooting impossibly accurate.

*Spells*, the third variety, are abilities that tap some



outside power to perform amazing actions—only those with access to the supernatural can possess them. Flying under your own power and the ability to turn people into dust are spells. Spells are measured in dice, from 1 to 10; but unlike skills they are not based on any stats. Spells stand alone.

## Dice Pools

Whether you're using a spell, a stat by itself, or a stat and a skill, any important and challenging action is resolved with a roll of 10-sided dice called a dice pool. No dice pool *ever* has more than 10 dice. If any dice come up matching, the action succeeds. The more dice that match (called the "width" of the roll), and the higher their face value (called the "height"), the better. (A matching set of ones is good, but a matching set of tens is a *lot* better.)

In combat, an attack roll's width determines the amount of damage and which attack goes first. An attack roll's height determines which part of the target takes the damage. Outside of combat, a roll's width determines how long the action takes (and sometimes other things, like how much damage is healed with a Mind+First Aid roll). A non-combat roll's height determines the quality of the success.

## Hit Locations, Wound Boxes, and Damage

Hit locations are where you take damage when an attack hits you. Most characters have six hit locations: left leg, right leg, left arm, right arm, torso, and head. Each hit location has a number of wound boxes that are filled when you take damage. If all a location's boxes are filled with light damage (called Shock), it's temporarily disabled (or you're unconscious). If all boxes are filled with more severe damage (called Killing), it's permanently maimed (or you're dead).



## PART I: THE GAME SYSTEM

### Chapter 1: The One-Roll Engine

The *NEMESIS* rules encourage speed and realism without sacrificing consistency or requiring endless series of rolls. We call the rules the “One-Roll Engine,” or “ORE.” Originally developed for the wartime superhero action of *GODLIKE: Superhero Roleplaying in a World On Fire, 1936-1946*, the ORE keeps game play fast and exciting by extracting all the information you need—speed, level of achievement, hit location, damage; everything you need to know—from a single roll of the dice.

This variant of the ORE is designed specifically for dark horror gaming—as such, it incorporates significant changes from its predecessors. Including a detailed system for determining sanity, the Madness Meter (as seen in *Unknown Armies*). We call the *NEMESIS* rules *Dark ORE*.

#### Dice Pools and Matching Sets

When a *NEMESIS* character tries to do something (or even do something difficult), you roll a number of ten-sided dice (“d” for short—so “6d” means six dice) to see if the action succeeds. The dice you roll are called a dice pool. (If you’ve played *GODLIKE*, *Vampire: The Masquerade*, or *Legend of the Five Rings* you’re familiar with the concept.)

When you roll, look for **matching dice**.

If you get a matching set—a set of two or more dice with matching numbers—your action succeeds. The higher the matching numbers, and the more of them that are the same, the better.

There are several small tweaks that can make success more likely or improve a successful roll, but for the most part, that’s it.

If you don’t roll any matching dice, your action fails.

**Example:** Michael Rook confronts Doctor Turnbridge at the cliff face. Rook attempts to restrain the mad doctor before he can fling himself off. The stat governing wrestling is Body, and Rook’s Body is 3 ten-sided dice (or 3d). The skill involved is Wrestling and Rook’s is 2d. Therefore he has five dice, or 5d, in his Body+Wrestling dice pool.

Rook rolls 5d. If he rolls 2, 2, 5, 6, and 9 with his 5d, he pins Turnbridge to the ground; the matching 2s mean a success. But if he rolls 1, 2, 5, 6, and 9, he misses because none of his rolled dice match.

#### The Cardinal Rules

There are a couple of rules for *NEMESIS* to always keep in mind, no matter how you change the system to suit your particular style. Most rules can be changed or dropped easily, but if you change these cardinal rules unforeseen problems might crop up. Everything in *NEMESIS* is mutable, but these rules should be dealt with carefully, changing them can seriously affect game play.

#### Rule #1: Roll Only When a Task is Difficult or the Outcome is Significant

For all the nifty things you can do with dice rolls in *NEMESIS*, you should roll only when you meet two requirements.

First, roll a dice pool only if the action is difficult enough that a regular person with no training probably couldn’t pull it off. If an action is trivially easy, there’s no point in rolling it. A game in which every action required a roll—lacing your boots, making coffee, reading the paper—would be tedious. Similarly, if you try something absurd (“I’m going to shoot down the sun!”) there’s no point in rolling, because no matter how well you roll it’s just not going to happen.

Second, roll only if the outcome is important to the game. After all, some actions are challenging but irrelevant. Maybe you want to show up one of your fellow players by beating him at a game of chess. You can both roll to see who plays better—but unless something significant is at stake, it’s unnecessary.

If you’re a player, don’t roll unless the GM asks you to. And if he doesn’t allow a roll when you think you should get one, mention it, but play along and trust his judgment. After all, only the GM knows what’s coming next in the game.

#### Rule #2: Never Roll More Than 10 Dice

The more dice you roll, the better the chance of success. If you roll only one die, there’s no chance of success. But if you roll 11 dice or more, there’s no chance of failure. In *NEMESIS* you *never* roll more than ten dice. Even if your stat+skill adds up to more than 10d, the excess dice are lost.

Of course, sometimes it’s important to know how well you succeed, especially compared to others. For some kinds of actions we use special dice that are reserved for important characters, inhuman mon-



strosities or the supernatural, called Expert dice (“ed”), and Trump dice (“td”) (see page 9 for details).

Remember: *Under no circumstances do you roll more than 10 dice.*

## Resolving Basic Dice Pool Rolls

The goal of rolling a dice pool is to get a *match*—to have two or more dice in the pool turn up the same number. If you do, the action succeeds. However, there are different levels of success—some successes are faster, deadlier, or just plain *better* than others. Sometimes other people or forces are *working* against you, to stop your success; so even if you would ordinarily succeed, their success cancels yours out.

In *NEMESIS*, every dice roll has two measures of success—*height* and *width*.

**Height is the quality of the action; width is the speed of the action.**

*Height* is the number that shows on the matching dice. If you roll two 5s, the height of the roll is 5. Height is a measure of quality of a success. The higher (or “taller”) the roll, the *better* the success. A successful action with a height of 10 is more *effective* than one with a height of 5.

*Width* is the number of matching dice. If you roll four 6s, the width of the roll is 4. Width is usually speed: the wider the roll, the faster the success. But in combat, width also determines damage. An action of width of 4 happens quicker (and in combat causes more damage) than one of width 3.

The shorthand for these results is written as “width x height”. I know it looks like math, but all it means is that a dice roll of width 3 and height 10 is written as 3x10—representing a fast, perfectly executed action.

Note that height—quality—is essentially random, while width—speed or power—is rarely greater than 2.

## La Belle Curve

Here’s a rough guide to your chances of getting at least one matching set depending on how many dice you roll. As you can see, the benefit of raising a pool from 8d to 10d doesn’t even come close to the payoff of raising one from 3d to 5d.

Size of Dice Pool	Odds of One or More Matches
2d	10%
3d	28%
4d	50%
5d	70%
6d	85%
7d	93%
8d	98%
9d	99.6%
10d	99.9%

## Round Down!

Certain rules in *NEMESIS* require you to divide points or dice pools, sometimes leaving you with less than whole numbers. In this case, *always round down*. We’ve seen some nasty in-game fights brew over this simple fact—so now you’re forewarned. If a player says, “Well, it doesn’t say anything about it in the book!” direct him here:

**ALWAYS ROUND DOWN.**

## Time

The width of a roll tells you how long the action takes. Depending on the action, the time scale for a task can be measured in combat rounds, minutes, hours, days, or even longer. The GM sets the time scale based on the specifics of the action. For example, breaking down a door might take rounds, picking a lock, minutes, fixing a car, hours, and decoding a complicated cipher, days. But there are circumstances where picking a lock might take days, breaking down a door, hours, or fixing a car, minutes; it’s up to the GM to set the time scale.

Once the time scale is determined, make the relevant roll: Body+Brawling to break down the door, Coordination+Lockpicking to pick the lock, Mind+Mechanics to fix a car, Mind+Cryptography to decode the cipher.

**Subtract the width of the successful roll from 5** to find out how many units of time it takes to complete the task.

If you roll a 2x3 on your Mind+Mechanics pool and the time scale is hours, it takes three hours to fix the car: 5 hours minus the width of 2 equals 3. If your Body+Brawling roll is 3x7, it takes two rounds to smash down the door (5 - 3=2). If your Mind+Cryptography roll is 4x2, it only takes one day (5-4 = 1) to decode the communiqué.

No matter how wide you roll, a task always takes at least one unit of time. If you get a width of five or wider, the job still takes one day, hour, minute, or round.





## Expert Dice and Trump Dice

NEMESIS uses one die type (the d10) for all rolls. But there are also two special ways of rolling dice: *Expert dice* and *Trump dice*.

Expert dice and Trump dice are significantly more powerful than regular dice. Use regular dice to resolve regular actions; Expert dice to resolve highly skilled actions and Trump dice to resolve supernatural actions. As such, Expert dice are available *only* in skills and Trump dice are available *only* in supernatural abilities—boosted stats, boosted skills and spells.

Expert dice are abbreviated “ed,” so seven Expert dice is “7ed”. An Expert die is special. You can either assign it any height you want, *before* you roll all the other dice in the pool; or choose to roll it regularly as a normal die. When you assign a number to the Expert die, there’s a catch: each Expert die in your pool must be *set to a different number*. Expert dice represent a level of ability not easily achieved by the normal man.

Like every other die, Expert dice count towards the ten-die maximum. Expert dice also have another advantage—they *automatically* “buy off” dice penalties. Each Expert die buys off a -1d penalty. And they have another bonus, even after buying off the penalty, the Expert *die is not lost*, but instead is rolled as a regular die. *This is mandatory*. If you face a dice penalty and you have Expert dice, you must use an Expert die to buy off a penalty.

The downside of Expert dice is that while they’re effective at directing dice pool rolls to a certain outcome, they’re blind. You won’t know what roll you’re getting when you pick the number—you could roll a match, or not.

A Trump die is like a wild card in poker: You assign it any number you want, *after* you’ve rolled all the other dice in your pool during the resolution phase in combat. This makes Trump dice even better than Expert dice—*any* dice pool roll with even a single Trump die succeeds, and if you have two Trump dice you can choose any level of success you like! You can even choose *not* to succeed or to succeed up to a certain level, if you want—a luxury that other dice don’t have.

Like every other die, Trump dice count towards the ten-die maximum. They’re abbreviated “td,” so six Trump dice is “6td”. (You might recognize Trump dice as wiggle dice from GODLIKE or WILD TALENTS re-named. They are the same. We changed it because it sounded kind of silly saying “wiggle” so often in a horror game.)

Trump dice represent a supernaturally versatile ability.

## Static and Dynamic Rolls

There are two different types of dice pool rolls—*static* and *dynamic* contests.

A **static contest** is when you’re struggling against an inanimate object or situation. The situation is static—it isn’t actively changing in response to you and trying to make life more difficult. Just roll the dice. If you get a match, you succeed.

A **dynamic contest** is when you’re competing against another person who’s trying to confound or surpass you. Running a race, having a knife fight, playing chess, interrogating someone for information, or lying to your interrogator—these are dynamic contests. In a dynamic contest, you’re rolling against someone else’s roll. The widest set finishes first, but the highest set wins. If width is a tie, the highest set goes first.

Which is more important—height or width? That depends on the contest. If it’s a foot race, width (speed) matters most. A racer that rolls a 4x2 outruns someone with a 2x10; he might not run with the grace of the guy that rolled a height 10, but he finished first. The winner with a wide but short result might be out of breath and disoriented compared to the loser with a high but narrow roll, but he still came in first, and sometimes that’s all that counts.

If time is no object, the victor may simply be the person with the tallest roll. In a chess match—where what matters is the move, not how quickly you choose it—someone with a 2x10 beats the fellow with a 4x4. The 4x4 player moves more decisively but not as wisely.

## Simplicity or Difficulty

There are two types of modifiers to rolls to reflect easy or complex tasks. The GM can set a **simplicity** rating, a number of dice added to the dice pool before it is rolled; or a **difficulty** rating, a minimum height necessary for the particular action to count as a success.

Simplicity ratings range from +1d to +3d. The GM assigns a Simplicity Rating to any action he feels is so simple it should *almost* assure success, depending on the character, situation and circumstances. For example a master swordsman trying to show off by performing a complicated sword maneuver might gain a +2d dice pool bonus due to its relative Simplicity (since he’s used to doing *much* more complicated things with a sword), while a normal Joe trying the same gains no Simplicity dice (since he has no experience with a sword). Dice gained in this manner are rolled normally with the dice pool (up to the 10d maximum) and only for that particular action; they may be combined with any normal bonuses up to 10d. When and where this bonus is available is up to the GM.



Difficulty ratings work a lot like an opposing height in a dynamic contest—if your match isn't equal or greater than the difficulty number, you fail. The GM assigns a minimum height necessary to succeed based on the circumstances.

If a door is extremely thick, the GM can decide that a Body+Brawl match equal or higher than 5 is needed to break it down. If an aroma is somewhat subtle, he can decide that your Sense+Smell match must match a height of 2 or you don't detect it.

Level of Difficulty	Sample Rating
Challenging	Difficulty 1
Difficult	Difficulty 3
Hard	Difficulty 5
Extremely hard	Difficulty 7
Almost impossible	Difficulty 9

## Dice Penalties

Tasks that require exceptional finesse, luck or effectiveness get a difficulty rating; but some tasks are difficult because circumstances are so chaotic, that they reduce your overall ability to succeed. Instead of a difficulty rating, such actions suffer a *dice pool penalty*. A dice penalty removes a die (or multiple dice) from your pool before it's rolled. When dice are removed, they are *always* removed in this order: regular dice first, then Expert dice and *only then* Trump dice.

Keep in mind that each Expert die negates a -1d penalty (but in turn it must be rolled as a normal die).

Example of Action Causing a Dice Pool Penalty	Dice Penalty
Multiple action(s)	-1d for each extra action
Attempt a skilled action without appropriate skill (for example, driving a car without the Driving skill)	-1d
Shooting a target at long range	-1d

## Minimum Width

Sometimes a task is difficult because you have to accomplish it *quickly*. After all, blasting a car before it rounds the corner is harder than if it's parked at the curb. Since width indicates speed, the GM can assign a minimum width necessary for a roll to succeed.

Bear in mind, requiring a width greater than 2 *substantially* reduces the chance of success. A width of 3 is improbable with a normal dice pool, while a width of 4 is nearly unheard-of without special dice. When width is used as difficulty, a width of 3 is usually sufficient to make a task very, very hard.

## Taking Your Time

*This only works on a task with a difficulty rating.* With the GM's permission, if you're not under threat of attack and you have some time to think, you can take your time and reduce the difficulty of a task. Every extra unit of time you spend concentrating on the problem reduces the difficulty by 1. This is different than simplicity—the task doesn't get easier, you just have more time to figure it out.

For example, say cracking a code is measured in days, and the code you want to break is difficulty 3. If you take three days of concentration on the problem and then roll, you roll against difficulty 0. (The time it takes after all that preparation is still 5 – width days; just add the time spent preparing to the total.)

Even better, with the GM's permission, you can take an automatic success in an action without rolling, by taking the maximum amount of time the task requires. For example, if the action normally requires 5 – width hours, and you take 5 hours to attempt it, with the GM's permission you automatically succeed with a 1x1. This is the only way to succeed without a matching set.

If you do take your time, you don't gain any character advancement benefits from a success (see **Character Advancement** on page 48 for details).

## Cooperating on a Task

Two or more characters can cooperate on a single static contest. All characters involved combine the appropriate dice pools, up to 10 dice.

For dynamic contests where timing doesn't matter, combine dice pools in the same way—just add all the pools together, up to 10 dice.

If the contest is dynamic and time *does* matter, it gets a little more complicated. The people working together roll their dice pools separately. If one gets a match and another rolls that number *on any die* in his pool, he adds it to the first guy's match, expanding the width. If both score matches, use the *tallest* roll but the *lowest* width, because the faster guy has to wait for the slower one to catch up. Expert and Trump die work normally when cooperating. (In this case Trump dice are exceptionally good, since they can be made to match the other guy's pool.)

**Example:** As the Twilight Hourglass counts down, Michael and Dr. Mann attempt to push open the hatch to the cultists' chambers. The GM says both need to roll Body+Brawling, and their pools are 4d each. Michael rolls 2, 2, 3, and 5, for 2x2. Dr. Mann rolls 3, 3, 4, and 9, for 2x3. They use the taller roll, Dr. Mann's 2x3—but since Michael rolled a “loose” 3 in his pool he can add it to the set for a 3x3.

## Multiple Matches

If you roll 5d and get 1, 1, 1, 10, and 10, then you actually have two matches—3x1 and 2x10. Which do you use?

The answer: whichever you prefer, but not both. If your character is running a race, the 3x1 is a good idea because it's faster. If quality is more important than speed, the 2x10 is best.

Sometimes, however, you roll a dice pool specifically *looking* for multiple matches so you can perform more than one action at the same time. That's called attempting multiple actions.

## Multiple Actions

Doing two challenging things at the same time is possible—but it's not easy.

To attempt multiple actions, first declare that you are attempting two (or more) things at once, and calculate the dice pools for the tasks. If you're driving and shooting, for instance, the two pools are Coordination+Driving and Coordination+Firearms [Pistol].

Now roll the *smallest* of the pools—and drop one die from it *per extra task*. So if you're performing two actions, take -1d from the smaller pool and roll. If you attempt three actions at the same time, take -2d from the smallest pool and roll.

Expert dice work the same as always: Each Expert die buys off a single penalty die, but in exchange that Expert die becomes a normal die and is rolled regularly. (So if you have 1ed and attempt two actions, you do so at no penalty, but instead of picking the height of the Expert die you roll it normally.)

**Example:** Michael Rook has Coordination+Firearms [Pistol] at 3d+3d+1ed. He's an expert with the Mauser pistol—a crack shot. He wants to attack twice in the same round (a multiple action). Usually this attack would suffer a -1d penalty, but instead he rolls the whole 7d dice pool—even the expert die, since it buys off the penalty and becomes a regular die.

If you roll more than one matching set, assign the matches to each action however you like. If you get only one match, choose which task succeeds. If you fail to get any matches at all, both fail.

If you possess Expert dice or Trump dice, you still roll the smallest of the pools, even if your Expert dice or Trump dice are in the smaller pool. However, *you can only use those dice to make a match for their particular stat, stat+skill or supernatural power*. If you have 5d+2td in Coordination+Driving and 9d in Coordination+Firearms [Submachine Gun], roll the lower pool minus 1d, or 4d+2td—but the Trump dice can only be assigned to

Driving, not Firearms. Same goes for Expert dice.

If you score an exceptionally wide single match—meaning four or more dice match—you can split that into two (or more) successes.

You can't perform multiple static tasks at the same time if they're on different time scales. If one action takes combat rounds to accomplish and another takes minutes, don't bother with multiple actions; just do the shorter action first and then the longer one.

**Example:** Dr. Mann, under attack by a dozen cultists of the Twilight Campaign is dodging and using the Twilight Hourglass to freeze his opponents in time. His Coordination+Dodge is 3d+2d and his *Manipulate Time* spell is 4d+1td. The dice pools are the same size, so he opts to roll the 4d+1td—which drops to 3d+1td after the dice penalty. He rolls 3, 7, and 7, and sets the Trump die to 3, giving him a 2x3 and a 2x7. He must use the 2x3 for the *Manipulate Time* spell, since that's the pool with the Trump die. He uses the 2x7 for the dodge.



## Chapter 2: Stats, Skills, and the Madness Meter

The essential building blocks of every *NEMESIS* character—human or supernatural—are stats and skills. They define your character’s natural abilities and the things you’ve learned to do, and are the basis of most dice rolls—the stat+skill dice pool.

### Stats

Six statistics (stats for short) measure your inborn physical and mental capabilities. Three stats govern physical capabilities (Body, Coordination, and Sense), and three govern mental capabilities (Mind, Command, and Empathy).

Normal humans have stats between 1d and 5d. A stat of 1d is dismal, 2d is sub-par, human average is 3d, while 4d and 5d are exceptional. Humans cannot normally exceed 5d in a stat or skill.

Any stat with more than 5d, or with Trump dice, is a supernatural power. Stats cannot have Expert dice.

See below for stat-tables.

### Physical Stat: Body

Hand-to-hand combat is governed by the Body stat, which measures your sheer physical power and ability to use it well—how strong, fast, and tough you are. A character with a high Body stat can lift more, hit harder, and run faster than someone with a low Body.

*Lift* is the maximum amount of weight you can lift and carry.

*Throw* is the maximum weight you can throw 10 yards. For lighter objects, move down the chart—for every extra Body die, you can throw it an extra 10 yards. So, a creature with Body at 9d can throw a 200-pound investigator 40 yards. Ouch.

*Base Damage* indicates the base damage of your hand-to-hand attacks. See *Damage*, page 25, for details.

*Sprint* is the maximum distance you can sprint in one combat round. You can keep this speed up for your Body stat in combat rounds without rolling. After that, with a successful Body+Running or Body+Endurance roll you can keep running at that speed for width in combat rounds; otherwise you have to stop and rest.

You can jog at half your sprint speed without a roll; how long you can keep it up is up to the GM. Some characters can jog for only a few minutes before running out of breath, while others can jog for hours.

Jump is your maximum running jump. Cut these in half if you jump without running first.

### Movement

You can figure out your maximum speed by looking at your Body stat chart. You can automatically move that distance in one combat round without having to roll; roll only if you’re trying to beat someone else or to keep up that speed across difficult terrain. Since you don’t have to roll, you can move at that speed and attack at the same time without declaring multiple actions (see *Multiple Actions* on page 11). Of course, attacking at a full sprint is probably worth losing a die from your attack.

Movement in *NEMESIS* is abstract. There’s no need to crunch numbers. Instead, if there’s any doubt the GM can simply call for appropriate rolls of Body+Running dice pool and compare widths.

### Supernatural Body

Many supernatural creatures possess Body stats in excess of 5d, as well as Trump dice. How do you reflect a creature that exceeds even the strength level found at Body 10d? Easy, just keep adding dice. Keep in mind we said you never *roll* more than 10d; it doesn’t mean you can’t *have* more than 10d. Each extra die above 10d doubles the maximum lift of the creature and increases its damage, movement and jump. These extra dice are *never* rolled, but are used to calculate the creatures’ secondary scores.

### Physical Stat: Coordination

The Coordination stat measures hand-eye coordination, reflexes, and how well you control and maneuver your body. Coordination is used for ranged attacks.

### Physical Stat: Sense

The Sense stat indicates how observant you are and how alert you are to potential danger. With a high Sense stat you have keen hearing, clear vision, and a better-than-average shot at noticing that funny burnt-almond odor before eating the poisoned date. With a low Sense you are nearsighted, hard of hearing, or generally oblivious to your surroundings.

### Mental Stat: Mind

The Mind stat measures your natural intellect. With a high Mind stat you have a better memory, quicker math skills, and a better grasp of abstract concepts than someone with a low Mind stat.



## Mental Stat: Command

The Command stat measures your charisma and force of personality. With high Command you dominate conversations, sway opinions, and get listened to in a crisis. With supernatural levels of Command you are inhumanly persuasive, capable of forcing others to believe or do nearly anything.

### Resisting Supernatural Levels of Command

If you have a Command of 6d or more, it's pretty easy to get unimportant NPCs to do your bidding— with enough time to work on them, a successful Command roll will convince them to do or believe

nearly anything. Against an important character or another player character, however, you must beat the target's Empathy+Equilibrium in a dynamic contest with your Command roll. Those who fail suffer ill effects on the Helplessness gauge in their Madness meters with the width of your roll as the Intensity, and must follow your commands. Those that resist remain immune to your influence.

## Mental Stat: Empathy

Empathy measures your humanity—how understanding, likable and insightful to the human condition you are.

Stat Level	Ability Level	(Stat) Example
1d	Pathetic	(Body) Easily exhausted.
2d	Sub-par	(Coordination) Plays a decent game of darts.
3d	Average	(Sense) Average sense of hearing.
4d	Exceptional	(Mind) Can formulate differential equations.
5d	Human Perfection	(Command) Instantly commands attention and respect.
6d (Supernatural)	Superhuman	(Empathy) Can resist physical exhaustion by will alone.
7d (Supernatural)	Extraordinary	(Body) Can lift an economy car.
8d (Supernatural)	Astonishing	(Coordination) Can dodge the spray of a submachine gun with ease.
9d (Supernatural)	Unparalleled	(Sense) Can read by touch alone.
10d (Supernatural)	Supreme	(Mind) Can calculate pi to the millionth digit in a moment.

Body*	Lift	Throw	Base Damage	Sprint	Jump (length/height)
1d	50 lbs	6.2 lbs	Width in Shock	12 yards (8 mph)	2 yards / 1/2 yard
2d	100 lbs	12.5 lbs	Width in Shock	14 yards (9 mph)	3 yards / 1 yard
3d	200 lbs	25 lbs	Width in Shock	16 yards (11 mph)	4 yards / 1 yard
4d	400 lbs	50 lbs	Width in Shock	18 yards (12 mph)	5 yards / 1 yards
5d	800 lbs	100 lbs	Width in Killing	20 yards (13 mph)	6 yards / 1 1/2 yards
6d	1,600 lbs	200 lbs	Width in Killing	25 yards (16 mph)	8 yards / 2 yards
7d	1.6 tons	400 lbs	Width in Killing	30 yards (20 mph)	10 yards / 2 1/2 yards
8d	3.2 tons	800 lbs	Width in Shock and Killing	40 yards (26 mph)	15 yards / 4 yards
9d	6.4 tons	1,600 lbs	Width in Shock and Killing	50 yards (33 mph)	20 yards / 5 yards
10d	12.8 tons	1.6 tons	Width in Shock and Killing	60 yards (40 mph)	25 yards / 6 yards
Every +1d past 10**	x2	x2	+1 Shock and Killing for each die above 10	+10 yards	+5 yards/+1 yard

\*The effects at each level of Body are *not cumulative*.

\*\*These extra dice are never rolled, but they still increase strength, damage, speed and jump.

Coordination	Notes
1d	You can cross a room safely if there's nothing in the way.
2d	You play a decent game of darts.
3d	You're an average pool player.
4d	You're a skilled acrobat.
5d	You're agile as an Olympic gymnast.
6d	You can attempt to dodge or block any attack, even gunshots.
7d	You can move so fast, you're a blur.
8d	You can catch fast objects such as arrows in flight without rolling—if they're not aimed at you.
9d	You can literally move faster than people can see.
10d	Every external muscle in your body is under your conscious control.

Sense	Notes*
1d	You notice when someone's talking to you—sometimes.
2d	Loud noises wake you up.
3d	You are about as observant as the average Joe.
4d	You pick up on things most people miss.
5d	You are one with your environment.
6d	You easily can hear things others must roll for.
7d	With a successful roll, you can sense movement at a quarter mile or less.
8d	You can differentiate between dozens of sounds amidst a cacophony.
9d	You can see in the dark and identify targets by smell.
10d	It takes a miracle (literally) to sneak up on you.

\*The effects of each level of Sense are cumulative.

Mind	Notes
1d	When people call you an intellectual, you can't always tell they're joking.
2d	Pretty much all subtlety, sarcasm and sub-text are lost on you.
3d	You can get high grades with a lot of work.
4d	You can have your pick of Ivy-league scholarships.
5d	You have a photographic memory (sight only) with a successful roll.
6d	You have a photographic memory (all senses) with a successful roll.
7d	Einstein and Hawking seem somewhat childish to you.
8d	All modern theory is the equivalent of a monkey banging two stones together.
9d	You can recall with perfect clarity anything you have previously sensed without rolling.
10d	You can consider intellectual problems even while asleep.

Command	Notes*
1d	You're a wallflower.
2d	You're a regular guy or gal.
3d	You can make people listen to you when you try.
4d	You're a born leader.
5d	Your presence commands attention and respect.
6d	In ordinary company you can steer the course of the conversation to nearly any topic at will.
7d	On a successful roll, you can convince anyone of anything after 5-width days.
8d	On a successful roll, you can convince anyone of anything in 5-width hours.
9d	On a successful roll, you can convince anyone of anything in 5-width minutes.
10d	On a successful roll, you can bark an order in a voice that causes a person to obey a command before considering the consequences, as long as it takes less than one round.

\*The effects of each level of Command are cumulative.

Empathy	Notes*
1d	You're a brick wall—emotionally speaking.
2d	You have trouble following emotional cues.
3d	You're an average Joe or Jane.
4d	You are inordinately perceptive to interpersonal relationships.
5d	You read the looks on people's faces like a book.
6d	You can see into another's soul.
7d	You understand the scope of all human emotions.
8d	You understand the whole of human experience in the way a scientist might understand the inner workings of a machine.
9d	You can manipulate groups of people with subtle emotional cues, arranging outcomes like a chess-master manipulating pieces on a board.
10d	You have transcended human emotion—though it remains fully within your grasp, you are beginning to feel other new emotions beyond human understanding.

\*The effects of each level of Empathy are *cumulative*.

## Skills

While stats measure innate ability, skills represent training and practice at specific tasks or subjects. You may have a great deal of innate Coordination, but you won't drive very well without knowing the basics of how cars work. In some endeavors, pure talent only takes you so far.

Skills range from no dice (no training at all) to 5d (world-class mastery)—the “average” skill, 3d, represents a typical amount of training and experience for someone who uses that skill often. Any skill with more than 5d, or with Expert or Trump dice is unusual.

Every skill is governed by a stat. Brawling is a Body skill, while Firearms [Pistol] is a Coordination skill. Add the stat and skill together to get your total dice pool. If your stat+skill exceeds 10d, you only roll 10d.

Some skills are more specialized than others, applying only to a particular type of action. If you have dice in the Firearms [Type] skill, choose what type of firearm you are skilled in: pistols, rifles, shotguns, or whatever.

A basic list of useful skills is available below, but don't feel limited to those. Nearly anything that takes time and effort to learn—a language, a trade, any useful body of information—can be a skill. New skills should be fairly specialized and restricted in application; use the basic skills as examples.

## Same Skill, Different Stat

At the GM's discretion, some uses of a skill might involve a different stat. Throw is usually a Body skill, reflecting the strength needed to throw something far. But if you need to throw it with unusual accuracy, the GM might call for a Coordination+Throw roll instead. If you need to figure out how a strange new gun works, the GM might call for a Mind+Firearms [Pistol] roll.

## Expert Dice

Expert dice are unique to skills—they represent an incredibly advanced skill level, like a physicist with world-changing formulae, a crack shot with pistols that can hit a target at 50 yards on the quick draw, or an Expert of occult study with many spells committed to memory. Expert dice are rare.

A character cannot have more Expert dice in a skill than dice in the stat that governs the skill.

## Rolling Without Skill Dice

You can almost always attempt a skill roll with only your stat dice, even if you have no skill dice at all; but there's a flat penalty of -1d to the roll (GM's discretion).

Some actions may be simply impossible without the training represented by skill dice, but again it's at the GM's discretion. An ordinary character with no training in Language [Latin] will have no chance of reading an ancient Latin text, for instance, but the GM might decide a character with a supernatural stat in Mind can roll for it without the skill by dint of sheer brilliance and deduction.

Skill Level	Ability Level	(Skill) Example
1d	Minimum training	(Swim) Can barely dog paddle.
2d	Some experience	(Throw) Can throw a football 20 yards accurately.
3d	Average Training	(Hearing) Can detect a tap on the phone line.
4d	Exceptional training	(Chess) Nationally ranked chess champion.
5d	Master-level training	(Bluff) Can bluff your way into a military facility.
6d+ (Supernatural)	Supernatural	(Intimidate) Can bully the heavyweight boxing champion.
7d (Supernatural)	Extraordinary	(Jump) Can leap from limb to limb 40 feet up in a tree.
8d (Supernatural)	Astonishing	(Catch) Can catch arrows in mid-air.
9d (Supernatural)	Unparalleled	(Sight) Can see in near-complete darkness.
10d (Supernatural)	Supreme	(Education) Can teach any subject from memory.

## Body Skills

**Athletics:** You excel at athletic feats and can do a passable job at a sport even if you've never played it before.

**Brawling:** You are a bruiser and know how to attack with your hands, feet, and head.

**Endurance:** You can pace yourself, hold your breath, run, or resist the ill effects of environment and exertion longer than most people.

**Health:** You eat well, have a strong metabolism and resist disease.

**Martial Arts [Type]:** You are extensively trained in the fine art of hand-to-hand combat. *Example Types:* Aikido, Boxing, Jeet Kun Do, Judo, Ju-Jitsu, Karate.

**Melee Weapon [Type]:** You are skilled with a particular type of hand-to-hand weapon. *Example Types:* Knife, Bayonet, Sword, Axe.

**Running:** You are an accomplished runner and can sprint for short distances or run for long distances without tiring or stumbling. You can keep up speed despite obstacles and fatigue. This does not determine speed (see the *Body table* on page 16); instead, it determines your ability maintain that speed over a distance or over obstacles.

**Swimming:** You are a strong swimmer, trained to swim fast and help others in emergencies.

**Wrestling:** You can tackle, throw, and pin opponents in close hand-to-hand combat.

## Coordination Skills

**Acrobatics:** You are a skilled gymnast and can complete flips, rolls, and handsprings. You can also use this skill to fall properly and to retain your footing after being thrown or knocked back.

**Archery:** You know how to fire and maintain bows and arrows.

**Catch:** You can catch objects out of the air on a successful roll.

**Climbing:** You are a skilled climber, capable of scaling vertical faces, walls, and anything on which you can find purchase.

**Dodge:** You are adept at getting out of the way of attacks and danger you can see coming.

**Driving [Type]:** You can drive a particular type of vehicle. *Example Types:* Bicycle, Car, Motorcycle, Tank, Truck.

**Escape Artist:** You are skilled at escaping ropes, handcuffs, and other restraint devices.

**Firearms [Type]:** You can fire, repair, clean, and maintain a particular type of firearm. *Example Types:* Machine Gun, Pistol, Rifle, Shotgun, Submachine Gun.

**Lockpick:** You are familiar with how to force, pick or bypass locks.

**Pilot [Type]:** You can pilot a particular type of airborne vehicle. *Example Types:* Blimp, Hang-Glider, Glider, Light Aircraft, Jet Aircraft, Helicopter, Spacecraft.

**Pick Pocket:** You are skilled at sleight of hand and are capable of stealing jewelry, wallets, and other personal effects from people without their knowledge. This typically means a dynamic contest of your Coordination+Pick Pocket vs. the victim's Sense+Hearing or Sense+Sight.

**Sail [Type]:** You can pilot a particular type of seaborne vehicle. *Example Types:* Sailboats, Small Watercraft, Large Watercraft, Speedboat.

**Stealth:** You are light on your feet and know how to remain unheard and out of sight. This typically means a dynamic contest of your Coordination+Stealth against their Sense+Hearing or Sense+Sight.

**Throw:** You can throw hand-held objects farther than most people your size.

## Sense Skills

**Hearing:** Your hearing is keener than average.

**Sight:** Your eyesight is keener than average.

**Smell:** Your sense of smell is keener than average.

**Taste:** Your sense of taste is keener than average.

**Touch:** Your sense of touch is keener than average.

**Search:** The ability to combine all useful senses in examining an area for clues. Cannot be higher than your Sight skill.



## Mind Skills

**Archaeology:** The study of ancient cultures.

**Anthropology:** The study of the origin, development and path of human civilization.

**Computer Hardware:** You can repair and build computers.

**Computer Programming:** You can program or reprogram computers.

**Criminology:** You can profile and track criminals by the evidence they leave behind.

**Cryptology:** You have a working knowledge of codes, ciphers, and encryption techniques.

**Education:** You have a solid overall education and know all manner of basic facts about math, science, grammar, and social studies.

**Electronics:** You can build, repair, and disassemble electronics without electrocuting yourself.

**First Aid:** With the proper equipment, you can treat minor wounds in the field and help a badly injured patient survive long enough for more intensive treatment.

**Forgery:** You can forge documents and recognize forgeries.

**Language [Type]:** You can speak, read, and write a particular language type. *Example Types:* Alien Language [specified], Arabic, Dutch, English, French, German, Spanish.

**Mythos:** A skill that dictates your general understanding as to the true nature of the universe. Use it to tie seemingly disparate elements, clues and occurrences together. This skill cannot be higher than the number of Failed or Hardened notches in your Unnatural gauge (if you have none, you cannot possess this skill; see *The Madness Meter* on page 18 for details).

**Mechanic [Type]:** You can repair, use, or build machinery of a particular type. *Example Types:* Cars, Light Aircraft, Jet Aircraft, Heavy Vehicles, Helicopters, Industrial Machinery, Watercraft.

**Medicine:** You can treat illness and wounds through surgery if you have access to the proper equipment. Your Medicine skill can't be higher than your First Aid skill.

**Navigation [Land]:** You can navigate using a map and compass or by dead reckoning on the ground.

**Navigation [Sea/Air]:** You can navigate by map, timing, and instrumentation, or by astrogation.

**Occult:** You have studied civilizations' attempts at cataloging and understanding the supernatural—this is often just a thin skein of superstition hiding the actual truth. For actual world-changing occult information, you need the Mythos skill.

**Psychiatry:** The science of studying, understanding and correcting problems with human behavior

**Survival:** You're a quick-thinking survivor; always aware of the dangers and pitfalls of your sur-

rounding environment.

**Tactics:** You are well versed in the arts of war and know how to use terrain, manpower, and equipment to coordinate attacks, prepare and avoid ambushes, and gain the upper hand in battles.

## Command Skills

**Inspiration:** You can cause people to feel optimistic despite any fears they might harbor. On a successful roll you can remove a single Hardened notch from a Madness gauge of a person listening to your pep-talk. This can only be done once per person per day. It does not affect Failed notches.

**Intimidation:** You can cause a person to fear you through physical or psychological threats. This usually means a dynamic contest between Command+Intimidation and Empathy+Resist or Empathy+Equilibrium.

**Leadership:** You can effectively guide and direct others, even under fire.

**Performance [Type]:** You have an entertaining skill and the confidence to perform it in front of large groups. *Example Types:* Acting, Flute, Guitar, Public Speaking, Singing.

**Psychology:** The art of understanding and manipulating human behavior to cure mental illness.

**Seduction:** You're skilled at attracting and manipulating others, particularly in a romantic sense.

## Empathy Skills

**Bluff:** You can talk your way through most situations, though any falsehood you tell will probably fall apart under close inspection.

**Counseling:** You can talk down a traumatized individual (see page 22 for details).

**Lie:** You can contrive convincing falsehoods that will be believed until evidence to the contrary is discovered.

**Meditation:** You can attain greater calm and focus with ritual and mental exercises.

**Persuasion:** You can convince people to see your side of an argument.

**Resist:** You are unusually resistant to psychological and physical coercion such as torture, telepathic attack, and brainwashing.

## Floating Skill

**Equilibrium:** You are not easily shocked and can function even in the most stressful or grotesque situations. This skill is rolled during Madness checks—each type of sanity gauge requires a different stat rolled with it. For example, for a Violence check, Equilibrium is rolled with Sense, for an Unnatural check, Equilibrium is rolled with Mind



## The Madness Meter

There are four categories of mental stability—the four pillars upholding sane and productive thought. These categories are: Violence, the Unnatural, Self and Helplessness. It's perfectly possible to have one piece of the foundation crumble while the other three are solid.

Horrific experiences can erode a person's ability to cope, and someone who has seen too much loses control over some aspect of his personality. Perhaps he develops a crippling phobia of something that reminds him of his traumas. Perhaps he obsesses on what he saw, or creates an elaborate rationale that shields him from accepting the truth. Perhaps he simply fades into catatonic passivity.

On the other hand, some people resist madness by becoming rigid and inflexible. While they retain control over themselves, it's a control that comes at the high price of increasing distance from the world and the people in it. It is possible to become so experienced—or numb—that just about any stimulus, no matter how alienating or nauseating, can be handled calmly and with equanimity. The downside of treating a mangled corpse as if it's as ordinary as breakfast is that you also treat breakfast with the caution and reserve most reserve for mangled corpses. Strength of this sort is a burden as much as a blessing, because those who possess it are, by necessity, alienated from their fellows and from themselves.

## The Gauges

**Violence:** This gauge dictates how you handle violence; whether inflicting or suffering from it.

**The Unnatural:** This gauge deals with things that fall outside of the status quo—supernatural events beyond the normal human range of experience.

**Self:** This gauge deals with internal conflict, especially guilt. Commit a crime, injure someone you love, lie to your best friend, this is all covered by the Self gauge.

**Helplessness:** This measures your reaction to traumatic events that you can't control.

## Hardened and Failed Notches

The four gauges of the Madness Meter measure how damaged or hardened your character has become to their particular influences. When confronted by a shocking event that falls under a particular gauge, you must make a Madness check by rolling a dice pool that represents how resistant you are to that stimulus.

When you succeed at a roll in a particular gauge, you gain a Hardened notch in that gauge. Hardened notches represent your mind coping with the stimu-

lus, leaving you resistant to it in the future. When you fail a roll, you gain a Failed notch, and suffer some ill effect as your mind fails to cope with the stimulus. That means one of three trauma reactions—fight, flight or freeze.

See below for more details.

## Confronting the Horrific

There are many strains and trials that can threaten someone's mental equilibrium. Not only are they divided by type, they differ by intensity. Having someone shoot at you is clearly a stress in the Violence region, but getting shot and then having to drag yourself a mile to the nearest farmhouse is a lot more difficult to internalize and overcome. Threats to sanity have Intensity ratings from 1-10. This works *exactly* like a difficulty number—your roll must match or beat the Intensity to succeed.

Sanity checks are managed with the Equilibrium skill. Unlike most skills, Equilibrium does not fall under a single stat. Rather, the stat that couples with it varies depending on the situation. Those without an Equilibrium skill simply roll their stat and hope for the best.

**For Violence checks:** Roll Sense+Equilibrium as your instincts kick in to preserve your skin in a circumstance that is clearly not safe. It's a razor-thin margin between using animal instincts to survive and succumbing to animal hysteria. Characters in tune with their surroundings can maintain that balance.

**For Unnatural checks:** Roll Mind+Equilibrium. Clearly unnatural events and entities are beyond common experience, and the only hope for putting it into a framework to which a character can relate is logic and abstract thought. Even if the reasoning turns out to be mistaken, it's better than nothing.

**For Self checks:** Roll Command+Equilibrium. The same force of belief that bends others to your will can help you stay the course even when you no longer recognize yourself.

**For Helplessness checks:** Roll Empathy+Equilibrium. Just as compassion for others allows you to relate and forge connections, understanding your own needs and trials can maintain hope, keep you from shutting down in despair—and keep you from turning into a ruthless automaton.

Hardened notches in a gauge offer powerful protection against challenges of that type: you do not have to roll if the Intensity is equal to or lower than your Hardened rating on a gauge.



**Example:** Dr. Mann has four Hardened notches in his Violence gauge, while his companion Michael has none. When someone pulls up a car and starts firing at them that's an Intensity 2 Violence check. Dr. Mann doesn't need to roll—he's a tough character who can keep his head under fire. Michael, however, must roll Sense+Equilibrium.

This means that every time you confront a challenge with Intensity equal to or less than your Hardened rating, your gauge won't change. Every time you face one greater than your Hardened rating, your gauge is going to change—you'll either get a Hardened notch or a Failed notch. Either way, you won't be the same.

The Equilibrium roll is made against a difficulty equal to the situation's Intensity: A matching set with either width or height at or above the situation's Intensity is sufficient to keep you in control. If the roll succeeds, you get another Hardened notch in the appropriate gauge. If the roll fails, you get a Failed notch in it. Furthermore, if you fail you also suffer a trauma reaction as described below under "Failed Rolls".

Keep in mind, Intensity 10 situations are *extremely* rare. They represent the absolute most terrible events you might see in your life. Hopefully you'll encounter them only once in a blue moon.

## Sample Situations and their Intensities

### Violence (Sense+Equilibrium)

- The sight of blood: Intensity 1
- Being shot at (or shooting at somebody): Intensity 2
- Seeing a dead body: Intensity 3
- Seeing a mutilated corpse: Intensity 4
- Being shelled by artillery: Intensity 5
- Being attacked by the undead: Intensity 6
- Suffering the effects of a *Rend Flesh* spell: Intensity 7
- Being consumed by a Shoggoth: Intensity 8
- Being impregnated by a Great Old One: Intensity 9

### The Unnatural (Mind+Equilibrium)

- Hearing disembodied voices: Intensity 1
- Seeing an unattended object move: Intensity 2
- Being struck by an invisible attacker: Intensity 3
- Watching a vampire rise from the grave: Intensity 4
- Seeing a Deep One: Intensity 5

- Seeing a Serpent Man: Intensity 6
- Seeing an Elder Thing: Intensity 7
- Seeing a Shoggoth: Intensity 8
- Seeing a Great Old One: Intensity 9

### Self (Command+Equilibrium)

- Lying to your best friend: Intensity 1
- Stealing: Intensity 2
- Stealing from your family: Intensity 3
- Cheating on your wife with her best friend: Intensity 4
- Defrauding everyone you know: Intensity 5
- Murdering a loved one: Intensity 6
- Killing a child: Intensity 7
- Mass murder: Intensity 8
- Betraying humanity itself: Intensity 9

### Helplessness (Empathy+Equilibrium)

- Getting locked in a pay-toilet for a night: Intensity 1
- Being mugged: Intensity 2
- Being locked up for long periods: Intensity 3
- Being violently kidnapped and held for ransom: Intensity 4
- Finding out you're suffering from a fatal illness: Intensity 5
- Realizing you have hours to live if you don't accomplish some specific task: Intensity 6
- Waiting on death row for your sentence to be carried out: Intensity 7
- Being herded to your death: Intensity 8
- Confirming the world of the Mythos behind the everyday after years of study: Intensity 9

## Successful Rolls

If your Equilibrium roll succeeds, you get another Hardened notch in the appropriate gauge. You only ever get one hardened notch per roll, no matter how intense the situation was.

**Example:** Michael Rook has no hardened notches in his Self gauge. In the course of a game, he surprises everyone by losing his temper and humiliating his girlfriend in front of her family. This is a rank 2 Self check. With a 3x10 Command+Equilibrium roll, he makes some kind of sense of it. ("It was just one time, I was under stress, I'll make it up to her. . .") He now has one Hardened notch in the Self gauge, even though the challenge was Intensity 2.



It's possible, albeit difficult, to completely fill a gauge with Hardened notches. Characters with full gauges have pretty much seen it all and are immune to further shocks. This sort of callousness has additional effects, however, as that sort of alienation from mainline humanity impedes one's ability to function as a person.

Characters with 10 Hardened notches in Violence get an automatic +2d bonus to Intimidate rolls. However, no skill rolled with the Empathy stat can ever have a width greater than 2. Any additional points of width are discarded.

Characters with 10 Hardened notches in Unnatural get an automatic +2d bonus to Mythos rolls. However, no skill rolled with the Mind stat can ever have a width greater than 2. Any additional points of width are discarded.

Characters with 10 Hardened notches in Self get an automatic +2d bonus to Lie rolls. However, no skill rolled with the Sense stat can ever have a width greater than 2. Any additional points of width are discarded.

Characters with 10 Hardened notches in Helplessness get an automatic +2d bonus to Dodge rolls. However, no skill rolled with the Command stat can ever have a width greater than 2. Any additional points of width are discarded.

### Mythos vs. the Occult

You may ask—what's the difference between the Mythos skill and the Occult skill? Since they both deal with the supernatural, sometimes the distinction is difficult. The short answer: The occult is the *trappings of knowledge*, while Mythos is *absolute knowledge*. The occult is 99% human superstition mixed with 1% knowledge of the supernatural, while Mythos is 100% knowledge of the other world.

The occult is not really damaging to the psyche—at least, until you find that 1% needle in the haystack—while Mythos *is always damaging to the Unnatural gauge*.

Each die in the Mythos skill requires an equivalent number of Hardened or Failed notches in the Unnatural gauge. So, to have Mythos 5d you'd need either 5 Hardened or 5 Failed notches in the Unnatural gauge.

This means until you see something Unnatural, it's not possible to *believe* in the Mythos, and therefore not possible to have a skill in it. While the GM can alter this rule as he sees fit, it creates a nice feeling of *descent* into the horrors of the Mythos.

### Failed Rolls

When you fail an Equilibrium roll, you get a Failed notch in the relevant gauge. No matter the relative Intensity of the situation, it's just one more Failed notch—really horrific experiences are not necessarily more scarring than minor ones. After all, a hallmark of decaying reason is a lost sense of proportion.

In addition to the Failed notch, however, you must *immediately* choose one of three trauma reactions. A trauma reaction means the conscious and logical part of the mind is unseated. You may be reacting with pure instinct, or just be stunned and dumbstruck. There are three trauma reactions, and once one is chosen you're trapped in that reaction until the situation changes and you have a chance to gather your wits.

The trauma reactions are:

**Flight:** You run away at top speed from the terrifying stimulus. If you're carrying anything that weighs more than a couple pounds, you drop it. If there's a choice of direction, you move away from what terrified you—if there are multiple paths that go straight away, you take the closest, safest or most familiar route. You run until you can no longer hear, smell, see, scent or feel the threat, or until you've failed enough Endurance rolls to collapse.

**Fight:** You attack with primal, berserk fury until you either obliterate the stimulus, fall exhausted from failed Endurance rolls, or are destroyed (or just knocked out). You cannot voluntarily stop fighting until the offending object, creature or person is clearly destroyed. Anyone who tries to stop you must also be attacked.

**Freeze:** You either hide and don't come out until you're sure the danger's passed, or you simply freeze like a deer in headlights. Freezing may mean perfect paralysis, or weeping in the fetal position. Characters who freeze in response to an unresponsive situation (for example, someone who freezes after coming upon the mangled remains of his beloved greyhound) can snap out of it if the situation does not change for an hour.

### Optional Rule: Multiple Failed Notches for a Single Failed Madness Check

A GM looking to emulate the situation where a single sight can send a relatively mentally sound individual spiraling into madness can make a simple tweak: Subtract the height of the Intensity from the height of the highest matching set in the failed Mad-



ness roll (if there are no matching sets, just use the Intensity number). This number becomes the number of Failed notches gained from that single horrific sight or experience.

Keep in mind this simple change makes character madness a much more distinct possibility.

**Example:** Dr. Turnbridge peers into the Twilight Hourglass despite repeated warnings. After he works the mechanism, the true nature of the universe—and the roiling chaos of Azathoth, the One, at the center of it—is revealed to him. This is an Intensity 10 check against the Unnatural. Turnbridge rolls his Mind+Equilibrium of 6d for a 2x3, which fails to match the Intensity by 7. With this optional rule, he suffers *7 Failed notches in the Unnatural from that one sight*.

If Turnbridge had failed to roll even a single match, he would have suffered *10 Failed notches in the Unnatural*. Ouch.

## Psychopaths and Cultists

Those who manage to gain 10 Hardened notches in a gauge are immune to that stimulus. Some individuals remain highly functioning in society even while suffering from multiple filled gauges. Others don't cope so well. Some examples of aberrant human behavior are listed below.

- Those who have 10 Hardened notches in the Self gauge are criminally insane—they fail to understand or care how stealing, lying, deceit and cheating negatively affect society.
- Those with 10 Hardened notches in the Violence gauge are psychopathic—they hold no value to any life except their own. This is a common trait in mass murderers and serial killers.
- Those who have 10 Hardened notches in the Unnatural gauge are cultists—they either worship or obsessively seek to fully comprehend the supernatural. Worshipers of entities such as Cthulhu and Nyarlathotep often suffer from this.
- Those who have 10 Hardened notches in the Helplessness gauge are paranoid. They trust no one—not even themselves, really—and are sure others are after them.

## Mental Collapse

Every time you get five Failed notches, in any combination of gauges, you develop a serious mental problem. Getting Failed notches always represents mental discomfort, just as Hardened notches repre-

sent isolation and alienation. Every five Failed notches means that inner pain has gotten so severe that it impinges on your ability to function. You have developed an aberration. You suffers its ill effects until you lose a Failed notch. If you get another Failed notch, the problem recurs. Another five Failed notches and you pick up another.

If you get an aberration, work with your GM to pick something that makes sense. Don't just try to get something that won't come into play: Believe it or not, mental aberrations can be fun to play. This is your chance to reveal your character's nature through actions. Don't waste it.

## Phobia

You develop a debilitating fear of something—typically something that was present during the trauma, or more rarely something that you associate with the issue. Someone who saw his wife torn to pieces by wild dogs might reasonably develop a fear of dogs. Someone who was attacked by Deep Ones might develop a phobia of fish, or water. Whenever in the presence of the feared object, roll Command+Equilibrium. If you're in a fight, you have to take an action doing nothing else to make this roll as you steel yourself for the confrontation. This roll is not a Madness check, inasmuch as it doesn't change your Madness Meter. If you fail the check, however, you have to either freeze or flee. Fighting is not an option. Characters who are phobic of something really obscure (“Large piles of unrefined tungsten terrify me!”) may automatically fail this check at every exposure.

## Depression

Depressed characters feel listless, apathetic and unable to care about anything. Good things are never good enough, while bad things are worse. At its nadir, *everything* is annoying, uncomfortable or worthless. Depression tends to move in cycles, which can be weekly or monthly. At its mildest, depression doesn't penalize anything (though your character is probably more cynical or morose than typical). At the next step down in the cycle, the grimness has increased to the point that all Empathy skill rolls are made at a -1d penalty. At its fullest depth, depression gives that -1d penalty to both Empathy and Command skills. (Note: At no point does this penalize the Equilibrium skill.) The cycle, then, is normal, bad, worst, bad, then normal again.

## Chemical Dependence

Depression often leads to attempts to self-medicate, but some people skip straight to drug addiction or alcoholism without lengthy periods of the blues. The chemical in question could be anything—cocaine and heroin are big-league addictives, but cheap and



legal booze addicts far more Americans than all other drugs together. If you're chemically dependent, you feel a need for the drug every day. If you succumb, you suffer no penalty—beyond that exacted by being drunk, high or on the nod. If you resist, you become jittery, angry, tense and distracted. On a day without your drug of choice, all Sense, Mind and Coordination skill rolls are made at Difficulty 3 due to physical illness and/or mental distress. (Note: At no point does this penalize the Equilibrium skill.)

## Fugues

Alcoholism and drug addiction often lead to fugues, or “blackouts” as they're more commonly called. You go on a bender, lose a chunk of time and come around—sometimes *days* later—with no memory of what you did. More rarely, people become afflicted with fugues even without the encouragement of mind-bending substances. They just get trapped in a mental cycle, unable to stop thinking about the source of their trouble and, rather than face it, the conscious mind shuts down.

Any time you react to a Madness check by running away or freezing, roll two dice. If they come up the same number, you enter a fugue. Characters in a fugue wander away, don't talk to people unless they absolutely have to (and even then are vague and distracted). They drive if they know where their car is, heading in a random direction. They stop and eat if they're hungry, go to the bathroom when the need arises, don't pick fights or jump off bridges; they seem like very distracted, slightly stunned people on an errand. When the fugue begins, roll one die: That's how many hours the fugue lasts, unless it comes up 10. If it's a ten, roll again: The fugue lasts that many days.

As indicated, fugues and drugs feed one another. Characters with both aberrations tend to automatically get their drug while in a fugue, as much as possible. Characters who take heavy doses have to roll the two dice to see if they drink themselves into a blackout. (A detective who takes a shot of bourbon to steady his nerves before a raid isn't going to fugue, but if he goes home afterwards and finishes the bottle, he might.)

## Getting Better

Morbid and miserable experiences alter a character's personality chart for the worse, one way or the other. There are some skills that allow characters to manipulate the gauges in a more controlled fashion. Keep in mind methods vary drastically between time periods; in 1925 a psychotic would likely be tied to a bed and drugged until compliant, while in the 1990s he'd be carefully medicated and monitored as well as subjected to intense therapy.

## Counseling

The Counseling skill lets a character talk down someone who's just emerged from a trauma, providing immediate psychological triage. The counselor rolls Empathy+Counseling against a Difficulty equal to the character's current Failed or Hardened notches (whichever the counselor's addressing). With a success, a Failed or Hardened notch is erased (this can only be attempted once per traumatic event). However, the counselor has to be able to talk with the patient, hear the patient's answers, and have a meaningful exchange of ideas (or, at the minimum, comforting platitudes). This takes at least a half-hour. It also requires a setting that is, if not perfectly safe, at least not immediately dangerous. Characters holed up in a WWI foxhole can do this between artillery barrages, but not during one.

Furthermore, Counseling can, with any success, snap someone out of a trauma reaction. This only takes a few minutes of conversation, but it can't be done in the middle of a fight or a chase or any other violent distraction. (This means that getting someone to give up a Fight reaction is pretty tough, unless someone's holding him down.)

The final limit on Counseling is that its immediate, empathetic nature makes it useless after a reaction has become ingrained. Thus, once a day has passed since the trauma Counseling can't alter the Hardened or Failed notch. After that, you need a psychiatrist.

**Example:** Officer Florintino has two Fails in Violence and during a particularly vicious and confusing shootout she sees her partner catch a slug in the throat. This is an Intensity 4 Violence check, causing her to roll Sense+Equilibrium against Difficulty 4. With a 2x1 she fails, goes berserk and kills the shooter even after he surrenders. She also racks up her third Failed notch. The only witness to this is Sergeant Panil, who has a 5d Empathy+Counseling pool. He pulls her aside as the rest of the SWAT team sweeps the building, puts a blanket over her shoulder and starts talking her down in the back seat of a squad car. He waves off anyone who tries to get in the way, so he's permitted his roll. The difficulty is 3, her current number of Failed notches. Rolling a 3x7, Panil convinces Florintino that she's okay, anyone would have done the same thing, she's safe now, her partner's in a better place, hey, no one has to know anything that scumbag said, and who could have heard him over the gunfire anyway? Officer Florintino erases her Failed notch—though there still may be questions about the death. . . .



## Psychiatry

This Mind skill is the dry and intellectual science of reshaping the thoughts of others. With a successful roll the psychiatrist can remove Failed and Hardened notches—or add them. It is not easy, however, and it is not quick.

To apply Psychiatry, the patient has to spend time in therapy. The more extreme his attitude, the more time is required to dig it out and restore him to a normal range of function. Fixing Failed notches takes longer than erasing Hardened notches.

Patients in residential therapy—isolated from the cares and stresses of everyday life and doing nothing but concentrating on getting well—have to spend a number of weeks there equal to their Failed notches in the gauge they're trying to fix. If they're trying to get rid of a Hardened notch, they have to spend that number of days in intensive recovery.

If the patient is only coming for an hour-long session once or twice a week, it takes a number of weeks of therapy equal to the patient's Hardened notches before the psychiatrist can attempt a roll. A character getting gradual treatment for Failed notches needs to spend months of weekly sessions before the roll gets made.

Once the time has been put in, the psychiatrist rolls Mind+Psychiatry. If the character being treated has done good roleplaying indicating someone who is really struggling with her issues and trying to get well, the psychiatrist may add a die to the pool (GM's discretion). If the character has resisted therapy, the roll is at a -1d penalty. Passive patients neither add nor subtract from the pool.

The roll is made without a difficulty rating. Any success alters the gauge as planned.

All this assumes the psychiatrist is trying help the patient get well, pushing her towards the mainstream middle of the chart. The system works just as well for an unscrupulous psychiatrist who, for whatever reason, wants a patient to get sicker. In that case, the psychiatrist has to invest time appropriate to the Failed notch he's attempting to inflict. Similarly, training designed to inure people against trauma require days or weeks equal to the Hardened notch desired.

**Example:** After being held hostage for a week, Special Agent Krebbs is in poor condition, physically and mentally. He picked up his fifth Hardened notch in Helplessness and is starting to show signs of dissociation. He's sent off to the psych ward at Bethesda.

After five days, his psychiatrist gets to roll to adjust poor Krebbs' attitude. Krebbs, however, has been resisting therapy, so the roll is at a -1d penalty. The doctor fails and Krebbs retains his Hardened notches. Although the doctor advises him to deal with his issues, his boss wants him

back for the big case. He's released.

Krebbs' wife, however, is unhappy with her husband's remoteness. She pressures him to continue therapy and he agrees to a once-weekly session with a different therapist. He starts out reluctant, but after five weeks of gradual improvement he's participating—somewhat. His new therapist is permitted a roll with no bonus or penalty. This therapist gets a 2x1. It's the bare minimum of success, but enough to thaw Krebbs and remove one Hardened notch in Helplessness.

## Psychology

Where psychiatry is a methodical and scientific approach to altering the minds of others, psychology is more akin to an art. True, it relies on many of the same techniques, theories and approaches as psychiatry, but it's more responsive, more personal and less clinical. (In most western clinics, that means it's less pharmacological.)

Psychology often depends on the therapist's strength of character and force of personality. It is therefore a Command skill rather than a Mind skill. Forming a tight and intense bond with a therapist can allow rapid progress—but unlike the repeatable methods of psychiatry, it depends on the patient as much as the therapist. Psychology does not make people better, but it can help them get better.

It can provide emotional triage, just like the Counseling skill—same time frame, same effects, same requirements, same difficulty rating. It can also remove notches from gauges like the Psychiatry skill, with the same investment of effort. (It cannot be used to add notches to any gauge, however.)

Psychology is quite versatile, but there's a catch. A successful Psychology roll does not change the patient's attitude. It allows a new Equilibrium roll, of the same type that was failed (or successful) before, only now the difficulty is the number of hard or failed notches in the gauge you're trying to affect.

**Example:** Dr. Amy Schneider is a psychologist working with a serial killer task force. She's present when one of her fellow agents goes in the basement and finds the remains of a trepanation experiment—a rank 3 Violence check, which Schneider's colleague fails, thereby racking up his second Violence Fail. Schneider has a 6d Command+Psychology pool, and while talking him down from the trauma she rolls a 2x8. This gives him a chance to reroll his Violence check, now against Difficulty 2 for the two Fails he has. He gets no sets and remains shaken and traumatized.

Compassionate to a fault, Dr. Schneider convinces the boss to give them two weeks' health



leave so she can really work on his issues. At the end of that time she rolls, with a +1d bonus because he's digging deep, and this time gets a 2x2. That's enough to permit him another Sense + Equilibrium roll against Difficulty 2. This time he gets a 3x1 and is able to erase that Failed notch.

## **Hope in Dark Times**

Mental equilibrium is a funny thing. Some intelligent, accomplished and ambitious people crumble into neurosis after seeing a gas station clerk get shot during a bungled robbery. Other ignorant and naïve people are subjected to far grimmer experiences—lengthy imprisonment, torture, rape—and manage to emerge relatively intact.

The difference often comes down to internalization. The victim who accepts that the event happened for a reason or that he somehow was asking for it (“What was I thinking, going to a gas station on the south side at night?”) incorporates fear and hesitation into his world-view. The victim who never buys into his abuse (“Daddy said it was his right, but he didn't have any right to do that to me”) has the resources to recognize his suffering without being governed by it.

While the circumstances of the trauma have a powerful impact on the victim's ability to cope, the victim's background and personal life are often just as important, if not moreso. To reflect this there are specialized character traits that you can purchase at character creation (see *Part II: Characters* on page 42 for more details).





## Chapter 3: Combat

Here's where we get into some of the most important rules in the game—the things that can injure or kill your character. Because combat and other threats change the game so drastically, the rules for them are quite specific.

Sure, it may be important for you to crack the Aklo cipher with your Mind+Cryptography dice pool, but usually you don't need to know too many details; just whether it worked or not. But if some cultist swings at you with a machete, you need to know exactly when, where, and how well he does it.

### The Three Phases of a Combat Round

Each round of combat is broken into three phases: *declare*, *roll*, and *resolve*. When all three are done and every character in combat has acted, the next round begins and the cycle starts all over again.

#### 1) Declare

Describe your character's action. The character with the lowest Sense stat declares first, because a character with a higher Sense is more aware of what's going on in the fight and is better able to respond. Non-player characters declare in order of Sense just like players. If two characters have the same Sense stat, the NPC declares first; or use the Sight skill and the Mind stat (in that order) as tiebreakers.

When you declare, make it short and specific. Expert dice are "called" at this point: Declare what height you want each to have. And if you're doing something special—dodging, attempting two things at once, aiming at a specific body part, helping a teammate with some action, casting a spell or using a martial arts maneuver—say so now.

#### 2) Roll

Each character rolls the dice pool appropriate to the declared action—usually a spell, a stat, or a stat+skill dice pool. Since all characters have already declared their actions, all roll at the same time and figure out their actions' width and height.

#### 3) Resolve

Before the dice are "read," anyone with Trump dice assigns them. Then the character with the widest roll *always acts first*. If two sets are equally wide, the taller roll goes first. All actions are resolved in order of width. If five characters roll 5x5, 3x6, 4x6, 2x3 and a 3x10, their actions are resolved in the following order: 5x5 first, then 4x6, then 3x10, then 3x6, and then 2x3. This means any action wider than your roll happens *before* your action—even if

you're trying to dodge or defend against that attack. If it's wider, it happens before you can act or react.

When an attack hits, it immediately inflicts damage. If you suffer any damage before your roll is resolved, you lose a die out of your highest match—since being punched, stabbed, or shot is very, very distracting. If your set is ruined (reduced to no matching dice), the action fails, even if you rolled a success. You lose a die every time you take damage.

That's all there is to a combat round. Everyone says what they're doing, they roll, actions happen in width order, and then the whole thing starts over again.

### Damage

Damage in *NEMESIS* is specific. When you're hit, the attack roll tells you exactly where you're hit and for how much damage.

### Types of Damage

There is a world of difference between getting punched in the gut and getting stabbed there. A punch aches and bruises, but unless you're pummeled for a long while you're unlikely to suffer any lasting harm. Being stabbed or shot is entirely different—your internal organs are re-arranged and exposed to all kinds of germs, viruses, and pollutants. Damage that penetrates the skin is serious.

In *NEMESIS* there are two types of damage: Shock and Killing.

**Shock damage** dazes you and can be dangerous in the short term, but is usually shaken off. It represents bruising, blunt trauma, concussion, shallow surface cuts, or light bleeding.

**Killing damage** is just what it sounds like—damage that can quickly end your life. It represents puncture wounds, deep cuts, organ trauma, ballistic damage, heavy bleeding, or burning. Sometimes Killing damage is reduced to Shock damage due to armor or other effects; when this is important, 1 point of Killing damage is equivalent to 2 points of Shock.

### The Damage Silhouette

Every character sheet has a damage silhouette with a bunch of wound boxes representing how much Shock and Killing damage a character can sustain. On a normal human, the damage silhouette is shaped like a human body, with hit locations split into legs, arms, torso, and head. The height of an attack roll determines which hit location takes the damage (see **Hit Location**, page 26).

If you're hit, mark off a wound box for each point of damage sustained. If it's Shock, put a single di-



agonal line through each box. If it's Killing damage, put an "X" through each box.

The GM should decide how to describe the damage and assign any penalties. Taking 5 Killing to the torso might not be immediately fatal, but it will probably kill you eventually if you don't get medical treatment; the GM might call it broken ribs or maybe a punctured lung. It might be worth a -1d penalty on most actions to reflect shock and pain; or maybe the damage itself is penalty enough. It's up to the GM.

When new damage strikes a hit location, always fill unmarked boxes first, if there are any. Shock damage becomes Killing damage if all a hit location's wound boxes are filled. Once all the wound boxes are marked with Shock, any further damage to that location is automatically counted as Killing damage.

## Hit Location

The location of an injury is usually much more important than the amount of damage—given the choice between having someone stomp on my foot or on my face, I'll pick the foot every time.

Because location is so important, in *NEMESIS* the height of an attack roll (i.e., the quality of the attack) defines the hit location, while the width of the roll (speed and power) determines damage as well as telling you who goes first. The higher the attack roll, the more dangerous the attack.

That poor little damage silhouette on the character sheet has numbers representing each of its locations, from 1 (left leg) to 10 (head). Look up the height of the attack roll on the silhouette to find out where you were hit.

### DAMAGE SILHOUETTE:

Height	Hit Location (Wound Boxes)
1	Left Leg (5)
2	Right Leg (5)
3-4	Left Arm (5)
5-6	Right Arm (5)
7-9	Torso (10)
10	Head (4)

Once all the wound boxes in the head (sometimes called "brain boxes") are filled with Shock damage, you're unconscious. If your head boxes fill with Killing, you're dead.

When your torso fills with Shock, your Body and Coordination are reduced by -4d until you recover at least 1 point of Shock. If your torso is filled with Killing, you're dead.

When a limb is filled with Shock damage, you can't use it to perform any skill or action. If a leg is filled with Shock damage, your running speed is cut in half; if both are filled, your movement is reduced

to 1 yard *per minute*. If a limb is filled with Killing, it's seriously damaged and may never be quite as good again. The GM decides the exact effect based on the nature of the attack and injury and the quality of medical care you receive. Maybe it reduces stat+skill rolls using that limb by -1d because it never quite heals properly, or you lose a wound box from that location permanently; or the attack cuts the limb clean off. It's up to the GM.

Once all wound boxes in a limb fill with Killing, any further damage to that limb goes straight to the torso.

**Example:** A cultist from the Twilight Campaign punches Dr. Mann with a 3x5. That does width in Shock damage, so Dr. Mann takes 3 Shock to hit location 5, his right arm.

The next round, another Twilight Campaign cultist stabs Dr. Mann with a knife (which inflicts width in Killing) with a 3x6. He suffers 3 Killing damage, again to the right arm. Dr. Mann has 5 wound boxes on his right arm, so 2 of the 3 Killing points fill the two empty wound boxes. The third point of Killing damage is divided between two of the three boxes that already have Shock damage. Dr. Mann's right arm now has 4 Killing and 1 Shock inflicted on it—it's so badly hurt it can't be used. One more point and it might be unusable forever!

## Non-Human Hit Locations

Some supernatural creatures—and many mundane ones—have bizarre body configurations and more or fewer wound boxes than a human. There are several ways to reflect this. A quick and dirty solution is to take the creature's Body stat, multiply it by 10, and split that figure between six hit locations as wound boxes. As a matter of course, the largest portion of the body should take the torso slot (7 to 9), the smallest should take the head slot (10) and the limbs should be split between the remaining numbers.

To reflect even more bizarre configurations you can simply spread the "head boxes" throughout the body of the creature in odd locations (say, one in the torso, one in the arm and one in the head). This makes knocking out such a creature nearly impossible without extensive knowledge of its body structure.

## Healing

Damage is nasty stuff, so you're naturally wondering how to get rid of it.

**Healing Shock damage:** Shock can be healed with the First Aid skill, if you have the right tools—a complete first aid kit with bandages, splints, and painkillers usually does the trick. The character per-

forming first aid makes a Mind+First Aid roll with the total amount of damage in the hit location as a difficulty number, up to a maximum of 10 (so if a limb has 2 Killing and 4 Shock damage, the difficulty is 6). Each successful use of the First Aid skill heals a number of Shock points equal to the width of the roll; a failed roll, however, *inflicts* 1 point of Shock.

First aid can be used once per wound. To keep track, simply put a check mark next to the hit location each time you take a wound and erase it when you get treated with first aid.

First aid can never heal Killing damage—only real medical treatment can do that.

Shock can also be healed with rest. Every game day, if you get a good night's rest, you recover half the Shock damage on each hit location (if you have only 1 point of Shock on a location, it heals completely).

**Healing Killing damage:** Killing damage takes a lot longer to heal. Short of some kind of supernatural intervention it can *only* be cured by serious medical attention—meaning surgery and a hospital stay—or prolonged bed rest.

When you get real medical treatment, the doctor rolls a Mind+Medicine dice pool. The procedure converts a number of Killing points to Shock equal to the height of the successful roll, taking 5 – width hours. Treat each hit location with a separate operation.

You can also recover Killing damage with extensive bed rest. For each week of complete rest, 1 point of Killing is converted to Shock on each hit location. If it's in a hospital, roll the doctor's Mind+Medicine pool and convert width in Killing to Shock instead.

Keep in mind that healing Killing damage varies due to time period. In the 1920's, a gangrenous limb would be severed, while in the modern era the patient would be pumped full of exotic antibiotics in the hopes the limb could be saved. In the days before antibiotics, a wound with a few points of Killing damage may grow worse over time thanks to infection, taking Shock damage each day rather than healing. The particulars of what can and can't be healed remains up to the GM to decide; if in doubt, resolve it with a Body+Health roll and set the difficulty based on the environment and circumstances.

## Hand-to-Hand Combat

Fighting hand-to-hand—whether it's kung fu, a sword fight, or just rolling around in the mud—is a contest between opponents with the vague goal of “getting the upper hand.” It's a messy business. Strength, speed, and aggressiveness are everything.

Hand-to-hand attacks use the Body stat. If you're unarmed, use the Brawling, Wrestling or Martial Arts skill. Generally it's your choice, unless the GM

decides a particular skill is required—if your opponent has wrestled you to the ground, you may be forced to use your Wrestling skill instead of Martial Arts [Karate]. If you have a weapon, use its Melee Weapon skill. As usual, the height of your roll determines the hit location: Roll a 3x1 and you hit the guy in the leg. Roll 2x10 and you smash him in the face. Width determines initiative (who goes first) as well as damage.

Base damage for hand-to-hand attacks is based on your Body stat (see **Body**, page 12, for details.) Hand-to-hand weapons amplify this damage, depending on how effective and deadly they are; they're described beginning on page 35.

## Called Shots

Just getting the edge on an opponent in hand-to-hand combat is hard enough—trying to hit a *specific* body part is truly tricky. Here's how it works: Lose one die from your dice pool because it's harder to target a specific hit location (skill dice can offset this penalty, but are lost or you can take the penalty and use the skill die normally). Next, set a die in your remaining pool to the hit location you're hoping to hit. Now roll the remaining dice. If you score a match and it beats your opponent's roll, you hit. If you score a match with the set hit location die, you've successfully struck that particular hit location. Expert dice buy off the dropped die penalty—as usual—but must be rolled normally.

The most popular hand-to-hand called shot is the knockout, a jab or blow to the head of a target (hit location 10) hoping to knock him unconscious. Be careful, though—if the target's head fills with Killing damage, that's it, he's dead.

Another popular attack is choking or strangling, which usually also involves a called shot to the head. See **Choking and Strangling** on page 28.

## Disarming

If someone's coming at you with a weapon, you're probably going to want to knock it away from him. Good luck.

Make a called shot on the arm holding the weapon. If you succeed, and you beat or match your target's Body stat as a difficulty number, you do no damage but force the target to drop the weapon. If your width is a point or more greater than the width of your target's attack, you can choose to either knock the weapon away or snatch it from the target—and if you snatch it, you can use it normally the next combat round.

If you fail to beat the target's width and the weapon has an edge, you suffer 1 point of Killing to whichever limb you're using to disarm, even if you succeed in knocking the weapon away. If that seems harsh, just remember that when someone's trying to



use a sword on you there's not much to grab but the pointy bits.

## Wrestling and Pinning

The standard hand-to-hand attack is a punch or kick, but many fights start out with an exchange of blows and end up with both fighters rolling around on the asphalt, each looking to hold the other guy down.

To pin someone, first announce that's what you're doing in the declare phase. Then roll your Body+Brawling, Body+Wrestling, or Body+Martial Arts dice pool. If you beat your target's roll, you inflict 1 point of Shock to the indicated hit location and knock the target down. The target is now pinned until he escapes.

When pinned, you can't dodge or take cover, and you can't attack anyone—including using firearms or Supernatural powers—except the character that pinned you. Even worse, while you're pinned any hand-to-hand attack made against you gains +1d to its dice pool.

You remain pinned until one of three things happens:

- Your attacker declares he's doing something else and lets you go.
- Your attacker is knocked out or killed.
- You beat your attacker's Body+Brawling, Body+Wrestling, or Body+Martial Arts roll in a dynamic contest with your own Body+Brawling, Body+Wrestling, or Body+Martial Arts dice pool. You can attempt this once per combat round.

## Choking and Strangling

Smothering, choking, and drowning are all the same thing: First you can't breathe, and then you pass out and die. The cause of death is lack of oxygen.

To choke someone with your bare hands (outside a pin), use your Body+Brawling, Body+Wrestling, or Body+Martial Arts pool. First, declare a called shot to the head. If you succeed, you inflict 1 point of Shock and continue doing 1 point of Shock to the target's head per round, until one of the following things happens:

- You declare that you're doing something else.
- You take damage from any source.
- The victim beats your Body+Brawling, Body+Wrestling, or Body+Martial Arts roll in a dynamic contest with his Body+Brawling, Body+Wrestling, or Body+Martial Arts. The victim may attempt this roll once a combat round.

You can begin choking a pinned opponent with any successful Body+Brawling, Body+Wrestling, or Body+Martial Arts roll—you don't need to make a called shot to location 10. But if you attempt a choke and fail, the target automatically escapes your pin.

Strangling a target works just like choking, but it cuts off the flow of blood to the brain instead of just air. Strangling inflicts 2 points of Shock to the head per round and requires a Body+Martial Arts attack (see page 29) or some form of garrote.

## Throwing Large Objects

Throwing something heavy at an enemy is pretty simple. Roll Body+Throw to attack. You inflict damage based on your Body stat just like a hand-to-hand attack, regardless of the size of the object. A supernaturally boosted character with 9d Body does width in Shock and Killing with a thrown rock or with a thrown dumpster; the dumpster may be bigger than the rock, but it's going a lot slower.

But throwing a large object has one advantage. If it's big enough to cover more than one hit location of the target, you can hit with multiple sets in your roll even if you didn't declare multiple actions. If you nail a thug with a dumpster and roll 2x7 and 3x10, he takes damage to the torso and the head!

## Knockback!

Knockback is the wonderful art of sending your opponent flying through the air with a single supernatural punch, kick, or blast. If you're struck with a supernatural attack of 6d+, you're knocked back. Keep in mind, it requires a boosted stat or a blasting spell at 6d or more, *not just a dice pool of 6d*—a normal human with a Body+Brawling pool of 8d from Body 4 and Brawling 4 can't knock you back, but a supernaturally boosted individual with a Body of 8d can send you flying. A boosted skill only causes knockback if the GM thinks it makes sense.

Knockback is determined by the width of the attack roll and the total damage inflicted. The formula is simple:

**Width of the roll x Shock damage = yards knocked back.**

So let's say you have Body 9d and hit a target with a roll of 3x10, for 3 Shock and 3 Killing. 3 width x 3 Shock = 9 yards. You send your opponent flying 27 feet. Ouch!



## Blocking, Dodging, and Supernatural Defenses

Most people don't like being hit, stabbed, or strangled, and the attack rules assume the target is trying his or her best to avoid it while still trying to get an attack in. But there are some times when you don't care about attacking back—you just want to survive. Here's how "getting the hell out of the way" works in *NEMESIS*.

There are three ways to defend against an incoming attack: *dodging*, *blocking* and *defending with a supernatural power*. Dodging uses your Coordination+Dodge pool. Blocking uses your Body+Brawling, Body+Wrestling, or Body+Martial Arts pool.

Defending with a supernatural power uses the appropriate spell, boosted stat or boosted skill dice pool as either a block or dodge. For example, with your *Wall of Sand* spell you can block an incoming attack by raising an impenetrable wall of sand, or with boosted Coordination you can dodge a hail of bullets. Some supernatural abilities can do both.

All three types of defense work pretty much the same way. Dodging, blocking, or defending with a supernatural power is a combat action that replaces your attack or other action for that round (unless you attempt multiple actions).

This is always a dynamic contest against your opponent's attack roll. Your roll's width must *equal* or *exceed* the attack roll's width, or the attack happens too quickly for you to react. And your roll must *equal* or *beat* the attack's height, or you don't defend well enough to avoid it.

On a successful dodge, block, or supernatural defense, each die in your matching set becomes a "gobble" die that removes 1 die from the attacker's matching set. Any attacking set that is reduced below width 2 is ruined and misses completely.

You can spread your "gobble" dice between multiple attackers, as long as your roll is equal or better than each individual attack roll's width *and* height.

Even better, if you're blocking with a shield or some other object that gives you a lot of coverage and was specifically built for blocking, you don't have to use gobble dice to defend. You still must roll to block and score a matching set, as usual, but *every attack* directed against you that *you know is coming* must beat your block roll's height to hit you—in other words, for that one resolve phase enemies must beat your block's height as a difficulty number. As always, if the attack goes first it hits before you can get your guard up.

**Example:** Michael Rook is jumped by three ghouls and dodges their attacks. His Coordination+Dodge roll comes up 3x7. The ghouls all

succeed, rolling 2x5, 2x6, and 3x9.

The ghoul with the 3x9 goes first—his width tied Rook's but his roll was higher. And because it was higher, Rook can't dodge it. Rook takes a hit to location 9 (his torso) and loses a die from his set thanks to the damage, reducing his dodge to 2x7. Next comes the 2x6 attack. Rook's dodge roll is taller at height 7, so he can use one of his gobble dice to reduce the ghoul's width to 1, changing a 2x6 hit to a 1x6 miss. The last ghoul rolled 2x5, also shorter than Rook's dodge—so Rook can use his last gobble die to eat a die from that attack, ruining it.

Thanks to skillful dodging, what would have been a savage flurry of claw-wounds is only one to the chest and a couple of near misses.

## What Can I Block and Dodge?

You can generally block or dodge any attack that you can see coming. Roughly speaking, this means hand-to-hand attacks and relatively slow projectiles such as thrown objects. If an attack is faster than an ordinary thrown object but slower than a bullet—a tree stump hurled by a sasquatch with a boosted Body stat, for instance—it's up to the GM.

The exception, of course, is a character with boosted Coordination. With supernatural reflexes and agility you can attempt to dodge or block *anything*, even gunfire or lasers. You still must beat the attack in a normal dynamic contest, however.

You can use block (but not dodge) to protect another target, if you're close enough that the attack could have hit you instead and the GM agrees to it.

## Martial Arts

The Martial Arts skill represents combat training that allows you to fight more effectively, granting a number of attack and defense bonuses. The higher your Martial Arts skill, the more bonuses you can choose from. At character creation, select one bonus from the list below for each die in the skill. When you gain a new die in Martial Arts, pick a new bonus for your repertoire.

You can choose *one* bonus for an attack from the available bonuses during the declare phase.

- +2 damage
- +2 height or -2 height
- +2 width for initiative only
- Upgrade Shock damage to Killing
- Attempt multiple actions without a 1d penalty
- Make a called shot with any successful roll
- Disarm with any successful roll—no called shot required
- Strangle instead of choke



- Escape a pin
- Knock the target down without falling yourself or having to wrestle him

However, Martial Arts training is specialized. You must define the type of Martial Arts you possess when you buy it. Different types of martial arts emphasize different maneuvers, from the holds and escapes of ju-jitsu to the hard strikes and kicks of karate. Martial Arts [Ju-Jitsu] is fine, or even Martial Arts [Eclectic Mix of Styles], but just plain Martial Arts is too broad. The specific type of Martial Arts skill dictates what kinds of attacks you can use it for; at the GM's discretion you might be able to use Martial Arts [Ju-Jitsu] just fine for a wrestling attack but not, say, to kick a fallen opponent in the head.

Work with your GM to choose the best maneuvers for your Martial Arts type. Want more bonuses? Take another type of Martial Arts skill!

You can also use the Martial Arts skill for other combat-related actions as allowed by the GM, such as making a Coordination+Martial Arts roll to land on your feet after falling or being knocked back.

At your GM's discretion, you can take Martial Arts for a specific weapon, such as Martial Arts [Zen Archery] or Martial Arts [Three-Section Staff]. It works the same as regular Martial Arts, *but for that particular weapon only*.

## Ranged Combat

The nasty thing about getting shot at is that once the bullet is in flight, there's not much you can do about it. Bullets are fast; people are slow. The first clue many people get that they're being shot at is the sensation of hot lead plowing through their flesh.

That means gunfire is almost always a static contest. The target isn't interacting with your bullet once it's in flight; if you shoot before the target can get out of the way, you either hit or you don't. Don't want to get shot? Get behind cover before the shooting starts.

To keep every fight from stagnating into endless repetitions of "I shoot him. I shoot him. I shoot him," there are various tactical options that skew your chances a bit. As always, these options must be chosen during the declare phase of combat, *before* you roll.

Most of these rules can also be used for any distance attack—be it a stinger missile, a *Rend Flesh* spell, or a bow.

## Aiming

By taking your time and sighting your target carefully, you can improve your chances of hitting: For every combat round spent squinting down the barrel at the target, add +1d to your dice pool. You can't

take any other action while aiming, or add more than +2d in this fashion. And if you're distracted (i.e., you have to roll another dice pool) or you suffer any damage while aiming, the bonus is lost.

In addition to normal aiming, shooting or attacking a large or stationary object at close range automatically grants a +2d bonus to the attack. After all, it's simple to shoot a house at 20 feet—much easier than, say, shooting a gibbering alien spitting acid at you.

## Called Shots

Sometimes you want to shoot a target in a specific body part. This is known as a called shot. It works pretty much the same way as in hand-to-hand attacks (see *Called Shots*, page 30): Drop 1d out of your dice pool, set one other die in your pool to the number of the hit location you're targeting, and roll the remaining dice looking for a match.

Sometimes you want to call a shot at an object worn or held by a target, not the target itself—like the fuel tank on a flamethrower, a mystic amulet, gadget, or doomsday device. In that case, make a called shot for hit location 9.

## Multiple Shots and Spray Attacks

Sometimes you fire more than one shot at someone (or at more than one person). With weapons designed to fire once per combat round (like many pistols or rifles) this is handled by the multiple actions rules (see *Multiple Actions* on page 11)—in other words, it's very hard to pull off.

Automatic weapons such as machine guns are built to make multiple attacks, and they have a large advantage—they have a Spray rating measured in dice that you add to your dice pool, and you don't lose the usual penalty die for attempting multiple actions (see *Spray*, page 34). Any and all matches that come up are hits. You can't combine this trick with aiming—if you spend a turn aiming and decide to use a weapon's Spray dice, the extra die from aiming is lost.

Spray attacks use a number of bullets (or energy charges, or whatever) equal to the number of dice in your pool (including the Spray rating); if your Coordination+Firearms+Spray pool is 9d, when you roll you shoot 9 bullets in a single combat round.

Usually you can attempt a Spray attack only against a single target or targets that are right next to each other. If they're spread out, you can attack only with suppressive fire.



## Suppressive Fire

Suppressive fire means you're putting as much lead as possible (or fire or whatever) in the general direction of a target. Instead of the stat+skill dice pool, roll a flat 2d plus your weapon's Spray rating, if any.

For each matching set, everyone in the targeted area who's not behind cover must roll a single die. If that die comes up the same as the height of one of your rolls, that character is hit in the indicated hit location for normal damage. In addition, every potential target must make a Empathy+Equilibrium roll or immediately seek cover. Once under cover, they can act normally again, but until they find cover they must do their best to go to ground.

Suppressive fire empties your weapon's ammunition. You can't attempt suppressive fire with weapons that fire less than 1 shot per combat round (in other words, weapons with a Slow rating; see page 34 for details). But you can use suppressive fire on weapons designed to make a single attack per round, like a pistol.

The intent of suppressive fire is to make the enemies keep their heads down (and more importantly, their guns), but a lucky hit is always possible.

**Example:** Michael Rook unloads a submachine gun (Spray 4d) in the direction of a gang of Neo-Nazis, using suppressive fire. He rolls 2d for suppressive fire + 4d Spray, for a total of 6d. His dice come up 3x6. Each of the Neo-Nazis rolls 1d. One of them comes up 6, matching the height of Rook's roll. So he takes a hit at width 3 to the left arm. The rest of the Neo-Nazis now must make Empathy+Equilibrium rolls or dive for cover.

## Sniper

Any time you shoot at someone who doesn't know he's going to be shot at, add +1d to your dice pool in addition to any other bonuses. It's one of the benefits of shooting at someone that isn't screaming, dodging, or firing back.

Depending on the circumstances, your GM might give other advantages for firing at a helpless target, if your character can stomach it. Doing so is an Intensity 3 check on the Violence gauge for the shooter.

## Range

The default attack roll assumes medium range. Because *NEMESIS* is abstract, "medium range" covers a lot, and differs from weapon to weapon.

Weapon ranges are listed in Close/Long range in yards, defining three distinct ranges—*close*, *medium*, and *long range*. The first number is close

range; the second number is long range; everything in between is medium range. *Maximum* range is usually unimportant—a miss is a miss—but for the record, guns usually have an effective range of less than a mile.

The range to the target modifies the attacking dice pool:

- **At close range**, add another die to your pool.
- **At medium range**, your dice pool is unaffected.
- **At long range**, reduce your dice pool by one die.

For more on weapons and their effective ranges, see **Weapons Listings** on page 36.



## Chapter 4: Armor, Weapons, and Objects

NEMESIS abstracts the properties of equipment, armor, and weapons into a number of different qualities—general concepts that define the game effects of the object or device—such as *Heavy Armor*, *Light Armor*, *Penetration*, *Area*, *Burn*, *Slow*, and *Spray*.

### Armor

Armor is any substance that protects against physical attack. Anything that absorbs any amount of incoming damage is, by definition, armor.

There are two categories of armor in NEMESIS: light armor and heavy armor. Both types are defined by an armor rating: light armor rating (LAR) and heavy armor rating (HAR). Armor absorbs a number of damage points equal to its rating from incoming physical attacks. If the armor eats up more damage than an attack inflicts, the armor deflects the attack. Any damage that gets through the armor is inflicted on the target normally. What kind of damage is absorbed depends on the type of armor.

**Light armor** absorbs 1 point of Shock damage per point of LAR. Light armor represents cushioning of some sort, such as pads, foam inserts, leather, or any other type of light shielding. If you have a light armor rating of 3, it absorbs 3 points of Shock from incoming attacks. Light armor *doesn't* defend against Killing damage—even 1 point of Killing punches right through it.

**Heavy armor** absorbs 1 point of Killing damage and 1 point of Shock per point of HAR. Heavy armor represents strong, usually rigid material, such as ceramic plates, metal, or stone. If you have a heavy armor rating (HAR) of 5, it absorbs 5 Shock and 5 Killing. Don't convert one type of damage to the other; if you have HAR 3 and you're punched for 4 Shock, you take 1 Shock—the unused Killing protection does you no good.

You can stack different types of armor—heavy armor with light armor underneath, for example, or light armor with heavier pieces built into it. Damage is absorbed in the order they're stacked—so if you wear heavy armor on top of light armor, the HAR protects you first and whatever damage is left over is blocked by the LAR.

Armor or Barrier	Level (Type)
Full body padding (all hit locations)	2 LAR
Riot helmet (hit location 10)	1 HAR + 1 LAR
Kevlar vest (hit location 7-9)	2 HAR + 2 LAR
Plate armor (all hit locations)	3 HAR + 2 LAR
1" wood door or shield	2 HAR
1/2" concrete wall	2 HAR
2" wood wall	3 HAR
6" wood wall	5 HAR
.25" aluminum	5 HAR
1' sandbags	5 HAR
Bulletproof glass	5 HAR
8" concrete wall	6 HAR
.25" titanium	6 HAR
1" steel plate	6 HAR
2" steel plate	7 HAR
4" steel plate	8 HAR
M1 tank armor	8 HAR
8" steel plate	9 HAR
10' earth	10 HAR
10' concrete bunker	10 HAR
16" steel vault door	10 HAR
Neutron star	25 HAR

### Stacking Armor

Modern body armor is just too bulky to allow much stacking: You can't wear more HAR points than your Body+Coordination stats and still move around and fight effectively. Each point of HAR in excess of your Body+Coordination subtracts -1d from your Coordination while wearing the armor.

That means an average human (2d Body and Coordination) can wear up to 4 points of HAR at one time (say, a riot helmet, a Kevlar vest, and 1 more point of armor for any hit location).

Note that it's the armor rating of the item that matters, not the size of the hit location—so a Kevlar vest with HAR 2 counts as 2 points, even though it protects three hit location numbers.

Supernatural armor (like enhanced or super-strong materials) doesn't suffer this limitation.

### Armor, Cover, and Hit Locations

Modern body armor typically offers protection from hand-to-hand attacks on all hit locations, and limited protection from firearm attacks to particular hit locations, such as the head and torso—but it's only useful if an attack hits a protected location. If you're wearing a helmet and you're shot in the leg, the attack is obviously not blocked.





Similarly, sometimes you're shooting at someone that's hiding behind something with an armor rating. Shots that otherwise might hit concealed hit locations strike the cover instead. If you're shooting a target with only his head and arms showing, your shots hit the cover unless you manage to hit his head (location 10) or one of his arms (locations 3 through 6). Even if you miss an exposed hit location, any damage that makes it through the armor is inflicted on the target normally.

By the way, a human body is equivalent to HAR 2—the victim being used as cover takes full damage from the attack, but only stops 2 Shock and 2 Killing from getting to whatever is on the other side.

## Damaging Objects

What happens when you inflict damage on an inanimate object such as a pistol, house, helicopter, or aircraft carrier? How much damage can an object suffer before it's inoperable or destroyed? Good question.

Objects in *NEMESIS* have wound boxes, just like people have wound boxes, representing how much punishment they can stand before they're destroyed.

Just like characters, damage beyond the object's armor rating fills up its wound boxes with Shock or Killing damage. When an object's boxes are filled with Shock damage, it's inoperable. If it's a computer,

for example, it's broken; if it's a room of a house, it's uninhabitable.

Once an object or location is filled with Killing damage, it's demolished beyond repair.

## Vehicles and Structures

Large objects like vehicles and buildings have wound boxes, just like small objects. If you want to keep things simple, just assume that any hit on an object damages it, and don't concern yourself with hit locations.

But if you want a little more detail, vehicles and structures can have multiple hit locations, just like people have limbs, each with its own wound boxes. It's up to the GM to assign hit locations, and to decide whether each location has the full armor rating of an object, as well as what happens to it when a location is damaged or destroyed.

**Example:** Dr. Mann drives a Model-T with three hit locations and HAR 3. Its hit locations are Tires (1-2), Chassis (3-7), and Cab (8-10). The GM says damage to the cab is treated as a suppressive fire attack on passengers and cargo. If the cab is destroyed, the car still runs, but the passengers are unprotected. If the tires take damage, one of the tires is blown. If the chassis is destroyed the car is wrecked.

Example Object	Hit Locations	Wound Boxes per Location	Armor	Weight
Nightstick	1	1	HAR 1	2 lbs
Pistol	1	3	HAR 4	6 lbs
Rifle	1	5	HAR 4	10 lbs
Bicycle	1	5	HAR 2	22 lbs
Small car	3	4	HAR 3	2 tons
Minivan	4	5	HAR 3	3.5 tons
Small truck	4	6	HAR 3	4 tons
Helicopter	5	5	HAR 3	4.2 tons
City bus	6	5	HAR 3	8 tons
Tanker truck	7	5	HAR 3	12 tons
Subway car	8	5	HAR 4	13 tons
Fighter jet	6	7	HAR 4	18 tons
Medium-size house	10	5	HAR 3	30 tons
M1 Tank	6	10	HAR 8	50 tons
Jumbo jet	10	20	HAR 3	400 tons
1' vault door	1	20	HAR 6	--
10' concrete bunker	6	3	HAR 10	--

## Weapon Qualities

Most weapons do damage in the ordinary way—you attack with a stat+skill roll and the weapon does width in Shock damage, or width in Killing damage, or both.

But some weapons do more damage than others, and some have special properties, like being able to

penetrate armor or exploding over a certain radius. The five weapon qualities that define what a special weapon can do are *Penetration*, *Area*, *Burn*, *Slow*, and *Spray*. There are also non-lethal attacks that reduce a target's stats and skills.

## Penetration

Penetrating weapons are designed to pierce armor. Their effectiveness is measured in points. They reduce the HAR of a target by their point amount before applying damage, for that attack only. If they reduce the HAR to 0 or less, the target suffers full damage.

Penetrating weapons automatically ignore *all* light armor.

If a *penetrating* weapon is explosive (that is, it has an Area rating), it permanently reduces the HAR of the target. An armor-piercing bullet reduces heavy armor for that attack only, but a LAW rocket or artillery shell makes a big enough hole to reduce the armor on that hit location permanently.

## Area

A weapon with the Area quality explodes when it hits, inflicting extra damage to the target and everything within a certain radius. Dynamite, grenades, and artillery shells are examples of Area weapons.

The Area quality is measured in dice. The specific target of the attack takes the non-Area damage, as usual. In addition, the target and every character within the radius takes 2 Shock to every hit location. Also, the target and every character in the radius rolls a number of dice equal to the weapon's Area rating during the resolve phase of combat. Each die indicates the hit location that suffers 1 point of Killing. Don't look for matches here—just take the damage from each die on the appropriate hit location.

**Example:** Dr. Mann is caught in an Area 3 explosion. He suffers 2 Shock to each hit location, and rolls a 1, 3, and 10 on the three Area dice. He takes 1 point of Killing damage each to his right leg (location 1), right arm (location 3), and head (location 10). In addition, due to the traumatic nature of the explosion, he must make a Sense+Equilibrium Madness check against his Violence gauge at Intensity 3.

If the initial attack misses, the Area dice don't get rolled at all—the attack goes wide and explodes harmlessly.

If you're the GM and a bunch of NPCs get caught in an Area blast, you may want to roll the dice just once and apply the same results to every character. This means that they all take the same damage to the same hit locations, which is unrealistic—but it's a lot easier than rolling 3d over and over for each NPC.

When an Area weapon physically injures you, it forces you to make a Madness check against the Violence gauge equal to its Violence Intensity—this represents the traumatic nature of large explosions.

Area weapons are particularly good at destroy-

ing structures and vehicles. When an Area weapon scores a hit on a vehicle or structure and does damage past its armor, all Area dice are focused *on that specific hit location*.

Area Weapon	Area	Penetration	Violence Intensity
Stick of dynamite	2d	3	2
Pineapple grenade MK2	3d	4	2
LAW rocket round	8d	7	3
35 cm shell	10d	10	5
20 mm grenade	3d	3	4
Low-yield neutron weapon	10td	20	8
10-megaton nuclear blast	20td	35	9

## Burn

The Burn quality has no points or dice pool associated with it—it simply takes effect. Targets damaged by a Burn weapon are on fire. When a Burn weapon strikes, it does normal damage. In addition, every hit location of the target except the head is now on fire and takes 1 point of Shock damage.

Burning hit locations suffer an additional point of Shock damage each round until the fire is extinguished. Typically, only full immersion or lack of oxygen will do it—most fire-based military weapons use a sticky fuel that is particularly difficult to extinguish.

Weapons with both Burn and Area qualities have a different sort of Area effect than usual. Instead of causing an explosion; Burn/Area weapons blanket a radius in flame. Rather than taking 2 Shock to every location and Killing damage from the Area dice, affected targets only suffer 1 point of Shock damage to each hit location rolled on the Area dice. But those areas are now on fire.

Any target set on fire must make an Empathy+Equilibrium roll against an Intensity 4 once per round to avoid panicking. A target that panics may do nothing except run around swatting at the flames until they succeed in the Empathy+Equilibrium roll.

The Burn quality can also be used to simulate other threats that stick with you, such as acid or a swarm of insects. The game effect is the same; just describe it differently.

## Slow

A weapon with the Slow quality can't be fired every combat round. Instead you must spend a number of combat rounds equal to its Slow rating to prepare it before you can fire again. If your gun is Slow 1, you can only fire it every 2 combat rounds. If it's Slow 3,

you can only fire it once every 4 combat rounds. If the weapon is already prepared, you can fire it on the first combat round, but after that it takes time to reload.

Note that Slow is different than a basic reload time. Most weapons without a Slow rating require a single combat round to reload its ammunition to maximum capacity.

## Spray

Spray weapons are designed to fire very rapidly and “spray” an area with bullets or blasts—they are fully automatic or possess some other factor making it easy to fire at many targets at once. A shotgun firing dozens of pellets and a machine gun spraying hundreds of bullets per minute are both Spray weapons.

Spray weapons can make multiple attacks (see page 11) with no dice pool penalty. Instead, a number of dice equal to the weapon’s Spray level are *added* to the dice pool for the attack roll. Each match is a successful hit by the weapon on the target inflicting normal damage. Spray weapons fire a number of bullets each round equal to the number of dice in the stat+weapon+Spray dice pool.

If you are performing multiple actions (firing while diving for cover, for instance), Spray weapons give another advantage—you still roll the lower of the two dice pools, but don’t suffer the normal multiple actions penalty.

Most Spray weapons can either be fired as single-shot weapons or as Spray weapons, but they must use their full Spray rating if they use it at all. If you’re firing a weapon with more than one Spray rating (representing a weapon with multiple settings, such as 3-round burst or fully automatic), choose which one to use during the declare phase of combat.

Weapons’ Rounds Per Minute	Spray Rating
300 rpm	1d
400 rpm	2d
500 rpm	2d
600 rpm	3d
700 rpm	3d
800 rpm	4d
900 rpm	4d
1000 rpm	5d
1200 rpm	5d
1500 rpm	6d

## Non-lethal Attacks

There are many “less than lethal” weapons out there designed to incapacitate without killing.

**Sensory or nerve impulse attacks**—such as a flash bang grenade or an electrical stunner—overwhelm the target’s nervous system, reducing all stats and skills by the width of the attack roll. The effect lasts width in rounds. At the GM’s discretion, this effect can be resisted with a successful Body+Endurance skill roll.

**Chemical attacks** such as tear gas or pepper spray reduce all the target’s stats and skills by -2d each for width in minutes. At the GM’s discretion, this effect can be resisted with a successful Body+Endurance roll.

## Basic Weapons

Weapons do different amounts as well as different *types* of damage. Some weapons cause only Shock, some only Killing, and some a combination of both. All are based off the width of the attack roll.

Damage is listed in shorthand: Width+1 in Killing and Shock is W+1 in KS. Width in Shock +1 Killing is *W in S+1K*. Got it?

## Basic Hand-to-Hand Weapons

Weapon	Damage
Axe, spear, sword	W+1 in K
Baseball bat	W+2 in S
Bottle, brass knuckles, billy club	W+1 in S
Fists and feet	W in S
Knife, shovel	W in S+1K
Large knife	W in K
Piano wire	As strangling (see page 28), but damage is K
Taser	W in S + nonlethal damage

## Basic Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Ammo Capacity	Damage	Spray/Area/Penetration	Slow	Range
Pistol	6 to 17	W in SK	0d/0d/0	--	20/50
Shotgun	6 to 8	Shot: W+1 in SK Slug: W+2 in SK	3d/0d/1 0d/0d/2	--	15/30
Carbine	10	W+1 in SK	0d/0d/2	--	50/150
Rifle	6 to 25	W+2 in SK	0d/0d/3	--	100/300
Submachine gun	25 to 50	W in SK	3d/0d/0	--	30/60
Assault rifle	25 to 50	W+2 in SK	4d/0d/3	--	40/200
Machine gun	100 to 500	W+2 in SK	5d/0d/2	--	40/400
Anti-tank rocket	1	W+1 in SK	0d/8d/7	3	10/100
Hand grenade	1	W+1 in SK	0d/3d/4	--	20/60
Grenade launcher	1	W+1 in SK	0d/5d/4	1	20/200
Compound bow	1	W+1 in K	0d/0d/1	--	50/100
Tank cannon	40	W+6 in SK + Burn	0d/7d/7	2	1,000/10,000
Field artillery	1	W+8 in SK + Burn	0d/10d/8	3	350/25,000
Bunker-buster bomb	1	W+10 in SK + Burn	0d/10d/12	--	500/25,000

## Advanced Firearms

NEMESIS uses an abstract system for weapons—a rifle is pretty much a rifle, a pistol a pistol, and a machine gun a machine gun. Not all guns are the same, however, and even two weapons of the same type (such as two different types of machine guns) may inflict different amounts of damage.

If you want to keep the game simple, stick to the basic weapons tables, where every weapon within each broad category does the same amount of damage. If you're interested in more realism use the ad-

vanced weapons charts. In this expanded system each individual gun and cartridge is unique, making the difference between, say, a small target pistol and a big Desert Eagle very apparent in game play.

First, find the weapon type's base damage (for example, Pistols inflict width in Killing and Shock), then find the ammunition type used by the weapon to determine its **damage modifier** and **Penetration** (see page 34). The **damage modifier** (if any) is applied in addition to normal damage after a successful attack.

## Advanced Ammo Qualities

Cartridge	Damage Modifier	Penetration
<b>Rifles and Machine Guns</b>		
.30 inch (7.62 mm)	+1K	3
7.62 Soviet	+0	3
5.56 mm NATO	+0	3
.50 AP (12.7 mm)	+1K	4
.50 SLAP	+1K	4
.50 BMG	+2K	4
<b>Pistols and Submachine Guns</b>		
.22 inch or .25 inch	-1K	0
.32 ACP	+0	0
.38 special revolver round	+1K	0
9 mm	+0	1
9 mm parabellum	+1K	2
9 mm Glaser safety slug	+3S	0*
.40 inch or 10mm	+2K	2
.45 ACP	+1K	2
.357 magnum	+2K	3
.44 magnum	+2K	3



.50 AE	+2K	3
<b>Shotguns</b>		
10 gauge shotgun (slug)	+2K	3
10 gauge shotgun (shot)	+1K	2
12 gauge shotgun (slug)	+1K	3
12 gauge shotgun (shot)	+0	2

\* Glaser slugs never penetrate HAR.

## Advanced Ranged Weapons

Pistols (Base Damage: W in KS)				
Weapon	Ammo	Capacity	Weight	Range
M-9 semiautomatic pistol	9 mm	15	2.5 lbs	25/50 yards
Glock 17 9 mm semiautomatic pistol	9 mm parabellum	17	2.75 lbs	20/45 yards
.45 M1911A semiautomatic pistol	.45 ACP	7	2.5 lbs	18/34 yards
Smith and Wesson revolver	.38 special	6	2.5 lbs	19/36 yards
“Bulldog” .44 police revolver	.44 magnum	6	2.5 lbs	12/24 yards
Taurus 605 .357 Magnum revolver	.357 magnum	5	2.25 lbs	25/50 yards
Desert Eagle .50 semiautomatic pistol	.50 AE	7	3.75 lbs	20/50 yards
Smith & Wesson .22 pistol	.22	10	1.5 lbs	5/20 yards

Rifles (Base Damage: W+2 in KS)				
Weapon	Ammo	Capacity	Weight	Range
Barrett M82A1.50 BMG rifle	.50 BMG	10	28.75 lbs	200/1500 yards
.30-06 rifle	.30	8	16.5 lbs	200/1000 yards

Shotguns (Shot Base Damage: W+1 in K + (Slug Base Damage: W+2inKS) Spray)				
Weapon	Ammo	Capacity	Weight	Range
Pump-action 10-gauge shotgun	10 gauge slug or shot	5	10.5 lbs	15/30 yards*
Pump-action 12-gauge shotgun	12 gauge slug or shot	8	9.95 lbs	15/30 yards*
Joint Service Combat Shotgun	12 gauge slug or shot	6	8.5 lbs	20/50 yards*

\*Ranges for slug ammunition are doubled.

Submachine Guns (Base Damage: W in KS + Spray)					
Weapon	Spray Rating*	Ammo	Capacity	Weight	Range
Heckler & Koch MP5	0d (4d)	9 mm parabel-lum	30	6.47 lbs	30 (15)/60 (30)*
Uzi	0d (3d)	9 mm	30	7.7 lbs	20 (10)/30 (15)*
Ingram MAC 10	4d	9 mm	30	6.28 lbs	5/10
Ingram MAC 11	5d	.32 ACP	32	3.5 lbs	5/10
Skorpion machine pistol	3d	.32 ACP	20	2.86 lbs	5/10

\*Spray/Range rating listed as: Semi-Automatic (Full Automatic). Weapons with only one Spray rating must be fired in full automatic mode with all Spray Dice.

Assault Rifles (Base Damage: W+2 in KS + Spray)					
<b>Weapon</b>	<b>Spray Rating</b>	<b>Ammo</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Range</b>
M16A2	0d (4d)	5.56 mm NATO	30	8.9 lbs	40 (12)/400 (80)*
AK-47	0d (3d)	7.62 mm Soviet	30	10 lbs	40 (12)/350 (70)*
M14	0d	7.62 mm NATO	20	11 lbs	50/500
SKS	0d	7.62 mm Soviet	10	11 lbs	40/400

\*Spray/Range rating listed as: Semi-Automatic (Full Automatic). Weapons with only one Spray rating must be fired in full automatic mode with all Spray Dice.

Machine Guns (Base Damage: W+2 in KS + Spray)					
<b>Weapon</b>	<b>Spray Rating</b>	<b>Ammo</b>	<b>Capacity</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Range</b>
M-249 SAW	4d	5.56 mm NATO	200	16.3 lbs	40/400 yards
M-240B	3d (4d)	7.62 mm NATO	100	27.6 lbs	60/600 yards
M60E3	0d (2d)	7.62 mm NATO	100	18.75 lbs	60/600 yards

\*Spray/Range rating listed as: Semi-Automatic (Full Automatic). Weapons with only one Spray rating must be fired in full automatic mode with all Spray Dice.

Explosive Weapons (Base Damage: W+1 in KS + Area)				
<b>Weapon</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Penetration/Area Rating</b>	<b>Slow</b>	<b>Range</b>
Dragon weapon system	33.9 lbs	11/9d	3	100/1000 yards
AT-4 LAW	14.75 lbs	8/8d	One Shot	20/300 yards
LAW	5.5 lbs	8/8d	One Shot	20/250 yards
M203 grenade launcher	3.5 lbs	4/5d	1	20/200 yards

## Advanced Melee Weapons

Hand-to-hand weapons usually operate under the same rules—roll a Body+Melee Weapon dice pool to attack and inflict damage based on width. If you want more detail in your weapons, use the following samples to get started.

In the “Special” column, “+1 initiative” adds 1 to width for initiative purposes due to length or excep-

tional balance. “+1d Spray” means the weapon can make multiple attacks on a target, just like a normal Spray weapon—only it’s used in melee combat (like the way a bo staff can pepper a target with strikes, or a wave of shuriken will hit a target more than once). “Penetration” is the same as for firearms, but usually applies only to heavy melee weapons that smash their targets to bits.

Melee Weapons				
<b>Weapon</b>	<b>Damage</b>	<b>Close/Max Range</b>	<b>HAR/Wound Boxes</b>	<b>Special</b>
Battle axe	W+2 in K	—	3/5	—
Billy club	W+2 in S	—	2/3	—
Glaive	W+2 in K	—	3/5	+1 initiative
Katana	W+2 in K	—	4/4	—
Knife (combat)	W in K	1/10 yards	3/3	—
Knife (ordinary)	W in S + 1K	1/10 yards	3/2	—
Mace	W in SK	—	3/6	Penetration 1
Nunchaku	W+1 in S	—	2/3	+1d Spray
Quarterstaff	W+2 in S	—	2/4	+1d Spray
Rapier	W+1 in K	—	3/3	—
Saber or sword	W+1 in K	—	4/4	—
Shuriken	W-1 in K	1/15 yards	3/2	+1d Spray
Spear	W+2 in K	—	3/4	+1 initiative

## Chapter 5: Other Threats

Combat is not the only threat to your character's well being. Want to know what happens when your character freezes, drowns, is electrocuted, falls, is poisoned, or is irradiated? You came to the right place.

### Impact

There are all kinds of ways to slam into things, and none of them are fun. Since they are all pretty similar, these rules cover falling, smashing into something and being smashed into.

Impact damage hurts your whole body; you automatically take 2 Shock to each hit location. That's just for starters.

In addition, impact does damage based on your speed (or, say, the speed of the jet smashing into your face). For each increment of speed (see the chart below), you suffer one point of damage to hit location 10.

If you run into something soft like water or padding, are strapped into a vehicle when it crashes, or are thrown into a soft pile of dirt, that point is Shock damage. If you run into something harder like earth or a brick wall, it's Killing.

Some skills help reduce that damage. If you see it coming (that is, you have a round or more to react

and your Coordination stat dice are equivalent to the speed of the impact) you get a single dice pool roll with a relevant stat+skill as a defense against the damage. This has to be a declared action in a combat round—you can't just freely scrap something else you're rolling to reduce impact damage. Some relevant stats and skills include Body+Endurance, Body+Jumping, Coordination+Acrobatics, and Coordination+Martial Arts.

A successful roll has three benefits.

First, you reduce the impact damage by 1 per point of width.

Second, if you're falling, you can deliberately take the damage on any one or two hit locations of your choice. This has two benefits. First, you can choose to suffer damage on your strongest or most armored hit location, or you can divide the damage (not the 2 Shock per location, but the rest of it) between any two locations however you want.

Third, if you're falling and land on your feet (or equivalent limbs), subtract your jumping distance (as determined by your Body stat) from your yards-per-round speed to determine how much damage is inflicted on you. If your jumping distance is greater than your speed, you suffer no damage at all—not even the 2 Shock per location.

### Impact Chart

Dice Equivalent	Speed	Yards Per Round	Damage	Falling Distance
1d	<2 mph*	<3*	1	Less than 1 yard
2d	4 mph+	6	2	1 yard
3d	8 mph+	12	3	2 yards
4d	16 mph+	24	4	3-10 yards
5d	32 mph+	48	5	11-40 yards
6d	64 mph+	96	6	41-80 yards
7d	128 mph+**	192**	7	81+ yards**
8d	256 mph+	384	8	—
9d	512 mph+†	768†	9	—
10d	1,024 mph+	1,536+	10	—

\* At this speed and distance, you still suffer 2 Shock to all hit locations, but have no time to roll a relevant stat+skill defense unless you have Boosted Coordination.

† The speed of sound near sea level is about 1,140 yards per round (760 mph). Use this rating to represent it.

\*\* This is about terminal velocity—the maximum speed a human falls through the atmosphere under normal circumstances.



## Cold

Extended exposure to cold can be lethal. Wetness only compounds the problem. The rate at which you take damage from cold weather depends on how prepared you are and how cold it is; but if you're trapped in extreme cold without cold-weather gear, you probably won't last long. There are two ratings for cold—Freezing (32° to 0° F), and Sub-Zero (everything 0° F and below).

Shelter	Interval (Freezing, 32° to 0°)	Interval (Sub-Zero, 0° and under)
Wet	Drop a time interval	Drop a time interval
Ordinary clothes	Body in minutes	5-width in minutes
Cold-weather gear	Body in hours	5-width in hours
Unheated shelter	Body in days	5-width in days

For each time interval in either type of cold, suffer 1 Shock to each arm and leg. That's not so bad—but you can't recover this damage until you find some source of warmth. If you find warmth before the next time interval passes, 10 minutes at a source of heat will shake off any Shock damage suffered by cold. If not, it's real damage, and remains there until healed normally. When your limbs fill with Shock, you begin taking Shock to your torso and head and keep taking damage to your limbs, turning the Shock there to Killing.

Freezing is much more forgiving than Sub-Zero environments. In Freezing, you can act normally without a successful Body+Endurance or Body+Health roll for the time interval. After that, you must rest at a heat source or begin suffering damage. In Sub-Zero environments, you *must* roll a successful Body+Endurance or Body+Health roll to do *anything* more than 1 minute/1 hour/1 day before returning to a heat source. If you fail the roll, you can do nothing but rest for an entire time interval, suffering appropriate damage all the time. Then you get to roll again.

That's not all: Every night you spend in a sub-zero environment—even in shelter—without access to warmth you must make an Intensity 3 or 4 Helplessness check.

## Suffocation and Drowning

You can hold your breath for a number of minutes equal to your Body stat. You can extend that with a Body+Endurance roll by the width of the roll in minutes.

After this grace period, you must roll Body+Endurance each round to avoid taking dam-

age, and you lose a die from your Body+Endurance dice pool for each round after the first. When you fail the roll, you begin to suffocate.

Each round of suffocation damage inflicts one point of Killing damage to your torso and one point of Shock to your head. When your head fills with Shock damage you pass out. When your head or torso fills with Killing damage you're dead.

Ordinarily you stop taking damage as soon as you start breathing again. Drowning is a special case, however, because once you inhale water it doesn't do you any good to come up for air—the water's still in there. You keep taking damage until someone succeeds with a Mind+First Aid roll to get the water out of your system and resuscitate you.

## Electrocution

Electrical hazards have a dice pool representing their danger, rated from 2d to 10d. When you're zapped, roll the electric dice pool. If a match comes up, you suffer width in Shock damage. However, the hit location is determined not by the height of the roll but by the circumstance of the electrical attack. If you're poking at wires with a stick, the Shock starts in your arm. If you're hit by lightning, it either starts in your head or in the highest point of your body.

Electrical damage doesn't stay in one place, though. It starts wherever it made contact and goes to the ground by the shortest route. Grab both ends of a live wire with one hand and you only take damage in that one arm. Grab an end in each hand, and the jolt travels from one hand, through the torso, and out the other arm, doing the same damage to all three locations. If you're hit by lightning, it goes straight down your head, through your torso and out one or both legs. (This is why lightning victims sometimes have their shoes blown off.)

That's what happens with a one-time shock, such as getting hit by a bolt of lightning or sticking your finger in a light socket and blowing the circuit breaker. It does damage, you go "Ouch!" and that's it.

If it's a steady current, that's a bit nastier—it can lock your muscles so you stick around and keep taking damage. You have to make a dynamic Body+Endurance roll against the electricity dice pool to let go. If you fail, your muscles have locked shut on the current source and you get juiced again the next round. This happens each round until you make your Body+Endurance roll, someone knocks you free, or you die.





## Poison

Poisons are substances that cause illness, injury, or death if ingested, inhaled or if the victim is subjected to prolonged exposure to them. All poisons are different, but their effects are similar. Poisons include everything from hemlock to gamma radiation.

Each deadly substance has an onset time and either a dice pool value or a flat damage value. Biological or chemical poisons have a damage rating for a lethal dose of the toxin—the amount consistently lethal to humans—and the specific hit location that it affects.

Radiation poisoning works much like chemical and biological toxins, but a radiation source has a dice pool that inflicts width in damage. Radiation damage is always Shock, but all damage from radiation is automatically inflicted as damage to the head (though in actuality it affects the whole victim).

When poisoned, you can make a Body+Health

or Body+Endurance roll. Each point of width reduces the Shock and Killing damage by 1. If the poison is radiation, your roll must beat the height (but not the width) of the radiation dice pool's roll.

If you're continuously exposed—trapped in a room filled with poison gas, for instance—you suffer the poison's effects once per minute. Chronic exposure—exposure to nonlethal levels of the toxin over a long period of time—usually has long-term effects that aren't measured immediately in the game; their effects remain up to the GM to decide.

Symptoms of radiation poisoning include weakness, loss of appetite, vomiting, and diarrhea. Chronic radiation poisoning generally causes no direct damage, but produces long-term consequences such as increased risk of cancer and birth defects in offspring. As with other chronic effects, they remain up to the GM to determine.

Biological and Chemical Toxins (Lethal Dose)	Delivery	Damage	Affected Location	Onset
Potassium cyanide (200 mg)	Inj./Ing.	5 SK	Head	5 minutes
Fugu venom (2 mg)	Ing.	5 SK	Head	5 rounds
Sarin gas (35 mg)	Inh.	7 SK	Torso	7 hours
Arsenic (40 mg)	Ing.	7 SK	Torso	7 hours
Cobra venom (18-45 mg)	Inj.	7 SK	Torso	7 rounds
Mustard gas (3-6 g)	Inh.	8 SK	Torso	8 rounds
Botulism (0.005 mg)	Inj./Ing.	8 SK	Torso	8 hours
Hemlock (100 mg)	Ing.	8 SK	Torso	8 minutes
Phosphene gas (3 g)	Inh.	8 SK	Torso	8 minutes
Ricin powder (0.005 mg)	Inh./Inj.	9 SK	Torso	~1 day
Phosgene gas (3 g)	Inh.	9 SK	Torso	9 hours
Hydrogen cyanide gas (50 mg)	Inh.	10 SK	Torso	10 minutes

Radiation (Dice Pool)	Delivery	Penetration	Type of Damage	Effects	Onset
Gamma (2d to 10d)	Exposure	10	Shock	Radiation poisoning/death	Instant
X-ray (2d to 5d)	10	Exposure	Shock	Radiation poisoning/death	Instant
Neutrons (5td to 10td)	Exposure	5	Shock	Radiation poisoning/long-term	Instant

## PART II: CHARACTERS

### Chapter 6: Building a Character

Building a character is a cooperative process between GM and player.

First the GM sets a Dice Total, which determines how many dice you have to spend on your character's Traits, statistics and skills.

The next step is deciding the basic concept for your character. Is he a world-spanning treasure hunter? A psychologist? A priest sworn to stop the rise of the Great Old Ones? Something else? Discuss the concept with the GM as you brainstorm—the game world may have built-in limitations on the type of character you can play. It might have no magic, for instance, only alien science; or it may have magic but only modern, real-world technology.

Once you have the character concept, buy the traits, stats, and skills to define your character, tailoring them to fit your vision.

#### Character Checklist

Let's look at character creation step by step.

#### Step One: Number of Dice

The GM decides how accomplished the player characters should be by setting a number of dice available for character creation. You assign them to stats and skills and can also trade them for other abilities. A 55-die character is just generally *better* than a 25-die character. But more dice doesn't always mean one character is better than another at *everything*. The 25-die character might be a weapons master while the 55-die character could be a pacifist monk.

During character creation, dice aren't rolled, they're just dice—an abstract shorthand used to calculate the cost and relative value of a character. Only when they are *spent* on stats, skills, boosted stats or skills, traits or spells do they *become* something. If you don't spend them during character creation, they are lost.

Every character begins with a completely clear Madness Meter—all four gauges clear of Hardened or Failed marks. If you wish, you can gain 1d to spend on your character by taking a Hardened notch in any one gauge, or 2d for a single Failed notch in any one gauge. A maximum of 10d can be gained in this manner.

Once the number of dice is set, and a briefing on the basics of the game world is given, it's time to sit down and build your character. The GM sets the tone of the game. Is it a cinematic world like the world of *Indiana Jones*? Is it something more su-

pernatural like the world of *Hellboy*? Or is it gritty and realistic like the world of the *Exorcist*? The number of dice is determined by what type of world the players find themselves in. Generally speaking, the more over the top and supernatural the world, the higher the number of dice.

Once the number of dice is set, it's time to pick traits.

Game Type	Reference	Number of Dice
Four Color	<i>Hellboy</i>	150d+
Cinematic	<i>Indiana Jones</i>	75d+
Gritty	<i>The Exorcist</i>	50d+

#### Step Two: Traits

Traits are special abilities that in most cases can only be bought at character creation (you must get the GM's permission to get one later). They represent certain abilities or special skills found only in particular characters.

There are two types of traits—mundane and supernatural. Mundane traits are traits that any normal person can buy, like a character who's more resilient mentally usual, or someone with access to large amounts of money. Supernatural traits represent unique abilities or special characteristics found in certain creatures or caused by spells, like inhuman biology, bulletproof skin, or huge size.

#### Mundane Traits

##### *Alien Angles (2d)*

**Prerequisite:** Mythos Skill at 1d or more

**Effect:** You know how to think in the alien ways needed to cast spells and can unconsciously slip into the correct mindset without effort. With this trait you automatically succeed at the Mind check required to cast spells.

##### *A Scientific Explanation (2d)*

**Prerequisite:** A science skill in excess of 3d

**Effect:** You can choose to roll Mind+[a science skill] in lieu of the Mind+Equilibrium when faced with a Madness check on the Unnatural gauge. It's still rolled at the same Difficulty, as more eerie experiences are harder to rationalize. If you succeed, you "explain it away" and gain neither a Failed nor a Hardened notch.



**Backup (1d/2d/4d)**

**Prerequisite:** None

**Effect:** You have contacts that can bring in significant backup in dangerous situations. At 1d this just means more equipment; at 2d vehicles and equipment; at 4d it means people, equipment and vehicles. The exact effects remain up to the GM to decide. Some characters can call for help without this trait; any cop can call out an emergency and have several others come running to help. The Backup trait represents unusual gear and specialists.

**Good Childhood (4d)**

**Prerequisite:** None

**Effect:** You had an extremely stable home life and a solid emotional foundation from early childhood. This allows you to modify Stat+Equilibrium rolls against any gauge of the Madness Meter, sacrificing a point of width for a point of height. So if you roll 4x5 against an Intensity 6 check, you can “squish” the roll to a 3x6 (dropping 1 point of width and adding 1 point of height) succeeding where you would have failed.

**The Law (2d)**

**Prerequisite:** None

**Effect:** You are the law in your area. This gives you authority to enforce the standard laws of your city, county or country. This would represent something like a local sheriff. To increase your pull, add the Backup and Resources traits. For example, an FBI agent might have The Law (2d), Backup (4d) and Resources (2d) for a total cost of 8 dice.

**Expert (4d)**

**Prerequisite:** GM’s permission

**Effect:** This allows you to purchase Expert dice in skills, or upgrade existing dice in skills to Expert dice. Without it, you cannot possess Expert Dice. This allows you to buy them in any skill through normal character development. Expert Dice *cannot* be purchased in stats.

**Money (3d)**

**Prerequisite:** GM’s permission

**Effect:** You’re rich. For whatever reason (and this reason *must* be defined at character creation) your character doesn’t have to worry about money; it’s just *there*. How much you can buy and when remains up to the GM.

**Mythos Skill (no cost, see prerequisite)\***

**Prerequisite:** A Hardened or Failed notch in the Unnatural gauge.

**Effect:** Each Hardened or Failed notch in the Unnatural gauge *automatically* grants you a +1d to your Mythos skill (up to 3d), in addition to granting you the standard dice to spend on Character

creation. At character creation you must define what supernatural creature or experience you have encountered.

**Religious (2d)**

**Prerequisite:** None

**Effect:** You can “put off” Failed and Hardened notches in the Unnatural gauge as long as you have *no* Failed notches in the Self gauge. Your religious belief places (or misplaces) your perception of the real world—even if it is absolutely horrific—in some religious context. But keep track of Failed or Hardened notches in the Unnatural, because if you gain a Failed notch in the Self gauge, *you suffer the full effect of everything you’ve lost to date in the Unnatural gauge as your faith crumbles.*

**Resilient (5d)**

**Prerequisite:** GM’s permission

**Effect:** At the end of a particular combat or spell-casting session (as judged by the GM), *all the Shock damage you suffered evaporates.* This does not affect Killing damage at all. (This trait fits best with four-color and some cinematic settings.)

**Resources (1d/2d/4d)**

**Prerequisite:** None

**Effect:** You have pull and can call someone to look into things. At 1d this means you know someone who has access to the research materials, a good head on his or her shoulders and who owes you a favor; at 2d this jumps to someone with a little more professional skill who can actually travel to locations and look things up; at 4d it means access to nearly any official file—DMV paperwork, criminal records, an FBI file, etc. Of course, the more important and useful the files, the more trouble your contact could get into for accessing them. . .

## Supernatural Traits

**Ageless (4d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** You are effectively immortal and will not die from old age. You can die from other causes however.

**Amorphous (10d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** You have no discernable body structure; you’re an amorphous blob. You have a single hit location that contains all of your wound boxes, except for 4 “head” boxes. Any successful attack that strikes you in hit location 10 damages one of your four “head” boxes; if they are filled with Shock damage, you are knocked unconscious; if they are filled with Killing damage, you’re dead.



**Area Attack (8d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural, Scale (3d+)

**Effect:** Your attack does Area damage of 1d. For each additional 2d placed into this trait over 8d, you do an additional 1d of Area damage, up to a maximum number of Area dice equal to your Body stat.

**Blood Drain (8d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** After you have an opponent pinned, you can make a Body+Brawling roll to begin draining his blood. If you fail this roll, the victim escapes the pin. If you succeed, make a Body+Brawling roll each round and deal the width in Killing damage. This damage is distributed equally throughout the victim's hit locations. Blood also sustains you. For every point of damage done, you may heal one point of Shock damage, or for two points you may heal one point of Killing.

**Bulletproof (10d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** All firearms are useless against you; they cause no damage. However, Area and Burn weapons (along with poison, radiation and everything else) inflict normal damage.

**Extra Dimensional (10d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** Your body is extra dimensional in nature—you phase in and out of real-space second to second. This means you're exceptionally hard to hit and don't suffer damage normally. Every time you're attacked, your Body stat is *automatically* rolled as a supernatural defense, no matter what other action you're taking. If it gobbles an incoming attack, the attack fails to injure you.

**Extra Wound Boxes (2d per level)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** Each level of this trait purchases 1 extra wound box for each hit location on your body. These wound boxes take damage and heal normally.

**Flight (4d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** You can fly at a rate double that dictated by your Body score. Double your Body dice pool for resolving resisted contests, so long as enough open space exists to allow flight.

**Foresight (8d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** You have a limited ability to see the future. Any time you are engaged in a dynamic contest, you receive a bonus of one Expert die. This applies strictly to actions that affect you, not your companions.

**HAR (4d per level)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** Each level purchased in this trait grants you a Heavy Armor rating. Buy 5 levels (20 dice) and you have HAR 5. You can buy any amount of HAR.

**Ignore Decapitation (6d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** Even if your head is filled with Shock or Killing damage, you continue to act. All of your Sense skills (save Touch) and all Mind skills drop to 0, and your Sense stat itself drops by -4d (minimum 1d). Before you can make a melee attack, you must succeed with a Sense+[combat skill] roll to locate the target. Forget about ranged combat. If your torso is filled with damage, that's it, you're dead.

**Inhuman Biology (3d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** Your body is not human. You possess abilities that make your form more resilient; for example, you can survive in a vacuum, breathe water, or eat raw flesh without risking illness. You and your GM must define the limits of this ability at character creation.

**LAR (1d per level)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** As HAR above, but you are purchasing LAR instead.

**Not Quite Dead (3d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** Treat any part of the body filled with Killing damage as if it were filled with Shock instead. Only when your head fills with damage are you truly "dead".

**Poisonous (1d per point of Shock and Killing damage)**

**Prerequisites:** Supernatural, Special Attack

**Effect:** Your special attack delivers an injected poison (see page 41).

**Psychic (3d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** You must link this trait to Mind, Empathy or Command at character creation. Its effect differs for each. With Mind it allows you to make a Mind roll to get an impression of a target's thoughts; with Empathy it allows you to read a target's emotions; with Command it allows you to influence a target's choices. Since psychic abilities are difficult to control, the outcome of a successful roll is up to the GM. If you use a psychic power near an event of Unnatural Intensity 1 or more you *automatically suffer a Failed notch in Unnatural*. If this event is happening to someone well known to you, you suffer the loss



no matter how far away it is. In addition, any Unnatural event of Intensity 9 or 10 causes all psychics to gain a Failed notch in Unnatural, regardless of relationship, *even if the power is not being actively used*. (Whether a “safe” distance applies in such a case is up to the GM.)

**Scale (2d and up for a x2 to x multiplier in size)\***

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** You are supernaturally large; each level multiplies your size from average human height (use 6’ as the standard). So if you purchase 12d in Scale, you are 72 feet tall. There is no limit to the number of dice that can be spent in this trait.

**Shapechange (1d/4d/8d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** At 1d you can *appear* to be a single other type of being—for instance, you can *look* like a human, even if you are a giant coleopteran. Some visual cue will give you away—maybe your shadow or reflection shows your true shape. At 4d, you can *physically* change between your native form and a single other form. At 8d you can physically become any living thing you can see—although to impersonate a specific person you may need the Persuade skill to fool people who know him. For all three types, statistics do not change unless the GM decides otherwise.

**Special Attack (1d to 10d)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** Each 1d in Special Attack adds a point of a type of damage to a *particular* attack defined at character creation. If you normally do only Shock, it only adds Shock; if you do Shock and Killing, it adds a point to both Shock and Killing.

**Slow (-2d per point of Slow)**

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** This is a negative trait that actually *adds* dice that you can spend on other traits. Each point of this trait applies a Slow rating to *all physical* actions (for instance, with Slow 2 all actions take three rounds to attempt). In addition, each point of Slow removes 10 yards from your sprint speed (to a minimum of 1 yard per round).

**Supernatural (8d)**

**Prerequisite:** GM’s permission

**Effect:** This allows you to purchase Expert Dice (for skills) or Trump Dice for any ability. Or to upgrade existing dice to these die types through character advancement. It also allows you to buy stats and skills in excess of 5d, as well as other supernatural abilities and traits. The GM may place limits on what exactly you can get with the Super-

natural trait. Unless the GM says otherwise you do not need this trait to learn spells.

**Unnatural Intensity (1d per 1 level of Intensity up to 10)\***

**Prerequisite:** Supernatural

**Effect:** Seeing you causes targets to make a Madness Check against the Unnatural gauge up to the level of Intensity you purchase (for instance, if you buy Unnatural Intensity at 5d you trigger a check against Intensity 5).

**Creating Your Own Traits**

The GM should feel free to create new traits to suit a particular campaign (or to outlaw or modify existing traits to match it). For example, in a *Hellboy* campaign, all PCs might be Supernatural—anything goes (the GM can even waive the 8d cost for Supernatural if he likes). In a *Sixth Sense* campaign, on the other hand, only the Psychic trait might be permitted. These limits, changes and tweaks are up to the GM.

**Step Three: Statistics**

Characters have six stats: three governing physical actions (Body, Coordination, Sense) and three governing mental and social actions (Mind, Empathy and Command). The vast majority of characters have all six stats. Normal humans stats range from 1d to 5d. Supernatural characters can have trump dice in stats; expert dice are only available in skills.

Stat	Cost Per Die
Regular die	2 dice
Trump die	8 dice*

\*Available only with the “Supernatural” trait to buy this

**Step Four: Skills**

Skills are stat-based abilities learned through practice or instruction, such as the ability to program a computer (based on the Mind stat), give an inspiring speech (based on Command), or perform a powerful spin-kick (based on Body). Pick and choose from the skills list on page 16; if you can’t find a skill that fits, create your own. Normal humans skills range from 1d to 5d.

Skill	Cost Per Die
Regular die	1 die
Expert die	4 dice*
Trump die	8 dice**

\*Available with either the “Supernatural” or “Expert” trait

\*\*Available only with the “Supernatural” trait to buy this

## Step Five: Spells

There are three types of supernatural abilities: boosted stats, boosted skills, and spells. Boosted stats and skills are covered above, so let's deal with spells. Unless the GM says otherwise, *you do not need the Supernatural trait to possess spells.*

Spells are a way of tapping a power source (whether it is the human soul, an alien entity or some cosmic pulse) and turning that energy into an effect. However the human mind must force itself to think in alien ways in order tap into those energies and cast the spell. They can be extraordinarily traumatic to the human psyche.

Spells are rolled on their own. They are not skills or stats; their dice pool stands alone. If you learn a spell, you gain its dice pool, however many or few dice it has. More powerful spells have more dice. Spells also have another advantage: They can possess trump dice *even if the spellcaster does not.*

You can possess a number of dice in a spell up to the number of Hardened notches in your Unnatural gauge; or a number of dice equal to twice the number of Failed notches in your Unnatural gauge. If a spell exceeds this limit, you cannot learn it. For example, if the *Rend Flesh* spell has a 5d+1td dice pool, you have no chance of learning it unless you have 6 Hardened or Failed notches in the Unnatural gauge. Once it is "learned" this dice pool does not change—unlike a stat or skill it cannot be advanced using the normal character advancement rules.

Spells are learned either by teaching or by reading. Learning a spell usually requires a particular skill, such as knowledge of the esoteric language in which it's written. With a teacher you must see the spell intoned or used and make a Mind+[appropriate skill] roll to gain the spell. Learning a spell from a written source also requires a Mind+[appropriate skill] roll, which takes 5 - width days, weeks or months.

Once a spell is learned, using it is as easy. Make a successful Mind+[appropriate Skill] check and intone the spell (and/or complete the actions necessary to activate it) and finally make a check against the Unnatural gauge of the Madness Meter. Normal effects apply. Some spells require other acts (human sacrifice or bloodletting, for instance) to "activate." These actions may require additional checks against the Madness Meter to succeed. Failure indicates you could not complete the actions, and therefore the spell fails. Some spells take 5 - width rounds, seconds, hours or days to intone (this remains up to the GM). Generally speaking, the more powerful the spell, the more damaging to the Madness Meter and longer it takes to activate.

Spells affect either the user or a target, and some affect both. Some spells inflict damage, others heal it. Some spells temporarily grant traits such as Heavy

Armor, Light Armor, Resilient, Psychic, Inhuman Biology, and so on.

Spell dice pools usually interact normally with other dice pools (at the GM's discretion). If a spell inflicts (or heals) damage, at 5d or less it inflicts (or heals) width in Shock; at 6d and above or with trump dice it inflicts (or heals) width in Shock and Killing. Spells last a specific timeframe: rounds, minutes, hours or days. Such details are always up to the GM.

### Optional Rule: Life-Powered Spells

Cruel GMs might want to add this little rule in if their players use spells *a lot*. With this twist, spells require the *caster* to power them, not some outside force. Every time a spell is used, the caster suffers the width of the roll as Shock damage to the torso. When the torso is filled with Shock, spellcasting causes Shock damage to the head. When the head is filled, the caster collapses from exhaustion. Killing damage can never be inflicted on the caster in this manner; it's always Shock.

#### *Call Forth Those From Outside*

**Prerequisite Skill:** Latin.

**Other Requirements:** Pentagram of Protection (optional).

**Madness Check:** Intensity 5, 7 or 9 in Unnatural (summoning an alien being or entity). See table.

**Spell Affects:** Single target.

**Activation Time:** 5 - width minutes or hours depending on what is being called.

**Dice Pool:** 5d+1td.

**Description:** This spell summons alien beings and entities outside our world. The following invocation has to be recited:

*Per Adonai Eloim, Adonai Jehova,  
Adonai Sabaoth, Metraton On Agla Mathon,  
verbum pythonicum, mysterium salamandrae,  
conventus sylvorum, antra gnomorum,  
daemonia Coeli God, Almonsin, Gibor, Jehosua,  
Evam, Zariatnatmik, veni, veni, veni.*

The height of the roll determines what will respond to the call. Note that when casting you have a choice of how "far" you want to push the spell, since the trump die gives some measure of control.

Height	Alien Entity
4 or less	Nothing responds
5 or more	Alien being from our dimension, e.g. Fungi from Yuggoth
7 or more	Alien being from another dimension, e.g. The Colour Out Of Space
9 or more	Alien entity akin to a deity, e.g. Yog-Sothoth



Once an alien being has responded to the call it must be bound to the caster's command. Binding a creature to the caster's will is a Command+Intimidation check. Resisting binding is an Empathy+Resist check. Wise casters of this spell will set the trump die to the height of the desired alien being. There is a risk that the alien being will bind the caster to its will instead; the caster should take protection against that eventuality by only "calling" from within a Pentagram of Power (see below).

**Source:** "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward", H.P. Lovecraft, 1927

### **Create Pentagram of Power**

**Prerequisite Skill:** None.

**Other Requirements:** A sacrifice (the bigger the better); marking material such as chalk, paint, etc.

**Madness Check:** Intensity 3 in Self (or 6 or 7 for sacrifice of an animal or a person).

**Spell Affects:** Target area.

**Activation Time:** 5 - width hours.

**Dice Pool:** 3d for an animal sacrifice, 6d for a human sacrifice, 7d for a human sacrifice.

**Description:** Creating a pentagram in a circle surrounded by four circles, then imbue the design with power by sacrifice. Roll the spell's dice pool. A successful roll allows adds 1td to your Command+Intimidation and Empathy+Resist checks when binding summoned alien beings. If the spell roll's width is 4 or greater you gain +2 td instead.

### **The Elder Sign**

**Prerequisite Skill:** Occult.

**Other Requirements:** None.

**Madness Check:** Unnatural 3

**Spell Affects:** Caster.

**Activation Time:** 5 - width rounds

**Dice Pool:** 3d+1td

**Description:** The Elder Sign is a mystical sigil that is either drawn in the air by gesture or inscribed upon a convenient surface. It commands respect from many of those from Outside. Most such beings leave the caster alone for a number of rounds equal to the height of the roll, provided that the caster takes no hostile action against them. The spell may not affect a being twice in a single day.

Unbeknownst to most casters, the Elder Sign suggests that the caster is allied with a specific group of powerful beings from Beyond, and may also be used for bonus dice when summoning such beings. The GM should decide beforehand if any particular monster will be warded off, ignore, or be encouraged by the Sign. If the caster recognizes a creature, a Mind+Mythos roll should let him know the effects of the Elder Sign upon it.

**Sources:** "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath", H.P. Lovecraft; "The Messenger," H.P. Lovecraft,

1929.

### **Formula to Raise from Essential Salts**

**Prerequisite Skill:** Latin and Chemistry.

**Other Requirements:** The "essential salts" of a corpse.

**Madness Check:** Unnatural 4

**Spell Affects:** Single target.

**Activation Time:** 5 - width minutes.

**Dice Pool:** 5d+1td.

**Description:** This spell can be found in *Borellus*. A person or animal can be resurrected from their essential salts. The target's entire body has to be incinerated by alchemical processes into their essential salts (Mind+Chemistry or Alchemy). The resultant ashes are a dry, dull greenish powder. If any part of the corpse is missing the raising will not succeed and a hideous abomination may result (GM, please refer to *Ye Liveliest Awfulness*, page 52). The target is raised with the following invocation/

*Y'ai 'Ng'ngah,  
Yog-Sothoth  
H'ee-L'geb  
F'ai Throdog  
Uaaah*

The target may be returned to dust with the following invocation:

*Ogthrod Ai'f  
Geb'-Ee'h  
Geb'-Ee'h  
'Ngah'ng Ai'y  
Zhro*

A person unfortunate enough to be brought back to life in this manner suffers a Helplessness check, Intensity 7. Being dissolved back to dust again is a Helplessness check, intensity 8.

**Source:** "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward", H.P. Lovecraft, 1927.

### **He Who Passes the Gateways**

**Prerequisite Skill:** Mathematics.

**Other Requirements:** A casting area of five concentric circles of fire or phosphorus.

**Madness Check:** Unnatural 3

**Spell Affects:** Caster.

**Activation Time:** 5 - width hours.

**Dice Pool:** 6d

**Description:** This spell consists of a litany that must be intoned within the casting area. The caster's spirit leaves its sleeping body and travels alien realms. The caster's spirit must concentrate—requiring an Unnatural check—to not stray and sever the link between spirit and body.

**Source:** "The Book" H.P. Lovecraft, 1934.



***The Primal Lay***

**Prerequisite Skill:** Mathematics.

**Other Requirements:** None.

**Madness Check:** Unnatural 2

**Spell Affects:** Caster.

**Activation Time:** 5 - width hours.

**Dice Pool:** 4d

**Description:** This spell opens your senses to time and space. In effect you can experience “a little of the past and a little of the future” in any given location after casting with a successful Sense+skill check. How far back and far forward you can experience equals the width of the spell roll in tens of minutes. What you experience may trigger further Madness checks. Unfortunately, this spell often attracts the attention of other-dimensional creatures. They can never be seen but at least one will always dog the caster’s footsteps afterwards.

**Source:** “*The Book*” H.P. Lovecraft, 1934.





## Chapter 7: Character Advancement

Developing your character over time is half the fun of roleplaying. A character that begins as a simple cult buster can develop over several game sessions into a supernatural scourge of the Mythos.

### Pips

One thing allows character advancement—Pips. There are two ways to gain Pips; through successful rolls in difficult situations and by GM reward. Individual Pip rewards number from 1 to 10, and accumulate over time.

You can spend 10 Pips to “buy” a die in a skill; you can spend 20 to “buy” a die in a stat. (If you have the Expert or Supernatural trait, you can “upgrade” a regular skill die to an expert die for 20 pips, a regular skill die to a Trump die for 40 pips, an Expert skill die to a Trump die for 20 pips, or a regular stat die to a Trump die for 80 pips). All upgrades require the GM’s permission.

The GM awards Pips at the end of a game session to represent how well your character did in the trials and tribulations of the game. Usually it’s a number between 1 (for minimum player effort) and 10 (for a role-playing dynamo who also keeps the game running smoothly).

You also gain Pips by matching or beating a difficulty rating in game. When you successfully match or beat a difficulty rating you gain that difficulty number in Pips.

**Example:** Michael Rook succeeds at a Difficulty 3 task with his Coordination+Firearms [Pistol] roll. He gains 3 Pips. If he beat a Difficulty 9 task, he’d gain 9 Pips.

There’s one important limitation, though. ***Dice pools with trump dice never award Pips.***

### Spending Pips In-Game

With the GM’s permission, you can spend saved-up Pips in the game to “buy off” damage before it takes effect. Eight Pips buy off a point of Killing and four pips buy off a point of Shock. These must be spent during the resolution phase of combat right when the damage occurs, otherwise the damage “sticks” and can’t be bought off.

Another use for Pips is altering rolls. With the GM’s permission you can spend 10 Pips *before you roll* to expand the width of a successful roll by 1, or 5 Pips to increase the height of a successful roll by 1. If the roll fails, you still lose the Pips.



## PART III: THREATS

### Chapter 8: Mythos Threats

#### Deep Ones

<b>Number of Dice:</b>	62 to 100
<b>Body:</b>	3d to 7d
<b>Lift:</b>	200 lbs. to 1.6 tons
<b>Throw:</b>	25 to 400 lbs.
<b>Sprint:</b>	16 to 30 yards
<b>Jump:</b>	4 to 10 yards
<b>Swimming:</b>	16 to 30 yards
<b>Coordination:</b>	1d to 5d
<b>Sense:</b>	2d to 6d
<b>Mind:</b>	2d to 6d
<b>Command:</b>	2d to 4d
<b>Empathy:</b>	1d to 2d
<b>Attack:</b>	Width+2 in Shock to width+2 in Killing
<b>Armor:</b>	+2 wound boxes per hit location
<b>Unnatural Intensity:</b>	5
<b>Skills:</b>	Brawling 3d, Climbing 2d, Mythos 2d, Swimming 3d, Wrestling 2d
<b>Traits:</b>	Ageless (4d), Extra Wound Boxes x2 (4d) Swimming 2d (Treated as half Flight in Water), Inhuman Biology (3d), Supernatural (8d), Special Attack: Claws (2d), Unnatural Intensity 5 (5d)

**Description:** Deep Ones are aquatic humanoid creatures that worship Cthulhu and his ilk. They infest and interact with degenerate seaside towns, crossbreeding with local populations to produce human-Deep One hybrids and spread the worship of the Great Old Ones.

They are highly resilient and difficult to kill, and their knowledge of human culture and technology gives them a significant advantage over most Mythos species—they can easily employ many human tools and vehicles, for example.

Many Deep Ones are powerful spellcasters and almost all worship the Great Old Ones. Some also worship a huge and powerful Deep One king known as Dagon.

Few Deep Ones travel alone or very far from their outposts, but some can muster up significant forces to respond to threats (treat this as an additional Backup trait). As a rule, Deep One communities are insular, protective and resistant to outside scrutiny or incursion. Such outposts should be approached with caution, if at all.

#### Ghouls

<b>Number of Dice:</b>	72 to 112
<b>Body:</b>	3d to 6d (6 to 12)
<b>Lift:</b>	200 to 1,600 lbs
<b>Throw:</b>	25 to 200 lbs.
<b>Sprint:</b>	16 to 25 yards
<b>Jump:</b>	4 to 8 yards
<b>Coordination:</b>	1d to 5d (2 to 10)
<b>Sense:</b>	2d to 8d (4 to 16)
<b>Mind:</b>	2d to 6d (4 to 12)
<b>Command:</b>	3d to 5d (6 to 10)
<b>Empathy:</b>	2d to 3d (4 to 6) (26 to 66)
<b>Attack:</b>	Width+2 in Shock to width+2 in Killing
<b>Armor:</b>	+3 wound boxes per hit location
<b>Unnatural Intensity:</b>	5
<b>Skills:</b>	Brawling 2d, Climbing 4d, Mythos 2d, Sight 5d, Smell 5d (18)
<b>Traits:</b>	Ageless (4d), Extra Wound Boxes x3 (6d), Inhuman Biology (3d), Supernatural (8d), Special Attack: Claws (2d), Unnatural Intensity 5 (5d) (24)

**Description:** Ghouls are degenerate humans, mutated through the taint of the Mythos into inhuman creatures with canine features, amazing senses, the ability to live underground indefinitely, effective immortality, and irresistible hunger for the flesh of the dead.

Most ghouls can be found in complex warrens beneath graveyards, feasting on corpses. Ghouls worship the Great Old Ones, and often interact with humans who have found a similar calling; meeting cultists on holy nights in remote graveyards, performing inhuman rites to the dark gods.

Ghouls can sometimes glean information from consuming the brains of the recently dead. In this manner they remain up-to-date on the comings and goings in the world above.

Some ghouls are more than degenerate humans—these “greater ghouls” were born of two ghoulish parents and represent exceptional members of their kind. Greater ghouls are stronger, smarter and more in tune with the Old Ones. Most are exceptional spellcasters.



## OUTER ONES

(Fungi from Yuggoth, Mi-Go)

<b>Number of Dice:</b>	107
<b>Body:</b>	4d Lift: 400 lbs.
<b>Throw:</b>	50 lbs.
<b>Sprint:</b>	18 yards
<b>Jump:</b>	5 yards
<b>Flight:</b>	36 yards
<b>Coordination:</b>	3d
<b>Sense:</b>	4d
<b>Mind:</b>	5d
<b>Command:</b>	6d
<b>Empathy:</b>	2d
<b>Attack:</b>	Width in Shock
<b>Armor:</b>	HAR 2
<b>Unnatural Intensity:</b>	7
<b>Skills:</b>	Detection 2d, First Aid 3d, Imitate Human Speech 1d, Mechanic [Alien Devices] 2d, Medicine 3d, Stealth 2d, Telepathy 2d, Wrestling 2d.
<b>Traits:</b>	Ageless (4d), Flight (4d), Foresight (8d), HAR 2 (8d), Inhuman Biology [immune to temperature, pressure] (3d), Supernatural (8d), Unnatural Intensity 7 (7d).

**Detection skill:** The Outer Ones, having no sensory organs as we know them, use this in place of all other sense skills save Touch and Search. This skill functions even in utter darkness.

**Vulnerabilities:** In any turn when confronted with a loud sound or bright light, an Outer One loses 1 die from all dice pools. They are not used to being immersed in liquids and are vulnerable to drowning.

**Description:** The Outer Ones are bizarre non-terrestrial creatures that may come from the distant reaches of our own solar system. They are interested in humanity in much the same way as humanity is interested in ordinary animals. But the Outer Ones are eager to remain hidden from the prying eyes of man and are very careful in their “expeditions.”

They are crustacean-like entities composed of an odd, color-changing spongelike substance. They are utterly inhuman, though many can affect human speech in an odd, reedy voice like that of a giant insect.

It is not unusual to hear this speech calling to loyal followers of the Old Ones on certain remote, darkened mountain paths.

## Serpent Men

<b>Number of Dice:</b>	98 to 110
<b>Body:</b>	4d
<b>Lift:</b>	400 lbs.
<b>Throw:</b>	50 lbs.
<b>Sprint:</b>	18 yards
<b>Jump:</b>	5 yards
<b>Coordination:</b>	4d
<b>Sense:</b>	4d
<b>Mind:</b>	4d to 6d (8 to 12)
<b>Command:</b>	4d to 8d (8 to 16)
<b>Empathy:</b>	2d
<b>Attack:</b>	Poisonous bite inflicts width in Shock+4 Shock and Killing
<b>Armor:</b>	LAR 3
<b>Unnatural Intensity:</b>	6
<b>Skills:</b>	Bite 2d, Dodge 3d, Endurance 3d, Mythos 3d, Psychology 3d, Smell 4d, Stealth 2d, Swimming 3d, Survival 2d, Wrestling 4d.
<b>Traits:</b>	Ageless (4d), Inhuman Biology (3d), LAR 3 (3d), Poisonous Bite [+4 shock+killing] (4d), Shapechange [appear as a human except for its shadow] (1d), Supernatural (8d), Unnatural Intensity 6 (6d).

**Description:** The Serpent Men are a race of intelligent ophidians that arose before the dinosaurs and ruled the world for millions of years with arcane knowledge in degenerate worship of the Great Old Ones. But sometime in the distant past their culture fell into ruin and only a handful of immortal, skilled individuals managed to survive.

Throughout human history they have hidden in the cultures that have come and gone, using an unearthly disguise—a mental projection that makes one appear as a human (except for its shadow, which is always serpentine).

They are dangerous, brilliant, calculating creatures who have had millions of years to study and manipulate humanity. They are never easy to locate or destroy.



## Shoggoth

<b>Number of Dice:</b>	114
<b>Body:</b>	7d
<b>Lift:</b>	1.6 tons
<b>Throw:</b>	400 lbs.
<b>Sprint:</b>	30 yards
<b>Jump:</b>	10 yards
<b>Coordination:</b>	2d
<b>Sense:</b>	4d
<b>Mind:</b>	2d
<b>Command:</b>	2d
<b>Empathy:</b>	1d
<b>Attack:</b>	Width in killing+2d Area
<b>Armor:</b>	Bulletproof
<b>Unnatural Intensity:</b>	8
<b>Skills:</b>	Brawling 2d, Imitate Skill 4d+1td, Movement 3d, Sight 1d, Touch 2d, Wrestling 3d.
<b>Traits:</b>	Ageless (4d), Amorphous (10d), Area 2d (10d), Bulletproof (10d), Inhuman Biology (3d), Scale x4 (4d), Supernatural (8d), Unnatural Intensity 8 (8d).

**Imitation:** This skill can be substituted for any skill the Shoggoth does not possess, provided that it has seen the skill performed before. A Shoggoth could use Imitation to pick a type of lock it has already seen picked, or to mimic a phrase it has already heard, but could not use it to deal with a new situation.

**Description:** Shoggoths are the creations of an unutterably ancient, now-extinct species which built vast cities in the prehistoric Southern Hemisphere. Shoggoths were meant to serve as strong but compliant workers, but they eventually overthrew their decadent masters. A few Shoggoths survive in the depths of the ocean and in remote, ancient ruins left by their old masters.

## Ye Liveliest Awfulness

<b>Number of Dice:</b>	57 to 93
<b>Body:</b>	2d to 5d
<b>Lift:</b>	100 to 400 lbs.
<b>Throw:</b>	12.5 to 100 lbs.
<b>Sprint:</b>	14 yards
<b>Jump:</b>	3 yards
<b>Coordination:</b>	2d to 5d
<b>Sense:</b>	2d to 5d
<b>Mind:</b>	None, or 1d to 5d
<b>Command:</b>	2d to 5d
<b>Empathy:</b>	1d to 4d (22 to 58)

<b>Attack:</b>	width in Shock to width in Killing + possible blood drain
<b>Armor:</b>	None
<b>Unnatural Intensity:</b>	6
<b>Skills:</b>	Brawling 3d, Wrestling 2d. [If the resurectee possesses a Mind stat it has a chance of possessing skills it had in life; otherwise it is a mindless monstrosity.]
<b>Traits:</b>	Ageless (4d), Blood Drain (8d), Ignore Decapitation (6d), Slow 1 (-2d), Supernatural (8d), Unnatural Intensity 6 (6d).

**Description:** These were once men or animals. They are the failure to correctly cast the spell *Formula to Raise from Essential Salts*. The spell is cast on the remains of a deceased being that has been rendered down into a dry ash—if any of the remains are missing, Ye Liveliest Awfulness results.

It is an inhuman monstrosity, a deformed, immortal beast bent on consuming flesh and blood.

Ye Liveliest Awfulness is extremely difficult to kill, but a sorcerer who knows the *Formula to Raise from Essential Salts* can “put down” such any part of the corpse is missing the raising will not be successful, and a hideous abomination may result (Unnatural check, intensity 6). The target is raised with the following invocation:

*Y'ai 'Ng'ngah,  
Yog-Sothoth  
H'ee-L'geb  
F'ai Throdog  
Uaaah*

The target may be returned to dust with the following invocation:

*Ogthrod Ai'f  
Geb'l-Ee'h  
Yog-Sothoth  
'Ngah'ng Ai'y  
Zhro*

A person unfortunate enough to be brought back to life in this manner suffers a Helplessness check, intensity 7. Being dissolved back to dust again is a Helplessness check, intensity 8.

**Source:** “*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*”, H.P. Lovecraft, 1927