2800

ALTERNITY®

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game

Player's Handbook

by Bill Slavicsek and Richard Baker

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PLAYER'S HANDBOOK

Rules for modern to far-future roleplaying games

by Bill Slavicsek and Richard Baker

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Foreword

As we write this, the final pieces of the ALTERNITY® Science Fiction Roleplaying Game are coming together in grand fashion. To be honest, we're extremely excited and terribly proud of the work we've done. Many, many people pooled their efforts to help us produce this new roleplaying game. Some, like Lester Smith and Jim Ward, had moved on long before the final product took shape. Others, whose names appear in the credits below ours, added their own special touches to make the ALTERNITY game what it is. We'd especially like to thank our editors, Kim Mohan and David Eckelberry, who helped turn raw text into this exciting package.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to the subscribers to the ALTERNITY Internet mailing list. Many of them spent a lot of time examining the *Limited Edition Player's Handbook* that was released last August. Their suggestions helped to further improve this final version of the book.

Way back at the beginning of this project, our fundamental approach to designing a new roleplaying game system for TSR, Inc. was simple: We looked back at what has made this company the giant of the roleplaying game industry and borrowed the best parts. Of course, that meant examining the company's flagship line—the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game.

Just as the AD&D® game provides the framework for playing great fantasy roleplaying adventures, we set out to make the ALTERNITY game do the same thing for modern to far-future roleplaying campaigns. From the beginning, we dedicated our resources and energy to designing a game that would cover all aspects of science fiction in two hardcover rule books. This is the first of those books, written especially for players. To these core rules, we'll add various campaign settings, accessories, and adventures as time goes on, following the model of support provided in all of the AD&D product lines.

However, we were also dedicated to creating a new, dynamic set of rules built specifically to handle science fiction—and we succeeded. The ALTERNITY game isn't the AD&D game with spaceships and rayguns. It's brand new.

Our philosophy, at its core, was to provide a set of game mechanics that allow you to play any type of science fiction story, from contemporary technothrillers to far-future space opera and everything in between. The rest is up to you. We hope you have as much fun playing the ALTERNITY game as we had creating it. It's been a blast!

Bill Slavicsek, Richard Baker
January 21, 1998

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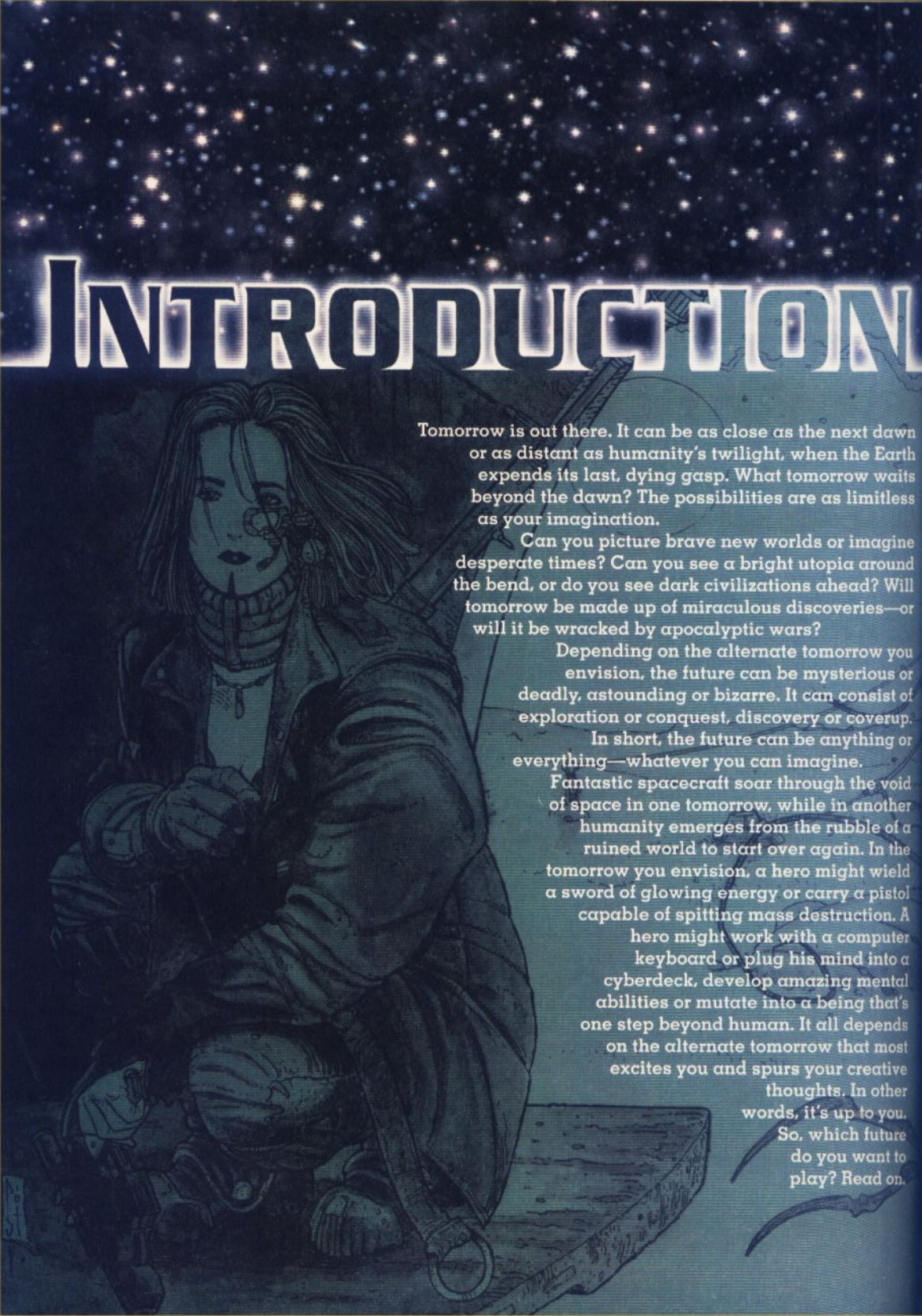
INTRODUCTION



Tomorrow is out there. It can be as close as the next dawn or as distant as humanity's twilight, when the Earth expends its last, dying gasp. What tomorrow waits beyond the dawn? The possibilities are as limitless as your imagination.

Can you picture brave new worlds or imagine desperate times? Can you see a bright utopia around the bend, or do you see dark civilizations ahead? Will tomorrow be made up of miraculous discoveries—or will it be wracked by apocalyptic wars?

Depending on the alternate tomorrow you envision, the future can be mysterious or deadly, astounding or bizarre. It can consist of exploration or conquest, discovery or coverup. In short, the future can be anything or everything—whatever you can imagine.

Fantastic spacecraft soar through the void of space in one tomorrow, while in another humanity emerges from the rubble of a ruined world to start over again. In the tomorrow you envision, a hero might wield a sword of glowing energy or carry a pistol capable of spitting mass destruction. A hero might work with a computer keyboard or plug his mind into a cyberdeck, develop amazing mental abilities or mutate into a being that's one step beyond human. It all depends on the alternate tomorrow that most excites you and spurs your creative thoughts. In other words, it's up to you.

So, which future do you want to play? Read on.

WHAT'S THE GAME ABOUT?

The ALTERNITY® game is TSR's roleplaying game of modern action to far-future adventure. It's science fiction, in so much that it draws upon the speculative storytelling style that deals with the future, space, and scientific breakthroughs yet to be made. It's a game of "what ifs."

What if . . . humanity develops a means to travel among the stars? What if . . . we aren't alone in the universe? What if . . . we can link directly into our computers and let our minds wander on electronic streams of data? What if . . . the world we know ends tomorrow? What if . . . alien entities invade our world?

No matter what supposition or speculative leap of imagination you come up with, as long as it's founded in a scientific (or quasiscientific) theory that's internally consistent, you're in the realm of science fiction. From a modern world that looks like today but features a technological twist that makes it a very different place (like a new weapon, computer, or other device), to a far-future era where humanity has moved to other worlds, any setting and level of technology is easily adaptable for play.

The ALTERNITY game, then, is a game of unlimited possibilities, exciting potentials, and imaginative "what ifs." The game system allows for many styles of play, though it never lets you lose sight of the fun of roleplaying. The rules are presented in the time-tested format that has made the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game the best-selling roleplaying game of all time—two hardcover rules books, one for players and one for game referees (called Gamemasters in the ALTERNITY game), that combine to create a complete and dynamic roleplaying game.

What Is Roleplaying?

If you're familiar with other roleplaying games (like the AD&D® game), you might want to skip to the next section, "Roleplaying Alternate Tomorrows," because we're about to provide a quick overview of what a roleplaying game is. If you're new to the hobby, get ready to enter an exciting new world.

Remember when you used to play Make Believe, when you pretended to be "Cops and Robbers" or "Cowboys and Indians"? For a few hours on a summer afternoon, you played the role of a police officer or a cowboy or some other hero from comic books or television. You created props and settings from your imagination, and you and your friends made up stories that everyone contributed to. It was lots of fun, but it was also totally free-form—there were no rules to speak of, and sometimes disagreements cropped up that ended a game before a full story could be told.

Make Believe has come a long way. It has matured and developed into modern roleplaying games such as this one. In a roleplaying game, every player takes on the role of an imaginary character. These player characters are the heroes of the story the group is collectively going to tell. One member of the group acts as the referee, or *Gamemaster*. This person uses the rules of the game along with his judgment to decide the outcome of every hero's actions, usually by applying the results of dice rolls or by gauging the heroes' reactions to specific situations.

The Gamemaster sets up the overall plot of each story, also called an *adventure*. This includes creating the background, developing the characters who make up the supporting cast and villains, planning key events that propel the story forward, and establishing the opening scene that gets the action moving. From that point on, the Gamemaster acts much as the director of a movie or the narrator in a novel, showing the heroes the world around them and describing the action as it unfolds.

The Gamemaster is the person in charge of the game. He gets it started and keeps it going. When a simple game of Make Believe comes to a halt, it's usually because the players couldn't agree on what just happened or what was going to happen next. That disagreement doesn't occur in a roleplaying game, because the Gamemaster has the final say in any situation that isn't covered by the rules.

However, the Gamemaster doesn't dictate everything that happens. Unlike the characters in a novel or a movie, the players' heroes don't just do what an author decides they will do. The players take an active role, describing how their heroes react to the events going on around them.

When players, characters, plots, rules, and imaginations get together,

the resulting swirl of interaction and participation is called *roleplaying*. Through roleplaying, the group tells a story that's started by the Gamemaster and expanded on by the players—a *group story*. These group stories can be more fun and rewarding than the static stories found in books and on the big screen because they're interactive—everyone participates in their creation.

Who Can Play?

Anyone can play the ALTERNITY game, though the recommended starting age is 10. In addition to the Gamemaster, as few as one and as many as ten players can participate, but game sessions work best with groups of four to six players.

How Do You Win?

Roleplaying games aren't about winning and losing. The goal of a roleplaying adventure is to create a group story. In an ALTERNITY game, the Gamemaster doesn't try to defeat the players' heroes (although he will put challenges before them), and the players don't try to outdo one another. Instead, they interact to advance the story and to solve the problems or mysteries the Gamemaster sets up at the beginning of each adventure.

Technically, a roleplaying game doesn't have to end. As long as the participants are enjoying themselves, the game can continue over any number of playing sessions.

Each of the Gamemaster's adventures can be a story in itself, with no connection to other adventures, or the adventures can be tied together in an ongoing story, which is also referred to as a *campaign*. If a single episode of a TV show is an adventure, for example, then the entire run of episodes is a campaign. During a campaign, characters grow and change. The players' heroes learn from their experiences and become able to handle tougher challenges.

If the heroes achieve some sort of ultimate success (defeating the archvillain and saving the world), that success could mark the end of the current series of adventures—but it isn't the end of the *game* if you don't want it to be. If everyone in the group wants to keep playing, all you have to do is start fresh with a new series of adventures (and perhaps a group of newly created heroes, if you want to try roleplaying a different kind of character).

Roleplaying Alternate Tomorrows

The ALTERNITY game is a comprehensive roleplaying game that has a foundation of core rules that can be used in a variety of settings. Each of these settings is referred to as an *alternate tomorrow*. Your Gamemaster's campaign might revolve around heroes in a modern-day world who work as high-tech espionage or antiterrorist agents. Or it might be set 500 years in the future, when your heroes explore the galaxy in vessels capable of crossing the vast distances of space in relatively short spans of time. Both of these settings can be used for an ALTERNITY game, but they take place in vastly different alternate tomorrows.

The *Gamemaster Guide* includes instructions for creating your own alternate tomorrow campaign, or you can use one of the official campaign settings specifically designed for the ALTERNITY game.

How to Use This Book

The ALTERNITY *Player's Handbook* is specifically designed for players, providing all the rules needed to create heroes and to roleplay those heroes in any ALTERNITY campaign. Are *all* the rules in here? No. Some have been reserved for the Gamemaster, and these can be found in the other half of the rules package—the *Gamemaster Guide*. But you'll discover that the *Player's Handbook* doesn't keep too many secrets from players when it comes to the all-important matter of what heroes can do and what happens to them as the result of their actions.

If you intend to be a player in a campaign that's run by someone else, you only have to concern yourself with what's in this volume. If you also want to try running the game, you'll need a copy of the *Gamemaster Guide* as well. Bear in mind that much of the material in the *Gamemaster Guide* isn't meant to be shared with players (although they might discover some bits of information during a campaign), and a lot of it isn't much use to them anyway. In addition to rules designed only to be known by the Gamemaster, the *Gamemaster Guide* has sections on creating alternate tomorrows, keeping a campaign alive and growing, and creating good adventures.

Getting Started

Chapter 1 of this book—which you should read right after finishing this introduction—offers a set of fast-play rules. The chapter provides an overview of the game, teaches the basics of the game system, and gives you a selection of heroes to use in playing through your first adventure. Each succeeding chapter focuses on one part of the core rules and explains it completely.

Even if you're experienced with roleplaying games, we recommend that you *not* skip over Chapter 1. It's in the fast-play rules that the fundamental concepts and the essential structure of the ALTERNITY game are introduced—if you don't learn what those basics are, you might have difficulty understanding some of the material in the later chapters.

Adding Details

After the first chapter, this book goes into more detail about each of the game's concepts and adds more rules as needed. Keep in mind that you only need to use the rules you and your Gamemaster want. Some groups want more detail in their adventures, and for them the details are here. Other groups feel that too many rules get in the way of their roleplaying.

The ALTERNITY game's modular format allows you to add as much detail as you're comfortable with, once you've learned how the fundamental concepts are used and how the basic game mechanic works.

Toward the back of this book are three chapters that we define as optional rules: a set of rules for mutants, another one for psionics, and a third set for cybernetics. In the larger sense, however, many of the rules in the front of the book are optional as well; for instance, if your Gamemaster doesn't want to allow heroes to have perks and flaws (and you and your fellow players don't object), you can all enjoy the game just as much without that set of rules in place.

The *Gamemaster Guide* has additional information on ways for each playing group to tailor the ALTERNITY game so that the rules do exactly what everyone wants them to do—not too much and not too little.

Tables and Sidebars

In addition to regular text (like what you're reading right now), this book includes two other types of information: *tables* and *sidebars*.

Tables, most of which are made up primarily of numbers, are an efficient way to provide a lot of statistics in a format that makes each piece of information easy to find; you'll see what we mean when you start coming across tables as you read the rules. Many tables that you'll want to refer to during play are collected and reprinted on some pages near the end of the book, so you don't always have to leaf through the book to find the information you need.

This Is a Sidebar

A sidebar is a piece of text printed on a green background, separate from the regular text that runs continuously throughout each chapter.

Some information is presented in a sidebar because it's associated with aspects of the rules that pop up in more than one place (and we didn't want to waste space by saying the same thing two or three times).

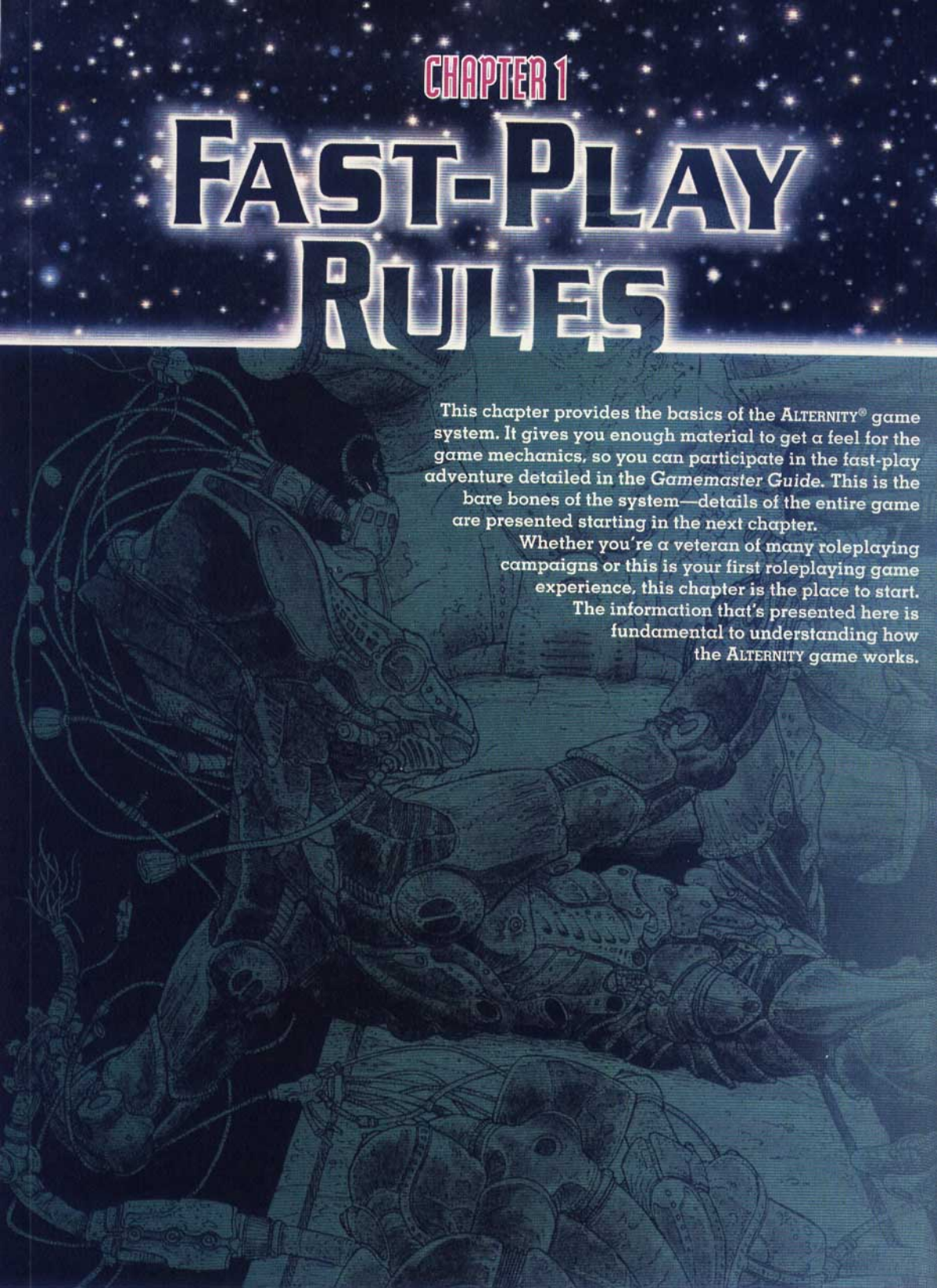
At other times, a sidebar is used to make information easier to spot, so you don't have to scan through regular text to find it.

Finally, some sidebars present facts that aren't critical to the rules, but which we think are things you should know nonetheless.

It's All About Fun

Above all, the ALTERNITY game is designed so that you can have fun creating and playing adventures set in alternate tomorrows that range from the current day to the far future. Don't become caught up in trying to play it exactly as it's written, if that gets in the way of having a good time. This isn't a college textbook, and there's no test waiting for you when you've finished reading it. Take what's presented here, adapt it, make it work for your group and your playing style, and just have fun! That's what roleplaying is all about. Turn the page and let's get started!

The action starts now!



CHAPTER 1

FAST-PLAY RULES

This chapter provides the basics of the ALTERNITY® game system. It gives you enough material to get a feel for the game mechanics, so you can participate in the fast-play adventure detailed in the *Gamemaster Guide*. This is the bare bones of the system—details of the entire game are presented starting in the next chapter.

Whether you're a veteran of many roleplaying campaigns or this is your first roleplaying game experience, this chapter is the place to start. The information that's presented here is fundamental to understanding how the ALTERNITY game works.

The Player's Role

As a player, your primary job in any ALTERNITY game is to portray one of the heroes in the story your group decides to play out. The heroes are the stars of the unfolding adventures that make up a Gamemaster's ongoing science fiction campaign.

To do this, you need a hero—an imaginary character who serves as your "connection" with the Gamemaster's setting and the other players' heroes. Your hero starts out as a collection of numbers and descriptive terms; from then on it's up to you to make that hero come alive through roleplaying.

By reacting as you think your hero would react and interacting with the other characters using your hero's voice and opinions, you're doing your job as a player.

Key Concepts

Let's take a look at the key concepts behind the ALTERNITY game. These concepts include basic game mechanics, fundamental character information, and a few special terms that players need to become familiar with.

► ***Hero:*** An imaginary character controlled by a player.

► ***Gamemaster:*** The participant in the game who acts as the moderator, narrating adventures and representing other characters involved in the adventure who aren't controlled by the players.

► ***Supporting Cast:*** These are the aforementioned "other characters," including the heroes' friends and enemies, as well as any other characters the heroes come into contact with. It's important to understand from the start that although the heroes are the stars of the show, it's possible for members of the supporting cast to be just as powerful as the heroes—or sometimes even more powerful.

► ***Setting:*** The ALTERNITY rules can be used to create adventures in any modern to far-future setting. Players and Gamemasters need to decide what type of setting they want to play in before the players' heroes are created. A setting can be a modern technothriller, a darkly sinister near-future mystery, a far-future postapocalyptic tragedy, or any other type of science fiction environment you can imagine.

Cauldron Station, the fast-play adventure presented in Chapter 1 of the *Gamemaster Guide,* takes place on a strange and dangerous planet in a far-future space opera setting.

► ***Adventure:*** A scenario in which the heroes interact with the supporting cast to create a group story. Every adventure is built around a situation (typically a problem the heroes need to solve), and it ends when the heroes have either succeeded in achieving their goal or failed to do so.

► ***Profession:*** Every hero in the ALTERNITY game is built around a profession. A profession is an overarching occupation under which specific careers are grouped. It's the first defining concept associated with a hero. The four basic professions—Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, and Tech Op—are introduced in these fast-play rules.

► ***Abilities:*** All characters (heroes and members of the supporting cast) have six Abilities. These are Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Will, and Personality.

► ***Ability Scores:*** Each Ability is expressed as a number, called the Ability Score. Each profession has two Abilities associated with it. To belong to a profession, a hero must meet the minimum scores in that profession's relevant Abilities.

► ***Skills:*** What's your hero good at doing? This question is answered by the skills he possesses. Every Ability and every profession has skills related to it. A hero's proficiency with a skill is expressed as a number, known as the *skill score.*

► ***Actions:*** When a hero wants to use one of his skills or one of his other characteristics to accomplish something, he attempts an action. There are different types of actions, each involving the use of different skills and characteristics.

► ***Dice:*** When the outcome of an action is in doubt, or when the Gamemaster needs to measure a character's degree of success, dice are rolled. The ALTERNITY game uses two kinds of dice: a single control die and situation dice of various sizes.

The control die and a situation die are rolled together to determine the outcome of an action.

◆ **Note:** ***The lower the roll, the better the chance that the hero succeeds in what he tries to do.*** More information on how to use the dice is given in "Playing the Game" on page 11.

Science Fiction Heroes

Use the fast-play rules in this chapter to learn the key concepts of the game. After you get the hang of things, use the full rules, as presented in the remainder of the *Player's Handbook*.

1 ▶ Profession

Four distinct hero professions are available in these fast-play rules.

▶ ***Combat Specs*** (short for specialists) are warriors who rely on physical power and endurance to supplement their training in the tactics and techniques of battle.

▶ ***Diplomats*** are negotiators, managers, deal-makers, merchants, clergy, or any others who use interaction skills and personal resolve to accomplish their jobs.

▶ ***Free Agents*** are troubleshooters or field operatives who rely on agility, interaction skills, and natural independence to get a job done. They're agents who may be ops for hire, or they may have ties to a specific government or organization, but in general they work better in small groups than as members of a large force.

▶ ***Tech Ops*** (technical operatives) are skilled in the use of particular equipment or have been specially trained to create or maintain high-tech equipment. They rely on natural genius, agility, and expert training to accomplish their goals.

Pick a profession that fits the kind of hero you want to play, then select one of the corresponding fast-play character templates on pages 14, 15, 16, and 17. Note that there are two different examples of each profession, giving you distinct choices for the kind of hero to play.

The templates were designed to be used with *Cauldron Station*, the fast-play adventure presented in Chapter 1 of the *Gamemaster Guide*. However, they can be used (or modified) to suit any other purpose you might find for them. (The "Background" section of each template mentions the *Nebula Bounty*. This happens to be the name of the heroes' spaceship in the *Cauldron Station* adventure. You can, of course, change this to any other you prefer instead.)

2 ▶ Name

Though each character template has been prepared in advance, you still get to select a name for your hero. Your hero can be male or female, and you can assign any personality you choose. The name you select can reflect the hero's personality or career (such as "Hunter" for a Free Agent), or it can be the complete opposite of it (such as "Bruiser" for a Diplomat). Of course, you can always use a less descriptive name, or even give your hero your real name if you want.

3 ▶ Ability Scores

Every hero has six Abilities.

▶ ***Strength*** (STR) defines a hero's physical power and prowess.

▶ ***Dexterity*** (DEX) measures the quality of a hero's agility, coordination, and reflexes.

▶ ***Constitution*** (CON) describes a hero's overall physical fitness and toughness.

▶ ***Intelligence*** (INT) indicates a hero's mental quickness and learning ability.

▶ ***Will*** (WIL) gauges a hero's mental fortitude and intuitive capacity.

▶ ***Personality*** (PER) indicates a hero's social abilities and charisma.

The fast-play system features only human heroes. Humans have Ability Scores ranging from 4 to 14.

Untrained: The "Untrained" score is equal to one-half of the full score, rounded down. Use this score when your hero attempts an action that requires a skill he doesn't possess.

Resistance Modifiers: Resistance modifiers affect the type of dice your hero's opponents roll when confronting your hero. Positive modifiers (such as +1 step) are good for your hero, because they provide a penalty to the opponent; a negative modifier (such as –1 step) is bad, because it makes it easier for your hero's opponent to succeed.

◆ ***Example:*** A character with a Dexterity score of 11 has a +1 step resistance modifier for that Ability. If an opponent fires a pistol at her, that +1 step is applied as a penalty to the opponent's chance of successfully hitting his target.

4 ▶ Action Check

A hero's *action check score* is determined by adding his Dexterity and Intelligence scores, dividing the sum by 2 (rounding down), then adding a profession bonus. This has already been done on the templates.

Marginal, Ordinary, Good, and Amazing are the degrees of success attainable on an action check. How well you succeed when making an action check determines how soon your hero can take an action.

The *actions per round* number is based on the hero's Constitution and Will scores, and has already been determined for you.

5 ▶ Durability

The "Durability" section of each character template provides a means for keeping track of any damage your hero might sustain over the course of an adventure. Your hero's stun and wound ratings are equal to his Constitution score. Your hero's mortal rating is equal to one-half this score, rounded up.

As your hero suffers damage during an adventure, mark off open boxes to keep track of how much damage he has sustained and how much more he can afford to take. The next section, "Playing the Game," has information about the effects of damage and recovering from damage.

6 ▶ Skills

Each character template has a selection of skills printed on it. There are two kinds of skills, broad skills and specialty skills. Specialty skills are printed in *italic* type to differentiate them from broad skills.

A character must possess a broad skill to also possess a specialty skill associated with it.

If a hero wants to try something but doesn't have the proper skill, he must use his untrained score for the associated Ability.

Broad skills have scores equal to their associated Ability Scores. Each specialty skill has a rank (a number representing a measure of improvement), which is added to the broad skill score to get the score for that specialty skill. The three numbers for each entry in the "Score" column on the character templates represent the full score for the skill in question, half that score, and one-quarter that score. This represents the numbers needed to achieve Ordinary, Good, or Amazing successes.

◆ ***Example:*** A skill score of 12/6/3

means that a roll of 12 or lower represents an Ordinary success, 6 or lower a Good success, and 3 or lower an Amazing success.

Skill Descriptions

This fast-play rules chapter doesn't contain details of what a particular skill enables a hero to do. Those details are provided in Chapter 4 of this book, and you're certainly free to look up any skill you're interested in and read about it.

However, for the purpose of learning how the game system works (and for putting heroes through the fast-play adventure in the *Gamemaster Guide*), complete skill descriptions aren't needed. You and your Gamemaster should have little trouble determining when a certain skill might come into play.

In many cases, the name of a skill is a pretty strong clue to when and how the skill can be used. For example, a hero with the Resolve broad skill has a form of inner strength that enables him or her to withstand or shrug off hardships that other heroes might succumb to, either of a physical or a mental nature. A hero with the Manipulation broad skill is talented at performing actions that require a high degree of eye-hand coordination, such as picking a lock.

Above all, don't get bogged down in details at this point. What's important is to learn how the game works and to have fun playing a hero.

7 ▶ Equipment

Each character template includes a selection of equipment the hero has access to—one or more weapons, some type of armor, and other gear. The game data given for weapons and armor is explained below.

The numbers on the line identifying a weapon indicate how much damage the weapon inflicts on an Ordinary, Good, or Amazing success. This damage is either stun (s), wound (w), or mortal (m) damage.

On the next line, "Range" gives the distance at which a weapon can strike a target, either "Personal" if physical contact is necessary, or a series of numbers representing short/medium/long range (in meters) for a weapon that fires projectiles or energy beams. The range at which a weapon is used often has an effect on the attacker's chance of hitting the target, as explained in the *Gamemaster Guide Fast-Play Rules* (as well as in Chapter 4 of this book).

"Type" refers to the kind of damage a weapon inflicts, either low impact (LI), high impact (HI), or energy (En).

For armor, the die ranges preceding "LI," "HI," and "En" indicate the amount of damage the armor stops when the wearer is hit by a weapon that does this type of damage. If a subtraction from a die roll produces a result less than 1, the armor failed to block any damage on that attack.

Playing the Game

The basic rule at the foundation of the Alternity game is a simple one. Your hero has some important game statistics, including Ability Scores, skill scores, and his action check score. In many cases, when your hero attempts to accomplish something, the Gamemaster asks you to roll dice. You then try to roll a number that's *equal to or less than* the appropriate score. If you roll higher than your hero's score, your hero fails. Whenever a hero tries to do something that might fail, this dice roll determines if he succeeds.

Rolling Dice

▶ ***The Most Important Rule:*** Not every action requires a dice roll!

The Gamemaster will only call for dice rolls in dramatic situations to determine the success of an action whose outcome is in doubt, or when he or she needs to judge the degree of an action's success.

For instance, if your hero wants to walk across a street or carry a small pack, no dice rolls are necessary. But if he wants to cross the street while carrying a wounded companion, being shot at by snipers, and targeted by insane motorists, then the situation is a dramatic one, and dice should be rolled.

A pilot hero trained to fly a spacecraft and read star charts doesn't need to make a dice roll to perform the normal duties associated with her area of expertise. But when these actions go beyond the call of duty and lives hang in the balance (or at least during dramatic situations), dice should be rolled.

The Control Die and Situation Dice

The Alternity game uses two kinds of dice: a *control die* and a *situation die*. Whenever the Gamemaster calls for a roll, you roll one control die and one situation die. The numbers that come up combine to indicate a success or a failure.

When you roll the dice, in game terms you're making a *check* for your hero—in effect, "checking" to see how the dice roll compares to one of your hero's scores.

▶ If you're comparing the roll to your hero's action check score to see how soon he gets to attempt his next action, the roll is an *action check*.

▶ If your hero uses a skill (comparing the roll to his skill score), this roll is a *skill check*.

▶ If you're checking against one of his Ability Scores, then the roll is a *feat check*.

In any case, you're looking to get as low a result as possible—***the lower the roll, the better the chance that your hero succeeds at what he's trying to do.***

▶ The control die is always a 20-sided die (d20).

▶ The situation die for any particular check is one of the following: a four-sided die (d4), a six-sided die (d6), an eight-sided die (d8), a 12-sided die (d12), or a 20-sided die (d20). There's also a d0, a place-holder to represent the situation die in a case where success is determined by only the roll of the control die.

Further, the situation die on any check is designated as either a *plus die* or a *minus die*. A plus die, such as +d4, is bad for the roller, because it tends to produce a higher result. A minus die, such as –d6, is good for the roller, because it helps to achieve a lower result.

Add or subtract the situation die from the control die as instructed by the Gamemaster. If the result is equal to or less than the score related to the hero's action, the action succeeds. If the result is greater than the score, the action fails. The degrees of success are explained on the next page.

◆ ***Example:*** Your hero wants to make a quick repair to his motorcycle so he can stay on the trail of the fleeing criminals. This action is a skill check using your hero's Technical Science–*juryrig* skill score. The Gamemaster tells you to roll the con-

trol die and a –d4 (the situation is in your hero's favor, so the d4 roll is subtracted from the d20 roll). Your hero's *juryrig* skill score is 13.

You roll the dice, getting a 14 on the control die and a 3 on the situation die. The result is 11 (14 – 3 = 11), which is lower than your hero's *juryrig* score. The action succeeds—but note that if the situation die had been +d4, or even +d0, the 14 on the control die would have made the outcome a Failure, because 14 is greater than your hero's score.

Situation Die Steps

The Situation Die Steps Scale has been designed to help you quickly determine what situation die to roll with the control die. It's printed on the top of this page, and a smaller version appears on the character templates later in this chapter.

Your Gamemaster tells you what bonus or penalty applies when you roll to see if your hero can perform a certain action.

A +1 step situation penalty means you start with your hero's *base situation die* (see the sidebar on this page) and move one step in the "Penalty" direction to find the die you'll be rolling. For instance, if your hero's base situation die for an action is +d4, then a +1 step situation penalty changes the die to +d6.

A –2 step situation bonus means you find your hero's base situation die on the scale and move two steps in the "Bonus" direction. For example, if your hero's base situation die for an action is +d4, then a –2 step situation bonus changes the die to –d4.

Degrees of Success

Every dice roll has one of five possible results: Critical Failure, Failure, Ordinary success, Good success, or Amazing success. The lower your dice roll, the greater the *degree of success* your hero achieves.

The three numbers associated with every skill score and action check score (the base score and two smaller numbers) represent the dividing points between the degrees of success.

Regardless of the result of the situation die, a roll of 20 on the control die produces a Critical Failure. Generally, this means that bad luck has befallen the hero, and no matter how high his skill score or Ability Score is, this action doesn't succeed.

A result greater than the score is a Failure; equal to or less than the score is an Ordinary success; equal to or less than the second number is a Good success; and a result equal to or less than the smallest of the three numbers produces an Amazing success.

On the character templates, the first number on the "Action Check Score" line represents a Marginal result. A hero can't get a Failure or a Critical Failure outcome when he makes an action check; if the dice result is greater than his action check score, the "Failure" is considered to be a Marginal result instead.

Scenes

Every adventure your Gamemaster sets up is built out of scenes. A scene is a distinct episode that has a clear beginning and ending. The three types of scenes are *combat*, *encounter*, and *challenge*.

A combat scene lasts from the start of a battle to its conclusion. An encounter scene lasts from the moment characters meet to when they part company. A challenge scene lasts as long as it takes the heroes to identify the challenge, and then overcome it or be defeated by it.

The Base Situation Die

Before you can use the Situation Die Steps Scale, you need to know where to start on the scale. That starting point is called the *base situation die*.

► For a skill check involving a broad skill, or for a feat check, the base situation die is +d4—roll the control die and a d4, adding the results together.

► For a skill check involving a specialty skill, or for an action check, the base situation die is +d0—just roll the control die.

If your Gamemaster tells you to apply a bonus or a penalty to your hero's situation die, start at the base location and move the proper number of steps in the right direction to find which type of die to roll.

Action Rounds

For the purpose of determining who acts when in a scene, every scene is divided into *action rounds*. During an action round, every hero performs one or more actions.

A round is divided into four *phases*. Each phase relates to one of the degrees of success that are achievable on an action check: Amazing, Good, Ordinary, and Marginal, in order from the first phase to the last. A hero can attempt only one action in a phase.

To determine who acts first in a round, every participant makes an action check by rolling a d20. The result determines the earliest phase in which a character can act. So, if a hero rolls a Good action check, the earliest phase he can act in is the second, or Good, phase.

All actions in a phase are considered to occur simultaneously, with the results of those actions being applied at the end of the phase.

Your hero can act in as many phases as his number of actions per round. But if an action check result indicates that your hero can't act until the Marginal phase, then he can only act once in the round (in the Marginal phase).

◆ ***Example:*** Your hero has an action check score of 11 and two actions per round. At the beginning of a round, the Gamemaster calls for action checks. If you roll a 5 (a Good success for a score of 11), the earliest phase in which your hero can act is the Good phase. Since he has two actions, he can act once in the Good phase and once in the Ordinary phase, or he can save his second action for the Marginal phase.

If you roll a 13 (a Marginal result), your hero can't act until the Marginal phase (the last phase of the round). In this case, he can only act once, losing his second action because he didn't react quickly enough.

Damage

Heroes lead challenging and sometimes dangerous lives. Eventually, your hero is going to suffer damage. As indicated on the character templates, damage in the fast-play system comes in three forms: *stun*, *wound*, and *mortal*.

Stun Damage

Stun damage is the lightest type of damage your hero can sustain. It represents shocks and bruises that rattle a hero but don't result in lasting injuries. When your hero suffers stun damage, mark off one stun box for each point of stun damage she received in the phase that just ended.

▶ ***Knockout:*** When all of her stun boxes are marked, your hero is knocked out and can perform no actions until she recovers.

Wound Damage

Wound damage is more serious than stun damage. It represents injuries that cause lasting harm to the body. When your hero receives wound damage, mark off one wound box for each point of wound damage he sustained in the phase that just ended.

▶ ***Secondary Damage:*** Wound damage causes secondary stun damage. For every 2 points of wound damage inflicted on your hero in a single attack, he also receives 1 point of stun damage (round down).

▶ ***Knockout:*** When all of his or her wound boxes are marked, your hero is knocked out and can perform no actions until he recovers.

Mortal Damage

Mortal damage is the most severe form of damage. It represents massive injuries to vital body parts. When your hero receives mortal damage, mark off one mortal box for each point of mortal damage she sustained in the phase that just ended.

▶ ***Secondary Damage:*** Mortal damage causes secondary stun damage and wound damage. For every 2 points of mortal damage inflicted on your hero, she also receives 1 point of wound and 1 point of stun damage (round down).

▶ ***Dazed:*** Mortal damage takes a toll on a hero immediately. For every mortal box marked, your hero receives a +1 step situation penalty to any actions she attempts.

▶ ***Death:*** When all of your hero's mortal boxes are marked off, she dies.

Recovery

How your hero recovers from damage depends on his condition (conscious or knocked out) and the type of damage he has suffered.

▶ ***Stuns*** are fleeting. This damage disappears at the end of a scene. It can be repaired during a scene by the use of Knowledge–*first aid*, Medical Science, or some other form of medical treatment.

▶ ***Wounds*** remain until healed with rest and/or medical attention.

▶ ***Mortal damage*** requires the use of the Medical Science–*surgery* skill and extensive medical attention to repair.

▶ ***Knockout:*** In the fast-play rules system, if a hero is knocked out from stun damage, he remains unconscious for the rest of the round in which he was knocked out and all of the following round. At the start of the round after that, he recovers 1 stun point and awakens.

If a character is knocked out from wound damage, he can't awaken until at least 1 point of his wound damage is healed.

If you don't want to take the time right away to read the complete skill descriptions for *first aid* and Medical Science, Chapter 1 of the *Gamemaster Guide* has brief information on how those skills are used.

What Do I Do First?

If you're new to roleplaying games, you might be wondering how things get started. Basically, it's pretty simple: After you've created a hero and gotten together with the rest of your group for your first adventure, your Gamemaster presents a situation—maybe something like this:

You're viewing an exhibit in a museum when a man you've never seen before staggers through the entryway. He stumbles around the room until he reaches you. "Thrasker's got the plans," he whispers urgently—then he collapses to the floor.

Or . . .

You're in a spaceport restaurant when three figures race through the door. "For the Prime Faction!" one of them shouts, and the three start firing weapons at the other customers.

After the Gamemaster sets the scene, he asks, "What do you want to do?" In game terms, doing something is known as taking an *action*. You might know right away what your hero's action will be, but don't just call out an answer. Wait for the Gamemaster to say it's your turn. Then answer as your hero would, explaining what your hero is going to do.

What can heroes do? Almost anything! A hero can say something, move, use a skill, use a piece of equipment, look for clues, duck beneath a table, or anything else you can think of. The Gamemaster determines whether your hero succeeds at what he tries to do, either by assessing the situation and making a judgment, or by calling for dice rolls.

After all the heroes have performed their actions and the Gamemaster has had the members of the supporting cast take their actions, the process starts again. Now the situation is different from what it was when the scene opened, and the next actions the heroes attempt might also be different from what they just finished doing.

Ready to Go?

If you've read through this chapter and didn't have any problems understanding how the basic structure of the ALTERNITY game works, you're ready to send your hero into action.

You and the rest of your playing group might start by going through the fast-play adventure presented in the *Gamemaster Guide*, but if your Gamemaster has experience in designing original adventures, he or she may have something different planned for you.

Is there something that doesn't seem as clear as it should? Sometimes you can solve a problem by simply rereading the section of text that's giving you trouble. An even easier way to clear things up is to jump right in—sit down with your friends, get an adventure under way, and start rolling dice. It won't be long before you're ready to start adding the features that are presented in the rest of this book.

ALTERNITY®
Science Fiction Roleplaying Character Template

Hero's Name _____ Player _____

Profession Combat Spec Career Soldier

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	12	6	+1
Dexterity	11	5	+1
Constitution	10	5	
Intelligence	9	4	0
Will	10	5	0
Personality	8	4	

ACTION CHECK SCORE *Actions per round:* 2

Marginal 14+ Ordinary 13 Good 6 Amazing 3

DURABILITY

Stun 10 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Wound 10 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Mortal 5 ☐☐☐☐☐

SKILLS	RANK	SCORE
STR		
Athletics		12/6/3
Climb	2	14/7/3
Melee Weapons		12/6/3
Powered weapon	2	14/7/3
DEX		
Modern Ranged Weapons		11/5/2
Rifle	2	13/6/3
Vehicle Operation		11/5/2
Land vehicle	1	12/6/3
CON		
Stamina		10/5/2
Endurance	1	11/5/2
INT		
Knowledge		9/4/2
First aid	1	10/5/2
WIL		
Awareness		10/5/2
Perception	1	11/5/2
PER		
Interaction		8/4/2
Intimidate	2	10/5/2

Weapons

11mm charge rifle d6+1w / d6+3w / d6+1m
Range (S/M/L): 80/160/400 Type: HI

Gravmace d8+2s / d6+2w / d8+2w
Range: Personal Type: LI

Unarmed (untrained) d4+1s / d4+2s / d4+3s

Armor

Battle jacket d6–1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4–1 (En)

Gear: comm gear, flashlight, lucky coin

Background: This navy veteran signed on as a member of the crew of the *Nebula Bounty* after mustering out, serving as the muscle for the small-time trading operation.

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ALTERNITY®
Science Fiction Roleplaying Character Template

Hero's Name _____ Player _____

Profession Combat Spec Career Spacehand

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	14	7	+2
Dexterity	8	4	0
Constitution	11	5	
Intelligence	10	5	0
Will	8	4	0
Personality	9	4	

ACTION CHECK SCORE *Actions per round:* 2

Marginal 13+ Ordinary 12 Good 6 Amazing 3

DURABILITY

Stun 11 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Wound 11 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Mortal 6 ☐☐☐☐☐☐

SKILLS	RANK	SCORE
STR		
Athletics		14/7/3
Climb	1	15/7/3
Unarmed Attack		14/7/3
Brawl	1	15/7/3
DEX		
Modern Ranged Weapons		8/4/2
Pistol	1	9/4/2
Vehicle Operation		8/4/2
Space vehicle	1	9/4/2
CON		
Stamina		11/5/2
INT		
Knowledge		10/5/2
Computer operation	2	12/6/3
System Operation		10/5/2
Engineering	1	11/5/2
Technical Science		10/5/2
Jury-rig	2	12/6/3
WIL		
Awareness		8/4/2
PER		
Interaction		9/4/2
Taunt	1	10/5/2

Weapons

11mm charge pistol d4+2w / d6+2w / d4+1m
Range (S/M/L): 10/20/80 Type: HI

Unarmed (*brawl*) d4+2s / d4+3s / d4+4s

Armor

Battle vest d6–3 (LI), d6–2 (HI), d4–2 (En)

Gear: comm gear, flashlight, toolkit

Background: Part owner of the *Nebula Bounty*, this spacehand loves the vessel and works overtime to keep it in good condition.

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ALTERNITY®
Science Fiction Roleplaying Character Template

Hero's Name _____ Player _____

Profession Diplomat Career Entertainer

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	7	3	0
Dexterity	9	4	0
Constitution	8	4	
Intelligence	11	5	+1
Will	11	5	+1
Personality	14	7	

ACTION CHECK SCORE *Actions per round:* 2

Marginal 12+ Ordinary 11 Good 5 Amazing 2

DURABILITY

Stun 8 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Wound 8 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Mortal 4 ☐☐☐☐

SKILLS	RANK	SCORE
STR		
Athletics		7/3/1
Jump	1	8/4/2
DEX		
Acrobatics		9/4/2
Movie stunts	2	11/5/2
Modern Ranged Weapons		9/4/2
Pistol	1	10/5/2
Vehicle Operation		9/4/2
Land vehicle	1	10/5/2
CON		
Stamina		8/4/2
INT		
Knowledge		11/5/2
Deduce	2	13/6/3
WIL		
Awareness		11/5/2
Intuition	2	13/6/3
PER		
Deception		14/7/3
Bluff	2	16/8/4
Entertainment		14/7/3
Act	3	17/8/4
Interaction		14/7/3
Charm	1	15/7/3

Weapons

Stutter pistol d6+2s / d8+2s / d8+4s

Range (S/M/L): 6/12/30 Type: LI

Unarmed (untrained) d4s / d4+1s / d4+2s

Armor

CF long coat d4 (LI), d4 (HI), d6–2 (En)

Gear: comm gear, 3D audio/video player

Background: This hero has taken a break from 3D stardom to research and write a script about the adventures of a trading vessel and has paid a hefty sum to sign on as a tempo-

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ALTERNITY®
Science Fiction Roleplaying Character Template

Hero's Name _____ Player _____

Profession Diplomat Career Trader

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	8	4	0
Dexterity	8	4	0
Constitution	8	4	
Intelligence	12	6	+1
Will	12	6	+1
Personality	12	6	

ACTION CHECK SCORE *Actions per round:* 2

Marginal 12+ Ordinary 11 Good 5 Amazing 2

DURABILITY

Stun 8 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Wound 8 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Mortal 4 ☐☐☐☐

SKILLS	RANK	SCORE
STR		
Athletics		8/4/2
Throw	1	9/4/2
DEX		
Modern Ranged Weapons		8/4/2
Pistol	2	10/5/2
Vehicle Operation		8/4/2
Space vehicle	1	9/4/2
CON		
Stamina		8/4/2
Endurance	1	9/4/2
INT		
Business		12/6/3
Small business	3	15/7/3
Knowledge		12/6/3
Computer operation	1	13/6/3
System Operation		12/6/3
Communications	2	14/7/3
WIL		
Awareness		12/6/3
Perception	1	13/6/3
PER		
Interaction		12/6/3
Bargain	3	15/7/3
Charm	1	13/6/3
Leadership		12/6/3

Weapons

9mm charge pistol d4+1w / d6+1w / d4m

Range (S/M/L): 8/16/60 Type: HI

Unarmed (untrained) d4s / d4+1s / d4+2s

Armor

CF long coat d4 (LI), d4 (HI), d6–2 (En)

Gear: comm gear, data slate, credit scan

Background: Co-owner and captain of the *Nebula Bounty*, this trader always looks to make the best deal.

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ALTERNITY®
Science Fiction Roleplaying Character Template

Hero's Name _____ Player _____

Profession Free Agent Career Explorer

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	10	5	0
Dexterity	11	5	+1
Constitution	9	4	
Intelligence	10	5	0
Will	11	5	+1
Personality	9	4	

ACTION CHECK SCORE *Actions per round:* 2

Marginal 13+ Ordinary 12 Good 6 Amazing 3

DURABILITY

Stun 9 □□□□□□□□□

Wound 9 □□□□□□□□□

Mortal 5 □□□□□

SKILLS	RANK	SCORE
STR		
Athletics		10/5/2
Climb	1	11/5/2
Melee Weapons		10/5/2
Blade	1	11/5/2
DEX		
Modern Ranged Weapons		11/5/2
Rifle	1	12/6/3
Vehicle Operation		11/5/2
Space vehicle	1	12/6/3
CON		
Stamina		9/4/2
Endurance	1	10/5/2
INT		
Knowledge		10/5/2
First aid	1	11/5/2
System Operation		10/5/2
WIL		
Awareness		11/5/2
Intuition	1	12/6/3
Perception	1	12/6/3
Investigate		11/5/2
Search	1	12/6/3
PER		
Interaction		9/4/2

Weapons

Render rifle d6+1s / d6+1w / d4+1m
Range (S/M/L): 50/100/250 Type: En

Combat knife d4+1w / d4+2w / d4+3w
Range: Personal Type: LI

Unarmed (untrained) d4s / d4+1s / d4+2s

Armor

CF short coat d4–1 (LI), d4–1 (HI), d6–3 (En)

Gear: comm gear, data slate, binoculars

Background: Copilot of the *Nebula Bounty*, this explorer enjoys trips that take the crew to the less populated regions of known space.

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ALTERNITY®
Science Fiction Roleplaying Character Template

Hero's Name _____ Player _____

Profession Free Agent Career Gambler

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	8	4	0
Dexterity	12	6	+1
Constitution	8	4	
Intelligence	10	5	0
Will	11	5	+1
Personality	11	5	

ACTION CHECK SCORE *Actions per round:* 2

Marginal 14+ Ordinary 13 Good 6 Amazing 3

DURABILITY

Stun 8 □□□□□□□□

Wound 8 □□□□□□□□

Mortal 4 □□□□

SKILLS	RANK	SCORE
STR		
Athletics		8/4/2
Throw	1	9/4/2
Unarmed Attack		8/4/2
Brawl	1	9/4/2
DEX		
Manipulation		12/6/3
Lockpick	1	13/6/3
Modern Ranged Weapons		12/6/3
Pistol	1	13/6/3
Vehicle Operation		12/6/3
CON		
Stamina		8/4/2
INT		
Knowledge		10/5/2
System Operation		10/5/2
WIL		
Awareness		11/5/2
Perception	1	12/6/3
PER		
Deception		11/5/2
Gamble	2	13/6/3
Interaction		11/5/2
Bargain	1	12/6/3
Charm	1	12/6/3

Weapons

Mass pistol d6w / d6+2w / d6m
Range (S/M/L): 2/6/12 Type: En

Unarmed (*brawl*) d4s / d4+1s / d4+2s

Armor

CF short coat d4–1 (LI), d4–1 (HI), d6–3 (En)

Gear: comm gear, cards, electronic lockpick

Background: The gambler joined the crew of the *Nebula Bounty* to escape a misunderstanding at the Vegas Prime space station. Now the gambler helps negotiate deals and make contacts wherever the crew goes.

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ALTERNITY®
Science Fiction Roleplaying Character Template

Hero's Name _____ Player _____

Profession Tech Op Career Pilot

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	9	4	0
Dexterity	12	6	+1
Constitution	9	4	
Intelligence	12	6	+1
Will	9	4	0
Personality	9	4	

ACTION CHECK SCORE *Actions per round:* 2

Marginal 14+ Ordinary 13 Good 6 Amazing 3

DURABILITY

Stun 9 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Wound 9 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Mortal 5 ☐☐☐☐☐

SKILLS	RANK	SCORE
STR		
Athletics		9/4/2
DEX		
Modern Ranged Weapons		12/6/3
Pistol	1	13/6/3
Vehicle Operation		12/6/3
Space vehicle	2	14/7/3
CON		
Stamina		9/4/2
INT		
Knowledge		12/6/3
Computer operation	2	14/7/3
Navigation		12/6/3
Drivespace astrogation	2	14/7/3
System astrogation	2	14/7/3
System Operation		12/6/3
Weapons	2	14/7/3
WIL		
Awareness		9/4/2
Perception	2	11/5/2
PER		
Interaction		9/4/2
Seduce	1	10/5/2
Leadership		9/4/2

Weapons

Laser pistol d4+1w / d6+1w / d4m

Range (S/M/L): 20/40/200 Type: En

Unarmed (untrained) d4s / d4+1s / d4+2s

Armor

Battle jacket d6–1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4–1 (En)

Gear: comm gear, data slate

Background: As pilot and navigator of the *Nebula Bounty*, this hero flies the ship into and out of hot spots throughout the galaxy.

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ALTERNITY®
Science Fiction Roleplaying Character Template

Hero's Name _____ Player _____

Profession Tech Op Career Doctor

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	8	4	0
Dexterity	13	6	+2
Constitution	8	4	
Intelligence	13	6	+2
Will	10	5	0
Personality	8	4	

ACTION CHECK SCORE *Actions per round:* 2

Marginal 15+ Ordinary 14 Good 7 Amazing 3

DURABILITY

Stun 8 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Wound 8 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Mortal 4 ☐☐☐☐

SKILLS	RANK	SCORE
STR		
Athletics		8/4/2
DEX		
Modern Ranged Weapons		13/6/3
Pistol	1	14/7/3
Vehicle Operation		13/6/3
Land vehicle	1	14/7/3
CON		
Stamina		8/4/2
INT		
Computer Science		13/6/3
Hacking	2	15/7/3
Knowledge		13/6/3
Medical Science		13/6/3
Surgery	2	15/7/3
Treatment	2	15/7/3
WIL		
Awareness		10/5/2
Perception	1	11/5/2
Resolve		10/5/2
PER		
Interaction		8/4/2
Charm	1	9/4/2
Interview	1	9/4/2

Weapons

Stutter pistol d6+2s / d8+2s / d8+4s

Range (S/M/L): 6/12/30 Type: LI

Unarmed (untrained) d4s / d4+1s / d4+2s

Armor

CF long coat d4 (LI), d4 (HI), d6–2 (En)

Gear: comm gear, medical gauntlet, surgery kit, medical kit

Background: As doctor and resident hacker of the *Nebula Bounty*, this hero keeps the crew in good repair and helps when the team needs expert computer aid.

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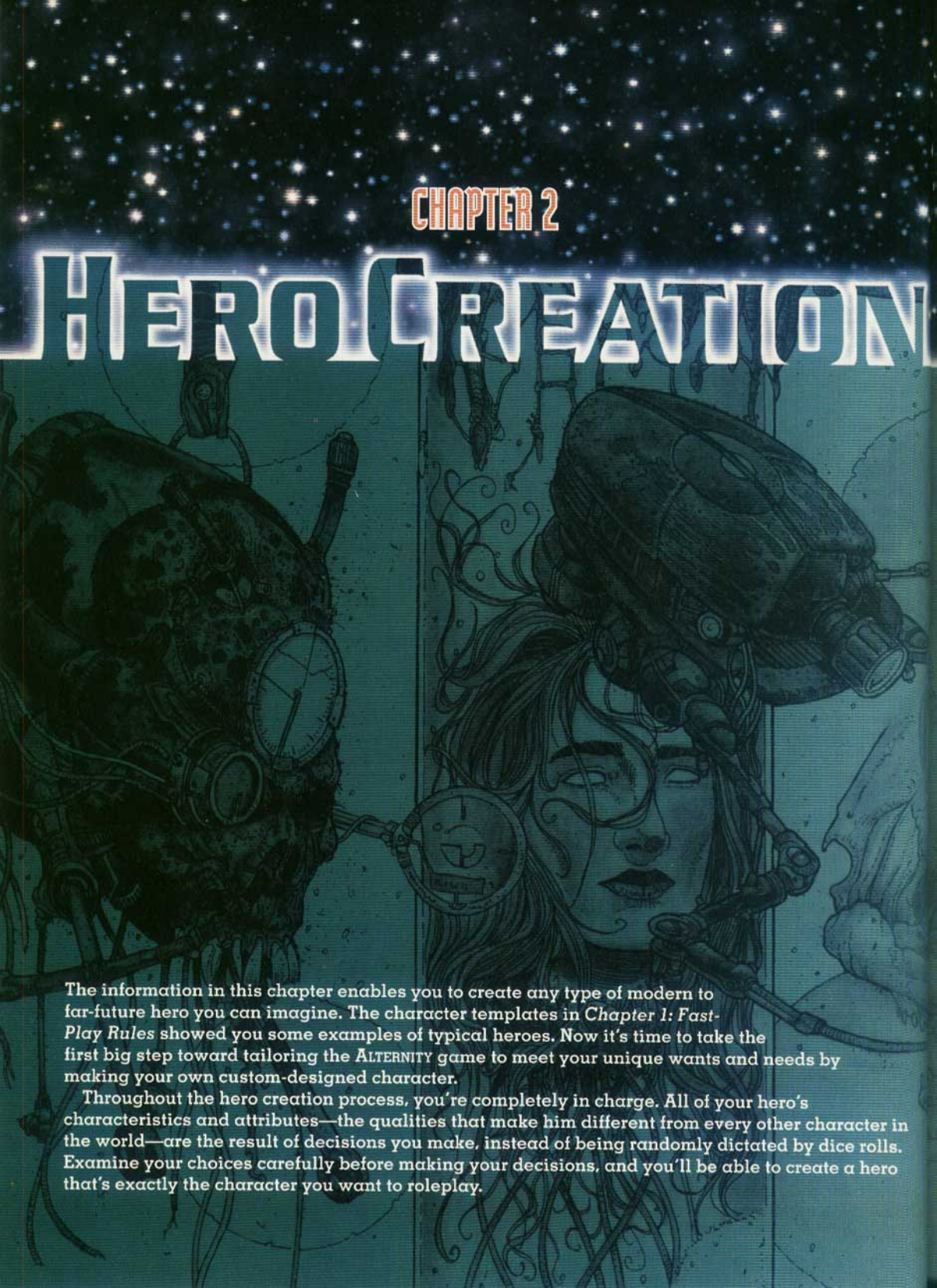
CHAPTER 2

HERO CREATION



The information in this chapter enables you to create any type of modern to far-future hero you can imagine. The character templates in *Chapter 1: Fast-Play Rules* showed you some examples of typical heroes. Now it's time to take the first big step toward tailoring the ALTERNITY game to meet your unique wants and needs by making your own custom-designed character.

Throughout the hero creation process, you're completely in charge. All of your hero's characteristics and attributes—the qualities that make him different from every other character in the world—are the result of decisions you make, instead of being randomly dictated by dice rolls. Examine your choices carefully before making your decisions, and you'll be able to create a hero that's exactly the character you want to roleplay.

What Is a Hero?

Every science fiction novel, film, and television series has heroes. They're the stars of the stories, the central characters around whom great events transpire. The player characters fill this role in roleplaying games, serving as protagonists in the adventures the Gamemaster presents. In the ALTERNITY game, we refer to player characters as "heroes."

Exactly what is a hero? That's up to you, because you're going to create the kind of hero you want to play. Are all heroes white knights struggling to make the galaxy a better place to live in? No, but many have this inclination. Like the heroes of books and movies, the hero you create needs to be someone who really matters. Your hero and the heroes created by the other players are the characters whom, ultimately, the adventures are about.

Heroes can be pure or flawed, driven by duty or greed, good or not so good—it doesn't matter as long as you can have fun playing the hero you create and the hero doesn't violate the tenets of the Gamemaster's world. Even the hero who's not so good should have some redeeming qualities, as well as the ability to grow, to learn, and to change to reflect the significant events that always seem to whirl around him.

In the long run, the best heroes in an ALTERNITY game display an ability to cooperate with other heroes, have good sides as well as bad, and develop into characters that are fun to play and fun to care about. That's what makes you come back to the campaign week after week—to see what's going to happen to the heroes.

The Hero Sheet

The essential record of your hero's capabilities and characteristics is contained on his hero sheet. A blank hero sheet (which you may photocopy for your personal use) can be found on the last page of this book.

As you move through each step of the hero creation process, fill the appropriate space on the hero sheet with the facts that you have just determined or decided. Of course, you can also use a separate sheet of paper to jot down even more details about your creation, or even write a short biography. But when you're finished with the hero creation process, the hero sheet (and the supplemental sheet, if your campaign is using any of the optional rules for mutants, psionics, or cybertech) will contain every piece of information you need to roleplay your hero in an ALTERNITY adventure.

Step by Step

The hero creation process is presented below in steps that are easy to follow. (These steps are summarized in the sidebar on page 20, which you may want to glance at now to get an overview of what the process involves.) Take each step one at a time until the system becomes clear; then you'll be able to build characters without too much time or trouble.

Note: The rules in this chapter allow you to create a starting hero—someone who is just about to embark on his or her first adventure. If you want to go further, or if your Gamemaster instructs you to do so, the *Gamemaster Guide* has information on how to create a character who's more experienced than a starting hero. But before you take that extra step, familiarize yourself with the basic process, beginning with . . .

1 ▶ Develop a Hero Concept

A hero concept is a general idea of the hero you want to create and play in an ALTERNITY campaign. A good concept starts with a few descriptive tags and then expands as much as you feel is necessary before you move on to the next step. (Note that the hero sheet does not have a place to write down a hero concept; instead, the concept of your hero will ultimately be defined by a collection of other entries on the hero sheet, such as "Profession," "Career," and "Attributes.")

Start with a concept that revolves around what kind of hero you want to play. Pick a character from your favorite novel or movie to use as a basis, or start by deciding what your hero is going to be good at. Do you want to play a tough fighter-type or a stealthy agent, a respected negotiator or an engineer with a solution for every problem? Forming a concept starts with answering the question "What does my hero do?"

Another approach is to start with the question "What is my hero like?" This sort of concept builds on a personality type instead of a job choice.

Complete Hero Creation Process

1 ▶ Develop a Hero Concept See pages 19–20

Begin by asking yourself some questions that will help you define the sort of hero you want to create: What does my hero do for a living? What sort of personality does he have? The answers will help you direct some of the choices you'll be making during the rest of this process.

2 ▶ Choose a Species See pages 20–30

Any hero can be a human, but you may also be able to roleplay an alien hero, depending on the type of campaign setting your Gamemaster is using.

3 ▶ Choose a Career See page 30

Every hero has a purpose in life that is at least partially defined by what he does and what he's good at. In the ALTERNITY game, a hero's career is primarily a descriptive label—it doesn't confine him to only being capable of doing things that are generally associated with that career.

4 ▶ Pick a Profession See pages 30–32

Select a profession—Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, or Tech Op—that logically encompasses your hero's career. (A fifth profession, Mindwalker, may also be available if your Gamemaster allows it.) Each profession provides special benefits to the heroes who belong to it.

5 ▶ Assign Ability Scores See pages 32–33

Divide 60 points among the six Abilities—STR, DEX, CON, INT, WIL, PER—and assign those Ability Scores to your hero, making sure to arrange them so that your hero:

- ▶ Meets the minimum requirements for his profession (which are given on TABLE P1: PROFESSION REQUIREMENTS on page 30).
- ▶ Abides by the minimum/maximum figures for Ability Scores for the type of hero (human or alien) you are creating. The figures are given in TABLE P3: ABILITY SCORE LIMITS on page 33.

5a ▶ Determine Options See pages 33–34

If your Gamemaster allows the use of the optional rules in *Chapter 13: Mutants* or *Chapter 15: Cybertech* and you want to create a hero who has one or both of these optional features, turn to that chapter and make those decisions before continuing with hero creation. Use the supplemental hero sheet (printed just ahead of the hero sheet at the back of this book) to record any facts about your hero that relate to the optional rules.

6 ▶ Purchase Skills See pages 34–36

Your hero gets six free broad skills, which vary depending on the hero's species. See TABLE P4: FREE BROAD SKILLS FOR HEROES on page 34.

The number of additional broad skills your hero can start with, and the number of points he receives to purchase additional skills, depend on the hero's species and Intelligence score. See TABLE P5: HERO STARTING SKILL POINTS on page 34. *Chapter 4: Skills* contains complete information on how much skills cost and what each one enables a hero to do.

7 ▶ Select Perks & Flaws See page 36

You may purchase up to three perks for your hero and select up to three flaws. See *Chapter 5: Perks & Flaws* for details.

8 ▶ Choose Attributes See pages 36–37

Choose one motivation, one moral attitude, and up to two character traits for your hero. Complete information is in *Chapter 7: Attributes.*

9 ▶ Complete the Hero Sheet See pages 38–41

As you've gone through this process, you've jotted down various entries on the hero sheet that describes your creation. Now's the time to fill in the rest of the blanks so that you can finish making your hero and get him going on his first adventure.

Assign a descriptive term to your hero, such as brave, cautious, curious, rash, logical, aloof, or friendly.

You can also develop a concept by answering both questions, so that you start with a brave pilot, a cowardly marine, a stubborn doctor, or a curious trader.

The goal is to come up with a concept for a hero who's both fun and compelling to play. There's no strict formula for this. Some players have their characters well formed in their minds right away, and those heroes' concepts emerge almost fully fleshed out. Others need to think about it, asking questions such as "What does my hero do for a living?" and "How does my hero behave?" The answers form the basis of your hero concept.

2 ▶ Choose a Species

Your Gamemaster will let you know if all heroes in the campaign must be human, or if you can choose to make your hero a member of one of the nonhuman species—fraal, mechalus, sesheyan, t'sa, and weren—that are part of the ALTERNITY game. If any of the alien species are available, you may want to look over the following information before deciding what species your hero belongs to.

Beyond that, it's a good idea to be generally familiar with the entire hero creation process before you "go alien," because you'll need to be aware of the ways in which alien heroes are different from human heroes in game terms (see the "Alien Abilities and Skills" sidebar).

In addition, keep in mind as you read the descriptions of the alien species that some of them are better suited for certain professions and careers that make the best use of their abilities. For instance, weren heroes are good candidates for careers that rely heavily on physical skills. On the other hand, fraal heroes are relatively better suited for careers that emphasize mental skills.

Note: If your Gamemaster is allowing the use of the optional rules for mutations (as given in *Chapter 13: Mutants*) and you want to create a hero who has mutations, that hero must be human; alien heroes can't be mutants. Some brief notes concerning humans appear at the end of this section, following the descriptions of the five alien species.

FRAAL

Quiet and peaceful, the fraal (pronounced "frahl") appear calm and composed in even the most chaotic situations. Averaging about 1.5 meters tall, the fraal are thin humanoids with large eyes; pale, almost luminous skin; and swept-back ears. While many are bald, some have wisps of silver, white, or pale yellow hair atop their large, round heads. Individual fraal can be so thin as to appear practically weightless, but most weigh about 55 kilograms. Even the youngest fraal adults have an ancient, wizened look that can be as intimidating to humans as it is disconcerting.

Roleplaying

Fraal aren't physically inclined. They tend to develop their minds instead of their bodies, working as Mindwalkers, Tech Ops, or Diplomats rather than in the Free Agent or Combat Spec professions. They are thinkers and philosophers with a deeply spiritual nature. Because they are a long-lived species, the fraal have a patient attitude that sometimes annoys humans. Their spirituality centers around mindwalking, the study and application of psionics. To them, the powers of the mind have almost religious significance; they feel that all species can find common ground by touching thoughts and sharing inner peace.

Fraal aren't pacifists, but they believe that violence should be the last resort of an intelligent, civilized species. They can seem cold and distant, but that's because they don't have as wide a range of emotions as humans do—and the emotional range they do possess doesn't shift as rapidly or unpredictably as humans' emotions do.

Peace-loving and intellectual, fraal are natural builders and scholars—forever working on creative or scientific endeavors, building or mending relationships (both personal and political), and adding to their pool of knowledge simply for the sake of learning.

Special Abilities

▶ ***Psionic Powers:*** By their nature, fraal have extraordinary mental powers, known as psionics, which other characters in the ALTERNITY game may not be capable of possessing. (Techni-

Fraal (male & female)

cally, the rules in *Chapter 14: Psionics* are optional, but if your Gamemaster determines that fraal exist in his or her campaign setting, then at least some of these optional rules should also be incorporated into the campaign.)

Even if members of other species also have access to psionic skills, fraal are extremely proficient in this area—able to use more psionic power than any other characters. A fraal who is a talent, or one who is a Diplomat with Mindwalker as his secondary profession, has psionic energy points equal to his Will score (instead of one-half Will for other such characters). A fraal who selects the Mindwalker profession has psionic energy points equal to his Will score × 1.5 (instead of Will × 1).

Note that all fraal receive the psionic broad skill Telepathy as one of their free skills. Since a talent can't have more than one broad skill, a fraal who is a talent is obliged to purchase his specialty skills from this category.

History

The fraal are nomadic starfarers who came to Earth more than 10,000 years ago. A large group of explorers traveled in three slow-moving colony ships, crossing the void of space over the course of many centuries. The trip was plagued by one disaster after another, though, so that by the time these colony ships reached the Sol system, contact with the fraal homeworld had been lost. In addition, damage to the ship's computers resulted in the loss of much vital information, including some technological know-how and most historical and scholarly records—among these the location of the fraal homeworld. The starfarers were cut off, isolated from their place of origin, and unaware of their original mission. Indeed, they weren't even sure if Earth was the destination they had been traveling to reach, or for what purpose. Thanks to eons of lost knowledge and countless mechanical breakdowns, accidents, and travel-related mishaps, these fraal were truly alone.

Initially, the fraal set up installations on Earth, building bases in isolated regions using local materials and components salvaged from their colony ships. From these hidden bases, the visitors set out to explore the planet and meet its inhabitants. Humans, still primitive but demonstrating great potential, were beginning to spread out from the geographic cradles that spawned them by the time the fraal arrived. Meetings between the two species led to the birth of many of Earth's greatest legends. Unfortunately, such meetings rarely went well for the visitors.

Though the fraal tried to join human society from the moment they arrived in the region, they kept running into problems. Primitive humans displayed great fear when the fraal approached, looking upon the aliens as magical creatures, spirits, or even gods. As humanity advanced, making contact didn't get any easier. Fear turned to distrust and hatred, and humanity's violent nature was too much for the peaceful fraal to deal with. Eventually, they withdrew and went into hiding in other parts of the solar system, watching humanity from afar and waiting for the proper moment to reveal themselves. Attempts made by the fraal in the 20th century resulted in tales of flying saucers and alien abductions, but little else. If they were capable of the emotion, the fraal would have begun to despair.

At some later point in human history, however, a meeting of the minds finally took place. As humanity put aside its own hostile nature to create a world of peace, the ancient visitors revealed themselves. The fraal joined forces with the humans, helping to lead humanity to the next great plateau. A free exchange of knowledge and ideas advanced both societies in numerous ways. One of the fraal's most significant gifts spawned a leap in technology that paved the way for true faster-than-light travel. Both sides prospered, and they soon merged to become a united society.

Contemporary Campaign

In a campaign set in contemporary times, the fraal are the first aliens to make contact with Earth. This is a time of paranoia and secrecy, with various powers working to keep the truth out of widespread circulation. Initially, the aliens are feared and few believe in their existence, but as the campaign unfolds the truth becomes more and more apparent. Of course, in this period of first contact, there are more than enough humans who want to exploit the fraal for personal ends. Government agencies, corporations, media moguls, and others seek to unlock the visitors' secrets for profit, out of curiosity, or to gain power and prestige.

In this type of campaign, one or two fraal join forces with the heroes, hoping to find a way to bring the two societies together. The road to peace and a better tomorrow stands before them, if they can work together to steer the two species in the right direction. This is a fragile time, and only great heroics and fortitude can keep events from tearing the world apart.

Near-Future Campaign

A campaign set in the near future describes a world where the existence of the fraal is an accepted fact, and the visitors and humans valiantly work together to conquer the stars. No corner of the solar system is off limits to the humans or their alien partners; colonies, research stations, and industrial facilities can be found as near as Earth's moon and as far away as Saturn. This is a time of scientific exploration as the two species struggle to unlock the secrets of faster-than-light (FTL) travel—a technology whose origin lies in the combination of human and fraal science.

In this type of campaign, the fraal are everywhere. They work with every friendly government (or with the world government, if one exists), helping civilization reach to the very limits of the solar system. This is an exciting time, a time of new discoveries, new challenges, and new technologies waiting to be developed for the good of all.

Far-Future Campaign

The faster-than-light technology born from the merging of human and fraal science has opened the stars to both species. Humans and their fraal companions have established a galactic society, though the age-old problems of Earth remain to cast a shadow over everything that has been accomplished. New alien species have been discovered, and many of these take their place alongside the original human and fraal explorers. But humans like to draw lines and establish nations, and soon war and the threat of war hinders even greater progress.

Still, there are no limits on where the human spirit can go or what can be discovered. In this type of campaign, the fraal can remain behind

to help guide humanity out of its latest crisis, or the species can build FTL ships and head out in a new direction—perhaps in search of the homeworld they lost so many millennia ago. . . .

Mechalus

Because of the basic resemblance between the two species, a mechalus (pronounced "*meck*-ah-lus") can be mistaken for a human if the viewer only catches a glimpse or if the area is shadowy. Averaging about 1.8 meters tall and weighing around 90 kilograms, the mechalus has the general shape and size of a human. On closer inspection, however, the similarities are quickly outdistanced by the differences. Veins of circuitry weave with flesh and blood to form a totally synthesized body. The mechalus's hair is a combination of protein strands and filaments of cable and wire. Even the skeleton has been reinforced with super-strong synthetic material, and bony protective plates can be seen beneath the bio-organic flesh at the shoulders and across the chest.

Roleplaying

Mechalus have the same range of emotions as humans, though they tend to try to downplay hostile or aggressive emotions. They were once responsible for the annihilation of another species, and since then they have made a conscious and constant effort to suppress or regulate their negative emotions.

Perhaps the hardest aspect of mechalus for humans to get used to is their ability to merge with computer systems. While the mechalus can easily employ standard computer interfaces, they have the unique ability to personally connect to computer systems. Filaments extend from fingers, snake into the computer in question, and form a solid link between body and machine. This link gives the mechalus speed-of-thought access to the computer system, and more precise control than any manual interface can provide.

With a natural affinity for technology and computers, mechalus make excellent Tech Ops. They aren't limited to this profession, however, and can be found filling the ranks of a variety of careers.

Mechalus (female & male)

The mechalus have very ordered minds, which translates into a strictly structured society and an equally organized outlook on life. Although they think with the precision and logic of a machine, they are highly emotional people who work exceedingly hard to promote their positive emotions and subdue their negative ones.

In a tense or dangerous situation, mechalus are likely to remain calm and logical; it's not difficult for them to suppress all their emotions when they deem such action appropriate or necessary. But in a climate of relaxation or celebration, their emotional pendulum can swing to the other extreme—to humans, it seems as though they are making a special effort to appear cheerful or jubilant. The mechalus don't consider their behavior at such times to be exaggerated; strong displays of positive emotion, when the situation permits, are simply their way of demonstrating (to themselves as well as members of other species) that mechalus are more than just machines encased in biological bodies.

Special Abilities

▶ ***Computer Operation Skill Bonus:*** Mechalus receive a –1 step situation die bonus whenever they use the Knowledge–*computer operation* or Computer Science–*hacking* skills. To gain this bonus, the mechalus must merge with the computer, forming a bond through the filaments that extend from his fingers. It takes one round to complete or disengage a merge.

▶ ***Cybernetic Enhancements:*** By their nature, mechalus have electronic technology integrated into their physiology. (Technically, the rules in *Chapter 15: Cybertech* are optional, but if your Gamemaster determines that mechalus exist in his campaign setting, then at least some of these optional rules should also be incorporated into the campaign.) Mechalus have two neural data slots that allow them to use computer programs, an internal processor that is equivalent to a Good quality nanocomputer (see *Chapter 10: Computers* for details), and bio-organic circuitry that functions like a reflex device.

At the Gamemaster's discretion, a mechalus hero may be equipped with, or may be able to acquire at a later date, some of the other cybernetic devices described in Chapter 15. A mechalus hero equipped with cyber gear is not subject to the chance of the cybernetic equipment being rejected by his body, and the limit to the amount of cybernetic gear he can have is based on his Constitution score +4 instead of simply his Constitution score (as is the case for heroes of other species).

History

The planet Aleer, an Earthlike world relatively close (on a cosmic scale) to the Sol system, gave rise to an intelligent humanoid species that would someday be called the mechalus by humans (who have a penchant for putting their own names to everything they encounter). The early history of the Aleerins follows much the same path as that experienced by Earth's humans—primitive tool-makers eventually built great civilizations, with periods of enlightenment crudely punctuated by episodes of brutal warfare. Eventually, the development of technology led to the invention of computers—and this is where the technological evolution of Aleerins and humans sharply diverged. Strides in medicine and genetic engineering, coupled with their computer know-how and their fascination with all things mechanical, gave the Aleerins the means to bioengineer their species. Cybernetic implants performed on a molecular level produced a synthesis of flesh and circuitry that now pervades the entire species—they are born with cyberbionics.

It was about this time that the species also developed space travel. Within a few generations, they had totally settled their solar system—but this breakthrough had its shameful side. Aleerins had always been a warlike species, and this behavior was never more evident than when they made contact with the sentient but primitive natives of another planet in the system. In response to a hostile reception from these creatures, who were barely able to defend themselves, the Aleerins used their heavily armed ships to obliterate the population of the planet.

Almost immediately thereafter, an emotional backlash swept through the entire Aleerin culture when the members of the species realized collectively what they had done. In a change of character that was essentially unanimous, the Aleerins became more sedate and less inclined toward hostility (or at least toward showing their hostility). They resolved that never again would they use violence unnecessarily against *another sentient species.*

Some Aleerins took this new attitude to an extreme; a splinter group composed of pacifists and technocrats rose up, taking the position that incorporating circuitry into flesh was not going far enough along the technological path. "Creatures of flesh are by their nature aggressive and fallible. They cannot resist the impulse to do harm to others," the leader of the group proclaimed. "Only by completely shedding our flesh can we achieve the next level in our evolutionary development."

The splinter group conducted illegal experiments in transferring living minds into computers. In the end, the computers that held the living minds were placed into spaceships, and the splinter group left Aleerin space to find its own destiny. To date, nothing further of these living computers has been heard.

Shortly after that time, humans encountered the Aleerins (renaming them the mechalus), and Aleerin space was pulled into the ever-expanding human galactic community.

Contemporary or Near-Future Campaign

If the mechalus are introduced into one of these types of campaigns, then it should be in the form of first contact—the mechalus travel to Earth or one of the solar-system colonies. After an initial relationship between humans and mechalus is established, the aliens will either join humanity's quest to explore and understand the galaxy (providing technological help along the way), or become an enemy of the aggressive human expansion. In the latter case, mechalus heroes could be involved in helping human heroes find a way to bring the two species together.

Far-Future Campaign

The mechalus are among the first alien species encountered as the humans explore the stars. They align themselves with the human community and accept the name bestowed upon them as a gift from their new friends. Mechalus computers and space vessels are among the best in the galaxy, and their in-system explorer ships, transports, and small

battle craft are state of the art. The mechalus can easily be considered equal partners in humanity's push to expand the galactic community.

Sesheyan

Standing approximately 1.7 meters tall and weighing a mere 40 kilograms, sesheyans (pronounced "se-*shay*-un") are humanoid only in the broadest sense of the word. A bulbous head encircled by eight small eyes and capped by large, pointed ears flows into a light, muscular frame. Powerful wings that extend to a 6-meter span spread from the sesheyan's back, and a long tail with an expandable fan-shaped tip provides stabilization while in flight. The wings can be folded tightly against the creature's upper back when they are not in use. Though they walk with a hunched, labored gait when on the ground, sesheyans exhibit a gracefulness while airborne that is matched by few other creatures capable of flight.

Roleplaying

Sesheyan heroes are among the small number of their species who have stepped into the galactic community thanks to the opportunities presented by humans and their starfaring ships.

Because of certain physical differences, such as their multiple eyes and strange head shape, the sesheyans are the most "alien" of the nonhuman species. Once they believed they were the highest form of life in the world they knew—they were hunters and shamans of great power. Now that they have seen the "magic" of the spacefaring species, their faith has been rocked. The typical sesheyan hunter maintains an outward appearance of confidence and power, but inside he struggles to stay brave in the face of so many frightening, strange, and seemingly magical things.

Most humans can't help feeling uneasy in the presence of a sesheyan. This attitude comes from humankind's innate fear of the dark and the creatures that inhabit it. Even the most primitive sesheyan finds this reaction mildly amusing. Though a sesheyan is a born hunter, he is also a being who might seem cold and aloof but actually has a

Sesheyan (female & male)

profound respect for all life and his place in its natural cycle.

Technology is new and alien to sesheyans. They can learn to use high-tech equipment, but many of them never become completely comfortable with it, and some deeply religious sesheyans refuse to have anything to do with it. Sesheyan heroes belong to the small group of sesheyans who have overcome their disinclination toward using high-tech equipment—they'll operate a computer, or a station on a spaceship, if they have to, but that doesn't mean they have to like it.

Sesheyans make excellent Free Agents, serving as spies, scouts, or even bounty hunters when they enter galactic society. A smaller number take up the profession of Combat Spec, and fewer still are Diplomats. Except for heroes who have overcome their natural distrust of technology, sesheyan Tech Ops are almost unheard of.

Special Abilities

▶ ***Flight:*** Sesheyans have natural flying ability, which they can employ in any environment with a significant atmospheric pressure (one-half that of Earth, or greater) and gravity equal to or less than Earth normal. In flight, sesheyans use the Acrobatics broad skill to make flying checks. They can purchase the *flight* specialty skill to improve their ability to move in the air.

▶ ***Zero-g Training:*** Because of their natural familiarity with freefall conditions, sesheyans function in weightless or near-weightless conditions as though they have the Acrobatics–*zero-g training* skill at rank 1. A sesheyan who actually purchases that skill is better at performing actions in zero gravity or light gravity than characters of other species; see the *zero-g training* skill description in Chapter 4 for details.

▶ ***Falling:*** As long as a sesheyan is conscious and able to use his wings, he never suffers impact damage from a fall. Instead, he simply takes flight or glides safely to the ground. If he can't use his wings, he suffers from impact damage (see page 58 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*) like any other character.

▶ ***Night Vision:*** A sesheyan's eyes are designed to intensify ambient light, thus allowing them to see even in near total darkness. This ability enables a sesheyan to ignore any penalties that apply to other species in situations of low illumination. Night vision doesn't function in total darkness, such as is found in a completely sealed room, and it doesn't work when a sesheyan is wearing protective goggles to protect against light sensitivity (see below).

▶ ***Light Sensitivity:*** Because sesheyans evolved on a world without bright light, normal sunshine and illumination bothers their sensitive eyes. In light of Ordinary intensity (sunlight on a cloudy day, a moderately illuminated room), a sesheyan performs all actions with a +1 step penalty. In Good illumination (full sunshine, a brightly lit room) the penalty is +2 steps, and in Amazing light (halogen lamps, flares) the penalty is +3 steps. Special goggles (see page 134 in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*) negate this penalty.

History

The sesheyans emerged from their prehistory only a short time ago. They are in the aboriginal stage of development, keeping oral histories and working with tools no more complicated than stone blades and wooden spears. Everything is mystical and magical to the sesheyans, and most of their culture is organized into tribes headed by either the best hunter or the most powerful shaman.

They call their world "Sheya," which means simply "hunting land" in their language. "Sesheyans" means "hunters of the land." In the sesheyan point of view, the world was made to provide its children sustenance, and the hunters are the undisputed masters of that world.

When human star vessels reach the sesheyan homeworld, they find superstitious hunters still locked in the stone age. Though many sesheyans may decide to travel the stars as allies of the galactic community, most remain planetbound, steadfastly clinging to their old beliefs and traditions.

A sesheyan's leathery flesh comes in shades that fall within the human range of skin tone, but he is obviously a creature of the night. Sesheyans are built to function in darkness with more precision and grace than humans demonstrate even in broad daylight. In the perpetual-twilight jungles of Sheya, the sesheyans' senses serve them well. The ground, the great trees with their tangles of vines and branches, and even the mist-filled air are the sesheyan's home, for his wings give him access to places landbound creatures can never reach. With eyes built to function in minimal illumination and ears sensitive to the slightest noise, these creatures have unparalleled hunting skills in obscured or low-light conditions.

Away from the low-intensity light of their homeworld, sesheyans must wear protective goggles to shield their sensitive eyes.

Far-Future Campaigns

Because of the level of technology on the sesheyan homeworld, this species can't be included in a campaign unless it's one in which humans have vehicles capable of faster-than-light travel. Once discovered, the sesheyans as a species will struggle to maintain their individuality and customs, while certain members of the species will welcome visitors and seek to learn everything they can.

From among this smaller group come sesheyan heroes, those who are willing to expand their hunt beyond the limits of twilight-enshrouded Sheya. These are the curious, the explorers, the seekers of advanced learning, who—no matter how much time they spend interacting with more advanced civilizations—nonetheless remain relatively primitive compared to most other members of the galactic community.

T'SA

Even when standing absolutely still—something that's almost impossible for the creature to do—a t'sa (pronounced "t-*sah*") conveys an impression of speed, sharp reflexes, and constant activity. Standing 1.4 meters tall, a t'sa is lightning-quick, with a fast mind to match his fast body. Sleek, with a reptilian form and the legs of a runner, a t'sa has a fine covering of interlocking scales that provide a modicum of natural protection. Most humans find t'sa, with their expressive eyes and child-like exuberance, to be extremely likeable.

Roleplaying

A t'sa has a natural curiosity and an affinity for all things technological. He's a consummate tinkerer, disassembling devices to discover how they work and to find ways to im-

prove them. T'sa have an undeserved reputation among humans for being overly naive, due to their infectious cheerfulness.

T'sa companions are a boon to any adventuring group. Their cheerfulness and good will never falters, and their desire to know every secret can be contagious—though this behavior can also get a t'sa into all kinds of trouble. Once a t'sa joins a group, he stays with it through thick and thin, usually bonding with at least one member as a lifelong friend.

Everything a t'sa does, he does quickly. He's always on the move, always asking questions, always seeking answers. Although he's often misunderstood, a t'sa is nonetheless eager to please and make friends.

T'sa make great Tech Ops, doing especially well as engineers and inventors. This species can also be found in fair abundance within the Free Agent, Diplomat, and Mindwalker professions, but t'sa very seldom aspire to be Combat Specs, because it isn't in their nature to be violent or physically forceful.

Special Abilities

▶ ***Action Check Bonus:*** Due to their natural quickness, all t'sa heroes receive a –1 step situation die bonus to their action checks. This makes a t'sa's base action check die -d4 instead of the usual +d0.

▶ ***Juryrig Bonus:*** Whenever a t'sa makes a Technical Science–*juryrig* skill check, he receives a –1 step situation die bonus. This makes a t'sa's base situation die for these checks -d4 instead of +d0.

▶ ***Body Armor:*** All t'sa possess natural body armor that provides protection of d4+1 (LI), d4 (HI), d4–1 (En).

History

Rising from a world that resembled Earth's prehistoric era, except that dinosaurs were never replaced by mammals as the dominant species, the t'sa evolved into an intelligent species. Their history had ups and downs, high periods and low, but eventually the t'sa developed a technological society. Spurred on by natural curiosity and an undeniable lack of patience, the t'sa compiled a substantial list of accomplishments and even established a star-spanning society.

By the time humans discovered faster-than-light travel, the t'sa had

T'sa (male & female)

Alien Abilities and Skills

Every alien species differs from the human species in three ways that have an immediate effect on hero creation:

- Different limits on how low or high an Ability Score can be, as outlined on TABLE P3: ABILITY SCORE LIMITS on page 33.
- A different group of broad skills that the hero gets for free; see TABLE P4: FREE BROAD SKILLS FOR HEROES on page 34.
- A lower number of points that a starting hero receives to spend on purchasing skills and perks, and a lower maximum number of broad skills; see "Special Abilities" in the description of the human species on page 30, and refer to TABLE P5: HERO STARTING SKILL POINTS on page 34.

Before you make a commitment to create an alien hero, examine those tables and the text that's associated with them to be sure you understand what you're getting, and what you're giving up, when you select a species other than human.

already founded a stellar empire. Consisting of five star systems in relatively close proximity to each other, the T'sa Cluster bustles with the energy of billions of t'sa doing whatever it is t'sa do—and doing it quickly. They have begun to expand beyond this domain, but they aren't an aggressive species. They are motivated by a simple desire to see what lies in the next star system rather than by greed, power, or expansionism.

Near-Future Campaigns

If the t'sa are introduced into a near-future campaign setting, then they arrive to make first contact with the humans of Earth and the solar system colonies. Many humans will attempt to exploit the t'sa, but others will see them for the friendly, good-natured beings they are. The two species can aid each other immensely, provided evil humans aren't allowed to ruin the opportunity before it comes to fruition.

T'sa heroes seek to learn from their human companions and are quite eager to help the humans get on with their exploration of the galaxy. Others come to evaluate the humans, working with them in an effort to understand them and decide if they are worthy of joining the T'sa Cluster.

Far-Future Campaigns

When humans spread out in search of new worlds to settle and explore, they found many intelligent species waiting for them. Few were as simultaneously excited and unimpressed by humanity as the t'sa. These small beings had their own stellar empire in place and their own accomplishments to be proud of when humanity encountered them, so the t'sa saw no reason to fawn all over the humans. The t'sa were curious, however—extremely curious.

The t'sa consider their cluster of worlds to be an independent entity, and they've appealed to the appropriate authority for full membership rights in humanity's galactic community. They seek to provide humans with help and good will, and to make the galaxy a better place through the joining of the two societies.

WEREN

You can't miss a weren (pronounced "*wear*-enn"). He stands 2.2 meters tall and weighs in at a hefty 180 kilograms. Covered in thick fur, he has a powerful form and wicked claws that make him a formidable opponent even when he's not carrying a weapon. A great mane of hair flares from his head, and his fur ranges from black to shades of gray to almost white.

Roleplaying

Weren approach life with amazing intensity. When they embrace a new idea or belief, they become zealots. They profess the tenets of those beliefs with word, deed, claw, and war mace. Though they're built for battle, weren also love to talk and share ideas. Not every discussion leads to a fight, and most weren won't battle those weaker than themselves unless they are left with no choice. They have strict codes concerning honor, combat etiquette, and noble acts.

Most weren are fierce warriors, embracing the Combat Spec profession, though a few make strides as Diplomats of one sort or another, especially as clergy of a human faith or shamans of their own culture. They have no extraordinary talent as Free Agents, Mindwalkers, or Tech Ops, however, and few weren heroes pursue those professions. Indeed, weren just can't get the hang of any technology beyond their own level of advancement, and even most of those living in an advanced society can't use such items without penalty.

Special Abilities

- ***Superior Durability:*** A weren is better able to withstand physical damage than members of other species. When determining a weren's durability rating, use the character's Constitution score × 1.5 (rounding down if necessary to produce a whole number).
- ***Natural Weapon:*** A weren has retractable claws at the end of his arms that can be used in combat if the character makes a successful Unarmed Attack–*brawl* or *power martial arts* skill check. The claws do damage of d4w/d4+2w/d4m (LI/O), plus any Strength bonus that might apply.
- ***Camouflage:*** A weren's fur shimmers and changes color to match his surroundings, making it hard to see him in natural terrain. Even in an urban setting, this natural camouflage causes the weren to blend into the background. Close up, the weren isn't hard to see unless he's perfectly still and in natural terrain. The benefit most often comes into play when observers are at a distance; the weren is hard to pick out against the background, giving opponents a +1 step penalty to ranged weapon attacks aimed against him.
- ***Primitive Culture***: Because weren come from a primitive culture and are less adaptable than other species when it comes to high technology, they receive a +2 step penalty when using any technological item from Progress Level 4 or higher. (*Chapter 9: Goods & Services* has definitions of Progress Levels and descriptions of equipment.)

A beginning hero can reduce this penalty to +1 step for a price of 4 skill points, and the penalty can be eliminated altogether by paying 4 more skill points when the character attains 6th level or higher. Optionally, a weren hero can endure the full +2 step penalty to start with, and then spend 8 skill points to remove it all at once when the character attains 6th level or higher. (*Chapter 8: Achievements* contains the rules for

when it's possible for characters to use skill points to remove a flaw.)

History

The homeworld of the weren is known as Kurg. When human starships reached the planet, the weren clans were deeply involved in their world's version of the Renaissance. It was a great time of learning, debate, and speculation about the nature of life. The printing press, the scientific method, the flintlock—all these and more can be found in weren society of this time. But this age of enlightenment did not deter the weren from continuing to pursue their true forte: war.

At the time humans first encountered the species, the small skirmishes that were a constant way of life for the weren had escalated to a point where the entire planet was embroiled in a raging war. This state of affairs served to keep them sharp, battle-ready, and at the peak of their aggressive and savage nature—despite the attempts of humans and radical weren religious leaders to teach them a more peaceful way of life.

Philosopher-warriors, weren appear to be a dichotomy of enlightened scholars and noble savages. They have combined the two ways of life well, effortlessly debating with words one moment and with claws or flintlocks the next. Considered primitive by the standards of the galactic community (and mostly unwilling to use high-tech equipment anyway), weren are nevertheless sought-after companions as humans spread out farther into the regions of the unknown.

Far-Future Campaigns

Weren can't appear in an ALTERNITY campaign until humans achieve faster-than-light travel and discover this emerging society. Although they don't have any high-tech gadgets of their own, weren will gladly board starships in order to learn more about the galaxy. They are great mimics, embracing new ideas and new religions while never forsaking the society that raised them.

While this fits with the weren's philosophical nature, the reverse is true when it comes to technology. They just can't get their minds around gadgets and tools beyond their own progress level, which

Weren (male & female)

translates to a limitation concerning such items.

As weren join the galactic community, they take the roles of soldiers, mercenaries, bodyguards, or even heavy laborers. Most humans are glad to have them serving in those capacities—provided they remain on the humans' side.

Human

In the Alternity game, members of the human species come in a variety of shades, sizes, and body types, but they all look like the people around us.

Special Abilities

▶ ***Skill Bonus:*** As a by-product of their anatomical versatility and their cultural diversity, humans in the Alternity game begin with 5 more skill points than members of other species do, and are allowed to start with one more broad skill. Table P5: Hero Starting Skill Points on page 34 gives the number of skill points and the maximum number of broad skills that a starting hero can have, based on his or her Intelligence score. For a human hero, increase those numbers by 5 and 1, respectively.

History

The history of humanity is well documented and doesn't need to be repeated here. For the purposes of this science fiction roleplaying game, two events will come to pass in humanity's future: The species will develop the means to expand beyond its homeworld and colonize the solar system. And eventually it will become capable of traveling beyond the solar system and establishing communities of humans in other star systems.

Filling Out the Hero Sheet

After you've decided what species your hero belongs to, write that name in the appropriate place near the top of the hero sheet. If your hero is a member of an alien species, move down to the "Game Data" box near the bottom of the sheet and jot down some notes about your hero's special abilities in the space provided. There's not enough room to go into a lot of detail, but these notes will serve as reminders.

Table P1: Profession Requirements

	Minimum Ability Score					
Profession	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Combat Spec	11	—	9	—	—	—
Diplomat	—	—	—	—	9	11
Free Agent	—	11	—	—	9	—
Tech Op	—	9	—	11	—	—
Mindwalker*	—	—	9	9	11	—

* Detailed in *Chapter 14: Psionics*

3 ▶ Choose a Career

A career expresses the sum of a hero's talents and training in a one- or two-word label. Careers include such descriptive titles as bounty hunter, medtech, ambassador, and mercenary.

In most cases, a career is synonymous with a hero's dramatic occupation (what he does when he's involved in an adventure). *Chapter 6: Sample Careers* provides some possible choices, but you're not limited to the careers that are briefly described there. You can create an original career, as long as it meets the approval of your Gamemaster.

In the complete hero creation process, choosing a career doesn't dictate the exact skills you must assign to your hero. The careers described in Chapter 6 contain skill suggestions that are appropriate for the career concept. But you make all the final choices as to which skills your hero has, as explained later in the creation process.

When you've settled on a word or a short phrase that describes your hero's career, write that information in the appropriate space near the top of the hero sheet.

4 ▶ Pick a Profession

Once you've assigned a career to your hero, you need to figure out which profession that career belongs to. All of the careers listed in Chapter 6 are clearly grouped under one of the four basic professions: Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, and Tech Op. These professions are explained below. (The Mindwalker profession, and some careers associated with it, are detailed in *Chapter 14: Psionics.*)

In order to qualify for inclusion in a profession, a hero must meet minimum requirements in certain Ability Scores. These necessary scores are summarized on Table P1: Profession Requirements. When you commit your hero to being a member of a profession, you must be willing to abide by these requirements during the next step of the hero creation process (assigning Ability Scores).

Each profession offers special benefits to its members. In most cases, you will need to refer back to the descriptions of these benefits at some later point in the hero creation process; for instance, your hero's action check score increase is taken into account after his action check score is determined (see page 38).

When you've decided what profession your hero belongs to, write that information in the appropriate space near the top of the hero sheet.

Combat Spec

Combat Specs rely on physical power and endurance to supplement their training in battle techniques. These warriors are walking arsenals who employ both technology and their own bodies as weapons in the pursuit of their chosen profession.

Special Benefits

▶ ***Action Check Score Increase:*** A Combat Spec's action check score is increased by 3 points.

▶ ***Situation Bonus:*** Choose one specialty skill from among those listed under these broad skills: Armor Operation, Unarmed Attack, Heavy Weapons, Modern Ranged Weapons, Melee Weapons, and Primitive Ranged Weapons. That specialty skill's base situation die improves from +d0 to –d4.

Diplomat

Diplomats are negotiators, political figures, managers, deal-makers, and any others who use interaction skills and personal resolve to accomplish their jobs. They specialize in getting things done through bargaining, heated discussion, and even guile.

Special Benefits

▶ ***Action Check Score Increase:*** A Diplomat's action check score is increased by 1 point.

▶ ***Contacts or Resources:*** A Diplomat starts with contacts or resources as described in the *Gamemaster Guide*. Your Gamemaster will inform you of the details of this benefit.

▶ ***Secondary Profession:*** All Diplomats have a knack for learning other skills to fall back on when discussion and negotiation fail. Select a second profession. Your hero can purchase skills from that profession for *list price –1* instead of *list price*. (See "Purchase Skills" on page 34 for more information.)

Free Agent

Free Agents are troubleshooters or field operatives who rely on agility, intuition, and their natural resolve to get a job done. They may have ties to a specific government or organization, but they work better alone or in small groups than they do as units in a large force.

Special Benefits

▶ ***Action Check Score Increase:*** A Free Agent's action check score is increased by 2 points.

▶ ***Resistance Bonus:*** Choose one Ability and improve its resistance modifier by 1 step. For example, if you choose Will for your hero who has a Will score of 11, that Ability's resistance modifier improves from +1 step (the penalty on any opponent's actions against him) to +2 steps.

▶ ***Last Resort Bonus:*** Free Agent heroes start play with a number of last resort points based on their Personality scores, but their maximum is increased by 1—so that a Free Agent hero with a PER score of 12 has a maximum of 3 last resort points instead of 2. Also, a Free Agent can spend 2 last resort points to alter an action instead of the usual 1 point.

Combat Spec Heroes

TABLE P2: RESISTANCE MODIFIERS

Ability Score	Resistance Modifier
4 or less	–2 steps
5–6	–1 step
7–10	0
11–12	+1 step
13–14	+2 steps
15–16	+3 steps
17–18	+4 steps
19+	+5 steps

Resistance Modifiers

When your hero is the target of an attempt by another character to harm or hinder him, one of your hero's resistance modifiers may come into play.

Most Ability Scores have an automatic resistance modifier of a certain amount; see TABLE P2: RESISTANCE MODIFIERS. This modifier affects an opponent's ability to succeed at what he is trying to do; for an Ability Score of 11 or higher, it translates into a penalty on the attempt.

A particular resistance modifier is applied only on certain kinds of actions. For instance, if your hero has a high Dexterity score, his Dexterity resistance modifier makes it more difficult for someone using a ranged weapon to hit him. (See TABLE P10: SKILLS & RESISTANCE MODIFIERS and the accompanying text on page 51 of *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action.*)

Resistance modifiers are always in effect unless the situation (or the Gamemaster) dictates otherwise. For example, a hero who's targeted by a sniper won't get the benefit of his Dexterity resistance modifier if he's immobilized, or if he's unaware that he's about to be shot at.

When your decisions on assigning Ability Scores are final, find your hero's resistance modifiers by using the table above and enter them on your hero sheet.

TECH OP

Tech Ops are operatives (or "ops" for short) accomplished in the use of high-tech equipment or specialists trained to create or maintain high-tech equipment. They rely on natural genius, agility, and expert training, as well as the benefits of their technological devices. Examples of Tech Op careers include technicians, scientists, pilots, and medical doctors.

Special Benefits

▶ ***Action Check Score Increase:*** A Tech Op's action check score is increased by 1 point.

▶ ***Accelerated Learning:*** Every time a Tech Op hero reaches a new achievement level, he receives the usual number of skill points plus extra skill points depending on the level he just reached:

Level Attained	Extra Skill Points
2–5	1
6–10	2
11–15	3
16–20	4
21+	5

5 ▶ ASSIGN ABILITY SCORES

Every hero (and every other character in the campaign setting) has six Abilities. Three of these—Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution—represent a hero's physical nature, and the other three—Intelligence, Will, and Personality—describe his mental makeup.

In this step of the hero creation process, you will assign a number to each Ability. The higher his Ability Score, the more proficient a hero is when using that Ability or when using skills associated with it.

Strength (STR)

Strength measures a hero's physical power. This score serves as the basis for all Strength-based skills.

A high Strength score provides a bonus to the damage a hero inflicts when making an unarmed attack, using a melee weapon, or using a thrown weapon. (See TABLE P9: STRENGTH AND DAMAGE on page 40.)

A hero's Strength resistance modifier (see TABLE P2: RESISTANCE MODIFIERS) is applied to the action of an opponent who tries to target a hero with a melee weapon or an unarmed attack.

Strength, along with Dexterity, determines a hero's combat movement rate. (See TABLE P8: COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES and the accompanying text on page 39.)

Also, a hero's Strength score has a direct bearing on how far he can throw objects; see page 57 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action.*

Dexterity (DEX)

Dexterity indicates a hero's physical agility, coordination, and reflexes. This score serves as the basis for all Dexterity-based skills.

Dexterity, along with Intelligence, affects a hero's action check score. (See "Action Check" on page 38.)

Dexterity, along with Strength, determines a hero's combat movement rate. (See TABLE P8: COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES and the accompanying text on page 39.)

A hero's Dexterity resistance modifier (see TABLE P2: RESISTANCE MODIFIERS) is applied to the action of an opponent who tries to attack a hero with a heavy weapon or a ranged weapon.

Constitution (CON)

Constitution is an indication of a hero's physical fitness and general health. This score serves as the basis for all Constitution-based skills.

Constitution, along with Will, determines the number of actions a hero can perform in a round. (See TABLE P7: ACTIONS PER ROUND and the accompanying text on page 38.)

This score also indicates a hero's durability: A hero can withstand a number of points of stun and wound damage equal to his Constitution score, and a number of points of mortal and fatigue damage equal to half his Constitution score, rounded up.

Constitution doesn't have a resistance modifier, as most other Ability Scores do. Instead, Constitution is used actively, allowing heroes to make feat checks and skill checks to resist harmful effects.

Table P3: Ability Score Limits

Hero's Species	Ability Score					
	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Human	4 — 14	4 — 14	4 — 14	4 — 14	4 — 14	4 — 14
Fraal	4 — 11	4 — 11	4 — 10	9 — 15	9 — 16	4 — 15
Mechalus	8 — 14	4 — 14	6 — 14	7 — 15	6 — 12	4 — 12
Sesheyan	6 — 12	7 — 15	4 — 10	4 — 12	9 — 15	4 — 12
T'sa	4 — 11	9 — 16	4 — 10	8 — 14	4 — 12	4 — 13
Weren	9 — 16	4 — 12	8 — 16	4 — 13	4 — 12	4 — 12

Intelligence (INT)

Intelligence is an indicator of a hero's mental quickness and learning ability. This score serves as the basis for all Intelligence-based skills.

Intelligence is particularly important to every hero because it determines the number of broad skills and specialty skills he begins his career with, and how many points he receives with which to purchase those skills. (See "Purchase Skills" on page 34.)

Intelligence, along with Dexterity, affects a hero's action check score. (See "Action Check" on page 38.)

A hero's Intelligence resistance modifier (see Table P2: Resistance Modifiers) is applied to the action of an opponent who tries to deceive or trick the hero (by using the Deception skill or one of its specialties).

Will (WIL)

Will measures a hero's mental fortitude and intuitive capacity. This score serves as the basis for all Will-based skills.

Will, along with Constitution, determines the number of actions a hero can perform in a round. (See Table P7: Actions per Round and the accompanying text on page 38.)

A hero's Will resistance modifier (see Table P2: Resistance Modifiers) is applied to the action of an opponent who tries to use a mental attack against him (see *Chapter 14: Psionics*), or who tries to employ certain Personality-based skills such as Entertainment, Interaction, and Leadership. This resistance modifier also helps a hero foil attempts to use the Stealth skill against him.

Personality (PER)

Personality indicates a hero's social abilities and charisma. This score serves as the basis for all Personality-based skills.

Personality determines how many last resort points a hero starts play with, and how many he can have at any time thereafter. (See Table P6: Last Resort Points and the accompanying text on page 38, plus "Last Resort Points" on page 59 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.)

Personality doesn't have a resistance modifier, as most other Ability Scores do. Instead, Personality is used actively, perhaps in an attempt to befriend a would-be enemy before that character can harm or hinder a hero.

Determining Ability Scores

To determine your hero's Ability Scores, you assign points to each Ability. You get a total of 60 points to divide among the six scores.

A few rules apply when assigning points to Abilities, as detailed below.

Profession Minimums

Your hero's scores must conform to the minimum scores for the profession you've selected. These minimums are given in Table P1: Profession Requirements on page 30.

Species Limits

For human heroes, every Ability Score must be assigned a value no lower than 4 and no higher than 14. The minimums and maximums for alien heroes are often different from this range. If you are creating an alien hero, you must abide by the ranges given for that species on Table P3: Ability Score Limits.

Examples of Ability Score Assignment

◆ ***Example 1:*** Dave creates a human Free Agent hero with the following scores: STR 8, DEX 12, CON 10, INT 12, WIL 9, PER 9. This hero follows all the rules.

◆ ***Example 2:*** Michele creates a mechalus Tech Op hero with the following scores: STR 7, DEX 9, CON 6, INT 15, WIL 13, PER 10. This hero meets the profession requirement, but violates the mechalus species limits for Strength and Will.

Note: The *Gamemaster Guide* provides guidelines for alternate methods of hero creation, including different ways of determining Ability Scores.

5a ▶ Determine Options

If your Gamemaster allows you to use the optional rules for creating mutant heroes, and you want to have such a character, refer to *Chapter 13: Mutants* and follow the steps described there for determining your hero's mutations.

If any of those mutations have a permanent effect on your hero's Ability Scores, increase or decrease the affected scores now before proceeding with the rest of the hero creation process. (As explained in Chapter 13, it is possible for a mutant hero to have Ability Scores that go beyond the minimums and maximums for humans.)

Likewise, if you are allowed to use the rules for cybernetics, refer to *Chapter 15: Cybertech* and determine whether your hero will be equipped with cyber gear at the start of his career. (As explained in Chapter 15, it is possible for a hero with cyber gear installed to have Ability Scores that go beyond the minimums and maximums for his species.)

Table P4: Free Broad Skills for Heroes

Hero's Species	Related Ability Score					
	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Human	Athletics	Vehicle Op	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Fraal	—	Vehicle Op	—	Knowledge	Awareness Resolve	Interaction Telepathy
Mechalus	Athletics	Vehicle Op	Stamina	Knowledge Comp. Sci.	Awareness	—
Sesheyan	Melee Wpns	Acrobatics	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
T'sa	Athletics	Manipulation	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction
Weren	Athletics Unarmed Attack	—	Stamina	Knowledge	Awareness	Interaction

The supplemental hero sheet, printed just ahead of the hero sheet at the back of this book, is designed to hold all the important information about a hero who is created using any of the optional rules.

Filling Out the Hero Sheet

After you've decided what all of your hero's Ability Scores are, write down the numbers in the "Score" column. Divide each score in half (rounding down if necessary) and write that number in the "Untrained" space. Then find the resistance modifier for each score on Table P2: Resistance Modifiers and put that in the appropriate space beneath "Res. Mod."

6 ▶ Purchase Skills

This is the most time-consuming step in the hero creation process, and in many ways the most important one. As you go through this step, you will need to refer often to *Chapter 4: Skills*, where you'll find full information on how skills are used, what sorts of skills a beginning hero can obtain, and how many points your hero must pay to acquire a certain skill. This is also the chapter where the skills are described, so you can read about the benefits a skill provides before deciding whether to acquire it for your hero.

If your Gamemaster is allowing the use of the optional rules for psionics and you are creating a character who has special mental abilities, you'll also need to refer to *Chapter 14: Psionics*, where the Mindwalker profession and the various psionic skills are described.

Obtaining Skills

All heroes receive six broad skills for free; these are listed on Table P4: Free Broad Skills for Heroes for each type of hero, human or alien, you can create. (Note that one of the free broad skills for a fraal hero is Telepathy, a psionic skill that's described in Chapter 14.)

To determine how many points your hero receives to purchase additional skills, find your hero's Intelligence score on Table P5: Hero Starting Skill Points. This table shows the number of skill points a starting hero is allowed to spend and the maximum number of broad skills a starting hero may purchase, based on his Intelligence score. (He can purchase fewer broad skills than the maximum number if desired. Free broad skills don't count against this maximum.)

Other rules concerning the purchase of skills for a starting hero are as follows:

- A human hero receives 5 more skill points than the number given on Table P5, and is allowed to purchase one more broad skill than the stated maximum.
- A hero must purchase a broad skill before he can select any of the specialty skills related to it. (Free broad skills are considered to have been purchased, so a hero can select any of the specialty skills related to them.)
- The purchase of a specialty skill gives a hero a rank of 1 in that skill. To determine a specialty skill score, add the skill rank to the associated Ability Score (Ability Score + skill rank = skill score).
- As shown on Table P19: Skill List in *Chapter 4: Skills* (pages 64 and 65), every skill has a profession code that identifies which profession(s) the skill is most closely related to, and defines how many points a hero of a certain profession must pay to purchase it. Five profession codes are used on the skill list: one for each of the four basic professions, plus an Open category. Some skills have more than one profession code; for

Table P5: Hero Starting Skill Points

INT Score	Skill Pts.	Broad Skills
4	15	2
5	20	2
6	25	3
7	30	3
8	35	4
9	40	4
10	45	5
11	50	5
12	55	6
13	60	6
14	65	7
15	70	7
16	75	8

First contact between humans and sesheyans

example, the Survival broad skill is related to both the Combat Spec and Free Agent professions.

▶ The cost of a skill in the Open category, or a skill that's not related to your hero's profession, is the number shown on the skill list. This is referred to as the *list price*.

▶ The cost of a skill that is related to your hero's profession is equal to 1 point less than the number shown on the skill list. This is referred to as the *list price –1*.

▶ A starting hero can purchase as many as three ranks in a specialty skill. The cost for the second rank is equal to the *list price* or the *list price –1* plus the skill's current rank. So, the cost to purchase a skill at rank 2 is the rank 1 price (*list price* or *list price –1*) plus 1 (the skill's current rank). The cost to purchase a skill at rank 3 is the rank 2 price (*list price* ×2 or *list price +1* ×2) plus 2 (the skill's current rank).

♦ ***Example:*** Dave wants his human Free Agent hero (see example 1 under "Examples of Ability Score Assignment" on page 33) to be a master of the martial arts.

First he purchases the Acrobatics broad skill for 6 points (*list price –1*, because the skill is related to the Free Agent profession).

Then he buys rank 3 in the Acrobatics–*defensive martial arts* specialty skill, calculating the cost as follows: 4 points for rank 1 (this is the *list price –1*, because the specialty skill is also related to the Free Agent profession), 5 points for rank 2 (*list price –1* plus 1 additional point for the current rank of 1), and 6 points for rank 3 (*list price –1* plus

Which Skills to Start With?

The sheer number of skills you have to choose from can make this part of the hero creation process somewhat daunting: With a limited number of points to spend, how can you be sure you're giving your starting hero the best possible assortment of skills?

By the time you get to this point in the process, you've decided on your hero's career and profession. *Chapter 6: Sample Careers* contains some good general advice on which skills your hero might need to handle the job you've chosen for him.

If your hero's career doesn't resemble any of the careers mentioned in Chapter 6, then you're pretty much on your own. However, we can make a few recommendations:

▶ Start buying some ranks in Stamina–*endurance* right away to give your hero a better chance of withstanding physical damage. (If your hero is a fraal, you'll need to purchase the Stamina broad skill first.)

▶ Resolve and its specialty skills are good for any hero to have, regardless of profession. *Mental resolve* prevents a hero from succumbing to emotional or mental stress, and *physical resolve* allows a hero to recover more quickly from physical damage.

▶ The Awareness specialty skills *intuition* and *perception* are also universally valuable, since they enhance any hero's ability to stay in tune with his surroundings—enabling him to pick up bits of important information and making it less likely for him to be taken by surprise.

an additional 2 points for the current rank).

Next he picks up Unarmed Attack, an Open skill, for 5 points, and he finishes this part of his skill selection by purchasing rank 3 in *power martial arts* for another 15 points (4 + 5 + 6, the same as for *defensive martial arts* because this specialty also has a list price of 5 and is related to the Free Agent profession).

Purchasing these skills for his hero has cost 41 of the 60 points Dave has available, but he considers it a fine investment—this hero is as good at martial arts as a beginning character can be, and still has 19 points left to use for other skills.

Filling Out the Hero Sheet

Initially, it's a good idea to use a separate sheet of paper to jot down the skills you want to purchase and the cost of each one, because you may find yourself changing your mind a few times during this step.

When you're finished deciding everything, use the back side of the hero sheet to record your hero's skill scores and the rank he possesses in each specialty skill he has acquired. (Note that the "Rank" column only contains spaces to be filled in for specialty skills, because broad skills don't have ranks.)

The space inside brackets opposite each skill is meant to hold three numbers. From left to right, these are:

▶ The hero's skill score. For a broad skill, this number is equal to the associated Ability Score. For a specialty skill, this number is the sum of the associated Ability Score and the hero's rank in that skill.

▶ The skill score divided by 2 (rounded down).

▶ The skill score divided by 4 (rounded down).

Information on how these three numbers are used was given in *Chapter 1: Fast-Play Rules* and is also detailed at the beginning of *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action.*

Skill Points Spent and Stored

Two places are provided on the front of the hero sheet for you to record the number of skill points you've spent in creating or improving your hero, and the number of skill points your hero has earned that haven't yet been spent.

Skill Point Spending Choices

In the step-by-step hero creation process, purchasing skills is mentioned just ahead of selecting perks and flaws. But in actuality, you'll want to work both of these steps simultaneously if you intend for your hero to have any perks or flaws.

To purchase a perk, you need to spend skill points just as you do when purchasing skills. Obviously, this will cut down on the number of points you can spend on skills.

When you assign a flaw to your hero, he receives extra skill points, which means that before you can finish deciding how your hero's starting skill points will be used, you should know which flaw or flaws (if any) he is going to have.

It's not necessary for you to immediately use every skill point that your hero is entitled to spend. Be aware, however, that you can only spend stored skill points between adventures, and after your hero has attained a new achievement level; you can't decide to give your hero a new skill while an adventure is going on.

7 ▶ Select Perks & Flaws

Perks and flaws provide advantages and disadvantages to the hero they're assigned to. No hero is required to purchase a perk or select a flaw.

Perks are advantages that can enhance roleplaying and give special bonuses. Full details on perks are given in *Chapter 5: Perks & Flaws.* The following rules apply to perks:

▶ A player can purchase up to three perks for his hero at the time of character creation. If you elect not to purchase a perk or perks for your hero at the time of creation, you will still have an opportunity to purchase certain perks as your character attains higher achievement levels, as described in *Chapter 8: Achievements.* It's also possible, at the Gamemaster's discretion, for your hero to receive a perk because of events that occur during the course of a campaign.

▶ Every perk has a cost in skill points that must be paid, either with the skill points a hero receives based on his Intelligence score, or with the points he receives by selecting a flaw (see below).

Flaws are disadvantages that can enhance roleplaying and give the Gamemaster story ideas for your hero. Full details on flaws are given in *Chapter 5: Perks & Flaws.* The following rules apply to flaws:

▶ A hero can be given up to three flaws at the time of character creation. The Gamemaster may also assign flaws to a hero as the campaign progresses.

▶ Selecting a flaw doesn't cost a hero any skill points. Instead, each flaw carries with it a number of bonus skill points associated with it. If a hero takes a flaw, he receives the appropriate number of points to spend during character creation, in addition to the points he receives as a result of his Intelligence score.

▶ Roleplaying a flaw can also earn a hero bonus achievement points at the end of some adventures (see *Chapter 8: Achievements*).

Filling Out the Hero Sheet

When you've decided what perks and flaws (if any) your hero has, fill out the appropriate spaces inside the "Game Data" box near the bottom of the hero sheet. In addition to the name of each perk or flaw, you may also have room for some short notes about their game effects. If you don't pick enough perks and flaws to use up this space, you may want to put some other information here instead.

8 ▶ Choose Attributes

Roleplaying attributes help further define and develop a hero, providing plenty of inspiration for good roleplaying. Good roleplaying of these attributes should be a goal of every ALTERNITY player, and such play can even earn bonus achievement points from time to time (see *Chapter 8: Achievements*). The various types of attributes are described in *Chapter 7: Attributes;* each category is briefly discussed below.

Motivation

Motivation is a hero's defining purpose, the reason he does what he does. A hero may have any number of lesser motivations, and other motivations will certainly develop as a campaign progresses, but every hero needs a primary motivation to build upon.

Think of your hero's primary motivation as the purpose he's dedicated his life to, or an incident in his past that has shaped his outlook and behavior to this point. If you can incorporate this motivation into the play of your hero, the Gamemaster may award your hero bonus achievement points at the end of an adventure.

Every hero should select a motivation during the creation process. There's no cost, but only one should be chosen.

Moral Attitude

Moral attitude reflects a hero's personal values—what he believes and the way in which he tries to live his life. A moral attitude isn't a rigid code of conduct; it's a benchmark for play. Because a hero represents a person with free will, a moral attitude can sometimes be bent or set aside as the situation demands. However, a hero who never follows his moral attitude or blatantly and constantly acts against it risks losing achievement points that otherwise would have been earned during an adventure. Conversely, incorporating this roleplaying attribute into the play of your hero can earn you bonus achievement points at the end of some adventures.

Every hero should select a moral attitude during the character creation process. There's no cost, but only one should be chosen.

Character Traits

Character traits further define a hero's personality through the use of descriptive labels. These labels are meant to provide direction as to how the hero is roleplayed, not to limit a hero's actions. Incorporating a hero's traits into play can earn bonus achievement points at the end of some adventures.

Every hero may select up to two character traits during the creation process. There's no cost for selecting character traits.

Tech Op Heroes

Filling Out the Hero Sheet

Motivation, moral attitude, and character traits are all meant to be recorded in the "Attributes" space near the top of the hero sheet. You may have to use a shortened form of your hero's motivation if you don't have enough room to write out everything in full.

9 ▶ Complete the Hero Sheet

The important decision-making is out of the way at this point, but your hero sheet still has a lot of places that need to be filled in. Proceeding roughly from top to bottom and left to right, here are guidelines and instructions for the spaces that remain.

Hero's Name

What's in a name? In fiction, a character's name tells a lot about the character and helps establish a mental picture of him. For example, naming a hero "Lizard" makes you think of adjectives associated with such creatures—quick, deadly, emotionless, slimy, sneaky, untrustworthy, scary. Naming a hero "Wolf" has different connotations—noble, hunter, wild, feral, swift.

The name you apply to your hero might tell others something about that character. However, your hero's name doesn't have to be a descriptive term—a "normal" name is perfectly fine, if that's what you prefer.

Player's Name

Your name goes on this line, so that everyone knows who this hero belongs to. You don't have to give this one much thought, since you're probably stuck with the name you were born with.

Gender

Is your hero male or female? Write your choice on this line.

Last Resorts

A hero's Personality score dictates how many last resort points he has at the start of his career, as shown on Table P6: Last Resort Points.

Table P6: Last Resort Points

PER	Max	Cost
7 or less	0	—
8–10	1	3
11–12	2	2
13–14	3	1
15+	4	1

On the table, the "Max" column gives the highest number of last resort points a character with a certain Personality score can have at any time. This is also the number of free last resort points that a hero begins with. The "Cost" column lists the number of skill points a hero can spend between adventures to buy a last resort point to replace one he has used.

On the hero sheet, write the maximum number for your hero in the space immediately following "Last Resorts." The small boxes to the right are meant to indicate how many last resort points your hero currently has available. (Five boxes are provided, because it's possible for a Free Agent hero to have that many last resort points.) Blacken any boxes that don't apply, and put check marks in the open boxes whenever your hero uses a last resort point; use a pencil here, so you can erase a check mark when a new last resort point is purchased. "Last Resort Cost," of course, is where your hero's cost number is meant to go.

Basically, last resort points are used when a hero wants to try to avoid a bad event or make it more likely that something good for him will occur. See "Last Resort Points" on page 59 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* for more information.

Setting

The Gamemaster determines what setting your hero plays in. Write the name of the setting here.

Gamemaster

Write in the name of the Gamemaster who runs the campaign your hero is a part of.

Action Check

Every situation a hero finds himself in is made up of rounds (see *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* for full details). The result of an action check determines when a hero gets to act in a round. The higher a hero's action check score, the greater his potential to act quickly.

To figure out your hero's action check score, follow these steps:

▶ Add your hero's Dexterity and Intelligence scores and divide by 2 (rounding down).

▶ Add the action score increase for your hero's profession to the result. This is your hero's *action check score.*

▶ *On the hero sheet, write this* number in the "Ordinary" space beneath the words "Action Check Score." In the "Good" space, write the number divided by 2, and in the "Amazing" space, write the number divided by 4 (rounding down in both cases). To the left of the plus sign in the "Marginal" space, write the number that's 1 greater than your hero's action check score. In the space labeled "Die," write "–d4" if your hero is a t'sa, or "+d0" otherwise.

What these numbers mean was briefly discussed in *Chapter 1: Fast-Play Rules* and is covered in detail in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action.*

Actions per Round

A hero's number of actions per round is an indicator of how often he can attempt to do different things in a given period of time. To determine this number, add your hero's Constitution and Will scores. Find the result on Table P7: Actions Per Round and write the number shown in the appropriate space on the hero sheet.

How to use this number was briefly discussed in *Chapter 1: Fast-Play Rules* and is covered in detail in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action.*

Table P7: Actions per Round

CON + WIL	Actions per Round
8–15	1
16–23	2
24–31	3
32+	4

Automatic weapons can be hazardous to someone else's health

Combat Movement Rates

When a hero is engaged in combat or in any other activity when time is measured in rounds, he uses *combat movement* to get around. There are seven different modes of combat movement, as shown on TABLE P8: COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES.

To determine your hero's movement rates, add his Strength and Dexterity scores together and find the appropriate line on the table. Enter those numbers into the appropriate spaces on the hero sheet. If your hero doesn't have the ability to fly, leave the "Glide" and "Fly" spaces blank.

Combat movement is further detailed in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*. Also see the descriptions of the *swim* and *flight* specialty skills in *Chapter 4: Skills* for more information on those modes of movement.

Situation Die Steps

This section of the hero sheet doesn't have spaces that need to be filled in. It's a graphic illustration of the progression of situation die steps that makes up the foundation of the basic ALTERNITY game mechanic. How to use this information was briefly covered in *Chapter 1: Fast-Play Rules* and is fully detailed in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.

Durability

How tough is your hero? How much punishment can he suffer before he falls unconscious? How much damage does it take to kill him? These are important questions for any hero.

A hero can suffer four types of

TABLE P8: COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES

STR + DEX	Sprint	Run	Walk	Easy Swim	Swim	Glide	Fly
2–7	6	4	2	1	2	6	12
8–9	8	6	2	1	2	8	16
10–11	10	6	2	1	2	10	20
12–13	12	8	2	1	2	12	24
14–15	14	10	4	2	4	14	28
16–17	16	10	4	2	4	16	32
18–19	18	12	4	2	4	18	36
20–21	20	12	4	2	4	20	40
22–23	22	14	4	2	4	22	44
24–25	24	16	6	3	6	24	48
26–27	26	16	6	3	6	26	52
28–29	28	18	6	3	6	28	56
30–31	30	20	8	4	8	30	60
32+	32	22	8	4	8	32	64

How to Record Durability

The section of the hero sheet where durability is recorded has many more boxes than most players will need for their heroes. To customize this area so it's accurate for the hero you're creating, you will probably have to eliminate some of the boxes. This is done by filling them in, indicating that they don't apply to your hero. Each of the boxes that remains open represents a point of damage your hero is capable of withstanding.

For instance, if your hero has a Constitution score of 9, you would leave 9 boxes open on the left side of the "Stun" and "Wound" lines. Also leave 5 boxes open on both the "Mortal" and "Fatigue" lines, because one-half of 9 (rounded up) equals 5. On this hero's sheet, his durability would be expressed as follows:

Note Weren characters have better durability ratings than characters of other species—they leave open a number of stun and wound boxes equal to Constitution × 1.5 (rounded down). If the example character above was a weren, he or she would have 13 open boxes on the "Stun" and "Wound" lines and 7 boxes open (one-half of 13, rounded up) on the "Mortal" and "Fatigue" lines.

damage during the course of an adventure: *stun*, *wound*, *mortal*, and *fatigue*. All damage is assessed in points, which are subtracted from the number of points your character has available. (See *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* for full details on damage and healing.)

▶ ***Stun:*** A hero's number of stun points, also known as his *stun rating*, is equal to his Constitution score. Write that number in the space next to "Stun." The boxes beside this number are used to record damage suffered during an adventure. See "How to Record Durability," above, and blacken the unneeded boxes on the stun line.

▶ ***Wound:*** A hero's number of wound points (his *wound rating*) is also equal to his Constitution score. Write that number in the space and blacken the unneeded boxes.

▶ ***Mortal:*** A hero's number of mortal points (his *mortal rating*) is equal to half of his Constitution score (rounded up). Write that number in the space next to "Mortal" and blacken the unneeded boxes.

▶ ***Fatigue:*** A hero's number of fatigue points (his *fatigue rating*) is also equal to half of his Constitution score (rounded up). Write that number in the space next to "Fatigue" and blacken the unneeded boxes.

Attack Forms

This is the space that contains basic information on the weapons your hero is carrying, as well as the figures you'll use when your hero decides (or is forced) to make an attack using only his fists.

The first line has been allocated to your hero's "Unarmed" attack form, because all heroes have the ability to make an attack without using a weapon. In the "Score" column on the "Unarmed" line, write down three numbers:

▶ If your hero has the Unarmed Attack broad skill and either of the specialty skills related to it (*brawl* or *power martial arts*), use this space to record your hero's scores in the specialty skill, just as they are written on the back side of the hero sheet.

▶ If your hero has the Unarmed Attack broad skill but doesn't have either of the specialty skills, put his Unarmed Attack scores in this space.

▶ If your hero has neither of those skills, put his untrained Strength score here and finish the line as you did earlier for skill scores.

In the "Base Die" column, write one of three entries:

▶ If your hero has either of the Unarmed Attack specialty skills or the Acrobatics–*defensive martial arts* specialty skill, "+d0" goes here.

▶ If your hero is a Combat Spec with an Unarmed Attack specialty skill, and he has chosen that skill to receive his special situation bonus, "–d4" goes here.

▶ If neither of the above conditions is true, "+d4" goes here.

The "Type" column contains the entry "LI/O." "LI" stands for "low impact." This fact is used in conjunction with armor ratings (see below) to determine whether a target's armor absorbs any of the damage that's caused by a successful attack. "O" stands for "Ordinary," which is a description of how effective the attack form is against objects that have a certain amount of durability. (More information is given in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor.*)

To fill in the "Damage Rating" column, first refer to TABLE P9: STRENGTH AND DAMAGE. Find the number that corresponds to your hero's Strength score and keep it in mind. Then write down one of three sets of figures:

▶ If your hero has the *power martial arts* specialty skill, the base figures that go here are "d6s," "d6+2s," and "d4w," reading from left to right. To these figures, add or subtract the appropriate number from TABLE P9: STRENGTH AND DAMAGE. For example, the damage rating for a hero with a Strength score of 13 who has this specialty skill is d6+2s/d6+4s/d4+2w.

▶ If he doesn't have that specialty skill, the base figures are "d4s," "d4+1s," and "d4+2s." Again, add or subtract the appropriate number from TABLE P9: STRENGTH AND DAMAGE to get your hero's damage rating.

▶ If your hero is a weren, the base

TABLE P9: STRENGTH & DAMAGE

STR Score	Damage Adjustment
3–6	–1*
7–10	0
11–12	+1
13–14	+2
15–16	+3
17–18	+4
19+	+5

* To a minimum of 1

figures are "d4w," "d4+2w," and "d4m," plus any increase because of high strength as described above.

Weapons

As part of the process of outfitting your hero, you will most likely want to provide him with at least one weapon. The rules for acquiring equipment are given in the first part of *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*, and game statistics for the various weapons available in the ALTERNITY game appear in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*. After examining this information and obtaining a weapon, write the name of the weapon in the "Attack Forms" column and fill in the appropriate information for the item. If your hero's weapon is one that uses ammunition, use the line near the bottom of the "Game Data" box to keep track of the number of clips, or bullets, or charges, your hero has.

How weapons are used was briefly discussed in *Chapter 1: Fast-Play Rules* and is explored in detail in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*.

Armor

In a world where most of a hero's opponents are likely to have weapons, it's almost essential for him to wear some sort of armor. Available armor is described near the end of *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*. If your hero is outfitted with armor, write the name of the armor here and fill in the "LI," "HI," and "En" spaces with the appropriate figures for that armor.

The benefits of armor were briefly described in *Chapter 1: Fast-Play Rules* and are fully detailed in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*.

Equipment

In addition to weapons and armor (if he possesses such things), your hero starts his career with some equipment that will enable him to do his job (or perhaps simply enable him to stay alive). Full information on how your hero acquires equipment is given in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*, along with descriptions of the gear that's available. Use the appropriate space on the hero sheet to list the items that belong to your hero.

As your hero pursues his career, he will obtain more equipment, and sooner or later you'll need a separate sheet of paper to keep track of all his stuff. In such a case, this space on the hero sheet might best be used to hold a list of only those items he has on his person at any given time.

Personal Data

Space is provided in this section for recording some brief bits of personal information about your hero. The labels here are more or less self-explanatory (ask your Gamemaster if you need clarification).

▶ ***Age:*** Although there are no firm rules for how old a starting hero has to be, you should assume that your hero is a young adult (unless your Gamemaster tells you otherwise). If you're having trouble coming up with a specific number to put in this space, the *Gamemaster Guide* contains information that your Gamemaster can use to help you out.

Achievement Track

Your hero earns *achievement points* for every adventure he participates in. This is where you keep track of how many achievement points he has earned, and what achievement level he has attained. Details about the Achievement Track are provided in *Chapter 8: Achievements*.

You're Done!

Now your hero sheet is filled out and your hero is ready to begin his adventuring career. As time goes by, some of the entries on your initial hero sheet may become obsolete, as your hero uses achievement points he has earned to purchase more skills, to improve existing skills, or even to improve his Ability Scores.

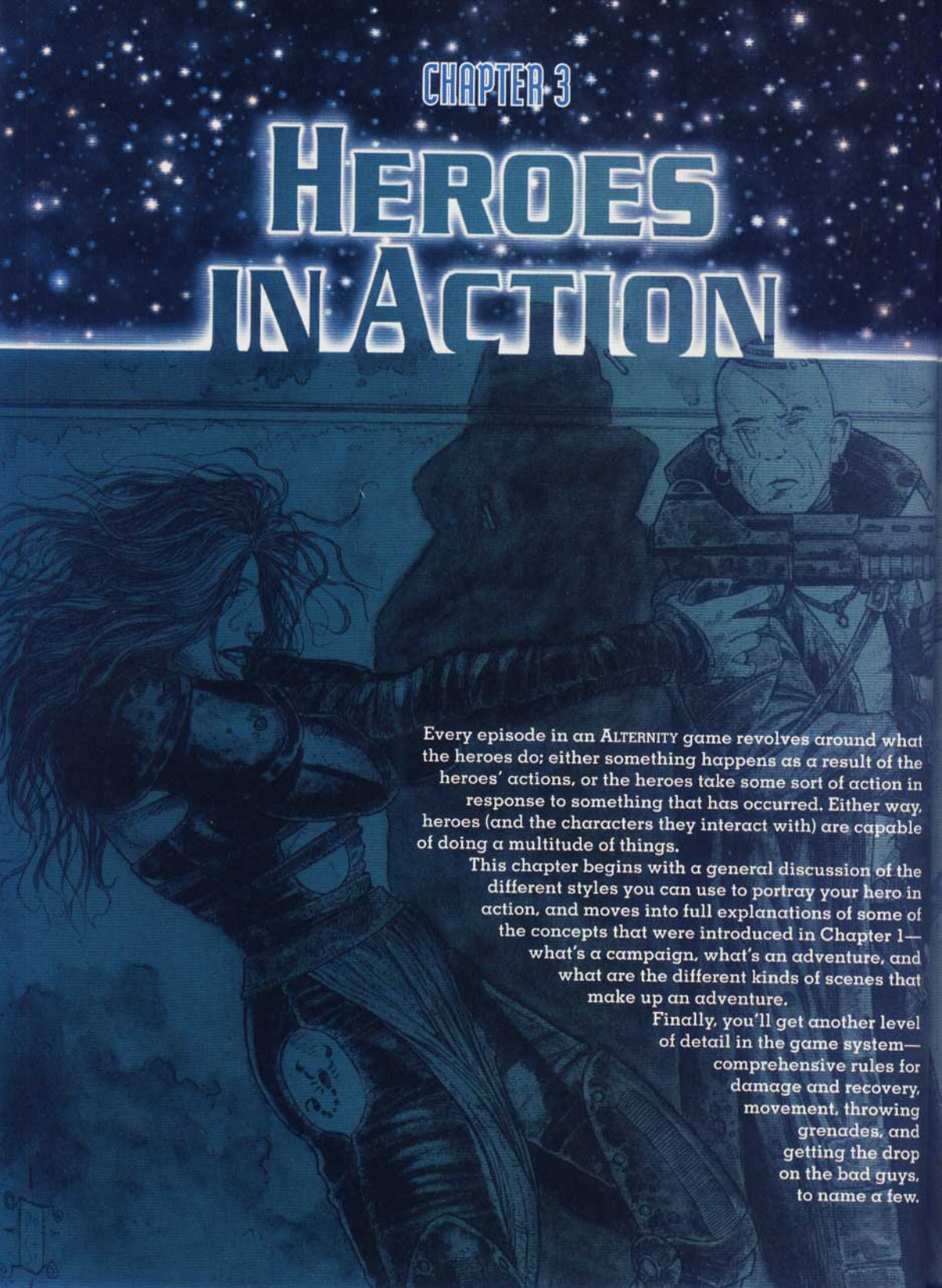
As a result of these changes, you may want to fill out a fresh hero sheet every once in a while. To allow for that possibility, don't write directly on the original hero sheet that's printed at the back of this book.

Now it's time to find out more about what your hero can do with the abilities and skills and characteristics that make him what he is. Turn the page and keep going with *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.

A typical weren greeting

CHAPTER 3

HEROES IN ACTION



Every episode in an ALTERNITY game revolves around what the heroes do; either something happens as a result of the heroes' actions, or the heroes take some sort of action in response to something that has occurred. Either way, heroes (and the characters they interact with) are capable of doing a multitude of things.

This chapter begins with a general discussion of the different styles you can use to portray your hero in action, and moves into full explanations of some of the concepts that were introduced in Chapter 1—what's a campaign, what's an adventure, and what are the different kinds of scenes that make up an adventure.

Finally, you'll get another level of detail in the game system—comprehensive rules for damage and recovery, movement, throwing grenades, and getting the drop on the bad guys, to name a few.

Doing Things

A typical Alternity game session begins with the Gamemaster describing a scene or a situation. Sometimes the description is all set up, with hints of dangers and excitement to come. In these scenes, heroes can make almost any decision as to what to do first. Other times the Gamemaster starts in the middle of the action, dropping heroes into a scene where events are already rushing fast and furiously around them. In this case, heroes usually have to react to a specific threat or problem before going in their own directions. Whichever method a Gamemaster uses to begin a game session (and a good Gamemaster will mix and match these techniques to keep players on their toes), it all boils down to the moment he says, "That's the situation. What do you do?"

How you answer that question, and even *the way* you answer that question, says a lot about your style of roleplaying. That's something you should think about, because how you play and your approach to interacting with the Gamemaster's campaign setting determines the qualities your hero brings to gaming sessions.

What Do You Do? Action!

The Gamemaster has set the scene. The tension mounts. Anticipation hangs in the air, in the long space between seconds as you decide what course of action your hero will take. That's the key word: *action*! The question "What do you do?" is the Gamemaster's way of calling the heroes to action, to let them know that it's their turn to influence the group story in some clever, interesting, or unusual manner. Heroes in roleplaying games perform actions that have meaning, advance the plot, and get things done. So, how do you answer the Gamemaster's question?

The quick response is: Any way you want to. A hero can do almost anything you can imagine. Depending on the situation, it might be logical to have your hero talk, move, use a skill, operate a piece of equipment, use a special ability, or do anything else you can think of that seems appropriate at the time.

For example, it's appropriate for a hero facing six heavily armed thugs to dive for cover, run away, pull his own weapon and attack, or even try to talk his way out of the situation. It isn't appropriate for him to exchange phone numbers with the thugs, burst into song, or ignore the threat the thugs present—unless that's a part of this hero's personality, or the player has an unusual plan in mind.

What Do You Do? Style!

The second aspect of this question deals with you rather than your hero. You've decided on a course of action for your hero. Do you *narrate* the action, or do you *act out* the scene?

Narration uses a style of roleplaying in which a player tells the Gamemaster and the other players what his hero is doing, instead of showing them. This style works just fine for getting information across and advancing the story, but it isn't as involving or intimate as acting out. Here's an example of narration:

"My hero, Jack Everstar, ducks behind a table and asks the threatening thugs if they know who he is. He's hoping to use his celebrity status as a famous holofilm star to make the thugs less hostile. He tells them he'll give them each an autographed holocube with a scene from *Lost Weren in Space* if they'll stop shooting and let him go."

Acting out a scene uses a style of roleplaying in which a player speaks as his hero speaks, playing out a scene "in character." He carries on a monologue when telling the Gamemaster what his hero is doing, and talks to the other players' heroes in the voice of his hero. But acting out a scene doesn't involve a player getting up and moving around. It's all done at the gaming table, as part of the general discussion and storytelling. A player can speak in his hero's voice while using his own voice, or he can change his voice if he's so inclined to make it a little different when he's playing his hero. This style gets everyone into the story but is harder to keep going for long periods of time. Here's an example of acting out a scene:

"I duck behind a table and call out in my best public appearance voice, 'Don't you people know who I am? I'm Jack Everstar! I've won two holofilm awards, and my last three movies broke earning records all around the solar system! Hey, how'd you each like to have a holocube with scenes from *Lost Weren in*

Space? I'll even autograph them for you! So why don't you put down the charge pistols and let me go?' "

The best roleplaying game sessions include both of these methods of play. It all depends on what you're comfortable doing, and how the Gamemaster and other players want to approach the game. To really make the most of roleplaying, however, it's best to at least deliver your hero's lines as you think your hero would say them. It's like that old saying, "Showing is better than telling." A roleplayer shows action by speaking in his or her character's voice.

Playing Roles or Rolling Dice?

The great debate rages on. Should a roleplaying game emphasize roleplaying over dice rolling, or vice versa? A lot depends on your style of play, but the ALTERNITY system encourages a balanced combination of the two.

Some players prefer to experience each adventure in character, roleplaying the entire story with little or no dice rolling involved. Other players don't want to be bothered with that roleplaying stuff. They just want to roll dice and mow down rows of enemies with the best weapons their heroes can acquire.

The point of any ALTERNITY game is for players and the Gamemaster to come together to tell a satisfying story while having fun at the same time. The Gamemaster brings a plot and the supporting cast to the game. It's up to the players to provide interesting heroes and lots of interaction (including witty banter, intriguing solutions, and engaging character development). Everyone should play their roles to the best of their abilities and help advance the story.

Don't rely on the dice and your hero's skills to such an extent that you ignore ideas as they come to you. At the same time, don't set the dice aside so that the game becomes nothing more than talking heads. The dice provide an element of chance, a potential for terrible disasters or amazing triumphs—especially when used in dramatic situations.

The Game Environment

Your Gamemaster sets his ALTERNITY game in a specific environment. A lot of things go into making this environment, including the specific subgenre of science fiction, the mood and tone of the campaign, and the details of the setting. For the most part, this material is left to the discretion of your Gamemaster and is covered in detail in the *Gamemaster Guide*. However, there are a few points that players should keep in mind that will help them develop their heroes more fully and direct their style of play.

Campaign

A campaign is the world your Gamemaster develops to set adventures in. Every adventure your hero experiences helps add more detail and depth to the ongoing campaign. "Ongoing" means that the world grows and advances each time the players' heroes visit it, and that the heroes, supporting cast, and events are linked from game session to game session. In other words, events in one adventure have consequences in the next, and decisions made by heroes carry on with each unfolding adventure.

The Gamemaster determines up front what specific subgenre of science fiction his campaign fits into. This tells the players a lot about the kinds of heroes they can develop and the adventures they can expect to play. Science fiction is a specific genre that deals with "what ifs." It usually encompasses the future, but it could be set in the modern day by postulating an amazing breakthrough in technology. Here are a few examples of SF subgenres.

- ***Combat SF:*** This subgenre spotlights the future of warfare. The Earth/solar system/galaxy is at war, and every hero has the latest weapons with which to wage it. Combat SF is usually hard, grim, and somewhat realistic, where the heroes seek to simply survive while they try to win the battle of the day.
- ***Exploration SF:*** Whether in the near future or the far future, humanity has a yearning to boldly step into the unknown. In exploration SF, this search is expedited by wonderful space vessels or amazing time-travel machines. Heroes work together to see what lies beyond the horizon or past the next star. This can be the most wide-ranging campaign setting, as heroes might be called upon to fight, negotiate, or solve a mystery in order to completely explore the newest planet or region of space.
- ***Horror SF:*** From the shadowy concrete jungles of the modern city to the silent darkness of distant space, horror SF presents a chilling challenge to heroes forced to confront the terrors of the unknown. A monster created in a laboratory can escape to terrorize a modern city, or an alien creature can slip aboard an isolated spaceship to systematically destroy the crew. Even the bright light of the future can't obliterate the fear of the unknown that is an innate part of the human psyche.
- ***Technothriller SF:*** This subgenre is set closer to the present day, with heroes involved in espionage, law enforcement, or antiterrorist activity. What makes it SF are the gadgets and weapons available to the heroes—the latest computers, high-tech weapons, and surveillance equipment from the cutting-edge laboratories of major corporations and powerful governments. The plots in this subgenre are usually larger,

Progress Levels

When your Gamemaster creates a campaign setting, it will be based on a certain *Progress Level*. That's the ALTERNITY game's term to define how far a society or culture has advanced up the technological ladder.

The numbering of Progress Levels begins at 0 (defining the most primitive societies) and in theory has no upper limit, although the ALTERNITY core rules don't have details on any level higher than PL 8.

Briefly, PL 5 is the level of our modern-day real world. PL 6 represents the near future, when humanity takes its first big steps into space. PL 7 and PL 8 are the far future, when technology has made it possible for humankind to traverse the distance between the stars.

Progress Levels are discussed at length in the beginning pages of *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*.

grander, and wider in scope, as villains seek to rule (or destroy) the world, and only the heroes can hope to stop them.

No matter what subgenre the Gamemaster decides on, it doesn't mean he can never break the rules of the subgenre or throw the players and heroes for a loop by crossing subgenres. In general, though, you know what to expect from session to session. Each subgenre has a mood and tone of its own. For example, a combat campaign is characterized by stark settings, grim situations, and realistic drama. A horror campaign, on the other hand, presents fantastic situations that are shrouded in shadow, mystery, and a tone of fear. The details of a campaign's setting will be different depending on the subgenre the campaign is tied to. (The *Gamemaster Guide* contains more information on this subject.)

What does this mean to the player? The campaign setting and the parameters of the subgenre determine what types of heroes are suitable, the Progress Level for equipment and technology, and which optional rules are available for play (psionic powers, cybernetic technology, mutations, and so forth).

Adventure

Each game session presents heroes with situations, problems, and goals that need to be accomplished. Each specific story is called an adventure. An adventure can be completed in a single game session, or it could unfold over a series of sessions, depending on its complexity and the actions of the heroes.

Think of an adventure as a multipart comic book story, a television miniseries, or even a novel. Each game session covers one issue, episode, or chapter in the unfolding story. The Gamemaster provides the potential of the adventure in the form of plot, background, scenery, and supporting cast. The players, through their heroes, provide the action that unlocks the potential and creates an exciting, dynamic story.

Every adventure has a beginning, a middle, and an ending. In between, it's made up of scenes and action rounds. These distinct units give an adventure cohesiveness, as well as an environment in which heroes can do what they do best—take action!

A spaceship pilot completes orbiting maneuvers

Types of Scenes

Every adventure is made up of *scenes*. A scene is a distinct act in the adventure that has its own beginning and ending. A short adventure, for example, might consist of three scenes. Longer adventures can be made up of as many scenes as necessary to reach the conclusion.

Most scenes start by presenting the heroes with a situation that requires some sort of decision. What you determine that your hero decides will affect the course of the story, sending it down one path instead of another possible path. The options open to a hero are too numerous to list, but here's an example of how your hero's initial decision (and those of your companions) can affect the course a scene takes.

▶ ***The situation:*** You and your companions are exploring a rubble-strewn alley, looking for a briefcase of stolen computer chips that was supposedly stashed here. Suddenly a squad of enemy soldiers appears from around a corner up ahead. You can see them, but they don't notice you right away. What do you do?

The heroes have a number of options, but their basic decision boils down to one of three choices:

1. They can try to vacate the area quietly, so that the soldiers don't become aware of their presence. This may not be easy, since the alley contains lots of obstructions.

2. They can get the attention of the soldiers and try to communicate with them. By pretending to be sympathetic to the enemy cause, they may be able to find out something about the missing briefcase.

3. They can move forward and try to engage the soldiers in combat.

What the heroes decide to do will determine which type of scene is about to unfold. Choice number 1 will put them into a *challenge scene;* choice number 2 brings about an *encounter scene;* and choice number 3 leads into a *combat scene.* Each of these scenes is described below.

Challenge Scene

Trying not to make a sound, you sneak your way carefully through the debris in the alley. If you can remain undetected for a little while longer,

you can get to a place that's shielded from the eyes of the enemy. Or . . .

The bomb is ticking, its digital readout at 1:16 and counting down to 0:00. You have just over a minute to get past the protection devices and disarm it before it explodes! Or . . .

The computer virus is spreading, systematically destroying data as it winds its way through the network. It's a fast, insidious bug, created by a master programmer. You must stop it quickly before it destroys all of the research and wipes out years of important work!

These are just three examples of the possible challenges that will face your hero as his adventures unfold. A challenge scene revolves around a hero's struggle against the forces of nature, a man-made hazard, or the search for an answer. In these scenes, your hero uses skills without directly interacting with or competing against another character.

Every challenge consists of a series of skill checks that form a *challenge path*. Your hero must successfully negotiate this path (by making successful skill checks) to overcome the challenge. Only the Gamemaster knows the exact details of a challenge path. As a player, it's your job to evaluate the situation and make decisions for your hero.

How long is a challenge path? That depends on the scene and the challenge in question. A simple challenge, such as crossing a chasm, usually requires one skill check—the hero either successfully leaps across the open space or he doesn't. More complicated challenges might require the use of various skills and even multiple successes to overcome them. Each step in the path requires the use of a skill, and it might take several successes before you can move on to the next step. Checks are made at intervals using whatever time units the Gamemaster deems appropriate: phases, rounds, minutes, hours, and sometimes even days or weeks.

Here's an example of a challenge path in which different skills come into play. Your hero needs to disarm a bomb before it explodes in 4 rounds (16 phases). The first step in the path requires the use of the Manipulation–*lockpick* skill to remove the bomb's outer cover. The second step in the path requires a Demolitions–*disarm* or a Knowledge–*deduce* skill check to evaluate the bomb's mechanisms. During this step, the hero discovers that there are four wires—red, white, blue, and yellow. The third step involves actually disarming the bomb. This step requires four successes. In total, this challenge requires a minimum of three actions and six successes to disable the bomb.

In some scenes, the Gamemaster might throw more than one challenge at the heroes. For example, heroes in a space vessel might have to deal with a number of challenges simultaneously. The pilot must navigate through an asteroid field while two Tech Op heroes work to repair the ship's stardrive and the copilot tries to plot a course to escape once the stardrive comes back on line.

The Gamemaster can also combine challenges with either combat or encounter scenes. For example, the heroes on the space vessel have all those challenges to deal with when the Gamemaster decides to add more trouble to the mix. An enemy vessel appears behind them, firing at their already damaged ship. Then, when things don't look like they can get any worse, the heroes notice another ship taking position in front of them beyond the asteroid field. This ship demands the heroes' immediate surrender.

Now some heroes need to handle the combat scene elements approaching from the rear, and others need to deal with the encounter scene elements in front of them. Plus, there are still the challenges inside the ship to deal with!

As you can see, a challenge scene can range from a simple situation to an intricate, multifaceted situation. Expect to see all kinds of challenges as your hero progresses through a campaign.

Encounter Scene

After putting on your cheeriest smiles and making sure your weapons are tucked into your coats, you call out to the soldiers ahead of you. "Hello, friends! May we impose upon you for assistance?" When the soldiers don't act hostile right away, you start to move slowly toward them. Or . . .

Your hero waits until Sardov leaves the bar. Then he walks over to the young woman Sardov was talking to just moments before. Relying on his natural charms, he hopes to learn something about the elusive spy from this dark-haired beauty. "Can I buy you a drink?" he asks, flashing his dazzling smile and letting that seductive twinkle brighten his dark brown eyes. Or . . .

The trader was good; your hero has to grant him that. He knew how to haggle, and he knew he had something of real value in that magnet-sealed container. "Look," your hero says, "I know what you've got there, I know that I need it, and I know that you have no idea what it really is. So let's cut the fun short and get down to serious business. What's it going to take to close this deal?"

Heroes must talk to, trade insults with, cajole, seduce, negotiate with, charm, beg, bribe, intimidate, and otherwise interact with the supporting cast all the time. When the thrust of a scene is roleplaying, advancing the plot, and enhancing the story, then the heroes are involved in an encounter scene.

An encounter scene can turn into a challenge scene or a combat scene, but it always starts with the heroes attempting to communicate with the supporting cast. Encounters involve heroes employing Intelligence, Will, and especially Personality skills to get what they want or simply make it through the scene without having the situation turn ugly.

There really isn't a set sequence of play for an encounter scene, and no checks need to be made to see who acts when. An encounter scene is an opportunity for players and the Gamemaster to use their roleplaying talents; the Gamemaster presents a situation and lets the heroes and supporting cast interact for as long as the story is moving and everyone is having fun. Skill checks are called for only sparingly, to augment the players' roleplaying and to determine the reactions of the supporting cast. When the discussion ends, so does the encounter scene.

More information on encounter skills appears on page 97 in *Chapter 4: Skills*, and in the descriptions of the various skills.

Combat Scene

Fighting these soldiers isn't going to help you find the missing briefcase, but you figure it's better to be on the offensive here than to put yourself in a vulnerable position by trying to sneak away or pretending to be harmless and friendly. So, you ready

your weapons and begin spreading out into an attack formation. Or . . .

Your hero didn't want it to come to this, but the bruisers at the door aren't giving him a choice. He needs to get in to see Gorden, the crime lord of Port Orgen. If these bruisers want to do this the hard way, he's more than up to the job. "You know," your hero says, "I really didn't want to work up a sweat today. This is all your fault." With that, he charges the bruisers, moving fast and hitting hard as the situation turns into a brawl! Or . . .

The quiet of the night has your hero on edge. Something's going to happen, he can feel it. He checks his charge rifle, making sure for the sixth time that the clip is locked and loaded. He starts to walk the perimeter of the camp again when the crack of a weapon resounds out of the night and something fast and hot buzzes past his left ear. "I hate firefights in the dark," he mutters, bringing his weapon up to bear and looking for a target.

Heroes get involved in combat all the time. It's not always the best solution, but sometimes heroes have no choice but to get into a knockdown, drag-out fight with the bad guys. When this happens, the action takes place in a combat scene.

Combat involves heroes using attack broad skills and their specialty skills—Heavy Weapons, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Attack, Modern Ranged Weapons, Primitive Ranged Weapons, Vehicle Operation, or System Operation—against other characters (usually members of the supporting cast). Also, heroes use the Athletics–*throw* skill when they want to hurl knives, rocks, or grenades at enemy targets. Of course, not every attack skill is appropriate in all situations. If a hero doesn't have a vehicle, then Vehicle Operation won't help him in that particular fight.

Combat scenes are the most rigidly structured scenes in an adventure—when lives are at stake, it's critical to know exactly when everyone is performing actions and what the immediate consequences of those actions are.

The procedure for making action checks, as described on page 12 in *Chapter 1: Fast-Play Rules*, always begins a combat scene. Thereafter, heroes and supporting cast take their actions in the phases when they're entitled to do so, and any damage that results from those actions is applied at the end of the phase in which the action took place. The scene continues phase by phase, round by round, until one side or the other is defeated or manages to break contact with the other side.

In a combat scene, most actions involve an attack or defense of one kind or another, but heroes are only restricted by the imaginations of their players and the parameters of the situation.

The Most Important Rule

The most important rule in the ALTERNITY game really isn't a rule at all: Not every action a hero performs requires a player to roll dice!

You only have to roll dice to resolve actions whose outcomes are in doubt, or when the Gamemaster needs to judge the degree of success for an action.

If you want your hero to drive an ordinary car down a quiet city street, no dice roll is necessary. He's performing an action that is considered routine and mundane. However, if that same hero drives a prototype battle wagon through rush-hour traffic while trying to lose pursuers and stay on the trail of a speeding villain—while also trying to avoid crashing into or driving over innocent bystanders—then the situation takes on heroic proportions, and dice should be rolled.

Heroic situations are those in which the hero must perform in the midst of a storm of activity (he's being shot at, he's trying to avoid a crowd, he's trying to perform multiple tasks at the same time), or when the outcome of his attempt to do something has far-reaching consequences (lives are at stake). Dramatic situations are key scenes in an adventure—scenes that involve the major villain, the primary threat, or a crucial plot point.

ROLLING DICE

When the Gamemaster wants to determine if a hero can successfully accomplish an action in a certain situation, or how well the hero is able to perform, he calls for a dice roll. Dice provide a method for measuring a hero's success and for determining random outcomes when success is not guaranteed.

Situation Die Modifiers

Because every action in every situation is different, the game system uses a sliding scale to determine which situation die you roll with the control die. This scale uses *steps*, as shown on the "Situation Die Steps" chart on the following page. The steps are also printed on your hero sheet. Here's how to read the chart:

The arrow pointing down shows that you count steps in that direction when the Gamemaster gives you a "Penalty" modifier. Remember, penalties are positive numbers (+1 step, for example).

The arrow pointing up shows that you count steps in that direction when the Gamemaster gives you a "Bonus" modifier. Remember, bonuses are negative numbers (–2 steps, for example).

All of the possible situation dice are displayed in order on the chart, ranging from +3d20 (an extremely high penalty) to –d20 (a very favorable bonus). Each line on the chart represents a step. As you identify the factors that affect your hero's ability to succeed in a certain action, you move up and down along the steps as the situation modifiers direct you until you determine the actual situation die to roll.

How do you do this? Start by finding the *base situation die* for the action your hero is attempting. Then count the steps for each *situation modifier*, either in the "penalty" or "bonus" direction, that the Gamemaster assigns to the action. Where you end up indicates the situation die you need to roll to attempt the action. See "Finding the Right Situation Die" on page 49 for an example of how this is done.

Much more detail about the different types of situation modifiers is contained within the next few pages. If there's something about the concept that you find difficult to understand so far, don't worry—by the time you finish reading about the types of actions a hero can attempt, you

Situation Die Steps

Dice to Roll	Situation Die		Situation Description	Modifier
–	–d20	BONUSES	No Sweat	–5 steps
–	–d12		Cakewalk	–4 steps
–	–d8		Extremely Easy	–3 steps
–	–d6		Very Easy	–2 steps
–	–d4		Easy	–1 step
+	+d0		Average	None
+	+d4	PENALTIES	Tough	+1 step
+	+d6		Hard	+2 steps
+	+d8		Challenging	+3 steps
+	+d12		Formidable	+4 steps
+	+d20		Grueling	+5 steps
+ + +	+2d20		Gargantuan	+6 steps
+ + +	+3d20		Nearly Impossible	+7 steps

Dice

d20 d12 d8 d6 d4

should have a clear picture of how to handle any situation that may arise during the game.

A Simpler Solution

Several lists of situation die modifiers are presented throughout this book and in the *Gamemaster Guide*. Depending on the level of detail you look for in a roleplaying game, you can make use of all these lists. Or, if you and your Gamemaster prefer things less complicated, you can use what we call the "eyeball approach."

Instead of identifying every situation modifier and having you move up or down the table to account for each one, your Gamemaster will come up with a general assessment of the situation—"eyeballing" it instead of examining it in detail—and simply direct you to use a particular situation die.

On the "Situation Die Steps" chart, the column labeled "Situation Description" is specifically designed to help your Gamemaster when he's using the eyeball approach. All he has to do is pick a descriptive term that basically describes the situation, and the step penalty or step bonus that applies to your hero's action is instantly determined.

Especially after you become accustomed to the idea of what sorts of factors qualify as situation die modifiers, you may find that the eyeball approach is accurate enough to meet your needs—and the activity of the adventure will move along a little more briskly because you aren't stopping to do all the calculations.

Other Dice Rolling Rules

In addition to the basic rules covering the use of the control die and the situation die, there are three more rules to keep in mind when playing the ALTERNITY game:

- When you roll dice, some results indicate automatic success or automatic failure, regardless of what the combined result of the control die and the situation die is.
- It's possible to have a situation die that goes beyond the extremes at either end of the situation die steps scale.

Automatic Success

No matter the odds, a hero usually has a chance to succeed at an action.

Finding the Right Situation Die

Here's a step-by-step description of what goes on when you need to determine the proper situation die.

Zug the mercenary wants to shoot his pistol at an opponent who's crouched down and partially obscured behind a low stone wall. Zug's score in the Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol* specialty skill is 14. The following factors influence what type of situation die Zug's player will roll:

▶ The base situation die for the use of any specialty skill is +d0. (This is a rule that's covered in more detail in the opening pages of *Chapter 4: Skills*.)

▶ Because only about half of his opponent's body is exposed, the target is harder to hit. Zug must take a +1 step penalty because of his opponent's *cover modifier*. (This concept is explained in detail in the "Possible Situation Modifiers" sidebar on page 50.) Zug's player counts one step in the penalty direction, from +d0 to +d4.

▶ The distance between Zug and his target is small enough that Zug is considered to be using his pistol at short range, so he receives a –1 step bonus as a *range modifier*. (See page 50, and also TABLE P22: RANGE MODIFIERS BY WEAPON TYPE on page 73 in *Chapter 4: Skills*.) Counting one step in the bonus direction puts Zug back where he started, at +d0.

▶ The Gamemaster knows that the target character has a Dexterity score of 13, so he instructs Zug's player to take a +2 step penalty to account for the character's *resistance modifier*. (Resistance modifiers were discussed on page 32 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*.) Counting two steps in the penalty direction brings Zug to the +d6 line on the table.

The Gamemaster decides that these are the only factors affecting Zug's chance of success, so Zug's player must roll the d20 control die and a +d6 situation die. He will add the results of these rolls together, hoping to get a result of 14 or less, which would mean that Zug succeeded in hitting what he was aiming at.

Therefore, in most situations, if a 1 comes up on the control die, the hero succeeds. Even if the combined result of the control die and the situation die would normally indicate a Failure, the 1 on the control die turns a Failure result into an Ordinary success.

The Gamemaster always has the option to declare a situation too difficult to allow an automatic success.

If a hero attempts an action with a situation die of +d20 or higher, the automatic success rule doesn't apply.

Remember, not every action requires the roll of dice. When something is so easy or routine as to not require a skill check, then that's considered an automatic success, too.

Critical Failure and the Bad Luck Rule

Sometimes, no matter how skilled a hero is, things don't work out. There's always a chance for an action to fail or for something negative to occur whenever a hero tries to do something beyond the scope of the routine. In the ALTERNITY game, this possibility is represented by the "bad luck" rule: When a player rolls for his hero and the control die comes up 20, something bad happens.

When this occurs on an attempted action that can be failed, the 20 indicates a Critical Failure result. This means that the attempt fails in the worst possible manner—a gun jams, a key breaks, a friend wanders into a hero's hail of bullets, a computer program freezes, and so forth.

If a Failure result can't happen on this attempt, then the 20 indicates bad luck. The attempt succeeds, but it's tainted by something negative. This negative consequence doesn't have to occur immediately, but an incident of bad luck should come into play in the near future and be at least indirectly associated with the action that spawned it.

Making the "bad luck" rule work requires a bit of roleplaying on the part of players. *You* know that a control die roll of 20 indicates that bad luck is on the horizon, but *your hero* doesn't. Until the incident of bad luck has passed, you need to roleplay your hero without making decisions for him based on knowledge he doesn't have.

In certain situations, the Gamemaster can decide to roll the dice in secret to determine degrees of success, so that if a 20 does come up, the players don't know it.

Beyond the Extremes

In most cases, heroes roll situation dice that fall between the two extremes of –d20 and +3d20. What happens when modifiers build up that take the situation die beyond these extremes?

On the bonus side, a –d20 situation die should help most heroes succeed at the task at hand, and that's the most favorable situation die a Gamemaster should allow.

At the other extreme, modifiers that push a situation die beyond +3d20 indicate that the task at hand is getting about as close to impossible as it can get—but for a hero, no action he takes that can be resolved by a dice roll is *automatically* impossible. So, for every penalty step beyond this, another +d20 is added. It's conceivable for a character to have to roll a control die plus a penalty of +4d20 or more to accomplish a really difficult task.

◆ ***Example:*** Mad Dog Morgan decides to leap across the empty space between two buildings to escape a raging fire. He has to dodge explosions and falling debris as he races for the roof's edge, all the while carrying his wounded and unconscious buddy, Zug the mercenary. Add to that the bad guys who are firing shots from a hovering aircar, and the Gamemaster determines that this is a Nearly Impossible task (+7 penalty) and decides that the check is tied to Mad Dog's Athletics skill. Mad Dog has a skill score of 13 and a base situation die of +d4. The +7 penalty pushes the situation die to +4d20, so Mad Dog needs to roll 13 or less on 5d20 (control die +4d20) to succeed. He has a chance of making it to safety, but in this case it sure doesn't look good for our heroes. . . .

PERFORMING ACTIONS

The process of making action checks and the structure of an action round were explained in *Chapter 1: Fast-Play Rules*. The details presented here describe how to handle some unusual circumstances, and expand the scope of what heroes can do in an action round.

Possible Situation Modifiers

It's impossible to categorize every factor that can affect a dice roll, but some situation modifiers are constant (when they apply) and should always be considered when you determine the proper situation die.

► **Base Situation Die:** Not a modifier itself, but a vital first step in determining the bonus or penalty in any situation. Every broad skill check and every feat check has a base situation die of +d4. The base situation die for specialty skill checks is +d0. Some profession benefits can improve these base situation dice.

► **Opponent's Resistance Modifier:** When a hero employs a skill against an opponent, the opponent's resistance modifier may have to be considered. TABLE P10: SKILLS & RESISTANCE MODIFIERS, on the facing page, lists the skills that cause resistance modifiers to come into play.

► **Range Modifier:** During a combat scene, it's important to remember that every type of ranged weapon and heavy weapon has a series of range modifiers. Some weapons are more accurate at short range, others at long range. A range modifier also applies when a hero attempts to throw a weapon or an object. Range modifiers are provided on various tables throughout this book, including TABLE P14: THROW SITUATION MODIFIERS on page 57 in this chapter; TABLE P21: HEAVY WEAPONS RANGE MODIFIERS on page 68 in *Chapter 4: Skills;* and TABLE P22: RANGE MODIFIERS BY WEAPON TYPE on page 73 in *Chapter 4: Skills.*

► **Cover Modifier:** If an opponent in a combat scene uses cover to protect himself from a ranged attack, a modifier is assigned to the hero's situation die. There are three types of cover, each with its own modifier:

Light cover (+1 step penalty to opponent) refers to either the type of material the target is hiding behind (something without much stopping power, such as bushes, light-weight doors, garbage cans) or how much of the target is exposed (half of the target's body or more).

Medium cover (+2 step penalty) indicates that the target is hiding behind material with good stopping power (heavy wood, brick, or mid-weight metal) or that less than one quarter of the target is exposed.

Heavy cover (+3 step penalty) indicates that the target is hiding behind almost impenetrable material (steel or some other heavy metal, a bulkhead or vault door, or a solid stone wall) or that the target is almost completely hidden from view.

► **Dodge Modifier:** If he doesn't have a chance to get behind some cover, an opponent in a combat scene can declare that he's dodging to make it more difficult for a hero to hit him. A dodge can be used against any attack, but it most often comes into play against ranged attacks. Depending on the success of an Acrobatics–dodge skill check, the hero receives a +1, +2, or +3 penalty to his attack.

► **Skill Situation Modifiers:** The use of a skill in certain conditions can provide either a bonus or a penalty to the situation die. Several of the skill descriptions in *Chapter 4: Skills* contain lists of situation modifiers that should be considered when a hero tries to use the skill.

► **Other Situation Modifiers:** The Gamemaster won't always assign additional modifiers based on the situation, but he or she has that option if the scene demands it. For example, if a hero is firing from high ground at surprised opponents in the open, the Gamemaster can decide that this is an Easy situation and award the hero a –1 step bonus. On the other hand, a hero might be atop a speeding train, trying to keep his balance while taking a shot. The Gamemaster can decide that this is a Hard situation and assign the hero a +2 step penalty.

Who Goes First?

All actions in a phase are considered to occur simultaneously, regardless of the order in which the players roll dice for their heroes and regardless of when the Gamemaster rolls dice for the characters he's representing.

The result of each character's action in a phase is applied at the end of the phase. If these results impose penalties on a character, those penalties take effect at the start of the next phase.

◆ *Example:* Mad Dog and Sor Deskul both achieved Good successes on their action checks. This means they can both act in the Good phase. Mad Dog decides to swing his chainsword at his opponent. Sor Deskul counters with a blow from his gravmace. Both score hits. Damage is applied before the next phase begins.

Heroes who haven't yet taken an action in the phase always get to act ahead of heroes who've already taken one or more actions. If two or more heroes get the same degree of success on their action checks and it's important to know which player rolls dice first, the heroes take their actions in order of their action check scores—highest score first, lowest score last. The lone exception to this rule is a hero whose action check is a Critical Failure; he goes last in the Marginal phase, regardless of any other action check results.

Assisting Actions

Sometimes characters want to help each other accomplish a task. A hero can assist another hero's action as long as the Gamemaster agrees that the task is one for which assistance can be given and accepted, all of the participating characters have an action in the same phase, and the characters are all working toward the same goal. For example, if one hero wants to help another one figure out how to disarm a bomb (using the Demolitions skill), or add his persuasiveness to an attempt to get a guard to accept a bribe (using the Deception skill), the characters can combine their actions into a single skill check.

One of the heroes working together is selected to be the lead character in an assisted action. This is usually the character with the best score in the skill being used, but players are free to select whomever they want to be the lead character. First, all of the helpers make skill checks. The results they achieve provide bonuses or penalties to the lead character's skill check: Critical Failure, +2 step penalty; Failure, +1 step penalty; Ordinary, –1 step bonus; Good, –2 step bonus; Amazing, –3 step bonus.

This modifier is applied to the lead character's skill check, in addition to any other modifiers that may

apply. If the task being performed requires a complex skill check (see page 62 in *Chapter 4: Skills*), then the modifier for the helper is applied to the portion of the complex skill check that's presently being undertaken. For as long as he continues to assist, the helper must make skill checks on each attempt to complete the complex skill check, just as the lead character does.

To assist, a character must possess at least the broad skill being used. An untrained character can't assist in an action, but a trained character can try to coach an untrained character through an action (the pilot on the ground giving instructions by radio to an unskilled passenger who's trying to land an airplane).

Postponing an Action

In some situations, a character may decide to postpone an action and take it later in the round. He may want to react to another character's action or just wait to see how a particular situation develops, or maybe he wants to help someone else perform a task (see the preceding section). There isn't any situation die penalty or bonus for postponing an action. However, a character who does this runs the risk of losing one or more of the actions he's entitled to during the round (but see below).

For example, a character who has two actions per round gets an Amazing result on his action check. Instead of acting right away in the Amazing phase, he decides to wait until the Good phase to use his first action. If he had decided to wait until the Marginal phase, he would take one action then and lose his second action as the round ends.

There's one other way to postpone an action. This is used when a character really wants to go first in the next round. To do this, he must get at least an Ordinary action check in the current round and then spend all of his available actions doing nothing but waiting. Before the start of the next round, when other characters are making action checks, the character who postponed his action is treated as though he rolled an Amazing action check—he's entitled to act ahead of all other characters in the Amazing phase of the next round if he so desires, and can take one or more other actions later in the round as long as he is normally entitled to take two or more actions per round.

TABLE P10: SKILLS & RESISTANCE MODIFIERS

Acting Character's Skill	Resisting Ability
Deception	Intelligence
Entertainment	Intelligence or Will
Heavy Weapons	Dexterity
Interaction	Will
Leadership	Will
Melee Weapons	Strength
Modern Ranged Weapons	Dexterity
Primitive Ranged Weapons	Dexterity
Psionic Skills	Will
Stealth	Will
Street Smart	Intelligence or Will
Unarmed Attack	Strength

Two Actions at Once

In general, a character can perform one action in a single phase. However, the Gamemaster might rule that sometimes a character can use a single action to perform two related physical activities in one phase.

In such a case, the primary action (the one that the player considers more important) receives a +2 step penalty. The secondary action receives a +4 step penalty. Separate action checks are rolled to resolve each attempt. These penalties are cumulative with any other situation die modifiers that might apply.

Some examples of related physical actions:

- Attacking with a weapon in each hand (which is covered in its own section on page 57).
- Attacking while performing some kind of stunt, such as leaping over a chasm and firing a weapon (but see "Combat Movement" on page 55 for the basic rules concerning moving and attacking).
- Balancing atop a precarious perch while making an attack.
- Using the Unarmed Attack skill against two opponents at once.

In all cases, the Gamemaster has complete discretion over the use of two actions in the same phase, and he has the right to pile on penalties for any stunt that's extremely complex and detailed.

DAMAGE

Damage represents injury to an object (such as a character's body) from an attack or some other occurrence that weakens the object. The four types of damage are *stun damage*, *wound damage*, *mortal damage*, and *fatigue damage*.

Most forms of attack (weapons, fists, grenade explosions, and so forth) have *damage ratings*, indicating that they are capable of inflicting three possible degrees of damage: Ordinary, Good, or Amazing. The degree of damage is usually tied to the degree of success the attacker achieves on his skill check.

For example, a weapon has this damage rating: d4s/d4w/d4m. If the check for the attack results in an Amazing success, the third part of the rating (d4m) is used. If the result is Ordinary, then only the first part of the rating (d4s) applies.

Stun Damage

Stun damage is the lightest type of damage a hero can sustain. It represents bumps and bruises and mild abrasions that can rattle a character but don't result in lasting injuries. For every point of stun damage your hero receives, mark off one box on the stun rating line of your hero sheet.

Optional Rule: Dazed

If your Gamemaster elects to use this optional rule, stun damage begins to take its toll as soon as your hero suffers enough damage to use up more than half of his stun points. Your

Actions and the Environment

Even in a modern-day setting, but especially in a futuristic campaign involving space travel and visits to other planets, the environment in which the heroes are operating can have a significant effect on their ability to do what they want.

Detailed information on the different types of environments that exist in the ALTERNITY game is provided in the *Gamemaster Guide*. In summary, there are five primary factors that define an environment, which together make up the GRAPH system: **G**ravity, **R**adiation, **A**tmospheric composition, **P**ressure, and **H**eat (or lack thereof). Each different environment has a rating of from 0 to 5 in each category. Following are brief descriptions of what the GRAPH ratings mean:

Gravity: These ratings are fairly straightforward, beginning with no gravity (G0). Light gravity (G1) includes conditions such as those found on the Moon or Mars. The gravity on the surface of Earth is rated at G2. High gravity (G3) includes conditions up to twice Earth normal, very high gravity (G4) goes up to four times Earth normal, and super high gravity (G5) represents the sort of crushing force found on gas giants such as Jupiter.

Radiation: An environment containing no radiation (R0) is rare but theoretically possible. Low radiation (R1) is represented by the normal, mostly harmless background radiation found on Earth. Ratings from R2 through R5 identify environments with increasingly intense radiation, ranging from moderate up to lethal. At the higher ratings, some form of protection is necessary to prevent sickness and death from quickly overcoming a character.

Atmospheric Composition: The ratings in this category refer in general to how readily the atmosphere reacts with substances that are exposed to it. A0 is a vacuum. A1 is an atmosphere composed of inert gases. A2 is Earthlike—the only type of atmosphere that humans can breathe without needing special equipment. A3 represents a toxic atmosphere, which humans can breathe only if they're wearing a mask that filters out the unbreathable elements. A4 is corrosive, and A5 is super corrosive—atmospheres that require characters to wear full body protection, and even then will eventually eat away at that protection.

Pressure: The ability of a body to retain an atmosphere is generally related to its gravity. P0 is a vacuum, which obviously has no air pressure. P1 and P2 are thinner than Earth normal, and P1 can only be endured by characters with breathing apparatus. P3 is moderate pressure, ranging from Earth normal (15 pounds per square inch at sea level) up to four times Earth normal. No special gear is needed to breathe in this pressure condition. P4 is dense, requiring characters to have breathing aids but not inhibiting their movements. P5 is the heaviest pressure, a condition in which an unprotected body would be crushed and even a character wearing protection will find his movement ability hindered.

Heat and Cold: The low end of this scale (H0) represents temperatures ranging from the chill of deep space (near absolute zero) up to about –200°C. Enclosed structures and vessels and personal protective suits can insulate a character from such an environment, as long as the protection includes an internal heating system. H1 is a condition in which unprotected characters can survive, but only for a short time. H2 is temperate, ranging from about –50°C (–58°F) up to 50°C (125°F)—conditions in which properly attired characters can operate without penalty. H3, H4, and H5 are extremes of heat that require some form of protection—but a temperature in the H5 range might be hot enough to actually melt or vaporize a vessel or device that's being used for protection. (Very few things can stand up to a temperature as hot as the surface of a star.)

When the Gamemaster determines situation modifiers for a skill check, he takes into account any bonuses or penalties that apply because of the environment in which the hero finds himself. Characters who are wearing protective gear or who have certain special abilities may be able to lessen or eliminate some of these penalties.

hero is dazed, and every subsequent action he attempts receives a +1 step penalty until enough stun damage is healed to leave at least half of his stun boxes unmarked.

Knockout

If all of your hero's stun boxes are marked off, he is immediately knocked out. Your hero is unconscious and can't perform any actions until he regains consciousness.

Heavy Stun

After all of a hero's stun boxes have been marked off, additional stun damage becomes wound damage. For every 2 additional points of stun damage a knocked-out hero suffers in a single attack, he or she suffers 1 point of wound damage (disregard the leftover point of stun damage, if applicable).

Wound Damage

Wound damage is more serious than stun damage. It represents injuries that cause lasting harm to the body, such as severe lacerations and broken bones. (Note, however, that the system doesn't take into account the effects of different types of wound damage.) For every point of wound damage your hero receives, mark off one box on the wound rating line of your hero sheet.

Secondary Damage

Damage that inflicts wounds also results in secondary stun damage. For every 2 points of wound damage a hero suffers in a single attack, he also suffers 1 point of stun damage (disregard the leftover point of wound damage, if applicable).

Optional Rule: Dazed

If your Gamemaster elects to use this optional rule, wound damage begins to take its toll as soon as your hero suffers enough damage to use up more than half of his wound points. Your hero is dazed, and every subsequent action he attempts receives a +1 step penalty until enough wound damage is healed to leave at least half of his wound boxes unmarked.

Knockout

If all of your hero's wound boxes are marked off, he is knocked out. Your hero is unconscious and can't perform any actions until he regains consciousness.

Heavy Wound

After all of a hero's wound boxes have been marked off, additional wounds are applied as mortal damage. For every 2 additional points of wound damage suffered in a single attack by a hero with no remaining wound boxes, he or she suffers 1 point of mortal damage (disregard the leftover point of wound damage, if applicable).

Mortal Damage

Mortal damage is the most severe form of trauma a body can endure. It represents such injuries as a severed artery or the rupture of a major organ (although the game system does not distinguish between the effects of different types of mortal damage). For every point of mortal damage your hero receives, mark off one box on the mortal rating line of your hero sheet.

Secondary Damage

For every 2 points of mortal damage a hero suffers in a single attack, he also takes 1 point of wound damage and 1 point of stun damage (disregard the leftover point of mortal damage, if applicable). This wound damage does not also cause secondary stun damage, as described in the "Wound Damage" section.

Dazed

Mortal damage takes a toll on a hero immediately. For *every point* of mortal damage your hero suffers, he receives a +1 step penalty to all subsequent actions he attempts. (This penalty is cumulative—a penalty of +2 steps for 2 points of mortal damage, and so forth.)

Dying and Death

A character who suffers any amount of mortal damage is considered to be dying. At the end of any scene in which a character has suffered mortal damage, the mortally wounded character must make a Stamina–*endurance* check. The result of this check determines if the victim's condition worsens: On a Critical Failure result, he suffers 2 additional points of mortal damage; on a Failure, he suffers 1 additional point of mortal damage; on any success result, his condition remains unchanged.

Until the victim receives medical treatment, he must make a new Stamina–*endurance* check every hour, with effects as described above. If the victim is helped by the application of Knowledge–*first aid* or Medical Science–*treatment*, the interval between Stamina–*endurance* checks is increased from one per hour to one per day.

If all of a victim's mortal boxes are marked off, he dies.

Amazing Damage

Not only does an Amazing result on an attack provide a whole lot of hurt to the character on the receiving end, it also increases the possibility that the character is put out of action.

A character who suffers Amazing damage—regardless of whether it's stun, wound, or mortal damage—must make a Stamina–*endurance* skill check as soon as the damage is applied at the end of the phase, taking into account any penalties that might be in effect. Characters who are decked out in especially tough armor may be exempt from this rule; see "Degrading Damage" on page 190 of *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*.

If the character fails this check, he or she is knocked out. The effect is the same as if the character suffered a knockout from stun damage—mark off all of his or her stun boxes. The character is unconscious and can't take any further actions until he or she is revived.

Fatigue Damage

Fatigue damage represents exhaustion a hero suffers due to extreme exertion. When a hero engages in a fatigue-causing activity, he must make a Stamina–*endurance* check. The check is made after the activity takes place, or at intervals as described below. A Critical Failure result indicates that the hero suffers 2 points of fatigue damage; a Failure result indicates 1 point of fatigue damage. Any success indicates that no fatigue damage occurs as a result of the activity just completed. Penalties can be assigned to this check, as described below.

Activities that require a fatigue check include movement measured in hours (walking, swimming, or flying), heavy labor for an extended length of time (10 minutes or more), exercise or other strenuous activity (10 minutes or more), or suffering wound or mortal damage in a scene (even if the damage was healed during the course of the scene).

Fatigue checks are made right after the activity (or after the scene ends, in the case of wound or mortal damage) or once per hour of activity. The Gamemaster can change this basic time unit, depending on the situation. (The *Gamemaster Guide* contains more information on handling situations in which fatigue comes into play.) Every check for continuous activity after the first one receives a cumulative +1 step penalty—the second check is made with a +1 step penalty, the third check with a +2 step penalty, and so on. Any other penalties or bonuses that might apply are considered as well. In addition, the Gamemaster can assign penalties for moving while carrying a heavy load or engaging in strenuous activity in poor conditions. The effects of fatigue damage are described below.

Dazed

Fatigue damage takes a toll on a hero immediately. For every fatigue box marked, a character receives a +1 step penalty to all subsequent actions he attempts.

Knockout

When all of a hero's fatigue boxes are marked off, he must immediately make a successful Resolve–*physical resolve* skill check to avoid falling unconscious due to exhaustion. (Characters who don't have the Resolve skill make this check using their untrained Will score.) If this check succeeds, the hero can continue to engage in activity for at least one more time unit—but the next time he suffers any fatigue damage, he becomes knocked out and can't perform any further actions until he regains consciousness.

Dazed Penalties

The penalties that come with suffering any type of damage apply to all checks that must be made by a damaged character, including skill checks, action checks, feat checks, and any other dice rolls made to de-

termine whether a character succeeds at something.

All penalties for being dazed are cumulative, so that a character who is dazed from stun damage and wound damage and also has 2 points of mortal damage operates with a +4 penalty, in addition to any other penalties that may apply.

Recovery

How your hero recovers from damage depends on his condition (conscious or knocked out) and the type of damage he has suffered.

Stun Recovery

All stun damage is fleeting. It disappears at the end of a scene, regardless of how much stun damage a character has suffered. It can be repaired during a scene by the use of Knowledge–*first aid*, Medical Science, or some other form of medical treatment.

A hero who is knocked out (all stun boxes filled) can be revived by medical aid—or may be able to recover naturally, as follows:

He remains unconscious for the remainder of the round in which he was knocked out and all of the next round. Starting in the round after that, when all conscious characters are making action checks, an unconscious character begins making Resolve–*physical resolve* checks in an attempt to bring himself out of it. On a Critical Failure or a Failure result, he stays unconscious. On an Ordinary success, he regains 2 stun points; on a Good success, he gets back 4 stun points; on an Amazing success, he recovers 6 stun points (but can't recover more than his maximum number of stun points). On any success, the character becomes conscious but can't attempt any other actions in the upcoming round.

Wound Recovery

Wound damage doesn't go away by itself. It affects a character until he receives medical aid or until he rests long enough to heal the damage naturally (see "Natural Healing").

If a character is unconscious because all of his wound boxes have been marked off, he can't regain consciousness until at least 1 point of that wound damage is healed.

Mortal Recovery

Not even a long rest will help a character who has suffered mortal damage—in fact, resting without being treated will eventually cause his condition to worsen.

Mortal damage can only be repaired through the use of the Medical Science–*surgery* skill. A dying character (one who has at least 1 point of mortal damage) will remain

Natural Healing

A character who has suffered damage may have to heal naturally due to a lack of medical assistance or because medical science has done all it can for the patient.

Natural healing of stun damage occurs automatically and (more or less) immediately; at the end of a scene, all stun damage disappears, and characters who were knocked out because of stun damage regain consciousness.

In the case of wounds, a character naturally recovers a certain number of wound boxes according to the result of a Resolve–*physical resolve* check. A check is made once per week (at the end of the week), with these results applying: Critical Failure, patient somehow aggravates his condition and suffers 1 additional wound; Marginal, character recovers 1 wound box; Ordinary, character recovers 2 wound boxes; Good, character recovers 3 wound boxes; Amazing, character recovers 4 wound boxes. A character without the Resolve broad skill makes an untrained Will check with a +d4 situation die.

Mortal damage can't be healed naturally; only the application of the Medical Science–*surgery* skill can repair mortal damage.

During natural healing, all checks are considered to be made while the character engages in minimal activity. If the character confines himself to a hospital bed or otherwise remains in a state of total rest for the period, the check receives a –2 step bonus. If the character engages in normal activity, the check receives a +2 step penalty.

How Armor Works

In simplest terms, armor protects its wearer from damage that he would have otherwise suffered as the result of a successful attack or some other damage-causing event (such as a fall).

Every type of armor is rated for its ability to protect its wearer from the three kinds of damage: low impact (LI), high impact (HI), and energy (En). When a character is hit by a damage-causing event, the amount of damage his armor absorbs is determined by rolling the appropriate die and adding or subtracting a constant (if applicable). The result is the amount of primary damage that did not get through to affect the character.

It's important to remember that armor does not provide protection against secondary damage—which means that even if a character is protected from all of the primary damage directed at him during an attack, he may still be worn down by an accumulation of secondary damage.

◆ *Example:* Stefan, decked out in a battle vest, is hit for 6 points of low impact (LI) wound damage by a chainsword. The attack also causes 3 points of secondary stun damage. His armor provides d6–3 points of protection against LI damage. Stefan's player rolls a 5 on d6 and subtracts 3, determining that the battle vest stopped 2 points of the primary damage from getting through. Stefan suffers 4 points of wound damage, instead of 6, and 3 points of stun damage because armor has no effect on secondary damage.

Many types of armor are so cumbersome that they hinder their wearer, which is reflected by a penalty to the wearer's action check. A character who has the Armor Operation broad skill (and perhaps also one or both of its specialty skills) can lessen or eliminate this penalty. See the skill description on page 64 in *Chapter 4: Skills* for more information.

Characteristics of the various types of armor in the ALTERNITY game are given in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor.*

in that condition until the damage is repaired or until he dies.

Fatigue Recovery

Fatigue damage can only be recovered when a character is in a complete state of rest—sleeping, or sitting quietly and not moving about. The amount of damage recovered is tied to the result of a character's Resolve–*physical resolve* skill check: Critical Failure , no fatigue points recovered; Marginal, 1 point recovered; Ordinary, 2 points recovered; Good, 3 points; Amazing, 4 points.

Fatigue recovery checks are made once per hour of complete rest, but the Gamemaster can alter the time unit from hours to some other interval, depending on the situation. Any physical activity negates the benefit of rest the character has accumulated during the current time unit.

Combat Actions

In a combat scene, heroes are liable to attempt certain actions that don't often come into play during a challenge scene or an encounter scene. These "combat actions" are described below.

Combat Movement

In a combat scene, most characters move by walking or running. If a character has the ability to fly (either naturally or artificially), that option might be available. If the scene takes place in water, a character might have to swim to move around.

Table P11: Combat Movement Effects

Type of Move	Restrictions & Penalties
All-out	No actions
Sprint	+3 steps
Run	+2 steps
Walk	No penalty
Easy Swim	+2 steps
Swim	No actions
Glide	+1 step
Fly	+2 steps

In some cases, a character might try to sprint.

Combat movement (as opposed to *all-out movement*, described below) works essentially like any other action. During a round, whenever a character has an available action, he can move for a single phase at his listed rate. However, it's also possible for him to move and perform some other action in the same phase. That additional action usually receives a situation die penalty, as shown on Table P11: Combat Movement Effects. Note that a character who is using his swim movement rate can't move and attempt another action in the same phase, and a character who moves at a walk can perform another action with no penalty.

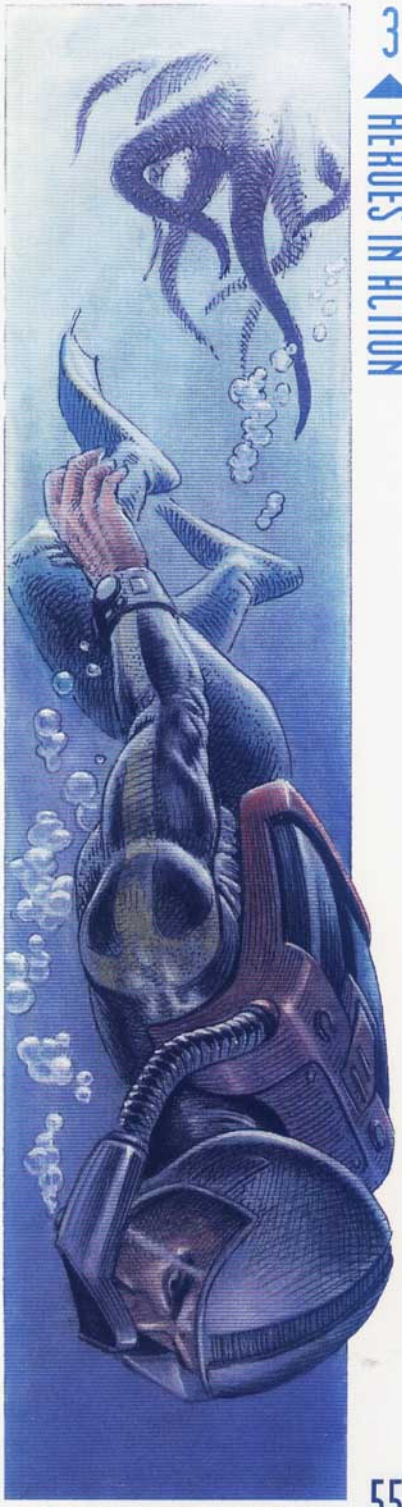
The movement rates for easy swim and glide are provided for those times when a hero is in water or airborne and simply wants to travel without covering distance as quickly as possible.

All-out Movement

If all a character wants to do is cover a lot of distance as quickly as possible, he can elect to engage in all-out movement. When doing so, he moves a number of meters per phase equal to his movement rate for the type of movement he's employing—sprint if he's on land, swim if he's in water, and fly if he's airborne—and he keeps moving in every phase for as long as he is able or willing to do so. He can't perform any actions except movement, though he can stop or duck behind cover whenever he reaches a suitable place.

To use this form of movement, a character must declare his intention to do so during a phase in which he has an action. In that phase and every phase thereafter until he stops, the character does nothing but move. After he decides to stop, he can do nothing else for the remainder of the current round.

Theoretically, a hero can use all-out movement as often and for as long as he wants. Realistically, however, it's probably not possible for someone to use all-out movement for more than a few rounds before adverse effects set in. The Gamemaster will decide if a hero is abusing the "privilege" of all-out movement, and may assign penalties or assess fatigue damage accordingly.



Danger in the depths

TABLE P12: ENCUMBRANCE

Load	Move	Penalty
STR×2	100%	0
STR×4	75%	+1
STR×5	50%	+2
STR×6	25%	+3

TABLE P13: OVERLAND MOVEMENT

Mode of Travel	Kilometers per Hour	Hours per Fatigue Check
Stroll	4	3
March	6	2
Forced march	8	1

Moving While Encumbered

While it might seem like a good idea for your character to be able to carry everything from a plasma gun to a portable workshop, most people can't put up with such a huge load for long. If your Gamemaster chooses to enforce a more realistic game, she may require you to keep track of your character's encumbrance—the total weight of all gear at one time.

Keeping track of encumbrance isn't always necessary. If your character owns a starship, it's reasonable to assume that he leaves a lot of his personal possessions stowed in a locker and only retrieves items as he needs them. On the other hand, if your character has just been marooned in the middle of an arctic waste and has to hike out, it's quite reasonable for the Gamemaster to ask you to decide which items your character wants to take.

Effects of Encumbrance

Any character can carry a load equal to twice his Strength score in kilograms without feeling any adverse affects. For example, a human with a Strength of 10 can carry 20 kg worth of equipment without losing a step.

A character toting equipment that weighs more than twice his Strength score in kilograms suffers penalties; see TABLE P12: ENCUMBRANCE. The reduction in movement rate applies both to combat movement and overland movement. The penalty applies to all actions related to Strength- and Dexterity-based skills, as well as the character's Strength and Dexterity resistance modifiers. (For example, a character with a +1 Dexterity resistance modifier who is loaded down with gear weighing five times his Strength score has his resistance modifier reduced to –1 for as long as he remains encumbered.)

Although it's possible for a hero to lift more weight than six times his Strength score in kilograms (see the discussion of Strength feats on page 63 in *Chapter 4: Skills*), STR×6 is the limit that a character can carry while still retaining the ability to move at an appreciable speed.

◆ *Example:* Grimes is wearing attack armor (15 kg), carrying weapons and sensors totaling 7 kg, and wearing a backpack stuffed with supplies and survival gear that totals 26 kg. His total load is 48 kg, and he has a Strength score of 12. The load weighs STR×4, so Grimes is slowed to 75% of his normal movement rate, has a +1 step penalty to the use of Strength and Dexterity skills, and his resistance modifiers in those Abilities are reduced by 1. If he can dump his backpack before getting into a fight, his load drops to 22 kg, which puts him under the STR×2 limit and means that he can move and fight with no penalty to any of his actions.

Traveling Long Distances

When characters are moving on foot over a long distance and for an extended period of time, everyone has the same basic movement rate, depending on the pace at which the group is traveling—a stroll, a march, or a forced march.

Characters engaging in overland movement make Stamina–*endurance* checks periodically depending on their mode of travel. The intervals are given above on TABLE P13: OVERLAND MOVEMENT. For example, a character moving at a stroll must make a check every 3 hours. On a Critical Failure result, he suffers 2 points of fatigue damage, and on a Failure he suffers 1 point of fatigue damage.

The physical conditions through which heroes are traveling when they're engaged in overland movement can have an effect on how long they can keep going before they have to rest.

The first consideration is the condition of the terrain. All terrain is rated as either Smooth, Varied, or Rugged with regard to how hard it is for someone to travel over or through it.

Smooth terrain is the equivalent of flat, open ground. Fatigue checks are made with no penalty.

Varied terrain is the equivalent of sand, light forest, or jungle. Such a route is more arduous, providing a +1 penalty to fatigue checks.

Rugged terrain is the equivalent of a swamp, a thick jungle, a heavy forest, or deep snow. Traveling through this terrain provides a +3 penalty to fatigue checks.

Darkness, inclement weather, or terrain that's icy or slippery makes the travel conditions worse than they were when only the terrain was considered. The penalty to fatigue checks is increased by +1 for each of these conditions that is present.

◆ *Example:* Traveling through a light forest (Varied terrain, +1) in a torrential downpour (+1) on a dark night (+1) provides a total penalty of +3 steps to a character's fatigue check.

Operating in Zero Gravity

Light gravity, or no gravity at all, can be difficult for characters to deal with if they aren't accustomed to it or don't have some sort of assistance. Any physical action a character attempts while he's in a zero-gravity environment carries a +3 step penalty in addition to any other modifiers that might apply.

In a light gravity environment (comparable to being on the Moon, for instance), the penalty is +1 step.

These penalties are lessened for a hero who has the Acrobatics–*zero-g training* skill; see the skill description on page 71 of Chapter 4. Also, a sesheyan character has an innate advantage when operating in zero gravity or light gravity; this information is contained in the *zero-g training* skill description.

If the optional rules for mutants (see Chapter 13) are used, it's possible for a hero to obtain a mutation that enables him to function better in light gravity.

Aiming

A character making an attack with a ranged weapon or a direct fire heavy weapon can spend an action aiming to increase his chance of success. This provides a –1 step bonus to his next attack, provided he makes the attack in the next phase in which he is entitled to act.

For example, a hero who gets two actions per round makes a Good action check. He uses one action in the Good phase to aim at his target. In the Ordinary phase, he uses his second action to make the ranged attack, with a –1 bonus for aiming.

If the hero spends the Marginal phase aiming, the –1 bonus is applied in the next phase in which the hero can act (depending on the action check he makes in the next round). Of course, if the target moves out of sight before the hero can act, the aiming bonus is lost.

Attacking with Two Weapons

A character can arm himself with two weapons, so long as each weapon is an object that can be wielded with one hand. These weapons can be of any type.

If a character tries to attack with both weapons at the same time, the penalties described earlier in "Two Actions at Once" apply to the attempt: Any attack a character makes with the weapon in his off hand (the one he normally doesn't use) receives a +4 step penalty, and any attack with the weapon in his skilled hand receives a +2 step penalty. These penalties are reduced if a character has the Ambidextrous perk; see *Chapter 5: Perks & Flaws*.

Attacks with two weapons are considered simultaneous—that is, they both occur in the same phase—provided that the Gamemaster is allowing characters to perform two actions at once (see page 51).

TABLE P14: THROW SITUATION MODIFIERS

Type of Object	Short	Medium	Long
Designed for throwing	–1 step	+1 step	+2 steps
Not for throwing	+1 step	+2 steps	+3 steps
Heavy	+4 steps	—	—

Thrown Weapons

How far a hero can throw an object depends on his Strength score. Short range is equal to the hero's Strength score in meters; medium range is STR × 2 meters; and long range is STR × 4 meters. These distances apply for throwing small, light objects, such as balls, grenades, rocks, or similar items. Objects that are significantly larger or heavier can't be thrown as far.

Weapons designed to be thrown include knives, daggers, spears, hand axes, javelins, and shuriken. (Descriptions of these weapons can be found in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*.) In addition, heroes might try to hurl balls, ball-sized rocks, bricks, or even empty guns at opponents. Damage adjustments for Strength apply to any attack made with a thrown weapon.

TABLE P14: THROW SITUATION MODIFIERS summarizes the difficulty of using a thrown weapon based on the type of object and the range of the target. As shown on that table, a hero actually gets a situation die bonus when trying to hit a target at short range with an object that is designed to be thrown. Objects that are small and relatively light (weighing up to 3 kg) but aren't designed for throwing cause the hero to receive a penalty, even at short range. For heavy objects (weighing more than 3 kg but no more than one-half of a character's Strength score in kilograms, rounded down), the penalty is +4, and no heavy object can be tossed beyond short range.

Grenades

Grenades need to be treated a little differently from other thrown objects due to their explosive radius. In other words, you need to know exactly where a grenade lands, since it doesn't have to hit its target to inflict damage. There are two types of grenades in the ALTERNITY game system: standard and gun-launched grenades. (*Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor* has descriptions and statistics for all available grenades.)

Standard grenades are any of the normal fragmentation, concussion, or energy grenades that are manually tossed at a target. A hero can toss a standard grenade a distance equal to his normal throwing distance. He uses his Athletics–*throw* skill. Treat a grenade as an object designed to be thrown for purposes of determining situation modifiers. Cover modifiers are applied to the *throw* situation die if such cover protects from the blast.

Gun-launched grenades are fired out of grenade launchers. This requires the use of the Heavy Weapons–*indirect fire* skill. Ranges depend on the grenade launcher being used.

Refer to TABLE P20: ACCURACY BY RANGE on page 67 in *Chapter 4: Skills* and the accompanying text in the description of the *throw* skill to determine how far a grenade lands from its intended target.

If it's important to know the direction of the miss from the target, a simple random determination might suffice: Roll d4, assigning each of the possible results to the four basic directions (ahead of the target, behind the target, to the left, to the right). The *Gamemaster Guide* has more detailed information on how to determine exactly where a grenade lands.

Holding Your Breath

Any character can hold his breath for at least a number of rounds equal to one-half of his Constitution score (round down). If he tries to keep holding his breath longer than that, he must make a Stamina–*endurance*

check at the start of every subsequent round, with a cumulative +1 step penalty on each check after the first one. On a Critical Failure result, he suffers 4 points of stun damage, on a Failure result 3 points, on an Ordinary success 2 points, and on a Good success 1 point.

If he gets a Failure or a Critical Failure result on a Stamina-*endurance* check, or if he loses all his stun points, he is unconscious and in danger of drowning. He makes a Stamina-*endurance* check in every round thereafter, marking off wound points after all his stun points are gone and then marking off mortal points when all his wound points are used up. If he isn't rescued before his last mortal point is lost, the character dies.

◆ ***Example:*** Jack Everstar is really in over his head this time—shackled to a concrete block that happens to be at the bottom of a lake. His companions are looking for him, but don't know exactly where he is. With a Constitution of 9, Jack has no problem holding his breath for 4 rounds. At the start of the next round, he gets a Critical Failure on his Stamina-*endurance* check and thus loses 4 stun points. One round later, he makes his next *endurance* check with a +1 penalty and gets an Ordinary success—2 more stun points lost.

His next *endurance* check is made with a +2 penalty, and Jack gets a Failure result. He loses 3 more points of damage—his last 2 stun points, which immediately renders him unconscious, and 1 wound point (since all his stun points are now used up).

Jack can still survive if he loses 7 more wound points and 3 of his 4 mortal points. But the penalty on his *endurance* checks gets worse each round—+3, then +4, and so on. He's probably going to be chalking up a lot of Failures, suffering 3 points of damage each time. If his pals don't find him soon, Jack is a goner.

Impact Damage

Heroes have a habit of getting to very high places, engaging in some kind of breathtaking fight scene, and then falling off. This usually results in a miraculous rescue or a plunge to the ground below. As the old saying goes, "It isn't the fall that gets you, but the sudden stop at the end."

If a hero winds up falling from a high place, he suffers damage when he hits the ground or some other hard object, as described below.

When a falling hero finally hits bottom, his player makes an Acrobatics-*fall* skill check (or a Dexterity feat check, if he doesn't have the *fall* specialty skill). Damage, as shown on Table P15: Impact Damage, is determined by the result of the skill check or feat check and the distance fallen:

Ex refers to an extremely short fall (a distance of less than 3 meters) or a collision with a vehicle traveling no more than 20 kilometers per hour.

S is for a short fall (3 to 10 meters), or the equivalent of a collision with a vehicle traveling 21 to 60 kph.

M is for a medium fall (11 to 30 meters) or a collision with a vehicle traveling 61 to 120 kph.

L is for a long fall (31 to 60 meters) or a collision with a vehicle traveling 121 to 300 kph.

T is for a fall in which the victim's body approaches terminal velocity (a distance of 61 meters or greater), or a collision with a vehicle traveling at more than 300 kph.

On the table, cross-reference the success achieved with the proper category to determine what kind of damage the victim suffers.

The Gamemaster can apply other modifiers based on the situation and the actions of the characters, as well as on the substance fallen upon (spikes, rocks).

Note: On worlds with lighter gravity than Earth, reduce the distance fallen by one grade (medium becomes short, for example). On worlds with heavier gravity than Earth, increase the distance fallen by one grade (medium becomes long).

Using a Parachute

The best way to take a quick trip in a downward direction is with a parachute strapped to your back—but there's still no guarantee that the landing won't cause damage.

Making a parachute jump only requires a check (using the Acrobatics-*daredevil* skill) if the situation makes it a high-risk activity. Night jumps, jumping from buildings and cliffs, low-altitude jumps, and jumps made in high winds or bad weather are high-risk situations. Also, any parachuting attempt by a character untrained in the Acrobatics-*daredevil* skill is considered high-risk.

On any high-risk jump, a Critical Failure indicates that the chute doesn't open and the character suffers damage according to the full distance he fell. (See Table P15: Impact Damage.) On a Failure result, the parachutist suffers damage as for a Short fall, and even an Ordinary success causes damage as for an Extremely Short fall. (The character makes an Acrobatics-*fall* skill check immediately, and the result is applied to Table P15 to determine how much impact damage he suffers.)

On any other result, the parachutist lands without injury, and the degree of success may have an effect on how accurate the jump was.

Table P15: Impact Damage

Check Result	Severity of Impact				
	Ex	S	M	L	T
Crit. Failure	d6w	d6+2w	d6+2m	d8+4m	d12+8m
Failure	d4w	d4+2w	d4+2m	d8+2m	d12+6m
Ordinary	d6s	d4w	d4+1m	d6+2m	d8+6m
Good	d4s	d4+2s	d8+2w	d4+2m	d6+4m
Amazing	—	d4–2s	d6+2w	d8+4w	d12+6w

Surprise

Sometimes one side or the other gets the jump on its opponent. Surprise occurs when one side waits in hiding to ambush the other, successfully sneaks up on the other, or otherwise takes an opponent unawares.

At the start of a scene, if one side or the other is in a position to surprise its opponent, the Gamemaster calls for Awareness-*intuition* checks. In some situations both sides can be equally surprised, in which case both sides make *intuition* checks. The Gamemaster assigns penalties to this check if the characters are occupied or in a rush. Bonuses can be assigned for being cautious or using some type of sensor.

Being Prepared

On the other hand, a group can be prepared for an encounter, thus gaining a bonus to avoid being surprised.

For characters to be prepared, they need to fulfill two requirements, as outlined below:

▶ ***Time to prepare:*** Heroes can't avoid surprise while they're rushing down a corridor or when the situation suddenly changes. They can prepare if they find a suitable location to defend, if they move slowly and cautiously, or if they have reason to think an attack is imminent.

▶ ***Focus:*** Heroes can't be alert for sudden attacks if they're busy doing something else. To be prepared to resist surprise, they must concentrate on staying alert and watchful.

▶ ***Awareness check:*** If a hero meets the above two requirements, his player makes an Awareness–*perception* check with a –1, –2, or –3 bonus based on the quality of his preparedness. Any degree of success indicates that he can't be surprised in the present situation.

Effects of Surprise

At the start of a scene in which at least one character failed his Awareness check, a special *surprise phase* occurs. Any character who isn't surprised can take an action in this phase. When all unsurprised characters have acted, the surprise phase ends and normal action rounds start.

Last Resort Points

When a hero faces extreme danger, when great injury or even death seem inevitable, or when a hero just has to pull a miracle out of thin air in order to save the day, he may have the opportunity to use a last resort point.

Like skill points, last resort points can be stored and spent. The rules for how many last resort points a character can have are on page 38 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*.

Effects of Last Resorts

A last resort point can be spent to alter the result of any skill or action check, changing the degree of success by one grade. A hero who wants to improve his success can spend a point to change a Good result into an Amazing result, or a hero who wants to hinder an opponent can change the opponent's Good result into an Ordinary result.

Heroes and members of the supporting cast can have last resort points. The *Gamemaster Guide* has details on how last resort points are assigned to the supporting cast.

Rules for Using Last Resorts

▶ Only one last resort point can be spent to alter a skill check or action check. (Members of the Free Agent profession can spend 2 points to alter the degree of success by two grades, if they so choose.)

▶ Last resorts can't be used to offset each other. Once a last resort is declared on an action, no other last resorts can be used on that action.

▶ The use of last resort points is declared in order, starting with the character who got the best action check. In the case of a tie, use die rolls to see who goes first.

▶ The use of a last resort point must be declared after dice are rolled but before any results are applied. For example, if a villain rolls an Amazing attack, the hero must declare his last resort use to change it to a Good result before the villain calculates damage.

▶ Only a character directly involved in an action can spend a last resort point on that action. For example, a hero can spend a last resort to alter his own skill or action check, or to alter a skill check whose result directly affects him.

▶ Last resorts can't be used to accomplish what would otherwise be impossible. If the Gamemaster determines that there's no way to succeed at a particular action, then a last resort can't be used to turn a Failure into an Ordinary success.

▶ A last resort spent on a Critical Failure alters the outcome to a Failure. Bad luck is averted, but the action still doesn't succeed. (A Free Agent, able to spend two last resort points at once, can change a Critical Failure into an Ordinary success.)

▶ Last resort points can be purchased with stored skill points. A hero can buy last resort points between adventures, up to the character's maximum.

Types of Situations

Sometimes a Gamemaster assigns a level of quality to a situation. This categorization can refer to such features as the rarity of goods, the presence or absence of light and sound, the nature of the circumstances, or some combination of these factors.

▶ ***Goods and Items:*** Ordinary items are common, everyday objects that have value and worth. Examples include common food and drink, run-of-the-mill equipment, and cheap lodgings.

Good items are of high quality and therefore more expensive. Examples include four-star restaurants, designer clothing, top-of-the-line equipment, and stylish lodgings.

Amazing items are rare, extraordinary, and very expensive, such as gourmet food, exotic and unique equipment, and luxury lodgings.

▶ ***Light and Sound:*** The amount of light or sound present in a hero's vicinity can affect the success of an action he attempts.

Ordinary illumination is equivalent to normal daylight. Ordinary sound is normal background noise.

Good illumination is similar to the brightness of a sunny day, or the inside of a well-lit room. Good sound is loud enough to make normal conversation difficult.

Amazing illumination is equivalent to looking directly at the sun, or a high-intensity light bulb. Amazing sound drowns out everything else in the area.

These categorizations can also be applied to conditions of low illumination, ranging from Slight (a night sky under moonlight) to Extreme (total darkness, such as inside a windowless room or a deep cave).

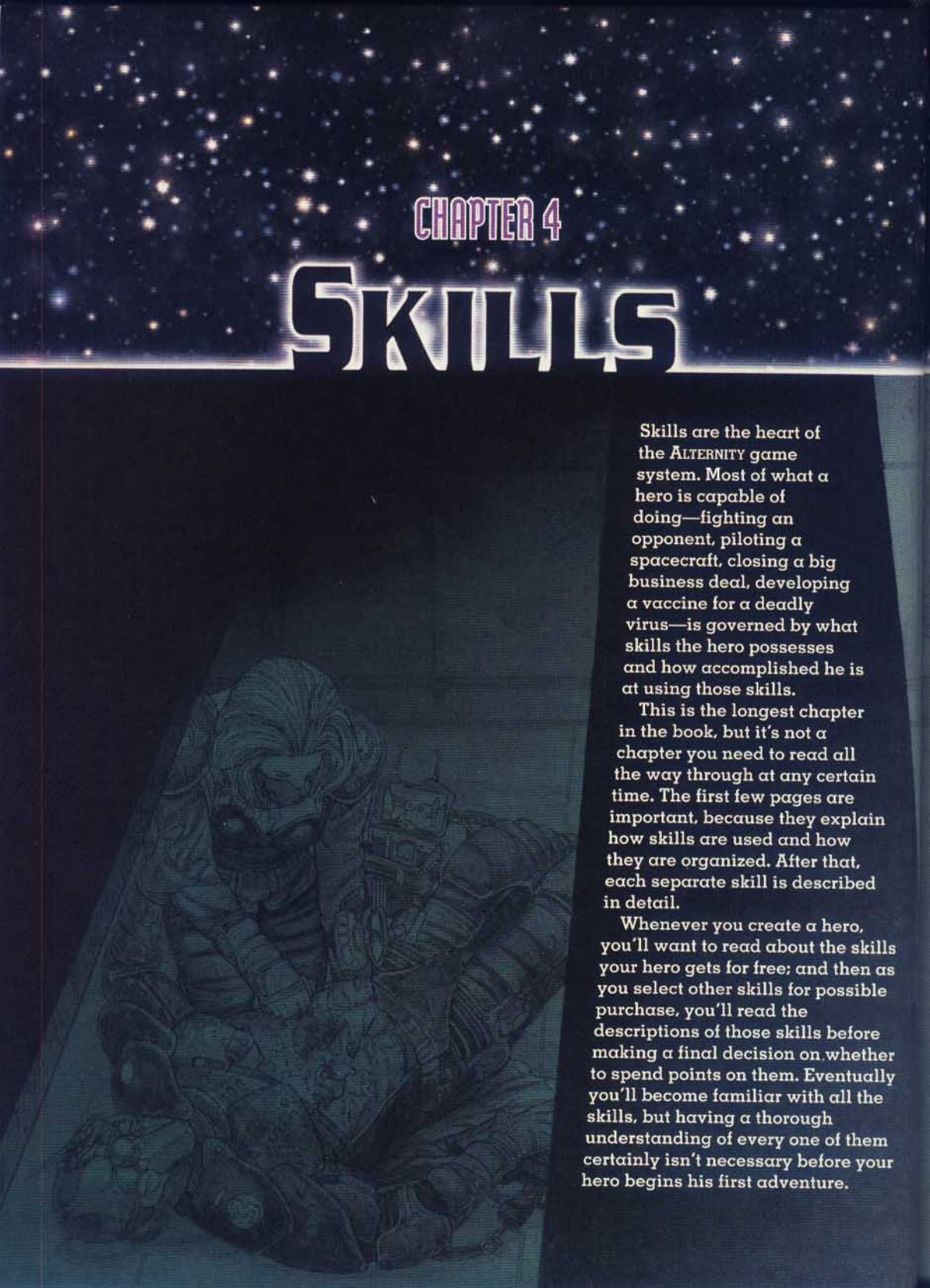
▶ ***Circumstances:*** Slight circumstances are straightforward, with a modicum of difficulty and an air of routine to them.

Moderate circumstances have a moderate degree of difficulty and an air of tension associated with them that makes these scenes more dramatic.

Extreme circumstances have a high degree of difficulty and an intensity that make these scenes climactic and of key importance.

CHAPTER 4

SKILLS



Skills are the heart of the ALTERNITY game system. Most of what a hero is capable of doing—fighting an opponent, piloting a spacecraft, closing a big business deal, developing a vaccine for a deadly virus—is governed by what skills the hero possesses and how accomplished he is at using those skills.

This is the longest chapter in the book, but it's not a chapter you need to read all the way through at any certain time. The first few pages are important, because they explain how skills are used and how they are organized. After that, each separate skill is described in detail.

Whenever you create a hero, you'll want to read about the skills your hero gets for free; and then as you select other skills for possible purchase, you'll read the descriptions of those skills before making a final decision on whether to spend points on them. Eventually you'll become familiar with all the skills, but having a thorough understanding of every one of them certainly isn't necessary before your hero begins his first adventure.

Broad vs. Specialty Skills

Broad skills represent general areas of knowledge, talent, or aptitude. They are categorized according to the ability with which they are most closely related: Acrobatics with Dexterity, Stamina with Constitution, and so forth. Specialty skills are narrower areas of expertise, each of which is associated with a particular broad skill. *A character must possess a broad skill in order to acquire any of its associated specialties.*

The most significant difference between specialties and broad skills is that specialty skills can be improved and broad skills cannot be. When a specialty skill is first obtained, the character possesses the skill at rank 1. (A hero who is being created and has not yet begun his career is permitted to purchase specialty skills up to rank 3.) The highest rank attainable in a specialty skill is 12.

Increasing the rank of a specialty skill improves a character's chance of succeeding in the use of that skill, and sometimes also provides additional advantages as set forth in the description of the skill. These advantages, called *rank benefits*, are automatically earned by a character who attains the appropriate rank in the specialty skill. Alternatively, a hero may be able to receive a rank benefit ahead of time if his or her player decides to spend skill points to acquire the benefit. See the sidebar "Purchasing Rank Benefits" on page 63.

Free Broad Skills

Every hero receives six free broad skills at the beginning of his career. (Table P4: Free Broad Skills for Heroes on page 34 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation* lists the skills available to each hero according to his species.)

Skill Points

Every beginning hero receives an allotment of skill points based on the character's Intelligence score, and is entitled to use those points to purchase a certain number of additional broad skills and specialty skills before starting her career. Table P5: Hero Starting Skill Points on page 34 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation* summarize the number of points and skills available according to a character's Intelligence. Additionally, a beginning hero may elect to "cash in" one or more of her free broad skills, receiving 3 more skill points for each broad skill she chooses to forego. (This relinquishing of free broad skills can't be done after a hero starts her career. A character may cash in one or more of her free broad skills and then purchase the same skill(s) later on.)

As a hero pursues her career, she receives achievement points from the Gamemaster as rewards for successful completion of missions and attainment of goals. When she obtains enough achievement points to qualify for the next higher achievement level, those points are converted into skill points and may then be used to purchase new skills or other benefits. (See *Chapter 8: Achievements* for more information.) A character is never obliged to spend skill points, and may choose to save some or all of the points she earns in order to be able to purchase a skill or a benefit that has a higher cost later on.

Cost of Skills

The method for determining how many points a character must spend to obtain a skill, or to achieve a higher rank in a specialty skill, is detailed in the "Purchase Skills" section on page 34 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*. To summarize:

► The cost to purchase a broad skill or rank 1 in a specialty skill is either the *list price*, as given on Table P19: Skill List (pages 64–65), or the *list price –1*. A character pays *list price –1* if he or she is a member of a profession mentioned in the "Pr." column for that skill.

► The cost to purchase a higher rank in a specialty skill is either the *list price* or the *list price –1*, plus a number of points equal to the character's current rank in the skill.

Skill Scores

A character's ability to perform an action related to a skill is indicated by his skill score. For a broad skill, this number is the same as the related Ability Score; it never changes, unless the Ability Score itself is somehow increased or decreased.

For a specialty skill, a character's score is equal to the associated Ability Score *plus* the character's current rank in the skill.

TABLE P16: SITUATION DIE MODIFIERS

Extreme	+3 steps	More difficult
Moderate	+2 steps	(penalties)
Slight	+1 step	
Marginal	None	
Ordinary	–1 step	
Good	–2 steps	(bonuses)
Amazing	–3 steps	Less difficult

Skill Checks and Situation Dice

A skill check is used to determine the outcome of an action directly related to that skill. To make a skill check, a player rolls a d20 (the control die) plus a situation die that varies according to the difficulty of what's being attempted. The check succeeds if the result of the dice roll is equal to or less than the character's skill score.

The base situation die for all broad skills is +d4, and the base situation die for all specialty skills is +d0. The situation die for any particular skill check may be modified by other factors, as specified in a skill description or as directed by the Gamemaster.

Modifiers to the situation die generally range from an Extreme penalty (+3 steps) to an Amazing bonus (–3 steps), as shown on TABLE P16: SITUATION DIE MODIFIERS. Many of the skill descriptions in this chapter provide examples of various situation die modifiers that players and the Gamemaster can use to help them determine how easy or difficult it is to succeed at a skill check under various conditions. Except when otherwise indicated, situation die modifiers are cumulative: If a condition exists that warrants a Moderate penalty, and another condition calls for a Slight penalty to the same check, the modifier in that case is a +3 penalty. Examples of typical situation die modifiers are provided in many of the skill descriptions that follow.

Table P16 doesn't represent the full range of possible modifiers. Some factors could modify the situation die by 4 steps or more in either direction, as set forth in a skill description or as determined by the Gamemaster.

Who Makes the Rolls?

At first glance it seems obvious that, since a hero is the one who employs a skill, the player of that hero gets to roll the dice on a skill check.

That's true almost all the time, but there may be occasions in an adventure when the Gamemaster decides to roll a skill check secretly on behalf of a hero, and then apply the result without revealing anything to the player about whether the check succeeded.

This secrecy may sometimes be necessary to prevent a player from being aware of something his hero does not know. For instance, if a hero tries to set an explosive charge, the Gamemaster will probably elect to roll the hero's Demolitions skill check in secret, so that neither the hero nor the player of that hero (and, for that matter, every other player in the game) knows ahead of time if the explosive will work or if it will be a dud.

Single vs. Complex Skill Checks

With many skills, a single dice roll immediately determines whether a character succeeds (and if so, the degree of success he achieves). If a hero wants to jump across a chasm or recall a specific piece of information, his success or failure is apparent after a single skill check.

For complicated, time-consuming tasks (such as repairing a piece of equipment or breaking into a secured computer system) or at times when the Gamemaster wants to build tension and suspense, a *complex skill check* may be called for. In such a case, a specific number of successes must be achieved to complete the task. Most of the time, the Gamemaster won't tell you how many successes your hero needs; you'll find this out only after the task is finished.

TABLE P17: COMPLEX SKILL CHECKS—which is referred to frequently throughout the rest of this chapter—identifies the factors that influence a complex skill check. The conditions under which a hero is operating can provide a modifier to the situation die, ranging from +4 steps for a Critical situation (worst for the hero) to –3 steps for a situation that is Amazingly favorable. The complexity of the task is reflected in how many successes the hero needs to finish the job. On any individual dice roll during a complex skill check, an Ordinary result counts as 1 success; a Good result counts as 2 successes; and an Amazing result counts as 3 successes.

Each of these individual dice rolls is one portion of a complex skill check. In the best case, a complex skill check can be completed in one dice roll, if its complexity is Marginal and if the result of the roll is a Good or Amazing success.

One or two Failure results during a complex skill check don't count as failures; this simply means that the character made no progress toward

TABLE P17: COMPLEX SKILL CHECKS

Conditions	Modifier
Critical (worst)	+4 steps
Extreme	+3 steps
Moderate	+2 steps
Slight	+1 step
Marginal	None
Ordinary	–1 step
Good	–2 step
Amazing (best)	–3 steps

Complexity	Successes Required
Marginal	2
Ordinary	3 or 4*
Good	5 to 7*
Amazing	8 to 10*

*Specific number decided by the Gamemaster.

Purchasing Rank Benefits

If the Gamemaster allows it, heroes may be able to acquire certain specialty skill rank benefits by spending skill points to purchase them before attaining the skill rank at which the benefits would be automatically obtained.

The cost in skill points to purchase a rank benefit is equal to the rank difference (the rank at which the benefit is automatically obtained, minus the hero's present rank) times 2. For example, the increased damage rank benefit for Unarmed Attack–*brawl* is automatically obtained by a character who reaches rank 8 in that specialty skill. For a character with rank 5 in *brawl*, the rank difference is 3 (8 – 5), which means that he can purchase the rank benefit for 6 skill points (3 × 2).

Certain rank benefits can not be purchased ahead of time. In the skill descriptions that follow in this chapter, those benefits are identified by a "⊗" symbol preceding the name and description of the benefit. Also, even if the Gamemaster permits rank benefits to be purchased, he or she may rule that other rank benefits (such as increased damage, used in the example above) can only be obtained by characters who attain the rank at which the benefit becomes automatically available.

his goal with the action he just took. But if *three* Failure results are rolled during the same complex skill check, the third one instantly ends the attempt. That particular complex skill check can't be attempted again until conditions change in some significant way (the hero improves his skill rank, obtains new equipment, or brings in some expert assistance).

A single Critical Failure result immediately ruins a complex skill check. Depending on the situation or the decision of the Gamemaster, the hero may be able to start again from the beginning—or it could be that the chance of succeeding at that particular complex skill check is gone for the time being, or perhaps gone forever.

Marginal Success

When a hero makes a skill check, there are five possible results of his action: Critical Failure, Failure, Ordinary success, Good success, and Amazing success. In some situations, the Gamemaster may decide that a hero can't really fail at what he's trying to do; a skill check is used to determine only the degree of success, not whether the hero succeeds or fails. In such cases, a Failure result becomes a Marginal success—but a Critical Failure still indicates that something unfortunate has happened, or may happen in the future (in the form of a bit of bad luck).

Table P18: Base Situation Dice

Type of Action	Base Die	Score Used
Feat	+d4	Ability
Untrained	+d4	½ Ability
Broad Skill	+d4	Ability
Specialty	+d0	Ability + Rank

Character vs. Character

In almost every case, only the acting character makes a skill check to determine the result of his attempt to do something. But sometimes the outcome of a situation may depend on what happens when characters compete with one another. The *Gamemaster Guide* has more details on this, but in general here's how it works:

Each character involved in direct competition (except for combat) makes an appropriate skill check. Any situation die modifiers that apply should be figured into the check. The character who achieves the greater level of success—Amazing beats Good, Good beats Ordinary, Ordinary beats Failure or Marginal, and a Critical Failure indicates an immediate and significant loss—wins the competition. If the contestants tie (both roll a Good success, for example), then another check must be made.

When characters (especially heroes represented by different players) use the same skill against each other, such as in an arm-wrestling contest or when haggling over a business transaction, and roleplaying the outcome isn't feasible, use this system.

Trained or Untrained

If a hero has received or purchased a broad skill or a specialty skill, he's considered to be *trained* in the use of that skill. A hero who is trained in a broad skill can attempt to perform any associated specialty skill using his broad skill score—unless the specialty can't be used untrained.

If a hero doesn't have a particular broad skill or a related specialty skill, he can still attempt a skill-related action. In this case, the hero is considered *untrained*. Use the untrained score for the related Ability (one-half of the Ability Score, rounded up) when attempting these actions. The base situation die for an untrained skill check is +d4, just as it is for the trained use of a broad skill.

Feat Checks

Sometimes an action your hero attempts is not directly related to a specific skill. In such cases, success or failure is determined by the result of a *feat check*. To make a feat check, a player rolls a d20 (the control die) with a base situation die of +d4. (Of course, other conditions may modify the situation die.) If the dice roll is equal to or less than the hero's relevant Ability Score, some degree of success is achieved.

Strength Skills

Strength measures a hero's physical power. To determine the result of an action involving Strength that isn't directly related to a skill, a hero makes a feat check (as described earlier on this page).

Lifting a heavy object is one example of a Strength feat. The Gamemaster doesn't have to be specific when he declares a feat to be of a certain level of difficulty, but he will use the following as a general rule: A Marginal feat (no modifier) is one that handles weights of no more than 3 times the hero's Strength score in kilograms; a Slight feat (+1 penalty) handles weights around 5 times

Table P19: Skill List

Strength Skills

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.	Pg.
Armor Operation	7	C	64
Combat armor	3	C	66
Powered armor	4	C	66
Athletics	3	—	66
Climb	2	—	66
Jump	1	—	67
Throw	2	—	67
_____ *(specific)*	1	—	68
Heavy Weapons	6	C	68
Direct fire	4	C	68
Indirect fire	4	C	68
Melee Weapons	6	C	69
Blade	3	C	69
Bludgeon	3	C	69
Powered weapon	4	C	69
Unarmed Attack	5	—	69
Brawl	3	C	70
Power martial arts	5	CF	70

Constitution Skills

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.	Pg.
Movement	3	—	76
Race	2	—	77
Swim	1	—	77
Trailblazing	3	F	77
Stamina	3	—	77
Endurance	4	C	77
Resist pain	4	C	77
Survival	5	CF	78
Survival training	3	CF	78

Dexterity Skills

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.	Pg.
Acrobatics	7	F	70
Daredevil	4	—	70
Defensive martial arts	5	CF	70
Dodge	4	CF	71
Fall	3	F	71
Flight	2	—	71
Zero-g training	2	CT	71
(specific)	1	—	72
Manipulation	6	—	72
Lockpick	4	F	72
Pickpocket	4	F	72
Prestidigitation	3	D	72
Ranged Weapons, Mod.	6	C	73
Pistol	4	C	73
Rifle	4	C	73
SMG	4	C	73
Ranged Weapons, Prim.	7	C	73
Bow	4	C	74
Crossbow	3	C	74
Flintlock	3	C	74
Sling	4	C	74
Stealth	7	F	74
Hide	4	F	75
Shadow	4	F	75
Sneak	5	F	75
Vehicle Operation	3	—	76
Air vehicle	5	T	76
Land vehicle	3	T	76
Space vehicle	5	T	76
Water vehicle	3	T	76

***Italic* type indicates a specialty skill.**
Blue type designates a skill that can't be used untrained.

In the "Pr." column, a dash indicates an Open skill—available to a character of any profession for the listed cost. Any skill followed by a profession code (C = Combat Spec, D = Diplomat, F = Free Agent, T = Tech Op) can be purchased by characters of the appropriate profession(s) for 1 point less than the listed cost. Skills related to the Mindwalker profession are detailed in *Chapter 14: Psionics*.

the hero's Strength; a Moderate feat (+2 penalty) involves weights of 10 times the hero's Strength score in kilograms; and an Extreme feat (+3 penalty) handles weights in the range of 15 times the hero's Strength score in kilograms. Feats involving heavier weights require an Amazing success to achieve and inflict fatigue damage upon the character (as detailed in the *Gamemaster Guide*).

In this example, factors other than the weight of the object being lifted may also affect the situation die; for instance, a penalty if the object is slippery, or a bonus if the object has handles or protrusions that make it easier to hold onto.

Armor Operation

Armor that's bulky, heavy, and cumbersome hinders the character using it. This is reflected by a penalty to the character's action check and the lessening or negating of a character's Dexterity resistance modifier. The Armor Operation broad skill and its specialty skills help to alleviate these penalties.

Table P41: Armor on page 188 in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor* lists the various types of armor available and indicates which ones require the user to take an action check and Dexterity resistance modifier penalty. Under the "Skill" column on that table, an entry of "—" means that the Armor Operation skill is not needed to use the armor effectively, and no action check or Dexterity resistance modifier penalty is associated with it. If either "Armor Op," "*combat*," or "*powered*" appears under "Skill," then the penalty (given in the "AP"

TABLE P19: SKILL LIST

Intelligence Skills

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.	Pg.
Business	4	D	78
Corporate	3	D	79
Illicit business	3	DF	79
Small business	3	D	79
Computer Science	7	T	79
Hacking	5	T	80
Hardware	4	T	80
Programming	4	T	80
Demolitions	6	CT	80
Disarm	4	T	80
Scratch-built	4	T	81
Set explosives	3	CT	81
Knowledge	3	—	81
Computer operation	1	—	82
Deduce	2	—	82
First aid	2	—	82
Language (specific)	1	—	83
_____ *(specific)*	1	—	83
Law	5	DF	83
Court procedures	3	D	83
Law enforcement	3	CF	83
(specific)	1	—	84
Life Science	7	T	84
Biology	3	T	84
Botany	3	T	84
Genetics	3	T	84
Xenology	4	T	84
Zoology	3	T	84
Medical Science	7	T	84
Forensics	3	T	84
Medical knowledge	3	T	84

Will Skills

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.	Pg.
Administration	4	D	90
Bureaucracy	3	D	90
Management	3	D	91
Animal Handling	3	—	91
Animal riding	1	—	91
Animal training	1	—	92
Awareness	3	—	92
Intuition	3	—	92
Perception	2	—	92
Creativity	4	—	92
_____ *(specific)*	1	—	93
Investigate	7	FT	93
Interrogate	4	CF	93
Search	4	FT	93
Track	4	F	93
Resolve	5	—	94
Mental resolve	3	—	94
Physical resolve	3	—	94
Street Smart	5	F	95
Criminal elements	3	F	95
Street knowledge	3	F	95
Teach	5	DT	95
_____ *(specific)*	3	DT	95

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.	Pg.
Medical Science (cont.)			
Psychology	3	T	84
Surgery	5	T	85
Treatment	4	T	85
Xenomedicine (specific)	3	T	86
Navigation	6	T	86
Astrogation, drivespace	4	T	86
Astrogation, system	3	T	87
Navigation, surface	3	T	87
Physical Science	7	T	87
Astronomy	3	T	87
Chemistry	3	T	87
Physics	3	T	87
Planetology	3	T	87
Security	5	CF	88
Protection protocols	3	CF	88
Security devices	3	FT	88
System Operation	4	—	88
Communications	3	DT	88
Defenses	3	CT	88
Engineering	3	T	88
Sensors	3	FT	89
Weapons	3	CT	89
Tactics	6	CT	89
Infantry tactics	3	C	89
Space tactics	3	T	89
Vehicle tactics	3	CT	89
Technical Science	7	T	89
Invention	4	T	89
Jurygrig	3	T	89
Repair	3	T	90
Technical knowledge	3	T	90

Personality Skills

Skill Name	Cost	Pr.	Pg.
Culture	5	D	96
Diplomacy	3	D	96
Etiquette (specific)	2	D	97
First encounter	3	D	97
Deception	5	DF	98
Bluff	3	DF	98
Bribe	3	DF	98
Gamble	3	DF	98
Entertainment	4	DF	99
Act	2	DF	99
Dance	2	DF	99
Musical instrument	2	DF	99
Sing	2	DF	99
Interaction	3	—	100
Bargain	3	DT	100
Charm	3	DF	100
Interview	3	DF	100
Intimidate	3	C	100
Seduce	3	DF	100
Taunt	2	—	101
Leadership	4	—	101
Command	4	CD	101
Inspire	4	CD	101

column) does apply, and this skill comes into play.

Having just the broad skill allows a hero to reduce the action check and Dexterity resistance modifier penalty of any type of armor by 1 step. An action check penalty can be reduced from +1 to 0, or from +2 to +1, and so on—but this benefit never provides a bonus. A Dexterity resistance modifier penalty can be similarly offset, perhaps returning the character's resistance modifier to its original value.

A character with the broad skill who is decked out in armor can attempt any actions he wants, though some strenuous physical activities (jumping, running, climbing, etc.) may require an Armor Operation check. In general, an Ordinary result on this skill check indicates a half effect (run at one-half the normal rate, for example), while a Good result or better indicates a full effect (run at the normal rate).

For a hero untrained in Armor Operation, an action check and Dexterity resistance modifier penalty associated with any type of armor always applies. An untrained hero can't do anything but walk and make simple attacks while using any armor that carries an action check and resistance modifier penalty. Simple attacks are just that—no rank benefits, such as the double-strike benefit related to the Melee Weapons specialty skills, can be employed by an untrained character who is wearing cumbersome armor. Also, an untrained character can't use any type of powered armor.

Combat Armor

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his ability to perform actions, including parrying with a shield, while wearing standard combat armor, by a gradual process of learning to compensate for the weight and awkwardness of the heavy armor. A character with this skill at rank 1, 2, or 3 is allowed to reduce the action check and Dexterity resistance modifier penalty associated with combat armor (not powered armor) by 1 additional step.

▶ ***Parrying with a Shield:*** The Armor Operation–*combat armor* skill applies when a hero tries to parry an Unarmed Attack or Melee Weapons attack. For rules on parrying, see page 69.

Powered Armor

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency with powered combat armor, becoming able to efficiently employ the strength enhancements built into powered armor. A character with this skill at rank 1, 2, or 3 is allowed to reduce the action check and Dexterity resistance modifier penalty associated with combat armor (not powered armor) by 1 additional step.

Armor Operation Rank Benefits

A character who achieves higher ranks in either or both of the Armor Operation specialty skills receives the following rank benefits when she is wearing armor of the appropriate type (either combat armor or powered armor).

⊗ **Improved Operation: The reduction to a character's action check and Dexterity resistance modifier penalty becomes 2 additional steps at rank 4, 3 additional steps at rank 7, and 4 additional steps at rank 10. Note that this rank benefit only reduces a penalty; it never provides a bonus. For example, a hero with rank 4 in this skill is allowed to reduce her armor's action check and Dexterity resistance modifier penalty by 3 steps (1 step for the broad skill, 2 additional for rank 4). If she's wearing armor that carries a +2 action check penalty, that penalty is simply negated, not turned into an action check bonus of –1. Also, a hero's Dexterity resistance modifier can never be improved beyond its original value.**

⊗ **Shaking Off Stuns: A character with this specialty skill also gets better at shaking off stun damage—including secondary damage—while wearing the appropriate type of armor. Any stun damage inflicted upon a character wearing armor is automatically reduced by 1 point for every 2 ranks attained, up to a maximum of 6 points at rank 12.**

Athletics

Free to human, mechalus, t'sa, and weren heroes.

This broad skill provides a hero with the abilities of a natural athlete—a competent level of strength, grace, and physical prowess. This skill is used to determine the success of physical actions such as climbing a tree, jumping over a large hole, or throwing an object at a target.

Climb

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve this aspect of the Athletics broad skill. With the *climb* skill, a hero can scale walls, ascend mountains, or otherwise climb up or over obstacles.

In combat scenes, a hero can climb a certain number of meters in a phase, depending on the result of a skill check: Critical Failure, fall (if possible); Marginal, no progress this action; Ordinary, 1 meter; Good, 2 meters; Amazing, 3 meters.

In challenge scenes or whenever the Gamemaster determines that a time unit other than rounds applies, a climb check is a complex skill check (see Table P17, page 62).

If a hero gets a Critical Failure on a *climb* check, he loses his grip and falls (unless equipment prevents it). If he has any actions left in the round, he can attempt to regain his hold by getting an Ordinary success or better on a second *climb* check with a +1 penalty on top of any other modifiers that apply. If this attempt fails or if the hero has no remaining actions, he falls. Damage from the fall (see Table P15: Impact Damage on page 58 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*) is lessened if the hero makes a successful untrained Dexterity check

Climb Situation Modifiers

Sheer surface	+3
Icy or slippery surface	+2
Darkness	+1
Wet surface	+1
Surface with some handholds and footholds	–1
Surface with many handholds and footholds	–2
Minimal climbing gear (gloves & sturdy shoes)	–1
Partial climbing gear	–2
Full climbing gear	–3

TABLE P20: ACCURACY BY RANGE*

	Distance from Target		
Skill Check Result	**Short**	**Medium**	**Long**
Critical Failure	4 m	8 m	12 m
Failure	2 m	4 m	6 m
Ordinary	on target	2 m	4 m
Good	on target	on target	2 m
Amazing	—— always on target ——		

* For thrown objects or indirect fire weapons

or an Acrobatics–*fall* skill check; see the description of Acrobatics–*fall* for more information.

Jump

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve this aspect of the Athletics broad skill. With the *jump* skill, a hero can attempt to leap over obstacles by performing a horizontal running or standing jump, or a vertical leap.

In combat scenes, a hero can jump a certain number of meters depending on the result of a skill check. There are three types of jumps: standing jump, running jump, and vertical leap. On any jumping attempt, a Critical Failure result indicates that the hero trips and takes a hard fall, suffering d6 points of stun damage. A Marginal result indicates that the hero makes a leap of Ordinary distance (see below) but suffers d4 points of stun damage because of a poor landing.

On a standing jump attempt, an Ordinary success means a leap of 1 meter; Good, 2 meters; and Amazing, 3 meters. A standing jump is performed from a stationary starting position.

On a running jump attempt, an Ordinary success means a leap of 2 meters; Good, 4 meters; and Amazing, 6 meters. A running jump requires at least 4 meters of space for a running start before making the jump.

On a vertical leap attempt, an Ordinary success means a leap of 1 meter; Good, 1.5 meters; and Amazing, 2 meters. A vertical leap is made from a standing position; the distances indicate how far above his head a character can leap and reach.

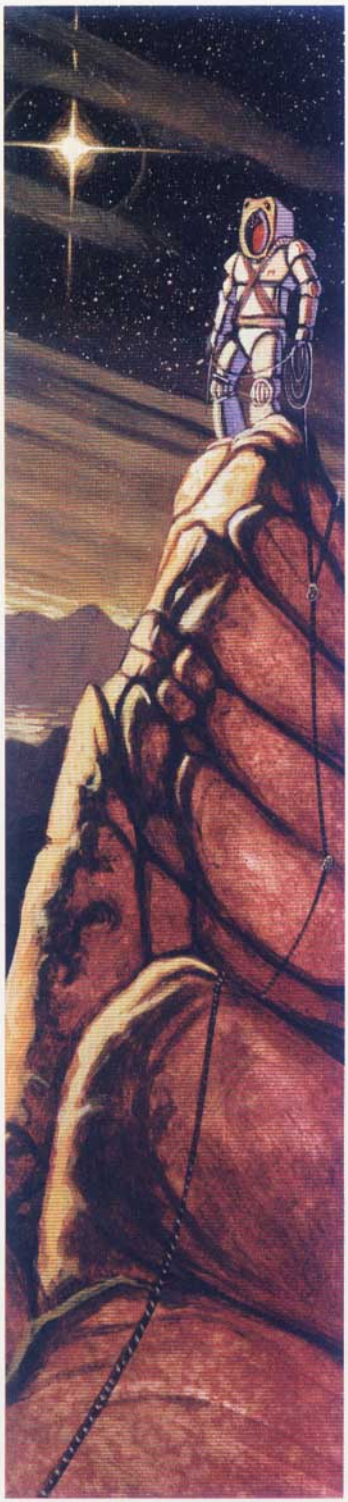
Note: In an environment where the gravity is weaker or stronger than Earth normal, the distance figures for a jump should be adjusted accordingly. As a rough guideline, double the given distances in light gravity and reduce them in heavy gravity: For Earth normal ×2, take one-half of the given distances; for Earth normal ×3, use one-third; and so forth.

⊗ ***Increased Distance:*** As a hero increases his ranks in this specialty skill, the distance that he can jump or leap also increases. The running jump improves by 1 meter at ranks 3, 6, 9, and 12; the standing jump improves by 1 meter at ranks 4, 7, and 10; and the vertical leap improves by 0.5 meters at ranks 5, 8, and 11.

Throw

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve this aspect of the Athletics broad skill. With the *throw* skill, a hero can accurately toss balls, darts, stones, throwing knives, grenades, and other small objects at a specific target.

The accuracy of a throw depends on the range (distance from the thrower to the target) and the degree of success achieved on a skill check, as shown on TABLE P20: ACCURACY BY RANGE. For example, at short range, any success hits the target or the target hex. (The target hex is a 2-meter-diameter hexagon centered on the target.) At medium range, an Amazing or Good throw hits the target; at long range, only an Amazing result counts as a direct hit. Other results miss the target by the distance shown. The distance a throw misses by isn't important for most thrown objects, but it does matter for grenade results, since a grenade has a blast radius.



On top of the situation

Athletics, Specific Skill

A blank line is provided under Athletics on the hero sheet for a player, if he so desires, to add a specialty skill that fits into the concept he has for his hero—for example, a specific sport or a physical fitness regimen such as weightlifting or aerobics. How this skill works in the context of a campaign, and even if it will be allowed, is left to the Gamemaster.

Heavy Weapons

This broad skill provides a hero with training in the use of heavy weaponry that isn't part of a ship or a vehicle, including mortars, grenade and rocket launchers, shoulder-fired missiles, and heavy firearms. Weapons that are part of a large ship or a single-operator vehicle require the use of System Operation or Vehicle Operation, respectively.

Heavy weapons are listed on TABLE P40: HEAVY WEAPONS on pages 182–183 in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor.* Each one is designated as either a direct fire weapon or an indirect fire weapon. The Heavy Weapons broad skill allows a hero to use any heavy weapon at the trained level. The two specialty skills described below provide improved ability in the use of the two types of weapons.

TABLE P21: HEAVY WEAPONS RANGE MODIFIERS

Range	Direct	Indirect
Short	–1 step	+2 steps
Medium	None	–2 steps
Long	+1 step	None

Each heavy weapon has a set of range figures. Situation die modifiers for range, as shown above on TABLE P21: HEAVY WEAPONS RANGE MODIFIERS, may apply when a certain type of heavy weapon is used against a target or a location that lies within a particular range category.

In addition, the accuracy of an indirect-fire weapon depends on the range between the shooter and the target location as well as the type of success achieved, as shown on TABLE P20: ACCURACY BY RANGE. For example, any success (Ordinary or better) hits a target at short range, but at medium range an Amazing or Good success is necessary. Other results miss the target location by the distance shown.

A few direct-fire heavy weapons (as well as some rifles and all submachine guns) are automatic weapons capable of firing multiple rounds of ammunition in every attack. The various attack modes for automatic weapons are described on page 74.

Direct Fire

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency with direct-fire heavy weapons. These weapons work just like normal firearms, requiring the user to aim them at a target. Direct-fire heavy weapons include heavy-caliber firearms, plasma guns, and renders.

Indirect Fire

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency with indi-

Melee Weapons Rank Benefits

As a hero improves his ability in one or more of the Melee Weapons specialty skills, he gains rank benefits as described below. *Note:* These benefits only apply when the hero is using a weapon that is associated with the skill in question: for instance, having rank 4 in the *blade* specialty does not entitle a hero to use a club to make a reaction parry against an attack.

⊗ **Resistance Modifier: At higher ranks, any Melee Weapons specialty skill provides an improvement to a hero's Strength resistance modifier. It improves by +1 at rank 4, by +1 again at rank 8, and by +1 again at rank 12.**

▶ **Reaction Parry: When a character reaches rank 4, he can attempt to parry whenever a Melee Weapons or Unarmed Attack is used against him. The parry attempt uses up the character's next available action. For example, a hero who achieves an Ordinary action check result and has 2 actions per round could attempt to parry attacks directed against him in the Amazing and Good phases, but then he'd have no actions remaining for the Ordinary and Marginal phases.**

▶ **Double-Strike: When a hero reaches skill rank 6, he learns to make a double-strike against a target with a successful skill check. A double-strike works as follows: The player rolls one control die and two situation dice to make his double-strike attack. The first situation die is the base modifier needed to make an attack with a +1 step penalty; the second situation die is the base modifier with a +2 step penalty.**

◆ ***Example of double-strike:* Maarten has the double-strike special attack benefit. His base situation die for a melee weapon attack (after all modifiers have been considered) is –d4. He rolls a control die (d20), plus a +d0, and a +d4 (–d4 +1 step penalty = +d0; –d4 +2 step penalty = +d4). His skill score is 14. He rolls a 12 on the control die and a 3 on the d4. This means that for this double-strike, he scored an Ordinary hit (12+0=12) on the first strike and a Failure (12 + 3 = 15) on the second strike.**

▶ **Multistrike: When a hero reaches skill rank 9, he learns to make multiple attacks in a single phase. The hero can strike with a melee weapon three times in a phase. These attacks can be directed at a single target or at up to three separate targets within two meters of the hero.**

To resolve a multistrike attack, the hero's player rolls one control die and three situation dice at the same time. All results are read off the control die, as modified by the three situation dice.

In a multistrike attack, the first situation die is the base die for the attack with a +1 step penalty. The second die is the base die with a +2 step penalty. The third die is the base die with a +3 step penalty. When calculating the base situation die, use the target that's hardest to hit.

◆ ***Example of multistrike:* Mad Dog faces three opponents wielding clubs and knives. He has a long sword and decides to try to finish this battle in one spectacular multistrike attack. The Gamemaster calculates the modifiers and informs the player that the base situation die for this action is +d0. This means that the player must roll a control die (d20) and a +d4, a +d6, and a +d8 to see how many hits Mad Dog scores.**

rect-fire heavy weapons. These weapons can fire over or around obstacles; they deliver an area effect attack instead of an attack against a specific target. Indirect-fire heavy weapons include grenade launchers, rocket launchers, shoulder-fired missiles, and mortars.

Melee Weapons

Free to sesheyan heroes.

This skill provides a hero with training in the use of melee weapons. A melee weapon is any object a hero uses in a close-quarters fight, from a blade (knife, sword, ax) to a bludgeoning weapon (club, mace, table leg) to a powered melee weapon (gravmace, stun baton, tri-staff). Melee weapons are listed on TABLE P38: MELEE WEAPONS on pages 172–173 in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor.*

▶ ***Parry:*** A character with a melee weapon can attempt to parry a Melee Weapons or Unarmed Attack skill used against him. Parrying with a melee weapon requires that the character make a Melee Weapons skill check (using a specialty skill if applicable) and compare his result to the attacker's result. (The Armor Operation skill and its *combat armor* specialty are used by a character attempting to parry with a shield.)

The character who parries must achieve a degree of success that's equal to or better than the attacker's. For example, if the attacker achieved a Good success, the defender needs to achieve a Good or Amazing success to parry the attack. (A character who is untrained or has just the broad skill can attempt to parry, but those with ranks in the appropriate specialty skill have a better chance of successfully parrying an attack.) If the defender achieves an equal or better than degree of success, no damage is inflicted by the parried attack. A character can only parry in a phase when he has an action available; a character who achieves a Good action check result, for example, can't attempt to parry an attack directed against him in the Amazing phase. Only one attack is deflected, and no other actions can be attempted in the same phase in which a character attempts to parry.

▶ ***Characters with Two Weapons or One Weapon and a Shield:*** Applying the normal penalties associated with using two weapons at the same time (see "Attacking with Two Weapons" on page 57 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*), a character can use his off-hand weapon (or shield) to parry a Melee Weapons or Unarmed Attack skill directed against him in the same phase in which he attacks. If a character uses a reaction parry (see "Melee Weapons Rank Benefits"), he must wait until his action check phase comes up to actually make the attack, though both skill checks receive the appropriate two-weapon penalties.

Blade

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency with any bladed melee weapon—a sword, knife, dagger, ax, polearm, or any other weapon that inflicts damage by either piercing or slashing an opponent with its sharp edge. As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains additional abilities as described in "Melee Weapons Rank Benefits" on the previous page.

Bludgeon

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency with any bludgeoning melee weapon—a club, mace, quarterstaff, or any other weapon that inflicts damage by striking an opponent with its blunt surface. As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains additional abilities as described in "Melee Weapons Rank Benefits" on the previous page.

Powered Weapon

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency with any powered melee weapon—a chainsword, gravmace, star sword, pulse baton, or any other melee weapon that uses energy to enhance its performance and damage capability. As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains additional abilities as described in "Melee Weapons Rank Benefits" on the previous page.

Unarmed Attack

Free to weren heroes.

This broad skill provides a hero with basic knowledge and experience in hand-to-hand fighting. A hero trained in Unarmed Attack has enough know-how to dish out damage and protect himself in a street fight. To improve his fighting skills, a hero must purchase the Unarmed Attack specialty skills detailed below.

Damage inflicted by a normal Unarmed Attack is d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s, plus any bonuses a hero receives for his Strength score. This is considered low impact (LI) damage for the purpose of determining the effectiveness of the opponent's armor.

Unarmed Attack Rank Benefits

As a hero improves his ability in one or more of the Unarmed Attack specialty skills, he gains rank benefits as described below.

▶ No Hands: When a hero reaches rank 5 in *power martial arts*, he becomes able to make an Unarmed Attack even though his hands are cuffed, bound, or otherwise not usable.

▶ Knockout: When a hero reaches rank 4 in *brawl* or rank 3 in *power martial arts*, he has a better chance of knocking an opponent unconscious. When a hero achieves an Amazing success on his skill check, thus forcing an opponent to make a Stamina–*endurance* check to remain conscious (see the section on "Damage" in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*), the opponent's check receives a penalty according to the hero's rank in the skill:

For *brawl*, the opponent's penalty is +1 at rank 4, +2 at rank 8, and +3 at rank 12.

For *power martial arts*, the opponent's penalty is +1 at rank 3, +2 at rank 6, +3 at rank 9, and +4 at rank 12.

▶ Increased Damage: When a hero reaches rank 8 in *brawl*, he becomes able to increase the amount of damage done by a successful *brawl* attack to d6s/d6+2s/d4w, plus any Strength bonuses. When a hero reaches rank 7 in *power martial arts*, the amount of damage done by a successful *power martial arts* attack increases to d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w, plus any Strength bonuses.

► ***Overpowering:*** The Unarmed Attack skill is also used to determine the success of an attempt to overpower an opponent, as detailed in the *Gamemaster Guide*. Briefly, overpowering is a form of unarmed attack made simultaneously by one or more allies trying to grab and restrain a single opponent. If a single attacker tries to overpower another character, his Unarmed Attack skill check is made at a +1 penalty. (The Acrobatics–*defensive martial arts* skill can also be used on an overpower attempt; see the skill description that begins on the bottom of this page.)

Every additional attacker who takes part in the same overpowering attempt provides a cumulative –1 bonus to the skill check. Overpowering does not cause damage, but it immobilizes an opponent for as long as one of the attackers continues to maintain a tight hold on that opponent. The Gamemaster will provide more information on this attack form as it becomes necessary.

Brawl

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency in brawling. Brawling is the art of unarmed, hand-to-hand combat that can be as undisciplined as street fighting or as studied as boxing or wrestling. As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains additional abilities as described in "Unarmed Attack Rank Benefits" on the previous page.

Power Martial Arts

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill allows a hero to learn one of the many disciplines of unarmed combat that emphasize the use of muscles and bones for power. Direct movements and offensive attacks predominate. The *power martial arts* skill encompasses combat styles such as karate and tae kwon do.

A hero with this skill enjoys improved damage on a successful unarmed attack: d6s/d6+2s/d4w, plus any Strength bonuses.

⊗ ***Resistance Modifier:*** At higher ranks, this skill provides an improvement to a hero's Strength resistance modifier, which makes it more difficult for opponents to successfully attack the hero in close-quarters combat. The hero's resistance modifier improves by +1 at rank 4, by +1 again at rank 8, and by +1 again at rank 12.

As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains other additional abilities as described in "Unarmed Attack Rank Benefits" on the previous page.

Dexterity Skills

Dexterity measures a hero's agility, coordination, and reflexes. To determine the result of an action involving Dexterity that isn't directly related to a skill, a hero makes a feat check (as described on page 63).

Grabbing the side of a building as the villain throws you off the roof is one example of a Dexterity feat. The Gamemaster doesn't have to be specific when he declares a feat to be of a certain level of difficulty, but he will use the following as a general rule: A Marginal feat (no modifier) is one that more than half of all people should be able to accomplish; a Moderate feat (+2 penalty) is something that athletes should be able to do in most situations; and an Extreme feat (+3 penalty) is one that tests even the greatest of athletes.

In this example, factors other than the difficulty of "simply" grabbing the side of the building may also affect the situation die. If the side of the building has numerous protrusions to serve as handholds, this might be worth a –1 or –2 bonus. If the surface is slippery or extremely smooth, a penalty of +1 or +2 steps (or more) would be appropriate.

Acrobatics

Free to sesheyan heroes.

This broad skill provides a hero with basic training in acrobatics, including gymnastics, tumbling, vaulting, rolling, dodging, balancing, high-risk activities, and falling without incurring serious injury. Depending on the situation, the Gamemaster assigns modifiers to the action.

This skill is used when a hero wants to vault over a fence or other obstacle, dodge out of the way of an immediate danger, or try to land safely after a fall.

Vaulting is basically a vertical leap that is enhanced by some form of assistance—either springing off another object or using a vaulting pole. When called upon to make a vertical leap, a character may use either his Athletics–*jump* skill or his Acrobatics skill. If the character has both skills, increase the distance noted under the *jump* description by 1 meter. If the character uses a pole, increase the distance by 2 meters.

Daredevil

This specialty skill enables a hero to improve his ability to perform high-risk activities such as skydiving, scuba diving, hang gliding, surfing, bungee jumping, and whitewater rafting.

The outcome of a *daredevil* attempt is determined by a skill check:

On a Critical Failure, the attempted action fails and the character could suffer stun or wound damage at the Gamemaster's discretion. This outcome generally involves bad luck concerning some aspect of the equipment being used—scuba diving gear springs a leak, a parachute fails to open properly, and so forth.

On a Failure, the attempted action doesn't succeed, but the character does not necessarily suffer damage—a parachutist goes drastically off course and lands a long distance from his target, perhaps taking damage as well. (For more information on the use of a parachute, see page 58 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.)

On an Ordinary success, the character is basically able to perform the action—he can manipulate a hang glider so that he stays aloft, but he has no control over his direction of travel.

On a Good success, the character has limited control of the action—he opens his parachute at just the right time, and also is able to use it to maneuver so that he lands only a short distance from his target.

On an Amazing success, everything goes right—he rides the raft all the way through the rapids without damage to himself or his equipment.

Defensive Martial Arts

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill allows a hero to learn one of the many disciplines of unarmed combat that emphasize fluid and circular movements, redirecting the force of an attacker. Training is often mentally oriented.

The *defensive martial arts* skill encompasses styles such as aikido and tai chi chuan.

A character with this skill can use throws, sweeps, flips, and holds to cause stun damage to an opponent. Damage is d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s, plus any increase a hero receives for his Strength score. This is considered low impact (LI) damage for the purpose of determining the effectiveness of the opponent's armor.

In addition to causing damage, this skill may enable a hero to knock an opponent to the ground, forcing that opponent to spend an action to regain his feet or else suffer a penalty to other actions he may try; see the *Gamemaster Guide* for details. *Defensive martial arts* can also be useful in an attempt to overpower an opponent, as described in the Unarmed Attack skill description on page 69.

▶ ***Block:*** When a character reaches rank 2 in this skill, he can attempt to block or counter any unarmed attack against him (including an attack by an enemy who is also using *defensive martial arts*). Blocking requires that the character make a *defensive martial arts* skill check and compare his result to the attacker's result. The character who blocks must achieve a success that's equal to or greater than the attacker's success. For example, if the attacker achieved a Good success, the defender needs to achieve a Good or Amazing success to block the attack. If the defender succeeds, then no damage is inflicted upon him by the blocked attack. A character can only block in a phase when he has an action available; a character who achieves a Good action check result, for instance, can't attempt to block an attack directed against him in the Amazing phase. Only one attack is countered, and no other actions can be attempted in the same phase in which a character attempts to block.

▶ ***Reaction Block:*** When a character reaches rank 4, he can attempt to block whenever any unarmed attack is directed against him. The block attempt uses up the character's next available action (either in the current round or the following round).

⊗ ***Resistance Modifier:*** At higher ranks, this skill provides an improvement to a hero's Strength resistance modifier, which makes it more difficult for opponents to successfully attack the hero in close-quarters combat. The hero's resistance modifier improves by +1 at rank 4, by +1 again at rank 8, and by +1 again at rank 12.

Dodge

This specialty skill allows a hero to use acrobatics as a defense in combat situations. It's also used when a hero dives for cover or hits the deck when an area-effect attack targets him.

Dodge lets a hero tumble, roll, duck, dive, or spring out of the way of an attack. One skill check (requiring an action) is made at the beginning of the first phase in which the hero can act. The result of that check is applied in that phase and lasts for all subsequent phases in the round. Any additional actions a hero takes in the round receive a +1 penalty as he ducks and rolls to avoid injury.

Using *dodge* provides the following adjustments to a hero's Strength or Dexterity resistance modifier (his defense against Strength-based or Dexterity-based attacks), as is appropriate for the situation: Critical Failure, –2 steps; Failure, none; Ordinary, +1 step; Good, +2 steps; Amazing, +3 steps. (This skill can't be combined with the parry or block rank benefits described under Melee Weapons and Acrobatics–*defensive martial arts*.)

▶ ***Action Benefit:*** When a hero achieves rank 3, he can *dodge* and perform an action in the same phase. The action is made with a +2 penalty.

▶ ***Reaction Dodge:*** When a hero achieves rank 7, he can perform a reaction dodge, which allows him to defend himself earlier in the round than his action check calls for. In a round when a character makes a reaction dodge, he can only dodge. All other actions are lost for the round.

◆ ***Example of Reaction Dodge:*** Fast Eddie is running out of steam and can't afford to get hit again, but his opponent also looks like he's ready to drop, so Eddie hangs in there for one more round of combat. He gets a Good result on his action check—but the other guy gets an Amazing. Eddie quickly decides to attempt a *reaction dodge*, which allows him to make a *dodge* skill check immediately. He can't do anything else for the remainder of the round, but he's willing to give up his chance to attack in return for a better chance of not being hit himself.

⊗ ***Resistance Modifier:*** At higher ranks, the *dodge* skill provides an improvement to a hero's Dexterity resistance modifier, which makes it more difficult for opponents to successfully attack the hero in ranged combat. The hero's resistance modifier improves by +1 at rank 4, by +1 again at rank 8, and by +1 again at rank 12.

Fall

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his ability to survive a fall by twisting his body, catching nearby protrusions, or otherwise slowing his descent, thereby decreasing the damage he sustains from an impact.

A character without the Acrobatics–*fall* specialty skill makes a Dexterity feat check to determine the damage he suffers when he falls. A character with the *fall* specialty skill adds his rank in the specialty to his Acrobatics score and uses that number to make the skill check, with a +d0 base situation die.

See TABLE P15: IMPACT DAMAGE and the accompanying text on page 58 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* for details about falling damage.

Flight

This specialty skill can only be used by a character with flying ability, either innate (as sesheyans have) or obtained through a mutation (see *Chapter 13: Mutants*), or by a character using some sort of mechanical apparatus that serves as an extension of his body, such as a jetpack (see *Chapter 12: Vehicles*).

A skill check is called for when a hero tries an unusual maneuver, must fly with particular precision (through an obstacle course, for instance), or needs to accomplish a task while maintaining speed and direction (pulling out a weapon while swooping toward a foe).

⊗ ***Improved Movement:*** As a character improves his *flight* skill, he increases his flying movement rates: +2 to glide movement at ranks 3, 7, and 11, and +3 to fly movement at ranks 4, 8, and 12.

Zero-g Training

This skill can't be used untrained.

A hero with the *zero-g training* skill can function in weightless or near-weightless conditions better than someone who doesn't have this skill. An untrained character has a +3 step penalty to the use of any

Strength- or Dexterity-based skills in zero gravity, and a +1 step penalty in light gravity. Purchasing this skill immediately reduces the zero-g penalty to +2 steps, and eliminates the penalty for light gravity.

⊗ ***Improved Training:*** For a hero with this skill at rank 4, the zero-g penalty is reduced to +1 step, and any actions attempted in light gravity receive a –1 step bonus. At rank 7 the zero-g penalty is eliminated, and at rank 10 any physical actions attempted in zero-g receive a –1 step bonus. (The bonus for light gravity never improves beyond –1 step.)

► ***Sesheyan Advantage:*** Because of their familiarity with freefall conditions, sesheyan characters without the *zero-g training* skill can function as though they do have the skill at rank 1. If a sesheyan purchases this skill, penalties are reduced by 1 step and bonuses are improved by the same amount. For instance, a sesheyan with rank 4 in this skill has no penalty in zero gravity and a –2 step bonus in light gravity. (The bonus for light gravity never improves beyond –2 steps for a sesheyan.)

Acrobatics, Specific Skill

This skill can't be used untrained.

A blank line is provided under Acrobatics on the hero sheet for a player, if he so desires, to add a specialty skill that fits into the concept he has for his hero—for example, tightrope walking. How this added skill works in the context of a campaign, and even if it will be allowed, is left to the Gamemaster.

Manipulation

Free to t'sa heroes.

This broad skill provides a hero with a natural proficiency in manual dexterity and control. This proficiency allows a hero to attempt such actions as picking a pocket without being noticed, performing a sleight-of-hand feat, picking a lock, or doing anything else that requires a steady hand, a sharp eye, and plenty of coordination.

Lockpick

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency at opening physical locks. The skill is usually employed with the assistance of tools of some kind, which provide a situation die bonus depending on their quality. (See the description of the lockpick set on page 146 in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services.*)

Locks that can be affected by this skill include those protecting doors, safes, and vehicles, as well as handcuffs and any other physical locking mechanisms. The *lockpick* skill is useless against a computer-assisted lock unless it has a physical mechanism the hero can manipulate.

Almost always, the use of *lockpick* requires a complex skill check (see Table P17, page 62). The situation die modifier is affected by the quality of the lock, the quality of the tools (if any are used), and any other external factors as determined by the Gamemaster. How long the job takes depends on the complexity of the lock and the result(s) of a character's *lockpick* skill check(s). One check can be made in every phase during which a hero has an action, unless the Gamemaster dictates otherwise.

Pickpocket

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency at picking pockets or otherwise removing objects from a person (or planting something on a person) without that person noticing.

The base situation die is determined by the target's Will resistance modifier, plus any additional penalties or bonuses as set forth by the Gamemaster.

On a Failure or a Critical Failure result, the pickpocketer slips up—he doesn't get what he was after and he is noticed, either by the intended victim or someone else who witnessed the attempt. In some cases, such as when the target is unconscious and alone, the Gamemaster may determine that a Failure result is not possible, and thus any attempt results in at least a Marginal success.

Repeated attempts by one pickpocketer against the same target are possible, but the Gamemaster has the final say on how often those attempts can be made, and he may assign a penalty to the second and subsequent attempts—trying to pick someone's pocket successfully a number of times in succession increases the chance that the character will be spotted.

The degree of success on a *pickpocket* skill check has no effect on the immediate result; whether the result was Ordinary, Good, or Amazing, the character succeeded in what he tried to do. But a result of Good or Amazing could help to offset any penalty the Gamemaster might attach to repeated attempts—you were so smooth that not only was your attempt not noticed, the target doesn't have the slightest flicker of suspicion that something has just gone wrong.

Pickpocket Situation Modifiers

Object is in direct contact with target's skin	+3
Object is heavy	+2
Object is kept in inner pocket of garment	+1
Object is light in weight	–1
Object is kept in exposed pocket or pack	–1
Victim is distracted	–1 to –3

⊗ ***It Takes One to Know One:*** As a character improves this specialty skill, he becomes more familiar with the tricks of the trade, thus making it harder for others to pickpocket him. This is shown as an increase to the character's Will resistance modifier—only for the purpose of spotting a *pickpocket* attempt. At rank 3, the benefit is a +1 penalty to the foe's attempt. At rank 6, the penalty to the foe is +2 steps, at rank 9 the penalty becomes +3 steps, and at rank 12 it is +4 steps.

Prestidigitation

This specialty skill allows a hero to become proficient in stage magic, also known as prestidigitation. In addition to entertaining others, the skill can also be used to slip small objects out of sight. These are items that are in plain view before a hero decides to use *prestidigitation,* such as on a table, a shelf, or some other resting place, or even in the hero's hand at the time the skill is put into play (thus allowing the hero to hide an item from discovery).

The base situation die is modified by the opponent's Will resistance modifier, and possibly by other factors as determined by the Gamemaster. On a Critical Failure, the hero drops the item he is manipulating or otherwise fumbles the task severely. On a Failure, the manipulation of the item does take place, but the task is

performed so clumsily or slowly that anyone paying attention can see what happened. On any success (Ordinary or better), the trick or task is pulled off without a hitch.

Ranged Weapons, Modern

This broad skill provides a hero with training in the use of modern ranged weapons. This skill covers pistols, rifles, shotguns, and submachine guns of all types, including projectile weapons and energy weapons.

All modern weapons have ammunition clips. To change a clip during a combat scene, a hero must use an available action. If he wants to change a clip and shoot in the same phase, a +2 penalty applies to the attack action.

Other factors that can influence the situation die used in a modern ranged weapon attack are listed under "Ranged Weapon Attack Modifiers" on this page.

Pistol

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency with modern pistols of all types, including projectile and energy weapons.

If a hero wants to draw and fire his pistol in the same phase, the action receives a +1 penalty.

► ***Quick Draw:*** After a hero reaches rank 3, he can perform a quick draw with his pistol. This allows him to draw his weapon and fire it in the same phase without the +1 penalty.

As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains other additional abilities as described in "Ranged Weapons Rank Benefits" on page 75.

Rifle

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency with modern rifles and shotguns of all types.

Some rifles (as well as all submachine guns and a few heavy weapons) are automatic weapons capable of firing multiple rounds of ammunition in every attack. The various attack modes for automatic weapons are described in the "Automatic Weapon Attack Modes" sidebar on the next page.

⊗ ***Improved Aim:*** When a hero reaches rank 3 in this specialty, he becomes able to hit a target with more dependability. This improvement in accuracy translates to a –1 bonus to the situation die for any rifle attack the hero makes.

⊗ ***Precision Shooting:*** When a hero achieves rank 6, his situation die penalties for making an autofire attack are reduced to 0, +1 step, and +2 steps.

As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains other additional abilities; see "Ranged Weapons Rank Benefits" on page 75.

SMG

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his proficiency with modern submachine guns of all types.

All submachine guns (as well as some rifles and a few heavy weapons) are automatic weapons capable of firing multiple rounds of ammunition in every attack. The various attack modes for automatic weapons are described in the "Automatic Weapon Attack Modes" sidebar on the next page.

► ***Rock-n-Roll:*** When a hero attains rank 3 in this specialty, he learns to change clips more efficiently. The penalty for changing a clip and firing in the same action is reduced to +1 step.

⊗ ***Precision Shooting:*** When a hero achieves rank 6, his situation die penalties for making an autofire attack with an SMG are reduced to 0, +1 step, and +2 steps.

► ***Extra Burst:*** When a hero attains rank 9, he becomes able to get off four bursts of ammunition, instead of three, on every autofire attack. He receives a fourth situation die, with a +3 penalty assigned to it. If the autofire attack is directed against more than one target (as is almost always the case), the recipient of this extra burst must be specified before the dice are rolled. (This benefit doesn't allow the hero to shoot at more than three targets, however.) Firing this extra burst uses up one additional burst from the weapon's clip.

Ranged Weapon Attack Modifiers

When a character uses any ranged weapon, either primitive or modern, a number of factors must be considered to determine the situation die for the skill check:

► The base situation die of the skill (+d4 for a broad skill or untrained, +d0 for a specialty).

► The weapon's modifier for range (see Table P22: Range Modifiers by Weapon Type on this page).

► Any modifier for a target's Dexterity resistance (–1 step bonus for DEX 3–6, +1 step penalty for DEX 11–12, +2 steps for DEX 13–14, +3 steps for DEX 15–16, +4 steps for DEX 17–18, +5 steps for DEX 19 or higher).

► Any modifier for the target being obscured by cover (see the sidebar on page 50 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*).

► Any modifier for a dodging target (see the *dodge* skill on page 71).

► Any additional situation modifiers as decided by the Gamemaster.

Ranged Weapons, Primitive

This broad skill provides a hero with training in the use of primitive ranged weapons. This class of weaponry covers bows and crossbows, slings, and even primitive firearms

Table P22: Range Modifiers by Weapon Type

Weapon	Short	Medium	Long
Primitive*	–1 step	+1 step	+2 steps
Pistol	–1 step	+1 step	+3 steps
Rifle	–1 step	None	+1 step
Submachine gun	–1 step	+1 step	+3 steps

* Bow, crossbow, sling only; flintlocks use figures for pistol or rifle, as appropriate

Automatic Weapon Attack Modes

Submachine guns and other automatic weapons provide a hero with up to three attack options in an action phase: fire, burst, or autofire. Table P39: Ranged Weapons and Table P40: Heavy Weapons in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor* indicate the types of attacks each weapon can make with a letter code (F = fire, B = burst, A = autofire). Some weapons can only be used in one mode, but two or three modes are available for others. It does not require an action to switch a weapon from one mode to another.

▶ **Fire** is a single attack aimed at a single target. It involves the use of one control die and one situation die, as with all normal actions.

▶ **Burst** is a hail of ammunition aimed at a single target. The attacker receives a –1 step bonus to his skill check. A Critical Failure result when using a weapon in burst mode indicates that the weapon has jammed. A successful Technical Science–*repair* check is needed to unjam a weapon.

▶ **Autofire** is a burst from an automatic weapon that is walked across its target instead of aimed. Up to three different targets within 6 meters of each other can be affected by autofire (the first target must be within 6 meters of the third target, with the second target falling somewhere between them). An autofire attack expends three bursts of ammunition from a weapon's clip.

To resolve autofire, a player rolls one control die and three situation dice at the same time. All the results are read off the control die, as modified by the individual situation dice. In autofire, the first situation die is the situation die for the action in question with a +1 step penalty. The second die is the situation die with a +2 step penalty. The third die is the situation die with a +3 step penalty. When determining the initial situation die (before applying the autofire penalty), consider any modifiers that apply to the target that's hardest to hit. (In most cases, this will be the target with the best Dexterity resistance modifier, or the one that is most protected by cover.)

◆ *Example of autofire:* Sgt. Grimes wants to use his submachine gun on autofire against the three thugs near the door. The Gamemaster calculates the modifiers and informs him that the situation die for this action is –d4. This means that Grimes's player rolls a d20 (the control die) and +d0 (situation die +1 step), +d4 (situation die +2 steps), and +d6 (situation die +3 steps) to see how many hits he scores with his autofire attack.

Note: If a "1" comes up on the control die during an autofire attack, every portion of the attack is considered an automatic success, as long as the situation die for that portion of the attack is less than +d20. In the example above, if Grimes's situation die was +d6 instead of –d4, then his situation dice for each portion of his attack would be +d8, +d12, and +d20. In this case, only the shots at the first two targets would be automatic successes. The shot at the third target is not an automatic success, but would still score a hit if the sum of the control die ("1") and the +d20 is equal to or less than Grimes's skill score. (See "Automatic Success" on page 48 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action.*)

such as flintlock pistols and rifles.

Although there are significant differences between them (see *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor* for more information), all primitive ranged weapons except flintlocks have the same modifiers for range; see Table P22: Range Modifiers by Weapon Type on page 73.

Bow

With the *bow* skill, a hero can become increasingly more proficient with the long bow and the short bow.

A bow can be loaded and fired in the same action by any character. As a hero attains higher ranks in this specialty, he gains additional abilities as described in "Ranged Weapons Rank Benefits" on the next page.

Crossbow

With the *crossbow* skill, a hero can become increasingly more proficient with this type of primitive weapon.

It takes one action to load a crossbow and a separate action to fire the weapon. As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains additional abilities as described in "Ranged Weapons Rank Benefits" on the next page.

Flintlock

This specialty skill covers the use of all types of flintlocks, including both pistols and rifles.

It takes one action to load a flintlock pistol and a separate action to fire the weapon—and it takes *two* actions to load a flintlock rifle, plus a separate action to fire the weapon.

As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains additional abilities as described in "Ranged Weapons Rank Benefits" on the next page.

Sling

With the *sling* skill, a hero can become increasingly more proficient with this type of primitive weapon.

A sling can be loaded and fired in the same action by any character. As a hero achieves higher ranks in this specialty, he gains additional abilities as described in "Ranged Weapons Rank Benefits" on the next page.

Stealth

This broad skill provides a hero with the ability to hide, sneak, or otherwise move about without attracting attention. The base situation die for a skill check is usually altered by the opponent's Will resistance modifier, as well as other conditions determined by the Gamemaster that may affect the hero's ability to remain unnoticed or undetected.

How well a hero uses Stealth or any of its associated specialties depends on the degree of success he achieves. This success translates into a modifier that applies to an observer's chance of noticing the hero with either an Awareness–*perception*, Awareness–*intuition*, or Investigate–*search* skill check (depending on the particular Stealth skill being employed).

If the hero's skill check results in a Critical Failure, the hero is liable to be noticed despite his best efforts; the observer's skill check is made with a –2 bonus. A Failure result provides no modifier to the observer's skill check. An Ordinary success

gives the observer a +1 penalty; Good, a +2 penalty; and Amazing, a +3 penalty. (The Gamemaster may decide to make a hero's skill check secretly, so the hero's player doesn't know the result of the attempt.)

The following descriptions of the specialty skills include information on how to handle a skill check made for a particular purpose. The rank benefit that pertains to all three of the Stealth specialty skills is described on the bottom of this page.

Obviously, a Stealth skill can't be used if the hero is presently in plain sight of his opponent, or if the hero is emitting sounds or smells that can reach the opponent. Before you can hide from someone, or follow him without being seen, or sneak up on him, you first have to be in a situation or a position where the observer can't immediately see or otherwise detect you.

Hide

Hiding is the ability to stay unnoticed by keeping quiet, by taking advantage of cover or darkness, and by remaining totally still.

If a hero is alone when he hides, no modifier is applied to his situation die. If there's someone around whom he's trying to remain hidden from, then that character's Will resistance modifier is applied to the situation die for the hero's skill check. If more than one character attempts to hide in the same place, a penalty ranging from +1 step to +3 steps may be applied at the Gamemaster's discretion, depending on the situation. A new *hide* check is required whenever the hero does something to change the situation (move, turn on a light, make noise, etc.).

Awareness–*perception* is the detection skill used by an opponent who isn't actively searching for the hero; Investigate–*search* is used if the opponent is specifically looking for the hero in particular or any hidden foe in general.

Shadow

Shadowing is the ability to follow a target without being noticed by that target. The target a hero is shadowing provides a Will resistance modifier to the hero's situation die. The skill used by the target to detect the shadowing character is Awareness–*intuition*.

The hero must make a new *shadow* check every time the situation changes (he moves closer, he does something to attract attention, etc.).

Sneak

Sneaking is the ability to move silently so as to avoid being observed. While a hero is sneaking, he can

Ranged Weapons Rank Benefits

As a hero improves his ability in one or more of the Ranged Weapons specialty skills, he gains rank benefits as described below.

⊗ **Distance Precision: When a hero reaches a sufficiently high rank in certain specialty skills, he knows how to compensate for distance. The step penalty for a medium-range shot is eliminated, and the penalty for a long-range shot is lessened by 1 step.**

This benefit comes into play when the hero achieves rank 3 in any of the Primitive Ranged Weapons specialties (*bow, crossbow, flintlock,* or *sling*), or in Modern Ranged Weapons–*rifle*. It also applies for a hero who has achieved rank 5 in Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol*.

▶ **Double-Shot: When a hero reaches a sufficiently high rank in certain specialty skills, he becomes able to fire his weapon twice in the same action. A double-shot works as follows: First, the base modifier for the attack is determined. Then the hero rolls the control die and two situation dice to make his double-shot attack. The first situation die is the base modifier needed to make an attack with an additional +1 step penalty; the second is the base modifier with an additional +2 step penalty. When two targets are involved, the base modifier for the attack is that of the more difficult target.**

This benefit comes into play when a hero achieves rank 6 in the *bow, sling,* or *pistol* specialty. Note that a double-shot using a sling can only be aimed at a single target, but a character using a bow or a pistol can aim at two different targets.

◆ ***Example of double-shot:*** **Darsen has the double-shot special attack benefit and a skill score of 14. His base situation die after all modifiers have been considered is +d4. He rolls a control die (d20), a +d6, and a +d8. The numbers 11, 4, and 2 come up on the dice. This gives Darsen skill check results of 15 (11 + 4) and 13 (11 + 2). The first shot misses its target, but the second one scores an Ordinary hit.**

▶ **Rate of Fire Increase: When a hero reaches rank 6 in the *crossbow* or *flintlock* specialty, he gains the ability to load and fire his weapon more quickly. A crossbow or a flintlock pistol can be loaded and fired in the same action, and a flintlock rifle can be loaded in only one action instead of two. When a hero reaches rank 12 in *flintlock*, he becomes able to load and fire a flintlock rifle in the same action.**

Note: **These benefits only apply when the hero is using a weapon that is associated with the skill in question; for instance, having rank 6 in the *sling* specialty does not entitle a hero to make a double-shot attack with a bow.**

All three specialty skills under Modern Ranged Weapons (*pistol, rifle,* and *SMG*) have rank benefits that apply only to those skills; see the individual skill descriptions for details.

Stealth Skills Rank Benefit

⊗ **Increased Effect: As a hero achieves higher ranks in Stealth specialty skills, he becomes even more difficult to detect. An Amazing result on his skill check causes a +4 step penalty (instead of +3) to be applied to the observer's skill check: a Good success means a +3 step penalty; an Ordinary success +2 steps, and a Marginal success +1 step. The outcome of a Critical Failure result does not change.**

This benefit is available to characters who have achieved rank 4 in *hide*, rank 5 in *shadow*, and/or rank 6 in *sneak*.

move at up to one-half of his walk movement rate. The skill used by an observer to detect a sneaking hero is Awareness–*perception* if the observer is expecting trouble, or Awareness–*intuition* if he is not.

The hero must make a new *sneak* check in every round during which he continues to use this Stealth skill.

In addition, if a hero succeeds in using the *sneak* skill to get adjacent to an opponent (or to get within short range, if the hero is using a ranged weapon), he can make an attack in the same phase that the successful sneak took place—and the hero receives a situation die bonus to that attack, since he has surprised his opponent. The bonus is determined by the level of success achieved: Ordinary, –1 step; Good, –2 steps; Amazing, –3 steps.

Vehicle Operation

Free to fraal, human, and mechalus heroes.

This broad skill provides a hero with a basic understanding of and proficiency with modern vehicles. Using this skill, a hero can attempt to operate most normal land and water vehicles. Some military or specialized land and water vehicles may have controls that are too complex for the broad skill to cover, requiring at least some level of specialization before a hero is able to operate them successfully.

The ordinary operation of any normal land or water vehicle doesn't require a skill check. During chases, races, or vehicle combat, or when navigating through heroic obstacles, skill checks may be called for.

When a hero purchases any of the Vehicle Operation specialty skills, he selects a specific type of vehicle to which the specialty skill applies. See the individual skill descriptions for more details.

See *Chapter 12: Vehicles* for detailed information concerning the use of this skill in heroic situations.

Air Vehicle

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill enables a hero to become trained in the use of a specific type of air vehicle. If he wants to be skilled in the operation of more than one type of air vehicle, he must purchase and improve each specialty skill separately.

Types of air vehicles include propeller planes, helicopters, private jets, commercial jets, and jet fighters. Other types of air vehicles may exist in your Gamemaster's campaign.

Land Vehicle

This specialty skill enables a hero to become trained in the use of a specific type of land vehicle. If he wants to be skilled in the operation of more than one type of land vehicle, he must purchase and improve each specialty skill separately.

Types of land vehicles include automobiles, motorcycles, race cars, large trucks, and tanks and other heavy military vehicles. Other types of land vehicles may exist in your campaign.

Space Vehicle

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill enables a hero to become trained in the use of a specific type of space vehicle. If he wants to be skilled in the operation of more than one type of space vehicle, he must purchase and improve each specialty skill separately.

This skill is also used to operate the helm of large, multicrewed space vessels. Other systems on space vessels require the specialized functions of the System Operation broad skill.

Types of space vehicles include space fighters (ships of 10 durability or less); scouts and light freighters (ships of 11–32 durability); medium freighters and corvettes (ships of 33–60 durability); and capital ships (more than 60 durability). The types that exist in your campaign may vary; check with your Gamemaster before selecting a specific type.

Vehicle Operation Rank Benefit

⊗ **Improved Proficiency:** As a hero achieves higher ranks in one or more of the Vehicle Operation specialty skills, he becomes even more adept at operating the specific types of vehicles he has specialized in.

The benefit is a –1 bonus at rank 4, a –2 bonus at rank 8, and a –3 bonus at rank 12.

Water Vehicle

This specialty skill enables a hero to become trained in the use of a specific type of water vehicle. If he wants to be skilled in the operation of more than one type of water vehicle, he must purchase and improve each specialty skill separately.

This skill is also used to operate the helm of large, multicrewed water vessels. Other systems on water vessels (such as battleships, submarines, and oil tankers) require a version of the specialized functions of the System Operation broad skill.

Types of water vehicles include canoes, rafts and rowboats, power boats, jet skis, sailboats, large commercial vessels, large military vessels, and submersible craft. Other types of water vehicles may exist in your Gamemaster's campaign.

Constitution Skills

Constitution measures a hero's stamina, general physical condition, and ability to absorb or withstand physical trauma. To determine the result of an action involving Constitution that isn't directly related to a skill, a hero makes a feat check (as described on page 63).

Fighting off the effects of nausea after being exposed to an unpleasant odor is an example of a Constitution feat. The Gamemaster doesn't have to be specific when he declares a feat to be of a certain level of difficulty, but he will use the following as a general rule: A Marginal feat (no modifier) is one that more than half of all people should be able to accomplish; a Moderate feat (+2 penalty) is something that well-conditioned people should be able to do in most situations; and an Extreme feat (+3 penalty) is one that tests even those who are in perfect shape.

Movement

This broad skill allows a hero to increase the distance he can travel in a given time, and also provides him with the ability to make a journey less arduous for himself and his companions.

A hero with the Movement broad

skill can engage in overland movement for longer than an untrained character can before he needs to begin making Stamina–*endurance* checks. (See "Traveling Long Distances" on page 56 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.) Such a character makes checks every 4 hours when moving at a stroll, every 3 hours when marching, or every 2 hours when moving under a forced march.

The broad skill also enables a hero to attempt *trailblazing*, as defined below in the description of that specialty skill.

Race

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his ability to move faster and cover more ground in a combat scene. A character who purchases rank 1 in this specialty skill immediately improves his run movement rate by 2 meters.

⊗ ***Movement Rate Increase:*** As a hero achieves higher ranks in the *race* specialty skill, he improves his run and sprint movement rates.The run rate goes up by 2 meters at ranks 5 and 9, and the sprint rate goes up by 2 meters at ranks 4, 7, and 12.

These increases apply both to normal movement and all-out movement. Thus, a character with a sprint movement rate of 20 and rank 7 in the *race* skill can travel 24 meters in a single phase if he spends an action to engage in normal movement—or he can cover 24 meters in a number of consecutive phases if he declares that he's using all-out movement.

Swim

Except to determine if a hero can tread water to avoid drowning, this skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill is necessary for a hero to be able to use his swim movement rate (see TABLE P8: COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES on page 39 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*). Without this skill, a hero can only tread water and paddle in a crude fashion, using his easy swim movement rate.

In addition, a hero with this skill improves his ability to hold his breath. (See "Holding Your Breath" on page 57 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.) Any Stamina–*endurance* checks a hero must make to keep holding his breath, or to determine if he suffers stun damage from being under water too long, are made with a –1 bonus at rank 1.

► ***Improved Breathing:*** The bonus to a hero's Stamina–*endurance* check while holding his breath improves to –2 at rank 4, –3 at rank 8, and –4 at rank 12.

⊗ ***Movement Rate Increase:*** As a hero achieves higher ranks in the *swim* specialty skill, he improves his swim and easy swim movement rates. Both rates increase by 1 meter at rank 4, again at rank 8, and again at rank 12.

Trailblazing

With *trailblazing*, a hero learns to find paths through rough terrain or create paths that others can use to move faster and cover more ground during a full day's travel. The successful use of this skill reduces the adverse effects of traveling in conditions of Good or Amazing difficulty for the hero and any companions who are traveling with him.

This skill check is made once per day, at the beginning of a day of travel. On a Critical Failure result, the unlucky hero manages to pick a route that is worse than the other travelers could have found for themselves, causing everyone in the group to suffer an additional +1 penalty to their fatigue checks, on top of any other penalties. (See TABLE P13: OVERLAND MOVEMENT and "Traveling Long Distances" on page 56 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.)

On a Failure result, no help is provided. An Ordinary success provides an reduction of 1 step to any penalties that apply; a Good success reduces penalties by 2 steps, and an Amazing success reduces penalties by 3 steps. Note that this reduction can't be used to turn a penalty into a bonus; the best possible result would be negating a penalty altogether.

Stamina

Free to human, mechalus, sesheyan, t'sa, and weren heroes.

This broad skill measures a hero's physical fortitude with regard to the effects of mortal damage and fatigue.

► ***Dying:*** A character who has suffered any amount of mortal damage is considered to be dying. At the end of a scene, a dying character (whether conscious or unconscious) makes a Stamina check. On a Critical Failure result, he suffers 2 additional points of mortal damage, and on a Failure he suffers 1 additional point of mortal damage. On an Ordinary success or better, his condition is unchanged.

The dying character makes additional Stamina checks once per hour, with similar consequences applying on any Critical Failure or Failure result, until he receives medical aid (see the Medical Science–*surgery* skill). The time between these Stamina checks can be lengthened to one per day if the character is helped by the application of Knowledge–*first aid* or Medical Science–*treatment;* see the descriptions of those skills for details.

► ***Fatigue:*** When a hero engages in certain fatigue-causing activities, he must make a Stamina check. This check is made after the activity takes place, or at set intervals for certain types of activity (see "Fatigue Damage" on page 53 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*). A Critical Failure result indicates that the hero suffers 2 points of fatigue damage; a Failure result indicates 1 point of damage. Any success indicates that no fatigue damage occurs as a result of the activity just completed.

Endurance

As a hero acquires ranks in the *endurance* skill, he becomes more able to withstand the effects of damage. For a character who has this specialty, *endurance* checks take the place of Stamina checks.

Resist Pain

This skill can't be used untrained.

Resist pain allows a hero to function normally and ignore some or all of the situation penalties for suffering large amounts of stun, wound, or mortal (but not fatigue) damage.

A character with this specialty skill may get an opportunity once per combat scene to check the effectiveness of his ability to resist pain. The first time during a combat scene when the character has received damage equal to more than half of his stun points or wound points, or when he receives at least 1 point of mortal damage, he makes a *resist pain* skill check. This check does not count as an action, and takes place before any characters attempt any actions. The result of this *resist pain*

check lasts for the rest of the combat scene.

Any penalties caused by the damage are applied to the check. For instance, if a single attack causes a hero to suffer 2 points of mortal damage, enough stuns to use up more than half of his stun points, *and* enough wounds to use up more than half of his wound points, then the check is made with a +4 penalty. (This example assumes that the optional "dazed" rule for stun damage and wound damage is in effect; if your campaign doesn't use that rule, then the penalty is +2, taking into account only the mortal damage.)

Check results: Critical Failure, hero succumbs to the pain and can't act for 2d4 phases; Failure, hero suffers from damage penalties as per the normal rules; Ordinary, hero ignores 1 step of penalty; Good, hero ignores 2 steps of penalty; Amazing, hero ignores 3 steps of penalty.

Resist pain only helps to lessen or eliminate situation penalties caused by cumulative damage. The benefit a hero receives from a successful skill check can't be used to turn a penalty into a bonus. If a hero only has a +1 penalty due to damage when the check is made but the result indicates a reduction of 2 points of penalty, the hero gets no immediate benefit from the extra reduction—but it might come into play if he suffers damage later in the scene.

Having this skill doesn't help a hero stave off dying or death results.

Survival

This broad skill provides a hero with basic general training in survival techniques: finding shelter, procuring food and water, and avoiding environmental hazards. Success depends on having any of these basic necessities available, as well as the result of a skill check. Checks are made once each day unless the Gamemaster determines otherwise.

Skill check results: Failure, hero can't acquire basic necessities for this day; Ordinary, hero acquires enough basic necessities to sustain himself for this day; Good, hero acquires enough basic necessities for himself and up to six others for this day; Amazing, hero becomes so familiar with the locale that survival is no longer an issue unless the situation changes.

The type of terrain or environment where the hero is located can provide a modifier to the skill check, as shown in the "Survival Situation Modifiers" sidebar.

Survival Situation Modifiers

Arctic terrain	+4
Arid or wasteland terrain	+3
Mountainous terrain	+2
Swamp or ocean	+1
Forest or grassland	0
Dense vegetation	–1
Jungle terrain	–2
Small settlement	–1
Small city or space station	–2
Large city or space station	–3

Survival Training

This specialty skill enables a hero to improve his ability to use the Survival broad skill in a certain type of terrain. If he wants to improve his skill in more than one type of terrain, he must purchase the specialty skill separately for each type.

Available terrain types include all of those listed in the "Survival Situation Modifiers" sidebar, plus any other type the Gamemaster allows.

Note that the situation modifiers given in the sidebar always apply, even for someone with a high rank in *arctic survival* (for example), but the high rank itself means that the hero is more likely to succeed on his skill check.

Survival on Other Worlds

As it's described here, the Survival skill is meant to apply primarily in the types of climate and terrain found on Earth. But the skill is also usable on other worlds.

If the heroes are on a planet with an Earthlike environment, then the given situation modifiers might apply just the way they are (assuming, of course, that the local vegetation and wildlife, if any, are edible). If the environment is drastically different from Earth, then it will be up to the Gamemaster to assign an appropriate situation modifier, ranging from a heavy penalty for a locale that offers little prospect for food or shelter to a sizable bonus for a place that has an abundance of usable resources.

The use of the Survival skill might be impossible in certain situations, as dictated by the Gamemaster—for instance, a barren and airless asteroid probably doesn't have any food, and whatever shelter it might provide would be meaningless if the heroes weren't already equipped with protective gear.

Intelligence Skills

Intelligence is a vitally important attribute for all heroes—even those characters with low scores in this ability—because the Intelligence score determines how many skills a hero can have at the start of his career. A character's Intelligence score is a general indicator of how much education he has had, how well he is able to retain and recall information, his ability to learn new information through study, and his ability to assess a situation and quickly come up with the most appropriate action or response. To determine the result of an action involving Intelligence that isn't directly related to a skill, a hero makes a feat check (as described on page 63).

Solving a complicated mathematics problem in one's head is an example of an Intelligence feat. The Gamemaster doesn't have to be specific when he declares a feat to be of a certain level of difficulty, but he will use the following as a general rule: A Marginal feat (no modifier) is one that most people should be able to accomplish without too much trouble; a Moderate feat (+2 penalty) is something that highly intelligent people should be able to do in most situations; and an Extreme feat (+3 penalty) is one that tests even those who have genius-level intellects.

Business

This skill provides a basic knowledge of the theories of production, distribution, supply and demand, advertising, inventory control, and

business planning. Skill checks are called for when a hero wants to play the stock market, apply his business know-how to conclude a trade, attempt an illegal business transaction, determine the value of goods in his own society, locate commodity marketplaces, and compute the local fair market value of goods and services.

The Gamemaster will assign modifiers to the situation die, taking into account the circumstances that exist when a skill check is called for.

If a character uses some aspect of the Business skill to haggle with someone over the buying or selling of a commodity, the other party's Intelligence resistance modifier is applied to the situation die. If the other party also has Business skill, the Gamemaster may elect to handle the confrontation as a "Character vs. Character" situation; see page 63.

Optionally, in such a case the Business skill can be treated as an encounter skill (see page 97). If the use of this skill results in a target's attitude being changed to Friendly or better, this can provide a bonus on any subsequent skill check to get the other party to cooperate.

A situation die penalty will usually apply when a hero tries to deal in exotic, rare, or unfamiliar goods; tries to make an illegal transaction; or tries to close a deal with a member of an unfamiliar culture. Any of these penalties can be Ordinary, Good, or Amazing, depending on the specific situation.

A bonus to the situation die would apply if the hero has inside information that gives him an advantage in making a transaction, or if he is dealing with a familiar commodity or culture.

Corporate

This specialty skill enables a hero to improve his ability to function in the realm of large-scale trade and commerce, and to deal with stock markets, mergers, corporate acquisitions, speculative business, and the businesspeople who operate in these circles. It also provides a character with an understanding of how big businesses and corporations operate. Corporate presidents and trade lords who move goods and services on a global or galactic scale use this skill to determine the success of their business activities.

Illicit Business

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his ability to function in the underside of the business world. Extortion, smuggling, fencing stolen goods, and dealing with the black market are among the questionable trade practices this skill provides knowledge in. Purchasing ranks in this skill doesn't necessarily lead to a successful criminal career; it merely provides the hero with the knowledge to interact with the wrong side of the law. This is the skill used by the white-collar criminal—the embezzler, the insider trader, the corporate spy, and so forth.

In addition, having this skill reduces the penalty for attempting an illegal transaction (see the Business skill description above), depending on the skill rank achieved. When this skill is first purchased, any illegal transaction penalty is reduced by –1 step.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** As a character achieves higher ranks in *illicit business*, he or she is able to disregard more severe penalties: At rank 4 the penalty reduction is –2 steps; at rank 7 it is –3 steps; and at rank 10 it becomes –4 steps. This benefit only reduces or eliminates a penalty; it never provides a bonus.

Small Business

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his ability to function in the pursuit of small-scale trade and commerce. Small-business owners and merchants use this skill to determine the success of their business activities. This skill improves a hero's ability to haggle on the consumer level, determine the value of goods and services, and find buyers and sellers in a specific area.

In addition, this skill provides a situation die bonus when a character attempts to make deals, haggle, or otherwise bargain in the pursuit of small-business finance. The bonus starts at –1 step when a character purchases this skill.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** As a character achieves higher ranks in *small business*, he or she receives a greater situation die bonus: –2 steps at rank 4, –3 steps at rank 8, and –4 steps at rank 12.

Computer Science

Free to mechalus heroes.

Computers are an integral part of human society, and many alien societies as well, at Progress Level 5 and higher. (For much more information on computers and related material, see *Chapter 10: Computers.*) Most computers and computer-assisted machines are designed to be user-friendly in routine situations.

The broad skill provides a hero with a basic understanding of computers and computer systems. (In comparison, the Knowledge–*computer operation* skill merely gives a character the ability to use a computer effectively, but does not allow any understanding of how the machine does what it does.)

The three primary uses for the Computer Science broad skill are information retrieval, computer repair, and programming. These uses are described below.

Note: Some computer systems allow users who don't have the broad skill to make skill checks at their base Intelligence score instead of at the untrained score. If such an assist program is installed in a particular piece of equipment, your Gamemaster will let you know.

▶ ***Information Retrieval:*** Most computers are connected to some storehouse of raw data—a large network, a centralized storage system, or the unit's own drives. Using the Computer Science skill to search for specific information requires a skill check only if that information is protected in some way (user password, encoded data, etc.) or if the information is obscure and hard to locate. In all but the most straightforward of situations, a complex skill check (see page 62) is used to determine the result of a retrieval attempt.

The broad skill is useful when a hero wants to retrieve information from any unprotected system—but if the system is protected, only programs of Marginal quality and Marginal complexity can be accessed with the broad skill. In order to retrieve information from a protected system of higher quality or greater complexity, the specialty skill *hacking* is needed.

A Critical Failure result on the skill check usually means that safeguards or alarms have been triggered, an unretrievable computer error occurs, or the character makes

some other monumental mistake that aborts this computer run.

► ***Computer Repair:*** A character with this skill has the ability to fix a damaged computer system, either by replacing defective parts or by rewiring a component or a system to bypass a problem spot. Repairing a computer system is always a complex skill check. For information on how attempts to repair a device are made, see the *repair* specialty under the Technical Science broad skill (page 89).

► ***Programming:*** Computer programs exist to handle almost any task imaginable. Without training in the use of these high-tech tools, the wealth of options and accessories available can be overwhelming to a hero trying to employ them. As with information retrieval (above), using Computer Science to navigate and utilize a program almost always involves a complex skill check. A hero with just the broad skill can only manipulate the source code of programs of Marginal quality and Marginal complexity. Manipulating programs of better quality and greater complexity requires the *programming* specialty skill.

For more information on how the Computer Science specialty skills are used, see *Chapter 10: Computers.* Brief descriptions of the specialty skills are given below.

Hacking

This skill can't be used untrained.

Hacking is the ability to break computer codes and bypass computer security for the purposes of gaining access to restricted data or secure computer systems. Hacking can be performed at a computer station that's physically connected to the data stores in question, or it can be performed from a distant location by creating a link via a network of some kind. It's most often used to retrieve secured data, to enter and take control of a computer system, or to perform some type of sabotage such as erasing files or introducing a virus of some kind.

This specialty skill allows a hero equipped with a computer to perform the previously mentioned tasks. The hero's own skill and any programs being used can help the hero navigate computer systems, overcome security, and even defend against other operators hooked into a system.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** As a character gains ranks in this specialty skill, his ability to perform actions related to hacking improves. This is reflected by a –1 situation die bonus at rank 4, a –2 bonus at rank 8, and a –3 bonus at rank 12.

Hardware

This specialty represents a character's knowledge of and proficiency with the physical components that make up a computer. Understanding how a computer system works, being able to set one up quickly, designing and building your own computer, and repairing computer equipment are some of the tasks covered by this skill.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** As a character gains ranks in this specialty skill, his ability to repair computer systems and work with computer hardware in other ways improves. This is reflected by a –1 situation die bonus at rank 4, a –2 bonus at rank 8, and a –3 bonus at rank 12.

Programming

This specialty skill enables a hero to improve her ability to analyze computer programs, modify existing programs, and (at higher ranks) create programs by writing her own code.

Having rank 1 in this skill enables a character to modify the source code of programs of Ordinary quality and Ordinary complexity.

► ***Modify Existing Programs:*** A character with rank 3 in this skill is able to modify the code of existing programs of Good quality and Good complexity. When the character achieves rank 6, she can modify any existing program.

► ***Create New Programs:*** A character with rank 3 in this skill is able to create new programs of Marginal quality and Marginal complexity. Ordinary programs can be created at rank 6, Good programs at rank 9, and Amazing programs at rank 12.

Demolitions

This broad skill provides a hero with training in the basics of setting explosive charges to demolish a specific target. A skilled hero has a working knowledge of handling explosives, using primers and timing devices, and placing charges for maximum effect.

Prepared charges come in several forms—satchel bombs, mines, and objects using plastic explosive, to name some typical ones. A prepared charge inflicts a specific type and amount of damage on objects within its explosive radius, as detailed in "Prepared Explosives" on page 180 in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor.*

Setting a prepared charge can be a simple activity, requiring only one skill check if a hero merely wants to place an explosive in a readily accessible area. A Failure result on this skill check means the device is a dud and won't explode as planned. (This is a case when the Gamemaster might elect to roll a skill check secretly, to prevent a player from knowing something that his hero would not have found out.) A Critical Failure result could mean that the device explodes prematurely, depending on the type of explosive being used.

If a hero wants to set a charge so that it won't be easily discovered, a complex skill check (see page 62) is necessary. The complexity of that check (how many successes are needed) is related to how well the character wants the device to be hidden: If he attempts and succeeds at a task of Marginal complexity, the explosive charge is hidden well enough that any opponents' Awareness checks to spot the device are made at a +1 penalty. That penalty increases for each succeeding level of complexity, up to a +4 penalty at the Amazing level.

In addition, completing a complex skill check of Good complexity indicates that the charge has been set in a spot that's not only well concealed but vulnerable—when the explosive is detonated, it causes damage of one grade better than normal (Ordinary damage becomes Good damage, for example). For a successful complex skill check of Amazing complexity, the damage done by the blast improves by two grades (from Ordinary to Amazing). More information about grades of damage appears on page 174 in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor* and also in the *Gamemaster Guide.*

Disarm

The *disarm* skill lets a hero attempt to render bombs, mines, and other demolition packages inoperative before they explode. A hero does not

need to make a skill check to disarm his own work or any common explosives. A skill check is required when time is of the essence, if the explosive is of unusual make, or if it has been rigged with security devices or booby traps. Except in the very simplest of cases, a complex skill check (see page 62) is involved.

Scratch-Built Explosives

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill lets a hero attempt to build a demolition package from scratch, or tamper with military ordnance such as a mortar shell to make it usable as a demolition charge. The use of the skill assumes that the hero has the proper materials and tools on hand; the skill check receives a +2 penalty if the hero is forced to use common items (such as things found around a house).

Making a scratch-built explosive device takes some time—at least a few minutes and perhaps as long as several hours, depending on the working conditions and the amount of time a hero wants to invest in the process. When the maker of a device declares his job to be finished, the Gamemaster will assign a situation die modifier to the upcoming skill check, ranging from a substantial bonus if the hero spent a lot of time on the job to a sizable penalty if the job was done in extreme haste.

A skill check is then made to determine the degree of success, which is directly related to the potency of the charge. Table P23 lists the three types of scratch-built explosive devices and the amount of damage each one causes. On a Critical Failure, the bomb explodes right at the end of the creation process, injuring the maker. A skill check result of Ordinary, Good, or Amazing also defines the complexity of the explosive for any subsequent *disarm* checks by other characters. (The hero who built a device can always disarm it without needing a skill check.)

Set Explosives

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his ability to set manufactured explosive charges. See the description of the Demolitions broad skill for information on how this skill is employed.

Knowledge

Free to fraal, human, mechalus, sesheyan, t'sa, and weren heroes.

This broad skill represents a hero's ability to know at least a little bit about any particular subject. With just the broad skill, a hero isn't considered an expert on any particular topic by any means. What it represents is the hero's ability to recall a class he took, an article he read, or a documentary he saw on the topic in question.

Knowledge skill checks aren't called for very often. In general, a player's own knowledge, imagination, and understanding of the clues at hand should be used to roleplay through most situations. However, at times a character would logically have more knowledge about a subject than the player controlling him does—especially in the area of *campaign knowledge*. Campaign knowledge covers everything from what characters who have grown up in a particular campaign setting might possibly know about everyday life to what they might know about detailed history, politics, and popular culture.

A Knowledge skill check can be either simple or complex. A simple skill check can be attempted to determine if a character can recall a specific piece of information that he had previously obtained (the password for a computer system, the safest route to take for exiting a building, and so forth). A complex skill check (see page 62) is used when a character wants to expand his knowledge of a topic by studying or doing research. The particular information being sought must be specified ahead of time.

For either type of skill check, the Gamemaster determines that the information being sought belongs to one of four categories:

Trivial knowledge deals with simple, obvious, or readily available information. (The United States has two major mountain ranges, one in the east and one in the west.)

General knowledge involves only the key features of a topic, not any details or particulars. (The range in the west is called the Rocky Mountains, and it has taller mountains than the range in the east.)

Specific knowledge covers special features of a topic, details that only someone intimate with the topic would know. (The highest point in the Rocky Mountains is the peak of Mt. Elbert in Colorado.)

Expert knowledge involves a level of detail that can usually only be acquired through experience, research, or training. (There are 56 peaks in the Rocky Mountains that are above 14,000 feet in elevation.)

Table P24: Knowledge Categories on the next page summarizes the effects of the various types of knowledge on skill checks related to those types. "Modifier" refers to the adjustment made to the situation die on a simple skill check; "Complexity" relates to the number of successes needed to complete a complex skill check. The Gamemaster will determine the time units for a complex skill check; trivial information might be obtainable within minutes or even rounds, but specific or expert information might take hours, days, or months of research to discover.

The Gamemaster can apply additional situation modifiers to any Knowledge skill check as he sees fit. For instance, it can be difficult to recall even a trivial bit of information in a pressure situation—such as when you're being shot at, or when you find a bomb that's about to explode. Any Knowledge check made under such conditions would likely have a hefty penalty attached to it.

The Gamemaster can call for a

Table P23: Scratch-Built Explosives

Skill Check Result	Type of Device		
	Concussive	Fragmentation	Incendiary
Crit. Failure	d4w	d4+3m	d6+2w
Failure	Dud	Dud	Dud
Ordinary	d6+2s	d4+2w	d4w
Good	d8+2s	d6+3w	d4+2w
Amazing	d4w	d4+3m	d6+2w

TABLE P24: KNOWLEDGE CATEGORIES

Category	Modifier	Complexity
Trivial	None	Marginal
General	+1 step	Ordinary
Specific	+2 steps	Good
Expert	+3 steps	Amazing

Knowledge skill check or disallow a player's request for such a check, depending on the situation. When the Gamemaster calls for a Knowledge check, it's usually done to pass on a clue that the characters might not otherwise receive. The Gamemaster might decide to roll Knowledge checks in secret so that the players don't see the results (or, perhaps, don't even know the check is being rolled).

Once you determine that your hero has knowledge concerning a particular topic, you can make a note of that fact on your hero sheet.

Computer Operation

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to improve his ability to make computers perform, specifically his ability to get the most out of the software (including the operating system) that is installed in a computer.

The degree of success achieved on a skill check relates to the quality or quantity of the information that is accessed or retrieved by the operator, or the speed with which the operator is able to perform a particular task.

Deduce

With this specialty skill, a hero can hone his abilities to use reason and logic to reach a conclusion. *Deduce* is used by detectives and other investigators who piece together clues and other information to solve a specific mystery. It's also used by scientists, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and others to discover the answer to a skill-related problem or to figure out what to do through the application of expert knowledge.

For example, a player may know nothing about developing vaccines, but his hero is a top-notch doctor. When the hero is confronted with a mutating disease that fails to respond to usual treatments, he uses this skill to find another solution. Or, a player may have no idea how a stardrive works, but his engineer hero can figure out how to modify one when needed.

This skill should only be used in situations where the hero knows more than the player, and the player is at a genuine loss as to what to do. Using the *deduce* skill should never take the place of good roleplaying and the player's imagination.

⊗ ***Resistance Modifier:*** At higher ranks, the *deduce* skill provides an improvement to a hero's Intelligence resistance modifier, which makes it more difficult for opponents to successfully use encounter skills to deceive the hero. The hero's resistance modifier improves by +1 at rank 4, by +1 again at rank 8, and by +1 again at rank 12.

First Aid

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill represents basic training in first aid techniques, including the use of trauma packs, first aid kits, and other general-use medical items. It doesn't provide a hero with the ability to use a medical gauntlet or surgical tools, for instance. (See *Chapter 9: Goods & Services* for brief descriptions of medical gear.)

Situation die modifiers that can have an effect on a first aid skill check are given in the "Medical Science Situation Modifiers" sidebar on page 84.

Note, however, that a hero can't use *first aid* on a member of an alien species unless the hero has the appropriate Medical Science–*xenomedicine* skill. (See page 86 for details.)

The *first aid* skill can be used to accomplish the following tasks:

► ***Heal Stun Damage:*** A character can use first aid to remove stun damage from himself or someone else. A successful skill check restores 2, 3, or 4 stun points depending on the degree of success (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing). This application of the skill only works on someone who is conscious.

► ***Knockout Recovery:*** A knockout, in game terms, occurs when a character's stun points are used up. A successful skill check brings a character back to consciousness and recovers 1, 2, or 3 stun points, depending on the degree of success.

► ***Heal Wound Damage:*** The *first aid* skill can be used to heal wounds, both in combat scenes and in non-combat situations. Healing in a combat scene takes place during action rounds, while fighting or some other dramatic situation is unfolding.

When *first aid* is used for healing wounds, the hero must be using either a first aid kit or a trauma pack, and a complex skill check (see page 62) is required. The task is one of Good complexity with a first aid kit, or Ordinary if a trauma pack is used.

On a Critical Failure, the patient suffers 1 wound instead of having any wounds healed, and the complex skill check is immediately ruined. When the complex skill check is completed, 1 wound is healed if the skill was used with a first aid kit, and 2 wounds are healed if a trauma pack was used.

This application of the *first aid* skill can be used on a certain character once to heal previously inflicted wounds. Any wounds that remain after *first aid* has been applied can only be healed naturally or by the use of the Medical Science–*surgery* specialty skill. New wounds that occur thereafter can be treated, but no additional application of *first aid* will heal remaining wounds from earlier damage results.

► ***Dying:*** A character with any amount of mortal damage is considered to be dying. A hero who uses either a first aid kit or a trauma pack and makes a successful *first aid* skill check can stabilize mortal damage, thus removing the need for the character to make a Stamina–*endurance* check at the end of the current scene. Note, however, that *first aid* does not heal mortal damage—Medical Science–*surgery* is necessary to restore a dying character to health.

⊗ ***Improved First Aid:*** As a character achieves higher skill ranks, he becomes more proficient at providing aid to injured patients. This is reflected by a reduction in situation

die penalties: 1 step of reduction at rank 4, 2 steps at rank 8, and 3 steps at rank 12. This benefit only reduces a penalty; it never provides a bonus.

Language, Specific Skill

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill gives a character a certain amount of fluency in a specific language, depending on the character's rank in the skill.

Every hero begins with rank 3 in his or her native language, which may be a language of the player's choosing or one that is dictated either by the Gamemaster's campaign setting or the hero's species. For any language, rank 3 represents a degree of fluency that enables a character to speak and read the language as well as a native. Lower ranks indicate a crude familiarity with the basic tenets of the language, allowing a character to understand simple statements; higher ranks improve the character's ability to use the language by virtue of a larger vocabulary, a deeper comprehension of obscure or complicated passages, and a sharper sense of how to put words together to communicate as effectively as possible with the recipient of the communication.

The Gamemaster will decide what constitutes a "specific" language in his or her campaign setting—for instance, all the members of a species might be able to speak and understand the same native language, regardless of where they live, or it could be that characters who live in different areas of a planet (or on different planets) can't understand one another without purchasing and using this skill.

At the Gamemaster's discretion, a hero's skill (or lack thereof) with a certain language might provide a situation die modifier to the use of other skills that involve the use of language to communicate with someone—Business and Interaction, to name just a couple of many possibilities. A character with rank 1 in a language receives a +3 penalty on all such attempts to communicate.

⊗ ***Improved Communication:*** As a character achieves higher skill ranks in a specific language, he or she gets better at employing other skills that involve language use (such as encounter skills and some Creativity skills). At rank 2 the penalty on an attempt to communicate is reduced to +1. At rank 3 no modifier is applied. Rank 6 provides a –1 bonus, rank 9 a –2 bonus, and rank 12 a –3 bonus.

Knowledge, Specific Skill

A blank line is provided under the Knowledge broad skill on the hero sheet for a player, if he so desires, to add a specialty skill that fits into the concept he has for his hero. This skill must be one that's not already covered by one of the skills described in this book—for example, a specific academic discipline such as history, mathematics, or geography, or a hobby or some other sort of special interest, as opposed to medical knowledge (an existing skill). How this added skill works in the context of a campaign, and even if it will be allowed, is left to the Gamemaster.

A specialty skill in Knowledge can be broad or narrow in scope; for example, history knowledge can be general (*world history*) or specific (*United States history*), as the player decides.

Law

This broad skill provides a hero with general knowledge of the laws and legal systems of her native society, making it possible for the hero to function as an advocate in a courtroom situation or to perform the basic duties of a law enforcement professional. If a hero wants to improve her ability to practice law in her native society, or expand her knowledge of law to cover the legal systems of other societies and other types of law, she must purchase ranks in a specific Law specialty skill, as described below.

Depending on the setting of the campaign, a hero's native society could be a branch of human civilization on Earth or on a planet or star system that has been colonized; it could also be a specific alien society or culture.

The Law skill can be used in an attempt to change the attitude of an individual with whom the hero is interacting. In such a case, it is treated as an encounter skill (see page 97). If this use of the skill results in a target's attitude being changed to Friendly or better, this can provide a bonus on any subsequent skill check to get information or cooperation out of the affected individual.

With a successful skill check, a hero can avoid legal entanglements, understand court procedures, and have a working knowledge of the techniques used by a specific society's law enforcers. This skill is not used if the Gamemaster decides to play out a scene involving a legal issue; in that case, roleplaying should be used to determine the outcome of a courtroom drama or the success of an arrest.

However, if the last scene in an adventure is an arrest, for instance, a Law skill check can be used to determine what happens "off camera." In such a case, the Gamemaster may call for a player to make a Law check on behalf of his hero. On a Critical Failure result, an opposing lawyer receives a –3 bonus to his skill check, or the hero loses the case outright. On a Failure result, the opposing lawyer receives a –1 bonus to his skill check. If the hero's skill check is an Ordinary success, the opponent's skill check is made with no modifier; on a Good success, the opponent takes a +1 penalty; and on an Amazing success, the opponent takes a +3 penalty, or the hero wins the case outright.

This procedure is a variation on the "Character vs. Character" rules outlined earlier on page 63. It differs in the respect that the competing character's skill checks are not rolled simultaneously—one character always initiates a legal action, and the opponent then responds to it. The alternating skill checks continue until someone gets either a Critical Failure or an Amazing success, or until the Gamemaster makes a judgment on the outcome of the case.

Court Procedures

Lawyers, judges, and others use this skill to interact in a courtroom setting. This aspect of the broad skill is used to argue a case or a point of view in an official proceeding.

Law Enforcement Procedures

Police officers, detectives, bounty hunters, and people in careers simi-

lar to those use this skill to follow (or bend the rules of) legal law enforcement procedures.

Topics covered by this skill include knowing the laws concerning surveillance and search and seizure, proper arrest and detainment procedures, filling out reports, and other subjects a law enforcement agent deals with on a regular basis.

This aspect of the broad skill is used to determine how good an arrest is (providing ammunition to the lawyers who will try to make the arrest stick).

Law, Specific Skill

This skill can't be used untrained.

For each separate purchase of this specialty skill, a hero selects a specific culture or a specific type of law (maritime law, salvage law, etc.). As the specialty skill is improved, the hero gains a progressively stronger grasp on the laws and legal systems of that culture or special discipline.

This familiarity translates into a bonus to the use of the Law broad skill or either of its other specialty skills (*court procedures* or *law enforcement procedures*) when one of those skills is employed by someone practicing law within the legal system of the culture in question.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** Having the Law–*specific* skill at rank 3 provides a –1 bonus when the skill is used in the conditions described in the previous paragraph. The bonus improves to –2 at rank 6, to –3 at rank 9, and to –4 at rank 12.

The Gamemaster will decide what constitutes a "specific culture," taking the campaign setting into account. In a campaign that takes place entirely on Earth, different countries may represent specific cultures; in a starfaring campaign, each planet, star system, or alien species could be a different culture.

Life Science

This broad skill represents a hero's training in the life sciences, including biology, botany, genetics, and zoology. Skill checks involving this skill and its associated specialties are made in the same way as Knowledge skill checks; see the description of that skill on page 81 for details.

Biology, Botany, Genetics, Zoology

These specialty skills must be purchased separately, but in general they work the same. These skills are useful for heroes who are explorers, scientists, or doctors.

Biology is the study of organisms. It can be used to ascertain information about the biochemical processes in a living being.

Botany is the study of plants and can be used to identify plant life.

Genetics is the study of heredity and genes, and forms the basis of genetic engineering and cloning (depending on the Progress Level of the campaign).

Zoology is the study of animals and animal life, and can be used to identify animal species.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** As a character attains higher ranks in any of these specialties, he receives a situation die bonus on skill checks that can be assisted by that specialty. The bonus is –1 step at rank 3, –2 steps at rank 6, –3 steps at rank 9, and –4 steps at rank 12. For example, a scientist trying to engineer a new, beneficial strain of bacteria receives a bonus for having a high rank in the *genetics* specialty.

Xenology

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill is the study of animal life forms of an alien nature and can be used to identify or classify such life forms, including alien plant life. It allows a character to make educated guesses as to the nature, behavior, and abilities of alien life forms.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** As a character attains higher ranks in *xenology*, he receives a situation die bonus on skill checks that can be assisted by this skill. The bonus is –1 step at rank 3, –2 steps at rank 6, –3 steps at rank 9, and –4 steps at rank 12.

Medical Science

This skill provides a hero with the training needed to perform certain medical procedures, including the ability to diagnose common ailments, diseases, and wounds. Skill checks made to determine if a character knows a certain piece of medical information, or if he's able to research a question and discover an answer, are made the same way as Knowledge skill checks; see the description of that skill on page 81 for details.

Medical Science Situation Modifiers

Patient is a member of an alien species	+3
Patient is same species	0
Combat conditions	+2
Patient knocked out	+1
Patient dazed*	+1
Patient has mortal damage, per point	+1
No medical treatment items being used	+3
First aid kit being used	0
Trauma pack being used	–1
Marginal disease	–1
Ordinary disease	0
Good disease	+1
Amazing disease	+2

* optional rule

A hero with just the Medical Science broad skill can't treat characters who have suffered damage, however. The *treatment* specialty skill is necessary to heal stun or wound damage, and reducing a patient's mortal damage requires the *surgery* specialty skill.

Forensics, Medical Knowledge, Psychology

These specialty skills must be purchased separately, but in general they work the same. Skill checks involving these specialties are made in the same way as Knowledge skill checks; see the description of that skill on page 81 for details.

Forensics is the study of causes of death and physical evidence at the scene of a crime or accident.

Medical knowledge is the study of medicine and represents how up-to-date a hero is on a particular medical technique or a technique outside his usual field of practice. As a hero's rank in this specialty increases, he receives a situation die bonus to any Medical Science–*treatment* skill checks: –1 step at rank 2; –2 at rank 5; –3 at rank 8; and –4 at rank 12.

Psychology is the study of mental processes and behavior, and the

treatment of mental aberrations and disease.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** As a hero attains higher ranks in *forensics* or *psychology*, he receives a situation die bonus on skill checks that can be assisted by that specialty. The bonus is –1 step at rank 3, –2 steps at rank 6, –3 steps at rank 9, and –4 steps at rank 12.

Surgery

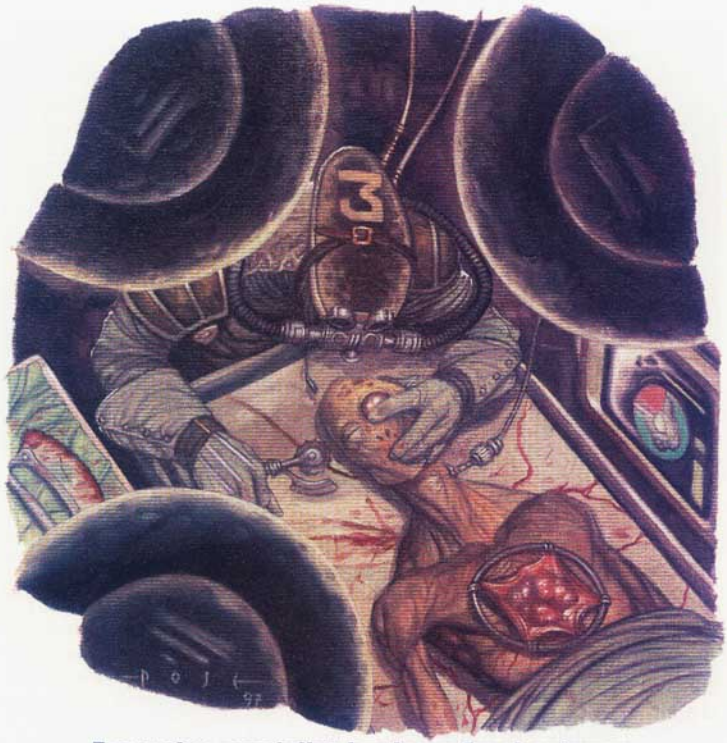
This skill can't be used untrained.

The Medical Science specialty skill *surgery* is used to heal mortal damage and perform other invasive medical procedures. Any application of this skill requires a complex skill check (see page 62).

Surgery can't be performed during a combat scene. It almost always takes much more time than mere rounds or minutes, and successful surgery is extremely difficult to perform in conditions such as those found on the typical battlefield.

The conditions for surgery are considered Critical (+4 step penalty) when the procedure must be performed with poor lighting, primitive tools (or no surgical tools at all), and no trained assistance. Marginal conditions (no situation die modifier) are considerably better than Critical, but still below what's necessary to be reasonably sure of success. A Good situation (–2 step bonus) is one with conditions similar to a modern-day ambulance or the sick bay of a spaceship. Amazing conditions (–3 step bonus) are those found in a standard hospital or the sick bay of an advanced spaceship. The best possible conditions for performing surgery—high-tech tools, trained support staff, skilled assistants, and the most advanced medical procedures available—provide a –4 step bonus to the surgeon's skill check.

The complexity of a *surgery* skill check depends on the amount of mortal damage the patient is suffering from when the procedure is begun: 1 point of damage is Marginal, 2 points is Ordinary, 3 points is Good, and 4 or more points of mortal damage is a situation of Amazing complexity. If the patient is suffering only from wound damage, then 2 points of damage is a situation of Marginal complexity, 4 points is Ordinary, 6 points is Good, and 8 or more points is Amazing. For every two successes achieved during the complex skill check, the patient is healed of 1 point of mortal damage and 2 points of wound damage. (A patient with 5 or more points of mortal damage is completely healed if the surgeon achieves 10 successes during a single surgical procedure.)



Forensics specialist begins a fraal autopsy

As a general rule, one new check (to see how many new successes are accumulated) can be made every hour during a surgical procedure. On a Critical Failure result or after three Failure results have been achieved, the patient's condition worsens on the table and he suffers 1 point of mortal damage. In addition, all successes achieved to this point are lost, and the procedure must be started over. If the point of mortal damage causes the patient's last mortal point to be used up, the patient dies.

A surgical procedure typically continues for as long as necessary to repair all of a patient's mortal damage. However, if the procedure is interrupted or halted before the patient is fully healed of mortal damage, the patient must continue to make Stamina-*endurance* checks (he's still dying) as described under "Dying and Death" on page 53 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*. In such a case, the patient does receive the benefit of any mortal points and wound points that were regained before the procedure was halted.

► ***Cybernetic Surgery:*** A character who has achieved at least rank 3 in *surgery* can use this skill to repair or heal an organism with existing cybernetic implants, providing such technology exists in the campaign. At rank 6, the character becomes able to install cybernetic implants. See *Chapter 15: Cybertech* for information on cybernetic devices.

Treatment

This skill can't be used untrained.

The *treatment* specialty skill can be used to accomplish all the same tasks that the *first aid* skill (page 82) is used for; see the description of that skill for basic information on the following topics.

► ***Heal Stun Damage:*** Just as with *first aid*, a successful skill check restores 2, 3, or 4 stun points to a conscious patient, depending on the degree of success.

► ***Knockout Recovery:*** A successful skill check brings a character back to consciousness and recovers

2, 3, or 4 stun points, depending on the degree of success.

▶ ***Heal Wound Damage:*** When *treatment* is used to heal wounds, the hero must be using either a first aid kit or a trauma pack, and a complex skill check (see page 62) is required. The task is one of Ordinary complexity with a first aid kit, or Marginal if a trauma pack is used.

On a Critical Failure, the patient suffers 1 wound instead of having any wounds healed, and the complex skill check is immediately ruined. When the complex skill check is completed, 2 wounds are healed if the skill was used with a first aid kit, and 4 wounds are healed if a trauma pack or more sophisticated equipment is used.

This application of the *treatment* specialty can be used on a certain character once to heal previously inflicted wounds. Any wounds that remain after *treatment* has been applied can only be healed naturally or by the use of the *surgery* specialty skill. New wounds that occur thereafter can be treated, but no additional application of *treatment* will heal remaining wounds from earlier damage results.

▶ ***Dying:*** A character with any amount of mortal damage is considered to be dying. A hero with *treatment* and either a first aid kit or a trauma pack can stabilize mortal damage, thus increasing the time between Stamina–*endurance* checks from one per hour to one per day.

▶ ***Treating Disease:*** The *treatment* specialty can be used to identify and treat debilitating diseases, with situation die modifiers dependent on how difficult the disease is to diagnose or how virulent it is. The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on this subject.

⊗ ***Improved Treatment:*** As a character achieves higher skill ranks, he becomes more proficient at providing aid to injured patients. This is reflected by a reduction in situation die penalties: –1 step at rank 3, –2 steps at rank 6, –3 steps at rank 9, and –4 steps at rank 12. Note that this benefit only reduces a penalty; it never provides a bonus.

Xenomedicine, Specific Skill

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill involves the medical study of a specific alien species, allowing a hero to use his other medical skills on members of that species. The skill must be purchased separately for each alien species a hero wants to know about.

A hero with at least rank 1 in this skill, as well as rank 1 or higher in Knowledge–*first aid*, Medical Science–*treatment*, and/or Medical Science–*surgery*, can administer aid to an alien character or creature of the appropriate species. Initially, the +3 step penalty associated with healing alien characters is applied.

⊗ ***Improved Treatment:*** As a character achieves higher ranks in a specific application of *xenomedicine*, she becomes more proficient at providing aid to patients of the appropriate species. When the hero reaches rank 3 in *xenomedicine*, the initial +3 penalty is reduced to +2; at rank 6, the penalty is +1; at rank 9, the penalty is eliminated; and at rank 12, the doctor receives a –1 bonus.

Navigation

This broad skill provides a hero with training in navigating on a planetary surface or in space. *Surface navigation* encompasses plotting courses for water vessels, land vehicles, and air vehicles. *System astrogation* involves plotting courses for space vehicles moving through normal space—as distinct from *drivespace astrogation*, which is not covered within the scope of the broad skill.

The Navigation skill does not include the ability to plot a course for characters who are moving overland on foot; that ability is an aspect of the *trailblazing* specialty under the Movement broad skill.

The use of the Navigation skill or any of its specialties requires a simple skill check—one dice roll that determines the accuracy and efficiency of the course that was plotted. Situation die modifiers that may apply to any type of Navigation skill check are listed in the sidebar on this page.

The optimum amount of time that must be set aside for a Navigation attempt, to avoid incurring a penalty for rushing the job, is 5 minutes. For every minute less than 5 spent on the attempt, the navigator must take a +1 penalty. For every minute more than 5 spent on the attempt—to a maximum of 10 minutes—the navigator receives a –1 bonus.

Navigation Situation Modifiers

Combat conditions	+4
Hostile conditions	+2
Calm conditions	0
Unexplored territory	+4
Partially explored territory	+2
Explored territory	0
Familiar territory	–2
No equipment	+4
Damaged or unreliable equipment	+2
Dependable equipment	0
Superior equipment	–2
Less than 5 minutes	+1/min.
More than 5 minutes	–1/min.
For *surface navigation* only:	
Darkness	+3
Inclement weather	+2
Rough terrain/turbulence	+2

Astrogation, Drivespace

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill involves the study and performance of navigation through drivespace, usually involv-

Drivespace Off Course Results

Critical Failure:	Travel ship's maximum distance in drivespace in a random wrong direction.
Marginal Success:	Travel 50% of the ship's maximum distance in the intended direction, then 50% in a random wrong direction.
Ordinary Success:	Travel 75% of the ship's maximum distance in the intended direction, then 25% in a random wrong direction.
Good Success:	Travel 90% of the ship's maximum distance in the intended direction, then 90% in a random wrong direction.
Amazing Success:	Arrive at the edge of the destination star system.

ing movement from one star system to another within the galaxy. (Drivespace, in settings with faster-than-light space travel, is a parallel dimension tied to the gravity plane of the galaxy. See *Chapter 12: Vehicles* for more details.) A hero with this skill can plot courses for stardrive-equipped starships of all kinds.

Any stardrive-equipped ship has a maximum distance, in light-years, that it can travel every time it drops out of normal space and into drivespace. (This process is known as making a starfall.) Larger ships have a greater maximum distance per starfall than smaller ones. For long trips, several starfalls—each requiring the use of the *drivespace astrogation* skill—must be accomplished before reaching the final destination.

The possible results of a *drivespace astrogation* skill check are these: Critical Failure, make another check with a +2 penalty and consult the Drivespace Off Course Results sidebar; Failure, make another check and consult the "Drivespace Off Course Results" sidebar on the previous page; Ordinary, arrive at the edge of the destination star system; Good, arrive inside destination star system, d12+2 AUs from target; Amazing, arrive inside destination system, d4 AUs from target.

Note: This skill may also be used to handle any other faster-than-light astrogation system (involving hyperspace, wormholes, jump gates, and so forth) that may exist in the Gamemaster's campaign.

Astrogation, System

This specialty skill encompasses the study and performance of astrogation through normal space, usually involving movement from one place to another within a star system. A hero with this skill (or the Navigation broad skill) can plot a course for a starship that doesn't have or isn't using drivespace technology.

Travel through normal space is usually measured in time units—how long it takes to get from one location to another. At Progress Level 7, starships can move through normal space at rates of up to 40% of light speed, but may not always be able to maintain that velocity for the full duration of a journey. The result of the astrogator's skill check determines how efficient the course is—getting the ship to its destination without running into any obstacles, physical or otherwise, along the way.

The possible results of a Navigation–*system astrogation* skill check are these: Critical Failure, make another check with a +2 penalty and consult the "System/Surface Off Course Results" sidebar; Failure, make another check and consult the "System/Surface Off Course Results" sidebar; Ordinary, course is plotted at normal travel time plus d4 time units; Good, course is plotted at normal travel time; Amazing, course cuts travel time by 1 time unit.

System/Surface Off Course Results

Critical Failure: Travel for d12+3 hours in random wrong direction. The next Navigation check made by a member of the traveling group carries a +2 penalty.

Marginal Success: Travel for d6+2 hours in random wrong direction. Identifying traveling group's precise position requires d4 hours of observation and mapping. Any Navigation check made before this time limit expires carries a +2 penalty.

Ordinary Success: Travel for d4 hours in random wrong direction. Identifying traveling group's precise position requires d20+10 minutes.

Good Success: Travel for d20+3 minutes in random wrong direction. Identifying traveling group's precise position requires d6+5 minutes.

Amazing Success: Travel for d12 minutes in random wrong direction, with traveling group's precise position known as soon as that travel is over.

Navigation, Surface

This specialty skill is the study and performance of navigation on a planetary surface, using stars, landmarks, and specialized equipment to plot courses and determine location. A hero with this skill (or with the Navigation broad skill) can plot courses for air, water, and land vehicles of all kinds, provided he's familiar with the planet in question.

Travel across the surface of a planet (or through its atmosphere) is measured in time units—how long it takes to get from one location to another. Different types of vehicles have different speeds at which they operate; faster vehicles use smaller time units to measure how quickly they can traverse a certain distance. The result of the navigator's skill check determines how efficient the course is—getting the vehicle being navigated to its destination by means of the smoothest or most direct route.

The possible results of a Navigation–*surface navigation* skill check are these: Critical Failure, make another check with a +2 penalty and consult the System/Surface Off Course Results sidebar; Failure, make another check and consult the System/Surface Off Course Results sidebar; Ordinary, course is plotted at normal travel time plus d4 time units; Good, course is plotted at normal travel time; Amazing, course is plotted that cuts travel time by 1 time unit.

Physical Science

This broad skill represents a hero's training in the physical sciences, which include astronomy, chemistry, physics, and planetology. Skill checks involving this skill and its associated specialties are made in the same way as Knowledge skill checks; see the description of that skill on page 81 for details.

Astronomy, Chemistry, Physics, Planetology

These specialty skills must be purchased separately, but in general they work the same. With these skills, a hero can improve these aspects of the Physical Science broad skill. These skills are useful to heroes who are explorers, scientists, scouts, or pilots.

Astronomy is the study of the universe beyond a hero's planet of ori-

gin, especially observations of celestial bodies and phenomenon.

Chemistry is the study of the composition, structure, properties, and reactions of matter. This skill is used to identify the composition of objects and to produce compounds and chemical reactions (if the proper equipment is available).

Physics is the study of matter, energy, and the interactions between the two. It can be used to solve problems relating to force, motion, and mathematics.

Planetology is the study of new celestial bodies, specifically when attempting to classify, log, and scan such bodies for useful information.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** As a hero achieves higher ranks in any of these specialties, he receives a situation die bonus on skill checks that can be assisted by that specialty. The bonus is –1 step at rank 3, –2 steps at rank 6, –3 steps at rank 9, and –4 steps at rank 12.

Security

This broad skill provides a hero with basic knowledge of security systems and procedures. (Note that this skill pertains to security systems that protect physical objects or specifically defined areas. Security systems of the sort that protect the theft or corruption of computerized data are dealt with under the Computer Science broad skill and its *hacking* specialty.) What a hero knows or accomplishes in any given situation depends on the result of a skill check.

For the purpose of determining the situation die modifier for each segment of a complex Security skill check, a situation of Marginal quality would be one in which (for example) the hero is undisturbed while he is examining or manipulating a type of security system with which he is familiar, and a situation of Amazing quality is one in which (for example) the hero and his allies are involved in combat or are under severe time pressure to accomplish their goal.

The complexity of a system relates to how time-consuming it is to get through any and all barriers that lie between an intruder and the object or area that the security system is protecting.

Protection Protocols

This skill represents a hero's training in protection procedures of all types. It has two principal uses:

▶ ***Secure an Area:*** With the proper amount of time and cooperation, a hero can set defenses and secure an area to a greater degree than it was before. (Some areas can't be secured or can only be secured with great difficulty, meaning that a situation die penalty applies to the skill check. The Gamemaster will decide when such situations exist.)

The degree of success on the skill check affects the subsequent Awareness skill checks of everyone guarding the area against intruders: On a Critical Failure, the Awareness checks of the guard(s) are made with a +1 penalty; on a Failure, no modifier is used on the Awareness checks; an Ordinary success causes a –1 bonus; a Good success, –2; and an Amazing success, –3.

▶ ***Analyze Weak Points:*** A hero can study a secured area (anything from a vehicle to a building to a neighborhood) and look for weak points to exploit. This use of the skill can aid the hero or another character who is going to force an entry point or try to sneak into the secured area by providing bonuses to those subsequent skill checks.

The analysis check is modified by how well the area is secured: No security means no modifier to the hero's check; Marginal security provides a +1 penalty; Ordinary, +2; Good, +3; and Amazing, +4.

Modifiers to subsequent skill checks are provided according to how well the hero succeeds at analyzing the weak points of a secured area: On a Failure, no modifier; an Ordinary success, –1 bonus; Good, –2; and Amazing, –3.

Security Devices

Using this skill, a hero can attempt to bypass all types of mechanical or electronic security, from trip wires to motion sensors to electronic locks. It's also used to set traps, both electronic and mechanical in nature.

One check can be made per round, and the hero making the check is busy for the entire round (no other actions possible). In a situation that isn't taking place in rounds, the time unit changes from rounds to minutes.

System Operation

This broad skill provides a hero with basic training in the use of spaceship systems other than the helm or piloting systems. (Vehicle Operation–*space vehicle* covers the actual piloting of a spaceship.) It also applies to other types of vehicles or ground-based installations that use one or more of the specific systems described below in the System Operation specialty skills. These other vehicles and installations include (but are not limited to) large water vessels such as battleships, military submarines, and cargo ships; jet fighters and large commercial aircraft; and radar outposts and gun emplacements.

For full details on how System Operation and its related specialty skills are used, see the sections on "What's in a Spaceship?" and "Space Vehicle Combat" in *Chapter 12: Vehicles*. Brief descriptions of the specialty skills are given below.

Communications

A communications specialist can operate all shipboard and personal communication gear with precision, attempt to decipher coded communication signals, code outgoing messages, jam external communication and sensor signals, and try to overcome jamming from an outside source.

Defenses

A defenses specialist can operate all shipboard defensive systems with precision, attempt to direct defenses to parts of the ship where they're most needed, and analyze attack patterns to make best use of the defenses his ship possesses. In space vehicle combat, the defenses operator can provide a penalty to an opponent's weapons or sensors during any given attack.

Engineering

An engineering specialist monitors a ship's electronic and mechanical systems as a whole, watching for fluctuations and other signs that a component is breaking down. He can institute repairs to damaged systems from his station, route power to spe-

cific systems, and direct hands-on repairs at remote locations.

Sensors

A sensors specialist can operate all shipboard and personal sensor gear with precision, attempt to scan ships or planets, and analyze those readings in a short period of time. He can use the data to provide bonuses to a weapons or defenses operator.

Weapons

A weapons specialist can operate all shipboard weapons systems with precision. In starship combat, the weapons operator picks targets and makes attacks.

Tactics

This broad skill provides a hero with basic training in and an understanding of tactics and tactical situations. While tactics may come into play in many types of situations, it's most commonly used during infantry combat, space combat, and vehicle combat. A successful use of the skill provides a penalty to the opponent's next skill check, indicating that you developed a tactical plan and successfully employed it against him.

Check results: On a Critical Failure, the opponent sees through your intentions and receives a –1 bonus; Failure, no modifier to the opponent's next skill check; Ordinary, +1 penalty to opponent's next skill check; Good, +2; and Amazing, +3.

Infantry Tactics

The *infantry tactics* skill covers battlefield strategies when the main component of the battle is individual troops.

Tactics Rank Benefit

⊗ **Increased Effect:** As a hero gains ranks in a Tactics specialty skill, he receives a situation die bonus for dealing with opposing infantry, spaceships, or vehicles. At rank 4, the bonus is –1; at rank 8 it improves to –2; and at rank 12 it becomes –3.

Tactics Situation Modifiers

Skill user engaged in combat	+1
Skill user observing combat	0
Familiar opponent	–1
Unfamiliar opponent, same species	+2
Unfamiliar opponent, different species	+3

Space Tactics

The *space tactics* skill covers battlefield strategies when spaceships engage in combat.

Vehicle Tactics

The *vehicle tactics* skill covers battlefield strategies when the main component of the battle is vehicles other than spaceships (land vehicles, water vehicles, and air vehicles).

Technical Science

This skill represents a hero's training in the technical sciences, including the maintenance, repair, and invention of mechanical and electronic devices (not including computers), and general technical knowledge.

Skill checks made to determine if a character knows a certain piece of technical information, or if he's able to research a question and discover an answer, are made the same way as Knowledge skill checks; see the description of that skill on page 81 for details.

This skill is necessary for a character to use certain sophisticated or potentially dangerous tools, such as a cutting torch (see page 140 in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*) without risking personal injury or damage to the tool.

Invention

Invention lets a hero build an electronic or mechanical component or system from scratch, or to modify an existing device to perform a new function.

Using this skill requires time; *invention* checks are always complex skill checks. Modifying an existing item may be able to be done in rounds, under the right conditions, but all other aspects of *invention* require hours, days, weeks, or months, depending on the determination of the Gamemaster.

Juryrig

This skill enables a hero to make fast, patchwork repairs in order to get an electronic or mechanical device or system up and running for a short period of time. A *juryrig* repair, even when successful, adds difficulty to the full repairs that must be made later, but it can get a hero through a sticky situation.

A *juryrig* repair can be made successfully once on a specific system or item. If it breaks down after being juryrigged, the system or item won't work again until it's completely fixed (using Technical Science–*repair*).

Making a *juryrig* skill check is a single action, but a character who tries to use this skill must do so on his first available action in a round, and he can't attempt any other actions for the rest of the round. How long the juryrigging lasts, and the amount of difficulty added to the full repairs, depend on the result of the skill check:

On a Critical Failure, the system or item becomes unusable and can't be made functional again without full repairs.

On a Failure, the *juryrig* attempt doesn't work but can be tried again.

On an Ordinary success, the system or item becomes operational for d6+1 time units, and 3 more successes are needed (in addition to those that were already required, based on how severely the item was damaged) to make full repairs.

On a Good success, the system or item becomes operational for 2d4+2 time units, and 2 more successes are needed to make full repairs.

Technical Science Situation Modifiers

No tools	+3
Minimal tools	0
Standard toolkit	–1
Specialized toolkit	–2
Darkness	+3
Marginal illumination	+1
Ordinary illumination	0
Good illumination	–1
No deadline	–2
Reasonable deadline	0
Tight deadline	+1
Unreasonable deadline	+3

On an Amazing success, the system or item becomes operational for 3d4+2 time units, and 1 more success is needed to make full repairs.

⊗ ***Improved Juryrig:*** When a hero reaches rank 6, his ability improves as follows: An Ordinary success produces a Good result (as described above), a Good success produces an Amazing result, and an Amazing success means the juryrigging works so well that the system or item is considered to be repaired and in regular working order.

Repair

This skill provides a hero with training in the repair and maintenance of various types of mechanical and electronic technology.

Any use of the *repair* skill (or any use of the Technical Science broad skill to make a repair) requires a complex skill check. As in all such cases, the conditions under which the skill is being used provides a modifier to each segment of the check. Some specific modifiers are given in "Technical Science Situation Modifiers" on the previous page.

The time it takes to perform a repair is determined by the Gamemaster, who will designate a time unit of minutes, hours, days, or weeks, depending on the nature of the repairs being attempted.

The complexity of a *repair* skill check is related to the amount of damage that must be repaired. Fixing an object that has suffered only stun damage is a task of Ordinary complexity. For an object with wound damage, the repair is of Good complexity. Fixing an object with any amount of mortal damage is a job of Amazing complexity, and depending on the extent of the mortal damage may require more than 10 successes.

Chapter 12: Vehicles contains information on damage to spacecraft and other conveyances. The *Gamemaster Guide* has further details on the toughness and durability of other types of objects and structures.

Technical Knowledge

This skill represents the study of technology and indicates how up-to-date a hero is on techniques or procedures that help him manipulate tools and other devices.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** As a hero's rank in this specialty skill increases, he receives a bonus to any skill checks involving Technical Science or the other three specialty skills: –1 step at rank 3; –2 at rank 6; –3 at rank 9; and –4 at rank 12.

Will Skills

Will measures a hero's mental fortitude and intuitive capacity. Although this Ability is most often associated with mental activities, a character's Will sometimes does have an effect on his physical capabilities—for instance, giving him the determination to press on when his body is in less than perfect condition. To determine the result of an action involving Will that isn't directly related to a skill, a hero makes a feat check (as described on page 63).

Staying awake for an entire night while on guard duty (particularly if you have to remain motionless and quiet) is an example of an activity that might require a Will feat check. The Gamemaster doesn't need to be specific when he declares a feat to be of a certain level of difficulty, but he will use the following as a general rule. A Marginal feat (no modifier) is one that most people can accomplish without too much trouble; a Moderate feat (+2 penalty) requires better than average Will; an Extreme feat (+3 penalty) is one that tests even those with the most powerful Will scores.

Administration

This broad skill provides a hero with knowledge concerning the forms and procedures that go into running an office or organization of almost any kind. With this skill, a hero understands scheduling, personnel and equipment management, and the regulations and laws that apply to such endeavors. Any large organizations, including governments, agencies, and corporations, have some type of administrational bureaucracy that a hero may someday be called upon to interact with. This skill allows him to attempt to identify the proper administrators to deal with in a particular situation, the proper procedures to follow, and the best way to cut through red tape.

The Administration skill can be used in an attempt to change the attitude of an individual employee of some corporation or organization. In such a case, it is treated as an encounter skill (see page 97). If the use of this skill results in a target's attitude being changed to Friendly or better, this can provide a bonus on any subsequent skill check to get information or cooperation out of the organization that is the employer of the target.

Using this skill, or either of its specialties, to get results out of a bureaucratic organization requires a complex skill check. In this case, the situation modifier for conditions relates to how quickly the character using the skill wants to produce results: It's a condition of Amazing difficulty (+3 penalty) if you need an answer in 1 day; Good, you'll settle for d4+1 days; Ordinary, you can afford to wait d4+2 days; Marginal, you're resigned to not getting an answer for d6+3 days.

The complexity of this skill check relates to the size of the bureaucratic system and the ease with which the system could process the request: Marginal, small system/extremely easy request; Ordinary, medium-sized system/routine request; Good, large system/complex request; Amazing, extremely large system/restricted or illegal request. (These two factors can offset one another to some degree; for instance, trying to get an extremely large bureaucracy to process a routine request would be a feat of Good or Ordinary complexity, depending on the Gamemaster's judgment.)

A character's Administration skill can also be used to hinder someone else's attempt to gain information. In such a case, the modifiers for conditions are transposed: It's a task of Amazing difficulty (+3 penalty) to slow down the process for d6+3 days; Good, if you're trying to gum up the works for d4+2 days; Ordinary, d4+1 days; or Marginal, if you only want to cause a delay of 1 day. Likewise, complexity works the other way around: For instance, slowing down an extremely easy request being processed through a small system is a feat of Amazing complexity, requiring a large number of successes in a relatively short time.

Bureaucracy

This specialty skill measures a hero's ability to grease (or clog up)

the wheels of bureaucracy. Important applications, permits, clearances, reports, or other bureaucratic requests can be processed faster and more efficiently with the use of this skill. Conversely, this skill can be used to make the same bureaucratic processes slower for others.

Management

This skill indicates a hero's ability to manage both personnel and administrative duties. A skilled manager can increase productivity, inspire workers, and supervise the workings of a business or office.

Animal Handling

This broad skill provides a hero with the basic ability to train animals to perform a variety of tasks, including doing labor, accepting riders, tracking, and attacking. It's also used to determine if a hero can get a trained animal to perform a task, to ride an animal, or to calm, capture, or otherwise handle a wild animal or an unfamiliar domestic animal. Note that the methods of training and the commands used with different animal species can vary widely.

Purchasing the broad skill entitles a hero to select one type of animal that he is able to train, subject to the approval of the Gamemaster. For instance, it may be possible for a hero to select "horse," or the Gamemaster may dictate that separate applications of the skill are needed to train quarter horses and draft horses. In such a case, the hero would need to have the specialty skill *animal training* in order to be able to train and handle more than one type of horse.

Any use of the Animal Handling broad skill to train a creature requires a complex skill check. Depending on the type of animal being worked with, a modifier is applied to each segment of the complex skill check, and certain types of animals take longer to train (more successes needed) than other types.

To have a chance of successfully training an animal, a character must spend at least 4 hours a day working with the creature. At the end of each week of continuous work, a skill check indicates how many successes were achieved toward the goal during that week. If the training schedule is interrupted by one or more days of no work, any days of work since the last skill check are lost. At the Gamemaster's discretion, an interruption of a week or more could mean that the training of that animal automatically fails and any successes that had been accumulated are lost.

If the complex skill check ends in a Critical Failure, the animal goes berserk and attacks its trainer. If the check is aborted because of three Failure results, the animal simply refuses to be trained (but a different character might have better results).

After an animal has been trained, other situation modifiers (listed in the bottom section of the sidebar) apply to any attempt to have the animal perform a certain task. "Unfamiliar animal" refers to a creature that has been trained by someone other than the character who's trying to make it perform. This modifier is cumulative with those listed under "Trained animal," so that trying to get an unfamiliar trained animal to perform a Good task carries a +3 penalty.

Someone with the Animal Handling skill may be able to get a wild animal or an untrained domestic animal to do something, but in no case will such an animal perform a task of greater than Ordinary difficulty.

Ordinary tasks include activities in response to simple, one-word commands such as "Attack," "Come," "Sit," "Stay," "Fetch," "Speak," and "Quiet." A Good task could be a combination of two Ordinary tasks (in succession or simultaneously), or it could be something more difficult, such as a dog pushing a lever with its paw when directed to do so. An Amazing task is just that—something that very few animals can or will do on command, such as running into a burning building to rescue a child. Of course, the Gamemaster has the final say on whether a task or trick is Ordinary, Good, or Amazing.

The broad skill also enables a character to ride any animal that can be used for basic ground transportation—generally meaning horses, mules, and other large quadrupeds. When an animal is being ridden, the creature moves in every phase. During a phase in which the hero has an action, he can use this skill in an attempt to maneuver the animal. See page 198 in *Chapter 12: Vehicles* for information on the types of maneuvers—Routine, Moderate, and Extreme—a rider may attempt. (Although an animal is not normally thought of as a vehicle, the same general rules apply to riders of animals and drivers of vehicles.)

Animal Handling Situation Modifiers

	Modifier	Complexity
Herbivores:		
Alien	+2	Amazing
Domestic	–1	Good
Wild	+1	Amazing
Carnivores:		
Alien	+5	Amazing
Domestic	–2	Ordinary
Wild	+4	Good

Unfamiliar animal	+2
Familiar animal	0
Trained animal:	
Ordinary task	–1
Good task	+1
Amazing task	+3
Untrained animal,	
Ordinary task	+1
Wild animal,	
Ordinary task	+3

Animal Riding

This specialty skill enables a hero to improve this aspect of the Animal Handling broad skill. A character with this skill can attempt racing over dangerous terrain, making jumps or performing other stunts, and engaging in mounted combat.

► ***Trick Riding:*** When a hero reaches rank 3 in this specialty, he becomes able to perform trick riding. This allows him to direct his mount to jump fences, leap chasms, or move backward. On a Critical Failure result, the animal trips (causing damage as per an Extremely Short fall for both mount and rider); on a Failure, the animal refuses to perform.

For making horizontal leaps, success on a skill check adds to an animal's natural jumping ability: Ordinary success, animal leaps normal distance plus 1 meter; Good, normal distance plus 2 meters; Amazing, normal distance plus 3 meters.

For jumping over obstructions, the results are: Ordinary, normal distance plus 1 meter; Good, normal distance plus 1.5 meters; Amazing, normal distance plus 2 meters.

For moving backward, an Ordinary success means that the animal backs up at one-half of its walk movement rate; Good, animal backs

up at its full walk movement rate; Amazing, animal backs up at one and one-half times its walk movement rate.

A hero with the trick riding ability can also use his mount for cover. This provides a penalty to an opponent's chance to hit the rider, depending on the result of the rider's skill check: Ordinary, +1 step; Good, +2 steps; Amazing, +3 steps. Of course, this tactic doesn't protect the mount in any way.

Trick riding can't be combined with any other action; for instance, it's not possible to make an attack while you're urging your mount to leap over a wall.

Animal Training

This skill allows a hero to become able to handle, ride, and train a specific type of animal. He must purchase and improve this specialty skill separately for each type of animal he wants to train. Types of animals include riding animals, pack animals, attack animals, and guard animals. Your Gamemaster has the final say on how animals are classified, and which ones require separate applications of this skill.

Awareness

Free to fraal, human, mechalus, sesheyan, t'sa, and weren heroes.

This broad skill represents a hero's powers of observation, perception, and intuition. Skill checks are called for when the Gamemaster needs to determine if a hero notices something—heroes themselves never call for a use of this skill.

Noticing something could be as simple as providing a hint that the hero missed in the normal course of play, or help when the hero appears totally lost or confused.

On a Failure, the hero doesn't notice a thing. Otherwise, any success provides the hero with at least a small clue. The Gamemaster can decide that the better the level of success achieved, the more details the hero becomes aware of. Situation die modifiers are listed in the *Gamemaster Guide*. Note, too, that another character's use of certain skills (such as Stealth and Security–*protection protocols*) can add modifiers to a hero's Awareness check.

The Awareness broad skill and its specialties are good examples of how the general rule on dice rolling applies to an ALTERNITY game: Dice should only be rolled on a skill check in a situation when the Gamemaster needs to determine if a hero is capable of doing something difficult or out of the ordinary. More often than not, heroes with respectable scores in Awareness or its specialties will automatically succeed when something exists that can be noticed or perceived—for instance, it doesn't take a skill check to determine if a hero sees a fallen tree blocking his path. On the other hand, a skill check may be called for to see if the hero notices that the fallen tree has a hole in its trunk where an object is concealed; or, the Gamemaster might assume that a hero who has several ranks in the *perception* specialty immediately notices the hole.

Some pieces of sensor equipment may provide benefits to a hero's Awareness skill check, as described in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*.

Intuition

This specialty skill represents a hero's natural instincts—his ability to sense danger when no obvious signs are evident, to avoid surprise, or to make an intuitive leap of logic without the support of hard facts. It's the ability to make a best guess in a given situation.

When no obvious signs of danger are evident, a hero's subconscious use of this skill can enable him to avoid being caught by surprise. (The Gamemaster calls for *intuition* checks; players don't request them, except in the circumstances described in the next paragraph.) Success indicates that the hero isn't surprised and can act in the surprise phase of the upcoming round. (For more information about surprise situations, see page 58 of *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.)

When a hero wants to make an intuitive "best guess," the Gamemaster may allow a player to call for an *intuition* skill check on his character's behalf. In such a case, any success yields a beneficial result, but the greater the level of success, the more accurate and complete the conclusion. This use of the *intuition* skill to make a best guess is only permitted to heroes who have purchased the specialty skill, and it shouldn't be allowed more than once or twice in an adventure.

Perception

This specialty skill represents a hero's alertness and powers of observation—the hero notices something either consciously or on a subliminal level. While *intuition* is a feeling or unexplainable sense, *perception* works on signs that can be spotted by normal senses—a broken twig lying in a path, the click of a gun's safety being released, the scent of familiar perfume in a crowded bar, a whisper in the wind. This skill can help determine a hero's ability to spot signs of trouble, perceive the true meaning in an authority figure's comment, or notice a subtle clue poking out of a pile of leaves.

When potential danger obviously exists in a situation, a hero's subconscious use of this skill can help him avoid being caught by surprise. (The Gamemaster calls for *perception* checks; players don't request them.) Success indicates that the hero isn't surprised and can act in the surprise phase of the upcoming round. (For more information about surprise situations, see page 58 of *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.)

Creativity

This skill provides a hero with training and talent (or knowledge) in a variety of creative endeavors.

A hero with the Creativity skill has a well-developed sense for the aesthetically pleasing, a facility for communicating with the written word, and the ability to convey and

Creativity Situation Modifiers

No deadline	–2
Reasonable deadline	0
Tight deadline	+1
Unreasonable deadline	+3
Using only broad skill	+4
Amazing tools/equipment	–2
Good tools/equipment	–1
Ordinary tools/equipment	0
Poor or insufficient tools/equipment	+3 or more

Note: Modifiers for tools/equipment only apply when appropriate; using a better camera can make you a better photographer, but a top-quality writing instrument doesn't make you a better poet.

evoke powerful emotions through a chosen medium. A character with just the broad skill possesses all of these characteristics, but not to such a degree that he's able to make a living as an artist, writer, or photographer. Turning the Creativity skill into the basis of a career (or being able to produce work of professional quality, if a character has another career) requires that the character pursue a specialty skill in his chosen field(s).

Using the Creativity skill involves a complex skill check, with a situation modifier based on the conditions under which the work is being done and a number of successes required related to the complexity of the task at hand. (Dashing off a cute, four-line poem might be merely an Ordinary accomplishment, but composing a lyrical, Shakespearean-quality sonnet would be Amazing.) Some of the situations that can affect a Creativity skill check are listed in the accompanying sidebar.

If the complex skill check ends in a Critical Failure, or three Failure results are obtained before the check is completed, whatever the character was trying to produce is scrapped (it just wasn't turning out right).

Creativity, Specific Skill

A blank line is provided under the Creativity skill on the hero sheet for a player to use if his hero specializes in some aspect of this skill. The Gamemaster will determine if a certain specialty skill is allowable, usually based on whether it defines a narrow enough field of interest. For instance, *illustration* might be allowed as a Creativity specialty, or it might be necessary for a hero to be more specific by singling out *computer graphics* or *holo art* as his area of expertise.

Investigate

This broad skill provides a hero with the training and ability to examine things systematically through observation, inquiry, and attention to detail. Unlike the Awareness skills, which handle the processing of immediate observations, Investigate takes time. In fact, the more time a hero spends in the act of an investigation, the better the chance of a successful skill check.

The broad skill can be used when a hero tries to apply logic and reason to reach a conclusion or deduce the solution to a problem; when a hero wants to search a specific area to turn up clues or other information; or when he tries to track a quarry that has left a detectable trail. By purchasing the specialty skills related to these uses of Investigate, a hero can improve his chances of making specific types of skill checks.

Situation modifiers for Investigate are provided in the sidebar above. Note that the definition of "time units" depends on the type of scene being run. In a scene being played out in rounds, a time unit is usually a phase. In a scene that uses a longer time frame, the Gamemaster determines what a time unit represents (usually minutes, hours, or days).

Any type of success on a skill check reveals a significant bit of information, but the accuracy and level of detail of that information are tied to the degree of success. A Failure result indicates that the hero wasn't able to reach an accurate conclusion in the time allowed with the information at hand. He may be allowed to attempt another check after a certain amount of time has passed, or if a new bit of information is introduced into the situation. The Gamemaster can also determine that some levels of detail can't be achieved without spending a certain amount of time at the investigation, or that a fully successful investigation may require a series of separate checks over a period of time.

Certain pieces of sensor equipment may provide benefits to an investigator, as described in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*.

Investigate Situation Modifiers

Using just the broad skill	+1
Fast investigation (1 time unit)	+3
Moderate investigation (2–3 time units)	+1
Careful investigation (4+ time units)	–2
Fresh investigation site	–2
Recent investigation site	0
Cold investigation site	+2
Old investigation site	+4
Hero has a related skill . . .	
at rank 1–4	–1
at rank 5–8	–2
at rank 9–12	–3
Hidden or concealed clue	+3
Small clue	+3
Large clue	–1
Hero knows what he's looking for	–1
Tracking a single target	0
Tracking a group of characters/creatures	–2
Tracking on soft ground	–1
Tracking on hard ground	+1
Tracking in urban setting	+3

Interrogate

The *interrogate* skill represents a hero's ability to ask the right questions in order to gain information from a specific target character. That character's Will resistance modifier is his protection from the probing questions of a skilled interrogator.

The skill covers the sort of interrogation that might be conducted by a seasoned journalist, a law officer, a lawyer, or a trained torturer—anyone who asks tough questions as a matter of course. It may include a hint of violence or actual pain-inducing techniques, but it usually just involves calm and reasonable debate, rhetoric, and trick questions to cause the target to slip up.

Search

This specialty skill enables a hero to develop his eye for detail and his ability to spot hidden objects. *Search* is used when a hero wants to look for clues in a specific area, find a particular object or person he knows is in the area, or hunt for important objects in as fast and systematic a fashion as possible.

The degree of success achieved on a skill check determines what the hero spots after a certain amount of time spent searching, ranging from a single small item or piece of information on a short search to several small items or a major piece of information on a long search.

Track

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his ability to follow a person, creature, or land vehicle by noting the tracks it leaves in its wake. Tracks can be anything from actual footprints to telltale signs such as broken branches, discarded litter, obvious waste material, or other evidence of passage. A tracker may not

be following physical evidence necessarily, but may be using detective skills, interview techniques, sensors (see *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*), or other special equipment.

Track is used to locate and follow a trail, either a physical one or a trail of information. Once a hero spots his prey, Stealth–*shadow* can be used to follow closely without being spotted.

When physical tracking is being done, movement is slowed to half the normal movement rate (whether walking, driving, or riding an animal). A *track* skill check can be made once every time unit, as determined by the Gamemaster. The possible results of a skill check are as follows:

On a Critical Failure, the trail is completely lost and can't be picked up again. On a Failure result, the trail is lost but can be rediscovered. (Three Failure results in the course of a single tracking attempt are treated like a Critical Failure.) On an Ordinary success, the tracker locates the trail and follows it for 2 time units before needing to make another check. On a Good success, another check is not necessary until 3 time units later. On an Amazing, success, the next check is not made until 4 time units later.

Track can also be used to obscure a hero's trail. Success affects the opposing tracker's situation modifier as follows: Critical Failure, –3 bonus; Failure, –1 bonus; Ordinary, +1 penalty; Good, +2; Amazing, +3.

When a hero takes this specialty skill, and each time he gains a new rank, he selects a specific terrain type to include in his repertoire. Any *track* skill check attempted when the hero is in such terrain is made with a –1 bonus, and any check made in terrain not in the hero's repertoire carries a +1 penalty. Terrain types include the following: forest, desert, mountain, arctic, jungle, swamp, ocean, urban/city, urban/ space station, urban/spaceship, or any other specialty terrain the Gamemaster allows.

Resolve

Free to fraal heroes.

This broad skill provides a hero with the inner strength of will necessary to defend against mental stress or attacks, to stand up to physical pain or bounce back from physical damage, and to stick to his own mind and convictions regardless of pressure or temptation. Details concerning each aspect of this broad skill are covered in the specialty skills that follow.

Mental Resolve

This specialty skill is used to determine a hero's ability to cope with emotional or mental stress of all kinds. The higher a hero's rank in *mental resolve*, the more resistant he is to emotional trauma, fear, panic, madness, insanity, mind control techniques, and mental powers.

When a hero is confronted with an emotional or mental trauma that has debilitating effects, he can make a *mental resolve* check to set the trauma aside and act without hindrance. The greater the level of fear or trauma, the higher the situation die penalty to the check.

Check results: Critical Failure, the hero collapses in mental anguish and can't act, or flees in the face of extreme fear for d4 rounds; Failure, the hero freezes and loses one action; Ordinary, the hero can act normally but receives a +1 penalty to all actions for 1 round; Good and Amazing, he puts aside his negative emotions and can act without penalty (but he may have to deal with the mental trauma later).

⊗ ***Resistance Modifier:*** At higher ranks, the *mental resolve* skill provides an improvement to a hero's Will resistance modifier, which makes it more difficult for opponents to successfully use encounter skills or mental powers to charm or influence the hero. The hero's resistance modifier improves by +1 at rank 4, by +1 again at rank 8, and by +1 again at rank 12.

Physical Resolve

Physical resolve is used to determine a hero's ability to cope with physical trauma of all kinds. It represents a hero's determination to resist physical torture, to press on though tired or in great pain, and to bounce back from physical damage.

When a hero is confronted with physical torture, he can make a *physical resolve* check to determine his reaction. The greater the level of pain and the greater the skill of the torturer, the higher the situation die penalty. Skill check results are as follows:

Critical Failure, the hero breaks under torture and immediately reveals everything the torturer wants to know.

Failure, the hero breaks under torture and reveals at least one important fact.

Ordinary, the hero withstands the torture for d4 time units (and then makes another check).

Good, the hero withstands the torture for d6+2 time units (and then makes another check).

Amazing, the hero withstands the torture for 2d4+3 time units (and then must make another check).

Physical resolve is also used to determine when a hero recovers from damage. Checks are made as described below.

▶ ***Knockout Recovery:*** A hero who falls unconscious due to knockout remains in that state for all of the round in which the knockout occurred and all of the next round. After that, he makes Resolve–*physical resolve* checks to regain consciousness—one check per round, at a time when the character is entitled to an action. On any success, the hero awakens, and he recovers a certain amount of stun damage depending on the degree of success:

Ordinary, recover 2 stun points; Good, recover 4 stun points; Amazing, recover 6 stun points.

▶ ***Natural Healing:*** See the sidebar on page 54 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action.*

▶ ***Avoiding Exhaustion:*** When all of a hero's fatigue points are used up, he can attempt a Resolve–*physical resolve* check (using his next available action) to try to avoid falling unconscious due to exhaustion. This check is made with no penalty for the fatigue damage the hero has suffered. If this check produces a Failure or a Critical Failure result, the hero immediately falls unconscious and must rest long enough to recover at least 1 fatigue point before he can perform any actions. If the check succeeds, he is able to keep going for a number of time units depending on the degree of success: Ordinary, 1 time unit; Good, 2 time units; Amazing, 3 time units. At the end of this extra time, exhaustion sets in—no further Resolve checks are allowed, and the hero is unconscious until he rests.

▶ ***Fatigue Recovery:*** The result of a Resolve–*physical resolve* skill check determines how many fatigue points a hero recovers after a sufficient amount of rest: Critical Failure

or Failure, no points recovered; Ordinary, 1 point recovered; Good, 2 points; Amazing, 3 points. (See page 53 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* for more information about fatigue.)

Street Smart

This broad skill provides a hero with general knowledge in the protocols of "the street." This is the world of gangs and street people, criminal organizations and dealers in illegal goods and services. It measures a hero's ability to negotiate and make contact with the realm of the blue-collar criminal.

Among other things, this skill helps a hero locate illegal goods and services, get around the local law or bureaucracy, and contact various underground groups and organizations. The greater the degree of success achieved, the better the hero talks the language of the streets—wherever those streets happen to be.

Several situational factors can come into play on a skill check of this type, including: the hero's relationship (if any) with the person or group he's approaching; the scarcity, legality, or difficulty of the item or service he's seeking; and whether or not he has any connections that might influence the deal one way or the other. (In addition, the law level of a particular society, as defined in the *Gamemaster Guide*, may also add modifiers to the check.) Situation modifiers are given in the sidebar. These modifiers are cumulative, so if a hero seeks an item of Amazing scarcity or illegality on a planet protected by Good law enforcers, the skill check carries a +6 penalty.

Note that not all illegal goods and services are corrupt or immoral. For example, this skill can be used to locate rebel groups on a conquered planet or to acquire printed or video media on a world where free speech has been outlawed.

Street Smart and its specialties belong to the group of skills known as *encounter skills*, which are discussed on page 97 near the beginning of the "Personality Skills" section. Refer to that text for more information on factors that can affect a Street Smart skill check.

Street Smart Situation Modifiers

Society has no law	–3
Society has Ordinary law	0
Society has Good law	+2
Society has Amazing law	+3
User of skill . . .	
Belongs to similar group	–1
Belongs to same group	–2
Belongs to opposed group	+3
Has local contact	–1
Has Reputation perk	–1
Has Infamy flaw	+1
Is an obvious stranger	+1
Seeks Ordinary assistance	–1
Seeks Good assistance	+2
Seeks Amazing assistance	+4

Criminal Elements

This specialty skill represents a hero's ability to make contact with and deal with those who are considered part of the criminal element—organized crime, professional criminals, gangs, etc. Whenever a hero tries to locate or interact with these types, he uses this skill.

Street Knowledge

This skill enables a hero to improve his familiarity with the inner workings of a particular organization or geographical area. To improve his knowledge of more than one such organization or area, he must purchase the skill separately for each one. For instance, a hero needs to buy this specialty twice in order to become familiar with how things get done in the spaceport on Beta IV, and to acquaint himself with the pecking order in the Interstellar Mercantile Union.

Teach

This broad skill represents a hero's ability to instruct others in the use of a skill belonging to the Open group. A skill check is required whenever the hero wants to teach a skill to another hero or character.

Getting instruction from a teacher can decrease the cost for another character when that character wants to buy or improve a skill. (A teacher can't teach himself, however, and the cost to another character for any skill or skill rank can never be decreased to less than 1 skill point.) A hero can only teach skills that he possesses, and the character to be taught must have enough points to purchase the skill at full cost. The benefit of a teacher on any given occasion depends on the result of the teacher's skill check:

Critical Failure, student doesn't learn or improve skill at this time; Failure, student must pay full skill cost; Ordinary, student pays cost –1; Good, student pays cost –2; Amazing, student pays cost –3.

A teacher can't teach more than one student at a time, only one skill can be taught at a time (usually between adventures), and only one new skill or one rank of improvement can be gained by a student during any teaching session. Also, a teacher can only teach a specialty skill up to one-half of his current rank in that skill. For example, a teacher with the Animal Handling–*animal training* skill at rank 4 can teach someone else *animal training* up to rank 2.

Teach, Specific Field

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill allows a hero to expand his teaching ability. For each separate purchase of this specialty skill, the hero selects a profession (Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, or Tech Op) and becomes able to teach skills associated with that profession in addition to those skills belonging to the Open group. A hero who is specialized in *Combat Spec teaching*, for instance, can help another character learn or improve a Combat Spec skill.

If the optional rules for Mindwalkers (see *Chapter 14: Psionics*) are being used, then a Mindwalker who has the *Mindwalker teaching* spe-

Teach Situation Modifiers

Teaching a broad skill	+2
Teaching a specialty skill:	
To rank 1, 2, or 3	0
To rank 4	+1
To rank 5	+2
To rank 6	+3
For the specialty skill:	
Student is learning a profession skill	–1
Student is learning an out-of-profession skill	+2

Table P25: Encounter Skill Effects

Skill Check Result	Target's Starting Attitude: Hostile	Neutral	Friendly	Charmed
Failure	Combative	Hostile	Neutral	Friendly
Ordinary	Hostile	Neutral	Friendly	Charmed
Good	Neutral	Friendly	Charmed	Fanatic
Amazing	Friendly	Charmed	Fanatic	Fanatic

Attitude Modifiers:

Combative .....+3
Hostile .....+2
Neutral 0
Friendly .....–1
Charmed .....–2
Fanatic .....–3

Encounter skills include:

Business (INT)
Law (INT)
Administration (WIL)
Street Smart (WIL)
Culture (PER)
Deception (PER) (*bribe, bluff* only)
Entertainment (PER)
Interaction (PER)
Leadership (PER)

cialty can teach psionic skills to another character who also has psionic abilities.

Personality Skills

Personality measures a hero's interpersonal abilities and charisma. This Ability and the skills associated with it can be extremely important, because almost any Alternity adventure includes scenes that require the heroes to interact with other characters. Making a good first impression on a stranger, or being able to persuade someone to do what you want, can be the difference between a successful mission and a dismal failure. To determine the result of an action involving Personality that isn't directly related to a skill, a hero makes a feat check (see page 63).

Sometimes a Personality feat check might be requested by the Gamemaster to determine a supporting cast member's initial reaction to a hero. In this case, a Critical Failure indicates that the supporting cast member will never get to like the hero; a Marginal result provides the character with a Hostile attitude; an Ordinary result with a Neutral attitude; and a Good or Amazing result with a Friendly attitude.

The Gamemaster doesn't need to be specific when he declares a feat to be of a certain level of difficulty, but he will use the following as a general rule. A Marginal feat (no modifier) is one that most people can accomplish without too much trouble; a Moderate feat (+2 penalty) requires better than average Personality; and an Extreme feat (+3 penalty) is one that tests even those with the best Personality scores.

Culture

This broad skill represents a hero's ability to understand and interact with cultures that are different from his own. Areas of knowledge covered by the skill include the customs, philosophy, and way of life of a particular culture, as well as a basic familiarity with major historical figures, events, and trends important to that culture.

In the use of the broad skill, a hero applies what he knows about cultural trends and studies to make an educated guess about how to interact with a member of another culture. The broad skill provides at least a working knowledge of what to do when dealing with any alien culture.

When Culture or any of its specialty skills is used in an interactive context with one or more other characters, it is considered an encounter skill (see the sidebar). A Critical Failure result on a skill check indicates that the hero has thoroughly insulted the individual or group he's trying to deal with. Other skill check results change the target's attitude as shown on Table P25: Encounter Skill Effects. The greater the degree of success, the more endearing and flattering the hero appears to the member(s) of the culture he's dealing with.

The complexity of the ideas that are being communicated during a use of the Culture skill (or the use of one of its specialty skills) may provide a modifier to the skill check:

Simple concepts—basic messages such as exchanging names, conveying friendly intentions, and *offering help—give a –1 bonus to* the skill check.

Everyday concepts—information that is somewhat more difficult to convey, such as explaining one's place of origin or occupation—provide no modifier.

Complex concepts—describing what the hero expects to gain from this contact, or conveying a threat or an opportunity that the hero wants to make known—provide a penalty of at least +1 and possibly more, if the Gamemaster rules that the concept being conveyed is exceedingly complicated or esoteric.

Diplomacy

This specialty skill allows a hero to improve his ability to reach agreements and understandings with representatives of different nations, cultures, subcultures and species.

Culture Situation Modifiers

Simple concepts .....–1
Everyday concepts 0
Complex concepts .....+1
Etiquette ranks 3–5 .....–1
Etiquette ranks 6–8 .....–2
Etiquette ranks 9–11 .....–3
Etiquette rank 12 .....–4

Encounter Skills

Most of the skills associated with Personality, as well as a few that are tied to Intelligence or Will, also belong to another special category known as *encounter skills*.

In game terms, an encounter skill is one for which the outcome of a skill check depends at least in part on the attitude of one character or group (the *target*) toward the character using the skill. Encounter skills are typically used during encounter scenes (see page 46 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*), but they can come into play at any time.

Whenever possible, a scene involving the use of encounter skills should be roleplayed (by players representing their heroes, and by the Gamemaster representing members of the supporting cast), so that dice rolls are not used to dictate how characters react or behave toward one another. But when a skill check seems necessary, refer to TABLE P25: ENCOUNTER SKILL EFFECTS and use the following guidelines:

A target that a hero is interacting with for the first time starts with one of three possible attitudes toward the hero: Hostile, Neutral, or Friendly. The hero's skill check result determines the target's attitude after the interaction occurs. To find the appropriate attitude, cross-reference the result of the skill check with the attitude of the target before the skill check was made. For example, if a hero attempts to use an encounter skill on a Neutral character and achieves a Good success, the Neutral character's attitude turns to Friendly. In all cases, a Critical Failure results in an immediate end to the interaction—the other character becomes disinterested or belligerent, or decides to leave, and nothing the hero does at this time will make any difference. Checks for some encounter skills (such as Deception–*bluff*) are handled differently from what's described here; such differences are explained in the descriptions of those skills.

A target's attitude provides a modifier to the hero's skill check, as shown in the list below Table P25. Of course, other aspects of the situation can also modify the skill check—for instance, trying to use some form of verbal persuasion on a Friendly target who can't hear you over the roar of a nearby jet engine would probably be done with a penalty instead of the standard –1 bonus for a target with a Friendly attitude.

The attitude categories are generally defined as follows:

Combative: The target believes that he is under attack or that an attack is imminent. He responds accordingly, fighting if he feels he has a chance or fleeing to summon help if he's outclassed. The attitude of a Combative target usually can't be changed by the use of an encounter skill; in most cases, some event related to the story (such as besting the character in combat) must occur to cause the target to change his mind.

Hostile: The target is inclined to take action to counter the hero, because he doesn't like him or feels threatened by him, but he will avoid a direct confrontation (combat) with the hero unless he's prepared or thinks it's the best option.

Neutral: The target responds as he is normally inclined to do, neither liking nor disliking the hero, giving no undue breaks to nor trying to take undue advantage of the hero.

Friendly: The target is inclined to take action to help the hero, as long as this action doesn't inconvenience him or place him at risk.

Charmed: The target is completely swayed to the hero's point of view, either by finding common goals or values, growing to like the hero, believing the hero intrinsically, or being cowed by the hero's overtures. A target whose attitude is changed to Charmed by the use of an encounter skill doesn't necessarily remain that way; if the hero gets a Failure on a subsequent skill check, the target's attitude changes to merely Friendly.

Fanatic: The target is so won over by the hero that he does almost anything the hero asks. Such a character becomes a loyal contact or follower of the hero, and remains loyal until the hero does something to change this condition. Just as with the Combative attitude (above), a Fanatic attitude can't be altered by an encounter skill check, but only by an event that occurs within the context of the story.

In general, *diplomacy* will come into play when a hero wants to reach an accord with a member of a different culture. The skill can only be used on a particular target if the hero has at least rank 1 in the specific Culture–*etiquette* skill that pertains to the target's culture.

Interaction and its specialty skills are usually used for interpersonal dealings between members of the same culture, but the Gamemaster may decide that Culture–*diplomacy* is also useful in such cases. (If so, it's not necessary for a hero to have the *etiquette* skill that pertains to his or her culture in order to use *diplomacy* on other members of that culture.)

Depending on the nature of the issue to be resolved, the *diplomacy* skill check may be a single dice roll, or it may be a complex skill check requiring an extended period of time to complete.

Etiquette, Specific Skill

This skill can't be used untrained.

For each separate purchase of this specialty skill, a hero selects a specific culture. As the specialty skill is improved, the hero gains a progressively stronger grasp on the customs, attitudes, and beliefs of that culture.

⊗ ***Increased Effect:*** Gaining ranks in Culture–*etiquette* as it pertains to a certain culture translates into a bonus to the use of Culture–*diplomacy* when that skill is used on a member of the culture in question. Having the *etiquette* skill at rank 3 provides a –1 bonus to *diplomacy* skill checks. The bonus improves to –2 at rank 6, to –3 at rank 9, and to –4 at rank 12.

The Gamemaster will decide what constitutes a "specific culture," taking the campaign setting into account. In a campaign that takes place entirely on Earth, different countries may represent specific cultures; in a starfaring campaign, each planet, star system, or alien species could be a different culture.

First Encounter

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill represents a hero's training in the theories and protocols of making first contact with a previously unknown culture. With this skill, a hero can assess the mental, physical, and technological ca-

pabilities of an unfamiliar species, begin the process of establishing communications and learning each other's language, and make a preliminary study of the strangers' cultural and societal habits.

A *first encounter* skill check is always a complex chore, and may take days, weeks, or even months to successfully complete. The Gamemaster will assign the number of successes necessary to complete the skill check based on the extent of difference between the two cultures involved. Also, the Gamemaster will determine the initial attitude of the target creature(s) toward the hero, and may inform the hero of changes in that attitude that take place while the complex skill check is under way.

Upon the successful completion of the *first encounter* skill check, the hero immediately gains rank 1 in the Knowledge–*language* and Culture–*etiquette* skills that relate to the formerly unknown culture.

Deception

This broad skill represents a hero's proficiency at deceiving others through conversation and face-to-face interaction. Whether a hero tries to bluff his way out of trouble, bribe a suspicious official, fast-talk dimwitted thugs into confusion, or gamble his way into a small fortune, this broad skill covers all verbal tricks and subterfuges.

Although the use of Deception or any of its specialty skills can affect the attitude of someone who is victimized by the skill, this shift in attitude is not necessarily long-lasting. Sometimes even the slightest change in a situation will spoil a character's ruse, or perhaps require another skill check to see if he succeeds in perpetuating his trickery.

A hero's Deception situation die is modified by his target's Intelligence resistance modifier. In addition, the Gamemaster may award bonuses or penalties depending on past dealings or other details that may come into play. The greater the level of success the hero achieves, the more convincing his deception appears to be.

Bluff

This specialty skill represents a talent for misleading or deceiving through false bravado or outright lies, or deterring a character by displaying extreme (and probably unwarranted) confidence.

Bluff is used to determine the result of a hero's trick, con, or bold-faced lie. No matter what other props a hero may use in a *bluff* attempt, the most important component is the hero's attitude and verbal interaction. This is the ability to make another character believe something that isn't true.

On a Critical Failure, the bluff is seen for what it is, and the target becomes Hostile or Combative. On a Failure, instead of having a positive effect, the hero's patter is considered to be annoying and condescending. On an Ordinary success, the bluff works for the immediate scene, although no change in attitude occurs in the affected character(s). On a Good result, the target's attitude toward the bluffer improves by one grade (Neutral to Friendly, Friendly to Charmed, etc.) for d8+1 time units before he figures out that he was tricked. On an Amazing success, the target's attitude improves by two grades for d12+2 time units before he figures out that he was tricked.

Bribe

Whenever a hero wants to offer another character money, goods, information, or services to get that character to do what the hero wants, a *bribe* check is called for.

On a Critical Failure, not only is the bribe refused, but the target becomes Hostile or even Combative. In all cases, there's no way he's going to accept the bribe.

A Failure result means that the bribe is refused, and if the hero wants to try again he must raise the value of the bribe being offered. Each subsequent Failure result adds to the size of the bribe until the hero either rolls a Critical Failure (with effects as described above) or achieves some degree of success.

An Ordinary success indicates that the bribe is accepted, but the attitude of the target is unchanged—a Hostile guard will accept your money and let you pass, but if he sees you again he'll still be Hostile.

On a Good success, the bribe is accepted, and the target's attitude improves by one grade for 2d6 hours or until the hero does something to change the relationship. (Bought friendships only last until the money runs out and usually require a steady flow of cash or favors.)

On an Amazing result, the bribe is accepted, and the target's attitude improves by two grades for 4d6 hours or until the hero does something to change the relationship.

Gamble

This specialty skill represents a hero's proficiency at various games of chance. With each purchase of the specialty skill, the player selects a different game (subject to the approval of the Gamemaster) for his hero to be skilled in.

With a successful *gamble* check, a hero can estimate the odds, determine if a particular game has been rigged, count cards, spot a cheater or another skilled gambler, and increase his own odds of winning.

A gambler can improve his odds of winning either by playing skillfully and honestly—or by cheating. If a hero plays honestly, the winner in a gambling contest is the one who achieves the highest success level, with each tie representing an increase in the stakes. A gambler's skill check is made with a –2 bonus if he is playing against an untrained opponent (someone who does not have the Deception broad skill), with no modifier if playing against a trained opponent (someone who has Deception and perhaps also *gamble*, but at the same or a lower rank), or with a +2 penalty if playing against a trained opponent of a higher skill rank.

If a hero decides to cheat, different modifiers apply: a –3 bonus if playing against an untrained opponent, a +1 penalty if playing against a trained opponent, and a +3 penalty if playing against a trained opponent of a higher skill rank. Payoffs are better, however, depending on the check result that ends the contest:

On any Critical Failure, the hero is caught cheating. On a Marginal success, he wins the pot; on an Ordinary success, he wins the pot plus a side bet equal to half of the pot; Good, he wins the pot plus a side bet of an equal amount; Amazing, he wins the pot plus a side bet of twice that amount.

As an option, you may use the "Character vs. Character" rules on page 63 to determine the outcome when heroes gamble against one another. In this case, however, the size

of the pot is agreed upon before any dice are rolled.

Entertainment

This broad skill represents a hero's proficiency in the performing arts. A hero with this skill is competent enough to perform amateur theater or play at the equivalent of a high school dance, while the specialty skills allow a hero to become a first-rate performer—or even a star.

Technical knowledge and training are an important part of this skill, but it also represents a hero's stage or screen presence, his magnetism in front of an audience, and his ability to play to that audience and elicit an emotional response. Skill checks are modified by the target's Will resistance modifier if the hero tries to fool or alter the emotions of his audience by entertaining them; or by the target's Personality resistance modifier if he tries to impress or otherwise alter attitudes toward him.

Many forms of performance entertainment exist, such as acting, dancing, singing, and playing a musical instrument. Other specialty skills that may be selected under this broad skill (with the Gamemaster's permission) include stand-up comedy, juggling, and ventriloquism.

The greater the level of success the hero achieves, the more powerful his performance (the better the improvement in the audience's attitude). A Critical Failure indicates some bit of bad luck has occurred—a microphone or speaker goes out, a set collapses, an instrument breaks, and so forth.

As with other similar uses of encounter skills, the beginning attitude of an audience toward a performer is either Hostile (inclined not to like the sort of act the entertainer does, or inclined not to like the entertainer himself), Neutral (unfamiliar with the entertainer), or Friendly (containing several members who are avid fans of the entertainer). In addition to any modifier for the audience's attitude (see TABLE P25: ENCOUNTER SKILL EFFECTS), other factors can affect an Entertainment skill check. For instance:

An entertainer who is simply trying to show his audience a good time and not necessarily turn them into fans receives a –1 bonus.

An entertainer who is out to make a name for himself, to impress the audience at the risk of alienating some of its members, receives a +1 penalty.

An entertainer who has an ulterior motive, who is trying to stun, shock, or divert the attention of the audience from some other occurrence, receives a +3 penalty.

Entertainment Skill Rank Benefit

⊗ **Enhance Another Skill:** Entertainment specialty skills can be combined with certain other skills for greater effect. The higher a hero's skill rank in the Entertainment skill, the better his chance of succeeding at using another skill in combination: At rank 1, he receives a –1 bonus to the check for the other skill; at rank 4 the bonus is –2; at rank 8 the bonus is –3; and at rank 12 the bonus is –4.

Possible combinations of skills to which this benefit could apply include act or dance with Interaction–seduce; dance with Manipulation–pickpocket or Acrobatics; sing with Interaction–taunt; and musical instrument with Leadership–inspire. If you have other ideas for how an Entertainment skill can be used in this way, talk them over with your Gamemaster.

Act

This specialty skill represents a talent for playing a part or assuming a dramatic role. It also covers impersonation and the skills and techniques of the stage and screen.

The *act* skill is used to determine the results of a hero's dramatic performance or to determine his knowledge or skill with a technical aspect of the stage or screen (such as directing, makeup, or stunts). In most cases, *act* is used to entertain. Penalties should be applied if an actor attempts a role that requires him to perform outside the controlled conditions of a sound stage.

► ***Disguise:*** When a hero achieves rank 4 in the *act* skill, he becomes able to employ stage and film makeup and techniques to change his appearance or even to look like someone else.

Applying a disguise requires a complex skill check, with the complexity of the check (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing) depending on how effective the hero wants his disguise to be. The Gamemaster may assign a situation modifier to each segment of the skill check to account for conditions such as the availability of materials and whether the hero is able to remain unobserved while he's putting on the disguise.

If the disguise is applied successfully, other characters who later observe the hero receive a penalty to any Awareness–*perception* skill checks specifically made to determine if they can see through the disguise: a +1 penalty for an Ordinary disguise, +2 for a Good disguise, and +3 for an Amazing disguise.

Dance

The *dance* skill represents a talent for moving rhythmically to music by following set steps and gestures or by improvisation. It also covers the technical aspects of performance dance, such as choreography and the knowledge of various popular and cultural dance techniques. *Dance* can be used to entertain, tell a story, or impress an audience. The greater the level of success, the more impressive and inspiring the dance performance—an Amazing result indicates that the dancer is poetry in motion.

Musical Instrument

This skill can't be used untrained.

The *musical instrument* skill represents a talent for playing a particular musical instrument and reading music. When a hero purchases this skill, he selects a specific musical instrument. If he wants to be skilled with more than one instrument, he must purchase and improve each specialty skill separately.

Musical instruments include drums, guitars, violins, flutes, saxophones, pianos, and any other instrument the Gamemaster determines exists in his campaign.

Sing

Sing represents a talent for carrying a note and singing songs. A hero with this skill is a trained vocalist

with a strong and melodious voice. The greater a hero's skill rank, the greater the caliber and quality of the performance he can give.

Interaction

Free to human, fraal, sesheyan, t'sa, and weren heroes.

This broad skill provides a hero with the basics of interpersonal contact with members of the same species and native culture. Through the use of the associated specialty skills, a hero can become an expert in the arts of interaction and communication. While everyone who grows up around other people has some skill at interacting with others, those who purchase any of the specialty skills are either trained or naturally proficient at winning friends and influencing people.

Interaction includes such specific areas as making bargains, knowing how to question, charm, seduce, or intimidate another character, and being able to taunt and trade insults with the best of them. Interaction is an encounter skill, meaning that any skill check takes into account the target's attitude (see Table P25: Encounter Skill Effects). However, neither a Combative character nor a Fanatic character can be influenced by Interaction. The target's Will resistance modifier also applies, as well as any other relevant factors listed in the "Interaction Situation Modifiers" sidebar. Note that the modifiers are cumulative.

In general, the changes in attitude that can be brought about by the use of Interaction are longer-lasting than the changes achieved through the use of Deception or Entertainment skills. Otherwise, a target's change in attitude lasts until the hero does something to alter that attitude in either a positive or negative way.

When possible, it's better to role-play an Interaction encounter than simply rolling dice and deciding an outcome.

Interaction Situation Modifiers

Target is different species	+2
Target is different culture	+2
Target's/hero's relationship:	
Strangers	+1
Known to each other	0
Acquainted	–1
For the *bargain* skill only:	
Opponent has no ranks in *bargain*	–2
Opponent has ranks in *bargain*	0
Supply is low	+2
Supply is moderate	0
Supply is high	–1
Demand is low	–2
Demand is moderate	0
Demand is high	+2

Bargain

This specialty skill represents a hero's ability to make and close deals of all kinds. It provides a hero with the skills to haggle, negotiate, and bluster his way through a deal.

Bargain situation modifiers include supply and demand of the item in question, as well as the Will resistance modifier of the person on the other end of the deal and any other relevant factors from the "Interaction Situation Modifiers" sidebar.

This skill comes into play when both parties are inclined to make a deal. It helps determine who gets the better outcome. It's used by merchants, customers, buyers, sellers, negotiators, and diplomats of all kinds. The greater the degree of success, the better the deal turns out to be for the hero making it.

Charm

This specialty skill represents a hero's ability to change the attitudes of those he interacts with. By presenting himself in a likable, friendly manner, a hero with this skill seeks to charm others into giving up something with kind words, a winning smile, and a personable attitude—whether it's material goods or simply a change of attitude.

Note that charm can only be used on targets whose attitude is Neutral or Friendly. A character can't charm a Hostile or Combative target.

Interview

The *interview* skill represents a hero's ability to get information from another character. It differs from Investigate–*interrogate* (a Will-based skill) in the amount of aggressiveness applied by the questioner and the inclination of the interviewee to cooperate. In general, *interview* serves to provide the questioner with information that the target is willing to share, while *interrogate* is used to extract information from a stubborn or hostile target.

Interview can't be used on someone with a Hostile or Combative attitude toward the questioner.

Intimidate

This skill represents a hero's ability to threaten another character, either by physical presence or the weight of authority. *Intimidate* enables a hero to force an opponent to back down, reveal information, or cooperate in some other way due to fear.

The target's Will resistance modifier applies to the hero's skill check, as does the target's attitude and any other Interaction modifiers. It's not possible to intimidate a Fanatic or Combative character. The greater the degree of success on the hero's skill check, the more cooperation he can elicit through intimidation.

Seduce

The *seduce* skill represents the ability to entice or beguile another character through the use of opening lines, witty exchanges, playful conversation, and intimate behavior. To seduce another character is to manipulate that character's emotions through planned exchanges.

The final goal of seduction is to gain the seduced character's trust or cooperation through romantic overtures. Note that *seduce* can only be used on targets whose attitude is Friendly or better. A character can't seduce a target whose attitude is Neutral, Hostile, or Combative. (A hero might need to *charm* a character into having a Friendly attitude before attempting to *seduce* that character.) To actually accomplish the seduction, the hero must achieve an Ordinary result or better.

A seduced character won't stay that way forever. How long the character remains seduced depends on the result of the check that led to the seduction. If the target becomes Charmed, the seduction works well enough to lead to serious feelings that will last if the seducer continues to feign interest (makes a successful *seduce* skill check at least once per week). If the target becomes Fanatic, the seduction works so well that the target falls in love with (or becomes obsessed with) the seducer.

Every time the seducer asks for a favor of any sort, the seduced character makes a Will feat check with a modifier based on his or her attitude (Charmed, *+1* penalty; Fanatic, *+2* penalty). A success on this feat check indicates that the seduced character's attitude is altered by one grade toward Neutral (Fanatic to Charmed, or Charmed to Friendly). Once the seduced character's attitude shifts to Friendly, he or she no longer behaves as though seduced.

Taunt

This specialty skill represents a hero's ability to trade insults with the best of them. A successful *taunt* can cause an opponent to become rattled or even attempt an action he knows is against his best interest. An opponent's Will resistance modifier and current attitude determines the situation die used in the check—but note the special modifiers for attitude in "Taunt Situation Modifiers." The skill has no effect on a target whose attitude is Charmed or Fanatic.

On a Critical Failure, the target uses the taunt to constructively fuel his own rage, receiving a –2 bonus to his next action if it is meant to directly affect the user of the *taunt* skill. On a Failure, the taunt has no effect on the opponent. On an Ordinary success, the taunt is effective, providing a *+1 penalty to the target's* next action. On a Good success, the taunt rattles the target, who receives a +2 penalty to his next action. On an Amazing success, the taunt enrages the opponent, who receives a +3 penalty to his next action and shifts one grade in attitude toward Combative in regard to the taunter (Neutral to Hostile, for example).

After a Critical Failure or a Failure result, a character can make another attempt to taunt someone else. However, only one *successful* taunt can be directed at a target in a scene. Additional uses of the skill have no effect.

Taunt Situation Modifiers

Target is Combative	–2
Target is Hostile	–1
Target is Neutral	0
Target is Friendly	+1

Adding Extra Skills

If you think of a skill you want your hero to have that's not covered in this *chapter, discuss it with your Gamemaster. If he or she agrees that the* skill is appropriate for the campaign setting, then it would be a fairly simple matter to create a description, decide on a cost and a profession code, and put the skill into play.

Leadership

This broad skill provides a hero with the abilities and talents of a leader. With leadership training, a hero can coordinate a group to get it to perform better or to work as a team.

Only one character can assume the role of leader at a time, or their conflicting orders cancel each other out. A leader, by using an action to attempt a Leadership skill check and then achieving a degree of success on the check, provides a –1 bonus to all actions performed in the remainder of the current round and all of the following round by a certain number of followers. The check is modified by the attitude of the targets, any factor that applies from the "Leadership Situation Modifiers" sidebar, plus any other factors determined by the Gamemaster. Note, however, that the Leadership broad skill can't be used on targets who are Combative. Skill check results:

On a Critical Failure, the leader confuses his followers, who receive a *+1 penalty for the remainder of the* current round and all of the following round. No further Leadership checks can be made in this scene.

On a Failure, the followers receive no bonus in the current round, but the leader can make another check in the next round.

On an Ordinary success, as many as two followers receive the leadership bonus in the remainder of this round and all of the following round.

On a Good success, as many as four followers receive the leadership bonus in the remainder of this round and all of the following round.

On an Amazing success, as many as six followers receive the leadership bonus in the remainder of this round and all of the following round.

Leadership Situation Modifiers

Targets are accustomed to being led	–2
Targets recognize leader's authority	0
Targets don't recognize leader's authority	+2

Command

This specialty skill represents the hero's ability to lead others by virtue of sheer authoritativeness and persuasive ability. This is the skill used by military officers, elected officials, and law enforcers to issue orders and see that they're carried out. This skill can't be used on targets who are Combative; before such targets can be led, their attitude must be shifted (perhaps by the use of the *inspire* skill; see below).

Inspire

This skill can't be used untrained.

This specialty skill represents the ability to command by example. This skill can be used by military officers, elected officials, and law enforcers who also have the *command* specialty, but *inspire* is more often used by those who are trying to lead civil disobedience movements and other types of nonviolent activities.

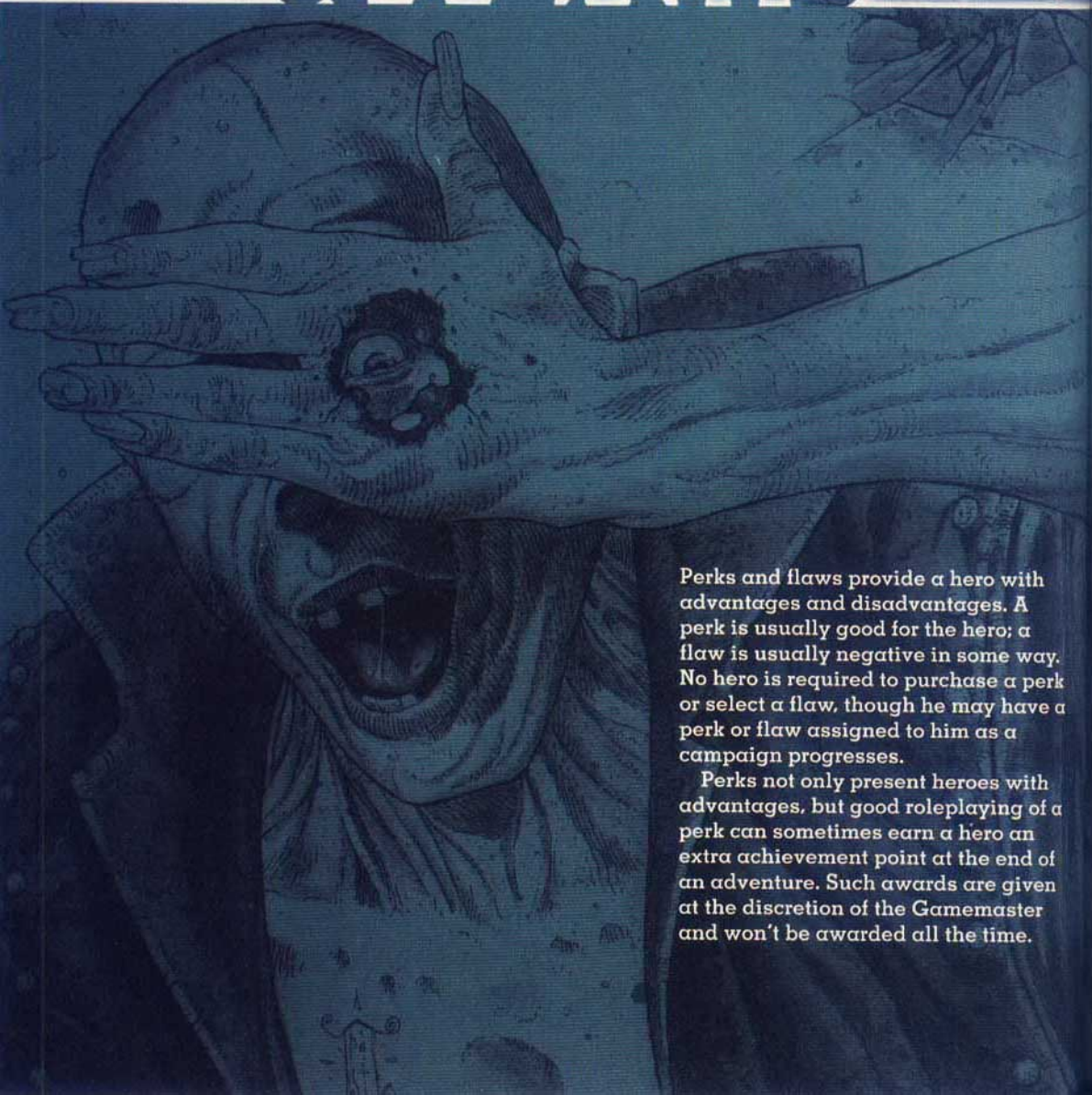
This skill is used in basically the same way that Interaction–*charm* is used: to favorably alter the attitude of the target(s) toward the user of the skill. One major difference, however, is that *inspire* can be used on targets who are Hostile or Combative.

Leadership Skill Rank Benefit

⊗ **Increased Effect:** As a character achieves higher ranks in a Leadership specialty skill, the bonus to his or her Leadership skill checks improves to –1 at rank 4, to –2 at rank 8, and to –3 at rank 12. This bonus is not cumulative, so that a character with rank 4 in both command and inspire receives only a –2 bonus.

CHAPTER 5

PERKS & FLAWS



Perks and flaws provide a hero with advantages and disadvantages. A perk is usually good for the hero; a flaw is usually negative in some way. No hero is required to purchase a perk or select a flaw, though he may have a perk or flaw assigned to him as a campaign progresses.

Perks not only present heroes with advantages, but good roleplaying of a perk can sometimes earn a hero an extra achievement point at the end of an adventure. Such awards are given at the discretion of the Gamemaster and won't be awarded all the time.

Perk Descriptions

Perks *are benefits you can purchase* for your hero. A character can never purchase more than three perks. These can be selected at the time of character creation or at a later date, but only certain perks can be added after a character has begun his career. (See *Chapter 8: Achievements* for more details.) On Table P26: Perks, the use of *italic* type for a perk's name denotes a perk that must be selected at the time of character creation if it is going to be purchased at all.

Table P26 shows the cost in skill points for a hero to purchase a perk at the start of his career, the ability the perk is associated with, and whether a perk is the *active* type or the conscious type. Active perks provide a hero with a constant benefit. Conscious perks are not always in effect; a hero may be required to make a check to see if a conscious perk can be activated. The Gamemaster determines when a perk can be used.

When a perk check is called for, the base situation die is +d4. The perk's score is equal to the associated Ability Score.

Table P26: Perks

Perk	Cost	Ability	Type
Alien Artifact	8	—	Special
Ambidextrous	4	DEX	Active
Animal Friend	4	WIL	Conscious
Celebrity	3	PER	Conscious
Concentration	3	INT	Conscious
Danger Sense	4	WIL	Active
Faith	5	WIL	Conscious
Filthy Rich	6	PER	Conscious
Fists of Iron	2/5	STR	Active
Fortitude	4	CON	Active
Good Luck	3	WIL	Conscious
Great Looks	3	PER	Active
Heightened Ability	10	Special	Active
Observant	3	WIL	Active
Photo Memory	3	INT	Conscious
Powerful Ally	4	PER	Conscious
Psionic Awareness	3	INT	Active
Reflexes	4	DEX	Active
Reputation	3	WIL	Active
Tough as Nails	4	STR	Active
Vigor	2/3/4	CON	Active
Willpower	4	WIL	Active

Alien Artifact

Cost 8

An alien artifact is a strange device or relic that the hero doesn't know anything about. It could be an object of alien origin, or a one-of-a-kind experimental gadget, or even an experimental process used on the character at some point in the past. Somewhere in his travels, the hero came to possess the artifact or the abilities it provides. Any alien artifact that is an item is small enough to be easily carried around or worn as an accessory to a hero's outfit. The hero doesn't know his item's function or purpose; he has to discover exactly what the artifact does as the campaign progresses.

As a perk, an alien artifact provides mostly advantages—but every artifact also has its negative side. Some provide a constant benefit; others require that the hero make a perk check to activate the artifact.

An artifact's negative side can be a flaw that manifests when the hero least expects it; the downside can also be the simple fact that alien artifacts are extremely rare, exceedingly valuable, and highly coveted—someone wants the one your hero

possesses, and will stop at nothing to get it.

Alien artifacts are listed and described in the *Gamemaster Guide*. After you select this perk, the Gamemaster will design an alien artifact for your hero.

Ambidextrous

Cost 4, DEX, Active

A hero with this perk can use both hands at the same time with more ease than someone who is not ambidextrous. A hero without this perk suffers penalties when using his off hand or when attempting to use two weapons in combat. (See "Attacking with Two Weapons" on page 57 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*.) With this perk, the penalty for the action using the off hand is reduced to +2 steps, and the penalty for the primary hand is eliminated.

Animal Friend

Cost 4, WIL, Conscious

Animals of all kinds innately trust a hero who has this perk. The hero can easily befriend animals, and he makes all encounter rolls involving normal animals with a –2 bonus (use the situation modifiers for the Animal Handling skill, page 91). The hero makes Animal Handling skill checks with a –1 bonus, in addition to other modifiers that may apply. This bonus has the effect of making it possible for the hero to train an animal in less time than would be needed by a hero who does not have this perk. The perk has no effect on sentient or unintelligent creatures.

Celebrity

Cost 3, PER, Conscious

This perk indicates that the hero is famous in certain circles, as chosen by the player and Gamemaster. The character can be an entertainment celebrity, a renowned scientist, doctor, or war hero, or he can enjoy celebrity status for another reason that the Gamemaster approves.

In a circumstance when a hero's Celebrity might have an effect, the Gamemaster may call for a perk check at the start of a scene to determine if the perk makes any difference in what's about to happen. A movie star may be adored by those who watch his films, but his celebrity status means nothing to those who have never seen a movie or read a personality profile of the star.

Check results: Critical Failure, celebrity status backfires and the hero is mobbed by the crowd; Failure, +2 penalty to any Personality-based skill checks made by the hero during the upcoming scene; Marginal, no modifier; Ordinary, –1 bonus; Good, –2 bonus; Amazing, –3 bonus.

As a celebrity's achievement level improves, so does the bonus applied to the perk check: At level 5, the base situation die for any Celebrity check becomes –d4; at level 10 it becomes –d6; and at level 15 it becomes –d8.

Concentration

Cost 3, INT, Conscious

This perk provides a hero with the ability to concentrate on the task at hand. By using it as an action, the hero makes a Concentration check to improve a stated task that he wants to attempt as his next action.

On a Failure result, the hero's next action is made with no modifier for Concentration. On an Ordinary success, his ability to concentrate provides him a –1 bonus; Good, –2 bonus; Amazing, –3 bonus.

If a hero is disturbed in any way prior to attempting the stated task, the Concentration perk bonus is lost.

Danger Sense

Cost 4, WIL, Active

This perk provides a hero with the innate ability to anticipate danger. This translates as a –2 bonus to all Awareness—*intuition* checks.

Faith

Cost 5, WIL, Conscious

This perk provides a hero with belief in either himself or a power or agency greater than himself. The player must select what the hero has faith in and the basic tenets of that faith. Examples include a nation, a religion, or a specific organization. This faith must be strong and all-encompassing. The hero must truly be fervent in his belief in this faith, not just be a casual observer of form and ritual. A hero with this perk who doesn't show extreme devotion loses the benefits it provides.

The first time the Faith perk is called upon during an adventure, the hero's base situation die for the perk check is –d4. Each additional use of this perk in the same adventure receives a cumulative +1 penalty. The moment a hero fails a perk check, he can't call upon the benefits of this perk until the next adventure or the next game session, as determined by the Gamemaster.

With the Faith perk, a hero can appear to perform miracles when the perk is used in conjunction with a skill that doesn't go against the tenets of the hero's faith. For example, a member of the clergy can call on Faith to help him solve a problem, apply medical aid to a character, or settle a dispute, but the benefits can't be applied to firing a weapon at a living foe. The benefits of Faith depend on a perk check:

On a Critical Failure, the hero fails not only the perk check but the skill check that follows it, and this perk can't be used again until the next adventure or game session (as the Gamemaster determines). On a Failure, the perk provides no benefit and it can't be used again until the next adventure or game session (as the Gamemaster determines). On an Ordinary success, the result of the hero's subsequent skill check is improved by one degree of success. On a Good success, the next skill check result is improved by two degrees of success. On an Amazing success, the next skill check result is improved by three degrees of success. (Of course, a result can never be improved to any degree greater than Amazing.)

◆ ***Example:*** The weren shaman Gorrarl must apply first aid to a badly wounded companion. He calls on his Faith perk first, achieving a Good success on the perk check. This grants him an improvement of two degrees of success on his *first aid* check result. The dice indicate that his *first aid* check is a Critical Failure, but because of his perk it instead becomes an Ordinary success.

Filthy Rich

Cost 6, PER, Conscious

This perk suggests a lot about a hero's background and usually indicates a connection to a wealthy (and perhaps influential) family.

This perk influences a hero's starting funds, as described in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*. If the hero ever needs to acquire funds, he can make a Filthy Rich check (with the permission of the Gamemaster). Failure indicates that the funds aren't forth-

coming; an Ordinary success or better indicates that the funds he needs are available. The more the hero asks for, however, the greater the situation die penalty.

Finally, Filthy Rich heroes have other advantages due to their social and financial status. This translates into a bonus to Personality-based skills when the hero decides to reveal his status. A perk check is made at the start of a scene. Results follow:

On a Critical Failure, the hero's status backfires, resulting in a +1 penalty to all checks related to Personality skills; Failure, no effect; Ordinary, –1 bonus; Good, –2 bonus; Amazing, –3 bonus.

The Gamemaster can determine that in some situations the Filthy Rich perk can operate as a flaw—especially among those who have a strong dislike for the wealthy and the upper classes. If a hero reveals his status in such a situation, perk check results become penalties instead of bonuses (or vice versa).

Fists of Iron

Cost 2/5, STR, Active

This perk provides a hero with a 1-point increase to the damage he inflicts on a successful Unarmed Attack skill check.

The use of this perk requires a perk check at the start of a combat scene. This check requires the hero to spend one action concentrating to increase the power of his punches.

A hero with the *power martial arts* specialty skill can spend 5 skill points for Improved Fists of Iron. The result of the check determines his bonus for the scene: Critical Failure, no benefit; Marginal success, 1-point increase to damage; Ordinary, 2-point increase; Good, 3-point increase; Amazing, 4-point increase.

◆ ***Example:*** A hero normally dishes out d4s/d4+2s/d6+2s in damage when he makes an Unarmed Attack. If that same hero has Fists of Iron, he inflicts d4+1s/d4+3s/d6+3s. With Improved Fists of Iron, the damage can be as high as d4+4s/d4+6s/ d6+6s on an Amazing perk check result.

Fortitude

Cost 4, CON, Active

A hero with Fortitude receives a –1 bonus whenever he is required to make a Stamina–*endurance* check.

Good Luck

Cost 3, WIL, Conscious

A hero with the Good Luck perk can make use of this benefit once during a scene. Immediately before attempting some other type of action (usually a skill check, an action check, or a feat check), the hero can make a Good Luck perk check. The result of this check provides a modifier to the next activity the hero undertakes: On a Critical Failure, bad luck occurs instead, and the hero takes a +3 penalty. On a Marginal success, his next activity receives a –1 bonus; Ordinary, –2 bonus; Good, –3 bonus; and Amazing, –4 bonus.

Great Looks

Cost 3, PER, Active

A hero with the Great Looks perk receives a –1 bonus to any Personality-based skill check made when his appearance could have a positive effect on an encounter.

Bear in mind that a human hero's great looks might not impress an alien, and even some other human cultures may have a different idea of what Great Looks are—it's a very subjective perk. The Gamemaster determines when the perk's bonus is applied and when it isn't.

Heightened Ability

Cost 10, Special, Active

This perk provides a hero with 1 extra point in the Ability Score of his choice. It can't be used to increase any Ability Score beyond the hero's species maximum. When this perk is purchased, the player raises the hero's Ability Score by 1 point, adjusting the Ability's resistance modifier and any bonuses if necessary.

Observant

Cost 3, WIL, Active

This perk provides a hero with exceptional powers of observation, giving him a –1 bonus to any Awareness–*perception* check.

Photo Memory

Cost 3, INT, Conscious

This perk gives a hero an extraordinary memory. When a player wants to determine what his hero remembers, or if he wants his hero to remember a specific detail (such as a license plate number or details of a document he glanced at), then a perk check is made. An Ordinary success is usually enough to provide some of the details the hero wants. The Gamemaster sets the situation die according to the type of detail and memory the hero is trying to recall.

For example, an attempt to remember something the hero knows extremely well might receive a –3 bonus or might not even require a check at all, while recalling the image of a face glimpsed briefly in the dark might receive a +3 penalty.

Powerful Ally

Cost 4, PER, Conscious

When this perk is selected, the Gamemaster and the player should discuss the nature and identity of this ally. There might also be some sort of cost involved for the continued assistance of an ally—the ally might be the hero's patron, who can call on the hero for help as often as the hero calls on him, or the ally might just collect favors and call them in at some future time.

When in trouble, a hero can call on his Powerful Ally for favors or help. A perk check determines what kind of aid the ally provides. Bear in mind that the hero needs a way to contact his ally, and the ally needs a way to respond.

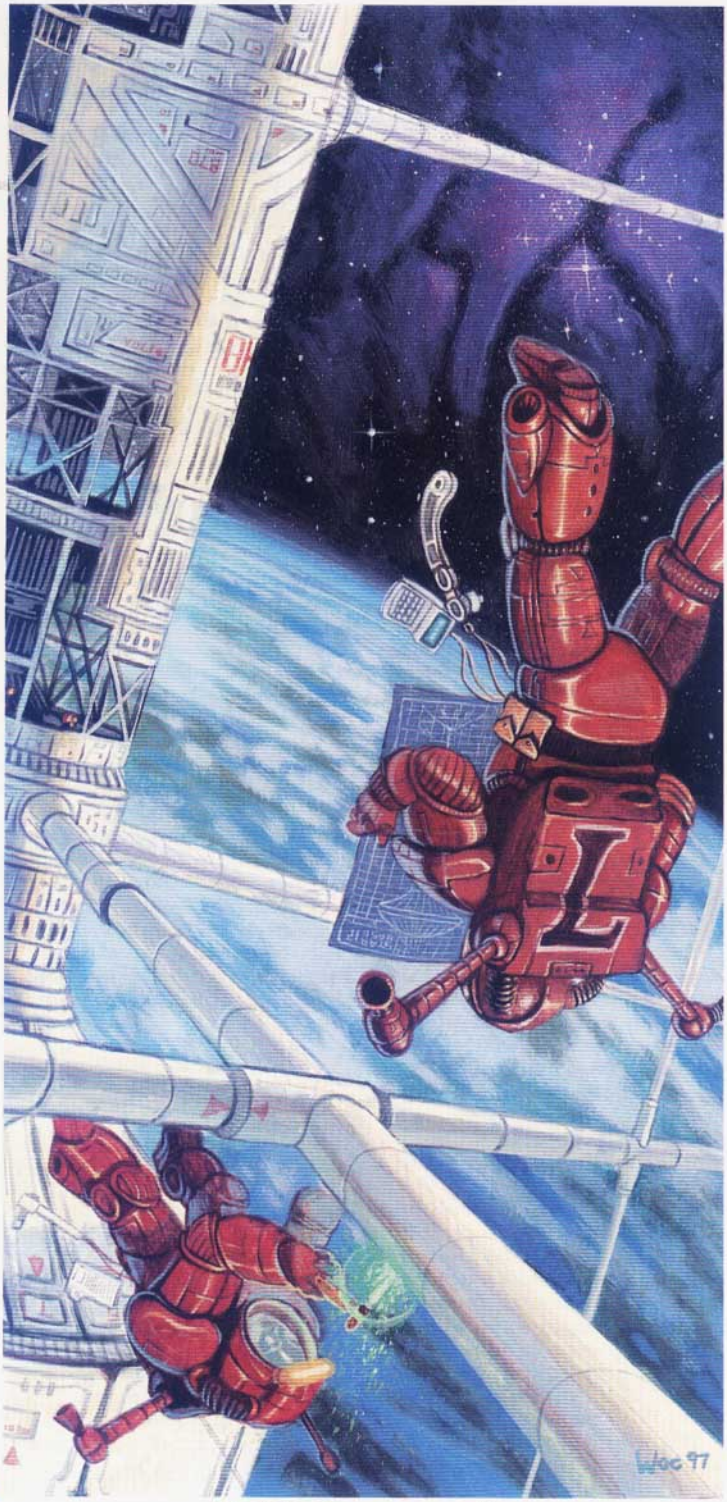
Check results: Failure, no aid is forthcoming; Ordinary, ordinary help; Good, good help; Amazing, amazing help. (These terms are defined in the *Gamemaster Guide*.)

Psionic Awareness

Cost 3, INT, Active

A hero with Psionic Awareness is entitled to an Intelligence feat check to determine whether he realizes that a psionic power is being used in his vicinity. (Heroes without this perk are not normally allowed checks to determine whether they can detect psionic activity.) The Gamemaster will determine when such a check should be made, and will roll the check secretly, only giving the player of the hero any information when the check is successful.

This perk can only be selected if the Gamemaster allows the use of psionics (see Chapter 14).



Working in zero gravity

Reflexes

Cost 4, DEX, Active

A hero with the Reflexes perk receives a +1 increase to his Dexterity resistance modifier. So, a hero with a Dexterity score of 11 who has a resistance modifier of +1 step increases the modifier to +2 steps with this perk.

Reputation

Cost 3, WIL, Active

This perk provides a hero with a reputation that's known far and wide. Unlike the Celebrity, perk, which indicates a positive reaction due to the influence of a hero's Personality, the Reputation perk helps a hero by making others fearful of or impressed by his supposed accomplishments. In game terms, this perk provides a situation die bonus whenever the hero attempts to use certain encounter skills. The player and the Gamemaster need to work out just what the hero's reputation is, and which encounter skills it provides a bonus to.

As a character's achievement level improves, he becomes better able to take advantage of his reputation: At level 5, the base situation die for any Reputation perk check becomes –d4; at level 10 it becomes –d6; and at level 15 it becomes –d8.

Tough as Nails

Cost 4, STR, Active

This perk provides a hero with a +1 step increase to his Strength resistance modifier. So, a hero with a Strength score of 11 who has a resistance modifier of +1 step (the penalty to his opponent's rolls) increases the modifier to +2 steps with this perk.

Vigor

Cost 2/3/4, CON, Active

This perk allows a hero to increase the amount of damage he can sustain.

For 2 skill points, a hero can increase his stun rating by 1 point.

For 3 skill points, a hero can increase his wound rating by 1 point.

For 4 skill points, a hero can increase his mortal rating and his fatigue rating by 1 point each.

Each of these benefits may be purchased once. So, if a hero spends 9 skill points, he can increase all of his

durability ratings (stun, wound, mortal, and fatigue) by 1 point each.

Willpower

Cost 4, WIL, Active

This perk provides a hero with a +1 step increase to his Will resistance modifier. So, a hero with a Will score of 11 who has a resistance modifier of +1 step (the penalty to his opponent's rolls) increases the modifier to +2 steps with this perk.

Flaw Descriptions

Flaws are disadvantages you can select for your hero that provide additional points for the purchase of skills. A player can never select more than three flaws for his character, but additional flaws may be assigned to a hero over the course of a campaign.

Table P27: Flaws lists the flaws, the bonus skill points they provide, and the ability each is associated with.

Unlike perks, all flaws provide a hero with a constant penalty of some sort. Flaws can be removed when a hero attains achievement level 6; see *Chapter 8: Achievements* for details.

Table P27: Flaws

Flaw	+SP	Ability
Alien Artifact	5	—
Bad Luck	6	WIL
Clueless	2/4/6	INT
Clumsy	5	DEX
Code of Honor	3	WIL
Delicate	3	STR
Dirt Poor	5	PER
Forgetful	5	INT
Fragile	3	CON
Infamy	2/4/6	PER
Oblivious	4	WIL
Obsessed	2/4/6	INT
Old Injury	2/4/6	STR
Phobia	2/4/6	WIL
Poor Looks	3	PER
Powerful Enemy	2/4/6	PER
Primitive	2/4/6	INT
Slow	6	DEX
Spineless	2/4/6	WIL
Temper	2/4/6	WIL

Alien Artifact

+5 Bonus Skill Points

An alien artifact is a strange device or relic that the hero doesn't know anything about. It could be an object of alien origin, or a one-of-a-kind experimental gadget, or even an experimental process used on the character at some point in the past. Somewhere in his travels, the hero came to possess the artifact or the abilities it provides. Any alien artifact that is an item is small enough to be easily carried around or worn as an accessory to a hero's outfit. The hero doesn't know his item's function or purpose; he has to discover exactly what the artifact does as the campaign progresses.

As a flaw, an alien artifact provides mostly disadvantages to a hero—but every artifact also has its positive side.

Some artifacts provide a constant penalty; others require that the hero make a check to activate the artifact. All artifacts, perk or flaw, have the same distinguishing trait: they are extremely rare, exceedingly valuable, and highly coveted—someone wants the one your hero possesses, and that someone will stop at nothing to get it.

As for an artifact's positive side, that can range from an unknown perk that manifests when the hero least expects it to a simple bonus that is constantly in play even while the artifact is penalizing the hero in some manner. Note that a benefit will never cancel out a penalty—the two aspects of an artifact will always be unrelated. (So, you won't find an artifact that provides a hero with a +1 penalty to the use of Dexterity-based skills and a –1 bonus to the use of Dexterity-based skills at the same time.)

Alien artifacts are listed and described in the *Gamemaster Guide*. After you select this perk, the Gamemaster will design an alien artifact for your hero.

Bad Luck

+6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

A hero with this flaw suffers a Critical Failure result whenever a 19 or 20 comes up on the control die.

Clueless

+2/4/6 Bonus Skill Points, INT

A hero with the Clueless flaw thinks he's proficient in a particular specialty skill, when in fact he's not as good as he thinks he is. The specialty skill is chosen by the Gamemaster secretly—the hero must discover the fact that he's clueless over the course of the campaign, and he may not ever realize it at all. The chosen specialty skill is never one that's associated with a hero's profession; it will either be a skill from the Open group or from one of the other profession groups.

For 2 bonus skill points, the hero receives a +1 penalty to the skill in question.

For 4 bonus skill points, the hero receives a +2 penalty to the skill in question.

For 6 bonus skill points, the hero receives a +3 penalty to the skill in question.

Clumsy

+6 Bonus Skill Points, DEX

A hero with the Clumsy flaw has poor coordination and an unsteady hand. He receives a +1 penalty to all Dexterity-based skill checks.

Code of Honor

+3 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

The Code of Honor flaw represents a standard the hero decides to live by. A Code of Honor must have real consequences to the life of the hero and the campaign in general, and living up to the code shouldn't always be easy or even the right decision. A Code of Honor that requires a hero to attack any evil aliens he meets isn't that much of a burden, but defending all aliens in a human-dominated galaxy is.

The player and the Gamemaster need to work out the hero's Code of Honor when this flaw is selected. They should also discuss the types of events that might trigger the hero's overblown sense of duty, honor, and commitment.

Examples of characters who have codes of honor that *could* be flaws include clergymen, law enforcers, government officials, business administrators, and doctors.

The achievement points a hero receives for participating in an adventure can be reduced if this flaw isn't

roleplayed as part of the hero's basic makeup.

Delicate

+3 Bonus Skill Points, STR

A hero with the Delicate flaw suffers 1 point of stun damage whenever he makes a successful Unarmed Attack against an opponent. If the hero suffers enough stun damage to leave him with less than half of his stun points, he can't attempt an Unarmed Attack—he must regain a number of stun points sufficient to bring him back to the halfway mark (at least) before he can use the skill again.

Dirt Poor

+5 Bonus Skill Points, PER

The Dirt Poor flaw suggests a lot about a hero's background and usually indicates an impoverished upbringing. This flaw influences a hero's starting funds, as detailed in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*. In addition, it adds a +1 penalty to any use of the hero's Personality-based skills when he tries to deal with situations involving characters from a higher social or financial standing.

The Gamemaster also determines a character (not another hero) to whom the hero owes money. As the campaign progresses, the hero must make payments to this character to remain in good standing. How this works in a particular campaign is left to the Gamemaster.

Forgetful

+5 Bonus Skill Points, INT

A hero with the Forgetful flaw has trouble remembering details—his recollection of a name, face, or fact has a tendency to slip away when the hero needs it most. A Forgetful character receives a +1 penalty to all Intelligence-based skill checks.

Fragile

+3 Bonus Skill Points, CON

A hero with the Fragile flaw is hampered by a +1 penalty to all Stamina–*endurance* skill checks he makes as a result of damage he has suffered.

Infamy

+2/4/6 Bonus Skill Points, PER

Infamy is a state of being publicly known for an evil or criminal act. The player and the Gamemaster need to agree on what the hero is infamous for (it could be trumped-up charges, or the hero can have a genuinely shady past) and what triggers the flaw. It could be a phrase the hero always says, or the weapon he uses, or when he's in the presence of a particular alien species or a member of a particular nation. Once recognized for his Infamy, a hero suffers penalties to the use of Personality-based skills and may even wind up hunted or in a battle.

For 2 bonus skill points, a hero is infamous for a minor crime or is known throughout a small area of the campaign setting. He receives a +1 penalty to all Personality-based skill checks.

For 4 bonus skill points, a hero is infamous for a moderate crime or is known throughout a moderate-sized area of the campaign setting. He receives a +2 penalty to all Personality-based skill checks.

For 6 bonus skill points, a hero is infamous for a severe crime or is known throughout a large area of the campaign setting. He receives a +3 penalty to all Personality-based skill checks when this flaw is triggered.

Oblivious

+4 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

A hero with the Oblivious flaw has trouble noticing things, suffering a +1 penalty to all Awareness–*perception* skill checks.

Obsessed

+2/4/6 Bonus Skill Points, INT

This flaw indicates that a hero is obsessed with a particular person, place, or thing, which is known as the *trigger* for the flaw. An Obsessed hero may forget what he's doing or turn his attention to the object of his obsession even in the middle of a tense situation.

The player and the Gamemaster need to decide on a trigger when this flaw is selected. The trigger should somehow be tied to the hero's background or personality. For example, a scientist might be obsessed with exotic insects, or an engineer with new and interesting technology. Less cerebral heroes might be Obsessed with another character, a fast vehicle, or a type of food.

For 2 bonus skill points, a hero is moderately distracted by the triggering event. He receives a +1 penalty to any actions not related to the obsession.

For 4 points, a hero is substantially distracted by the triggering event. He receives a +2 penalty to any actions not related to the obsession.

For 6 points, the hero is almost completely distracted. He receives a +3 penalty to any actions not related to the obsession.

Old Injury

+2/4/6 Bonus Skill Points, STR

Sometime in the past, the hero suffered an injury. Now that Old Injury acts up every so often, inflicting wounds on the hero. The player and the Gamemaster should agree on a triggering event, but in general it should be something physical: An attempt to run or jump, getting involved in a close-quarters attack, and an attempt to dodge are all acceptable triggers. An Old Injury can be triggered once per scene, though the effects remain until the character is healed.

(Note that if a character wants to remove this flaw, a medical procedure must be included as part of the removal process. See *Chapter 8: Achievements* for more details.)

For 2 bonus skill points, a hero suffers 1 point of wound damage when this flaw is triggered.

For 4 bonus skill points, a hero suffers 2 points of wound damage plus 1 point of secondary stun damage when this flaw is triggered.

For 6 bonus skill points, a hero suffers 3 points of wound damage plus 1 point of secondary stun damage when this flaw is triggered.

Note: Wearing armor does not offset or reduce this damage.

Phobia

+2/4/6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

This flaw represents an irrational fear that hampers the hero in some way. The hero selects a specific fear that may or may not come into play in any given adventure. It should be a general fear (moving vehicles), not a specific one (moving green taxicabs with purple dots and yellow flags), to qualify as a flaw. When the

hero is confronted by his Phobia, he suffers a penalty.

For 2 bonus skill points, a hero suffers a +1 penalty to all actions while this flaw is in effect.

For 4 bonus skill points, a hero suffers a +2 penalty to all actions while this flaw is in effect.

For 6 bonus skill points, a hero freezes or flees as appropriate while this flaw is in effect.

Poor Looks

+3 Bonus Skill Points, PER

A hero with the Poor Looks flaw suffers a +1 penalty to all Personality-based skill checks when appearance could have a negative effect. Poor Looks isn't just a measure of physical beauty; it includes manners, grooming, and overall appearance.

Bear in mind that a human hero's Poor Looks might not be seen as such by an alien, and even some other human cultures may have a different idea of what Poor Looks are. The Gamemaster determines when the flaw's penalty is applied and when it isn't, depending on the situation.

Powerful Enemy

+2/4/6 Bonus Skill Points, PER

A hero with this flaw begins play with a Powerful Enemy who's out to make his life terrible. This enemy must have a long reach, lots of subordinates, and the ability to affect the hero wherever he may be. How close the enemy's base of operations is and how often he can affect the hero are determined by the number of skill points the flaw provides.

Examples of powerful enemies include a specific law enforcement agency (especially if the hero is a fugitive), a corporation, a government, a criminal organization, or an alien conspiracy. In all cases the true enemy should remain unknown for a long time, and direct contact between the enemy and the hero shouldn't occur while the hero is at low achievement levels.

Primitive

+2/4/6 Bonus Skill Points, INT

This flaw indicates that a hero has come from a primitive culture and upbringing, which causes problems for him when dealing with modern technology.

For 2 bonus skill points, a hero receives a +1 penalty whenever he uses modern technology.

For 4 bonus skill points, a hero receives a +2 penalty whenever he uses modern technology.

For 6 bonus skill points, a hero receives a +3 penalty whenever he uses modern technology, and he is either awed into inactivity or flees in terror for d4+1 time units in the face of some technological wonder he hasn't seen before.

Slow

+6 Bonus Skill Points, DEX

A hero with the Slow flaw has reduced reaction time, which manifests as a +1 penalty to his action checks.

Spineless

+2/4/6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

The Spineless flaw hampers a hero by weakening his will, making him fearful, indecisive, and easier to manipulate. This is reflected in a reduction to the hero's Will resistance modifier.

For 2 bonus skill points, a hero's Will resistance modifier is reduced by 1 step.

For 4 points, a hero's Will resistance modifier is reduced by 2 steps.

For 6 points, a hero's Will resistance modifier is reduced by 3 steps.

Temper

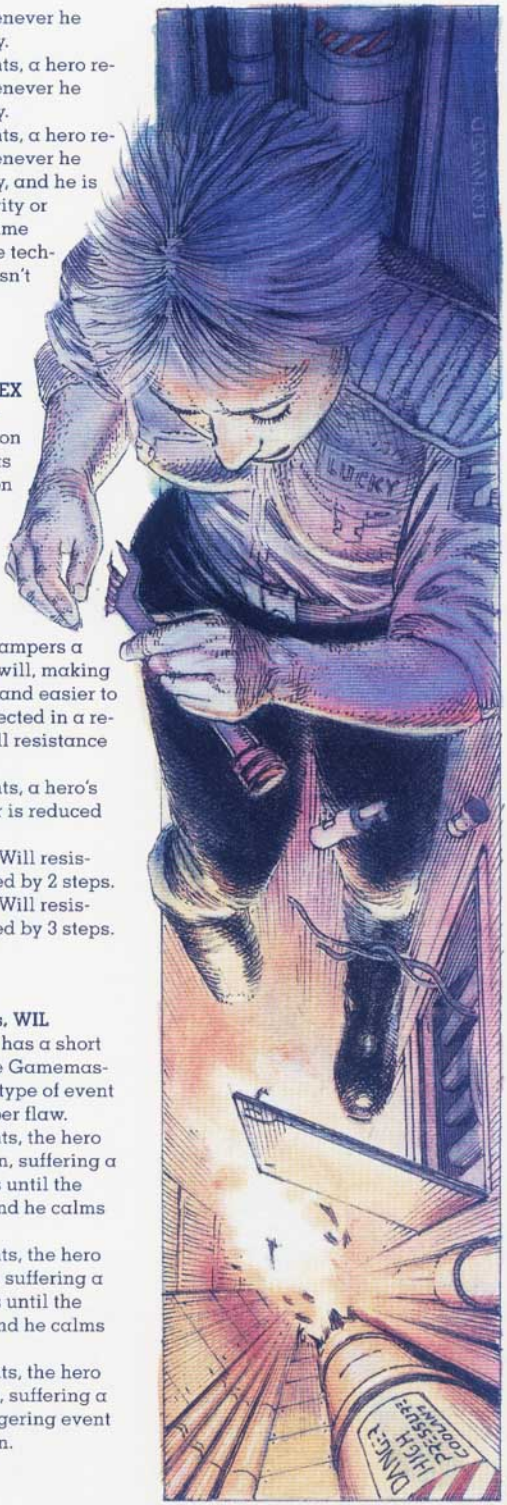
+2/4/6 Bonus Skill Points, WIL

A hero with this flaw has a short fuse. The player and the Gamemaster must agree on what type of event triggers the hero's Temper flaw.

For 2 bonus skill points, the hero becomes gruff and mean, suffering a +1 penalty to all actions until the triggering event ends and he calms down.

For 4 bonus skill points, the hero reacts without thinking, suffering a +2 penalty to all actions until the triggering event ends and he calms down.

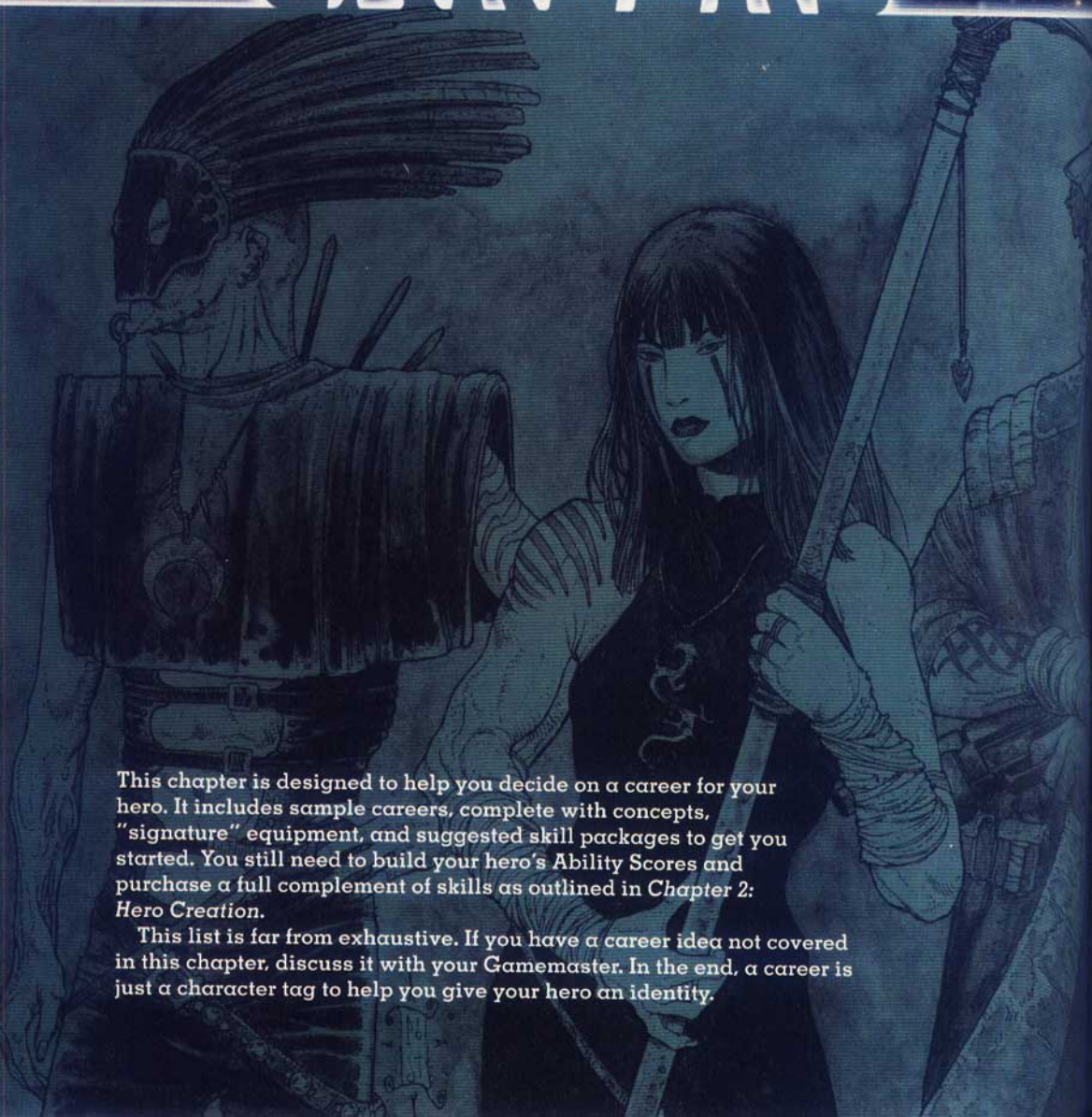
For 6 bonus skill points, the hero flies into a berserk rage, suffering a +3 penalty until the triggering event ends and he calms down.



A Critical Failure

CHAPTER 6

SAMPLE CAREERS



This chapter is designed to help you decide on a career for your hero. It includes sample careers, complete with concepts, "signature" equipment, and suggested skill packages to get you started. You still need to build your hero's Ability Scores and purchase a full complement of skills as outlined in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*.

This list is far from exhaustive. If you have a career idea not covered in this chapter, discuss it with your Gamemaster. In the end, a career is just a character tag to help you give your hero an identity.

Combat Spec Careers

Combat Specs are the warriors of tomorrow. Most of the characters in this profession have their highest scores in Strength and Constitution, although respectable Dexterity is also important.

To take advantage of his high Strength, a Combat Spec should consider immediately picking up either the Melee Weapons or Unarmed Attack broad skill. A Combat Spec who's not good in a fight probably won't last long enough to pick these skills up later.

Modern Ranged Weapons, even though it's Dexterity-based, is a skill many Combat Specs can't live without. After all, there's not much that Melee Weapons or Unarmed Attack can accomplish against an enemy with a gun who's 20 meters away.

Depending on the firearms and weapons you choose to equip your hero with, pick up *pistol*, *rifle*, and/or *SMG* to enhance the Modern Ranged Weapons skill. Take *blade*, *bludgeon*, and/or *powered weapon* to improve the Melee Weapons capability, and consider *brawl* to augment the Unarmed Attack skill.

Any Combat Spec, regardless of specific career, can certainly benefit from the Stamina specialty skills *endurance* and *resist pain*. Both help in battles, and that's where the Combat Spec earns his keep.

Whenever a Combat Spec has skill points to spare, it's a good idea to pick up the Athletics specialty skills *climb*, *jump*, and *throw*. Also, it's never too early to purchase the *first aid* specialty from the Knowledge broad skill. In general, Combat Specs can withstand more damage than characters belonging to other professions, so it's often the warriors who are called upon to help the wounded.

If your hero can start with as

Signature Equipment

Equipment is expensive, and most heroes just starting out can't afford a lot of it. In some cases, they can't even afford the basic items necessary to let them play the characters they have in mind. What good would a hacker be without a computer, a medtech without a medical kit, or a law enforcer without a standard weapon? With the intention of avoiding this problem, we've provided each sample career with *signature equipment* that the Gamemaster can decide to give to a hero without paying the cost out of that hero's starting funds. In most cases, this piece of signature equipment is the least expensive model available—a starting hero shouldn't begin with a top-of-the-line ship, or with the best weapons, armor, or gear in the campaign.

Also, the equipment that's available to a character depends on the Progress Level and type of campaign he's set in. (Progress Levels are described in detail in the first few pages of *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*, which is also the chapter that contains lists of the basic equipment available to heroes.) If a piece of equipment listed for a career isn't available because of the restrictions of the campaign, your Gamemaster will exchange it for an equivalent item that fits into his campaign.

Skill Packages

At the end of each career description in this chapter is a suggested "skill package" for the character type in question, including the number of skill points needed for the character to acquire those skills. In no case does the cost of a skill package exceed 35 points, which means that a hero will usually still have points left that can be spent on other skills (unless he or she has an especially low Intelligence score). Those additional skills could be taken from the ones that are mentioned in the descriptive text for a career, or any other skill that fits your conception of the hero you're creating.

The point costs for these packages assume that the hero in question is human; as such, the packages don't mention skills that a human hero receives for free. For a hero who belongs to one of the alien species, adjust the list of necessary skills and the skill costs accordingly. For example, a sesheyan Combat Spec who takes the law enforcer skill package doesn't have to purchase the Melee Weapons broad skill, but will have to buy the Athletics broad skill if he or she wants to have it.

many as five broad skills (in addition to the ones he or she receives for free), Resolve and Acrobatics are good ones to add. Both have applications and specialties that a Combat Spec might want to have aptitude in. Leadership is also worth considering, since by their nature many Combat Specs are aggressive, take-charge characters.

Before you decide on broad skills beyond the most important ones for Combat Specs, look over the career descriptions that follow. Many of them offer other choices for broad skills that might be more suited to the type of hero you want to create.

Bodyguard

A bodyguard hires himself out to those who require protection. A hero with this career might be working for another hero, or he might be an independent contractor in charge of a security team that hires itself out. Bodyguards protect the rich, the powerful, politicians, crime lords, those in need, and anyone else who can afford their services—or who they're assigned to protect if they're in the service of others.

This character's first concern is the safety of someone else. This doesn't mean a bodyguard should behave passively, waiting for something bad to happen before he acts. Sometimes he takes specific steps to keep his charge safe. It's important for a bodyguard to be prepared.

The Acrobatics broad skill has a couple of specialties that the bodyguard might want to consider: *defensive martial arts* and *dodge*. Both help the hero avoid damage in one manner or another, and this is important, since a bodyguard who gets taken out can't offer any protection. An alternative in the Dexterity category is Stealth–*hide*, which allows a hero to be inconspicuous as he guards his client.

► ***Signature Equipment:*** 11mm charge pistol, comm gear, CF short coat.

► ***Skill Package:*** Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol 2;* Security–*protection protocols;* Awareness–*perception*. Cost: 20 points.

Brawler

A brawler specializes in hand-to-hand fighting and close-quarters battles. He's a boxer, a street fighter, or hired muscle—mean and strong. He can improvise in battle, using his own body and whatever else is on hand as a deadly weapon. The brawler fights for money, honor, to prove he's the best, as a matter of pride, or just to survive.

Get as many ranks in the *brawl* specialty as you can afford (up to the limit of 3 for a starting hero), and improve this skill as quickly as you can. Powered weapons and large firearms aren't the brawler's style, but he's comfortable with the *blade* and *bludgeon* Melee Weapons specialties. Though he may not like it, the brawler could probably use Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol* for those times when his fists aren't enough.

Street Smart, perhaps supplemented by one of its specialty skills, can help the brawler in the types of situations he normally finds himself in. Interaction–*taunt* is useful for gaining the upper hand against opponents who are susceptible to verbal baiting. Finally, Interaction–*intimidate* can help a brawler stave off all but the most persistent, less easily frightened opponents.

► ***Signature Equipment:*** Combat knife, truncheon (club).

► ***Skill Package:*** Melee Weapons; Unarmed Attack–*brawl 2;* Street Smart. Cost: 20 points.

Corporate Security Specialist

This character works for a large corporation. He handles all of the security concerns of that corporation, from securing property to protecting employees to a variety of covert operations. Ensuring the security of a corporation might include performing acts of espionage, recovering stolen goods, eliminating the competition, or finding solutions to security-related problems that affect the corporation in some manner.

The broad skill Security and both of its specialties, *protection protocols* and *security devices*, are obviously handy for this Combat Spec career. Typically, a corporate security expert has a higher Intelligence score than most other Combat Specs—he needs the skill points provided by a high Intelligence score to develop other security-related skills such as Computer Science and Law.

A security specialist might want to add the Investigate broad skill to his repertoire. Business and Street Smart can also be valuable.

Though he's one of the more cerebral Combat Spec heroes, a security expert also needs battle skills. A security expert who can make a computer do tricks but can't handle a firearm won't stay healthy long enough to make use of his superior brain power.

► ***Signature Equipment:*** 11mm charge pistol, CF long coat.

► ***Skill Package:*** Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol 2;* Knowledge–*deduce;* Security–*security devices;* System Operation–*sensors, defenses*. Cost: 30 points.

Gunner

A gunner is a heavy weapons expert or a warrior trained in the use of vehicle or ship weapons systems. He likes big weapons—the bigger the better. He usually has a gift for calculating range and a great eye for hitting his target. The gunner likes huge, spectacular explosions, especially if he's the one setting them off. No ship should be without a heavy weapons expert, and any group going into a major battle or hostile territory can certainly use one.

The gunner's primary skill depends on the exact nature of his career. If the hero's always assigned the biggest death-dealing weapons in the arsenal, then purchase Heavy Weapons and stock up on ranks in either *direct fire* or *indirect fire*. Because carrying large weapons around could slow him down and make him more vulnerable to attacks from enemies, this hero should collect as many ranks in *endurance* as possible. Armor Operation and one of its specialty skills, *combat armor* or *powered armor*, can also serve the heavy weapons expert well.

The ship's gunner requires a completely different approach. He starts with the System Operation broad skill, then purchases ranks in the *weapons* specialty. Since vessels don't get into fights all the time, purchasing ranks in another specialty—perhaps *defenses* or *sensors*—would be a good fallback. This hero could also pick up Technical Science and either *jury-rig* or *repair* so he can keep his weapons functioning.

► ***Signature Equipment:*** Heavy machine gun, battle vest, toolkit.

► ***Skill Package:*** Heavy Weapons-

direct fire 2; System Operation–*defenses, weapons;* Technical Science–*repair.* Cost: 30 points.

Law Enforcer

A law enforcer is trained in the methods of crime prevention and detection, and has the authority to maintain the peace, safety, and order in a community. A law enforcer can be a police officer, a government agent, a member of the military police, or a constable on a space station.

The law enforcer plays a variety of roles, so we'll examine the skills that each of these roles requires. Lean toward the role you feel is most important to your hero concept.

To fulfill his pledge to "serve and protect," a law enforcer sometimes needs to meet deadly force head on. Any of the combat skills will help in this area.

The law enforcer who functions as a detective or investigator should purchase ranks in the Awareness specialty skills, especially *perception,* and also Knowledge–*deduce.* Investigate–*search* and *track* can further define a particular type of law enforcer. Some investigators might go the scientific route, taking the Computer Science or Medical Science broad skill, and one or more of the *hacking, forensics,* and *psychology* specialties.

Finally, all law enforcers can benefit from Law and the *law enforcement* specialty, as well as Street Smart and both of its specialties, *criminal elements* and *street knowledge.* And, in the end, a good law enforcer needs at least a little facility with Personality skills. *Charm, interrogate,* and *intimidate,* specialties of the Interaction broad skill, all prove helpful in the line of duty.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Nightstick (club), .38 revolver pistol, battle vest.

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Melee Weapons–*bludgeon;* Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol;* Law; Investigate–*interrogate.* Cost: 30 points.

Martial Artist

A martial artist is a hero trained in a specific combat style. Usually, the style has a code and value system attached to it that the hero tries to live by. A martial artist can be an expert in any known combat style, including karate, judo, or kung fu. He might instead know a form specific to an alien species or a style developed by a particular culture. He might also be one of those martial artists who has developed his own fighting style.

The martial artist can be a law enforcer or a special agent, a trained warrior seeking to right wrongs and deal with injustice, or a spiritual person forced to use his fighting prowess due to circumstances beyond his control. Whatever your hero concept, the martial artist is built upon one of two primary skills.

If your martial artist is a trained fighting machine, you should purchase Unarmed Attack and as many ranks in *power martial arts* as you can afford. If your concept is more along the lines of the pacifist who is forced to fight for either honor, justice, or survival, then you might want to use the Acrobatics–*defensive martial arts* approach.

To duplicate the feats made famous in martial arts movies and television shows, you'll also need to purchase the Athletics specialty skills *climb* and *jump,* and if you want your hero to toss throwing stars (shuriken) like an expert, get a few ranks in *throw,* too. The Acrobatics specialties are handy for this career as well, and no martial arts expert should be without *dodge* and *fall* for long. For the martial artist who employs exotic weapons, purchase the Melee Weapons broad skill. The *blade* specialty covers swords like the katana, while *bludgeon* handles weapons such as quarterstaves and nunchakus.

The Resolve broad skill is a must for the well-rounded martial artist. Ranks in *mental resolve* mark the spiritual hero, *physical resolve* the pure fighting machine.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Katana or nunchaku.

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Melee Weapons; Unarmed Attack–*power martial arts;* Acrobatics–*dodge;* Stamina–*endurance;* Resolve–*physical resolve.* Cost: 35 points.

Mercenary

A mercenary is a professional soldier who sells his services to the highest bidder or to a cause he believes in. He's usually a veteran of some past war, trained by a government-funded army who decided to sever his ties for one reason or another. A mercenary is an individualist who knows how to work well as part of a unit—and usually knows how to lead that unit.

The mercenary needs every advantage he can get, and that starts with the combat skills. Dishing out damage is important, but the professional soldier also needs to be able to withstand damage dished out by others. Armor Operation and whichever of the specialty skills (*combat armor* or *powered armor*) is needed to operate the protective gear the hero employs is a must.

Finally, since the mercenary approaches war as a business, Interaction–*bargain* can mean the difference between negotiating a good contract or an excellent one.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Attack armor, 9mm charge SMG, rations, survival gear.

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Armor Operation–*combat armor;* Modern Ranged Weapons–*SMG 2;* Interaction–*bargain, intimidate.* Cost: 25 points.

Soldier

A soldier belongs to a standing military force. He can be a common grunt, a marine, or even a special forces operative. He can be an enlisted soldier or an officer, someone who worked his way up from the bottom or received the full benefits of an officer training academy. Regardless of how he got to where he is, he's been trained to fight, to follow orders, and to be loyal to the cause and the government he defends.

The well-rounded soldier needs other skills. The Movement broad skill and its specialty *trailblazing* are important tools for the warrior on the go, especially if he plans to lead others across hostile terrain. Survival and *survival training* in one or more environments will serve the traveling soldier well. Sometimes a soldier has to work with death-defying equipment, such as parachutes and hang gliders; Acrobatics–*daredevil* will give him a fighting chance with such gear. Ranks in one of the Awareness specialties also helps keep a soldier sharp and alert. Go for *intuition* if you see your hero as someone who reacts on gut instincts, or *perception* if he's observant and detail-oriented. Tactics and *infantry tactics* provide the edge a soldier needs to survive.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Assault

rifle, battle jacket, rations, survival gear.

► ***Skill Package:*** Armor Operation; Modern Ranged Weapons–*rifle;* Survival; Tactics–*infantry tactics.* Cost: 25 points.

Spacehand

A spacehand can be crucial to a group of heroes with their own space vessel. Not only is the spacehand decent in combat, he also has a set of skills that make him indispensible in the long haul. He's a jack-of-all-trades—laborer, bodyguard, repair man, copilot. He's the guy who usually knows how to get things done.

In addition to the various combat skills, a good spacehand picks up Vehicle Operation–*space vehicle* so he can fly the ship when necessary (though he doesn't consider himself a pilot). Then he digs into the mental skills so that he can operate the ship and keep it in good condition.

In no particular order, the spacehand also covets these skills: Acrobatics–*zero-g training;* Knowledge–*computer operation;* Computer Science–*hardware;* Navigation; System Operation and its specialties; and Technical Science–*juryrig* and *repair.*

► ***Signature Equipment:*** Toolkit, soft e-suit, 9mm zero-g charge pistol.

► ***Skill Package:*** Unarmed Attack–*brawl;* Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol;* Technical Science–*juryrig;* Vehicle Operation–*space vehicle.* Cost: 30 points.

Diplomat Careers

Diplomats are the negotiators and deal-makers of tomorrow. Any hero with high Personality and Will scores, and whose primary occupation is dealing with others, is liable to be a Diplomat of some kind. And don't neglect the secondary profession that's available to Diplomats as part of their profession benefits.

Diplomats must take advantage of their high Personality and Will scores by purchasing these broad skills as soon as possible: Culture, Deception, Leadership, Administration, Resolve, Business, Law, and Teach. Other broad skills will suggest themselves based on a particular diplomat's secondary profession.

Areas outside the Diplomat's expertise that might also be considered include Modern Ranged Weapons (just because heroes tend to get in fights), Computer Science (for those times when the Diplomat wants to manipulate data personally), and System Operation (so that the Diplomat can contribute to his team when they're traveling in a vessel).

Ambassador

An ambassador is an official representative from one government or organization to another. He has the ability and sanction to negotiate in good faith, propose and accept deals, and speak for the agency he represents.

Administration–*bureaucracy* is an important skill for the ambassador to have. Law–*court procedures* helps this hero maintain proper decorum in official meetings. When the negotiations get heated, either *intuition* or *perception* can give the ambassador an edge. This hero also needs good doses of *mental resolve, bluff, bribe,* and *bargain.* An appropriate Culture specialty helps, too. Finally, a good ambassador has some amount of skill in Interaction–*charm* and Leadership–*inspire.*

► ***Signature Equipment:*** Formal clothing with antiscan weave, data slate.

► ***Skill Package:*** Law–*court procedures;* Administration–*bureaucracy;* Awareness–*perception;* Culture–*diplomacy, etiquette (specific #1) 2, etiquette (specific #2) 2;* Deception–*bluff;* Interaction–*charm.* Cost: 35 points.

Cleric

A hero who's a member of the clergy is an official representative of a specific religion. A cleric is a teacher, a healer, and a religious leader. He may actively preach and attempt to convert the masses, or he may simply lead by example. Aside from human religions, an alien cleric could be a sesheyan shaman or a weren priest.

Some clerics select Manipulation to take advantage of the sleight-of-hand skills it provides, including *prestidigitation.* The free Knowledge skill is the gateway to a few important specialties, including *first aid* and specific areas of knowledge that a teacher and religious leader needs, such as *history, religious doctrine,* and *herbal lore* (all of which are specialties that would need to be created for the campaign setting). For those clerics who want to be a bit more informed about the universe around them, the Life Science and Physical Science broad skills are the way to go—but hold off on the specialties until you've purchased the other skills your hero needs.

Will-based specialty skills that come in handy for this hero include *intuition, perception, mental resolve,* and the Teach specialties tied to various professions. He might also consider Animal Handling and *animal training.*

Personality-based skills that the cleric uses include *etiquette, charm, intimidate,* and *inspire.* Clerics who operate in or come from a primitive society might want Entertainment and one or more of its specialties.

► ***Signature Equipment:*** Based on the cleric's secondary profession, plus a holy item and holy text.

► ***Skill Package:*** Knowledge–*first aid 2, religious doctrine;* Resolve–*mental resolve;* Teach; Culture–*etiquette (specific);* Leadership–*inspire.* Cost: 30 points.

Entertainer

An entertainer is either on his way up or has already reached the top of his field. He's an actor, a musician, a comedian, or a singer. He travels the world (or the galaxy) performing for his fans and trying to make an even bigger name for himself wherever he goes. He may have real talent, or he may just be lucky—a one-hit wonder.

Entertainers can have attitude, or they can be played as lounge lizards milking a gimmick for all it's worth. This hero starts out with the Entertainment broad skill and whichever of its specialties—*act, dance, musical instrument,* and *sing*—are appropriate. The Creativity broad skill and a specific creative specialty can also be helpful. Depending on the entertainer's act, Manipulation–*prestidigitation* might also be selected.

Specialty skills associated with the list of Diplomat broad skills given earlier also serve this hero well. You should consider selecting from *small business, management, intuition, bluff, bribe, gamble, charm, seduce,* and *taunt.*

Finally, if the points are available, an entertainer should consider the Athletics specialty skills, Acrobatics, and Street Smart.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Performing costume, musical instrument (or some other prop for the act).

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Awareness–*intuition 2*; Deception–*bluff*; Entertainment–*act 2, musical instrument (specific), sing 2*; Interaction–*charm, seduce 2*. Cost: 30 points.

First Contact Consul

A first contact consul is trained in negotiating with alien species and specializing in analyzing, categorizing, and opening discussions with new alien species—what spacers call "making first contact." First contact consuls are assigned to exploration vessels, new colonies, and contact teams, often traveling to the very edge of human space to make the first meetings between species as peaceful as possible. A consul seeks to establish friendly relations and set up a strong foundation for future negotiations.

This hero's primary skill is *first encounter*, though the other Culture specialty skills can also help him in his line of work. The Awareness specialty skills can't be stressed enough, especially *intuition*. Under the Knowledge broad skill, this hero should consider *first aid* and a few special specific fields of knowledge, such as *sociology* and *space lore*. The Life Science and Medical Science broad skills are important, especially the specialties *xenology, psychology,* and *xenomedicine*. Finally, Survival and Investigation can serve a first contact expert well.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Sensor gauntlet, soft e-suit, holorecorder.

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Life Science–*xenology*; Awareness–*intuition 2, perception*; Culture–*diplomacy 2, etiquette (specific), first encounter 2*. Cost: 35 points.

Trader

A trader is one of the independent merchants operating in every campaign setting. Some barely eke out a living, while others seem to turn everything they touch into gold. A trader usually has some debt he's working off, he's looking for the score that will pay off big, or he's a smuggler of some sort.

This hero needs a variety of skills, but it's good to start with Business–*small business* (and maybe *illicit business*), and Interaction–*bargain*. A trader needs to defend himself, so you should pick up a combat skill of some sort. Then start piling on the skills that will help the trader's business endeavors and create the type of merchant you want to play. Select from Knowledge–*economics*, Manipulation–*lockpick* and *pickpocket*, the Vehicle Operation skill of choice, Computer Science–*hacking*, Navigation, Street Smart, and as many of the Deception and Interaction skills you can afford.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** 9mm charge pistol, CF long coat, beat-up trader ship (and a huge loan for the ship that needs to be paid off).

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol*, Business–*small business*, Interaction–*bargain 2*. Cost: 20 points.

Free Agent Careers

Free agents are the independent operatives of tomorrow. Any hero with high Dexterity and Will scores, and whose primary specialty is troubleshooting is usually a Free Agent of some kind. When something really needs to get done, the Free Agent is the character who those in power usually turn to.

A Free Agent hero should start out with the combat skill of your choice; after that's out of the way, you'll know what you've got left to spend on other skills. Modern Ranged Weapons works well due to the Free Agent's high Dexterity, but consider Unarmed Attack–*power martial arts* as well. Go for all of the Athletics specialties as soon as you can, and also consider the following Free Agent broad skills when creating a career: Survival, Acrobatics, Stealth, Security, Investigate, and Deception.

Bounty Hunter

A bounty hunter tracks, locates, and captures those who have fled justice or are wanted by any legal or illegal authority—as long as the pay matches the danger involved.

Specialty skills that most apply to the bounty hunter include *dodge, shadow, protection protocols, search, track, interview, intimidate,* and *bribe*. Because a bounty hunter is one of the more obviously aggressive Free Agents, you might want to purchase Armor Operation and a rank or two in the specialty needed for the armor he wears. Ranks in both of the Stamina specialties can be helpful, as well as Law.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** SMG, attack armor, sensor gauntlet.

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol*; Stealth–*shadow*; Investigate–*track*; Interaction–*interview*. Cost: 30 points.

Explorer

An explorer wants to see new things, discover new places, and generally visit locations that no one else has ever been to. He's an adventurer-for-hire, a person driven by wanderlust and curiosity, or a dreamer in search of some mythological place. He never settles down, preferring to keep moving—to see what lies beyond the next hill or star system. An explorer can also serve as a scout or guide, depending on the concept you come up with.

Specialty skills from those broad skills listed above that are appropriate for the explorer include specific terrains under the Survival skill, *fall, hide, sneak,* and *track*. Pick up the Athletics specialties whenever possible, the *daredevil* specialty, Vehicle Operation–*space vehicle*, Movement–*trailblazing*, the Stamina specialties, Life Science and Physical Science, Navigation, System Operation, and either of the Awareness specialty skills. For a twist, you might want to purchase Primitive Ranged Weapons for your explorer, giving him an edge on backwater worlds.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Battle vest, 11mm charge rifle, beat-up trader ship (and a huge loan for the ship that needs to be paid off).

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Modern Ranged Weapons–*rifle*; Vehicle Operation–*space vehicle*; Movement–*trailblazing*; Survival–*survival training (specific)*; Navigation–*surface navigation*. Cost: 35 points.

Gambler

A gambler is a professional card shark, dice player, or expert at some other game of chance. He makes a living by locating the big games and finding a way to win. Some gamblers are highly skilled players; others are highly skilled cheaters. All know how to *bluff, charm,* or *seduce* their

way out of tight situations. Gamblers usually have some other talent to fall back on. They'd rather win the day through wits and skill, but some learn to fight to protect themselves during those times when the game takes a dark and deadly turn. They love to play the odds—and they don't like to lose.

Deception is this hero's primary skill, so pile on ranks in *gamble*. Since the gambler is sometimes a thief of sorts, purchase Manipulation and all of its specialties, Computer Science–*hacking*, and Security–*security devices*. The Awareness specialty skills serve the gambler well, and there's going to be a situation when *hide* and *sneak* come in handy. Street Smart, Business, and Culture might also work for your gambler concept.

► ***Signature Equipment:*** Flashy clothes, small pistol, "lucky" token of some sort.

► ***Skill Package:*** Manipulation–*pickpocket*; Deception–*bluff 2, gamble 2*; Interaction–*charm 2, seduce*. Cost: 30 points.

Reporter

A reporter keeps the public informed through articles in the print media or by filing stories on computer networks or over some other form of broadcast media. A crusading journalist is an advocate for the people. An investigative journalist seeks to uncover conspiracies or otherwise expose the truth about governments, corporations, or products. A reporter believes in the freedom of the press, the public's right to know, and the power of the press to influence, inform, and entertain. He'll stop at nothing to get the story, risking danger, threats, and even death in some cases to bring the truth to light.

Though he's not a combat-oriented character, some form of battle skill can help keep the reporter alive. His primary skills are Creativity–*photography* and *journalism*, Investigate–*track*, Interaction–*interview*, and Street Smart. The Stealth specialties *shadow* and *sneak* work in this hero's favor, as does Computer Science–*hacking*. Finally, Administration–*bureaucracy* helps a reporter cut red tape, and the Deception specialty skills aid in getting to the heart of a story when pure honesty fails.

► ***Signature Equipment:*** Holorecorder, data slate.

► ***Skill Package:*** Administration; Creativity–*journalism*; Investigate–*track*; Interaction–*interview*. Cost: 20 points.

Spy

A spy is a clandestine agent employed by a government or some other organization to gather information. He secretly watches others, keeps surveillance, engages in espionage, or investigates specific agencies or people to uncover intelligence. Some spies are independent agents, gathering information to sell to the highest bidder. Others are loyal to an employer, company men who engage in games of death and deceit for the same organization for as long as they stay in the business.

Combat skills of all types suit the spy, who often finds himself in extreme danger. The Athletics skills are important, as are Acrobatics–*dodge* and *fall*. Manipulation–*lockpick* and *pickpocket* come into play when the spy must perform as a thief, as do any of the Stealth specialties. Stamina–*resist pain*, as well as Resolve–*mental resolve* and *physical resolve*, serve to protect the spy from interrogation techniques.

The spy might also take Computer Science–*hacking*, Demolitions–*disarm* and *set explosives*, Security–*security devices*, Business–*corporate*, Administration–*bureaucracy*, the Awareness specialties, the Resolve specialties, and Street Smart. Finally, a spy usually has to pretend to be something he's not. For this reason, the Culture–*etiquette* specialty, the Deception and Interaction specialties, and Leadership can be useful.

► ***Signature Equipment:*** Surveillance gear, antiscan weave clothing, 9mm charge pistol.

► ***Skill Package:*** Athletics–*climb*; Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol*; Manipulation; Stealth–*sneak*; Interaction–*interview, seduce 2*. Cost: 35 points.

Tech Op Careers

Tech Ops are skilled in the use, maintenance, and invention of modern technology. Anyone with high Intelligence and Dexterity scores, and whose primary area of expertise uses technology in a significant way, is probably a Tech Op of some kind.

The Intelligence skills are where the Tech Op shines. Depending on what disciplines your hero knows the most about, he should pick up one or more of these broad skills: Computer Science, Life Science, Medical Science, Navigation, Physical Science, System Operation, and Technical Science. Beyond these, Investigate, Teach, and a combat skill of your choice can also be handy.

Comptech

A computer technician, or comptech, is a computer operator or engineer who's an expert in programming, hardware, or software operation. A comptech knows computers inside and out—he can fix them or modify them or even build them from scratch if that's where his training lies. He's usually good with software, getting the most out of the programs his machine has access to or improvising something to accomplish the task at hand.

This hero's primary skills are Computer Science–*hardware* and Technical Science–*repair*. He probably also has ranks in the other specialty skills related to those broad skills.

Other important skills associated with comptechs are Business–*corporate* or *small business*, Security–*security devices*, System Operation–*sensors*, and Knowledge–*deduce*.

► ***Signature Equipment:*** Marginal quality microcomputer, two Marginal programs, one Ordinary program.

► ***Skill Package:*** Computer Science–*hacking, hardware 2, programming*; Technical Science–*repair, technical knowledge*. Cost: 30 points.

Doctor

A doctor heals wounds, cures illness, and otherwise provides medical aid when it's needed. Every adventuring group needs a doctor eventually. A doctor (sometimes called a medtech) tries to use the technology and science available to him to diagnose, treat, or cure whatever ails someone else. A doctor might specialize in general practice, surgery, or alien physiology.

The doctor starts with Medical Science and as many of its specialties as you think are necessary. Take *treatment* and *surgery* first, then *forensics, medical knowledge, psychology*, and/or *xenomedicine*, de-

pending on the kind of doctor you want your hero to be. Life Science can further define your doctor, especially the *biology* and *genetics* specialties. Also, don't neglect the Interaction specialty skills unless you want your doctor to have a poorer than average bedside manner.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Surgical kit, first aid kit, medical gauntlet.

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Medical Science–*medical knowledge, surgery 2, treatment 2.* Cost: 25 points.

Engineer

An engineer is a hero with a flair for technology. Engineers usually strive to keep technological equipment in working order or to repair technological equipment that has been damaged or has worn out. An engineer can be a specialist—a mechanic, a drivemech, a computer engineer, or an electronics specialist—or a jack-of-all-trades. Some are better at keeping things working or at juryrigging a temporary solution; others fix things right the first time, even if it takes a while to do it. There are also engineers who design technology, inventing new devices, improving existing systems, or pioneering new technology.

The engineer starts with the Technical Science broad skill and its specialties *invention, juryrig, repair,* and *technical knowledge.* Computer Science can be useful, as can Physical Science–*physics.* An engineer should also consider System Operation–*engineering,* Awareness–*perception,* and Investigate–*search.*

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Computer gauntlet, toolkit, soft e-suit.

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Knowledge–*computer operation;* System Operation–*engineering;* Technical Science–*juryrig 2, repair 2, technical knowledge 2;* Awareness–*perception.* Cost: 30 points.

Hacker

A hacker is a computer expert who specializes in using computers in unique ways. A hacker can break through computer security, access restricted data, log into top-secret systems, and otherwise electronically roam where others don't tread.

In futuristic settings, the hacker becomes the gridpilot, interfacing through cybernetic connections to roam the information highways of cyberspace. In any setting, hackers are electronic spies and thieves, saboteurs, information brokers, couriers, fun-loving techies, or rebels against the establishment.

The hacker needs Computer Science–*hacking* to perform the basic tasks of his career. He's usually also hooked up with Business–*corporate* and *illicit business,* Security–*security devices,* System Operation–*sensors,* Administration–*bureaucracy,* Resolve–*mental resolve,* Street Smart, and Deception–*bluff.*

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Ordinary quality microcomputer or Marginal gridcaster and nanocomputer, one Marginal program, two Ordinary programs.

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Computer Science–*hacking 2, hardware, programming 2;* Security–*protection protocols, security devices.* Cost: 35 points.

Pilot

A pilot is an adventurer, a thrill-seeker trained in the operation of some type of vehicle—usually one he can operate without any help. He flies airplanes, jet fighters, star fighters, or small space vessels. He's a rogue, a brawler, confident of his abilities and ready to take on any challenge or risk any dare. He can also be the helmsman of a larger vessel.

This hero starts with Vehicle Operation–*air vehicle* or *space vehicle.* He also picks System Operation and any or all of its specialties as soon as he can. The pilot also needs a personal combat skill or two. Navigation and its specialties are important, as is Tactics–*space tactics* or *vehicle tactics.* Finally, Leadership might be appropriate for your hero concept.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Jumpsuit, 9mm charge pistol, small trader (and a huge loan for the ship that needs to be paid off).

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol;* Vehicle Operation–*air vehicle, space vehicle;* Knowledge–*computer operation;* Navigation–*system astrogation;* System Operation. Cost: 30 points.

Scholar

A scholar specializes in a particular field of study, be it history, ancient civilizations, archaeology, or even supernatural phenomena. He not only has lots of knowledge stored in his head, but he's got loads of books, electronic storage devices, ancient parchments, and more theories than he knows what to do with. He's an ardent researcher, able to follow leads and find information, sometimes with only the barest of clues. He's read more about life than he's lived it, but he's ready to set out and become a field researcher.

This hero starts with ranks in specific areas of Knowledge, or with one or more of the Science broad skills, depending on the concept you have in mind. He might have a combat skill or two, but in general he's an adventurous know-it-all. He can use the Survival broad skill (for a field researcher) or possibly Tactics (for the armchair general type).

The Awareness specialties, Investigate–*search,* Knowledge–*deduce,* Resolve, and Culture can also be useful to the adventurous scholar hero.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Ordinary quality computer and one Ordinary program, 9mm pistol, rations (for field work).

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Knowledge–*deduce;* Life Science; Physical Science; Technical Science; Awareness–*intuition, perception.* Cost: 25 points.

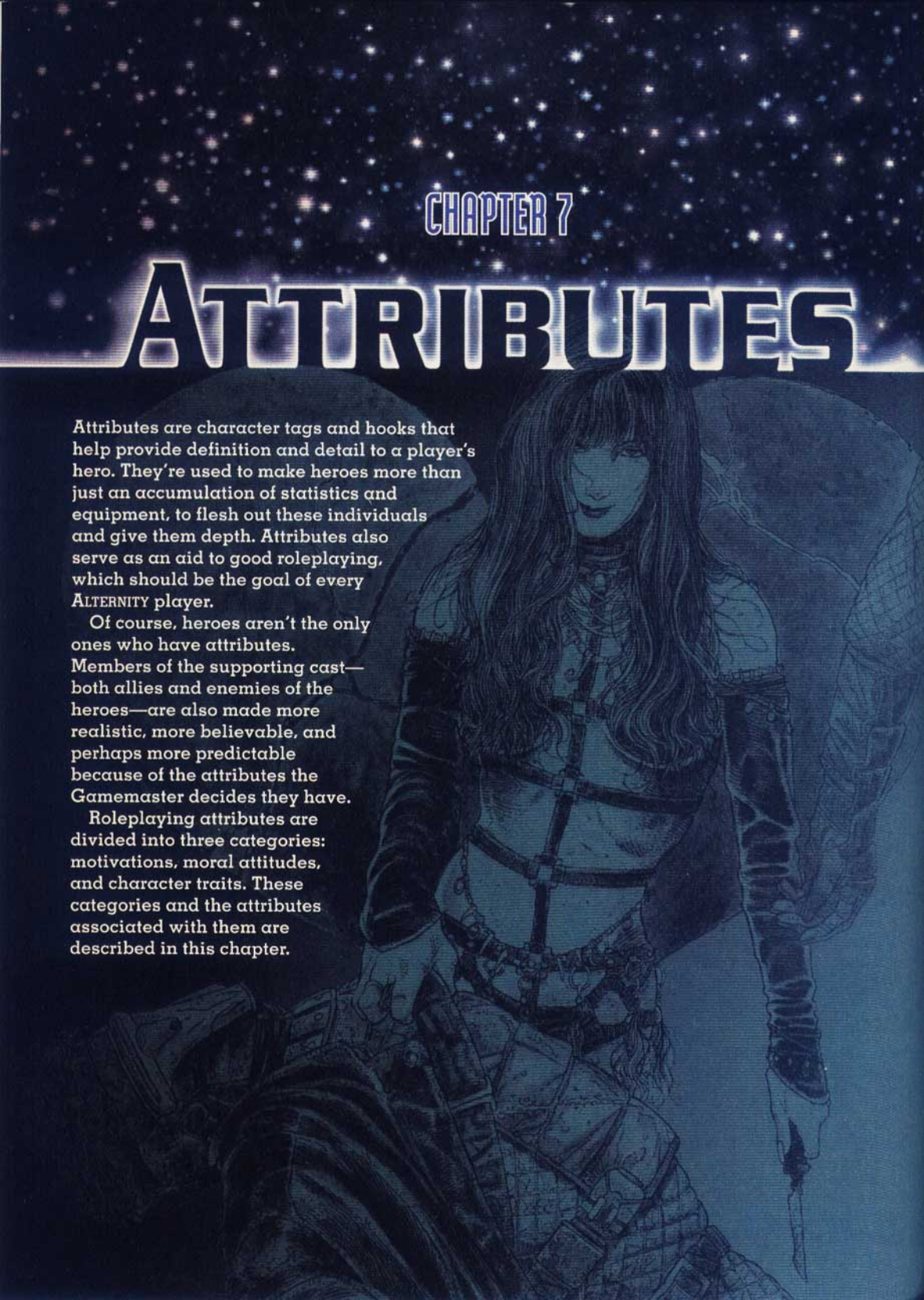
Scientist

A scientist is a field researcher, an inventor, or a specialist in a particular field of scientific study. Scientists accompany adventuring teams to conduct research, test theories and new inventions, or to provide expert knowledge to the group when such help is needed. Scientists include biologists, geneticists, cyberbionicists, xenobiologists, astrophysicists, geologists, and biochemists.

The scientist starts with one or more Science broad skills and a few specialty skills. Knowledge is important, as is System Operation–*sensors.* Administration, Knowledge–*deduce,* Investigate–*search,* Teach, Culture, and Leadership can also be selected by the adventurous scientist.

▶ ***Signature Equipment:*** Sensor gauntlet, microcomputer, instrument pack.

▶ ***Skill Package:*** Knowledge–*computer operation, deduce;* Physical Science–*astronomy, chemistry 2, physics 2;* System Operation–*communications, sensors;* Investigate. Cost: 35 points.



CHAPTER 7

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are character tags and hooks that help provide definition and detail to a player's hero. They're used to make heroes more than just an accumulation of statistics and equipment, to flesh out these individuals and give them depth. Attributes also serve as an aid to good roleplaying, which should be the goal of every ALTERNITY player.

Of course, heroes aren't the only ones who have attributes. Members of the supporting cast—both allies and enemies of the heroes—are also made more realistic, more believable, and perhaps more predictable because of the attributes the Gamemaster decides they have.

Roleplaying attributes are divided into three categories: motivations, moral attitudes, and character traits. These categories and the attributes associated with them are described in this chapter.

Motivation

What motivates your hero to action? A hero's motivation is his defining purpose, the reason he does what he does. Select one motivation to build your hero's background and purpose upon. You can assign any number of lesser motivations that may come and go as the campaign progresses, and some will certainly develop as the hero grows and interacts with the setting, but the hero's primary motivation is the foundation upon which his goals and desires are built.

This is the purpose your hero has dedicated himself to. Motivation may come from upbringing, education, secret desires, or even from a specific incident that shaped the rest of the hero's life to this point. If this motivation is incorporated into your play of your hero, the Gamemaster may reward your character with bonus achievement points at the end of some adventures.

Every hero should have one primary motivation at the start of his career. There's no cost for selecting a motivation. Some possible motivations are briefly described in the text below. If you have another idea, discuss it with your Gamemaster.

All for Love

What's love got to do with it? Everything, at least for the hero with this motivation. This hero puts the person he loves above everything. That person's welfare and happiness are more important than his own. This motivation serves heroes whose players build a romance into their backgrounds, heroes with parents or children, or heroes who seek to reconcile or unite with loved ones or others whose love they hope to win.

Can't Get Enough

A hero with this motivation wants to acquire as much wealth and as many material possessions as he possibly can. He wants it all, and he doesn't want to share it with the rest of the world. This motivation requires the player and the Gamemaster to agree on the scope of the hero's greed—what specifically he covets—and how much latitude the player has in roleplaying. For example, a greedy hero who tries to pocket everything that he and his companions come across is going to cause trouble within the group quickly. It's better to narrow this motivation so that it pertains to a specific item or category of items, and to roleplay the hero as basically greedy but not stupid enough to constantly anger his companions.

Even better, the player should provide a reason for his greed. Does he need money to accomplish something or help someone? Does he want to collect every alien artifact he can to corner the market? A good hook can make this motivation interesting, meaningful, and fun to play.

Deeper Meaning

This motivation compels a hero to seek wisdom and understanding in order to improve himself and the world around him. He seeks to learn what drives a hostile culture, or to discover some order in the seemingly randomness of the galaxy. This hero questions everyone and everything to get to the details hidden below the surface—he wants to uncover the reasons for the way things are, because he believes that attaining this understanding will enable him to be a better person in the long run.

Discovery

Finding a cure for a deadly disease, or the means for faster travel, or the next new planetary expansion, or achieving some other technological or scientific breakthrough is what drives a hero with this motivation. He seeks to advance the limits and frontiers of civilization or science. Such a hero can be an idealist, a dedicated doctor, or even a mad scientist tinkering with the fundamental forces of nature.

Find the Truth

The truth is out there, and this hero wants to discover exactly what it is. This can be a broad, general motivation, but it works best if the hero is seeking a specific truth. Perhaps he has been the victim of slander, and he wants to make it clear, by demonstrating or proving the truth of the matter, that his detractors are lying. Or maybe the hero discovers that a government or corporation has lied to the public, and this hero wants to dispel the shadows to find out what's real. This hero can be anything from a raging paranoid to a free thinker

who genuinely seeks the truth about a given subject.

Fun First

A hero with this motivation can be a hedonist who lives his life solely to experience pleasure, a wealthy socialite who wants to always live in the lap of luxury, or a party animal who's always on the lookout for a good time. Everything the hero does is designed to achieve or sustain this lifestyle. He wants to have fun, feel good, and enjoy life to the fullest extent possible.

Helping Others

"To serve and protect" might be the motto of a hero with this motivation, or the hero could be a humanitarian seeking to serve the better interests of the world at large. Heroes can dedicate themselves to military service because they believe it's right or because their families have strong military heritages. They can help others while following careers as law enforcers, politicians, doctors, or scientists. They can serve out of a sense of duty or because they genuinely want to help others in some manner. Some may even serve the greater good by becoming advocates for animal or alien rights, environmentalists, or protesters seeking to change the world in some way.

Loose End

Some actions or events from the hero's past remain unfinished or unresolved. He needs to complete an old task, solve an old problem, or find a lost love. The key here is that the unresolved past shapes and influences the hero's present and future. This hero might have seen his sister abducted by aliens while he was helpless, and so has dedicated his life to solving paranormal mysteries—with the intention of someday finding his lost sister. Or this hero was experimenting to develop a drug to combat a killer disease when the experiment went bad. The drug poisoned people instead of saving them, and the hero seeks to make amends as he continues to search for the cure.

On a Mission

This motivation describes a hero with a specific goal in mind. He seeks something or someone that's important to him. It's better to think lofty than low—the goal should not be so simple that it can be achieved in the span of a few adventures, but neither should it be impossible to achieve. Goals could include finding a lost loved one, identifying the planet of origin of an ancient alien species, capturing the murderer who framed you, or locating evidence of paranormal activity.

Personal Power

This hero craves clout. He has a lust for all of the benefits and privileges that go with command, wealth, and the rest of the trappings of power. Whether it's military rank, political influence, or technological power, this hero wants it all. This can be a difficult motivation to roleplay in a group setting, but it can be used if handled delicately. The best use of this motivation is for individual, small-scope power of some sort, as opposed to world domination.

Staying Alive

This hero wants to live, but there are forces out there that want to destroy him. A hero who seeks to survive may be a hunted fugitive, a visionary with a radical message, the last of a family, or a mutant with an ability that others want to exploit—in short, anyone whose survival is in question due to a specific threat (aside from the usual threats that bother every hero).

Trust in Higher Power

Spiritual conviction can move mountains, and it's certainly one of the stronger motivations a hero can have. This motivation can manifest in a number of slightly different ways. For example, a hero with trust in a higher power can be on a spiritual quest, or he can be spreading the doctrine of a particular faith to everyone he meets. He can be a defender of the faith, a crusader, a teacher, or a clergyman. This motivation requires that the player and the Gamemaster work out the basics of the hero's beliefs.

Vengeance

Someone or something—a person, an organization, a corporation, or an alien monster—did something terrible to the hero, or his friends or family, in the past. Now, everything the hero does is designed to point toward and prepare for the eventual day of reckoning—the day the hero gains his revenge! Of course, vengeance is a slow process. The hero who selects this motivation shouldn't be able to settle the score right away. He has to build toward it, slowly getting closer and closer to achieving his goal. (If the Gamemaster is creative, he may twist events so that the hero eventually discovers he has been after the wrong organization or individual all this time. Then a new chase begins as the hero seeks vengeance on the true villain.)

Winning Is Everything

A hero with this motivation seeks to be the very best at what he does. He may want to be the best warrior, the best scientist, the best athlete, or the best explorer there is. To be the best, the hero faces every challenge head-on. He constantly tests himself and those around him, especially those who have similar talents and abilities. He wants to prove his superiority, particularly in ways that make his skills and abilities apparent to those he cares about and those whose opinions matter to him.

Yearn to Learn

Knowledge for its own sake: That's the focus of a hero with this motivation. He wants to learn all he can about a specific topic. This knowledge may have value and may be used for a variety of purposes after the hero collects it, but that's just an added bonus. He really just wants to learn about the subject for the simple pleasure that learning provides him. In many ways, this hero is like the absent-minded professor. However, information brokers and intelligence agents can be ruthless in the pursuit of knowledge if they select this motivation.

Moral Attitude

How does your hero approach life? What are his personal values? A hero's moral attitude encompasses his set of beliefs, his principles, his ethics, and his code of conduct. It's the way he tries to live his life. A moral attitude isn't a rigid, confining rule. Instead, consider it as a guide and a benchmark for play.

Heroes are free-willed individuals. As such, they can bend or set aside their moral attitudes as situations dictate. Some may even change their beliefs as a campaign progresses. Roleplaying a hero's moral attitude and incorporating it into the decisions a hero makes and the actions he takes can earn bonus achievement points at the end of some adventures. On the other hand, a hero who never follows his moral attitude or blatantly and constantly acts against it risks losing achievement points that otherwise would have been earned in an adventure.

Every player should select a moral attitude for his hero. There's no cost for selecting a moral attitude. The moral attitudes that are available in the ALTERNITY game are described below. Note that a hero who has a negative moral attitude can be hard to incorporate into a group of other characters who have moral attitudes oriented toward good. For this reason, the Gamemaster may dictate that some attitudes are not available choices for heroes.

Anti-authority

The anti-authority character believes that his life is his own and he should be allowed to do as he pleases. He has a loose code of ethics, one that usually centers on things that are good for him. He's an individualist with little respect for anything that confines or hampers free will. He can be good or evil, but usually does what he pleases in order to get the most out of life. Some anti-authority characters can be true anarchists, seeking to topple the pillars of authority to promote absolute freedom. Most aren't that fanatic, however.

Apathetic

An apathetic character just doesn't care. Some of those who hold this moral attitude believe that nothing really matters in the end, so there's no point in being concerned about anything. Others just don't have the convictions to form important opinions or to carry out important decisions; it's easier to believe that nothing matters than it is to take a stand. Apathetic characters can lack emotion, interest, and feeling, or they can wear an air of indifference. Some can be cynical. A hero who is apathetic may have had his beliefs shattered by some past event and only needs a new cause to ignite the spark of emotion smoldering in his breast.

Conformist

A conformist is a follower. He doesn't stick out. In fact, he works extremely hard to be just another face in the crowd. The conformist doesn't like to make waves. He goes with the flow, keeping his head low and his nose in his own business. He values the popular opinions of the day, accepting everything and deciding on nothing. He's adaptive, fitting in with the crowd as a way of life. He's accommodating and agreeable, bending over backward to stay on everyone's good side. He complies with the regulations and mores of the day, because that's what everyone else does.

Corrupt

The corrupt character has a strict personal code, one that promotes a twisted, even deviant moral program that usually bolsters his goals and desires. He may still be honorable as long as it doesn't inhibit his own agenda. He's self-disciplined, usually admiring or demanding that same trait in others—after all, without discipline, corruption consumes itself in raging fire. The controlled flame burns the longest, and that's important to the corrupt hero. However, he won't tolerate those who work against his goals.

Despicable

A despicable character is wicked, amoral, and totally evil. He has no code of ethics. He's unpredictable, random, and possibly even insane. If he helps someone, it's only for personal gain—and he gets great satisfaction from hurting the same person later. He despises those who are good and honorable. He sneers at discipline. He hates authority. He delights in evil and enjoys causing pain and sorrow.

Ethical

The ethical hero lives by principles that are universally recognized as right and good. He strives to do nothing that is evil or morally wrong, and he seeks to help everyone in need. The ethical hero has a strict moral code that values fair play, respects authority, and brings the greatest benefit to the most people. The ethical hero is honest and hard-working, kind and wise. He can be stern and even driven by his moral attitude, but he is also fair and good.

Gallant

The gallant hero believes that the strong must protect the weak. He has a nobility of spirit and a high degree of courage. This hero is quick to action, daring in deed, and dashing in manner and appearance. He tries to right wrongs, but he also enjoys the fruits of his labors. He knows he's good, and he likes to have others see his goodness in action. The gallant hero models himself after the knights of old, swashbucklers, or the famous lawmen of the Old West.

Honorable

The honorable hero sticks to his word and holds others to the same standard. He follows a code of dignity, integrity, and pride. The honorable hero is often extremely individualistic, though his personal code means that he can be trusted and counted on to keep his word. Indeed, his word is his bond, and he strives to make his actions live up to his lofty promises—even if no one else is around to witness his honor.

Just

A character with a just moral attitude doesn't care if a law is intrinsically good or evil; he believes that law is the defining aspect of modern civilization. Everyone is equal under the law, and the just-minded character works to defend that principle. He protects everyone's opinions, as long as they don't break the laws of the land. He is fair and law-abiding, without regard to the ethics of the laws he defends.

Selfish

The selfish character always wants to know what's in it for him. He has a high regard for life and freedom—especially his own. He places his own interests above all else, seeking a personal angle before he commits to

anything. If he agrees to something (after securing the personal stake he needs to make such a commitment), he sticks with it. However, self-preservation and self-aggrandizement are definitely the cornerstone of this hero's code of behavior.

Unscrupulous
The unscrupulous hero is self-serving and depraved. He's ruthless—he'll stop at nothing to achieve his goals. He has no conscience, and thus perceives no need to adhere to the principles of right and wrong. If he wants something, he takes it. If a lie will work as well as the truth, he opts for the lie.

Virtuous
The virtuous hero is righteous and good, exhibiting moral excellence in word and deed. He always tells the truth, he demonstrates great courage—especially regarding his convictions—and he lives as an example to others. He can't be bribed or persuaded to work against his beliefs. He upholds his convictions even in the face of extreme adversity. The virtuous hero is irreproachable and unburdened by guilt—unless he goes against his moral attitude. Then he is wracked by guilt and must seek a way to repair the damage he has done.

Worldly
Materialistic gain is the goal of the worldly character. He wants to own things, especially the best things he can find. He will compromise his other beliefs if there's something for him to gain by doing so. Mercenaries, business people, and those born rich are examples of characters with worldly moral attitudes.

Character Traits
Motivation defines a hero. Moral attitude describes his value system and personal ethics. Character traits give a hero a personality by providing roleplaying hooks that a player can latch on to. Traits are descriptive labels that give direction on roleplaying a hero's personalty. They're intended to be a starting point, not a limiting factor.

Good roleplaying of a hero's character traits can result in an award of bonus achievement points at the end of some adventures.

Cellular Imaging

Up to two character traits can be selected for a hero. Try to combine the two traits in an interesting and logical manner. If you do select two widely opposed traits, discuss ways to make it work with your Gamemaster. As with moral attitudes (see above), it can prove difficult for a hero who has negative traits to function effectively as a member of a group of characters who don't have similar traits.

Aggressive
An aggressive character is assertive, bold, and inclined to act in a hostile fashion.

Amoral
An amoral character makes no distinction between right or wrong and lives accordingly.

Calm
A calm hero rarely gets excited or agitated. He remains composed even while chaos rages around him.

Cheerful
A cheerful hero is almost always in good spirits. He's happy, pleasant, and easily passes his attitude to those around him.

Compassionate
A compassionate character feels the suffering of others and has an inclination to give aid, provide support, or show mercy.

Confident
A confident hero is self-assured, bold, and sure of his worth and abilities.

Courageous
A courageous hero is brave and resolute, able to stand fast in the face of adversity.

Cowardly
A cowardly character displays fear in the face of danger, often standing back or even fleeing while others move in to confront it.

Curious
A curious hero can't leave well enough alone. He wants to know what's around the corner or behind the door. He's eager to acquire information or knowledge, as befits his inquisitive nature.

Dependent
A dependent character relies on someone or something besides himself. This someone or something is usually needed or greatly desired, and it influences or unduly controls the hero in some way.

Egotistical
An egotistical character is conceited, boastful, and sometimes even totally self-centered. He has a tendency to speak about himself to excess.

Energetic
An energetic hero is vigorous, full of vitality, and possessed of an intensity of expression.

Flippant
A flippant character is quick to make jokes, off-the-cuff remarks, and disrespectful comments couched in levity. This hero can even be impertinent.

Follower
A character who is a follower either subscribes to the teachings of another, or is a servant or subordinate. The follower accepts guidance, orders, or simply tries to emulate another.

Foppish
A foppish character is preoccupied with his clothes, manners, and appearance, and he's usually vain about these things as well.

Friendly
A friendly hero is warm, comforting, and likable. He always has a smile and a good word for those he meets.

Frivolous
A frivolous character can be inappropriately silly, rarely serious, or over-

ly preoccupied with trivial matters, or may show evidence of all three of those behavioral quirks.

Generous
A generous hero shares his good fortune with others, giving freely to those he likes and to those in need.

Hateful
A hateful character feels animosity or hostility toward life in general or someone or something in specific. This hatred can be buried deeply and rarely shown, or the character can wear his hatred like a dark shroud for everyone to see.

Helpful
A helpful hero is always ready to lend a hand, to provide aid, and to generally be useful to others.

Honest
An honest hero is truthful. He displays integrity, fairness, and generally has a solid reputation.

Humble
A humble hero is modest, content to keep his accomplishments low-key, and rarely boastful.

Humorless
A humorless character is unwilling or unable to see the comical or absurd aspect of a situation. He may be perpetually grumpy, or he simply may lack the ability to perceive, enjoy, or express things that are comical or funny.

Humorous
A humorous character expresses things that are comical or funny as a matter of course. He can be amusing, and he enjoys being amused.

Illogical
An illogical character blatantly contradicts or disregards the principles of logic, often demonstrating a lack of good sense.

Independent
An independent hero is self-reliant, self-sufficient, and self-supporting. He strives to make his own way in the world, free of the influence or control of others.

Kind
A kind hero has a warmhearted nature. He's benevolent, gracious, and tolerant of others.

Lazy
A lazy character is disposed to idleness. He'd rather relax than work or exert himself. He can be sluggish by nature, or he can be the sort of person who actively goes out of his way to avoid work.

Leader
A leader is a natural commander, a take-charge sort who relishes the responsibilities and duties of leadership. He leads by example, word, and deed, guiding others to accomplish some particular task.

Logical
A logical character employs the principles of reasoning to solve problems and reach conclusions.

Mysterious
A mysterious character exudes an air of secrecy, sometimes talking in riddles, always keeping something about himself hidden from the rest of the world.

Ominous
An ominous character is menacing and threatening in manner, appearance, or deed.

Optimistic
An optimistic hero sees the best in everything. He's hopeful, expecting the best result in every situation.

Passive
A passive character accepts the actions of others without objection, resistance, or complaint. He tends to comply with others' commands or suggestions, though sometimes he simply refuses to participate.

Peaceful
A peaceful hero is slow to anger, rarely loses his temper, and is generally tranquil. Some peaceful heroes are even serene.

Pessimistic
A pessimistic character sees gloom and doom everywhere, believing that every situation is going to end in the worst possible way.

Precise
A precise character follows the proper forms and etiquettes of his society. He makes severe and rigorous demands of himself and others.

Quiet
A quiet hero is soft-spoken or unusually silent, expressing himself with one- or two-word statements and rarely stringing more than a handful of sentences together at a time.

Rash
A rash character is quick to react, usually acting with ill-considered haste and boldness. He doesn't think, but instead immediately responds to the actions of others.

Religious
A religious hero believes in something greater than himself. He's faithful, pious, and conscientious, as well as devoted to the tenets of his beliefs.

Romantic
A romantic hero idealizes heroic tales, adventure, and love. He's enthusiastic, imaginative, and even a bit impractical.

Rude
A rude character is ill-mannered and discourteous, either due to a conscious effort on the hero's part, or because he lacks social graces.

Selfish
A selfish character is most concerned with his own personal comfort and well-being.

Skeptical
A skeptical hero demands proof of everything. He doubts, he questions, and usually he doesn't want to believe anything at face value.

Suspicious
A suspicious character is doubtful of other people. He trusts no one and doesn't require proof to believe that someone has done something wrong.

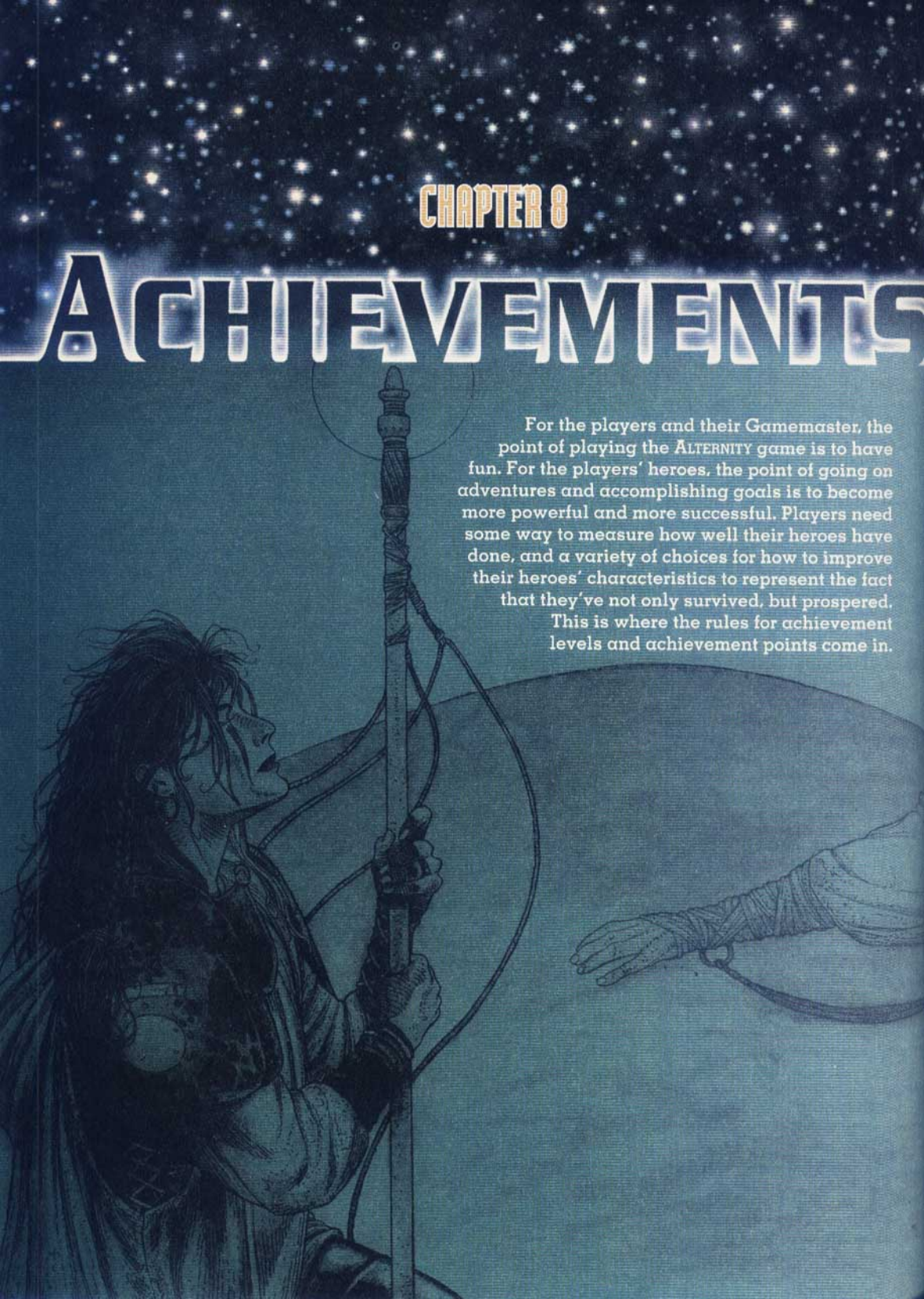
Talkative
A talkative hero never shuts up. He chatters incessantly. He can be interesting, annoying, verbose, glib, or effusive, as the player decides.

Thoughtless
A thoughtless character is inconsiderate and inattentive to others and their feelings.

Trusting
A trusting hero is inclined to believe or confide in someone readily, without doubt or hesitation.

CHAPTER 8

ACHIEVEMENTS



For the players and their Gamemaster, the point of playing the ALTERNITY game is to have fun. For the players' heroes, the point of going on adventures and accomplishing goals is to become more powerful and more successful. Players need some way to measure how well their heroes have done, and a variety of choices for how to improve their heroes' characteristics to represent the fact that they've not only survived, but prospered. This is where the rules for achievement levels and achievement points come in.

The Point System

Achievement points, awarded by the Gamemaster at the conclusion of an adventure, are a measure of a hero's (and a player's) performance in the adventure that just ended. A hero earns from 1 to 3 achievement points for each adventure he completes. Good roleplaying and other bonuses might increase these points by 1 or 2 more. (The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on the awarding of achievement points.)

A hero's achievement level is an indication both of the hero's overall performance and of his longevity. A new achievement level is gained every time the hero earns a certain number of achievement points. The points earned are recorded on the achievement track portion of the hero sheet, a portion of which looks like this:

ACHIEVEMENT TRACK

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Hero's Level **1 2 3**

A starting hero circles the "1," indicating that he's a level 1 hero. The empty box above the "1" denotes the hero's achievement goal: Counting from the left of the track, this box represents the number of achievement points he needs to earn before he can spend those points to improve his skills or give himself some other benefit. Achievement points are equivalent to skill points—every achievement point earned by a hero represents one skill point that can be spent at some later time. Points can only be spent between adventures.

When a hero earns an achievement point, mark one box on the achievement track. Be sure to use a pencil—you'll be erasing and marking boxes on this track often during a hero's career. When the box above the circled number ("1" in this case) is marked, the hero receives a number of skill points equal to the number of boxes marked. These points can be stored, used to improve existing skills, or used to purchase new skills or abilities.

After that, erase the marks and the circle, then circle the next number in sequence. That number represents the achievement level the hero has just attained. The process of earning achievement points begins again, and continues until the box over the new circled number is marked.

◆ ***Example:*** A level 1 hero earns enough achievement points to mark the box above his circled "1." He now receives 6 skill points that he can either store or spend as he sees fit. He erases all of the marks, circles the "2," and starts the achievement process again. Notice that he now needs to earn 7 achievement points to receive his next allocation of skill points (instead of 6 for a level 1 hero).

Note: If a hero needs to mark off just one or two more boxes to reach his achievement goal, he might wind up earning more achievement points than he needs. In this case, the excess achievement points are applied to the hero's next achievement goal.

◆ ***Example:*** A hero needs only 1 achievement point to reach his next goal. He earns 3 achievement points for his participation in the adventure that just ended. He uses 1 of those earned points to reach his goal, marking the box above a circled number. After he receives his skill point allotment and erases all of the marks, he circles the next higher number on his achievement track and immediately marks off two boxes toward his next goal, representing the 2 excess achievement points he earned.

Using Skill Points

What do you do with the skill points you receive when your hero attains a new achievement level? You have several options, as outlined below.

Store Skill Points

You can store skill points you receive so that you can purchase an expensive skill or benefit at a later time.

Improve Skills

You can spend the skill points to improve one or more of your hero's existing specialty skills. Note that you can't improve a specialty skill more than one rank at a time, even if you have enough skill points to buy two ranks at once.

Purchase New Skills

You can spend the skill points to buy new broad or specialty skills for your

hero. If you purchase a new specialty skill, you must buy it at rank 1.

Purchase Rank Benefits

You can spend points to acquire a specialty skill's rank benefit for your hero, as long as the hero has at least rank 1 in the skill in question. See "Purchasing Rank Benefits" on page 63 in *Chapter 4: Skills* for details.

Purchase Last Resort Points

You can purchase last resort points for your hero between adventures if the following conditions are met:

- Your hero has a Personality score of 8 or higher.
- Your hero currently has fewer last resort points than his maximum.

TABLE P6: LAST RESORT POINTS, on page 38 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*, summarizes the number of last resort points a hero is entitled to and what the cost of each last resort point is.

Purchase Achievement Benefits

Achievement benefits are tied to a hero's achievement level. They can only be purchased once a hero attains a certain level. Achievement benefits are described below.

ACHIEVEMENT BENEFITS

Heroes get better in two ways. First, they show improvement in skills by the skill ranks they've accumulated. Second, they demonstrate overall experience by the achievement level they've earned. In addition, as a hero's level goes up, special achievement benefits become available to him. These benefits provide a hero with improvements or bonuses that affect areas of a hero's persona other than his skills.

Reading the Table

The costs for achievement benefits and when they can be purchased depends on a hero's profession, as shown on TABLE P29: ACHIEVEMENT BENEFITS (on the facing page). "Cost" lists the purchase price in skill points for the benefit in question; "Lvl" gives the achievement level the hero must reach before he can purchase the benefit.

Action Check Bonus

This benefit can be purchased once. It provides the hero with a –1 bonus when he makes action checks. So, a hero with a +d0 action check modifier who purchases this benefit improves his modifier to –d4.

Action Check Increase

This benefit can be purchased up to three times, starting at the achievement level shown on Table P29. This benefit increases a hero's action check score by 1 point.

Extra Action

This benefit can be purchased once. It increases the hero's actions per round by 1, to a maximum of 4.

Ability Score Increase

This benefit can be purchased up to two times for each of the six Abilities—but not if the purchase would raise an Ability Score above the hero's species maximum.

The benefit becomes available for the first time when a hero attains the level given on Table P29 under "Ability Score Increase #1," and for the second time at the level given under "Ability Score Increase #2."

When a hero purchases this benefit, he increases the specified Ability Score by 1 point. Skill scores and other characteristics associated with the Ability are also increased.

TABLE P28: ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL SUMMARY

Lvl	Needed	Earned
1	0	0
2	6	6
3	13	7
4	21	8
5	30	9
6	40	10
7	51	11
8	63	12
9	76	13
10	90	14
11	105	15
12	121	16
13	138	17
14	156	18
15	175	19
16	195	20
17	216	21
18	238	22
etc.	etc.	etc.

Fatigue Rating Increase

This benefit can be purchased once. It increases a hero's fatigue rating by 1 point.

Mortal Rating Increase

This benefit can be purchased once. It increases a hero's mortal rating by 1 point.

Stun Rating Increase

This benefit can be purchased up to three times. It increases a hero's stun rating by 1 each time it's selected.

Wound Rating Increase

This benefit can be purchased up to two times. It raises a hero's wound rating by 1 each time it's selected.

Monetary Award

This benefit can be purchased each time a hero attains one of the following achievement levels: 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24. It represents a windfall of wealth. A scientist might receive a grant to conduct research, a soldier might get a raise, or a merchant might strike it rich. The *Gamemaster Guide* provides details on how to reward a hero with monetary wealth.

New Perk

This benefit can be purchased if a hero purchased fewer than three perks at the start of his career. (Three is the limit for purchased perks, not counting those that may be assigned to a hero by the Gamemaster.) The hero must choose from the perks listed on Table P29.

Remove Flaw

This benefit can be purchased once for each flaw a hero has. It allows a hero to eliminate a flaw he may have selected during the hero creation process or one that was assigned to him by the Gamemaster. Two conditions must be met: The cost that must be paid to remove a flaw is double the number of skill points it provided to the hero, and the flaw's removal

Table P29: Achievement Benefits

	Combat Spec		Diplomat		Free Agent		Tech Op		Mindwalker	
Benefit	**Cost**	**Lvl**	**Cost**	**Lvl**	**Cost**	**Lvl**	**Cost**	**Lvl**	**Cost**	**Lvl**
Action Check Bonus	10	3rd	12	5th	10	3rd	10	3rd	10	3rd
Action Check Increase	4	3rd	4	3rd	3	3rd	4	4th	4	6th
Extra Action	6	6th	6	6th	5	4th	6	5th	6	4th
Ability Score Increase #1										
Strength	10	3rd	15	6th	15	6th	15	9th	15	9th
Dexterity	15	5th	15	7th	10	3rd	10	3rd	15	6th
Constitution	10	3rd	15	9th	15	5th	15	6th	10	4th
Intelligence	15	6th	10	5th	15	4th	10	3rd	10	3rd
Will	15	7th	10	3rd	10	3rd	10	5th	10	3rd
Personality	10	4th	10	3rd	10	5th	15	7th	15	4th
Ability Score Increase #2										
Strength	20	6th	30	9th	30	9th	30	12th	30	12th
Dexterity	30	8th	30	10th	20	6th	20	6th	30	9th
Constitution	20	6th	30	12th	30	8th	30	9th	20	7th
Intelligence	30	9th	20	8th	30	7th	20	6th	20	6th
Will	30	10th	20	6th	20	6th	20	8th	20	6th
Personality	20	7th	20	6th	20	8th	30	10th	30	7th
Fatigue Rating Increase	4	3rd	5	4th	10	3rd	10	4th	6	5th
Mortal Rating Increase	8	3rd	10	6th	20	5th	20	6th	12	7th
Stun Rating Increase	4	4th	4	4th	4	3rd	4	5th	4	5th
Wound Rating Increase	6	5th	7	5th	7	4th	7	4th	8	6th
Monetary Award	6	3rd	5	3rd	6	3rd	6	3rd	6	3rd
New Perk										
Ambidextrous	6	7th	6	6th	5	3rd	5	6th	6	6th
Animal Friend	3	3rd	3	4th	3	4th	4	4th	4	5th
Celebrity	4	6th	4	3rd	4	5th	4	9th	4	8th
Concentration	5	5th	5	4th	5	5th	4	3rd	4	3rd
Danger Sense	5	6th	6	7th	5	3rd	6	7th	5	6th
Fists of Iron	3/6	5th	4/8	9th	3/6	4th	4/8	9th	4/8	9th
Fortitude	5	3rd	6	5th	6	5th	5	5th	6	8th
Observant	5	3rd	5	4th	5	3rd	6	5th	5	5th
Photo Memory	5	8th	4	5th	5	7th	4	7th	4	3rd
Powerful Ally	5	4th	5	6th	5	4th	6	7th	6	8th
Reflexes	6	4th	6	6th	5	3rd	5	4th	6	6th
Reputation	4	4th	5	5th	5	5th	5	4th	4	6th
Tough as Nails	5	3rd	6	9th	6	6th	5	5th	6	9th
Willpower	6	8th	6	5th	6	6th	6	5th	5	4th
Remove Flaw	x2	6th	x2	6th	x2	6th	x2	6th	x2	6th
Acquire Contact	5	4th	3	2nd	4	3rd	5	4th	5	6th

must logically fit into the story—an Old Injury requires surgery to correct, getting rid of an Obsession requires several sessions with a mental health professional, and so forth.

Acquire Contact

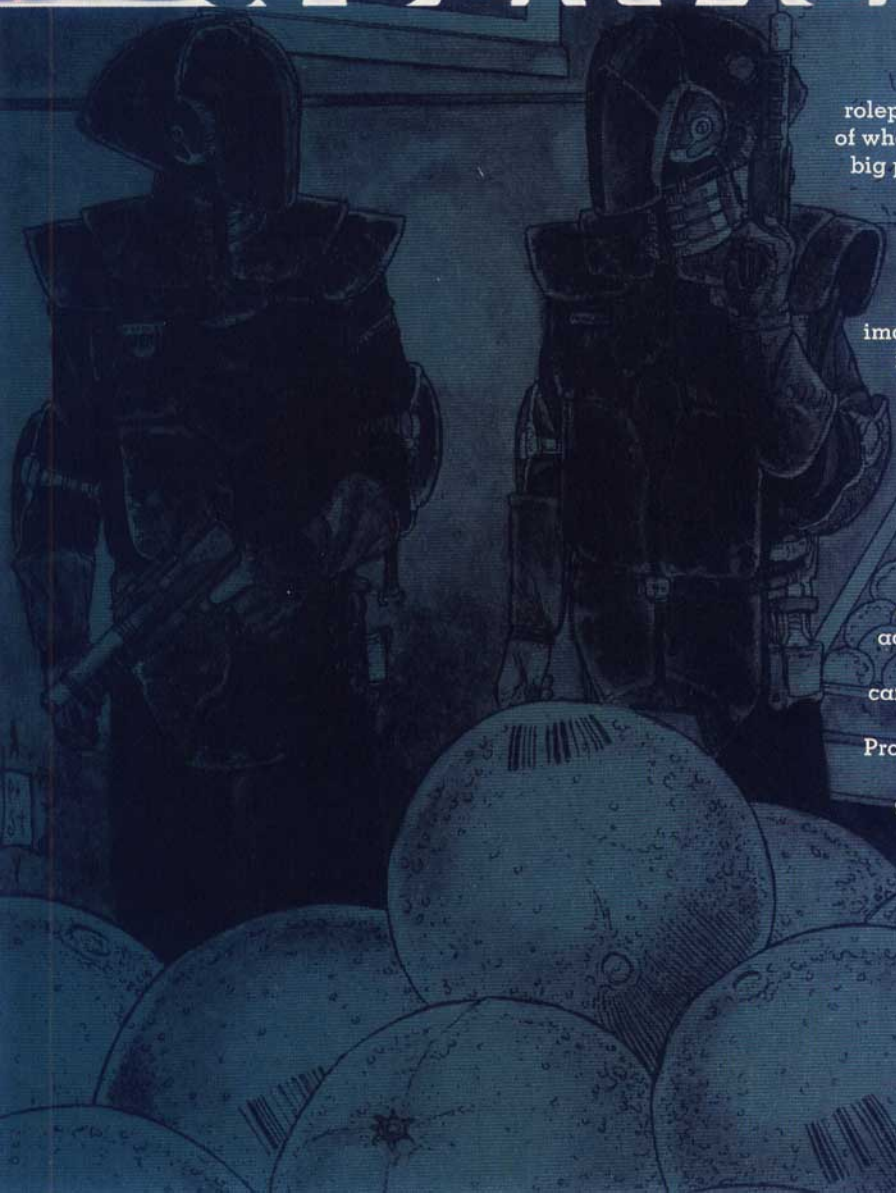
This benefit can be purchased as many times as the Gamemaster allows. It provides a hero with some form of new acquaintance who has knowledge or influence that can be advantageous to the hero and his friends. The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on contacts.

Achievement Level Summary

Table P28: Achievement Level Summary provides an overview of the achievement level structure: the total number of achievement points needed to attain a certain achievement level, and the number of skill points earned by rising from a lower level to the next higher one. For example, a level 4 character needs to build up a total of 21 achievement points to reach that level, and upon attaining level 4 he receives 8 skill points to spend (or save, as the player sees fit).

CHAPTER 9

GOODS & SERVICES



Ability Scores, skills, and roleplaying attributes are part of what defines a hero. Another big part of what makes a hero distinctive is the gear he owns or carries. The hotshot star pilot needs a ship and a reliable sidearm to complete his image, just as the gunfighter in an old Western needs a horse and a trusty .45 revolver.

This chapter and the three that follow it describe all the fundamental tools, equipment, services, computers, weapons, armor, vehicles, and other accessories that heroes can purchase in an ALTERNITY campaign. This chapter also provides an overview of Progress Levels, which is the framework the ALTERNITY game uses to define when and if a certain piece of equipment is available to heroes and other characters.

Equipping a Starting Hero

You need to select equipment for your hero before you begin playing an ALTERNITY game. Normally this involves (at the least) choosing a weapon, possibly selecting some form of armor, and grabbing a handful of useful gadgets and devices that your hero might reasonably own or have access to. There are two equally good ways to determine your hero's starting equipment:

- Your Gamemaster will, if he so desires, assign your hero a selection of equipment.
- Otherwise, you can determine your hero's starting funds and then make decisions to purchase whatever gear your hero can afford.

Gamemaster Discretion

The Gamemaster may decide to specify whatever equipment he thinks is appropriate for your hero. For instance, if your character is part of a military assault team, he may need armor, weaponry, and other items that he can't personally afford. In such a case, it's perfectly appropriate for your hero to receive the equipment he needs—with the understanding, of course, that the stuff doesn't belong to him.

Military organizations, large corporations, and other centers of power customarily bear the financial burden of outfitting their employees. If a government or company is willing to outfit a hero with the finest equipment money can buy, it's a good bet that the organization only issues the gear because it expects the character to perform a service in return.

It's not unusual for heroes to be at the beck and call of some greater power when their careers are just starting. As they (and the campaign they're a part of) develop and mature, they acquire their own possessions and resources and eventually may be able to buy just about any high-ticket item they want.

TABLE P30: MONEY ON HAND

Profession	$$$
Combat Spec	5d6
Diplomat	5d12
Free Agent	5d8
Tech Op	5d8
Mindwalker	5d4

Spending Money

Even if the Gamemaster assigns all of your hero's equipment, your hero will still have a small amount of spending money at the start of the game. Refer to TABLE P30: MONEY ON HAND above to determine how much cash your character starts the game with. Roll the dice that correspond to your hero's profession (for example, five rolls of a d6 for the Combat Spec), add up the total, and multiply

The Shirt on Your Back, and Then Some

Your hero doesn't have to buy everything imaginable to get along in a typical career and life. Assume he has some reasonable (in number and value) personal possessions—several pairs of shoes, enough changes of clothing to go a week or two between trips to the laundry, a personal radio or a handheld electronic device of some sort. It's also assumed that your character has some place to live—a house, condominium, or apartment—that's decently if not comfortably furnished.

Some possessions may be mundane for a certain type of character and unusual for another type. For instance, a Diplomat who attends a lot of highbrow social functions may be assumed to have his own tuxedo, but a soldier in the infantry who wants to own such a garment probably should have to pay for it specially. Make some notes on your hero sheet (or a separate piece of paper) listing items you want your hero to possess, and ask your Gamemaster if anything on the list needs to be paid for out of your hero's available cash.

Don't worry about overlooking some minor item when you make the list of what your hero owns or has immediate access to. Your Gamemaster will make allowances along the way, perhaps permitting you to "suddenly" possess the cordless phone you neglected to mention earlier. And he won't hold you responsible if your hero forgets to pack his toothbrush.

Currency in the Campaign

Before you start making purchases with your hero's spending money or starting funds, your Gamemaster will tell you what the standard unit of exchange in the campaign is.

In this book, we use "$" to indicate prices and values, but that doesn't mean every campaign has to have the dollar as its financial foundation.

For all practical purposes, it doesn't matter what the campaign's monetary system is based on. It might be U.S. dollars, British pounds, or any other present-day currency that's familiar to the Gamemaster and his or her players. For a science-fiction flavor, the Gamemaster might opt for "Earth dollars," "galactic credits," or some other made-up term.

that result by 10 to find out how much spending money he has.

This cash is a resource you can use to purchase some inexpensive things to round out your gear, or you can hold onto it to meet everyday expenses or to buy something later on.

Starting Funds

If your Gamemaster wants you to have more control over the process of outfitting your hero, you will start by determining your hero's starting funds. Refer to TABLE P30: MONEY ON HAND (on the previous page). Roll the dice that correspond to your hero's profession (for example, five rolls of a d8 for the Free Agent), add up the total, and multiply that result by 100 to determine your hero's starting funds.

That figure represents all the money your hero has—a bankroll that he must use to buy what he owns at the start of his career. With this freedom, however, comes responsibility; in order to use your hero's starting funds to best effect, you'll need to examine all the lists and descriptions in this chapter and the next three chapters to decide what to buy. It's a good idea to consult with the other players in your group to avoid pointless duplication; for instance, if you expect to be working together, it's probably not necessary for more than one of you to buy a large tent.

In some cases, a hero has a piece of "signature equipment" that is so central to the basic concept of the character that its cost shouldn't prohibit him from owning one. A good example is the hacker, who may need a computer of some kind to be able to perform his prescribed function. (And, presumably, it's in the best interest of all the other heroes in the group for him to have this equipment.) Even if the Gamemaster strictly administers a hero's starting funds, he might allow him to begin the game with a career-associated signature item. See *Chapter 6: Sample Careers* for suggestions of signature equipment that certain types of characters might have.

Filthy Rich and Dirt Poor

Heroes who choose the Filthy Rich perk or the Dirt Poor flaw start with either more or less funds than heroes without these considerations. To determine how much cash such characters start with, whether it represents spending money or starting funds, use TABLE P31: RICH AND POOR in conjunction with the result already obtained for the hero on TABLE P30: MONEY ON HAND.

For a hero with the Filthy Rich perk, make a perk check (using the character's Personality score with a +d4 situation die)—counting a Critical Failure as a Marginal result for the purpose of this roll only. Find the appropriate multiplier on Table P31 and adjust the hero's spending money or starting funds accordingly. Filthy Rich heroes can't buy extra equipment for less fortunate starting characters; a perk or a flaw only applies to the character who selects it.

TABLE P31: RICH AND POOR

Success	Filthy Rich	Dirt Poor
Marginal	×10	-90%
Ordinary	×20	-75%
Good	×50	-50%
Amazing	×100	-25%

For a Dirt Poor hero, use the procedure outlined above and subtract the appropriate percentage from his bankroll.

Note: A character with either the Filthy Rich perk or the Dirt Poor flaw is not entitled to receive a career item (as discussed in the previous section). A rich character is expected to be financially independent, and a poor character must simply do the best he can with what little resources he has.

PROGRESS LEVELS

For thousands of years, humanity has been engaged in a form of evolution centered on technology rather than biology. At certain points during that long period of development, the human species has learned how to make better use of the knowledge it already had; at other points, a breakthrough in knowledge, in the form of a new discovery, has improved the ability of our species to manipulate the forces of the world we live in—often to the direct advantage of those doing the manipulating. These advances, in whatever form they take, define and delineate the differences between Progress Levels in the ALTERNITY game.

Simply put, a Progress Level (often abbreviated PL) is an indication of the state of technology that exists in a particular society or civilization (which, in a science fiction setting, may be located on a planet other than Earth). This state of technological development generally pervades all aspects of a culture, particularly at higher levels (PL 5 and beyond) when long-range communication is virtually instantaneous. Even at lower levels, it's unlikely—but not impossible—for a group of humans (or other sentient creatures) to be at one Progress Level in some respects and at another one in other respects.

Progress levels may vary widely from place to place on the same world or even the same continent. Consider the early 20th-century explorers who finally penetrated the deepest reaches of the Congo or the Amazon jungle, encountering native tribes who still used Stone Age technology. In a science fiction setting involving exploration, heroes may discover entire planets locked in their own Stone Age, Bronze Age, or

TABLE P32: PROGRESS LEVELS

Human Timeline			Progress Level
?	to	-4000	0: Stone Age
-4000	to	476	1: Bronze/Iron Age
476	to	1453	2: Middle Ages
1453	to	1850	3: Age of Reason
1850	to	1945	4: Industrial Age
1945	to	2047	5: Information Age
2047	to	2160	6: Fusion Age
2160	to	2525	7: Gravity Age
2525	to	2814	8: Energy Age
2814	to	5260	9: Matter Age
5260	to	?	10: Far Future

Middle Ages periods, despite the high level of technology that characterizes the civilization from which the heroes originated.

PL 0: Stone Age

The major achievements of a Stone Age society are the use of fire, the domestication of animals, and the invention of agriculture. An individual living in a Stone Age society is primitive, but he isn't necessarily gullible, stupid, or easily frightened by advanced technology.

Common weapons in a PL 0 civilization include the club, the dagger, the spear, and the bow. Armor made from leather or hide is possible, as are wicker shields. Communication beyond the local tribe or settlement doesn't exist. Travel is accomplished by foot or by simple rafts or canoes. Simple pottery, stoneworking, and woodworking are possible.

Human civilization emerged from the Stone Age during the period from 5,000 to 2,000 B.C., with different regions and cultures making the transition at different times.

PL 1: Bronze/Iron Age

Early human civilizations had begun to master the working of metal toward the end of the Stone Age. The malleability of copper led to its becoming the first metal to be "tamed." When tin was added to copper, the much stronger alloy bronze was created. This advance allowed for the crafting of tools and weapons of great durability. In turn, those improved tools made possible the working of iron, which soon replaced bronze as the metal of choice for tools and weapons.

In a Bronze/Iron Age society, advances in pottery, construction, and agriculture allow for the concentration of populations into larger and larger groups, with a corresponding upswing in the accumulation and sharing of knowledge. The rise of nations, city-states, and empires begins in the Bronze Age. Organized efforts to improve communications allow regional societies to exist. Galleys and small sailing vessels are capable of relatively long voyages, and some cultures may build extensive road or canal networks to link distant places. Improvements in agricultural efficiency allow the rise of artisans, craftsmen, professional soldiers, and other occupations that are not directly concerned with gathering food.

The sword comes into use early in the Bronze Age, replacing the club and the dagger as the preferred weapon of infantry. Chariots briefly dominate warfare before cavalry (aided by the introduction of the stirrup) renders chariots obsolete. The first true military forces or tactical systems appear. Armor can now be made from sewn plates or scales, metal links, or even forged breastplates, and a variety of metal melee weapons dominate the battlefield.

The ancient Egyptian and Minoan cultures marked the beginning of Bronze Age civilizations for humanity, and the Roman Empire is a famous example of a successful Iron Age society.

PL 2: Middle Ages

Maturing civilizations experience a period of turmoil and adjustment at this Progress Level. Developments continue in architecture, commerce, metallurgy, and mathematics. Wider dissemination of information becomes possible thanks to more advanced printing techniques. Sea communications dominate in the later part of this stage of development, and sturdy seagoing carracks and galleons open the door to the next Progress Level.

As populations increase and knowledge of agriculture evolves, an increasing percentage of the population relocates into growing cities and towns. Toward the end of this Progress Level, the feudal system, in which a small class of nobles ruled a large population of agricultural workers, begins to collapse. Specialized crafts develop, universities appear, and the middle class is born. The first corporations emerge in the form of trade guilds. The evolution of strong systems of trade and finance tends to distribute a society's wealth more evenly among its members, diluting the power of the nobility.

Tools of warfare undergo a significant revolution. Sophisticated chain and plate armors protect warriors from harm, and elaborate fortifications become something of an art form. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, the introduction of simple gunpowder weapons signals the imminent end of knights, heavy armor, and organized armies of swordsmen.

The Middle Ages on Earth lasted roughly from A.D. 476, when the last Roman emperor of the West was deposed, until 1453, when the Turks brought an end to the Byzantine Empire by capturing Constantinople. Because communication over long distances is still relatively sporadic and inefficient during this period, individual civilizations in all parts of the globe advance at vastly different rates.

PL 3: Age of Reason

The Age of Reason is an era in human history when the development of ideas and systems of thought takes precedence over technological invention. The scientific method improves humankind's understanding of the world. Experimentation becomes the means by which the physical properties of nature are systematically examined. The study of the various scientific disciplines—chemistry, electromagnetics, medicine, biology, and astronomy—flourishes. Instruments such as microscopes

and telescopes enable scientists to greatly extend the range of their observations and discoveries.

The new reliance on science generates waves on all levels of society. Superstition falls away, and exploration of the world reaches its apex. Society begins to experiment with new forms of organization, such as democracy. Corporations and economic alliances continue to evolve. Economically, this Progress Level is a transition from the cottage industries of the Middle Ages to the industrialization of the 19th century.

The cannon becomes the dominant factor in naval warfare, while massed musket fire and horse-pulled field pieces rule the battlefield. Even the reliable bow vanishes, replaced by the flintlock. Light melee weapons remain common.

In humanity's history, this was a time of great strides. Giants such as Galileo, Kepler, and Newton redefined the world of physics and astronomy, and knowledge in all the sciences advanced. Most of the world was mapped by explorers of this period, and the Old World met the New.

PL 4: Industrial Age

In the fourth Progress Level, the theoretical knowledge of the previous era matures into widespread practical application. The harnessing of hydraulic, steam, and electric power creates an explosion of commerce and industry. Developments such as the telegraph, the telephone, and the radio make true global communication possible. Breakthroughs in manufacturing techniques allow the construction of heavy ironclad vessels, rail transportation, and architecture of previously unimagined size. Pioneers venture high into the atmosphere and descend into the sea's depths.

Urbanization is complete as individuals gather in smaller environments where they can more easily exchange goods and information. Corporations expand in power, many establishing themselves throughout the explored world. Old power structures based on obligations to the ruling elite fall away, succeeded by governments based on political and economic will.

The means of war change swiftly through the period. Aircraft and submersibles join the list of military assets. Reliable and accurate rifles, pistols, and machine guns become common. Mechanized war machines herald the first great change in the art of battle since the end of the knight.

For humanity, the transition to an industrial way of life comes tumultuously and spreads slowly. New sciences such as psychology, evolutionary biology, and genetics broaden our understanding of what our species is and where it has come from. Economies and societies based on agriculture fade into history, but countries such as the United States and Russia are ravaged by civil wars as the agrarian lifestyle gives way to industrialization. The world is wracked by conflict toward the end of this Progress Level, now that humankind has equipped itself with weapons of mass destruction and the means to transport those weapons on a global scale.

PL 5: Information Age

The Industrial Age relied on chemical power; but in the Information Age, computer technology and electronics, along with the introduction of fission power and weapons, reduce the importance of fossil fuels. Instantaneous electronic transfer of data creates a freedom of information, and the first primitive Grid appears. Advances of the past trickle down to individuals. The automobile replaces the locomotive as the common form of travel. The first steps toward space travel involve massive chemical rockets, unmanned probes and satellites, and short-term manned missions.

The technology of the era allows greater participation by citizens in the decisions of their government. The emergence of international alliances begins to dissolve borders between nations. Corporations gather power, and begin to threaten government authority. Societal evolution is relatively slow, because technology has a greater effect on individual lifestyles than on society as a whole.

Many weapons available at this Progress Level are similar to those of the Industrial Age. Rifles, machine guns, and heavy howitzers are still used by the world's soldiers. Automatic aiming systems and guided weapons make warfare much more precise and efficient. Strategic weapons, tested but never used, exhibit the species' power to exterminate itself in minutes.

Humanity experienced its Information Age as anxious years full of minor crises. The tension gradually alleviates through the age, and as the era ends new superpowers form.

PL 6: Fusion Age

The development of fusion power provides an efficient, nonexpendable energy source that almost obliterates the need for chemical fuel sources. Advanced space exploration and colonization become possible. Computers become even more accessible, reliable, and powerful. Second-generation Grid computers adopt the first efficient, though primitive, virtual systems.

Slowly, society experiences another revolution as individual nations are replaced by world powers. Megacorporations number among these new superpowers as the line between national citizen and corporate employee blurs into indistinction. Armed with the means to eradicate the entire species, the world powers keep conflicts to the level of skirmishing and posturing, and integration of the Information Age's improvements proceeds peacefully.

In the later years of this age, the first crude applications of gravity induction technology appear, in the form of civilian and military vehicles that can move through the air without using physical propulsion or consumption of fuel.

Chemical-powered explosives and firearms remain the weapons of choice; fusion technology can't be effectively miniaturized for personal combat. Nevertheless, advanced chemistry and superconducting technology change the materials and capabilities of many weapons. True spaceships become possible, propelled by powerful fusion drives, but still require a reaction mass in order to traverse space. The age sees the tenuous settlement of other planets and asteroids within the same star system.

PL 7: Gravity Age

As this Progress Level opens, the invention of two key technologies herald humanity's climb to the stars. The mass reactor systematically replaces fusion power as an even more efficient source of energy that can be miniaturized with greater ease. With the use of the mass reactor, world powers explore, divide, and colonize the entirety of the local star system.

For the most part, life on the home planet is unchanged.

The second advance of the era brings perhaps the greatest upheaval in the history of human civilization. The introduction and integration of gravity technology leads to the creation of the stardrive, an engine that allows ships to bridge the gap between the stars. Political and economic reorganization occurs as the species spreads far from home. Humanity forms stellar nations, traveling between the stars in city-sized fortress ships.

Projectile firearms are in their last days, as crude energy weapons—made possible by stardrive technology—become available. Massive energy screen generators change the shape of space combat. Powered armor is available to the warriors of the age.

Personal (melee) weapons enjoy a resurgence, due in large part to a shift in military tactics—armed conflict between individuals seldom occurs on an army-vs.-army scale, but more frequently involves engagements of small units in conditions when ranged weapons are not necessarily effective.

Computer technology links every society, settlement, and outpost of a star system in a single information Grid, creating the ultimate in the exchange of knowledge and data for business, entertainment, and research.

PL 8: Energy Age

The continuing miniaturization of stardrive technology allows power plants the size of marbles to harness the basic forces of creation. Powerful personal force screens and energy weapons dominate the battlefield, as slug-throwers finally disappear after ruling the battlefield for a thousand years. Miniaturized sensors, shields, and engines allow mass production of small, practical starfighters. At the other end of the spectrum, advanced construction techniques allow humans to build the first world ships—massive vessels the size of small planets.

PL 9 and Higher

Generally, these Progress Levels are beyond reach or comprehension, although isolated worlds or undiscovered species may exist that have access to them. In many cases, the creation of a perfect countertechnology causes the signature technology of an earlier age (fusion power, force screens, etc.) to be abandoned in favor of more elegant and more powerful technologies. Practical control of matter at the subatomic level may be possible at this stage of technological development.

Equipment Descriptions

Table P33: Personal Equipment is presented in two parts on pages 135 and 136. The gear listed on this table is organized into seven general categories, and each item is briefly described in the accompanying text.

What the column headings mean:

► **PL** (Progress Level) gives the earliest level at which an item is available. All the items listed on the table are also available at any Progress Level higher than the one indicated—though sometimes in distinctly altered form. (For instance, a PL 6 flashlight may not look much like a PL 4 version of the same item, but it's probably still easy enough to identify it for what it is.)

► **Mass** is the mass, in kilograms, of a single item at its base Progress Level. A dash in this column indicates that an item's mass is negligible (less than 1 kg), but that doesn't necessarily mean that a hero can wear or carry as many of these items as he wants. Your Gamemaster will let you know if your hero becomes overloaded with so-called "weightless" equipment. (See the rules on encumbrance on page 56 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*, for details on a hero's carrying capacity.)

Your Gamemaster might decide that technological improvements can bring the mass figures down for certain items. For instance, the magnetic boots that are developed at PL 6 have a mass of 4 kg, but an upgraded PL 7 version of magnetic boots might have a mass of only 2 or 3 kg.

► **Cost** gives the standard price of an item under a "normal" situation—that is, when a seller for the item is fairly easy to find. Just as in the real world, these prices can fluctuate according to supply and demand. The figures on the table represent what a beginning hero can expect to pay for an item of mid-range quality (nothing flashy, nothing shabby), but any price is subject to change at the Gamemaster's discretion.

Clothing and Accessories

What the well-dressed Alternity hero wears, for both style and function.

Antiscan weave (PL 7): Microcircuit fibers can be combined with either ordinary or CF (carbonate fiber) fabric to create a cloth that hampers several types of scanning technology, including infrared, radar, magnetic detectors, X-rays, and weapon detectors. Any detection check using such equipment is made at a +3 penalty when someone wearing an-

Gravity Induction

Control of gravity is one of the key features of PL 7. The development of gravitonic science and gravitonic engineering leads to a host of miraculous devices: levitating cars, interplanetary drives that require no reaction mass, and a wide range of military tools. Just as the application of electricity was spurred by the discovery of the induction principle, the creation of devices that induce gravitational energy leads to an effective control over weight.

Gravity induction relies on the phenomenon first set forth in Einstein's Theory of Special Relativity: An object's mass approaches infinity as the object's velocity approaches the speed of light. By using a cyclotron to accelerate a tiny particle to near-light speed, the gravity generator creates gravitons between the particle and the surrounding mass. These gravitons can be siphoned off, redirected, or stored by use of the induction coil.

At this Progress Level, gravity inducers can be miniaturized to the size of hockey pucks for special applications. An inducer powerful enough to negate a human's gravitational attraction to the Earth is about the size of a discus, while the induction motor in an skycar requires a gravity generator about the size of a spare tire.

Cash, Card, or Bioscan?

Over the course of history, the physical nature of money has changed several times, primarily as a result of technological developments. How your hero carries his cash, and exactly how he makes purchases and receives income, varies according to the Progress Level he originates from and the Progress Level of any world or society he may visit.

At PL 0, money is unheard of. The only medium of exchange is the barter system, in which something you have or something you do can be traded for something you want.

From PL 1 to PL 4, the dominant financial exchange is through currency, both in coins and printed bills. Letters of credit are used occasionally for large sums.

At PL 5, the widespread use of credit comes into existence. While printed currency still pervades society, by the end of the age personalized credit cards and cash cards allow access to a financial network.

At PL 6, the use of a single identity and financial card becomes standard. The "smart card" can authorize purchases and identify its possessor for access to residences, vehicles, and other secured areas. To prevent theft and misuse, the use of a smart card also requires a personalized code.

At PL 7 and beyond, cards become unnecessary. Instead, most of society relies on each individual's unique biological features by using fingerprint detectors, voice pattern analyzers, retina scans, and/or DNA scans to differentiate one citizen from another. At Progress Level 7, identification is usually established by reading an individual's distinctive bioelectric field.

At Progress Level 8, most citizens are tagged before birth; tailored microbes write an identity code on an unused strand of DNA for machines to read later.

tiscan weave is being targeted.

Antiscan weave can be used in clothing, backpacks, suitcases, and other items composed partly or entirely of fabric. The price of any such item is three times the base cost of the ordinary version of the item.

Backpack (PL 4): This item can be a simple sack, a high-tech pack with many compartments mounted on a frame, or a "designer" version made of some sort of expensive animal hide. The largest packs can hold up to 25 kilos of supplies and other gear.

Bioholster (PL 6): Also known as a smart holster, this is a hip-worn device that is keyed to its owner's bioelectric field. When someone other than the weapon's owner tries to take the weapon from the holster, the holster locks the weapon in place, making it impossible to remove.

The bioholster includes a motion-detection release system that aids fast draws; when the user's hand approaches in the characteristic draw motion, the holster releases the weapon just in time for the user to catch and aim it without breaking his motion. The holster thus negates the +1 penalty for drawing and using a weapon in the same phase. (See the text for the Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol* skill on page 73 in *Chapter 4: Skills*.)

Smart holsters can be modified to carry melee weapons, but the fast-draw feature only works with small weapons such as pistols, knives, and daggers.

Boots (PL 2): This type of footgear comes in a variety of styles.

Briefcase (PL 3): A portable container often used for carrying papers, books, small personal items, and office supplies. At PL 5 and higher, briefcases can have special locking mechanisms, secret compartments, hidden cameras and recording devices, and other high-tech additions for the corporate climber on the go.

Business dress (PL 3): The clothes an executive wears. For men, this includes the equivalent of a business suit, collared shirt, tie, and dress socks. For women, this includes the equivalent of a woman's business suit or dress with matching accessories. For the true fashion-conscious elite, business dress of superior make and style can be 2 to 10 times more expensive than the listed cost. This sort of indulgence marks the character as a potential member of certain power circles.

Casual dress (PL 3): Clothes worn for comfort, play, or relaxation. Casual wear includes jeans, sweat pants, t-shirts, sweaters, sweatshirts, and similar garb. Fashionable, designer casual dress costs 2 times the listed price.

Coat (PL 1): A heavy outer garment covering the body from the shoulders to below the waist. Sometimes a coat includes a hood.

Fatigues (PL 5): These are garments designed for manual labor or worn by the standard soldier of the age.

Formal dress (PL 3): Clothes worn by men or women for formal occasions, elegant parties, or a night on the town. Fashion-conscious characters can purchase expensive designer garments that cost up to 10 times the listed price but virtually guarantee that onlookers will be impressed (possibly granting the wearer a bonus on any Personality-based skill checks).

Glasses (PL 3): In their simplest form, glasses consist of a pair of lenses mounted in a frame. They are worn to improve vision, to make a fashion statement, or to do both. Designer models are 2 to 3 times more expensive than the listed price. At PL 5, contact lenses become available; cost is $50 for a six-month supply.

Goggles, protective (PL 5): These come in various forms for different purposes, the most common being a set of eyepieces that protect the wearer from extremely bright light. The standard model reduces any penalty for operating in bright light by 1 step, but if these goggles are worn by a character whose eyes are especially sensitive to light, the penalty can't be reduced to less than +1.

At PL 7 a special variety of protective goggles comes into existence. These items are manufactured for sesheyans, although other characters can also wear versions of them. They completely negate any penalty for bright light, and adjust instantly to changes in illumination. Where they are available, these goggles cost at least 5 times the listed price.

Holster/scabbard (PL 1): A holster is a case of leather or similar material shaped to hold a pistol. It's worn either on a waist belt or in a shoulder harness.

A scabbard is a sheath of leather or similar material used to hold a sword, dagger, or knife. It's usually

Table P33: Personal Equipment

Clothing and Accessories

Item	PL	Mass	Cost
Antiscan weave	7	—	Cost x 3
Backpack	4	1	100
Bioholster	6	1	150
Boots	2	1	100
Briefcase	3	1	60
Business dress	3	—	300
Casual dress	3	—	50
Coat	1	1	100
Fatigues	5	—	50
Formal dress	3	—	500
Glasses	3	—	50
Goggles, protective	4	—	25
Holster/scabbard	1	1	25
Jewelry	1	—	100
Pouch	2	—	50
Shoes, athletic	5	—	150
Shoes, business	4	—	50
Shoes, formal	4	—	100
Stealth cloak	8	1	750
Utility harness	4	—	25
Watch	4	—	50

Communications

Item	PL	Mass	Cost
Cellular phone	5	—	100
Comm gear	7	—	175
Command link	5	1	250
Mass transceiver	7	500	40000
Orbital uplink	5	2	200
Radio, personal	5	1	175

Medical Gear

Item	PL	Mass	Cost
First aid kit	4	2	50
Forensics kit	5	5	250
Life support pack	7	3	500
Medical gauntlet	7	2	1250
Medical scanner	6	10	3000
Pharmaceuticals (cost per dose):			
Anesthetic	4	—	50
Antibiotic	5	—	50
Antiradiation	6	—	100
Antivenom	5	—	75
Coagulant	6	—	50
Psi-enhancer	7	—	150
Sedative	5	—	25
Stimulant	5	—	25
Surgical kit	6	15	1250
Trauma pack I	6	1	200
Trauma pack II	7	2	400

Professional Equipment

Item	PL	Mass	Cost
Chain hoist	4	20	150
Cutting torch	5	10	250
Demolitions pack	5	25	750
Generator, portable	5	25	500
Instrument pack	6	15	500
Rescue pack	5	20	500
Toolkit	4	10	100
Toolkit, special	5	10	300
Walker	6	200	2000
Weight neutralizer	7	4	300
Workshop, portable	6	100	1000

worn on a waist belt or on a harness across the back.

A concealed holster or scabbard is worn in a place not usually searched and not subject to easy spotting—the forearm, inside of the thigh or calf, the small of the back, or the ankle. The concealed weapon must be either a small handgun or knife. The concealment provides a +2 penalty to all but the most intrusive of searches.

Jewelry (PL 1): The listed cost is for high-quality costume jewelry—rings, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, pins, and other adornments not made from precious materials—or inexpensive versions of the real thing (for example, a semiprecious stone in a simple setting). The price for top-quality jewelry can be many times the listed cost, as directed by the Gamemaster. For example, a gold ring might cost as much as $500, while a diamond ring could go for $1000 to $5000 or more.

Pouch (PL 2): This is a flexible or hard-covered case worn on a belt at the hip. It includes a few compartments and zippered pockets.

Shoes (PL 4 or 5): Shoes come in a variety of styles, depending on form and function. All shoes provide at least minimal protection for the feet.

Athletic shoes (PL 5) have canvas or leather uppers and flexible soles heavily treaded for good traction. The base price is for high-quality "designer" footwear, manufactured to provide maximum support for the foot and ankle while also being comfortable.

Business shoes (PL 4) are generally stiffer and less sculptured than athletic shoes, with an emphasis on style at least as much as function. This group includes all the versions of footwear seen in the most prominent offices of the campaign setting.

Formal shoes (PL 4) sometimes emphasize style much more than comfort, but are often "required" to complete an outfit of formal attire. The listed cost might be doubled or tripled (at least) for designer models.

Stealth cloak (PL 8): This is a large hooded poncho made from antiscan weave with conductive fibers. In many military forces, the stealth cloak is standard issue for scouts and snipers. When activated, the garment provides the wearer with a +3 bonus on any skill checks involv-

Table P33: Personal Equipment

Sensors

Item	PL	Mass	Cost
Audiorecorder	5	1	50
Binoculars	4	1	225
Compass	3	—	25
Goggles, imaging	5	2	300
Goggles, infrared	5	2	250
GPS receiver	5	—	150
Holorecorder	7	1	1200
Microphone, para.	5	3	375
Psi-detector	6	4	2500
Radar gauntlet	7	2	350
Sensor boom	5	1	75
Sensor gauntlet	7	2	725
Surveillance gear	5	—	250
Videorecorder	5	1	500
Weapon detector	6	1	125

Miscellaneous Gear

Item	PL	Mass	Cost
Animal, guard	1	varies	varies
Animal, mount	1	varies	varies
Animal, pack	1	varies	varies
Animal, pet	1	varies	varies
Biolock	6	—	100
Duct tape	5	—	10/roll
Ear plugs	4	—	10
Fire extinguisher	5	5	25
Handcuffs	4	1	50
Holoviewer	7	3	500
Instant glue	5	—	5
Lockpick set	4	1	75
Magnetic clamp	6	1	50
Music gauntlet	7	2	250
Musical instrument	3	varies	varies
Padlock	4	—	10
Psi-restraint devices:			
Helm	6	2	1200
Collar	6	1	1700
Implant	6	—	3500
Suitcase	4	2	50
Videoviewer	5	7	200
Weapon biokey	6	—	75

Survival Gear

Item	PL	Mass	Cost
Bedroll	2	4	25
Boots, magnetic	6	4	350
Cabin, portable	7	40	650
Camping unit	6	10	300
Candle	1	—	1
Climate weave	7	—	Cost x 2
Climbing gear	4	10	100
Cooler	4	5	50
Emergency beacon	5	10	200
E-suit, soft	5	10	2500
E-suit hard	6	20	4000
Flare	4	1	5
Flashlight	4	1	25
Grappling hook	2	1	20
Habitat dome	6	50	1500
Heater, portable	4	8	75
Jumpsuit	6	3	750
Lantern	3	1	50
Lighter	4	—	5
Machete	3	2	25
Matches	3	—	5/box
Mirror	1	—	10
Parachute	4	5	100
Raft, inflatable	4	5	100
Rations (1 wk.)	4	2	25
Respirator mask	4	1	125
Rope, 50 m	1	5	25
Scuba gear	4	15	500
Skis	4	3	150
Stove, portable	4	4	100
Survival gear	4	3	70
Tent	3	10	100
Torch	1	1	10
Vacuum mask	6	2	200
Water condenser	5	5	250
Water purifier	4	7	175
Weather monitor	6	1	75
Zero-g web	6	3	350

ing Stealth or its specialty skills. If an observer notices the wearer anyway, the wearer still receives a +1 improvement to his Resistance Modifier against a ranged weapon attack.

The stealth cloak can be worn over some forms of light armor; ask your Gamemaster if a certain combination is permissible.

The cloak uses a charge cell that is good for 6 hours of operation. Extra charge cells cost $100 apiece.

Utility harness (PL 4): This is a light, strong utility belt that provides several places to attach packs, toolkits, or similar small devices.

Watch (PL 4): The listed cost is for a sturdy, well-crafted, water-resistant timepiece with a lighted display and a built-in stopwatch and alarm. More expensive versions costing up to 10 times the listed price can be adorned with jewels and precious metals and can have special casings to make them waterproof, shockproof, and pressure-resistant.

Acquiring Equipment During the Game

Before he begins his career, your hero may be allowed free selection from all the equipment lists in this chapter and the next three chapters—limited, of course, to what's available at the Progress Level of the campaign setting. This reflects the fact that, in effect, every beginning hero has spent his entire life (up to that point) amassing his belongings.

But once your hero has been fully equipped with all the gear he can afford (or all that you think he needs), and your Gamemaster has gotten the first adventure of the campaign under way, replenishing supplies and buying new stuff isn't always going to be easy.

Obviously, your hero can't buy something if he can't find someone willing and able to sell it to him. An urban environment is going to have much more merchandise available than an isolated village, and purchasing power is basically meaningless in the middle of a deserted wilderness. From time to time, perhaps often, your hero and his companions may be forced to shepherd their resources carefully, because they'll have no idea where their next ammunition clip or first aid kit is coming from.

Of course, there are ways to obtain equipment that have nothing to do with an exchange of currency. Do you blow up the enemy's ammo dump or try to take it over? Is it smarter to put a few holes in that computer terminal, or to activate it and see what it can do for you? This is the stuff of which adventures are made. . . .

Communications

Personal equipment for short- and long-range communications is listed here.

Cellular phone (PL 5): This is a low-power transmitter and receiver that sends radio signals to a nearby relay tower, which places the call into a telephone line.

At PL 5, the phone is a large handset and has an effective range of 100 kilometers from the nearest relay tower or urban area. At PL 6, it's a unit the size of a credit card with a range of 500 kilometers. At PL 7, the cell phone is a pin, brooch, or patch with a range of 1,000 kilometers.

Cell phone batteries are rechargeable and last for 1 day of moderate use at PL 5 plus 2 days for each Progress Level beyond that. Extra batteries cost $25 each.

Comm gear (PL 7): The special frequency-agile transceiver inside this micro-thin headset can cover the entire lower part of the electromagnetic spectrum below microwaves (only the common radio frequencies, and not the infrared and visible spectrums.) The unit may also take the form of a thin card or a small pocket phone. By adjusting the VLF to UHF bandwidths up or down, comm gear can locate the best frequency for long-range, short-range, or directional communications. Comm gear has a 1,000 kilometer range for surface communications, and can reach into high planetary orbit to contact base ships.

For an extra $100, an encryption device can be included to scramble and unscramble signals as needed. A charge cell for the device costs $25 and lasts for 30 days regardless of how often the comm gear is used.

Comm gear can be installed in a computer gauntlet (see *Chapter 10: Computers*) for a price of $300 over and above the cost of the gauntlet.

Command link (PL 5): This is a radio transmitter used to interface with a computer that has a matching receiver.

Mass transceiver (PL 7): The ultimate in communication within a star system, the mass transceiver uses the crisscrossing lines of gravity formed by a system's star and planets to transport cohesive graviton packets to other mass transceivers in the system. These packets contain signals that provide instantaneous communications between any and all ships and installations equipped with mass transceivers. There is no signal delay or lag because of distance, unlike with an interplanetary radio transmission.

A mass transceiver can't be used to send signals to a point outside a star system, because the graviton packets rapidly fall apart once they leave a system's gravity well.

The device requires a portable generator (see page 140) to be functional. At Progress Levels 8 and higher, miniaturization technology makes the mass transceiver progressively smaller and able to be powered by batteries, but not so small as to be portable.

Orbital uplink (PL 5): About the size of a dinner plate, this portable antenna can be trained on orbiting satellites or ships from a planetary surface. It allows voice communication, telemetry, or data links to be established to any orbiting station, or any other planetary station that also has an orbital uplink. In effect, it permits a planetwide communication and information link, even if the user is not in direct range of ground-based stations. At PL 6 and beyond, an orbital uplink can be attached to a cellular phone.

Radio, personal (PL 5): Mostly used in military, paramilitary, and rescue services, the personal radio (also known as a walkie-talkie) is a durable transceiver with a range of about 50 kilometers at PL 5 and 200 kilometers at PL 6. Unlike the cellular phone, no phone circuits or relay towers are necessary. For an additional $100, encryption circuits can be included to scramble or unscramble secure transmissions. The PL 6 radio is much smaller and lighter than its predecessor.

The personal radio's battery is good for 1 day of moderate use per Progress Level (6 days at PL 6, for instance) before it needs recharging. Additional batteries are $25 each.

Want Something That's Not Here?

None of the equipment lists in this chapter and the next three chapters are intended to be exhaustive or complete. If there's a device or an item that you think your hero must have, either at the start of his career or as he develops over the course of the campaign, discuss it with your Gamemaster.

Medical Gear

Knowledge of medical science and the technology to apply that knowledge improves by leaps and bounds at every new Progress Level beginning with PL 5.

First aid kit (PL 4): No soldier or outdoorsman should be without a

Portable Power

At PL 5 and higher, some pieces of equipment operate on battery power. In such a case, the listed price for the item includes one fully charged battery (sometimes also called a charge cell). The cost for additional batteries is given in the item's description.

Unless the Gamemaster decides otherwise, charge cells for different items are not interchangeable; for instance, a cellular phone battery can't be used to power a stealth cloak.

Some batteries (such as the one used in a cell phone) can be recharged by hooking them up to an external power source. A full recharge may take anywhere from 1 to 6 hours, depending on the Progress Level of the item and the Gamemaster's decision.

For practical purposes, extra batteries take up a negligible amount of space and have essentially no mass, so that—within reason—a character can carry as many spare batteries as he or she desires. Lithium polymer technology, developed late in PL 5 and further refined in PL 6, produces batteries that are nothing more than thin strips of flexible plastic and can be installed in or removed from a device in a single action.

first aid kit. Bandages, gauze, surgical thread and needles, and more advanced medical supplies are included. A first aid kit confers a –1 bonus to a user's Knowledge—*first aid* skill check, or a –2 bonus on a skill check involving Medical Science–*treatment*. A first aid kit (or a trauma pack, described below) is necessary if a character wants to use the *first aid* skill or the Medical Science–*treatment* skill to heal wounds or stabilize mortal damage. See the descriptions of those skills in Chapter 4 for more information on what a first aid kit can do.

A character who is conscious can use a first aid kit on himself, but the Gamemaster might apply a penalty if he uses the kit to heal wounds or stabilize mortal damage. Typically, a first aid kit is used by a character to treat someone else.

A first aid kit contains enough material to provide a bonus on three attempts to heal wounds and up to six attempts to heal stun damage or awaken someone who has been knocked out. It can be used once to stabilize mortal damage. After all of its contents have been exhausted, it must be replaced.

Forensics kit (PL 5): Medical examiners and investigators are often required to take samples from bodies or perform autopsies. The forensics kit is an indispensable tool for these operations. It confers a –2 bonus to a character's skill checks involving Investigate and Medical Science in matters of forensic medicine.

Life support pack (PL 7): This emergency device can save the life of a dying patient. A successful Knowledge—*first aid* or Medical Science—*treatment* skill check is required to apply the life support pack. It prevents the patient from losing any more mortal points (by eliminating the need for him to make Stamina–*endurance* checks) for as long as the pack's power supply lasts.

The device has an internal power cell (rechargeable but not replaceable) that lasts for 5 days. If a life support pack runs out of power, the patient's condition will immediately begin deteriorating; he must make a Stamina–*endurance* check immediately, and once per hour thereafter, to determine if he continues to suffer an increasing amount of mortal damage, unless he is treated by some other means.

Medical gauntlet (PL 7): This device contains a variety of medical sensors and samplers that can accurately diagnose almost any medical condition known by means of a blood sample and an ultrasonic scan. The gauntlet provides a –1 bonus to Medical Science—*treatment* skill checks when its user is attempting to diagnose or treat known diseases or wounds.

Medical scanner (PL 6): The forerunner of the PL 7 medical gauntlet, this briefcase-sized machine has inputs and detectors, along with the components necessary for some basic chemical tests, to help a doctor assess a patient's condition and diagnose an illness or determine the severity of the patient's injuries. The scanner provides a –1 bonus to Medical Science—*treatment* skill checks when its user is attempting to diagnose a known disease or gauge the severity of obvious (visible or detectable) wounds. However, it provides no bonus to the actual treatment of an injury or some other malady.

Pharmaceuticals (PL 4–7): Several types of beneficial drugs and medicines are available in the ALTERNITY game. In almost all societies, these substances can only be legally sold by licensed pharmacy companies, and in most cases they can only be legally purchased and dispensed by characters who have medical training (the Medical Science skill, not merely Knowledge–*first aid*).

Recognizing symptoms that warrant treatment and administering the proper dosage of a drug requires a successful Medical Science–*treatment* skill check unless otherwise noted below.

The substances described here (as PL 4 or PL 5 items) are *not* included in a standard first aid kit or trauma pack. Also, they are only guaranteed to be effective when used by (or on) characters of human stock. At the higher Progress Levels (6 and up), different versions of these drugs that work on specific alien species are available.

Anesthetics (PL 4) are used to prepare a person for surgery. One injection of anesthetic renders a patient unconscious.

Using anesthetic against an unwilling target in combat requires a successful Unarmed Attack, and the victim is entitled to a Constitution feat check to determine the exact effect: Critical Failure, opponent is knocked out (all stun points lost); Failure, opponent suffers d6+2s; Ordinary, d6s; Good, d6–1s; Amazing, d4–1s.

Antibiotics (PL 5) are used to fight various types of microbial infection. A person suffering from any one of a variety of diseases can be treated with an antibiotic, which is administered either orally or by injection. The drug gives the patient a better chance of making a successful Constitution feat check in order to fight off the disease, with a bonus dependent on the progress level: –1 at PL 4, –2 at PL 5, –3 at PL 6, and –4 at PL 7.

Treatment with antibiotics usually takes 1 to 8 days, and a patient may need several days thereafter to recover full strength. Antibiotics may not be effective against rare or new alien or domestic microbes.

Antiradiation serum (PL 6) is a plasmalike solution administered intravenously. Electrolytic solutions help to prevent cell death. A patient gains a –2 bonus to his Constitution feat checks when fighting off the effects of any form of radiation. (The *Gamemaster Guide* has details on the effects of radiation.)

Antivenom (PL 5) is an antidote for a natural poison, such as a snake bite or a scorpion sting. If the victim receives a dose of antivenom within the poison's onset time, he gains a –4 bonus to his Constitution feat check. This bonus is halved if the antivenom is administered after the poison begins to affect the victim. Antivenom may be ineffective on some alien toxins or unusual venoms.

Coagulant (PL 6) causes clotting at the point of injury without thickening blood throughout the body. A dose of coagulant gives a dying character a –3 bonus to his next Stamina–*endurance* check, making it much more likely that his condition will not worsen for at least the next 24 hours. Coagulant can be administered by any character who makes a successful Knowledge–*first aid* skill check.

Psi-enhancers (PL 7) are only available in a campaign setting that uses the optional rules for psionics (see Chapter 14). These substances help Mindwalkers and talents to perform better by reducing accumulated psionic energy loss due to the use of mental powers. One dose of psi-enhancer restores 2d4 lost psionic energy points, but also gives the patient a +1 penalty on the use of all psionic skills for d6 hours after the drug is administered.

If a patient receives a second dose within 24 hours after the first one, the drug's effectiveness is reduced by 2 points (to 2d4–2) and the patient suffers a +2 penalty on all psionic use for d6+1 hours after the second dose is administered.

Sedatives (PL 5) are used to calm people who might be dangerous to themselves or those around them. Sedated individuals suffer a +3 penalty to all action checks and actions. That penalty is reduced by 1 step per hour (or some other time unit, as determined by the Gamemaster) until the effect of the drug wears off.

Using a sedative against an unwilling target in combat requires a successful Unarmed Attack roll, and the victim is entitled to a Constitution feat check to fight off the effects: Ordinary, penalty reduced to +2; Good, penalty reduced to +1; Amazing, drug has no effect.

Stimulants (PL 5) heighten awareness and alertness, temporarily offsetting the effect of fatigue damage or stun damage or both. Any character, including the one receiving the drug, may administer a dose of stimulant. Each dose of stimulant counteracts some damage, depending on the result of a Constitution feat check by the character receiving the treatment: Critical Failure, 10 points; Marginal, 8 points; Ordinary, 6 points; Good, 4 points; Amazing, 2 points.

The damage offset is first applied to fatigue, and then to stuns if any points are left unaccounted for. (If all the points can't be used to neutralize either stun or fatigue damage, they are lost—but see below.) While a patient is under the effect of a stimulant, he suffers a +1 penalty on any Intelligence, Will, or Personality-based skill checks.

After d4+1 hours the stimulant wears off, and the amount of damage points indicated by the patient's Constitution feat check are immediately applied to the patient, half as stuns and half as fatigue points. If this leaves the character with no stun points or no fatigue points to spare, he loses consciousness and must recover by resting.

The use of a stimulant more often than once every 48 hours is dangerous. Every additional dose of stimulant that a character receives in any 48-hour period provides a cumulative +1 penalty to his Constitution feat check (+1 for the first additional dose, +2 for the next one, and so on). Also, the first additional dose causes nausea and disorientation that provides a +2 penalty to any action the character attempts in the following 24 hours. Extra doses beyond the second one cause wound damage: d4+1 for the third dose, 2d4+2 for the fourth dose, and so on.

Surgical kit (PL 6): A backpack is required to contain this portable operating theater. It includes all the equipment necessary to perform any surgical procedure short of a cybernetic graft. The kit is necessary if a character wants to attempt a Medical Science–*surgery* skill check on a mortally injured character without a full medical facility.

Trauma pack I (PL 6): A trauma pack is the size of a paperback book. A dedicated computer program, medicine injectors, applicators, synthetic drugs, and artificial blood and skin combine to create a portable emergency treatment center.

Trauma Pack I

The device provides a –2 bonus to the user's Knowledge–*first aid* skill check or a –3 bonus to a Medical Science–*treatment* skill check involving any attempt to heal wounds or stun damage. A trauma pack (or a first aid kit, described above) is necessary if a character wants to use the *first aid* skill or the Medical Science–*treatment* skill to heal wounds or stabilize mortal damage. See the descriptions of those skills in Chapter 4 for more information on what a trauma pack can do.

A character who is conscious can use a trauma pack on himself, but the Gamemaster might assign a penalty to the attempt if he is using the pack to heal wounds or stabilize mortal damage. Typically, a trauma pack is used by a character to treat someone else.

A trauma pack contains enough material to provide a bonus on six attempts to heal wounds and six attempts to heal stun damage or awaken someone who has been knocked out. It can be used twice to stabilize mortal damage. After all of its medicinal contents have been exhausted, they must be replenished by installing a refill, which costs $100.

Trauma pack II (PL 7): Basically an intelligent, autonomous version of the trauma pack I, this device is designed to be used with body tank armor and some cybernetic body enhancements. When installed, the pack monitors the vital signs of its user and activates at the first sign of damage. When activated, it provides one of the following benefits:

Knockout recovery: When the

wearer suffers enough damage to use up the last of his stun points, the pack dispenses a drug that immediately restores enough stun points to leave the wearer with damage equal to only half, or one less than half, of his total stun points. For instance, if a hero with a stun rating of 13 loses all of his stun points, the trauma pack instantly restores 7 of those points, leaving him with 6 points of stun damage. A hero who benefits from this application of the trauma pack II receives a +2 step action check penalty in the following round.

Wound recovery: The moment the wearer suffers enough wound damage to use up more than half of his wound points, the pack dispenses a drug that immediately restores d4+2 wound points to the character.

Mortal damage: The moment the wearer suffers any mortal damage, the pack dispenses a drug that immediately stabilizes the damage, removing the need for the wearer to make a Stamina–*endurance* check. All actions attempted by the wearer after receiving the stabilizing drug are made with a +3 penalty until his mortal damage is healed.

Each pack contains drugs sufficient for two applications of each function; no more than one of these packs can be rigged on an individual at a time.

Professional Equipment

Every profession has certain tools of its trade. Here are some common items used to perform particular tasks.

Chain hoist (PL 4): This is a heavy-duty lifting device that uses pulleys, hooks, and clamps. It needs a strong anchor point overhead, and when properly set up can lift as much as 1000 kg.

Cutting torch (PL 5): This high-powered, self-oxidizing torch can slice through steel up to 10 centimeters thick. The Technical Science broad skill is necessary for a character to use a cutting torch correctly. Someone without the skill must make an untrained check, with a Failure result indicating something unfortunate (the torch is broken, the character suffers wound damage, the torch's flame cuts in the wrong place) at the Gamemaster's discretion.

Demolitions pack (PL 5): Everything a character needs to blow something up is included in the demolitions pack. The major feature is a pair of 10-kg satchel charges, but 20 meters of primer cord, radio detonators, and wire detonators are also included. This is enough material to bring down an average-size building or bridge, if set up correctly. Additional satchel charges cost $200 each.

Generator, portable (PL 5): The portable generator uses an efficient, self-oxidizing chemical fuel to drive a combustion engine and produce electricity. At PL 7, the generator can produce enough power to meet the needs of an outpost containing 10 people, as well as recharge any hand-held or portable device. At PL 8, the portable generator is a mass reactor capable of providing power for a group of 100 people.

Instrument pack (PL 6): This item comes in several versions, each designed for use with a particular scientific skill. Instrument packs are available for the Life Science specialty skills *biology, botany,* and *zoology*, as well as the Physical Science specialty skills *chemistry, physics,* and *planetology.* (At PL 7 this item is also available for the Life Science specialty skill *xenology.)*

When a scientist is engaged in field work and needs to make a complex skill check to determine if he uncovers a piece of knowledge, having an instrument pack lessens the complexity of the skill check by one grade; for instance, the character can obtain Expert knowledge by making a skill check of Good complexity instead of Amazing complexity.

Rescue pack (PL 5): This backpack-sized unit includes a number of useful devices, including two 50-meter nylon ropes; a general toolkit; a first aid kit; two doses of coagulant; a folding stretcher; two insulating blankets; a light-duty cutting torch (half as powerful as the cutting torch described above); a powered grapnel launcher; and a half-dozen pitons, pulleys, and other attachments.

Toolkit (PL 4): This collection of implements contains a hammer, pliers, adjustable wrench, screwdrivers, nails, bolts and screws, small clamps, and any other common tool the Gamemaster approves.

A toolkit is useful, if not downright necessary, for skill checks involving Technical Science or the *invention, juryrig,* and *repair* specialty skills. Having tools is a favorable condition of Ordinary quality, providing a –1 step modifier to the situation die.

Toolkit, specialized (PL 5): This is a toolkit designed to support one specific specialty skill under Technical Science, either *invention, juryrig,* or *repair.* The specialized toolkit gives the user a –2 bonus to skill checks in that specific field.

Walker (PL 6): The precursor of powered armor, a walker is a heavy-duty construction and cargo handling machine that is worn by its user like a huge exoskeleton. Its servos and pistons raise the wearer's effective Strength to 18 for purposes of lifting, carrying, or performing heavy labor. This increases the character's Strength-based damage adjustment, but doesn't affect his other Strength-based skill scores.

The walker is so clumsy and awkward that action checks and combat actions are made with a +3 penalty. The walker's power supply allows 8 hours of heavy work or 16 hours of light work before it needs to be recharged (which takes 4 hours). Walkers of PL 6 design require the user to have the Vehicle Operation–*land vehicles* skill. At higher Progress Levels, the device has a lighter exoskeleton and can be used without the need for skill checks.

Weight neutralizer (PL 7): This is a handheld gravity inducer about the size of a hardcover book. It has a magnetic clamp on one face and a control panel on the opposite face. The neutralizer measures the weight of an object it is attached to—which must be made of a substance that a is attracted by a magnet—and then generates a perfect counter-field. Under the neutralizer's influence, objects become gravity-neutral—large containers, metal crates, or pallets with heavy loads can be moved around and placed in a desired spot.

The neutralizer's endurance is 10,000 kg-hours. For example, an object weighing 10,000 kg can be neutralized for 1 hour, or a 1,000-kg object for 10 hours. When its power is depleted, it must be fully recharged (requiring 6 hours) before it can be used again.

Workshop, portable (PL 6): At a mass of 100 kg, this item may not seem very portable, but the workshop can be stowed in many vehicles. It includes heavy work surfaces, a multipurpose mill and press, a powered table saw and miter, and a

Specialized Toolkit

variety of other tools. Its principal purpose is to allow a character in a remote area to perform major vehicular repairs or fabricate small structures or devices.

The workshop is most useful in conjunction with the Technical Science broad skill and the *repair* specialty. Any complex skill check involving either of those skills is considered to be of Ordinary complexity if the workshop is being used.

It takes 1 hour to set up or take down the portable workshop, and it requires a power supply such as the battery of a vehicle or a generator.

Sensors

To enable characters to attain a greater understanding of the world, a variety of tools are available for gathering or storing information.

Audiorecorder (PL 5): A device for recording sound waves, either on cassette tape, compact disk, 3D crystal, or optical chip. The recorder ranges in size from large units the size of a man to microrecorders that fit in his pocket.

Binoculars (PL 4): These devices come in many shapes and sizes; this description assumes a fairly small and concealable instrument. Binoculars magnify distant images 25 times, so an object 500 meters distant may be examined as if it were only 20 meters away. Advanced models from higher Progress Levels have improved range and added features.

Compass (PL 3): The early compass relies on the principle of magnetism. The needle in a magnetic compass aligns itself with the planetary magnetic field to indicate magnetic north and magnetic south. This isn't necessarily true north and south; the Earth's magnetic pole is located hundreds of kilometers from its actual axis of rotation. Also, large ferrous masses near a magnetic compass can create local distortions.

The inertial compass developed at PL 6 uses a small, powered gyroscope to indicate true north. This device costs $100. Its battery lasts for 1 month of continuous use, after which it must be replaced at a price of $25.

Using a compass provides a –1 bonus to Navigation–*surface navigation* skill checks when applicable.

Goggles, imaging (PL 5): This device gathers and intensifies existing light in order to improve night vision. Imaging goggles reduce penalties for conditions of low illumination or obscurity by 2 steps. However, they don't enable the wearer to see in total darkness, and he must take a +1 penalty on Awareness checks due to the limited field of vision provided by the goggles.

Goggles, infrared (PL 5): These goggles convert infrared light to visible light, allowing the user to see well in conditions of low illumination or total darkness. The goggles provide a 3-step penalty reduction in conditions of darkness or obscurity and also grant a –1 bonus to Investigate–*search* or Awareness–*perception* checks when the object sought might be spotted by its temperature.

Hot targets are brighter and clearer than cold ones, and items at the same temperature are hard to distinguish separately. An inanimate object handled by a living creature retains a heat signature for up to 1 hour, depending on the temperature of its surroundings.

Anyone wearing infrared goggles when a bright light is activated is temporarily blinded, losing any remaining actions in the round and taking a +2 penalty on his next action check.

GPS receiver (PL 5): The global positioning satellite receiver uses satellite signals to compute the user's exact position and elevation on a planet. It's phenomenally accurate, provided the world it's used on has a satellite network to link into. It appears as either a cellular phone or a piece of comm gear, depending on the Progress Level.

The GPS receiver provides a –2 bonus on Navigation–*surface navigation* checks.

Holorecorder (PL 7): A device for recording holographic images, either on a disk or a 3D. Because of the three-dimensional nature of holography, at least two of these devices are needed to record a scene. Holorecorders range in size from shoulder-mounted cameras to palm-held units to optical implants.

Microphone, parabolic (PL 5): This device allows the user to eavesdrop on distant conversations. It's composed of a hand-held microphone ringed by a transparent plastic dish about 30 centimeters in diameter. The parabolic mike amplifies sounds by a factor of 25 so that a conversation 250 meters away sounds as if it's only 10 meters distant. The user receives a –2 bonus to Awareness–*perception* checks on attempts to pick up sounds using the microphone.

Psi-detector (PL 6): This device is only available in a campaign that uses the optional rules on psionics (see Chapter 14). It is concealable and portable, resembling a small radio. Its antenna is capable of detecting and pinpointing psionic activity within 100 meters.

Use of a psi-detector requires a successful System Operation–*sensors* skill check. An Ordinary success indicates whether mental powers are being used within the detection radius. A Good success further clarifies which of the four psionic broad skills (Biokinesis, ESP, Telekinesis, or Telepathy) is being used. An Amazing success allows the user to pinpoint the exact source of the mental emissions. A Critical Failure may fail to give any reading or give a false reading, targeting the wrong individual.

Radar gauntlet (PL 7): Resembling an elbow-length glove of tough plastic and synthetic material, the radar gauntlet is a powerful sensor that contains a small phased array radar system. With a successful System Operation–*sensors* skill check, the user can detect vehicles, aircraft, or characters in powered armor. Only metallic or rocky objects can be spotted, since radar signals pass through most organic and plastic materials. Terrain obstructions such as hills or mountains block the radar signal.

The radar's range is 5 km for surface vehicles and 100 km for air vehicles. In confined areas such as urban zones or the passageways of a ship, interference prevents the device from operating.

The gauntlet is an active sensor, meaning that it emits a signal instead of merely receiving input. Any

device capable of picking up electromagnetic signals that is within two times the gauntlet's effective range may detect the gauntlet's signal.

Sensor boom (PL 5): This is a telescoping pole that adjusts from 1 to 5 meters in length. It can support a video pickup, a flashlight, a mirror, or a similar item at the extreme end, allowing the user to scout very small spaces or peer around corners without risking life and limb.

Sensor gauntlet (PL 7): A standard personal detector and analyzer device, the sensor gauntlet appears as a heavy, open-fingered glove that extends to the elbow. Sensors and electronics line the arm and palm of the hand, and collected data is viewed on a screen located on the back of the hand just above the wrist.

The sensor gauntlet combines several important pieces of equipment. First, it's a broad-band electromagnetic scanner that can detect and classify any kind of radiated electromagnetic energy. Second, it includes a spectrometer and an advanced chemical sniffer that can determine the elemental composition of any normal, unshielded object. Finally, the sensor gauntlet can link with a radio or comm gear to transmit data or can record its findings on a data disk for later retrieval and detailed examination. Using a sensor gauntlet gives a –1 bonus to Life Science, Physical Science, Awareness, and Investigate skill checks.

Surveillance gear (PL 5): Here are just a few examples of the types of surveillance gear available starting at Progress Level 5. The Gamemaster determines the actual costs and availability of different items, using the listed cost as a base for the more elaborate items.

Microphones include contact microphones that translate vibrations into sound; flexible, tubular microphones that fit in crevices and pick up sounds up to 10 meters away; and wireless microphones that are easily concealable and pick up sounds within 4 meters.

Scramblers interfere with radio transmissions within 3 meters of the wearer.

Sonic trackers use subtle changes in air pressure to locate moving objects. This device is useful for spotting reclusive creatures or hidden threats in conditions of bad visibility or heavy cover. Objects that are large or fast-moving are easier to spot than small, slow-moving ones. Usually, the tracker is set to filter out anything except responses caused by animals of moderate to large size. A character using a tracker gains a –1 bonus to Awareness skill checks.

Tracers are tiny devices about the size of a coin that transmit a signal that can be located and followed within 12 km. After 72 hours of constant transmission, the power cell burns out.

Videorecorder (PL 5): A device for recording video images, either on tape or some other medium. Videorecorders range in size from shoulder-steadied units to palm-held recorders to microrecorders that can be mounted on a shoulder or helmet to leave hands free for other activity.

Weapon detector (PL 6): This handheld device uses a magnetic resonating field to scan a person for concealed objects and a chemical sniffer to detect traces of explosives. The detector must be used at a range of 1 meter or less. Scanning a person requires one round, at the end of which the user must make a successful Investigate–*search* skill check to spot a weapon or device on the suspect's body, with a –2 bonus for dense objects composed of metals or hard plastics, such as most firearms. An item made with antiscan weave can defeat a weapon detector.

Survival Gear

These are items to help heroes cope with the great outdoors or persevere in hostile conditions.

Bedroll (PL 2): Depending on the Progress Level, bedrolls range from a simple pair of blankets to sleeping bags to inflatable, battery-warmed beds.

Boots, magnetic (PL 6): This footwear provides the user with the ability to function without difficulty in zero gravity (assuming, of course, that his feet are in contact with a surface that attracts a magnet). By alternately activating and deactivating each boot in turn, the wearer can stride haltingly across the surface to which the boots are attracted. The magnets are strong enough to hold a mass of 200 kg in place in Earth-normal gravity.

Running or jumping while wearing the boots is impossible. In combat, any penalty associated with operating in zero-gravity conditions is reduced by 1 step (assuming the boots remain in contact with the magnetic surface).

The electromagnets in the boots are powered by a battery that lasts for 24 hours of operation before it must be replaced (for $25) or recharged (for 2 hours). Turning the power on or off requires an action.

Cabin, portable (PL 7): This device fits on a large backpack-style frame or can be stowed in a vehicle. The user only has to lay it down and pull a cord to deploy a cabin 4 meters by 3 meters large with a 2-meter ceiling. The cabin is made from semirigid, inflating plastic and includes a camping unit and two bedrolls.

The unit isn't airtight, but the built-in camping unit can heat or cool the interior of the cabin to keep it comfortable in any H2 environment. Because the cabin doesn't have a lot of structural integrity, it isn't usable in any environment with gravity higher than G3 or atmospheric pressure greater than P3. The unit can be deflated, stowed, and later reinflated if it is connected to a fresh tank of compressed air (cost $50).

Camping unit (PL 6): Combining a portable stove, heater, air conditioner, and refrigerator in one economical package, the camping unit includes its own carrying frame for wear as a backpack. Its power cell works for 2 weeks of normal use, or 1 week if the unit is forced to heat or air-condition the interior of a structure in extreme temperatures. Its cold food storage capacity is 10 kg of hiking or survival rations. Extra power cells cost $50 each.

Candle (PL 1): This is a cylinder of tallow, wax, or some other slow-burning combustible material. The

Environment Codes

Several of the descriptions in the "Survival Gear" section contain references to different types of environments, using a form of code (H2, R3, etc.) that you may not be familiar with.

These codes are part of the GRAPH system, which is a way of defining the basic characteristics of any environment. An overview of the classifications is given on page 52 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*, and more information can be found in the *Gamemaster Guide*.

luminosity of a candle is quite weak, extending only 2 or 3 meters in all directions. Candles vary widely in size and longevity. Through PL 5, a 10-cm candle lasts a few hours; at PL 6 and higher, a candle of similar size burns for 1 or 2 days.

Climate weave (PL 7): Microcircuit fibers are combined with either ordinary or carbonate fiber weave to create a cloth containing passive heating and cooling elements that can either seal in or reflect heat without the use of a power source. It keeps the wearer comfortable in temperatures from –40°C (–40°F) to 60°C (140°F), and allows survival in temperatures 35°C (60°F) hotter or colder than those extremes.

Climbing gear (PL 4): Climbing gear consists of a 50-meter rope, a piton hammer, 20 pitons, a rappelling belt, crampons, and a climbing ax. Using full climbing gear provides the user with a –3 bonus to Athletics-*climb* skill checks.

A more modest set of climbing gear that includes rope, a piton hammer, and pitons is priced at $50. This partial gear gives the user a –2 bonus to *climb* skill checks.

Cooler (PL 4): A small, portable refrigerant unit, the cooler preserves modest amounts of medical supplies, perishables, or thirst-quenching beverages. It can be powered by a portable generator or a battery that lasts for 48 hours. Extra batteries costs $25.

Emergency beacon (PL 5): This is a powerful, long-endurance transmitter that broadcasts a homing signal when activated. If transmitted from the surface of a planet, the signal can easily be detected by ships in orbit. The beacon's battery allows up to 3 months of operation. A replacement battery costs $50, but the power source can also be recharged in 12 hours.

E-suit, soft (PL 5): The e-suit, or environment suit, is the standard working garment of spacers—especially engineers and zero-g construction specialists. The soft e-suit is a fairly bulky and awkward garment made of several layers of insulated, tear-resistant fabric. The collar and cuffs seal to gloves, boots, and helmet to provide complete protection from many hostile environments.

The suit includes a portable life-support unit that provides air and a comfortable temperature for the wearer in any heat conditions of H3 or lower and under any atmospheric pressure of P4 or lower. It offers partial protection in H4 heat conditions. It does not completely protect a hero against radiation levels higher than R2, although some benefit is realized in more extreme radiation conditions. In an atmosphere rated at A4 or A5, the suit provides temporary protection at best. (The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on the effects of various environments on soft e-suits.)

E-suit, hard (PL 6): The hard environment suit withstands harsh punishment in the toughest of planetary environments. It replaces most of the material used in the soft e-suit with plates of polymere, and creates a fully independent and ventilated environment. The hard e-suit allows its wearer to operate normally in heat conditions of H4 or lower and atmospheric pressure of P4 or lower. It does not completely protect a hero against radiation levels higher than R3, although some benefit is realized in more extreme radiation conditions. In an atmosphere rated at A4 or lower, the suit is dependable as long as it is properly maintained; in an A5 atmosphere, the suit provides only temporary protection. (The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on the effects of environments on hard e-suits.)

Flare (PL 4): A flare is a small signal rocket visible for about 10 to 20 kilometers, depending on the conditions. If a flare is fired directly at a living creature, the action is treated as a Modern Ranged Weapons-*pistol* skill check with a +2 penalty. It inflicts damage of d6s/d4w/d4+1w.

Flashlight (PL 4): Most portable, battery-powered lights at PL 4 cannot illuminate more than 20 meters ahead of the user. At PL 5 and higher, flashlights are available that project either a pinpoint beam of light or ultraviolet rays to mark a target. A flashlight battery lasts for 1 week of use, and costs $5 to replace.

Grappling hook (PL 2): A grappling hook is used to secure a rope for climbing. Most grappling hooks can be folded flat for easy carrying.

A grappling hook with a rope qualifies as partial climbing gear, providing the user with a –2 bonus on any Athletics-*climb* skill check.

Habitat dome (PL 6): The habitat dome is similar to the portable cabin in most respects, but it is completely airtight and insulated for survival in environments with a sparse or non-existent atmosphere and heat conditions ranging from H0 to H4. The dome is about 4 meters in diameter and 2 meters tall in the center. Its door is actually a small airlock. The dome includes an emergency beacon, 40 meals worth of rations, and a water purifier.

Heater, portable (PL 4): In cold, arctic, and space-chilled environments, a portable heater or heaters are necessary for survival. Unless it's used inside an enclosure, a heater loses its effectiveness and only improves the temperature by a few degrees in its immediate vicinity. A heater's battery has enough power for 48 hours of operation. Extra batteries cost $25 each, or a depleted one can be recharged in 4 hours.

Jumpsuit (PL 6): The standard shipboard or station jumpsuit is unremarkable in appearance, being a one-piece coverall in a neutral or uniform color. Included with the garment are a vacuum mask (see below), heavy gloves, and seals around the collar and cuffs that provide the

E-suits and Armor

It's impossible to wear any type of armor along with an e-suit. However, the suit itself does provide a degree of armor protection; a soft e-suit is equivalent to a battle vest, and a hard e-suit protects as well as heavy assault gear. (See *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor* for details on armor.)

Just as heavy assault gear does, a hard e-suit requires its wearer to take a +2 penalty to his action checks and his Dexterity resistance modifier. The wearer of a hard e-suit is allowed to use his skill in Armor Operation–*combat armor* to reduce this penalty.

If the wearer of an e-suit suffers damage, the effectiveness of the suit to protect against hostile environments can be severely compromised. All e-suits at PL 6 and beyond are self-sealing. A soft e-suit remains usable until the wearer suffers enough wound damage to use up more than half of his wound points, or any amount of mortal damage. A hard e-suit is only punctured if the wearer suffers mortal damage.

wearer with protection against decompression. The garment is made of climate weave (see above), and as such can be used in open space for up to one hour before extreme temperature begins to affect the wearer. The suit will protect its wearer indefinitely in a temperature-controlled vacuum (such as inside a damaged or decompressed ship or space station). The suit also includes a built-in web harness for holding tools, and numerous pockets.

Lantern (PL 3): A variety of energy sources can provide a lantern's power: combustible liquids at PL 3 and PL 4, and also electricity at PL 5 and higher. A lantern can be fitted with a lens or a hood to direct its illumination. A high-quality lantern can project light up to 50 meters. A lantern battery lasts for 2 weeks of use and costs $10 to replace.

Lighter (PL 4): This is a hand-held mechanical or electrical device used for starting a fire.

Machete (PL 3): The machete is useful for cutting through areas of thick vegetation, reducing penalties by 1 step for characters moving through terrain featuring heavy vegetation, such as jungles, forests, or swamps. If used as a weapon, a machete does damage as a cutlass.

Matches (PL 3): Easily carried and concealed, matches are slender pieces of flammable material chemically treated to ignite when heated by friction.

Mirror (PL 1): A portable reflective device is useful for signaling, reflecting low-powered laser security devices, examining around corners or confined areas, and viewing one's own image.

Parachute (PL 4): A parachute is a device used to slow free-falling motion. The outcome of a parachuting attempt depends on the result of an Acrobatics–*daredevil* skill check, and on whether the attempt is a low-risk or high-risk jump. See "Using a Parachute" on page 58 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* for details.

Raft, inflatable (PL 4): Inflatable rafts allow unpowered travel over water. A typical raft can hold four adult humans, and comes with a pair of paddles. Larger versions are available at a higher cost.

Rations (PL 4): Soldiers, explorers, and outdoorsmen carry rations for both regular sustenance and emergency. The food is nourishing but generally not tasty; rations fail to meet any standards of culinary taste until PL 7.

Respirator mask (PL 4): This device provides a means for breathing in A3 environments by filtering toxic substances out of the air. It's only effective in an atmosphere with an oxygen content and a pressure of P3 or P4. The mask requires no power, but its filter cartridge must be replaced after 48 to 96 hours of use, depending on the condition of the local air. Extra cartridges cost $25 each.

Rope (PL 1): At lower Progress Levels, ropes are made of hemp or some other natural substance. At PL 5 nylon ropes are available, and at PL 6 a carbonate fiber (CF) composite is used. Synthetic lines are stronger and lighter than natural ropes of similar size. The strongest synthetic ropes can support more than 500 kilos of mass.

Scuba gear (PL 4): A character equipped with scuba gear can make dives as deep as 250 meters for up to 2 hours. Replacement oxygen tanks (which can be refilled) cost $150 each. At PL 6 scuba gear improves dramatically with the introduction of an oxygenator that can extract oxygen from the water around the swimmer. It also collects and recycles the user's own exhalations, eliminating the characteristic bubble trail. This unit weighs only 5 kg and allows an underwater excursion of up to 12 hours.

Skis (PL 4): Cross-country and downhill travel through snow often requires the use of skis, boots, and poles. The listed price covers only skis and poles; boots must be purchased separately.

Stove, portable (PL 4): Since most societies rely on cooking as a preparation of food, the portable stove is another step to bring comforts to distant environments. A portable stove is powered by a generator or a battery. Rechargeable batteries last for 8 hours and cost $25 each.

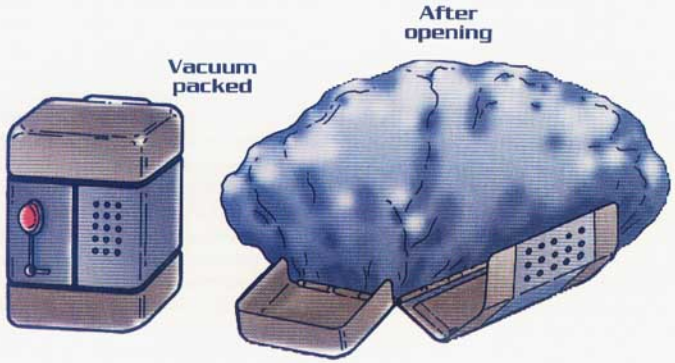
Survival gear (PL 4): This is an assortment of useful materials packed into a belt pouch. It includes a magnetic compass, a signal mirror, a butane lighter, 30 meters of 20-kg test fishing line and 2 hooks, 20 waterproof matches, and a lightweight insulated blanket.

Tent (PL 3): Whether composed of cotton, nylon, carbonate fiber, polymere, or climate weave, the tent serves the purpose of providing a primitive shelter against weather and the environment. The standard tent fits only two individuals, but larger models can house a dozen or more.

Torch (PL 1): Primitive torches are simple bundles of wood coated in oil, but at PL 6 and higher, the typical torch doesn't burn at all. Chemicals in the torch's cylinder mix when activated to shed light in a 10-meter radius around the torch.

Vacuum mask (PL 6): Every experienced space hand has this emergency device somewhere close by. The vacuum mask is a soft, clear plastic visor that fits over ears, eyes, nose, and mouth. It can be donned in an instant to protect the user against decompression. A small control unit worn on the belt, sleeve, or chest contains an oxygen candle that refreshes the user's air supply for 8 hours. The device stows easily into a packet about the size of a paperback book.

Combined with a jumpsuit, the vacuum mask offers complete protection against decompression and permits the user to work in vacuum or hostile atmospheric pressure (P0, P1, P2, and P4 conditions) for as long



Survival Gear

as the oxygen holds out. Without a jumpsuit, the mask allows survival, but the character suffers skin bruising, bad sunburn or frostbite, and other ill effects. Extra oxygen candles cost $25 each.

Water condenser (PL 5): Useful in areas with some amount of atmospheric water, the condenser uses heat-exchange technology to catch and trap water from the air. It produces enough water to support four people in humid areas, two people in normal areas, or one person in arid areas. If no atmospheric water exists, the condenser is useless.

Water purifier (PL 4): The purifier is used to produce drinkable water from tainted or mineral-heavy sources. Its power supply (cost $50, not rechargeable) lasts for 1 month of heavy use or 2 months of light use.

Weather monitor (PL 6): A favorite of outdoorsmen and scouts everywhere, this device tracks atmospheric pressure, humidity, temperature, and electrostatic charge to create an accurate picture of current weather trends. Most weather phenomena can be predicted 12 to 48 hours in advance with a successful Knowledge skill check; the weather monitor gives the user a –2 bonus on this check. For unique local conditions including H1 or A3 environments, the user loses his bonuses for the device.

Zero-g web (PL 6): This is a light thruster and stabilizer that attaches to the hips and shoulders. It folds into a small pouch about the size of a soda can. When deployed, it permits the user to move and change course across open spaces.

Combined with an e-suit or a vacuum mask and jumpsuit, the zero-g web allows a character to maneuver freely outside a ship or station, possibly for emergency escape or making repairs.

Miscellaneous Gear

Other items that may be of use to your ALTERNITY hero are presented below.

Animal, guard (PL 1): In most human regions, this refers to a trained attack dog. A character needs the Animal Handling broad skill in order to have a good chance of controlling a guard animal with precision. The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information about guard animals.

Marines approach an alien portal

Animal, mount (PL 1): Generally, this refers to a horse or a camel. A character needs the Animal Handling broad skill to have a good chance of using a mount effectively in a pressure situation. The *Gamemaster Guide* has details about mounts.

Animal, pack (PL 1): On human worlds, mules and burros are the favored pack animals. The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on pack animals.

Animal, pet (PL 0): A variety of small to medium-sized animals can serve as pets, including dogs, cats, ferrets, lizards, and birds. To teach a pet to do a trick, the Animal Handling skill is required.

Biolock (PL 6): A large and sturdy keyless padlock, the biolock recognizes its owner's bioelectric signature, much in the same way as the smart holster works. A biolock is extremely difficult to pick, requiring a successful complex skill check of Amazing complexity using the Security–*security devices* skill, with a +3 situation die modifier. The device can be destroyed by cutting tools or firearms, but it has an armor rating of d6–1 (LI), d6–1 (HI), d4+3 (En) and a durability rating of 8 stun/8 wound/4 mortal.

Duct tape (PL 5): Duct, electrical, reflective, phosphorescent, and double-sided tape of various widths are available. The listed cost is for a roll 20 meters in length.

Ear plugs (PL 4): Characters whose ears are sensitive to sound or who find themselves exposed to high-intensity or high-decibel sonic vibrations can use ear plugs to get some relief from the condition. Ear plugs reduce any penalty associated with sound waves by 2 steps, but they also make it impossible for the wearer to distinguish normal conversation unless the speaker is standing right next to the wearer.

Fire extinguisher (PL 5): The typical fire extinguisher is portable and contains a sufficient charge to put out a fire of small to moderate size. Until PL 6, fire extinguishers wear down over time and require frequent service and upkeep. At PL 6 and beyond, extinguishers are capable of dousing anything short of a plasma fire, and they can be dormant for years without losing their charge.

Handcuffs (PL 4): These restraints prevent a character from using his hands if they are cuffed behind his back; if his hands are bound in front of his body, any actions he is capable of attempting receive a +3 penalty. In either case, a bound character's Strength and Dexterity resistance modifiers are reduced by 1 point.

Handcuffs can be picked (by another character) with a Manipulation–*lockpick* skill check. They can be slipped (by the cuffed character) with a Manipulation–*prestidigitation* skill check. The quality of the restraints provides a penalty to either type of skill check: Ordinary cuffs, +1; Good cuffs, +2; Amazing cuffs, +3. The quality of the cuffs also defines the complexity of the *lockpick* skill check.

The listed cost is for cuffs of Ordinary quality; multiply the cost by 3 for Good cuffs, and by 10 for Amazing cuffs.

Starting at PL 6, tougher handcuffs, known as binders, become available. Binders of Ordinary quality provide a +3 penalty to the bound character and cost 10 times the listed price for normal handcuffs. Good quality binders provide a +4 penalty and cost 20 times normal; and Amazing quality provides a +5 penalty for 30 times the listed price.

Holoviewer (PL 7): The standard holoviewer appears as a 0.5-meter-diameter disk that rests on a floor or table. The development of early force field technology at PL 7 at last allows practical use of holographic images transmitted into the dynamic medium of air. Image quality is fantastic; from a distance greater than 1 meter, it is impossible to distinguish a three-dimensional holograph image from reality. The projection radius of the average personal holoviewer is about 3 meters in all directions. Almost all holoviewers include audio, and advanced models have controlled odor emitters.

The holoviewer can receive holofeed signals and tune in to any programs broadcast over cable or through the air. The device can also be used to watch prerecorded holos. Three-dimensional crystals (3Ds) are the most common form of information storage at PL 6 and 7, since they can be used for data storage, programs, movies, or music.

Instant glue (PL 5): Early versions of quick-drying glues, esters, and cements have the advantage of drying in seconds, but they tend to degrade after a few months. At PL 6, organic epoxies and resins possess the same ability for quick application but last for decades.

Lockpick set (PL 4): While a skilled lockbreaker can use anything from wire to safety pins, a set of specialized lockpicks is a big advantage. Electrical leads, sensor masks, and other tools for opening electronically locked doors are included. The quality of the set confers a bonus to the character's Manipulation–*lockpick* and Security–*security devices* skill checks: Ordinary tools, –1; Good tools, –2; Amazing tools, –3.

The listed cost is for tools of Ordinary quality; multiply the cost by 3 for Good tools, and by 10 for Amazing tools.

Magnetic clamp (PL 6): This battery-powered device creates a powerful magnetic field, adhering to a metallic surface with an effective Strength score of 20. A normal vise or clamp on the upper surface allows all kinds of fastenings or devices to be attached to the clamp and held in place. The battery in this item lasts for 50 hours, after which time a backup battery automatically activates to provide another 50 hours of power. These batteries can be recharged.

Music gauntlet (PL 7): The all-purpose musical instrument of PL 7, the music gauntlet appears as an open-fingered glove that extends to the elbow. Electronics lining the arm and palm of the hand create a powerful synthesizer capable of duplicating the sound of almost any other instrument. A character uses the Entertainment–*musical instrument* skill to operate the music gauntlet.

Musical instrument (PL 3): Musical instruments evolve throughout all Progress Levels, and it is impossible to list all the forms of percussion, strings, wind, keyboard, alien, and other instruments. Price, mass, and quality of instruments varies widely.

Padlock (PL 4): The padlock, initially primitive and obtuse, becomes an instrument of simple yet elegant design. A key, a combination, or a mix of both may be required to open a padlock. The quality of the lock imposes a penalty on attempts to pick it: Ordinary, +1; Good, +2 steps; Amazing, +3 steps. Unless the lock is integrated into a larger structure, it is possible to destroy the lock with cutter or laser to gain access.

Psi-restraint (PL 6): This device is only available in campaign settings that use the optional rules for psionics (see Chapter 14). In such settings,

many organizations—governments, corporations, crime gangs, law enforcement agencies—have access to some form of dampening device designed to deprive a psionic character of his mental powers. Powerful Mindwalkers have been known to fight through the effects of the psi-restraint. Three forms of psi-restraint come into use; all of them are rare and difficult for a private citizen to acquire.

The psi-restraint helmet has a blank faceplate to force a loss of vision, and is fitted with a locking collar so that the prisoner can't remove it without assistance. Without the correct electronic key or code, a successful Security–*security devices* skill check with a +2 penalty is required to remove the helmet. The helmet's neural interference circuits add a +4 penalty to the use of any mental powers and a +1 penalty to all Intelligence-based checks. The psi-restraint helmet is most often used in jails and corporate detention facilities.

The psi-restraint collar is a simple necklace apparently composed of iron or some other heavy metal. While the collar imposes the same penalties as the helmet, it can be concealed beneath many forms of clothing. Removal of the collar without the correct key or code requires a successful Security–*security devices* skill check with a +2 penalty. Failure to successfully remove the collar or attempting to remove it forcefully activates a safety mechanism, causing the collar to either explode or send out a radio signal. The psi-restraint collar is used by many advanced societies that disdain or restrict the use of psionic powers.

The psi-restraint implant is only available in campaigns that use the optional rules for cybertech (see Chapter 15). An implant at the base of the skull regulates the use of mental powers. The implant has a variable setting that can impose up to a +5 penalty on the use of mental powers, or no penalty at all. Adjusting the level of neural interference on the implant without the proper key or code requires a Security–*security devices* skill check with a +2 penalty. Removal of the implant requires successful Medical Science–*surgery* skill check. The psi-restraint implant is a favorite means of many organizations for controlling Mindwalkers.

Red Star Rising

Suitcase (PL 4): The listed cost is for a standard suitcase, measuring approximately 100 cm × 60 cm × 20 cm. For additional cost, a false bottom, hidden pockets, and antiscan weave can be added.

Videoviewer (PL 5): The videoviewer, once called a television, can receive video signals and tune in to any programs broadcast over cable or through the air. The user can also watch prerecorded videos. Three-dimensional crystals (3Ds) are the common means of information storage at PL 6 and 7, since they can be used for data storage, programs, movies, or music.

Weapon biokey (PL 6): This is a smart sensor that can be installed in the handle of a firearm to prevent it from firing except when held by its owner. The biokey relies on the same bioelectric field recognition that the smart holster and the biolock use.

Services

Sometimes your hero needs the help of an expert or the use of some other service. Doctors, lawyers, rental cars, travel arrangements, and lodging are just a few of the things heroes might need to acquire over the course of a campaign.

The costs on Table P34: Services are basic guidelines only. In cases where a grade of quality is not mentioned, the cost applies to the standard, no-frills variety of that service. The cost of a hospital stay, for instance, would be considerably higher than the listed price if the patient was housed in a private room or an intensive care ward.

The price of a service may vary widely from one campaign setting to another, and even from one place to another in the same setting. In some places, certain services may be simply unavailable. Check with your Gamemaster on the availability of any services your hero might want to purchase.

Ambulance (PL 4): In civilized areas, ambulance service is easily contacted through a simple comm or radio call. Once called to the scene, an ambulance service provides hasty delivery of the wounded and dying to a nearby medical facility.

Ambulance technicians always have at least the Knowledge–*first aid* skill, and many of them are trained in Medical Science–*treatment*. That training, along with their excellent equipment, enables them to stabilize mortally wounded patients and begin the healing process on the injured. Most ambulance services will refuse to enter combat zones, and those that do venture into such areas are likely to charge much more than the listed cost.

Car rental (PL 5): Most urban centers have facilities where heroes can obtain temporary use of automobiles and other personal vehicles. Surcharges for long-distance travel, insurance, and fuel are sure to apply.

Chartered transportation (PL 4): If heroes can't or don't want to use mass transportation, it might be possible for them to charter a boat, an airplane, a system liner (which travels from one planetary system to another within a star system), or a driveship (a stardrive-equipped vessel that traverses interstellar distances). Prices are high, reflecting the fact that a charter vessel (including the services of a pilot) will transport characters wherever and whenever they want to go—within reason.

Comm call (PL 5): Planetary comm calls include long-distance telephone, videophone, and holophone calls that connect one location on a planet, moon, or asteroid to any other location on the same stellar body. At PL 6 and higher, this communication is cheap, common, and instantaneous.

System calls allow communication to any location in the star system. Means of communication include radio, laser, and particle wave. However, since all of these means of communication travel at light speed, instantaneous exchanges are impossible until the invention of the mass transceiver at PL 7.

Interstellar communications remain plagued by delay even at PL 7

Table P34: Services

Service	PL	Cost
Ambulance	4	300
Car rental	5	50/day
Charter boat	4	500/day
Charter plane	5	1000/day
Charter system liner	6	1000/day
Charter driveship	7	2000/day
Comm call, interstellar	7	10000/minute
Comm call, planetary	5	1/minute
Comm call, system	6	10/minute
Combat Spec for hire	2	100/level/day
Diplomat for hire	3	250/level/day
Free Agent for hire	2	200/level/day
Hospital stay	3	500/day
Lawyer	4	300/hour
Limousine	5	100/day
Lodging, cheap	3	25/day
Lodging, good	4	50/day
Lodging, opulent	4	200/day
Meal, cheap	1	10
Meal, good	1	25
Meal, opulent or exotic	3	100
Medical, psychiatry	5	100/session
Medical, surgery	4	5000
Medical, treatment	3	250
Message service	4	50/month
Mindwalker for hire	6	500/level/day
News service	5	25/month
Security service	4	100/month
Taxi ride	3	10/km
Tech Op for hire	5	300/level/day
Travel, air	5	0.5/km
Travel, bus	4	0.10/km
Travel, ocean	3	1/km
Travel, interstellar	7	200 + 100/ly
Travel, system	6	100 + 10/AU
Travel, train	4	0.25/km

and PL 8. Interstellar communication must follow the same rules as interstellar travel: drivesats send capsules into drivespace to transmit their messages to another drivesat. Most drivesats have a range of 50 light-years. Eleven hours after transmission, the target drivesat receives the message and either delivers it or relays it to another drivesat. The return of a reply takes another eleven hours. A drivesat is extremely expensive to build and operate.

Combat Spec for hire (PL 2): At times, judicious application of force is the only means to achieve an objective. Professional soldiers, bodyguards, and mercenaries with a variety of skills and moral attitudes may be available to meet this demand. Most mercenaries demand additional compensation for hazardous duty, insurance, medical care, and death benefits.

Diplomat for hire (PL 3): Life's intricate complications often require the intervention of a skilled negotiator. Public-relations experts, administrators, assistants, entertainers, and business consultants are just a few examples of Diplomats who have expertise in the art of the deal.

Free Agent for hire (PL 2): Bounty hunters, explorers, spies, private investigators, and smugglers answer the call for work on the edges of civilization and its rules. The bigger the job, or the greater the risk, the higher the pay a free agent will demand.

Hospital stay (PL 3): Most medical facilities charge a flat fee for each day spent in a hospital bed. The cost of a hospital stay doesn't include surgery or treatment.

Lawyer (PL 4): Lawyers provide legal representation both inside and outside a courtroom. The specialization, skill, moral attitude, and salary of lawyers vary widely. Criminal attorneys can provide both heroes and villains with a well-reasoned defense, and civil attorneys offer an ability to settle grievances legally. Famous and established lawyers are sure to demand exorbitant payment, or a significant percentage of any financial suit.

Limousine (PL 5): While a taxi or rental car might suffice for the purpose of mere transportation, a limousine offers opulent comfort and makes a statement about its passenger's style and wealth. The cost includes the wages of a driver. Limousines that are especially large or include accessories such as a jacuzzi or defense systems cost much more than the listed price.

Lodging (PL 3): This can be any sort of nightly accommodations, whether at an inn, hostel, motel, or hotel. Cheap lodging is generally devoid of amenities, often without a private room or a shower. Average accommodations can provide fine private chambers equipped with a phone, room service, and some form of electronic entertainment. Opulent lodgings range from a hotel suite to a five-star penthouse and promise all the comfort and service anyone might wish for.

Meal (PL 1): As the quality of the meal rises, the price tends to follow. Of course, if food is desired simply as a matter of sustenance, any number of inexpensive restaurants cater to the needs of the masses. An average meal is defined by both its taste and by the staff. An opulent or exotic meal is often an entertainment event in itself at a restaurant where excellent cuisine is matched by flawless service.

Medical, psychiatry (PL 5): Treat-

ment for addiction, anxiety, depression, phobia, amnesia, and other forms of mental illness is possible with counseling, therapy, and occasionally the use of behavioral drugs. If a patient is undergoing regular professional treatment, the doctor providing the treatment is allowed periodic Medical Science–*psychology* skill checks (once per month, or any other time unit the Gamemaster specifies) to see if the patient's condition improves. The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on mental illness.

Medical, surgery (PL 4): A patient suffering from mortal damage requires the intervention of a professional surgeon. A doctor working in a state-of-the-art medical facility receives a –3 bonus to his skill checks for being in a favorable situation of Amazing quality.

Medical, treatment (PL 3): Patients suffering from wound damage, disease, radiation, and poison can be treated without surgery. A doctor working in a state-of-the-art medical facility receives a –3 bonus to his skill checks for being in a favorable situation of Amazing quality.

Message service (PL 4): The primary function of a message service is to take messages for a client when he is not available. Usually, but not always, the operator of the message service knows how to contact the client in order to pass on messages immediately. When coupled with a cellular phone or other portable communication device, a message service doubles as a secretarial service capable of screening calls.

Mindwalker for hire (PL 6): In campaign settings that use the optional rules for psionics (see Chapter 14), skilled Mindwalkers are in constant demand. Still, most Mindwalkers refuse to risk violating the laws of the society in which they dwell.

News service (PL 5): Depending on the technology of the civilization, subscription to a news service provides the subscriber with print, radio, video, electronic, and/or holographic media. Whatever form the news updates come in, the result is to keep the subscriber updated on all events of note in his areas of interest: local, planetary, or interstellar news, or events in a specific field such as medicine or business.

Security service (PL 4): A security service provides round-the-clock protection of a residence or place of business. Alarms, patrols, and cameras may be included. Increased levels of protection require the services of a Combat Spec with experience as a bodyguard.

Taxi ride (PL 3): In almost all urban and suburban environments, taxis are available for immediate transportation. Often, taxi drivers double as tour guides and fixers, full of information on places to visit or to avoid. Of course, the driver is likely to expect an extra reward for directing tourists to places that provide lodging, food, or entertainment.

Tech Op for hire (PL 5): Numbered among Tech Ops are medical doctors, engineers, pilots, hackers, and all forms of specialists who deal in high tech. Depending on the task involved, these professionals often require equipment and supplies, which the employer must furnish.

Travel (PL 3–7): Travel over standard commercial means takes the form of passenger vehicles dedicated to the task of transporting human cargo. Schedules for commercial travel are set as much as a year in advance, and it is often necessary to reserve tickets well ahead of time.

Air travel (PL 5) relies on commercial airlines and airbuses. Most commercial planes have a seating capacity of at least 100. Smaller cities may not be served by commercial airlines, especially in the early years after a society develops air travel.

Bus travel (PL 4) involves all forms of land travel that employ individual, independently powered vehicles over a road. Most buses seat 50 to 100 passengers. When it's available, bus travel is the cheapest, but also the slowest, form of mass transportation.

Ocean travel (PL 3) by liner, sailboat, or yacht is a common means of transport in settings where water covers a large percentage of a planet's surface.

Interstellar travel (PL 7) requires the use of a stardrive and remains fairly expensive even at PL 7. Commercial driveships serve a variety of purposes. Smaller vessels, capable of covering 5 light-years in a single journey, serve to link star systems that are close to one another and carry only a few dozen passengers. On the largest commercial cruisers with a range of 25 light-years, the number of passengers may exceed 1,000. The high cost of crossing the void between the stars limits the availability of the service.

System travel (PL 6), or interplanetary travel, begins at PL 6 but only becomes highly popular at PL 7 when full-scale exploration of the stars gets under way. Because this form of transport is limited to sublight velocities, travel from the inner to the outer planets of a system remains relatively expensive.

Train travel (PL 4) is an excellent alternative for the fiscally conscious traveler and for cargo shipments. At PL 6 and beyond, the velocity of a passenger train or a cargo train can exceed the speed of sound. Light rail systems, such as urban mass transit, are in constant operation and use a flat pricing structure in which a one-time fee allows a rider to stay on board as long as he wishes.

Medical Skills

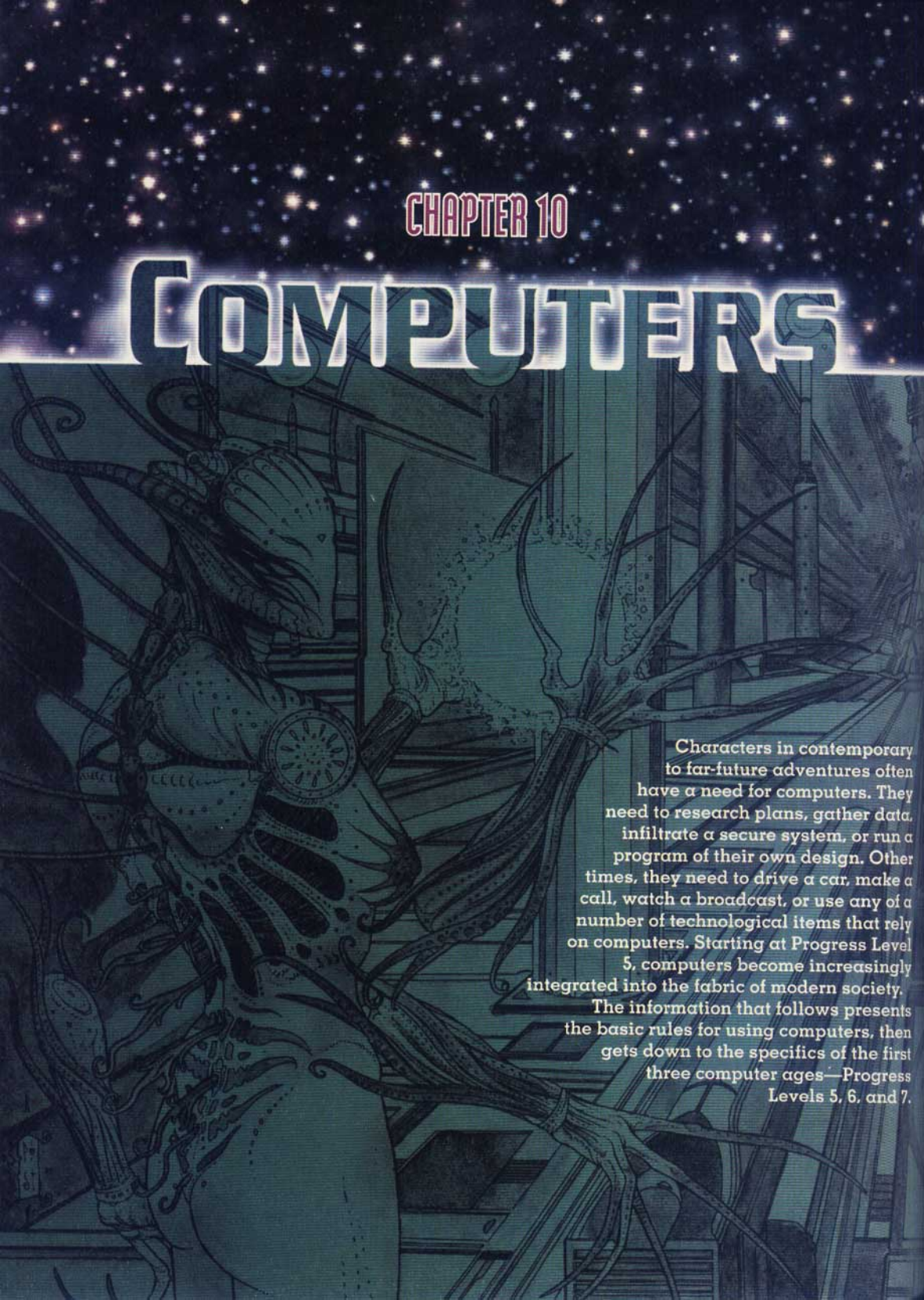
To a greater degree than is true of many other professions, a medical doctor's skill score is tied to the Progress Level of the facility in which he works. This is a reflection of the fact that improvements in knowledge and technology have a tendency to make doctors more capable than they would have been if they were using their skills at a lower Progress Level.

At a typical medical facility, a doctor's skill score in his specialty (psychology, surgery, or treatment) is equal to the Progress Level of the facility plus 8.

Of course, this general rule does not apply to heroes, who can have skill scores higher or lower than that fixed number.

Expenses Not Included

The price of hiring an expert—a lawyer, a Diplomat, a medical doctor, or anyone else who's providing his expertise for a fee—represents only the compensation that's paid directly to the character. Any expenses the professional incurs in the course of performing his duties must be accounted for separately, unless a different arrangement is made before the expert begins his work.



CHAPTER 10

COMPUTERS

Characters in contemporary to far-future adventures often have a need for computers. They need to research plans, gather data, infiltrate a secure system, or run a program of their own design. Other times, they need to drive a car, make a call, watch a broadcast, or use any of a number of technological items that rely on computers. Starting at Progress Level 5, computers become increasingly integrated into the fabric of modern society.

The information that follows presents the basic rules for using computers, then gets down to the specifics of the first three computer ages—Progress Levels 5, 6, and 7.

Using Computers

In general, using a computer requires the Knowledge–*computer operation* specialty skill. An untrained character can perform basic tasks (word processing, playing a game, etc.) without knowing *computer operation* per se. Anything more complicated requires the use of the specialty skill.

Computer operation represents a character's ability to get the most out of a computer's normal operating parameters. It allows a character to effectively use and operate a computer.

For the technically inclined, the Computer Science broad skill and its specialty skills provide more extensive aptitude to characters willing to invest in additional time and training. By itself, the broad skill enables a character to retrieve information from an unprotected computer system, make repairs to a piece of hardware, and perform some basic programming chores, as described on page 79 in *Chapter 4: Skills*.

The specialty skills under Computer Science are *hacking*, *hardware*, and *programming*.

Hacking can't be used untrained. It allows a character to manipulate programs and infiltrate networks in ways the original designers never intended. In campaigns set at PL 6 or higher, this skill is also used to operate specialized computers such as gridcasters. To use a gridcaster, however, a character has to be wired for data—with a nanocomputer, cytronic circuits, and a neural interface jack implanted in his body.

A character with *hacking* doesn't need *computer operation*; *hacking* allows a character to accomplish everything that *computer operation* covers and more.

Hardware represents a character's knowledge and proficiency with the physical components that make up a computer. Understanding how a computer system works, being able to set one up quickly, designing and building your own computer, and (at higher ranks) being able to repair computer components are all covered by this specialty skill.

Programming provides a character with the training and expertise needed to write computer codes and modify existing programs to achieve a desired effect.

One Success or Many?

As with many other types of skills in the Alternity game, success when using a computer can be determined in one of two ways.

For simple tasks or in situations when the Gamemaster wants to keep the action fast and furious, he can call for a character to make a single skill check; the better the result, the greater the degree of success.

For time-consuming tasks or in situations when the Gamemaster wants to build tension and suspense, he can require a complex skill check (see page 62); he assigns a specific number of successes that must be achieved to complete the task.

The Computer Itself

For game purposes, a computer consists of a *processor*, *active memory*, *stored memory*, and various *interface devices*. This basic model holds true for all computers through at least Progress Level 7.

Processor

The processor determines a computer's power, represented as a situation bonus to action checks when a character is specifically operating the computer. This bonus ranges from no bonus for Marginal processors, to –1 for Ordinary, –2 for Good, and –3 for processors rated as Amazing.

► A ***co-processor*** can be added to a computer to provide a –1 bonus to a user's *computer operation* or *hacking* skill checks when specifically operating the computer.

Memory

The quality of a computer's processor also determines its memory capacity. A processor divides memory (its data storage capacity) between active and stored memory.

► ***Active memory*** determines the number of programs that can be in use at a given time. Every program has a specific size, equal to the number of active memory slots it takes up; a size 3 program, for example, requires 3 slots of active memory.

► ***Stored memory*** represents those programs and datafiles stored in a computer that are not currently in active memory. For game purposes,

stored memory isn't a major concern. Between hard drives and disks, a character can store all of the programs and datafiles she might want to carry around.

Stored memory comes into play when a character wants to download data to her computer (see the description of the transfer program on page 166 for more information), and when the character wants to load programs into active memory.

▶ ***Loading Programs.*** It requires an action to move a single program from stored to active memory, or to replace a program in active memory with one from stored memory.

Operating System

A computer's operating system, or OS, provides the basic parameters under which the machine operates. Every processor comes with a built-in OS that matches the quality of the hardware. Though the OS is considered to be active, it doesn't use up any active memory slots.

Every OS includes the following basic functions: *copy, delete, error recognition, file management, protection, protocol,* and *save.*

Copy allows a user to replicate files and programs. *Delete* allows a user to remove unwanted files and programs from memory. *Error recognition* identifies software or hardware problems, but does not provide the means to solve these problems. *File management* enables a user to organize the files in memory in any way desired, making it possible to easily locate any particular piece of information. *Protection* warns of viruses and other intrusions. *Protocol* allows the computer to interface with other computers, either via a network or by translating data from different operating systems. *Save* allows a user to store files for later use.

Interface Device

Every computer comes with an interface device. This device allows the user to communicate with his machine, inputting data and retrieving it in some way.

Standard interface devices include monitors, keyboards, trackballs, styluses, voice recognition technology, and neural connections that allow characters to plug their minds directly into computer systems. What's available depends on the Progress Level of the campaign and what the Gamemaster allows.

GIDs (Grid interface devices), a special type of equipment for use with computers of Progress Levels 6 and 7, are described in detail under "Users in the Grid" on page 159.

Table P35: Active Memory

	Processor Quality			
	M	O	G	A
Data Slate (PL 6)	1	2	3	5
Desktop (PL 5)	2	4	6	8
Gauntlet, any (PL 7)	3	5	7	9
Gridcaster (PL 6)	3	6	8	10
Gridsuit (PL 7)	3	5	—	—
Mainframe (PL 5)	5	8	12	15
Microcomputer (PL 6)	3	4	6	7
Nanocomputer (PL 6)	2	3	5	6
Notebook (PL 5)	1	2	3	4
Supercomputer (PL 5)	unlimited			

M = Marginal O = Ordinary G = Good A = Amazing
(PL #) = The Progress Level at which the processor becomes available

Computers Through the Ages

Progress Level 5, the Information Age, is defined by an explosion in computer technology. Every year, smaller, faster, and more powerful personal computers hit the market and influence the way society works and plays. Near the midpoint of the Information Age, the first Grid appears. It's basically just a computer network accessed via modems, telephones, and cable lines.

The basic computers of PL 5 are the *supercomputer,* the *mainframe,* the *desktop,* and the *notebook.*

Progress Level 6, the Fusion Age, experiences a number of technological leaps that move it well beyond the capabilities of the Information Age. In the realm of computers, breakthroughs include three-dimensional crystal hologram memory storage systems (3Ds), improved processors, and cytronic circuitry that allows users to experience virtual reality in the Grid.

The Grid evolves, growing to cover the planet and the rest of the solar system as colonies and research stations expand to other planets. Besides developing to incorporate virtual users—called "gridpilots"—the Grid becomes an important interactive communication medium. Everyone in this era uses the Grid.

In addition to more powerful versions of PL 5 computers (designed to handle the new programs and technology), new types of computers appear: the *gridcaster,* the *microcomputer,* the *nanocomputer,* and the *data slate.*

Progress Level 7, the Gravity Age, ushers in an advancement in computer miniaturization and power. The Grid continues to evolve. As humanity travels to other star systems, it takes the Grid along—every star system with major human settlements constructs its own Grid. With the advent of drivespace communications, gridpilots can send their virtual selves (called "shadows") to Grids in other systems to perform programmed functions, such as picking up or delivering news and data.

Though computers advance by leaps and bounds in this era, the percentage of gridpilots among the population at large remains roughly the same. Most humans just aren't willing to undergo surgery and accept mechanical implants in order to make full use of the Grid. Instead, noninvasive machinery is developed to allow users to experience at least a fraction of the virtual Gridscape. This technology employs sensory suits and virtu-self goggles to simulate the sensations available to

wired gridpilots whose shadows roam the Grid.

Most of the computers introduced at PL 6 are still available, but the bulky, outdated machines of PL 5 have all but disappeared. Instead, new technology has led to the development of the computer gauntlet, worn over the forearm and hand. In addition to its computing capabilities, each gauntlet has a specialized function.

Computer Descriptions

The descriptions below detail computers as they exist at the Progress Level in which they are first introduced. Consider them to be the ultimate machines of the age. If such machines are still available in later Progress Levels, they have been upgraded to handle the new technology and programs of the age.

Data Slate

A data slate is the Fusion Age (PL 6) answer to pen and paper, replacing these antique items in almost all everyday functions. Basically a flatscreen and input slot, a data slate (or "d-slate") fits in the palm of the hand. By placing a 3D in the slot, the user can review data on the screen. With a stylus or a neural interface, the user can manipulate data.

Files and programs that a data slate accesses are often stored on 3Ds (see "Peripherals" below), since the stored memory is extremely limited in these devices. A d-slate can be connected to a larger computer or workstation to download data as necessary. A data slate has no Grid interface device.

Desktop

The desktop computer is the standard personal computer of Progress Level 5. It isn't easily portable, but it can be lugged around if necessary. In such a situation, a desktop can't be used until it's reassembled and connected to a power source.

A desktop includes a processor, a keyboard and mouse, a CD-ROM drive, an internal disk drive, a modem, and a monitor.

Table P36: Computer Costs

	Mass	Cost per Quality M	O	G	A
Progress Level 5					
Co-Processor	—	250	500	1000	1500
Desktop	10	1000	2000	3000	5000
Mainframe	10	10000	25000	50000	100K
Notebook	1	1000	2000	4000	6000
Supercomputer	50	1.5M	2M	4M	6M
Progress Level 6					
Co-Processor	—	200	400	800	1000
Data slate	—	300	600	900	1200
Desktop	8	1000	1500	2000	3000
Gridcaster	4	2000	3000	5000	7000
Mainframe	8	10K	25K	50K	100K
Microcomputer	1	1000	2000	3000	4000
Nanocomputer	—	1000	2000	3000	4000
Supercomputer	30	1M	2M	3M	4M
3D	—	10	15	20	30
X3D	—	25	30	40	50
NIJack	—	—	500	—	—
Progress Level 7					
Co-Processor	—	200	400	600	800
AI (artificial int.)	—	100K	200K	300K	500K
Data slate	—	250	500	750	1000
Gauntlets					
Computer	2	2000	3000	4000	5000
Gridcaster	2	2000	4000	6000	8000
Medical	2	3000	4000	5000	6000
Professional	2	1000	2000	3000	4000
Gridcaster (helmet)	2	2500	4500	6500	8500
Gridsuit	4	2000	3000	—	—
Mainframe	5	10K	20K	40K	75K
Microcomputer	1	800	1500	2500	3500
Nanocomputer	—	1000	2000	3000	4000
Supercomputer	20	250K	500K	750K	1M
Memory harness	2	4000	5000	6000	8000
Subdermal NIJack	—	—	—	700	—
Wireless NIJack	—	—	—	1000	—

K = thousand M = million

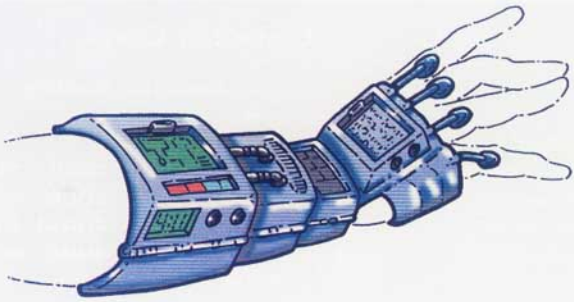
Gauntlets

The basic computers of Progress Level 7, gauntlets come in a variety of specialized models. Worn over the forearm and hand, all gauntlets feature touch-pads on the upper forearm panel and on the palm, a thinscreen on the back of the hand, drive slots for inputting 3Ds or X3Ds (see "Peripherals" below), and various jacks for connecting the gauntlet to a computer interface mechanism. (It's possible for a character to wear two gauntlets at the same time, but they can't be *used* simultaneously.)

All gauntlets are equipped with built-in co-processors, which provides users with an automatic –1 bonus on any action related to the use of the gauntlet.

Computer Gauntlet

The basic computer gauntlet is the personal computer of the Gravity Age. It replaces the notebooks and data slates of earlier ages. The computer gauntlet's Grid interface is con-



Computer Gauntlet

sidered to be a dumb GID (see "Users in the Grid," page 159).

Gridcaster (gauntlet)

The most popular gridcaster of PL 7 comes packed in a gauntlet. It can be connected by leads to a gridpilot's neural interface jacks (NIJacks), or plugged directly into subdermal jacks that connect to the pilot's cytronic circuitry system without the need for leads or cables. The gridcaster gauntlet is a smart GID.

See "The Grid," pages 156–159, for more details on gridpilots and dumb and smart GIDs.

Medical Gauntlet

The medical gauntlet, one of the most amazing devices of Progress Level 7, is a dedicated medical computer with specialized diagnosis equipment built in. In addition to the standard computer interfaces located on the top forearm and hand panels, powerful sensors are built into the palm of the glove.

While the normal computer functions can be used by anyone with the Knowledge–*computer operation* or Computer Science–*hacking* skills, the medical diagnosis hardware and software requires the Medical Science broad skill. In addition, depending on the circumstances, most of the Medical Science specialty skills can be used with the medical gauntlet.

The medical gauntlet's Grid interface is considered to be a dumb GID.

Professional Gauntlet

The professional gauntlet is a computer gauntlet with dedicated programming to aid its user in a chosen field. The bonuses provided by the quality of the gauntlet are applied when using a specific broad skill and its related specialty skills, not to the Knowledge–*computer operation* or Computer Science–*hacking* skills. The gauntlets have dumb GIDs.

A professional gauntlet provides a –1 bonus to a character's related skill checks when the gauntlet is used in conjunction with a specific application of those skills.

Common professional gauntlets include the following items:

The pilot gauntlet aids in Vehicle Operation–*air vehicle* or *space vehicle* skill uses.

The navigator gauntlet provides a bonus to Navigation skill checks.

Ops (operations) gauntlets assist System Operation skill uses.

A science gauntlet aids in Life, Physical, or Technical Science skill uses (one broad skill per gauntlet).

Security gauntlets assist Security skill uses.

Gridcaster

The gridcaster, which first appears at Progress Level 6, is a specialized device designed to provide a virtual link to the Grid. It isn't a stand-alone computer, but an integrated interface device that allows a user to access and manipulate the Grid. A user must link to the gridcaster through a cytronic neural interface, and must then connect the unit to the Grid to fully utilize the device.

Fully portable, a gridcaster measures about 25 cm square and 5 cm deep. In addition to a specialized processor and memory slots, it features a built-in keyboard, a Grid interface link, and a cytronic neural link (for the user to connect to).

At Progress Level 7, the gridcaster comes in two models—the more-popular gridcaster gauntlet (see above) and the less common gridcaster helmet. The helmet is a stylish device worn over the head and plugged directly into the user's NIJacks.

Optionally, a gridcaster can take the form of a pair of mirrorshades (or some other similar type of eyewear) with a built-in heads-up display. This device enables a gridcaster to maintain a level of awareness of what's going on around him, instead of being visually cut off from his surroundings inside a helmet.

All gridcasters are considered to be smart GIDs.

See "The Grid," pages 156–159, for more details on GIDs, gridcasters, and the gridpilots who use them.

Gridsuit

The virtual sensory suit, or gridsuit, appears in the Gravity Age (Progress Level 7). It is designed to allow those who don't have internal nanocomputers and NIJacks to experience the Grid. The user wears a full-body sensory suit, virtu-self full-spectrum goggles, and total-sound earphones. When the suit's interface cable is plugged into the Grid, the wearer's mind and body plunges into the virtual Gridscape. It's not as "real" an experience as being a true gridpilot, but it's as close as most people are willing to get. (Full-fledged gridpilots require the installation of a variety of invasive devices, including nanocomputers, cytronic circuitry, and NIJack interfaces.)

While wearing a gridsuit and being plugged into the Grid, the user must remain at the location of his connection. In addition, as the Grid sensations overwhelm him, all Awareness checks involving phenomena of the real world receive a +3 penalty.

Mainframe

A mainframe is a sophisticated computer designed to run powerful workstations in the home or office. The ultimate version of this machine, which first appears late in Progress Level 5, is a compact, powerful computer configured as a tower to fit underneath a typical desk. All mainframe computers feature a processor, a keyboard and mouse, a CD-ROM drive, an internal disk drive, a modem, and a monitor.

A mainframe isn't considered to be portable. This machine is larger and heavier than a desktop, and can't be carried around without great

difficulty. As with a desktop, if a mainframe is moved, it can't be used until it's reassembled and connected to a power source.

Microcomputer

This miniaturized computer first appears in the Fusion Age (PL 6), replacing the notebook computer. It measures only 15 cm by 10 cm. Consisting of a flip-open thinscreen, a voice-activated interface, an internal power supply, a dumb GID, and an input drive, it features a power cell that provides a limited amount of energy, usually enough for 6 hours of continuous use. A depleted cell can be recharged in 2 hours. Extra power cells cost $200 each.

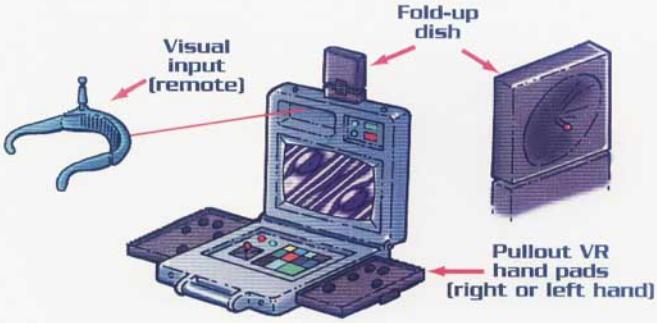
Nanocomputer

The first fully realized cybernetic-control computer is the nanocomputer, making its debut in the Fusion Age (PL 6). Basically, a nanocomputer is an extremely small processor implanted inside the user's head. The price of the nanocomputer includes cytronic circuitry that connects the computer to the neural network of its user. (For a nanocomputer to be available in your campaign, your Gamemaster must be using at least a scaled-down version of the optional rules in *Chapter 15: Cybertech*. See "Cybernetics and PL 6 Computers" on this page for more details.)

Cybernetics and PL 6 Computers

Some of the computer technology of the Fusion Age necessarily makes use of cybernetics—the integration of electronic and mechanical devices into a living being.

The rules for cybertech (presented in Chapter 15) are considered an optional part of the ALTERNITY game. However, even if your Gamemaster decides not to use those rules, he may elect to allow a scaled-down version of cybertech to exist in his campaign for the purpose of enabling characters to use certain pieces of PL 6 computer technology, such as the gridcaster and the nanocomputer.



Gridcaster

Notebook

Appearing at PL 5 and remaining popular until the introduction of the data slate and microcomputer of PL 6, a notebook is a self-contained, extremely portable personal computer. With a flip-up display screen, built-in keyboard, battery supply/recharger, hard drive, disk drive, CD-ROM drive, and modem, a notebook goes wherever its user goes.

Batteries provide a limited supply of power (up to 4 hours of continuous use), and additional battery packs can be carried. This is the smallest personal computer available in the Information Age, though specialized electronic devices such as electronic appointment books do come in smaller packages.

Supercomputer

A supercomputer, about the size of a large cabinet or bookcase, is packed with hundreds of terabytes of memory and processing power. These computers are extremely rare at Progress Level 5, and few people have access to such computing power—even at work or via modem connections.

A supercomputer controls and monitors systems within business, science, or manufacturing complexes, in addition to providing massive amounts of storage and computing power. All interfacing with the supercomputer occurs using either a dedicated workstation or via a networked personal computer.

► ***Active memory:*** For game purposes, a supercomputer has an unlimited amount of active memory, though limits may be imposed by the workstation or the networked personal computer a character uses.

PERIPHERALS

Various devices are available to expand or enhance the capability of a computer in some way. Only those items that are unusual or unique to the ALTERNITY game are described; real-world devices are only mentioned in brief, and the list is by no means exhaustive.

Standard peripheral devices of PL 5 include the *digital camera, digital recorder, printer, scanner,* and *stylus.*

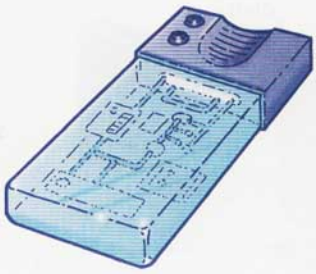
The technology of PL 6 introduces new devices, including the *NIJack, 3D,* and *X3D.*

Further advances in the Gravity Age (PL 7) lead to the development of improved NIJacks, including a *subdermal* and *wireless* version, and the introduction of the *memory harness* for use with the new AI (artifical intelligence) programs. (See "Artifical Intelligence" on page 167 for more information.)

Neural Interface Jack (NIJack)

The neural interface jack, also known as a NIJack, is a plug located on the outside of a character's body. This plug connects to cytronic circuitry inside the body, allowing datacables to link the user to cybernetic machinery. The most common application for a NIJack is to allow a gridpilot to link (or jack) into his gridcaster and, in turn, into the Grid. Without a NIJack and cytronic circuitry, a character can't fully operate a gridcaster.

NIJacks and other Grid interface technology are first developed at PL 6, with vast improvements being introduced at PL 7.



3D

3Ds and X3Ds

By the time of the Fusion Age (PL 6), magnetic storage devices have been replaced by three-dimensional crystal hologram storage devices—commonly called 3Ds. A 3D contains a huge amount of space within its crystal interior, since data can be recorded in three dimensions instead of one.

Of course, program complexity and size has increased to fill the newly available space. While this makes new programming technologies possible, it doesn't provide the unlimited amount of storage space that was predicted near the end of the Information Age. The programs needed to access the virtual reality aspect of the Grid and otherwise run the machinery of this age are stupendously complex and incredibly large.

A huge number of PL 5 programs can be stored on a single 3D, but no cutting-edge computer operator or gridpilot of the age uses the outdated, outmoded, and outclassed programs of the earlier Progress Level—they use updated, PL 6 versions of those same programs, versions that incorporate the newest programming techniques and make use of the newest technology.

Each removable 3D can hold programs totaling 2 slots of memory; larger 3Ds, called X3Ds, can hold up to 5 slots of memory.

Memory Harness

Developed in the Gravity Age (PL 7), a memory harness is a belt and full body mesh that contains a storage system for an artificial intelligence (AI) program. A character wears the harness to carry a scaled-down AI.

AI programs don't fit in portable computers—they're too large. A scaled-down version of the program can be loaded into a memory harness to provide at least partial assistance outside a ship or complex that normally houses a full AI. (See "Artificial Intelligence" on page 167.)

The harness can be connected to a computer gauntlet so that the limited AI can interact with the wearer. The harness can even be equipped with sensors and speakers so that the AI can record data and observe conditions, as well as communicate verbally with the wearer.

Subdermal NIJack

In the Gravity Age, leads and cables are no longer necessary for the gridpilot on the go. Connections can be installed in the wrist or forearm so that a gridcaster gauntlet can be plugged directly into a user's cytronic circuitry system without the need for running cables to NIJacks located in the neck or head. (The subdermal NIJack, as an item of cybernetic equipment, is also mentioned in *Chapter 15: Cybertech*.)

Wireless NIJack

The wireless neural interface jack is a sensor located on the outside of a character's head, usually high on the side or back of the neck where it can be hidden by hair.

When activated, a wireless NIJack completes a data link with a computer or gridcaster that has a similar sensor. A wireless NIJack performs all of the functions a regular NIJack, except it requires no hard-wired connection; data is transferred via radio emissions.

A character equipped with a wireless NIJack must be in line of sight and no farther than 10 meters from the system he's interfacing with. (The wireless NIJack, as an item of cybernetic equipment, is also mentioned in *Chapter 15: Cybertech*.)

The Grid

The worldwide computer network that comes to be known as the Grid expands and improves as time goes by. Though they share many similarities, the Grid of a particular Progress Level has its own characteristics.

At Progress Level 5

The worldwide computer network of the Information Age connects computers via modems and similar links, making extensive use of telephone lines, satellite links, and other communication media. As the Information Age matures, many network servers appear. Most have links to each other, but each has its own rates, protocols, and areas of interest. In general, an access provider charges a flat fee for unlimited use.

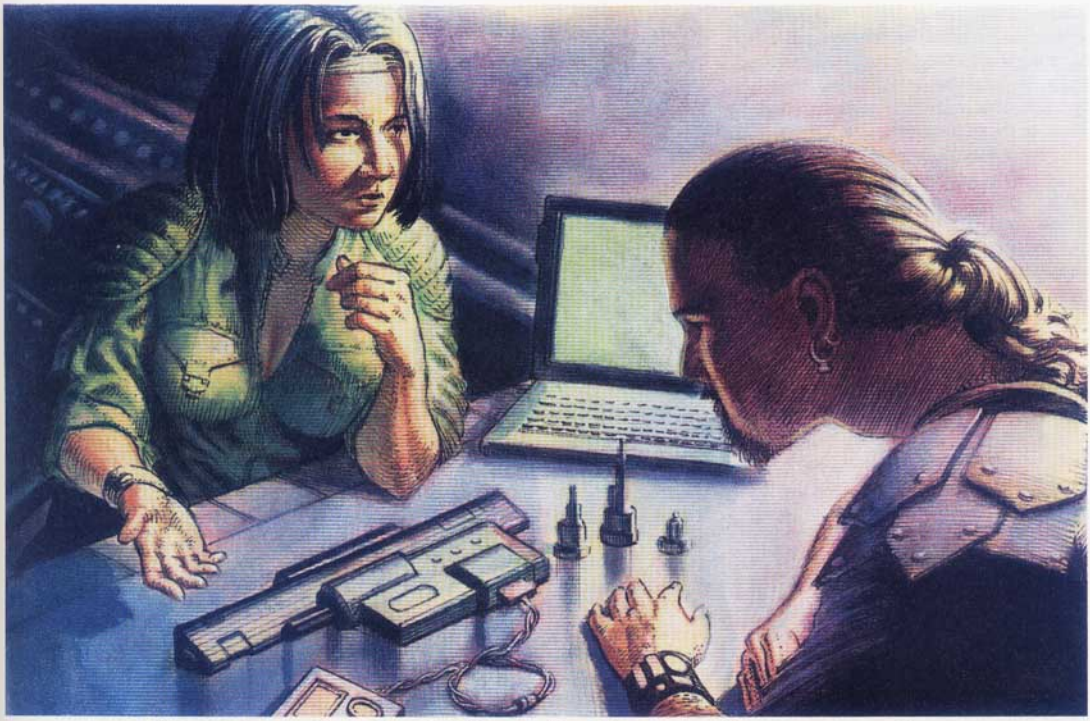
Most activity on the net (which comes to be called the Grid as the age nears its conclusion) involves entertainment, news gathering, and information sharing. Gridsites exist that are dedicated to almost every subject imaginable, and interested users meet constantly to trade information and opinions on a wide variety of topics. A hacker can attempt to sabotage or access remote computers connected to the Grid, but this is difficult and often time-consuming.

Getting information out of the Information Age Grid is a cumbersome process, since a user often has to seek out and visit many sites to accumulate data. One useful feature is the ability to post a request for information. Though this takes time, eventually another user may read the posting and provide the information being sought.

Every Grid user has an online name to identify him without giving away his true identity. This online name is associated with the user's Grid address and access account. Hackers can employ false addresses and accounts, though such subterfuge is guarded against by extremely powerful watchdog programs.

Places in the Grid

The Grid consists of a vast number of systems linked by communications lines. Each system is a group of linked computer nodes connected to the Grid. The three types of systems are *public*, *private*, and *restricted*.



Interaction at work: striking a deal for computer components

A public system can be accessed by anyone with a computer and modem. These systems include electronic mail services, public databases, electronic shopping and banking services, chat and bulletin board systems, corporate information boards, and topic-specific Gridsites open to the general public.

Public systems are considered to be unprotected, though the quality of the system determines how many layers of defense it has (see "Information Retrieval," above) for when a hacker attempts to access nonpublic areas of the system.

Private systems make up the majority of the Grid. These systems require passwords to be accessed, and records are kept on the number of users, who the users are, and what parts of a system they visit. These systems include private databases, fee-based entertainment, news and business services, and pay-to-play computer games. Private systems are considered to be protected, meaning that they have protection programs beyond the basic layers of defense that exist in a public system.

Restricted systems are specially designed to prevent unauthorized access. Many private systems are connected to restricted systems that protect only the private system's most sensitive data, while other restricted systems have no low-security connections. These systems include high-level corporate and government computer systems, such as utility and communications command centers, bank account files, personal data records, billing databases, personnel files, research and development systems, and classified government or law enforcement systems. In addition to protection programs, a restricted system has a greater number of layers of defense than the quality of its processor might indicate, usually from 3 to 12 more (3d4, or as determined by the Gamemaster).

Types of Networks

Following are brief descriptions of the most common types of computer networks connected to the Grid.

Academic networks include college and university computers, and various libraries with Gridsites. These systems are generally open to the public and have (at best) Marginal protection.

Access service networks are commercial computer setups that provide accounts and usage packages that include e-mail, research services, commercial reservation applications, and other common services. Most access service systems are private and have at least Good protection.

Corporate networks have many subsystems devoted to accounting, administration, personnel, public relations, and research and development. Medium-size and small businesses follow this model, though their systems are smaller and less diversified. Regardless of its size, the typical corporate network is restricted and has Ordinary protection.

Financial networks include those found in stock market and commodity exchange services, banks, and other financial institutions. Actual datastores of account information can't be accessed through the Grid, and no hacker of this age can break into these systems. All such networks have restricted access and Amazing protection.

Government networks include bureaucratic sites that handle red tape and track data on driver's licenses, birth and death certificates, and

building permits; judicial and law enforcement sites; legislative sites that track and record current laws, voter registration information, and records concerning court decisions. Most of these networks are private and have Marginal protection.

Military networks are concerned with supplies, logistics, and the administrative matters of a branch of the military. These networks are generally private with Good protection. This category does *not* include networks that control or oversee weapons and other military technology.

Open networks are the portions of other networks that can be accessed by the general public. These contain advertisements, shopping catalogs, discussion groups, or other public relations areas. Most of them have Ordinary protection or less.

Operational networks manage or control physical facilities—automated factories, telephone switchboards, and air traffic control systems fall under this category. Access to these networks is restricted, and they always have Amazing protection.

Portal networks provide connections from one portion of the Grid to another, usually for a fee. These networks are private and have Ordinary protection.

Ultrasecure networks deal with information and operations that can't be accessed by the general public. Intelligence agencies, defense systems, and other highly sensitive data falls into this category. Most ultrasecure networks have restricted access and Amazing protection.

User networks are computers in private homes that temporarily connect to the Grid. A service provides electronic mail and other data as part of a monthly usage package that most Grid-connected users subscribe to. Access to such a network is private, and it has Marginal protection.

Navigating the Grid

The Grid of the late Information Age is a research and fact-gathering tool. It allows a user to make many contacts, though without an accurate idea of whom he's dealing with across the datalines.

An accomplished hacker can get into some restricted systems, though the process is difficult. Law enforcement agencies are always watching for those who alter, tamper with, or steal restricted data.

Every computer system in the world that's connected to a telephone line can be visited by a computer user. Most connections allow only limited access to visitors, though once inside, a hacker can get into all kinds of trouble. It all depends on the programs he carries, the power of his machinery, and his own skills—not to mention the capabilities and the number of defense layers of the system he's invading.

At Progress Level 6

The extensive computer network of the Fusion Age covers not only the Earth, but also any other linked sites throughout the solar system (permanent space stations and facilities on the Moon and other system bodies). Technology improves by leaps and bounds, and a true virtual reality is established inside the Grid.

Users can work the Grid from remote workstations as though it were a PL 5 network, but to get the most out of the technology, a user needs a nanocomputer and a gridcaster. With these tools, users can generate grid-selves to explore and manipulate the virtual Gridscape. High-end users, called gridpilots, generate superior grid-selves known as shadows.

The Gridscape

When a gridpilot links into his gridcaster and connects to the Grid, a portion of his consciousness enters a newly generated shadow, which plunges into the virtual datastream. The cyber wind is raw and exhilarating, sending tingling sensations back to the gridpilot as the shadow rushes along. It takes nanoseconds to travel in the Grid, but the gridcaster and its built-in programs slow the perception of the trip to a pace the mind can follow and enjoy.

The electron stream empties into a raging datafall that leads directly to the Grid. From this perspective, the Grid appears as a latticework of glowing lines and lights suspended in a field of infinite white. This is the first view a shadow sees as it links to

The Grid Demands Attention

Being connected to the Grid is, to put it mildly, pretty distracting. A gridpilot who's plugged in is automatically at a disadvantage if he tries to do anything other than interact with the Grid (run a program, download information, etc.). Any "real world" action he attempts that requires a skill check or a feat check brings with it a penalty that the Gamemaster will assign depending on the situation.

For instance, firing a weapon at a stationary target is pretty easy in any event, but if a plugged-in gridpilot tries to do this, he'll take at least a +2 penalty on his skill check (in addition to other situation modifiers that might still result in an overall bonus on the check). At the other extreme, using that weapon against an opponent who's in motion and is firing back might force the plugged-in gridpilot to take a much more severe penalty (+3, +4, or worse) in addition to any other modifiers that would apply even if he wasn't plugged in.

Generating Gridsuit Shadows

A gridsuit allows a user to create a shadow that's better than the typical grid-self but usually not as good as one employed by a true gridpilot. A gridsuit shadow is generated using the process detailed in the description of the shadow form program on page 165, but with these differences:

► "Program quality" (in this case, the quality of the gridsuit and its built-in software) can only be either Marginal or Ordinary; no Good or Amazing gridsuits exist at PL 7.

► The user of a gridsuit makes skill checks using his *computer operation* skill score— or, if an untrained character is ever foolish enough to try using a gridsuit, one-half of his Intelligence score.

Since a gridsuit allows a user to generate a shadow, it also has the capability to bypass the usual Grid safeguards—like the gridpilot, the gridsuit wearer places himself in real danger when he plunges into the Grid.

the dimension of data. The lines represent the billions of paths that carrier signals can take; the lights, the countless number of computer systems linked into the Grid.

Users in the Grid

Anyone can use the Grid. There are two basic Grid interface devices (GIDs) designed to accomplish this: dumb GIDs and smart GIDs. Regardless of the type of interface device being used, it always requires an action to engage contact with the Grid or to disconnect.

Dumb GIDs don't allow a user to interact with the Grid except in the most superficial ways. A telecomm, the PL 6 equivalent of the telephone, allows its user to call Grid codes to converse with other users or specialized Grid-self personalities. A gridstation, another form of dumb GID, allows a user to view the virtual Gridscape on a screen and interact through the use of prompts.

A nanocomputer and a NIJack are not necessary to make use of dumb GIDs, because those who operate them don't actually enter the virtual Gridscape. Instead, they interact via a monitor, screen, or holographic projector and some manually operated interface such as a keyboard or a voice-activated interface.

Smart GIDs include the computer systems of the age and the specialized gridcaster. These devices allow full interaction with the Grid, though a user decked out with cytronic circuitry and a gridcaster can experience so much more by actually "entering" the Grid.

Most users who enter the Grid with low-end Grid-self programs are rarely in any real danger. The programs and safeguards keep all but the most persistent threats at bay. Gridpilots, however, operate outside the parameters of the normal safeguards. For this reason, their shadows experience real danger—danger that sometimes finds its way back to the gridpilot himself!

So, a prepared gridpilot generates the best shadow he can (by using the highest-quality shadow form program he can obtain or create), arms it with the best weapon and defense programs available, and has a store of other important programs waiting to handle any situation.

In the Fusion Age, a shadow exists only as long as its gridpilot remains linked to the system. When he breaks the connection, the shadow disappears. If the shadow was retrieving or delivering data, the data also disappears. The shadow must actually reach a destination to deliver whatever data it carries (although a gridpilot can scan data in a system if his shadow decides to risk a look).

Viruses, protection programs, system users, and other shadows all pose threats to a gridpilot and his shadow. Even so, the rush of the experience and the potential rewards are enough to lure most gridpilots into the virtual Gridscape.

The nanocomputer, complete with cytronic circuitry, is the advance in technology that makes the gridcaster possible. This biowiring (included in the price of the nanocomputer) permits electronic signals to travel between neural pathways and cybernetic machinery, allowing computer components to merge with human flesh. The circuitry also provides the foundation for other cyberware, if the optional rules in *Chapter 15: Cybertech* are being used in the campaign.

At Progress Level 7

Each civilized, technological star system of the age has its own Grid. The various Grids are connected via drivespace communication relays, although (as with all drivespace travel) it takes 11 hours to transmit a message or a computer program to another star system. For this reason, cutting-edge gridpilots use the shadow form 2 program. It allows a gridpilot to generate shadows that can operate, within programmed parameters, without direct connection back to the pilot. Otherwise, the PL 7 Grid is just an extension of and a natural improvement over the Grid of the Fusion Age.

Activity in the Grid

At PL 6 and beyond, the Grid generates a virtual reality in which gridpilots and other users can interact. (Challenge, combat, and encounter scenes can all take place within the Grid.)

Characters interacting only by a manual interface are never personally endangered. It isn't until a user adds a NIJack and a nanocomputer and connects via a gridcaster that personal danger becomes possible.

Programs

Computer programs, or software, are sets of instructions that, when loaded into active memory, enable a computer to perform a specific function. Every program belongs to one of three categories—*operation*, *hacking*, or *utility*—and is either Marginal, Ordinary, Good, or Amazing in quality. (A few programs are not available in Marginal-quality versions, as set forth on TABLE P37: COMPUTER PROGRAMS.)

Program Descriptions

The descriptions below detail computer programs as they exist at the Progress Level in which they are first introduced. Newer, updated versions of earlier programs exist at later Progress Levels. These have been modified to work with and take advantage of the new technology, but the basic function of each program remains unchanged.

Each program description begins with two important pieces of information—the Progress Level in which the program first appears, and the number of slots of active memory the program takes up when in use.

Operator Programs

An operator program helps a user accomplish a given task. The situation die modifier provided by the quality of the program is applied to the user's Knowledge–*computer operation* or Computer Science–*hacking* skill check, which determines how well the software functions during its current use. A Marginal program provides no modifier; an Ordinary program gives a –1 bonus; Good, a –2 bonus; and Amazing, a –3 bonus.

Application

Various general-purpose software.

An application program can be a word processor, graphic design utility, spreadsheet, business program, system diagnostics, or other program designed to accomplish a specific task. Any application that can be imagined is probably available. With an application program running, certain tasks may receive a situation bonus, as determined by the Gamemaster.

Logging in at PL 5

Sam Dallas has a Knowledge–*computer operation* skill score of 13 and a notebook computer with a Good processor. He has two programs loaded into active memory: datascan (Good quality) and transfer (Ordinary quality). He's logged into the main library of the University of Washington, in search of information about the Ebola virus.

The university online library has an Amazing processor, which means it will take 6 rounds for Sam's datascan program to complete its work. Sam's player makes the skill check, rolling d20 –d6 (a –2 bonus for the program's quality). The roll is a 9, giving Sam an Ordinary success. After 6 rounds, a menu appears listing all sources of information on the topic—1,240 storage slots worth of data. Now, with his transfer program, Sam can start downloading the data at the rate of 2 slots per round. (He might want to narrow his search parameters and rerun the datascan program, or else he's going to be downloading for quite a while.)

Jenny Taggert has a Computer Science–*hacking* skill score of 16. She has gotten past the guards and managed to enter the Tensor Corporation building, but now she has to access a mid-level manager's computer to find evidence to convict the company of industrial sabotage. She inserts her own disk containing a Good break-in program and an Amazing datascan program.

First, however, she has to get into the system. Because of the quality of the Tensor system and its protection protocols, Jenny makes her skill check with a +2 penalty (–3 bonus for program, +3 penalty for system, +2 penalty for protection). So, Jenny rolls d20 +d6 and needs to achieve a 16 or less. If she succeeds, she can use her datascan program to locate the relevant files. Of course, she has to hurry before the night watchman makes his rounds. . . .

Datadoc

Used to repair files and programs.

Datadoc restores damaged datafiles and programs. One skill check can be made for each damaged file.

The level of success determines the quality of data recovered, which might not be the same as the quality of the original program or file. For instance, if datadoc is run on a damaged program of Amazing quality and the operator gets an Ordinary success on his skill check, the program becomes functional again but is only of Ordinary quality. Regardless of the skill check result, a successful run of datadoc can't produce a program or file of better quality than the original.

On a Failure result, no data is recovered from the damaged file or program. One additional skill check can be made, but with a +1 penalty.

On a Critical Failure result, no data is recovered and no further attempts to restore the file or program may be attempted.

Datascan

Allows a user to search for datafiles.

A datascan program examines stored memory for specific datafiles or programs. Any degree of success on a Knowledge–*computer operation* or Computer Science–*hacking* skill check calls up a menu; the better the degree of success, the more extensive the information.

On an Ordinary success, the datascan simply produces a menu listing file names. On a Good success, the menu also includes the types and sizes of stored files. An Amazing success also reveals when the file was created, when it was last accessed, and who accessed it (if the file is part of a networked system).

Using a datascan program takes a certain number of rounds, depending both on the quality of the processor being searched (Marginal or Ordinary = 1; Good = 2; Amazing = 3) and on the quality of the datascan program: Marginal program, 4 rounds × processor's quality ; Ordinary program, 3 rounds × processor's quality; Good program, 2 rounds × processor's quality; Amazing program, 1 round × processor's quality.

For example, the number of rounds needed to search an Amazing processor with an Ordinary datascan program is 3 × 3, or 9 rounds.

A datascan program can be used to examine someone else's computer system. If the system isn't open, it must be accessed by means of a break-in program (a hacking program, described on page 162).

Decode

Used to unscramble an encoded file.

This program is designed to defeat computer passwords in order to gain access to restricted computer systems. It also unravels encoded datafiles and translates them into a format the user can access. See the description of the encode program, on the next page, for information on how the decode and encode programs interact.

Shadow Combat

The shadow programs described in this section allow a user to create a shadow—a virtual avatar that represents him and allows him to interact in the Grid. Just like normal heroes, shadows come complete with Ability Scores, action check scores, and durability ratings. Independent shadows even have a Computer Science–*hacking* skill score. Shadows can be equipped with weapons and armor that inflict and absorb damage much like their real world equivalents. Shadow weapons inflict stun, wound, and mortal damage to other shadows, and a shadow weapon program's quality functions like a normal weapon's accuracy.

When two shadows find reason to conflict, shadow combat is accomplished using the rules for combat described in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*, with a few exceptions:

- Whenever a shadow needs to make a skill check that's appropriate to the Grid, it makes a feat check using the appropriate Ability Score. For example, if a user must determine if his shadow is surprised (normally a function of Awareness), make a Will feat check.
- When a shadow form program needs to determine success or failure for a program it is operating (such as shadow weapon), its Computer Science–*hacking* skill score is used instead of an Ability Score.

Table P37: Computer Programs

	Slots	Cost per Quality M	O	G	A
Operator Programs					
Application (PL 5)	2	200	400	600	800
Datadoc (PL 5)	2	300	600	900	1200
Datascan (PL 5)	1	100	200	300	400
Decode (PL 5)	2	200	400	600	800
Encode (PL 5)	2	200	400	600	800
Enhance (PL 7)	3	—	1000	2000	3000
Entertainment (PL 5)	3	25	50	75	100
Gridwipe (PL 6)	2	250	500	750	1000
Reference (PL 5)	3	250	500	1000	1500
Surge (PL 6)	2	500	1000	1500	2000
Trace (PL 5)	1	300	600	900	1200
Hacking Programs					
Break-in (PL 5)	2	300	500	700	900
Corrupt (PL 5)	2	200	400	600	800
Crash (PL 5)	3	300	600	900	1200
Shadow armor (PL 6)	1	250	500	750	1000
Shadow armor 2 (PL 7)	2	500	1000	1500	2000
Shadow weapon (PL 6)	1	300	600	900	1200
Shadow wpn 2 (PL 7)	2	600	1200	1800	2400
Utility Programs					
Alarm (PL 5)	1	100	150	200	300
Antivirus (PL 5)	1	100	300	400	500
Assist (PL 7)	2	500	100	1500	2000
Control (PL 5)	4	500	1000	2000	3000
Fortress (PL 5)	2	250	500	1000	2000
Grid log (PL 6)	1	150	250	350	450
Gridlock (PL 6)	2	300	400	500	600
Guardian (PL 7)	1	600	900	1200	1800
Menace (PL 7)	2	700	1400	2100	2800
Mirror image (PL 6)	1	—	300	600	900
Shadow form (PL 6)	2	500	1000	1500	2000
Shadow form 2 (PL 7)	3	1000	2000	3000	4000
Static (PL 6)	1	—	200	300	400
Transfer (PL 5)	2	400	400	800	1600
Virus (PL 5)	varies	250	500	1000	2000

Encode

Used to create access passwords and scramble data.

This program allows a user to establish access passwords for a computer system or to scramble data files so that they can't be read. The quality of success the user achieves provides a penalty (Ordinary, +1; Good, +2; Amazing, +3) to the skill check of an intruder who tries to use a decode program to access the system or the files.

Enhance

Provides skill bonuses to cybernetic heroes.

This program is only available if the Gamemaster is using the optional rules for cybernetics. Page 244 in *Chapter 15: Cybertech* contains complete information on how enhance programs work.

Entertainment

Provides fun and diversion.

An entertainment program usually takes the form of a game, puzzle, or interactive story. The better the quality of the program, the more sophisticated the entertainment value. Many entertainment programs can be loaded on two or more networked computers, so that a number of users can engage in a real-time contest.

Gridwipe

Used to harm shadows.

This program attacks a gridpilot's shadow form, weakening it by destroying programs the shadow is using. A gridwipe can be used in real time, or it can be delivered by a virus as a trap for an inquisitive shadow.

A gridwipe program appears as a swirling twister of energy that locks onto and rushes toward the shadow who has been targeted or who triggered the gridwipe by opening a virus shell.

When used as an active attack by its operator, the gridwipe program provides a bonus to the user's Knowledge–*computer operation* or Computer Science–*hacking* skill check. The degree of success achieved reduces the quality of the target program: Ordinary, one grade; Good, two grades; Amazing, three grades. For example, an Ordinary program that is reduced by one grade becomes a Marginal program. Any program reduced below Marginal is destroyed and can't be repaired.

When delivered through a virus, gridwipe remains active until it runs its course. The program can attack a number of times equal to its quality: Marginal, 1; Ordinary, 2; Good, 3; Amazing, 4. Use the skill score of the virus the program is housed within. Each skill check, whether it results in a failure or a success, is a separate attack. On a Critical Failure, the gridwipe program deletes itself.

Gridwipe can damage a gridpilot's shadow. If no active programs are available for the gridwipe to attack, a shadow suffers 1 point of mortal damage for each grade of quality that should have been reduced according to the user's skill check.

Programs damaged by gridwipe can be repaired using a datadoc program, provided the damage wasn't severe enough to destroy them.

Reference

Provides accumulated knowledge on a specific subject.

A reference program contains a store of information in an easy-to-use format. Plenty of reference programs

exist commercially, and others can be accessed from net-connected universities and news organizations.

The quality of the program provides a bonus to the user's Knowledge or other Intelligence-based skill check when seeking information on a topic covered by the program: Marginal, no modifier; Ordinary, –1 bonus; Good, –2; Amazing, –3.

Reference programs include any topics that could conceivably be researched, as well as the topics covered by such Intelligence skills as Business, Computer Science, Law, Life Science, Medical Science, Physical Science, Tactics, and Technical Science.

Surge

Used to attack gridpilots.

This program conceals coded machine-language instructions in the communication between the host computer and an intruding system. These instructions direct the intruding system to spike unpredictably in power. A computer operator using a NIJack to operate the intruding system can suffer damage from the short-circuiting of his installed nanocomputer.

The amount of damage caused by a surge program depends on the quality of the program and the result of the user's (or virus's) skill check:

Program Quality	Damage
Marginal	d4s/d4+2s/d6+2s
Ordinary	d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w
Good	d8+2s/d4+2w/d4+4w
Amazing	d12+2s/d6+4w/d4m

Trace

Allows user to track a hacker's signal.

A trace program is used to locate the source of the carrier signal that contains the break-in program employed by a remote operator (such as the signals crisscrossing computer networks). It can also be used to locate a user who has been met on a computer network. This program can only be used against an operator who has otherwise been noticed.

Performing a trace requires a complex skill check. The number of successes required depends on the quality of the target's processor. See page 62 in *Chapter 4: Skills*.

The difference when using a trace program, however, is that any Failure result ends the trace attempt.

If a trace program is used successfully, the operator knows the location from which the signal originated. In the Information Age, this location is expressed as a telephone number. The operator may have to do further research to translate the number into a street address, if so desired.

At higher Progress Levels, the information gained from the successful use of a trace program takes the form of an actual electronic address, which may or may not (depending on how the network in question is structured) be a specific or even a unique location. For instance, a PL 6 trace program could tell the user the physical address from which the hacker's signal originated (inside a particular building), and at PL 7 a trace would yield the precise location (the vice-president's office on the third floor of that building).

Hacking Programs

A hacking program is specifically designed to help a user perform Computer Science–*hacking* skill checks. Any situation die modifier related to the quality of the program is applied to the *hacking* skill check of a character who is attempting to hack into a computer system.

Break-in

Used to gain access to a system.

A break-in program is used to invade another computer system. Invading another system requires a complex skill check. The number of successes needed depends on the quality of the system's defenses.

A computer system can only be accessed via a break-in program if it's connected to a network of some kind (such as the Grid). A hacker can also manually attempt to access a computer, but he must rely on his own skills when physically manipulating a protected computer.

The protection function of the standard operating system (OS) alerts its user of a break-in attempt only if the hacker achieves a Critical Failure result. Otherwise, a more sophisticated defense, such as an alarm program, is required to notice a hacker's activity.

Once inside a system, an intruder can employ datascan or decode programs, or he can download files to his own computer.

An intruder must be expelled or leave on his own. At Progress Level 5, simply turning off the computer or disconnecting the network link expels the intruder.

Corrupt

Used to damage stored programs.

This program attacks other programs in stored memory, corrupting the data and rendering the files useless. It can't be used, however, until a user has gained access to a system with a break-in program, or by delivering the corrupt program inside a virus program (see page 166).

Against most programs, a corrupt program either damages or destroys its targets. It can only target programs that are in stored memory.

When used as an active attack by its operator, the corrupt program provides a bonus to the operator's Computer Science–*hacking* skill check. The success achieved reduces the

Progress Levels Don't Mix Well

In order to use a program created at a certain Progress Level, you need computer equipment from that level or a higher one. For example, although a PL 6 computer can run PL 5 software, no machine manufactured with PL 5 technology can use PL 6 programs.

A computer system works most efficiently when the Progress Level of the hardware matches the Progress Level of the software. If a program or a datafile from a lower Progress Level is loaded into a processor of a higher level, a penalty is applied to any skill checks an operator makes to use the program or access the file. The penalty is +3 for every level of difference between the software and the computer—meaning that if a character runs a PL 5 program on a PL 7 computer, he takes a +6 penalty.

Of course, software does get upgraded as technology advances; for instance, PL 6 has new versions of the programs that were first developed at PL 5. Depending on the Progress Level of his campaign setting, your Gamemaster will decide what grades of software and hardware are available for heroes to purchase, and what the prices of those items should be.

quality of the target program: Ordinary, one grade; Good, two grades; Amazing, three grades. For example, a Good program that is reduced by two grades becomes a Marginal program. Any program reduced below Marginal quality is destroyed and can't be repaired.

When delivered through a virus, a corrupt program remains active until it runs its course. The program can attack a number of times equal to its quality: Marginal, 1; Ordinary, 2; Good, 3; Amazing, 4. Use the skill score of the virus the program is housed within. Each skill check, whether it results in a Failure or a success, is a separate attack. On a Critical Failure result, the corrupt program deletes itself.

Files damaged by a corrupt program can be repaired using a data-doc program, if the damage wasn't severe enough to destroy the files.

Crash

Used to harm a computer's circuitry.

This program attacks the processor, shutting down or locking up a computer system and destroying any programs in active memory. A crash program can't be employed until a user has gained access to a system with a break-in program, or by delivering the crash program inside a virus program (see page 166).

When used as an active attack by its operator, the crash program provides a bonus to the operator's *hacking* skill check. The success achieved reduces the quality of the target processor: Ordinary, one grade; Good, two grades; Amazing, three grades. For example, an Amazing processor reduced by two grades becomes an Ordinary processor. As the number of active memory slots decreases, programs in active memory are destroyed if there is no room for them to reside. The Gamemaster randomly determines which programs or files are destroyed.

Any processor reduced below Marginal quality locks up and must be reinitialized. In addition, all programs in active memory when this occurs are destroyed.

When delivered through a virus, a crash program attacks once. Use the skill score of the virus the program is housed within to determine success.

A processor that has been damaged by a crash program must be repaired using the Computer Science–*hardware* skill.

Shadow Armor

Provides a shadow with protection.

A shadow armor program builds a wall of protective data around a shadow, taking on a specific appearance within the virtual Gridscape. While the virtual armor's appearance can be modified by the gridpilot, the image created must be based on how effective a type of armor is against weapons that do energy damage, which serves as a rough indicator of the program's quality. (See *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor* for details about armor.) For example, Marginal shadow armor could appear as a CF short coat, Ordinary armor as a battle vest, Good armor as a battle jacket, and Amazing armor as suit of attack armor.

The protection provided by shadow armor against shadow weapons depends on the program's quality, as shown below. The modifier is applied to other types of programs (including from shadow weapons) used against a shadow.

Armor Quality	Protection
Marginal	d6–2 / No modifier
Ordinary	d4 / +1 penalty
Good	d4+1 / +2 penalty
Amazing	d6+1 / +3 penalty

Shadow Armor 2

Provides a shadow with superior protection.

This program operates just like the PL 6 shadow armor program, except that it provides better defense against shadow weapons. For this version of the program, Marginal armor appears as the equivalent of a battle jacket, Ordinary as attack armor, Good takes the form of cerametal armor, and Amazing appears as a body tank.

The protection provided by the shadow armor 2 program against shadow weapons depends on the program's quality, as shown below. The modifier is applied to other types of programs (including from shadow weapons) used against a shadow.

Armor Quality	Protection
Marginal	d4 / +1 penalty
Ordinary	d6+1 / +2 penalty
Good	d6+2 / +3 penalty
Amazing	d6+3 / +4 penalty

Program Durability

Some programs that can be engaged in combat by a shadow (guardian and menace, for example), have specific durability ratings tied to the quality of the program.

The same is true for other programs that might come under attack, except that their durability is less impressive: Unless otherwise specified, a Marginal program has a durability rating of 2 stun/2 wound/1 mortal; Ordinary, 4/4/2; Good, 6/6/3; and Amazing, 8/8/4.

Shadow Weapon

Provides a shadow with a dedicated attack form.

The shadow weapon program provides offensive power for a gridpilot's shadow form. The weapon takes on a specific appearance within the virtual gridscape, though it can be modified by the gridpilot within the parameters set by the quality of the program. For example, a Marginal or Ordinary program generates a small weapon of some sort; a Good program generates a large weapon; and an Amazing program generates a heavy weapon.

The degree of success a shadow achieves when using a shadow weapon to attack another shadow (or some other program) depends on the result of the gridpilot's Computer Science–*hacking* skill check. The quality of the program can provide a situation die bonus to the gridpilot's skill check, and is directly tied to the damage the shadow weapon is capable of inflicting upon other shadows and programs in the Grid:

Quality	Bonus	Damage
Marginal	no	d4s/d4+2s/d6+2s
Ordinary	–1	d4+2s/d4w/d4+2w
Good	–2	d4w/d4+2w/d4m
Amazing	–3	d4+2w/d4m/d4+2m

Shadow Weapon 2

Provides a shadow with superior weaponry.

This program operates just like the shadow weapon program, except that the damage that the virtual weapon inflicts is greater.

As with the less powerful shadow weapon program, the quality of the shadow weapon 2 program can provide a situation die bonus to the gridpilot's Computer Science–*hacking* skill check, and is directly tied to the damage the shadow weapon is

capable of inflicting upon other shadows and programs in the Grid:

Quality	Bonus	Damage
Marginal	no	d6s/d6+2s/d8+2s
Ordinary	–1	d6w/d6+2w/d8+2w
Good	–2	d6+2w/d4m/d4+2m
Amazing	–3	d8+2w/d4+2m/d6+2m

Utility Programs

A utility program performs its function without guidance or assistance from a computer operator. Such a program either responds to specific conditions or carries out a task after being activated. Some utility programs protect a computer system by providing a penalty to intruders seeking confidential data. Such penalties depend on the quality of the program: Marginal, no modifier; Ordinary, +1 penalty; Good, +2; Amazing, +3.

Alarm

Alerts a user to intruder activity.

An alarm program greatly improves the chance that the presence of an intruder in a computer system will be noticed.

With an alarm program in active memory, an intruder's skill checks when using a break-in program receive a penalty based on the quality of the alarm, as described above. Any Failure resulted achieved by the intruder sets off the alarm and alerts the computer system's operator to the invasion.

Antivirus

Finds and destroys virus programs.

An antivirus program defends a computer system from an invading virus program. The penalty provided by an antivirus is applied to all virus skill checks.

If the user of the virus program achieves a Failure or a Critical Failure result on his skill check, the antivirus locates the virus and destroys the program inside it. See "Virus" on page 166 for more details.

Assist

Provides expert assistance to the untrained.

An assist program provides characters with help when they attempt to use a computer system. Assist programs are rarely used in personal computers, but they can be found in public computer systems, in vehicle computers, and in other computers that might have to be used by untrained operators. An assist program is a basic help utility that walks the user through the process.

Typical assist programs allow an untrained character to attempt to use a skill as though he has the broad skill (using the character's base Ability Score for the skill in question). Even so, only the most basic operations can be handled with the help of an assist program—flying a ship, operating a computer, plotting a simple course, operating a ship system, or making a minor repair.

The quality of an assist program provides additional help in the way of skill ranks, making it easier to achieve a success score. A Marginal assist program allows a character to use a skill as though the character possesses the broad skill (base Ability Score). An Ordinary program adds one rank (Ability Score +1). A Good program provides two ranks (Ability Score +2), and an Amazing assist program provides three ranks (Ability Score +3).

Assist programs can be placed on 3Ds and used by characters with external data slots and nanocomputers. The skills that can be placed into an assist program include Business, Computer Science, Demolitions, Knowledge, Navigation, System Operation, Tactics, Technical Science, Administration, Animal Handling, Creativity, and Entertainment.

Control

Used to run automated machinery and systems.

A control program automatically operates a system within specific parameters. Control programs aren't usually run on personal computers in this Progress Level. Instead, they're used to operate automated factory systems, security systems, air conditioning, and heating systems in office buildings or other facilities.

Of course, merely having a control program isn't enough to operate an air conditioning system, for example. The program is worthless without the automated systems connected to it—systems usually costing thousands of dollars or more.

The amount of active memory required to run a control program depends on the quality of the program: Marginal, 1 slot; Ordinary, 2 slots; Good, 3 slots; Amazing, 4 slots.

Fortress

Protects a system from intrusion.

A fortress program defends a computer system from intrusion. A system defended by a fortress program must be overrun by a break-in program before an invader can gain access. Invading a computer system requires a complex skill check. If that skill check is successfully completed, the fortress program increases the defensive capacity of the system by increasing the number of successes needed to break into it, depending on the quality of the program: Marginal, +2 successes; Ordinary, +4; Good, +6; Amazing, +8 successes.

Also, the quality of the fortress program can provide a penalty to the skill checks of the hacker attempting to invade the protected system: Marginal, no modifier; Ordinary, +1; Good, +2; Amazing, +3.

A fortress program can be used to boost the durability rating of any other program that can be protected but does not have a specific durability rating given in its description (see "Program Durability" on page 163). The quality of the fortress program augments the other program's durability rating as follows: Marginal, 2 stun/2 wound/1 mortal; Ordinary, 4/4/2; Good, 6/6/3; Amazing, 8/8/4.

Grid Log

Used to record a run through the Grid.

A Grid log program in active memory makes an accurate copy of a gridpilot's trek through the datastream. It can be used to retrace steps through the Grid or to look for anomalies in missions that turned out badly.

The accuracy of the Grid log's copy is determined by the quality of the program, with penalties applied for any defenses in operation that might hinder its use (such as static).

Gridlock

Used to hinder shadows.

This program inhibits or traps a gridpilot's shadow form. A successful use of the gridlock program causes the affected shadow to suffer a penalty to its action checks, depending on the result of the program user's skill check: Ordinary, +1 penalty; Good, +2; Amazing, +3.

An inhibited shadow suffers a penalty to its action checks, which requires the shadow to take more time to perform a certain task. A

shadow is trapped if it achieves only a Marginal result on its action check. In that round, the shadow can take no actions. Any data a shadow copies while on a Grid run must be carried back to the gridcaster, so a trapped shadow's data is delayed or even lost if it can't return to its source.

The gridlock program can be used as an attack, or it can be imbedded within a virus as a trap or for delayed delivery.

When activated, a gridlock program appears as thick, clinging bits of light or great balls and chains of energy that attach to a shadow to hamper its movement through the datastream.

Guardian

Used to defend a shadow or system.

A guardian program generates a computerized "pet" who defends a specific location or program (such as a shadow) in the Grid. The object of the guardian's defensive effort is specified at the time the program is run. The pet detects intruders or other dangers, alerts its user, and battles to protect its charge. Guardians have the following statistics:

Marginal
All Ability Scores 6; Durability 6/6/3; Action check score 9+/8/4/2; Actions per round 1; Attack score 8/4/2; Damage d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s

Ordinary
All Ability Scores 8; Durability 8/8/4; Action check score 11+/10/5/2; Actions per round 2; Attack score 10/5/2; Damage d4+2s/d4w/d4+2w

Good
All Ability Scores 10; Durability 10/10/5; Action check score 13+/12/6/3; Actions per round 2; Attack score 12/6/3; Damage d4w/d4+2w/d6+2w

Amazing
All Ability Scores 12; Durability 12/12/6; Action check score 17+/16/8/4; Actions per round 3; Attack score 14/7/3; Damage d4+2w/d6+2w/d8+2w

Menace

Creates a Grid warrior ally.

The menace program generates a Grid warrior that can be called upon to repel an invader, to fight alongside a shadow, or to roam the Grid causing trouble. A menace program will not attack other programs tied to its user. Good and Amazing menace programs can be ordered to seek and attack a specific user's shadow or other programs loose in the Grid.

Once set free, a menace can only act in its prescribed manner—it attacks. A menace either attacks whatever is nearby that doesn't belong to its user, or it seeks out and attacks a specific target (as specified at the time the menace is generated). Menaces have the following statistics:

Marginal
All Ability Scores 8; Durability 8/8/4; Action check score 9+/8/4/2; Actions per round 1; Attack score 10/5/2; Damage d4s/d4+2s/d4w

Ordinary
All Ability Scores 10; Durability 10/10/5; Action check score 11+/10/5/2; Actions per round 2; Attack score 12/6/3; Damage d6s/d6+2s/d4+1w

Good
All Ability Scores 12; Durability 12/12/6; Action check score 13+/12/6/3; Actions per round 3; Attack score 14/7/3; Damage d4w/d4+2w/d8+2w

Amazing
All Ability Scores 14; Durability 14/14/7; Action check score 15+/14/7/3; Actions per round 4; Attack score 16/8/4; Damage d6w/d6+2w/d4m

Mirror Image

Used to confuse other programs.

A mirror image program creates duplicate versions of a user's shadow and carrier signal, making the user more difficult to attack or defend against. The duplicates don't have any abilities or functions other than moving around and providing additional targets to take some of the heat off the true shadow and its carrier signal.

A mirror image program provides a penalty to attacks directed at either a shadow or carrier signal. It also hinders the use of the trace program, providing a penalty to the trace-user's skill check commensurate with the quality of the mirror image program: Ordinary, +1; Good, +2; Amazing, +3.

Shadow Form

Generates a gridpilot's virtual-self.

This program is essential for the character who wants to be a gridpilot. It generates a shadow, which is the gridpilot's virtual self inside the Grid. Without a shadow form program, a gridpilot can't make use of a gridcaster or experience the virtual reality of the Grid.

A shadow has three Ability Scores: Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution. While in the Grid, these characteristics replace the ones used by the gridpilot in the real world. The scores are tied to the quality of the program being used:

Marginal—STR 6, DEX 6, CON 6.
Ordinary—STR 8, DEX 8, CON 8.
Good—STR 9, DEX 9, CON 10.
Amazing—STR 10, DEX 10, CON 12.

These scores are modified according to the number of ranks the user has in Computer Science–*hacking*; increase each Ability Score by one-half the number of ranks the character possesses (round down). For example, a character with 2 ranks in *hacking* increases his shadow's Ability Scores by +1. (Note: This rank benefit cannot be purchased early.)

Since the gridpilot controls his shadow directly, his mental characteristics (Intelligence, Will, and Personality) are unchanged.

The shadow form's resistance modifiers are determinally normally (see "Resistance Modifiers" on page 32), using the Ability Scores as determined above.

The shadow's action check score is the same as its gridpilot's score. A shadow's durability is stun = CON, wound = CON, and mortal = 1/2 CON.

When using a shadow form program, a gridpilot continues to use his Computer Science–*hacking* skill to use programs and take actions within the Grid.

Shadow Form 2

An advanced shadow generator.

This program generates an improved shadow that's designed to operate independently of its gridpilot's direct control. This allows the shadow to travel to and access Grids that may lie light-years away.

Unlike the basic shadow form, shadow form 2 provides a complete set of six base Ability Scores (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Will, and Personality) and other characteristics, depending upon the quality of the program:

Marginal—STR 8, DEX 8, CON 8, INT 9, WIL 9, PER 9.
Ordinary—STR 10, DEX 10, CON 10, INT 10, WIL 10, PER 10.
Good—STR 11, DEX 11, CON 12, INT 11, WIL 11, PER 11.

Shadows and Damage

A shadow's worst enemies are other shadows, who can attack with sophisticated shadow weapons. Gridlock, gridwipe, and other programs are also dangerous to a shadow. And even shadows have to find a way around fortress programs, encoded data gates, and alarms.

There's no way to heal damage that a shadow suffers—but, on the other hand, a shadow doesn't suffer penalties from accumulated damage the way a character does. It remains operational, performing its assigned task, until it takes its full quota of mortal damage, at which point the shadow instantly disappears.

The shadow's gridpilot is not affected when his shadow is hurt—but he still needs to be wary. If an opponent traces the shadow's carrier signal back to the gridpilot, a surge program can cause real—and possibly lethal—damage to the user on the other end of the gridcaster connection.

The well-prepared shadow carries the best versions of shadow armor and shadow weapon its user can get her hands on. A shadow also needs a variety of updated PL 5 programs to manipulate data, breach computer defenses, and scan for important files.

Amazing—STR 12, DEX 12, CON 14, INT 12, WIL 12, PER 12.

These scores are modified according to the number of ranks the user has in Computer Science–*hacking*; increase each Ability Score by one-half the number of ranks the character has (round down). For example, a character with 5 ranks in *hacking* increases his shadow's Ability Scores by +2. (Note: This rank benefit cannot be purchased early.)

The shadow form's resistance modifiers are determinally normally (see "Resistance Modifiers" on page 32 in*Chapter 2: Hero Creation*) using the Ability Scores as given above.

The shadow's action check score is the same as its gridpilot's score. Because shadows can be sent out independently of their gridpilots, the number of actions per round is determined by the program's quality: Marginal, 1 action per round; Ordinary, 2 actions per round; Good, 3 actions per round; Amazing, 4 actions per round. (See "The Grid" on pages 156–159.) A shadow's durability is stun = CON, wound = CON, and mortal = 1/2 CON.

All shadow form 2 programs have the equivalent of 2 ranks in Computer Science–*hacking* to use programs and take actions. (Higher quality programs have a higher effective Intelligence Ability Score, giving them a better score in the *hacking* skill.) When a shadow form 2 program is sent into the Grid, it can't receive specific direction from its gridpilot. As a result, the shadow form can't use the gridpilot's Computer Science–*hacking* skill.

Static

Used to hinder programs.

The static program creates noise in the Grid lines, hindering certain programs. The generated noise hinders traces and datascans, and makes a Grid log record incomplete at best. The penalty provided by static, according to the quality of the program (Ordinary, +1; Good, +2; Amazing, +3), is applied to the use of programs directed at the operator or at work in the operator's vicinity.

Transfer

Regulates download speed.

A transfer program processes data being downloaded or copied into a computer. The number of slots of data that can be downloaded or copied per round depends on the quality of the program. Without a transfer program, data must be downloaded at the exceedingly slow rate of 1 slot every 2 rounds.

With a transfer program active, data can be downloaded at a certain rate, determined by the quality of the program: Marginal, 1 slot per round; Ordinary, 2 slots per round; Good, 3; Amazing, 4.

Virus

Deadly program contained in harmless shell.

A virus is a harmless-looking shell that contains a potentially dangerous program. The shell itself appears as any innocuous program, from an entertainment program to a reference, application, or datafile program. When the virus activates, the program inside it performs its function. Programs that can be placed within a virus—only one program per shell—include corrupt and crash.

When a virus is created, the user determines the condition that releases its hidden programming. This condition can be a specific date and time at which the program is loosed; the activation of a specific program type; or when a specific command is issued (either unknowingly by the system operator or purposely by a remote hacker).

To introduce a virus into a system, the creator of the virus must leave it where the target operator can find it and download it, or send it to the target and hope it doesn't appear dangerous. Thereafter, the virus itself does the work, as outlined below.

A virus must make a skill check, using a base situation die of +d0, on any occasion when the virus could be activated (such as when the user of the system calls up a particular program or file). The situation die of this skill check is modified by the presence of an antivirus program—a +1 penalty for an Ordinary antivirus, +2 for Good, or +3 for Amazing.

If the virus's skill check results in a Critical Failure, the virus and its hidden program are both destroyed even if no antivirus program is running. On a Failure result, the virus is destroyed if an antivirus program is present, but simply remains dormant

Datafiles and Downloading

A large datafile that's moved into a processor's active memory is treated the same as a program for the purpose of reaching the limit of the processor's capacity. In other words, a computer user can't transfer one large datafile after another into the same processor's active memory without pausing every so often to move a file from active into stored memory.

This requirement only applies to large bodies of information. Applications—word processors, spreadsheets, and the like—also create and employ datafiles, but most of these are small enough to be kept within the part of active memory where the application program resides.

(perhaps activating at a later time) if the system doesn't have an antivirus program running (in active memory).

A virus has a skill score, based on its quality: Marginal, 8; Ordinary, 12; Good, 16; Amazing, 20.

A virus program's size is equal to the program inside it, plus whatever extra memory the virus shell needs: Marginal, 0; Ordinary, 0; Good, +1; Amazing, +2.

In addition, the quality of the virus must match or exceed the quality of the program hidden within it. So, a Good crash program can only be hidden within a Good or Amazing virus program.

Here's an example of a virus in action: If an Ordinary virus (score 12) invades a system protected by a Good antivirus (+2 penalty), a result of 12 or less on d20+d6 is needed for the virus to successfully launch its hidden program. Then the program functions as detailed in the appropriate description. A virus can contain a shadow weapon program for use against a shadow form.

Writing Programs

Characters with the Computer Science–*programming* skill can write their own programs. Writing a program is a complex skill check, with one check being made each time unit (see below).

In general, writing all but the simplest programs takes time; time units for writing programs can be days, months, or even years. It isn't until higher Progress Levels, after the introduction of "smart" computers, assist programs, and neural interfaces, that the time units can be reduced to rounds, minutes, or hours.

The Gamemaster determines the time units when a character wants to write a program, based on the type and complexity of the program.

Information Retrieval

Accessing a store of information from an open computer system does not require a skill check. Closed systems, or systems otherwise protected from unauthorized users, have layers of defenses that can only be navigated by a series of skill checks. Or, if the Gamemaster decides not to use the rules for complex skill checks in such a case, then the defenses in a closed or protected system simply add penalties to the user's skill check.

Layered defenses simulate a hacker's crawl through a computer system, examining files, overcoming protection programs, and eventually reaching the data he's looking for. A computer system has a number of layers based on the size of its processor—Marginal, 2; Ordinary, 3 or 4; Good, 5 to 7; Amazing, 8 to 10. This number also represents the number of successes needed to penetrate every layer of the defenses.

Some programs, such as alarm, can add penalties, making it harder for a hacker to invade a computer system. The fortress program adds layers of defense, increasing the number of successes needed to penetrate a computer system.

◆ ***Example:*** Quentin, a hacker, attempts to locate specific data in a protected computer system he has accessed through the Grid. He has a *hacking* skill score of 14, a Good processor (–2 bonus to action checks), and an Amazing break-in program (–3 bonus to skill checks).

The computer system he's hacking into also has a Good processor, which means he needs to achieve at least 5 or as many as 7 successes to breach the system (the Gamemaster decides on 6 successes). An Ordinary fortress program protects the system, providing an additional +4 successes needed, for a total of 10.

So, Quentin winds up with a –2 action check bonus and a –3 skill check bonus. He needs to roll a 14 or less on d20 –d8 and achieve 10 successes to overcome the defenses and locate the system's datastore.

If your Gamemaster wants to settle an information retrieval action with a single skill check, then simply apply the modifiers for the quality of the programs in use that can affect the attempt.

◆ ***Example:*** In a single-check situation, Quentin must roll 14 or less on a d20 –d6. Starting from a base situation die of +d0, his –3 bonus (for the quality of his Amazing break-in program) is modified by the target system's +1 penalty (for its Ordinary fortress program).

Artificial Intelligence

An artificial intelligence (AI) program provides a vehicle or complex with a self-aware computer assistant or operations supervisor. At Progress Level 6, AI programs are new, expensive, and not integrated into everyday society. In other words, they're rare and still somewhat experimental. Your Gamemaster may decide that AIs are unavailable in your campaign setting, even if the campaign is set at PL 7.

An AI program can't be loaded into a personal computer system. The program is simply too large and too complex to operate outside either a specially designed institutional or vehicle dedicated supercomputer system. A scaled-down version can be loaded into a memory harness.

The quality of the supercomputer's processor provides a situation die modifier for all actions an AI might attempt. The modifiers are as follows: Marginal processor, +d4; Ordinary, +d0; Good, –d4; Amazing, –d6.

The processor's quality also determines the number of slots of active memory an AI has access to: Marginal, 4 slots; Ordinary, 7; Good, 10; Amazing, 13. An AI uses these slots to run programs that emulate broad and specialty skills. A broad skill program fills 1 memory slot. For specialty skill programs, each rank requires its own slot (in addition to the slot necessary for the broad skill).

An AI has three Abilities: Intelligence, Will, and Personality. The quality of the AI program determines its Ability Scores, as follows:

Quality	INT	WIL	PER
Marginal	12	10	8
Ordinary	14	11	9
Good	16	12	10
Amazing	18	13	11

An AI can utilize user programs that contain broad or specialty skills associated with Intelligence, Will, or Personality.

For Intelligence skills, the AI can make checks to provide advice or operate computer-controlled systems (such as the systems handled by the System Operation skills). An AI couldn't actually perform surgery, for example, unless it had manipulators of some sort, and even then a penalty might be applied.

The following Will skills can't be loaded into a program: Awareness–*intuition*, Resolve–*mental* or *physical*. The use of Creativity receives a +3 penalty, in addition to any other penalties that may apply.

The following penalties are applied to the application of these Personality skills: Deception, +1; Interaction, +2; Leadership, +3.

To determine the number of actions per round and the action check score for an AI, cross-reference the quality of the program with the quality of the processor:

	Processor			
Program	M	O	G	A
Marginal	1/10	1/12	2/14	2/16
Ordinary	1/11	2/13	2/15	3/17
Good	2/12	3/14	3/16	4/18
Amazing	2/13	3/15	4/17	4/19

When an AI is downloaded into a memory harness, its statistics are cut in half (round up). Any information that an AI in a memory harness gathers isn't automatically transferred to the full AI. The harness data must be downloaded back into the AI for full integration to occur.

An AI has a personality, which can be suggested by the players or designed by the Gamemaster. An AI functions as a member of a hero's supporting cast, usually controlled and roleplayed by the Gamemaster.

What does an AI program do? That depends on where its computer system is installed. In an institutional facility, an AI monitors automated functions, handles security, and assists with research and development projects. On a spaceship, an AI monitors basic ship functions, watches for and alerts crews to maintenance problems, and can fill in for crew members at various stations—either when the crew is resting or otherwise involved, or when a crew member can't perform his duties for one reason or another.

An AI constantly monitors the ship it's assigned to, watching for problems and systematically running diagnostics to make sure the vessel is operating in peak condition. It keeps track of all crew and passengers, answers questions with data stored in its memory, and provides logical advice when called upon for an opinion. In concert with a remote robot (see below), an AI can initiate minor repairs or examine places where its sensors normally can't reach.

An AI can operate all ship systems at its base Intelligence score, though when called upon to actually perform as a member of the crew it can only operate one of these systems at a time. If the ship has dedicated computer systems, the AI can apply the bonuses granted by those dedicated computers to its Intelligence feat check.

The Gridpilot at PL 7

Darkstream wears a state-of-the-art gridcaster gauntlet (Amazing quality), attached to a subdermal NIJack on her forearm to eliminate the need for a cable connection. She plugs into a Grid interface and flips down her mirrorshades. The lenses provide a heads-up display so she can monitor her Grid run without closing her eyes or wearing one of those clumsy helmets. All of Darkstream's skill checks receive a –1 bonus thanks to the gauntlet's co-processor, and the gridcaster's quality gives her a –3 bonus to her action checks while running the Grid.

Darkstream has a Computer Science–*hacking* score of 16, with 4 ranks in the specialty skill. The shadow form 2 program loaded into her gridcaster activates the moment she plugs in, generating a virtual image of herself. It's a Good program, set to make her appear as a liquid-black version of herself. The shadow has the following Ability Scores, thanks to the program's quality and Darkstream's *hacking* skill: STR 13, DEX 13, CON 14, INT 13, WIL 13, PER 13. Darkstream's program has a +2 resistance modifier to being attacked (determined from her shadow's Ability Scores). The shadow's action check score, equal to Darkstream's own, is 13. While it's operating independently, the program has a Computer Science skill score of 16, allowing it to use programs effectively. In addition to shadow form 2, Darkstream has brought along both shadow armor 2 and shadow weapon 2 in active memory, both of them of Good quality.

Darkstream has accepted a simple commission: retrieve the programming schematics for an advanced shadow weapons program from the TekWizards Corporation. But since TekWizards' headquarters is light-years away in another star system, Darkstream has to set her shadow program 2 loose and hope that it can complete the mission on its own.

Darkstream's shadow flies along an avenue of blazing light—the dataflow that leads from her interface connection to the bright glory that is the Gridscape. It activates a second program in active memory, shadow armor. The shadow is instantly surrounded by a fiery aura of crimson energy. Moments later, the shadow reaches its destination: an island in the expanse of white and crisscrossing lights. A glowing cube floats above the island, which looks like a blue disk with veins of pulsing yellow lightning. A single white dot with a red logo blinks on the cube's surface, identifying it as the Grid address of the TekWizards Corporation. Without hesitation, the shadow activates its shadow weapon program and begins to messily hack apart the fortress program guarding the TekWizard system access point. A moment later, the shadow finds itself staring into the neon eyes of a menace—a shadow program activated to defend the system.

Shadow combat has begun. The first step is a surprise check: Does Darkstream's shadow see the attack coming? A successful Will feat check, rolled by Darkstream's player, indicates that the shadow senses the danger before the menace can attack. The next step is an action check, and the shadow has a –3 bonus thanks to Darkstream's gridcaster. The shadow achieves a Good success. The menace, a Good program itself, achieves an Ordinary success.

The shadow form attacks the menace program with its Good shadow weapon program (using its Computer Science–*hacking* skill score of 16), gaining a –3 bonus thanks to the gridcaster's co-processor and the Good program. The menace imposes a +1 penalty thanks to its resistance modifier. With a Good result, the shadow weapon does d4m of damage; Darkstream's player rolls a total of 2 mortals. But the fight isn't over; the menace program has fight left in it with 4 mortal points remaining. It will strike back in the Ordinary phase and keep on fighting until one of the two programs dissolves into the datastream.

Robots

Practical robots appear at Progress Level 5. These are basically automated machines either controlled by a remote operator or by a dedicated computer program. These robots aren't usually multipurpose, but dedicated to performing a single task or series of related tasks. Examples of PL 5 robots include the units used in automated factories and machines built to be scientific research aids, such as deep sea probes.

As Progress Level 6 develops, programmable, human-sized robots become more refined. Few are constructed in humanoid form; most are built to perform dedicated functions and conserve energy—if a 1-meter-tall robot will accomplish its tasks as well as a 2-meter-tall robot, then it might as well only be 1 meter tall.

Robots of PL 6 perform services ranging from sanitation and repair to construction and security duty. As robots become more adept, they are placed in jobs that humans find distasteful, tedious, or dangerous.

At PL 7, materials and technology become advanced enough to allow for more multipurpose robots. In addition, the advent of true artificial intelligence creates computers that are more like partners than tools. These programs, too large to house within human-sized robots, make use of small robots to serve as their sensory extensions into the world.

Robot Characteristics

Robots are equipped with computer processors. The quality of the processor provides a situation die modifier for all actions a robot might attempt. The modifiers are as follows: Marginal processor, +d6; Ordinary, +d4; Good, +d0; Amazing, –d4.

The processor also determines the number of active memory slots a robot can use for running programs. Progress Level 6 processors are the equivalent of desktop computers, while Progress Level 7 processors are the equivalent of mainframes.

A robot's Intelligence score is also dictated by its processor: Marginal, 12; Ordinary, 13; Good, 14; Amazing, 15. Other Ability Scores are dictated by the robot's function and form.

A robot can only utilize programs that can be stored in its active memory. User programs designed to emulate broad skills occupy 1 slot each; specialty skills require a number of slots equal to the skill's rank, plus 1 slot for the associated broad skill.

It's possible to load part of a specialty skill program into a robot in order to leave memory available; for instance, a robot with the Demolitions–*disarm 6* program can have a reduced version, such as *disarm 3*, loaded and then use other memory slots for different programs.

To determine the number of actions per round and the action check score for a robot, cross-reference the quality of the processor with the robot's Dexterity score:

	Dexterity			
Processor	**1–5**	**6–10**	**11–15**	**16+**
Marginal	1/6	1/8	2/10	3/12
Ordinary	1/7	2/9	3/11	3/13
Good	1/8	3/10	3/12	4/14
Amazing	2/9	4/11	4/13	4/15

PL 6 Robot

▶ ***T-Kat:*** This small, box-shaped robot comes in household or industrial-strength models. It's designed to keep halls clean and aid in pest control, using low-powered sonics and a vacuum-sweeper as it completes its pre-programmed circuit.

STR 1, DEX 8, CON 2, INT 12, WIL 4, PER 1; Durability 2/2/1; Movement—walk 6 (wheels); Action check score—8+/7/3/1; Actions per round 1; Mass 47 kg; Size 45 cm; Processor quality—Ordinary (5 active slots); Stored programs—operating system, pest identification utility, eradication utility, housekeeping utility, service map; Cost $8,000.

PL 7 Robot

▶ ***A-Eyes:*** This small sensory robot is controlled by an artificial intelligence program housed in a ship or installation computer. The a-eye floats and moves about using a tiny gravitonic inducer, transferring whatever it sees and hears back to the AI program.

STR 2, DEX 6, CON 4, INT 13, WIL 8, PER 2; Durability 4/4/2; Movement—fly 4; Action check score—9+/8/4/2; Actions per round 1; Mass 10 kg; Size 30 cm; Processor quality—Marginal (7 active slots); Stored programs—operating system, System Operation–*sensors 6* program, control utility, Acrobatics–*dodge 3* program, Awareness–*perception 4* program, Investigate–*search 4* program; Cost $18,000.

Spaceship Computers

While the exploration and exploitation of the solar system figure prominently into many PL 6 campaigns, most space travel is accomplished by space-to-ground shuttles and slow-moving space transports. These vehicles rarely find their way into a hero's possession except as a means to get from one place to another at the behest of a government or corporation.

Spaceships of Progress Level 6 are stock models, as described in *Chapter 12: Vehicles*. All ship functions and systems make use of the computer that comes with the command compartment. This is a mainframe with a Marginal processor; it provides no modifiers. It does, however, monitor all ship systems, operate all automated functions, and allow the ship's crew to interact with the ship and operate the various systems from the command deck.

Dedicated computer systems can be added to other compartments in the ship, though only Ordinary quality models are available at PL 6. An Ordinary specialized computer provides a –1 bonus to certain skill checks, as detailed below.

Type of Computer	**Affected Skills**
Battle	SO–*weapons*
Comm	SO–*communications*
Defense	SO–*defenses*
Engineering	SO–*engineering*
Nav	Navigation–*system* and *drivespace*
Science	Life Science, Medical Science, Physical Science, or Technical Science
Sensor	SO–*sensors*

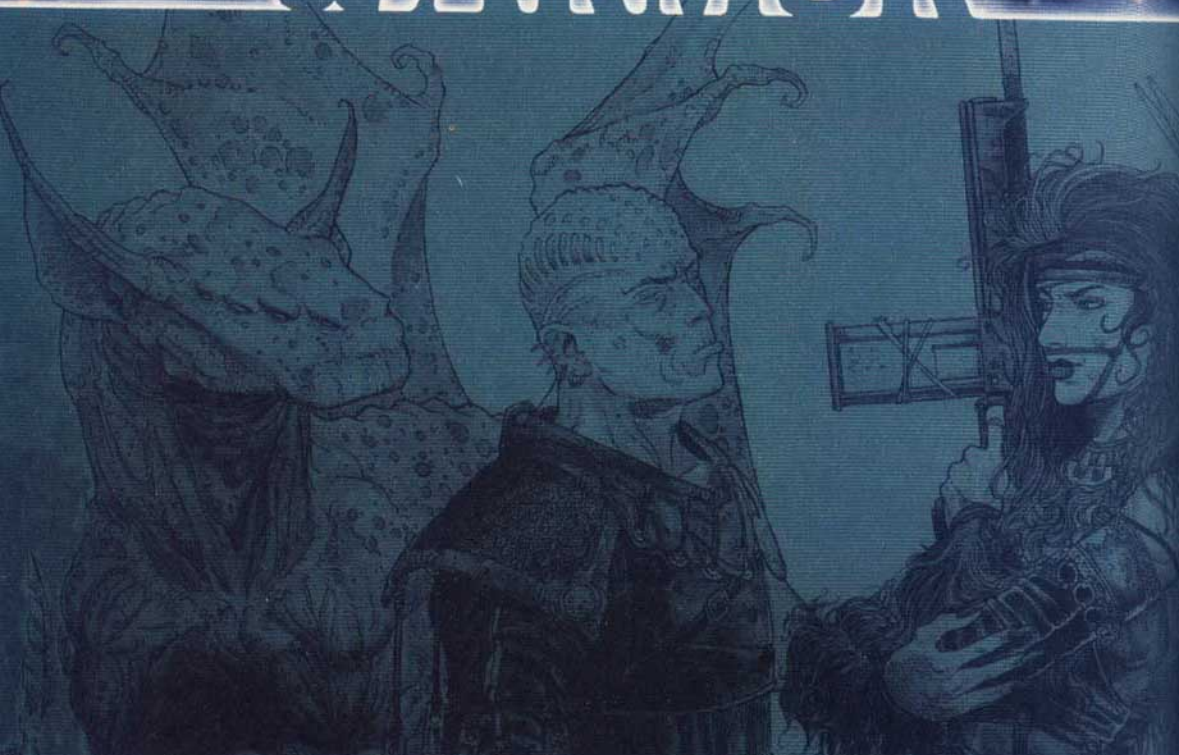
("SO" stands for System Operation.)

All spaceship dedicated mainframe computer systems of PL 6 are available in the Gravity Age (PL 7). Further, all qualities are now available: Ordinary, Good, and Amazing. In addition, one new dedicated system appears in this age:

An AI supercomputer provides the memory and systems necessary to house an artificial intelligence program in a ship. Without this dedicated system, an AI program can't be used on a ship.

CHAPTER 11

WEAPONS & ARMOR



In heroic stories, good guys defeat villains through ingenuity, spirit, and strength of will—and sometimes, when nothing else will fill the bill, armed confrontation. In the ALTERNITY game, heroes must contend with fanatical terrorists, carnivorous aliens, aggressive criminals, ruthless agents, enemy soldiers, vigilant guards, and all kinds of other beings and creatures that pose a danger both to society in general and the heroes in particular. While skills and clever strategies are important, sometimes the difference between victory and defeat is the trusty weapon at a hero's side and—because the villains also have weapons—the sturdy suit of armor that covers his body.

This chapter describes all the types of weapons and armor that are available to heroes (and their opponents). Melee weapons, ranged weapons, heavy weapons, and armor are listed on separate tables, and the items on each table are grouped according to the Progress Level at which they were originally developed.

Melee Weapons

Personal weapons are described below, in the order of the Progress Level in which they appeared.

PL 0: Stone Age

Weapons associated with the Stone Age are among the most basic tools designed by human hands, made with the simplest of materials.

Club: This category includes all types of simple, one-piece bludgeons—humanity's oldest weapon. Clubs range from natural sticks and bones to carved stone or wood to modern nightsticks and truncheons of hard wood, plastic, or even metal. The combat statistics for a club also apply to any heavy, clublike object a character picks up to use in a fight, such as a table leg or a lead pipe.

Dagger: All knives, stilettos, and other such weapons are included in this category (except for the combat knife, which has its own entry).

Quarterstaff: While this stout rod of wood—or metal or plastic, at higher Progress Levels—isn't particularly deadly, it's easy to use (note its bonus for accuracy). A staff doesn't need to be manufactured for the purpose in order to be used as a weapon; any object of suitable size (around 2 meters long) will suffice in a pinch.

Spear: Primitive spears are sharpened wooden spikes or daggers attached to the end of wooden shafts. Modern societies can produce spears of more durable material, although such items might not be as readily available and might weigh more than a primitive spear.

PL 1: Bronze/Iron Age

Weapons of better quality begin to appear in this age, including metal versions of some earlier weapons.

Gauntlet: This weapon is a metal sheath that fits over the outside of the hand, providing slightly better damage potential in a fistfight than one's bare knuckles.

Hand ax: A tool that became a weapon, the hand ax consists of a short wooden handle with a heavy, single-edged cutting head. Primitive axes can be made from carved stone, but the majority of axes at higher Progress Levels have metal heads.

Mace: A mace is a club with a blunt stone or iron head fitted to one end. Some of the heads may be studded, flanged, or spiked.

Short sword: The short sword consists of a handle designed for one-handed use and a blade that's longer than a dagger's—any blade just over 0.5 meter in length. The blade is pointed and used for thrusting.

PL 2: Middle Ages

Improvements to the ax and sword appear, as well as a new category of weapons—the polearm.

Broad sword: The heavy, double-edged broad sword features a meter-long blade designed for both cutting and slashing.

Flail: The common threshing flail, modified for war, is a potent weapon. It consists of a sturdy wooden handle attached by a chain to an iron rod, a spiked rod, or a spiked iron ball.

Great ax: This weapon consists of a stout wooden shaft, 2 meters long, with a curved, single-edged blade at one end. It does impressive damage but takes two hands to wield.

Nunchaku: A nunchaku consists of two wooden or metal bars joined by a chain or a hinge. It can strike powerful blows, but it is especially good when used to parry incoming attacks (–1 bonus to parrying checks).

Polearm: Polearms are a class of weapons consisting of a long shaft with an edged weapon mounted on one end. These weapons require two hands to use.

PL 3: Age of Reason

Variations on the sword grow popular, while development in other personal arms slows because of the advent of firearms.

Cutlass: The weapon made famous by pirates, the cutlass features a curved, single-edged blade with a heavy basket hilt.

Katana: This is the sword of the samurai. Its blade is slightly curved, with a chisel point and a small ring-shaped guard. The katana is forged from the finest steel, and painstaking care yields a blade of great strength and flexibility.

Rapier: With the demise of armor on the battlefield, the rapier came into use as the gentleman's weapon. A long, straight sword with very little cutting power, the rapier is primarily used as a thrusting weapon, often in duels and fencing competitions.

Saber: The favored hand-to-hand weapon of the cavalry, a saber has a slightly curved, double-edged blade that gives maximum slashing power.

PL 4: Industrial Age

The dominance of gunpowder weapons is established, and the only significant advance in personal weapons is an accessory for the rifle.

Table P38: Melee Weapons

Weapon	Skill	Acc	Range	Type	Damage (O/G/A)
Progress Level 0: Stone Age					
Club	Melee-*bludgeon*	0	Personal	LI/O	d4+1s/d4w/d4+1w
Dagger	Melee-*blade*	0	Personal*	LI/O	d4w/d4w+1/d4+2w
Quarterstaff	Melee-*bludgeon*	–1	Personal	LI/O	d4+1s/d4+3s/d6w
Spear	Melee-*blade*	0	Personal*	LI/O	d4w/d4+2w/d4m
Unarmed	Unarmed Attack	0	Personal	LI/O	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s
Progress Level 1: Bronze/Iron Age					
Gauntlet	Unarmed Attack	0	Personal	LI/O	d4+1s/d4+2s/d4–1w
Hand ax	Melee-*blade*	0	Personal*	LI/O	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w
Mace	Melee-*bludgeon*	0	Personal	LI/O	d6+1s/d4+1w/d6+1w
Short sword	Melee-*blade*	0	Personal	LI/O	d4w/d6w/d6+2w
Progress Level 2: Middle Ages					
Broad sword	Melee-*blade*	0	Personal	LI/O	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m
Flail	Melee-*bludgeon*	+1	Personal	LI/O	d6+2s/d4+2w/d6+2w
Great ax	Melee-*blade*	+1	Personal	LI/O	d6+1w/d6+2w/d4+1m
Nunchaku	Melee-*bludgeon*	0	Personal	LI/O	d6s/d6+2s/d8+3s
Polearm	Melee-*blade*	+1	Personal	LI/O	d6+1w/d4+3w/d4+1m
Progress Level 3: Age of Reason					
Cutlass	Melee-*blade*	+1	Personal	LI/O	d4+1w/d6+1w/d6+3w
Katana	Melee-*blade*	–1	Personal	LI/O	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m
Rapier	Melee-*blade*	–1	Personal	LI/O	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w
Saber	Melee-*blade*	0	Personal	LI/O	d4w/d4+2w/2d4+1w
Progress Level 4: Industrial Age					
Bayonet	Melee-*blade*	+1	Personal	LI/O	d4w/d4+2w/d4m
Progress Level 5: Information Age					
Combat knife	Melee-*blade*	0	Personal*	LI/O	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w
Stun baton	Melee-*powered*	0	Personal	En/O	d4+1s/d4+3s/d6+4s
Progress Level 6: Fusion Age					
Chainsword	Melee-*powered*	+1	Personal	LI/O	d8+1w/d8+2w/d4+1m
Pulse baton	Melee-*powered*	0	Personal	En/O	d8s/d4+2w/d6+2w
Progress Level 7: Gravity Age					
Gravmace	Melee-*powered*	0	Personal	LI/O	d8+2s/d6+2w/d8+2w
Power Cestus	Unarmed-*brawl*	0	Personal	LI/O	d4+2s/d4w/d4+1w
Progress Level 8: Energy Age					
Star sword	Melee—*powered*	0	Personal	En/G	d6+1w/2d6w/d4+3m
Tri-staff	Melee—*powered*	–1	Personal	En/O	d8+2w/3d4+1w/d6m

* Weapon can be thrown using the Athletics-*throw* skill; see "Thrown Weapons," page 57.

Bayonet: Originally a dagger crudely attached to a rifle's muzzle, the bayonet eventually becomes a standard attachment. In effect, a bayonet turns a rifle into a spear.

PL 5: Information Age

While firearms continue to develop, research into melee weapons is at its lowest point ever.

Combat knife: This weapon is a high-tech version of the standard dagger or knife, composed of tempered steel, sophisticated polymers, or ceramic blends. A combat knife is typically equipped with additional features: A small compass can be inlaid in the handle, or a hollow handle can contain several meters of fishing line and a hook, a dozen matches, or some other suitably sized piece of survival gear.

Stun baton: This low-powered version of the pulse baton is sometimes known as a taser. Above the insulated handle, its surface crackles with a high-voltage, low-current electrical charge that can temporarily short-circuit the human nervous system. Insulated gloves (one pair included in the listed cost; $50 for a replacement pair) are necessary to prevent the user from accidentally shocking himself. Without gloves, the user suffers Ordinary damage (d4+1s) if his Melee Attack-*powered weapon* skill check result is a Critical Failure.

PL 6: Fusion Age

Personal arms gain respect again as new technology—resulting in the first powered melee weapons—expands the scope of what a close-quarters weapon can do.

Chainsword: This device consists of a meter-long blade either built into a heavy forearm gauntlet and power supply or a standard weapon hilt.

Table P38: Melee Weapons

Weapon	Actions	Clip Size	Clip Cost	Hide	Mass	Avail	Cost
Progress Level 0: Stone Age							
Club	3	—	—	+1	2	Any	10
Dagger	4	—	—	+3	1	Any	20
Quarterstaff	3	—	—	—	2	Any	15
Spear	3	—	—	—	2	Any	35
Unarmed	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Progress Level 1: Bronze/Iron Age							
Gauntlet	4	—	—	+3	1	Com	10
Hand ax	3	—	—	+2	1	Any	50
Mace	2	—	—	+1	2	Com	75
Short sword	3	—	—	+1	2	Com	100
Progress Level 2: Middle Ages							
Broad sword	2	—	—	—	4	Con	200
Flail	2	—	—	—	4	Com	150
Great ax	2	—	—	—	5	Com	100
Nunchaku	3	—	—	+2	1	Com	75
Polearm	1	—	—	—	5	Com	50
Progress Level 3: Age of Reason							
Cutlass	3	—	—	+1	3	Com	100
Katana	3	—	—	+1	2	Con	1000
Rapier	3	—	—	+2	1	Com	300
Saber	3	—	—	+1	2	Com	250
Progress Level 4: Industrial Age							
Bayonet	3	—	—	—	2	Com	50
Progress Level 5: Information Age							
Combat knife	4	—	—	+3	1	Any	35
Stun baton	3	20	50	+2	2	Com	300
Progress Level 6: Fusion Age							
Chainsword	2	5	125	—	5	Mil	1500
Pulse baton	3	10	75	+2	2	Con	500
Progress Level 7: Gravity Age							
Gravmace	3	10	75	+1	3	Con	850
Power cestus	4	12	50	+1	3	Con	500
Progress Level 8: Energy Age							
Star sword	3	10	250	+2	2	Res	7000

The blade is edged with a molecule-thin razor of super-tough artificial crystals, driven in chainsaw fashion along the weapon's edge. This provides a powerful cutting edge and a particularly lethal melee weapon.

Pulse baton: The first powered melee weapon capable of inflicting lethal damage, the pulse baton is a half-meter-long rod that delivers a concentrated energy discharge when it hits a target. While the baton appears to be a simple flashlight, the operator must wear a pair of insulated gloves (one pair included in the listed cost; $50 for a replacement pair) to prevent an accidental discharge. Without gloves, the wielder suffers Ordinary damage (d8s) if his Melee Attack–*powered weapon* skill check result is a Critical Failure.

PL 7: Gravity Age

Powered weapons appear in increasing variety and power. The personal weapon is reborn as more and more combat occurs between units and small groups instead of armies.

Gravmace: The gravmace consists of a meter-long handle with a gravitonic capacitor inside a striking head. Powerful capacitors manipulate the weapon's mass, making it strike like a sledgehammer while being swung like a willow switch.

Power cestus: The power cestus consists of an elbow-length gauntlet of CF (carbonate fiber) weave, ending in a heavy fighting glove that covers the user's hand. Gravity technology allows the wielder to strike blows of astonishing power with a gloved hand.

PL 8: Energy Age

Melee weapons of the period approach and even exceed the capabilities of many ranged weapons. The miniaturization of the mass reactor to a personal level allows for the creation of fantastic new weapons.

Star sword: The star sword generates a complex, phased magnetic field in the rough shape of a sword

How to Read the Weapons Tables

Here are brief descriptions of what the column headings on the weapons tables mean:

Weapon: The common name of the weapon.

Skill: The name (often abbreviated) of the skill a character needs to avoid using the weapon untrained.

Acc: Accuracy, an optional rule. A number other than 0 indicates that a bonus or a penalty is applied to the wielder's skill check to account for the weapon's ability to hit its target. For example, the precise laser rifle provides a –1 bonus, while the flintlock pistol carries a +2 penalty.

Md: Mode, not applicable to melee weapons. This column indicates whether a weapon fires a single shot per phase (F), a burst (B), or is capable of autofire (A). If the weapon can be operated in more than one mode, then the user can decide which one he wishes to employ. For more information, see "Automatic Weapon Attack Modes" on page 74 in *Chapter 4: Skills*.

Range: The weapon's range, expressed as "Personal" for melee weapons and usually as a series of numbers for other weapons. The numbers represent short/medium/long range in meters. An asterisk (*) after "Personal" identifies a melee weapon that can be thrown, using the Athletics–*throw* skill.

Type: The first listing under type describes the form of damage the weapon inflicts: low impact (LI), high impact (HI), or energy (En).

The second listing describes the weapon's firepower: Ordinary (O), Good (G), or Amazing (A). If a weapon's firepower is inferior to the toughness of armor it is used against, any damage the weapon inflicts is degraded—mortal damage becomes wound damage, for instance. More information on the degrading of damage is given later in this chapter.

Damage: The amount of damage a weapon inflicts when used in the proper manner. Figures are given in Ordinary/Good/Amazing order, and the appropriate damage is applied depending on the result of the wielder's skill check.

Actions: An optional rule. The number of times that a weapon can be used in a single round.

Clip Size: For powered melee weapons, this number is equal to the number of hits the weapon can strike before its charge pack is empty and requires replacement. For ranged weapons and heavy weapons, this number describes how many shots a weapon can fire before its clip is exhausted (or, for a revolver, before all of its chambers are empty). A number after a slash mark (/) indicates the number of bursts that may be fired from a single clip. Each use of a weapon in burst mode expends one burst (three shots) of ammunition, while each use of autofire mode expends three bursts. A dash to the left of a slash mark indicates that the weapon can't be used in single-shot mode.

Clip Cost: The average cost of a clip of ammunition.

Hide: If a character attempts to conceal possession of a weapon, a number here represents the penalty applied to an opponent's Awareness–*perception* check to spot the weapon. A listing of "—" indicates that the weapon can't be concealed.

Mass: The weapon's mass, in kilograms.

Avail: The availability of the weapon—either Any, Common (Com), Controlled (Con), Military (Mil), or Restricted (Res), ranging from easiest to most difficult to obtain.

Any refers to weapons that also serve as tools or are otherwise available to everyone without the need of permission or regulations.

Common weapons are available to anyone with money and an easy-to-get license. If a hero wishes to avoid the registration of such a weapon, or is for some reason unable to secure one through legal means, the cost is doubled.

Controlled weapons are available to police forces, security details, criminal gangs, and to any private citizen who has a special, hard-to-get license. Law enforcement agencies take a dim view of those who illegally carry and use controlled weapons. Unless a hero has legal access to such a weapon, its listed cost is tripled.

Military weapons are available to the special assault squads of some police and security forces, the most aggressive criminal gangs, and legitimate military forces. Very few licenses for military hardware are handed out, and few heroes have ready access to these weapons. Purchase of military hardware through illegal means multiplies the listed cost by a factor of five.

Restricted weapons are military weapons of great destructive power. Only military forces can acquire restricted weapons, and until they're needed they remain under some form of control. Only those characters who are completely above or oblivious to the law can acquire such weapons. Weapons of this sort cost 10 to 20 times their listed price if procured illegally—if the Gamemaster allows them to be available at all.

Cost: The average cost of the weapon.

blade, and then fills the interior of this field with white-hot plasma. On contact, the containment field releases a stream of plasma that can burn or cut through almost anything.

A star sword is difficult to use and often damages an untrained wielder. An untrained character who gets a Critical Failure when using it suffers Good damage (2d6w), and on a Failure result takes Ordinary damage (d6+1w). A trained wielder suffers Ordinary damage on a Critical Failure.

Tri-staff: This 2-meter-long staff is topped by a three-pronged blade. When the staff is activated, an internal power source suffuses it with a soft glow. This aura acts as a defensive force field that improves the Strength and Dexterity resistance modifiers of its wielder by 1 step.

Ranged Weapons

As early as the dawn of civilization, the ability of ranged weapons to neutralize enemies from afar was recognized as an advantage. The projectiles that ranged weapons expel become increasingly more lethal as technology takes its strides. The

powerful energy weapons developed at high Progress Levels bear virtually no resemblance to their humble ancestor, the bow and arrow.

PL 0: Stone Age

Aside from thrown weapons originally intended for use in melee combat, the early bow and sling represent the first use of ranged weapons.

Bow, short: This is a simple bow made from a single piece of wood. Because archery and bowhunting exist as sports, short bows made of high-tech materials may be readily available at higher Progress Levels.

Sling: This weapon is a simple looped strap in which a stone is whirled and then let fly. Small stones originally serve as ammunition, but the sling at PL 2 and higher uses metal bullets, whose aerodynamic shape increases the sling's range by 10 meters in each category.

PL 1: Bronze/Iron Age

While existing ranged weapons improved in quality and general use, true development remained scarce.

Javelin: A light throwing spear, sometimes fashioned from metal, the javelin was often used in hunting. Its balance and mass make it an ideal throwing weapon, increasing the wielder's normal throwing range by 50 percent in each category. ("Thrown Weapons" on page 57 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* explains how far a character can throw an object.)

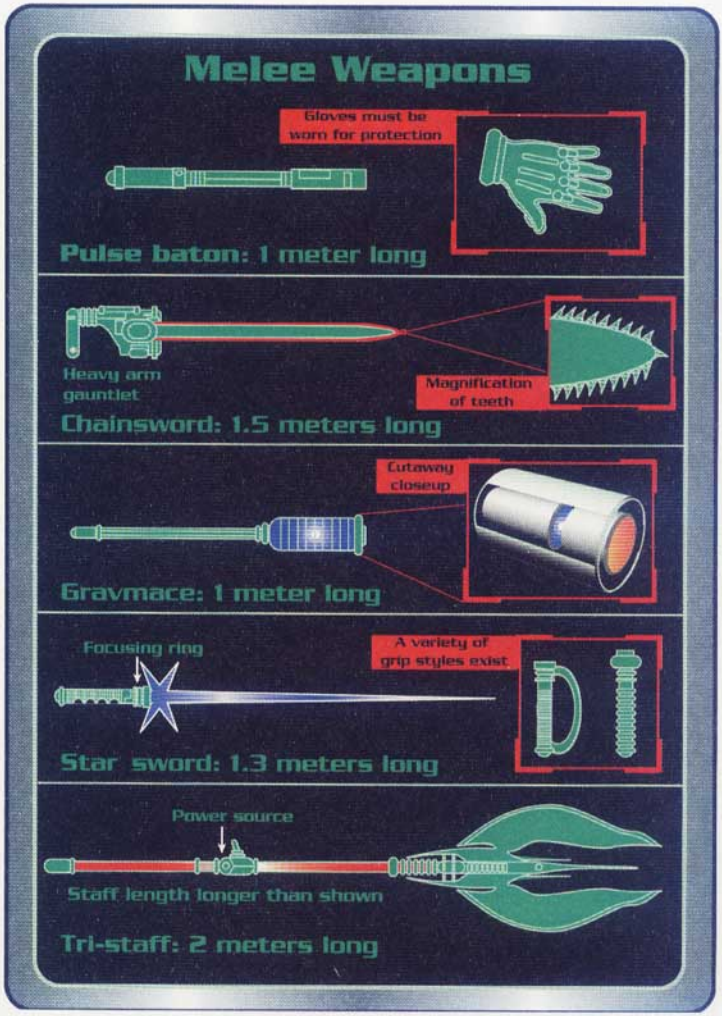
PL 2: Middle Ages

Improvements in bow design bring about the long bow and the crossbow, while specialized throwing weapons such as the shuriken also appear.

Bow, long: A famous weapon, the long bow actually exceeds the PL 3 flintlock rifle (see below) in range, accuracy, and rate of fire and does nearly as much damage. The long bow remained the weapon of choice for many soldiers long after the advent of firearms.

Crossbow: Consisting of a bow mounted crosswise on a wooden or metal stock, the crossbow is fired much like a gun. Although slower and clumsier than a long bow, it outranges the bow and has superior striking power.

Shuriken: Though these "throwing stars" are not extremely lethal, the metal, sharp-pointed disks are easy to conceal.



PL 3: Age of Reason

The significant advancement of this Progress Level is the development of firearms, typified by the flintlock.

Musket, flintlock: The musket was the most successful of the black powder weapons. By later standards it is inaccurate and unreliable, but its .50 to .60 caliber bullet deserves respect.

Pistol, flintlock: The flintlock pistol employs the same mechanism and muzzle-loading powder and shot as the flintlock musket.

Rifle, long: Also known as a Kentucky rifle, this flintlock weapon was more accurate than the musket, but fired a smaller ball.

PL 4: Industrial Age

The age of industrialism saw firearms go into mass production even as the same weapons improved in sophistication and stopping power.

Derringer: The smallest pistols ever made, these weapons appeared with flintlock actions early in the 19th century but didn't become popular until the 1870s.

Pistol, .32 caliber revolver: Light revolvers and small handguns are in common use for centuries after their invention. The small size of the .32 caliber makes it ideal for concealment in a hidden holster or pocket.

Pistol, .45 caliber revolver: A heavier pistol, it's not quite as easy to conceal as the .32, but delivers greater damage and has longer range.

Rifle, .30 caliber bolt-action: A common infantry weapon, the bolt-action rifle is accurate, but tends to be slow-firing and heavy.

TABLE P39: RANGED WEAPONS

Weapon	Skill	Acc	Md	Range	Type	Damage (O/G/A)
Progress Level 0: Stone Age						
Bow, short	Prim-*bow*	+1	F	20/40/100	LI/O	d4w/d4+2w/d4+3w
Sling	Prim-*sling*	+1	F	10/20/60	LI/O	d4s/d4+2s/d4w
Progress Level 1: Bronze/Iron Age						
Javelin	Athl-*throw*	0	F	Per STR	LI/O	d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w
Progress Level 2: Middle Ages						
Bow, long	Prim-*bow*	+1	F	40/80/200	LI/O	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m
Crossbow	Prim-*bow*	0	F	50/100/250	LI/O	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m
Shuriken	Athl-*throw*	0	F	Per STR	LI/O	d4s/d4w/d4+1w
Progress Level 3: Age of Reason						
Musket, flintlock	Prim-*flintlock*	+2	F	20/40/100	HI/O	d6+1w/d6+3w/d6+1m
Pistol, flintlock	Prim-*flintlock*	+2	F	4/8/16	HI/O	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m
Rifle, long	Prim-*flintlock*	+1	F	30/60/150	HI/O	d6w/d6+2w/d6m
Progress Level 4: Industrial Age						
Derringer	Mod-*pistol*	+1	F	2/6/12	HI/O	d4–1w/d6w/d6+2w
Pistol, .32 rev.	Mod-*pistol*	+1	F	4/8/30	HI/O	d4w/d6w/d4m
Pistol, .45 rev.	Mod-*pistol*	+1	F	4/10/40	HI/O	d4+1w/d4+2w/d6m
Rifle, .30 bolt	Mod-*rifle*	0	F	50/100/300	HI/O	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m
Rifle, .44 lever	Mod-*rifle*	+1	F	40/80/240	HI/O	d6w/d8+1w/d6m
Shotgun, 12 gauge	Mod-*rifle*	0	F	6/12/30	HI/O	d4w/d6w/d4m
SMG, .45 cal	Mod-*SMG*	+2	B/A	8/16/40	HI/O	d4+1w/d4+2w/d6m
Progress Level 5: Information Age						
Pistol, .38 rev	Mod-*pistol*	0	F	6/12/40	HI/O	d4w/d4+1w/d4m
Pistol, .44 magnum	Mod-*pistol*	0	F	6/12/50	HI/O	d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+2m
Pistol, 9mm	Mod-*pistol*	0	F	6/12/50	HI/O	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m
Rifle, 7.62mm	Mod-*rifle*	0	F	70/140/350	HI/O	d6+1w/2d4+1w/d4+1m
Rifle, assault	Mod-*rifle*	0	F/B/A	60/120/300	HI/O	d4+2w/d6+3w/d4+1m
SMG, 9mm	Mod-*SMG*	+1	B/A	10/20/80	HI/O	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m
Progress Level 6: Fusion Age						
Pistol, 9mm ch	Mod-*pistol*	0	F	8/16/60	HI/O	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m
Pistol, 9mm zero-g	Mod-*pistol*	0	F	4/10/40	HI/O	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m
Pistol, 11mm ch	Mod-*pistol*	0	F	10/20/80	HI/O	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m
Rifle, 11mm ch	Mod-*rifle*	0	F/B/A	80/160/400	HI/O	d6+1w/d6+3w/d6+1m
Rifle, 11mm zero-g	Mod-*rifle*	0	F	30/60/200	HI/O	d6+1w/d6+3w/d6+1m
Shotgun, autoflec	Mod-*SMG*	0	F/B/A	10/20/40	HI/O	d4w/d6w/d4m
SMG, 9mm ch	Mod-*SMG*	+1	B/A	20/40/100	HI/O	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m
Progress Level 7: Gravity Age						
Pistol, 15mm sabot	Mod-*pistol*	0	F	10/20/100	HI/O	2d4w/2d4+1w/d4+3m
Pistol, laser	Mod-*pistol*	–1	F	20/40/200	En/O	d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m
Pistol, mass	Mod-*pistol*	0	F	2/6/12	En/G	d6w/d6+2w/d6m
Pistol, stutter	Mod-*pistol*	0	F	6/12/30	LI/O	d6+2s/d8+2s/d8+4s
Rifle, laser	Mod-*rifle*	-1	F	100/400/1000	En/O	d6+1w/d6+3w/d4+1m
Rifle, mass	Mod-*rifle*	0	F	4/12/30	En/G	d6w/d8+1w/d6+1m
Rifle, quantum	Mod-*rifle*	0	F/B/A	80/200/500	En/O	d4+3w/d6+4w/d6+1m
Rifle, render	Mod-*rifle*	0	F	50/100/250	En/O	d6+1s/d6+1w/d4+1m
SMG, laser	Mod-*SMG*	0	B/A	20/80/200	En/O	d6w/d6+2w/d4m
SMG, stutter	Mod-*SMG*	0	B/A	10/20/80	LI/O	d6+2s/d8+2s/d8+4s
Progress Level 8: Energy Age						
Automaser	Mod-*SMG*	–1	B/A	20/60/120	En/O	d6w/d6+2w/d4m
Pistol, hvy maser	Mod-pistol	–1	F	20/40/80	En/G	d6+1w/2d4+1w/d4+1m
Pistol, maser	Mod-*pistol*	–2	F	10/20/60	En/O	d6w/d6+2w/d4m
Rifle, hvy maser	Mod-*rifle*	–1	F/B/A	40/200/500	En/G	d8+1w/d12w/d6+1m
Rifle, maser	Mod-*rifle*	–2	F/B/A	60/120/400	En/O	d6+2w/2d4+2w/d4+2m

TABLE P39: RANGED WEAPONS

Weapon	Actions	Clip Size	Clip Cost	Hide	Mass	Avail	Cost
Progress Level 0: Stone Age							
Bow, short	3	10	10	—	1	Any	100
Sling	2	10	5	+2	<1	Any	25
Progress Level 1: Bronze/Iron Age							
Javelin	1	—	—	—	1	Com	50
Progress Level 2: Middle Ages							
Bow, long	2	10	10	—	1	Com	200
Crossbow	1	10	15	—	2	Con	400
Shuriken	4	—	—	+4	<1	Com	10
Progress Level 3: Age of Reason							
Musket, flintlock	1	1	5	—	4	Com	350
Pistol, flintlock	2	1	5	+2	2	Com	200
Rifle, long	1	1	5	—	5	Com	500
Progress Level 4: Industrial Age							
Derringer	2	2	5	+4	<1	Com	100
Pistol, .32 rev.	3	6	10	+3	1	Com	200
Pistol, .45 rev.	3	6	15	+2	1	Com	250
Rifle, .30 bolt	2	10	25	—	3	Mil	500
Rifle, .44 lever	2	12	20	—	3	Com	400
Shotgun, 12 gauge	2	5	15	+1	3	Com	500
SMG, .45 cal.	4	—/8	40	—	4	Con	600
Progress Level 5: Information Age							
Pistol, .38 rev	3	6	15	+2	1	Com	100
Pistol, .44 magnum	3	6	30	+1	1	Com	450
Pistol, 9mm	4	15	25	+3	1	Com	300
Rifle, 7.62mm	3	10	50	—	4	Con	1000
Rifle, assault	4	30/10	100	—	3	Mil	1500
SMG, 9mm	4	—/10	50	+1	3	Con	1200
Progress Level 6: Fusion Age							
Pistol, 9mm ch	4	15	50	+3	1	Com	400
Pistol, 9mm zero-g	2	15	50	+3	1	Com	500
Pistol, 11mm ch	4	10	60	+2	1	Con	800
Rifle, 11mm ch	4	30/10	60	—	4	Mil	1500
Rifle, 11mm zero-g	4	15	60	—	4	Mil	1800
Shotgun, autoflec	4	15/5	150	+1	3	Mil	2500
SMG, 9mm ch	4	—/10	150	+1	3	Mil	1500
Progress Level 7: Gravity Age							
Pistol, 15mm sabot	3	6	60	+1	2	Con	900
Pistol, laser	4	20	50	+3	1	Con	1000
Pistol, mass	2	4	100	+2	1	Mil	1200
Pistol, stutter	4	10	50	+2	1	Com	500
Rifle, laser	3	12	75	—	4	Mil	1500
Rifle, mass	2	4	100	—	4	Mil	2000
Rifle, quantum	3	15/5	200	—	8	Res	8000
Rifle, render	3	8	100	—	4	Res	2000
SMG, laser	4	—/10	75	+1	3	Con	1500
SMG, stutter	4	—/20	200	+1	3	Con	1000
Progress Level 8: Energy Age							
Automaser	4	—/20	200	—	3	Mil	20000
Pistol, hvy maser	3	30	125	+1	2	Mil	12000
Pistol, maser	4	40	100	+2	1	Con	8000
Rifle, hvy maser	3	60/20	125	—	5	Mil	18000
Rifle, maser	4	90/30	100	—	4	Mil	15000

Rifle, .44 caliber lever-action: Introduced early in the Industrial Age, repeating rifles such as this weapon were common in the Old West, mainly among hunters and frontiersmen.

Shotgun, 12 gauge: Shotguns come in several different forms, including pump-action, bolt-action, single-shot, and double-barrel. The 12 gauge is a fairly typical pump-action shotgun.

Damage from a shotgun is highly dependent on range. At short range, damage is doubled. At long range, all damage results are halved (round down, to a minimum of 1 point).

Submachine gun, .45 caliber: Popularly known as the "tommy gun," this weapon came into use near the end of the Industrial Age. It was the first of the personal automatic weapons, with the ability to damage more than one target in a single attack. That property made it a highly desirable firearm despite its relatively poor accuracy.

PL 5: Information Age

In addition to its other achievements, the Information Age will always be remembered as the era when automatic weapons are developed. For the first time, an individual can wield a weapon that has the ability to damage more than one target in a single attack.

Pistol, .38 caliber revolver: This medium revolver comes into widespread use because of its relatively low cost as well as its slightly improved range.

Pistol, .44 magnum revolver: The most powerful handgun of the 20th century, this formidable weapon is renowned for its hitting power.

Buying Outmoded Hardware

With the permission of your Gamemaster, you can purchase weapons and armor from an earlier Progress Level for your hero. In fact, a great portion of society probably uses hardware that's a little out of date until something forces them to change. For example, the charge pistol is a PL 6 technology, but it's still a common sidearm in the PL 7 universe. Generally, a hardware item that's one level behind the campaign setting (such as a charge pistol in the Gravity Age) is available for its listed price.

Hardware older than one previous Progress Level may appeal to your image of your hero. An eccentric space pirate who insists on carrying a cutlass makes perfect sense if he's played right. But finding a cutlass in a PL 6 or PL 7 campaign setting might not be easy.

Weapons and armor that are more than one level removed from the current Progress Level usually aren't readily available—and if such an item can be located, it will almost always be more expensive than its list price. The price increase can vary from 30 to 600 percent (3d20 × 10), assuming the Gamemaster determines that the item is available at all.

If a character finds himself on a world or in a society that's at a Progress Level lower than his own, many hardware items that are out of date in his frame of reference might be easier to come by.

Pistol, 9mm: Smaller but deadlier than the .38, the 9mm is an extremely popular handgun in the second half of the Information Age. A high-capacity ammo clip and a rapid rate of fire combine to produce an approximation of autofire, although the pistol is incapable of fully automatic action.

Rifle, 7.62mm: The main battle rifle of the mid-20th century, the 7.62 remains a favorite of marksmen long after lighter, full-automatic weapons supersede it on the battlefield.

Rifle, assault: The assault rifle—the first firearm capable of both burst mode and autofire—is the standard military weapon of the era. Its range and damage are superior to anything that has come before it.

Submachine gun, 9mm: A whole family of small but deadly automatic weapons with astounding rates of fire fall into this category. The submachine gun is an outstanding weapon in a close-in fight, but can't match a rifle for range or accuracy.

PL 6: Fusion Age

The Fusion Age brings about a new variety of ranged weapons—charge weapons, which collectively have superior range and damage capabilities over their PL 5 ancestors.

Charge weapons use energy cells that become exhausted after firing four clips. A cell costs $100 and requires an action to replace.

Pistol, 9mm charge: In this weapon, the firing pin and chemical explosive combination of a PL 5 firearm is replaced by a powerful contact delivering a massive shock to the cartridge, which is powered by an electrochemical propellant. On firing, the propellant is converted into a white-hot plasma that expands more powerfully and smoothly than a chemical explosive. The result is a weapon that fires a slug with much higher muzzle velocity than earlier firearms.

Pistol, 9mm zero-g: This charge pistol has a sophisticated anti-recoil system to neutralize the gun's movement. It allows the user to fire the weapon in weightless conditions without throwing himself into awkward tumbles or turns.

Pistol, 11mm charge: This is a heavier version of the 9mm charge pistol, firing a larger round.

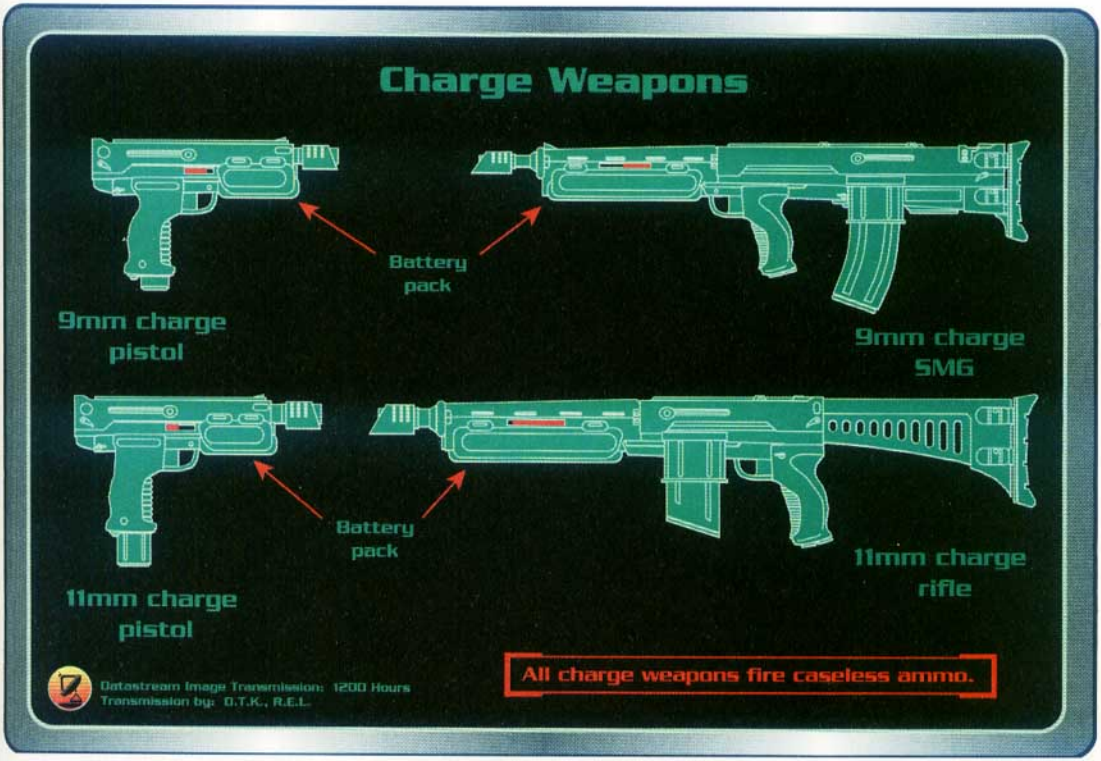
Rifle, 11mm charge: The standard

Electrochemical Weapons

Development of the mechanical-action firearm ceases in the Fusion Age. The firing pin is replaced with an electrical contact, connected to a powerful battery. Powder is likewise replaced by a chemical mix that superheats into plasma when electrocuted by sufficient voltage. A charge firearm is several times more powerful than a standard firearm.

The charge firearm uses electrochemical action to produce a super-high muzzle velocity. A PL 5 rifle might shoot a bullet with a velocity of 1,000 meters per second, but an electrochemical rifle can easily throw a slug at the rate of 3,000 meters per second. Consequently, the charge rifle shoots farther and flatter, and delivers more energy to the target. In fact, charge weapons have such a high muzzle velocity that special tumbling or expanding bullets must be used in order to deliver sufficient impact energy to the target.

Charge weapons require a clip of electrochemical cartridges, which resemble normal bullets, and a powerful battery capable of delivering shocks in the 40,000-volt range.



11mm charge rifle features the electrochemical firing system described above for the charge pistol, but includes an automatic mode.

Rifle, 11mm zero-g: Like the zero-g pistol, this rifle fires standard charge rounds with a special anti-recoil system to neutralize its kick.

Shotgun, autoflechette: The autoflechette gun fires a 25mm round that contains a bundle of tiny, razor-sharp aerofoils. A single hit can carve an unarmored person to ribbons, but the autoflechette gun can also be used in full automatic mode with a rate of fire equal to that of most submachine guns—thus, it can clean out a roomful of targets with a few bursts.

Like the standard shotgun, damage from the autoflechette is highly dependent on range. At short range, damage is doubled. At long range, damage rolls are halved (round down, to a minimum of 1 point).

Submachine gun, 9mm charge: This weapon combines electrochemical charge technology with full automatic action.

Superconductor Technology

In the early part of the Gravity Age, the discovery of a true superconducting metallic alloy—a mixture of lanthanum and several other ores—opens a whole new area in the technology of storing, transmitting, and employing electricity. In addition to making magnetic accelerators, levitation, and 100 percent efficient electric motors possible, an application of this same technology allows the building of enormously powerful capacitors in a very small space. All kinds of hand-held items use energy cells that put chemical batteries of earlier eras to shame.

Two important weapons applications emerge from superconductor technology. First, hand-held rail guns, accelerators, and other such devices are made possible by lanthanide-alloy coils. Second, weapons requiring a strong source of electrical power—such as the charge firearms—make use of lanthanide capacitors. Lanth cells resemble the flat-disk batteries of PL 5, though they are two to three times as thick.

PL 7: Gravity Age

Personal weapons expand in diversity thanks to the advent of mass technology and the continued refinement of energy distribution. In this age, the first true energy weapons come into use—weapons that don't expel physical projectiles and thus are not subject to the laws of inertia. Ranged energy weapons can be used in light gravity or zero gravity without causing problems to the user because of recoil. (The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on the possible adverse effects of operating in a light-gravity or zero-g environment.)

The new lanthanide capacitor is the basis for energy cells for weapons at this Progress Level. These power packs still last for four clips' worth of ammunition, but cost $200 each.

Pistol, 15mm sabot: This small, handheld electromagnetic accelerator hurls a special, discarding-rocket slug at hypersonic velocities.

The round fired by this weapon is a miniature scramjet that ignites soon after leaving the muzzle and quickly accelerates to incredible

Prepared Explosives

Many kinds of explosives are available for use in construction, demolition, and for military purposes. A few of the most common are covered below. All require at least the Demolitions broad skill to use with relative safety. Without this skill, a hero attempts to set an explosive using his untrained Intelligence score. A Critical Failure result on the skill check means that something went wrong; roll d20 to determine if the explosive is a dud (1–18) or if it explodes prematurely (19–20), inflicting damage on the hero and others in the vicinity. (The only items detailed here that can explode prematurely are dynamite, a land mine, and a satchel charge.)

► **Dynamite:** Available at PL 4 and later; type LI/O (stick) or LI/G (bundle); Controlled; cost $20/stick, $100/bundle. This stick of explosive material comes with an attached fuse or (for a bundle) a blasting cap, fuse, and timing device. Dynamite can be thrown, at a +1 penalty for a stick and a +3 penalty for a bundle.

► **Land Mine:** Available at PL 4 and later; type HI/G; Military; cost $2500. The typical land mine is set to explode when stepped on, though it can also be rigged to detonate on a time-delay trigger.

► **Plastic Explosives:** Available at PL 5 and later; type LI/O (single) or LI/G (double); Restricted; cost $200 per block (includes detonator). Plastic explosives produce a localized blast and can be molded around a target area like putty. An area of about one-tenth of a square meter can be covered by one block of this substance; a double dose covers roughly twice that area. Characters with the Demolitions–*set explosives* skill receive a –1 bonus to their skill checks when using plastic explosive.

► **Satchel Charge:** Available at PL 5 and later; type LI/A; Restricted; cost $2000. This pack of explosives can be used to demolish structures. It includes a blasting cap and timer.

► **Primer Cord:** Available at PL 5 and later; type LI/O; Controlled; cost $25 per meter (includes blasting cap). This ropelike plastic explosive can be wrapped around an object or placed in a circle to cause direct-contact explosions, or it can be used to link other explosives for nearly simultaneous detonation. A small amount of primer cord is from 1 to 2 meters in length, and a medium amount is up to 5 meters in length. Using more than 5 meters of primer cord at one time does not increase the damage done by the explosive.

► **Plasma Jelly:** Available at PL 6 and later; type En/G (single) or En/A (double); Controlled; cost $500 per ball (includes charge cap). This small ball of electrochemicals suspended in malleable jelly superheats into explosive plasma when electrocuted by sufficient voltage (provided by the charge cap). It can be spread across a surface; a single application covers one-fourth of a square meter, and a double dose covers twice that much area. Heroes with the Demolitions–*set explosives* skill receive a –1 bonus to their skill checks when applying the jelly.

Damage & Area of Effect

The table below provides damage figures for the types of explosives described in this sidebar. Every damage value is effective within a certain area—either "contact," meaning that only the object or character actually touching the explosive when it goes off suffers the listed damage, or "out to x," where x is a distance in meters away from the blast.

Explosive	Amazing	Good	Ordinary
Dynamite stick	d6+2w (contact)	d6w (out to 2)	d8s (out to 4)
Dynamite bundle	d8+4w (out to 2)	d8w (out to 4)	d12s (out to 8)
Land mine	d8+2w (contact)	d6w (out to 2)	d6–1w (out to 4)
Plastic, single	d6+1w (contact)	n/a	d8s (out to 2)
Plastic, double	d6+1m (contact)	d6+1w (out to 2)	d8s (out to 6)
Satchel charge	d6+3m (out to 2)	d6+1w (out to 6)	d8s (out to 10)
Primer cord, small	d6+1w (contact)	n/a	d6s (out to 2)
Primer cord, medium	d6+3w (contact)	d4w (out to 2)	d6s (out to 4)
Plasma jelly, single	d4m (contact)	n/a	d4+1w (out to 2)
Plasma jelly, double	d4+3m (contact)	d4+3w (out to 2)	d4+1w (out to 4)

speed. Due to its extremely high velocity, the rocket round is designed to splatter against any appreciable resistance to transfer as much kinetic energy as possible to the target.

Pistol, laser: Another application of electrochemical technology, the laser weapon uses an electrical charge to raise a chemical mass to brilliant fluorescence. This light is focused through precisely machined artificial crystals and expelled from the weapon as a white-hot beam.

Pistol, mass: Utilizing the gravity induction technology also employed in shipboard weapons systems, the mass pistol throws an artificial, short-lived mass singularity at its target. This gravity point causes horrible damage through tidal effects to both animate and inanimate objects, but it is short-ranged and consumes an enormous amount of energy.

Pistol, stutter: This hand-held weapon uses sonic energy—audible as a loud, low-frequency rumble—to incapacitate a target. Since the stutter pistol delivers stun damage, it is favored by riot response teams and those who seek to pacify rather than terminate opponents. The stutter pistol doesn't function in a vacuum.

Rifle, laser: The laser rifle is a larger, heavier, improved version of the laser pistol—every bit as accurate as the smaller weapon, and able to hit a target from as far away as a full kilometer.

Rifle, mass: The mass rifle works on the same principle as the mass pistol, but is heavier and has a longer range.

Rifle, quantum: This weapon is a personal version of the ship-mounted particle beam. It uses a small accelerator to fire subatomic particles at a target. All personal quantum weapons are extremely expensive and highly restricted, making them rare and often illegal to own and operate.

Rifle, render: This weapon utilizes gravity induction technology to strobe through a lightning-quick cycle of attraction and repulsion against the target. This action causes matter to literally tear itself to pieces. A lucky target may escape with bad bruises, surface abrasions, and a thorough battering, but a well-centered hit by the render creates massive body trauma.

Submachine gun, laser: The laser SMG does more damage, has greater accuracy, and fires more shots per clip than previous SMGs.

Submachine gun, stutter: The automatic version of the stutter pistol is a favored weapon of riot-control police and others who need to knock out a large number of people without inflicting lethal injuries. The stutter SMG doesn't function in a vacuum.

PL 8: Energy Age

Energy Age ranged weapons become subtle and accurate without surrendering the ability to deal out lethal damage. Maser technology, making use of microwave radiation, extends the range of personal firearms.

Automaser: This submachine gun is a heavy maser pistol (see below) capable of full automatic fire. It uses a small mass reactor and an internal antenna array to create a broad-band blast of electromagnetic energy, combining the nastier features of a laser and a microwave beam.

Pistol, heavy maser: The heavy maser pistol harnesses the power of a miniature mass reactor to create destructive bolts of broad-band electromagnetic radiation. This results in a beam with the cutting or penetrating power of a high-grade laser, coupled with the scorching and charring of a microwave burst.

Pistol, maser: The maser pistol—one of the most accurate weapons ever produced—is a less powerful version of the heavy maser pistol.

Rifle, heavy maser: This weapon works on the same principles as the maser pistol, but adds greater range and full auto capability.

Rifle, maser: This is a smaller, more accurate, and less powerful version of the heavy maser rifle.

Amazing Damage

As noted in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*, someone who takes Amazing damage from an attack must succeed on a Stamina–*endurance* skill check to avoid falling unconscious. It's important to remember that this rule also applies to Amazing damage from area-effect weapons such as grenades and prepared explosives—a character who's right next to a grenade when it goes off not only suffers heavy damage, but might be knocked out of action for the rest of the scene.

Heavy Weapons

For destructive power, heavy weapons are unmatched. This military-grade weaponry grows in popularity as the ages pass, given its advantages in the ability to penetrate armor and general stopping power.

PL 4: Industrial Age

Although heavy weapons such as the ballista, catapult, and cannon existed previously, the Industrial Age sees the development of the first personal heavy weapons.

Flamethrower: This device consists of an incendiary fuel tank (worn slung across the back) and a gunlike nozzle and hose. The weapon projects a stream of ignited fuel that can hit a target as far away as 30 meters.

Fireproof or heat-shielded objects suffer half or no damage depending on the level of their protection. Flammable objects ignite and continue to burn for d6 rounds, suffering d4–2 points of wound damage each round or until the fire is extinguished. A flamethrower weighs 6 kg when its tank is empty.

Table P40: Heavy Weapons

Weapon	Skill	Acc	Md	Range	Type	Damage (O/G/A)
Progress Level 4: Industrial Age						
Flamethrower	Hvy-*direct*	0	F	6/12/30	En/O	d6w/d6+3w/d8+3w
Grenade, frag.	Athl-*throw*	+1	F	Per STR	HI/G	d4w/d4+2w/d6+2w
Machine gun, .30	Hvy-*direct*	0	A	60/200/600	HI/O	d6w/d6+3w/d6m
Rocket launcher	Hvy-*direct*	+1	F	30/60/150	HI/G	d6w/d4+3w/d4m
Progress Level 5: Information Age						
Grenade launcher	Hvy-*indirect*	0	F	50/200/350	As load	As load
Grenade, concus.	Athl-*throw*	+1	F	Per STR	LI/O	d6+2s/d4w/d4+1w
Grenade, incend.	Athl-*throw*	+1	F	Per STR	En/G	d4w/d4+2w/d4+3w
Grenade, smoke	Athl-*throw*	+1	F	Per STR	Special	Special
Hvy machine gun	Hvy-*direct*	0	A	100/400/1000	HI/G	d6+1w/2d4+2w/d8m
SAM, handheld	Hvy-*indirect*	0	F	1000/2000/4000	HI/G	d4w/d6w/d6+4w
Progress Level 6: Fusion Age						
Bantam launcher	Hvy-*indirect*	0	F	100/800/4000	As load	As load
Bantam, antiair	Hvy-*indirect*	-2	F	As launcher	HI/G	d4w/d4+2w/d4m
Bantam, antiper.	Hvy-*indirect*	0	F	As launcher	En/O	d6w/d6+2w/d8+2w
Bantam, antiveh.	Hvy-*indirect*	-2	F	As launcher	HI/G	d4+2w/d4+4w/d4+1m
Grenade, plasma	Athl-*throw*	+1	F	Per STR	En/G	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m
Grenade, stun	Athl-*throw*	+1	F	Per STR	En/O	d6s/d8s/d8+2s
Hvy mach gun, ch	Hvy-*direct*	-1	A	200/600/1200	HI/G	d8w/2d6w/2d4m
Rail gun	Hvy-*direct*	-1	B/A	150/500/1500	HI/G	d6w/d6+2w/d6m
Progress Level 7: Gravity Age						
Arc gun	Hvy-*direct*	-1	F	20/40/100	En/G	d8+1s/d8w/d6+3w
Cannon, stutter	Hvy-*direct*	-1	F	20/40/80	LI/O	d6+2s/d8+3s/2d6+3s
Cannon, 25mm sabot	Hvy-*direct*	0	F	100/200/2000	HI/G	d8w/d4+1m/d6+2m
Grenade, pulse	Athl-*throw*	+1	F	Per STR	En/G	d4+2s/d6+2s/d8+2s
Grenade, tracer	Athl-*throw*	+1	F	Per STR	HI/G	d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+2m
Plasma gun	Hvy-*direct*	0	F	40/80/200	En/G	d8w/d8+3w/d12+3w
Quantum mini	Hvy-*direct*	0	F/B/A	100/250/800	En/G	d8+1w/d8+3w/d6m
Progress Level 8: Energy Age						
Bantam, starload	Hvy-*indirect*	-2	F	As launcher	En/A	d8+2w/d4+1m/d6+1m
Cannon, maser	Hvy-*direct*	-1	F	80/200/600	En/G	d8w/d4+1m/d6+2m
Grenade, mass	Athl-*throw*	+1	F	Per STR	En/G	d6+2s/d6+2w/d6m
Mass launcher	Hvy-*indirect*	-1	F	20/300/1000	En/G	d6+1w/d6+3w/d4+1m

The *Gamemaster Guide* has detailed information on the durability and flammability of various types of objects, which are the major factors in determining whether something is capable of catching fire.

Grenade, fragmentation: The earliest version of this explosive device is difficult to throw accurately, but it can do formidable damage to anything that's nearby when it goes off.

All targets within 2 meters of a frag grenade's explosion suffer Amazing damage (d6+2w); targets within 6 meters suffer Good damage (d4+2w); and targets within 10 meters suffer Ordinary damage (d4w). Anything farther than 10 meters away isn't affected by the blast.

Machine gun, .30 caliber: This fairly light, air-cooled machine gun came to prominence on battlefields of the era. The mechanism behind the machine gun is brilliant and simple: propellant and energy left over from expending a round of ammunition is used to load the next round into the chamber. It fires its bullets in rapid succession—much faster than a character could empty a single-shot gun.

Rocket launcher: Introduced as an infantryman's antitank weapon, the shoulder-fired rocket launcher is also useful for busting bunkers and heavy fire support. Many PL 5 variations of this weapon (the LAW rocket, the RPG-7, etc.) also exist.

PL 5: Information Age

Advances in the Information Age enhance the abilities of heavy weapons, and the sophisticated use of grenades, or hand-held bombs, becomes standard.

Grenade launcher: While there are grenade launchers that mount on rifles, this item is a separate weapon specifically designed to fire small, explosive shells. The standard launcher can accommodate a variety of loads. The two basic types of launchers are the 40mm hand mortar and the 6×40mm six-shot launcher.

The hand mortar resembles a simple breech-loading, single-barreled shotgun. The six-shot looks like an oversized revolver mounted on a

TABLE P40: HEAVY WEAPONS

Weapon	Actions	Clip Size	Clip Cost	Hide	Mass	Avail	Cost
Progress Level 4: Industrial Age							
Flamethrower	2	12	200	—	22	Mil	500
Grenade, frag.	2	—	—	+2	1	Mil	75
Machine gun, .30	4	—/50	500	—	10	Mil	2000
Rocket launcher	1	1	50	—	5	Mil	1200
Progress Level 5: Information Age							
Grenade launcher	3	1	Varies	—	2	Mil	1000
Grenade, concus.	2	—	—	+3	0.5	Mil	75
Grenade, incend.	2	—	—	+3	0.5	Mil	150
Grenade, smoke	2	—	—	+3	0.5	Con	50
Hvy machine gun	4	—/50	500	—	0.5	Mil	5000
SAM, handheld	1	1	1000	—	8	Res	3500
Progress Level 6: Fusion Age							
Bantam launcher	2	4	As load	—	7	Mil	4000
Bantam antiair	2	—	—	+1	3	Res	1000
Bantam antiper.	2	—	—	+1	3	Mil	500
Bantam antiveh.	2	—	—	+1	3	Mil	1000
Grenade, plasma	2	—	—	+3	0.5	Res	400
Grenade, stun	2	—	—	+3	0.5	Mil	250
Hvy mach gun ch	4	—/50	3000	—	45	Res	10000
Rail gun	4	—/30	100	—	20	Res	20000
Progress Level 7: Gravity Age							
Arc gun	2	6	150	—	10	Mil	2000
Cannon, stutter	2	10	100	—	15	Con	2500
Cannon, 25mm sabot	2	20	200	—	10	Mil	10000
Grenade, pulse	2	—	—	+3	0.5	Res	350
Grenade, tracer	2	—	—	+3	0.5	Mil	350
Plasma gun	2	8	100	—	6	Mil	12000
Quantum mini	4	90/30	300	—	10	Res	15000
Progress Level 8: Energy Age							
Bantam starload	2	—	—	+1	3	Res	2000
Cannon, maser	2	12	200	—	10	Res	25000
Grenade, mass	2	—	—	+3	2	Res	1000
Mass launcher	2	5	500	—	15	Res	8000

shotgun stock. Unlike the hand mortar, the six-shot can hold six grenades at once (but can only fire them one at a time). It also costs four times the listed price. In other ways, it's identical to the hand mortar.

Grenade, concussion: The concussion grenade is basically a half-kilogram block of TNT in a cardboard wrapper. It has a pin and arm mechanism, but no fragmentation material. The concussion grenade is considered an offensive weapon, since it can be thrown by troops in open terrain without fear of causing themselves shrapnel damage.

All targets within 2 meters of a concussion grenade's explosion suffer Amazing damage (d4+1w); targets from 2 to 4 meters away suffer Good damage (d4w); targets from 4 to 6 meters away suffer Ordinary damage (d6+2s); and targets beyond 6 meters aren't damaged by the blast.

Grenade, incendiary: This grenade releases a highly combustible chemical that ignites and throws shrapnel within a 6-meter radius.

All targets within 2 meters of an incendiary grenade's explosion suffer Amazing damage (d4+3w); those from 2 to 4 meters away receive Good damage (d4+2w); and those from 4 to 6 meters away receive Ordinary damage (d4w). Fireproof or heat-shielded objects suffer half or no damage depending on the level of their protection. Flammable objects ignite and continue to burn for d6+1 rounds, suffering d4–1 points of wound damage each round or until the fire is extinguished.

The *Gamemaster Guide* has detailed information on the durability and flammability of various types of objects, which are the major factors in determining whether something is capable of catching fire.

Grenade, smoke: This grenade releases a thick cloud of smoke that fills an area in a 6-meter radius around the explosion site. The smoke lasts for d8+4 rounds. It provides Good cover (+2 penalty to opponents' attempts to attack) and applies a +2 penalty to Awareness checks for all characters within the area of effect.

Some smoke grenades are filled with tear gas. Tear gas works just like smoke with the added benefit of

partially incapacitating unprotected characters. Each individual in the area of effect makes a Constitution feat check to try to counter the effect of the gas: Critical Failure, helpless for 2d4 rounds; Failure, +3 penalty to all action checks and actions for 2d4 rounds; Ordinary, +2 penalty; Good, +1 penalty; Amazing, gas has no effect. Characters wearing e-suits or using respirator masks or oxygen tanks are unaffected by tear gas.

Heavy machine gun: This weapon type includes any of the large automatic weapons that use large-caliber rounds and require a mount to control the recoil. Without the use of such a mount, penalties for using automatic fire are doubled (+2/+4/+6 instead of the usual +1/+2/+3), the user must take an additional +1 penalty for lack of accuracy, and must make a successful Strength feat check to keep from being knocked down.

SAM, handheld: This is a shoulder-fired surface-to-air missile with a heat-seeking head. When used against an airborne target that's giving off a significant amount of heat, the missile will circle around for a second attack one round later if it misses the target on its first pass.

PL 6: Fusion Age

Heavy weapon development in the Fusion Age concentrates on improving existing weaponry using the technology advances of the period.

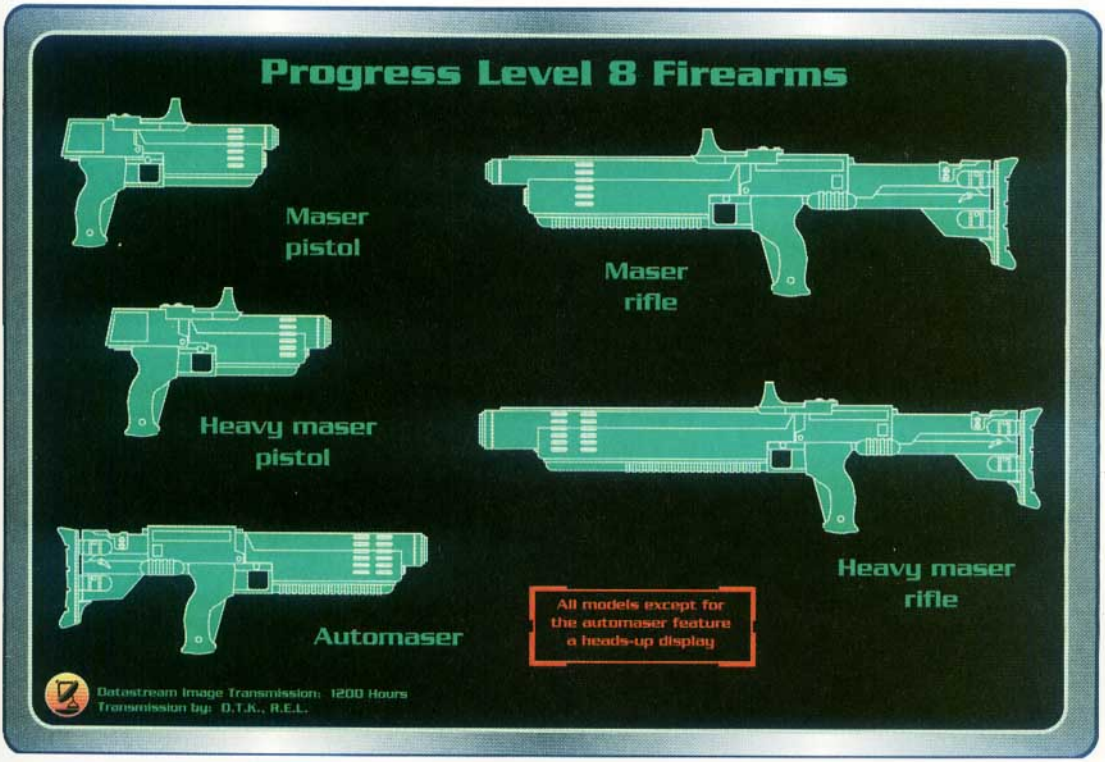
Bantam launcher: This portable launcher fires miniature bantam rockets. Braced on the shoulder and fired like a bazooka, the bantam launcher is light and easy to use. It has four chambers that can hold a variety of bantam rocket loads. The pistol grip has four triggers, one to activate each of the four load chambers, though only one trigger can be depressed at a time. The built-in guidance system makes this weapon accurate to extreme ranges.

Bantam antiaircraft rocket: This projectile, about 0.5 meter long, has additional lift and guidance systems to lock onto and track low-flying aircraft. It can be triggered to seek a heat source such as a jet engine or to follow the commands of its user, who can direct it with a laser sight. The blast inflicts Amazing damage (d4m) within 4 meters of the explosion; Good damage (d4+2w) up to 8 meters away; and Ordinary damage (d4w) out to 12 meters.

Bantam antipersonnel rocket: This rocket delivers a low-level radiation burst designed to inflict maximum damage on people while leaving vehicles and buildings intact. Amazing damage (d8+2w) is inflicted within 4 meters of impact; Good damage (d6+2w) up to 8 meters; and Ordinary damage (d6w) out to 12 meters.

Bantam antivehicular rocket: This weapon is designed to hinder or destroy armored vehicles, but can also be used against bunkers and other hardened installations. It causes Amazing damage (d4+1m) to the target it impacts; Good damage (d4+4w) within 2 meters; and Ordinary damage (d4+2w) out to 4 meters away.

Grenade, plasma: This is a more powerful version of the incendiary grenade. All targets within 2 meters of a plasma grenade's explosion suffer Amazing damage (d4m); those from 2 to 4 meters away suffer Good damage (d6+2w); and those from 4 to 8 meters away take Ordinary damage (d4+2w). Fireproof or heat-shielded objects suffer half or no damage, depending on the level of their protection. Flammable objects ignite and burn for d6+1 rounds, taking d4 points of wound damage per round or until the fire is extinguished.



The *Gamemaster Guide* has detailed information on the durability and flammability of various types of objects, which are the major factors in determining whether something is capable of catching fire.

Grenade, stun: The stun grenade creates a concussive wave that stuns those within the blast radius. All targets within 2 meters of the impact suffer Amazing damage (d8+2s); Good damage (d8s) is inflicted out to a distance of 4 meters; and Ordinary damage (d6s) extends to those up to 10 meters away.

Heavy machine gun, charge: This heavy machine gun makes use of charge technology to substantially improve upon the heavy machine gun of the previous era; this weapon has better range, stopping power, and accuracy. Without the use of a mount, penalties for automatic fire are doubled (+2/+4/+6), the user must take an additional +1 penalty for lack of accuracy (or disregard the weapon's accuracy bonus, if the optional rule is being used), and must make a successful Strength feat check to avoid being knocked down.

Rail gun: This weapon consists of a powerful electromagnetic accelerator that fires a stream of small projectiles at extremely high velocity.

PL 7: Gravity Age

The Gravity Age stands as a crowning era for heavy weapons, as more efficient power sources and significant advances in miniaturization technology made formerly unprecedented destructive power available to individuals.

Arc gun: This is a weapon capable of delivering a powerful electrical shock in the form of a lightning bolt.

The arc gun uses a built-in, low-powered laser beam to ionize the air between the weapon and its target, creating a path for the electrical arc. Because it requires air to operate, the weapon is useless in a vacuum.

Cannon, stutter: A stutter cannon is a heavy weapon that consists of a backpack and attached gun. It is designed to disperse or otherwise handle a crowd without the use of lethal force. The stutter cannon produces compressed sonic waves that deliver hammerlike blows against targets. Each pulse affects all targets in a 3-meter radius.

Cannon, rail: A rail cannon consists of a backpack and attached gun. The backpack contains an electromagnetic accelerator that releases a powered 25mm projectile with amazing speed and force. The cannon's energy cell must be replaced after the weapon has fired two clips.

Grenade, pulse: This grenade consists of a powerful capacitor and a special ceramic shell that functions as a spherical antenna array. When it detonates, the capacitor releases a pulse of electromagnetic energy in the immediate area. This pulse can stun unprotected humans, but it's more useful for damaging electronic equipment—computers, sensors, vehicle control systems, servomotors, and the like. The discharge causes Amazing damage (d8+2s) within 2 meters; Good damage (d6+2s) out to 4 meters; and Ordinary damage (d4+2s) out to 10 meters.

Grenade, tracer: This is a smart shaped-charge grenade. Though it can be manually tossed or hurled by a launcher, once it reaches its target area it searches for a moving target to make contact with. Upon impact, the grenade explodes and releases

its razor-sharp fragments. Amazing damage (d4+2m) is suffered by the target it impacts with (if any); Good damage (d6+2w) extends out to 2 meters; and Ordinary damage (d4+2w) extends to 4 meters. If no target is within 2 meters of its landing point, the grenade falls to the ground and waits up to 2 rounds for a target to approach within its detection range of 2 meters. If those 2 rounds go by without it being approached by a target, the tracer grenade automatically deactivates. In such a case, it can be salvaged and reused.

Plasma gun: The plasma gun consists of a backpack and attached gun. Using a powerful electromagnetic accelerator, it throws blasts of superheated plasma generated by the delivery of an electrical shock to a large electrochemical shell.

Quantum minigun: This weapon adds a backpack accelerator to the quantum rifle, producing particle beams with longer range and more lethal force. All personal quantum weapons are extremely expensive and highly restricted, making them rare and often illegal to own and operate. Like the rifle, the minigun is capable of burst mode and autofire.

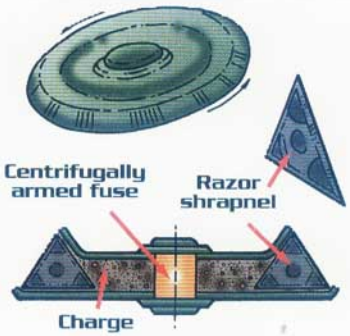
PL 8: Energy Age

Energy Age heavy weapons continue the trend of the past, adding new methods of delivering energy.

Bantam starload rocket: This projectile uses a miniature mass reactor to power an explosion, creating a blast that targets people and vehicles with ferocious punishment. The blast does Amazing damage (d6+1m) to anything within 6 meters; Good damage (d4+1m) out to 12 meters; and Ordinary damage (d8+2w) out to 20 meters.

Cannon, maser: The maser cannon employs a miniature mass reactor and requires the use of a heavy backpack accelerator to supply the energy for maser blasts.

Grenade, mass: This grenade detonates a tiny mass reactor, resulting in a few cubic meters of cosmic catastrophe. Heat, light, and all forms of broad-band electromagnetic radiation slag anything in the general vicinity of the grenade. All targets within 2 meters of the explosion suffer Amazing damage (d6m); Good damage (d6+2w) is inflicted on those within 4 meters; and Ordinary damage (d6+2s) is suffered by those within 10 meters of the blast.



Tracer Grenade

Mass launcher: This indirect-fire weapon can only be used on a planetary surface, or in an artificial environment with at least light gravity. It launches a wave of gravity energy into the air and relies on the gravity well of a planet to both return the energy to the ground and magnify its power. All targets within 4 meters of the blast suffer Amazing damage (d4+1m); targets within 8 meters suffer Good damage (d6+3w); and targets within 12 meters suffer Ordinary damage (d6+1w).

The damage figures given above and on Table P40 assume Earth-normal gravity conditions. In light gravity (G1), damage from the mass launcher is halved (round up). In heavier gravity (G3, G4, and G5), damage increases by +1 for every grade of difference between Earth normal (G2) and the current environment. (For more information on different levels of gravity, see "Actions and the Environment" on page 52 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action.*)

Armor

Just as weapons improve over the millennia, various types of armor emerge over time to protect the vulnerable hero from the deadly array of arms he might encounter. Armor isn't impervious, but it's better than nothing, and a complete suit of armor can guard its wearer against all but the most well-aimed blows.

The finest armor types of the highest Progress Level are self-contained tanks, equipped with onboard sensors, computers, and weapons systems, and are appropriate only on the battlefield. In civilized areas, most people view unconcealed armor in much the same way they view a holstered sidearm—it's an indication that the individual expects to shoot and get shot at.

PL 0: Stone Age

Stone age armor makes use of readily available material (which is limited), and armor technology remains primitive for centuries.

Hide armor: This armor utilizes the furs and skins of animals, which are stitched or fastened together to roughly fit the body of the individual wearing it. The protection it provides is minimal, and its use during the era is uncommon. This category also includes weaves of thick vegetation made into protective garments.

PL 1: Bronze/Iron Age

The first manufactured defensive armor appear during this early period in history.

Leather armor: This protection is easy to craft and maintain, and does a decent job of protecting the wearer from the weapons of the day.

Helm: The center of the sensory organs is treated to extra protection. A helm can't be used with other armor if the armor contains an integral helmet or hood. The Gamemaster can determine that a helm's protection isn't significant in some situations, especially if it is the only armor being worn.

Shield, small: A small shield is usually round, about a half-meter in diameter, and worn on the forearm of the secondary hand.

PL 2: Middle Ages

This is the age of the knight, when armor goes beyond being a defensive device and also becomes a status symbol and a sign of rank.

Chain mail: Various types of laminated, scale, brigandine, splint, and banded armor fall under the broad category of chain mail. Formed by linking or sewing metal rings to a plain leather backing, chain mail provides excellent protection against slashing (low impact) attacks. The chain mail suit includes a coif to protect the head.

Plate armor, full: Full plate mail is made from shaped and fitted metal plates riveted and interlocked in such a way as to cover the entire body. Gauntlets, boots, and a visored helmet are included, as well as a layer of thick padding under the armor.

Plate armor, partial: This armor combines a metal breastplate with either chain or brigandine armor. A

few metal plates protect vital parts of the body, but not as many are used as in full plate armor.

Shield, medium: A medium shield is heavier than a small shield, and is usually a meter or more in diameter. It can be round or square, though most looked like rounded triangles.

PL 3: Age of Reason

As firearms arrive on the scene, earlier forms of armor—largely ineffective against high impact damage—disappear at this Progress Level.

Leather coat: The cuir bouilli ("boiled leather") coat isn't the best armor, but it's better than nothing in battle. Leather coats have an advantage in being innately concealable; in many societies, the rugged coat is an item of style.

PL 4: Industrial Age

While the increasing power and accuracy of firearms limit the advance of armor, the first attempts to shield against the bullet are developed.

Flak jacket: While unable to fully absorb the blows of the weapons of the period, the flak jacket is the first armor to seriously inhibit the passage of high impact damage to its wearer. The armor's bulk and mass are its disadvantages.

PL 5: Information Age

The era produces several new protective devices to ward off firearms, for both military and law enforcement personnel.

Assault gear: This is a suit of modern armor, made up of heavy padding, kevlar, and plastic plates. In later ages, kevlar is replaced by carbonate fiber.

Battle vest: This category includes all the varieties of bulletproof vests that come into use during the latter half of the 20th century. A normal battle vest can be worn under very bulky clothing, but generally it's meant to be pulled over anything else a person might happen to be wearing. Light versions are designed with concealability and comfort in mind. The vest uses strong ceramic-alloy plates sandwiched in a weave of kevlar or (at a higher PL) carbonate fiber to protect the wearer's torso.

Riot helmet: The riot helmet has a clear plastic visor, offering protection while preserving vision.

Riot shield: This is a high-tech, clear plastic, full-body shield, usually used in conjunction with riot gear.

Table P41: Armor

Armor	Skill	AP	Type	LI / HI / En	Hide	Mass	Avail	Cost
Progress Level 0: Stone Age								
Hide armor	Armor Op	+1	0	d6–3 / d4–3 / d6–4	—	10	Any	100
Progress Level 1: Bronze/Iron Age								
Leather armor	—	0	0	d6–2 / d6–4 / d6–4	+2	7	Any	350
Helm	Armor Op	+1	0	+1 / 0 / 0	—	4	Com	200
Shield, small	Armor Op	+1	0	+1 / 0 / 0	+1	4	Any	75
Progress Level 2: Middle Ages								
Chain mail	Armor Op	+1	0	d6–1 / d6–4 / d6–4	+1	15	Com	750
Plate, full	*combat*	+3	0	d6+1 / d6–3 / d6–3	—	25	Con	2000
Plate, partial	*combat*	+2	0	d6 / d8–5 / d6–4	+1	20	Com	1000
Shield, medium	*combat*	+2	0	+2 / +1 / 0	—	7	Any	300
Progress Level 3: Age of Reason								
Leather coat	—	0	0	d6–3 / d4–3 / d4–2	+3	5	Any	500
Progress Level 4: Industrial Age								
Flak jacket	*combat*	+2	0	d6–2 / d4–1 / d6–3	—	15	Con	800
Progress Level 5: Information Age								
Assault gear	*combat*	+3	0	d6–1 / d6–1 / d6–1	—	10	Con	1500
Battle vest	—	0	0	d6–3 / d6–2 / d4–2	+2	5	Con	600
Riot helmet	Armor Op	+1	0	+1 / +1 / 0	—	2	Con	300
Riot shield	*combat*	+2	0	+1 / +1 / +1	—	4	Con	500
Progress Level 6: Fusion Age								
Assault gear, hvy	*combat*	+2	0	d6–1 / d6 / d6–1	—	12	Mil	2500
Attack armor	*combat*	+3	0	d4+1 / d6+1 / d6–1	—	15	Con	3000
Attack armor, pow	*powered*	+2	G	d6+1 / d6+2 / d6	—	25	Mil	8000
Battle jacket	Armor Op	+1	0	d6–1 / d4+1 / d4–1	+1	8	Con	1500
CF long coat	—	0	0	d4 / d4 / d6–2	+3	4	Com	1000
CF short coat	—	0	0	d4–1 / d4–1 / d6–3	+3	3	Com	750
Progress Level 7: Gravity Age								
Body tank	*powered*	+4	G	2d4+1 / 2d4+1 / 2d4	—	60	Res	25000
Body tank, recon	*powered*	+3	G	2d4 / 2d4 / d6+2	—	45	Mil	30000
Body tank, zero-g	*powered*	+5	G	3d4 / 3d4 / 2d4+1	—	80	Res	50000
Cerametal armor	*combat*	+2	0	d6+1 / d8+1 / d6	—	10	Mil	2000
CF softsuit	—	0	0	d6 / d6 / d6–1	+4	3	Con	2000
Deflection harness	—	0	0	see description	+3	2	Con	2500
Progress Level 8: Energy Age								
Ablative harness	—	0	0	see description	+3	2	Mil	5000
Body tank, over.	*powered*	+3	G	2d6+1 / 2d6+1 / 2d6	—	40	Res	70000
Displacer softsuit	—	0	0	see description	+4	3	Res	7500
Energy web	—	0	0	d6–1 / d6–1 / d6+2	+3	2	Mil	4000
Stealth softsuit	—	0	0	see description	+4	2	Res	10000

PL 6: Fusion Age

As technology improves, new materials are invented for use in protective devices, including carbonate fiber and polymere. Carbonate fiber (CF), created by the application of atom laser technology (developed at PL 5 but not immediately put to practical use) is a weave of nanoengineered carbon chains that are deliberately arranged for strength and resistance. Polymere is microengineered plastic.

Assault gear, heavy: This armor resembles PL 5 assault gear in general appearance, but bulletproof CF weave and polymere plates replace much of the padding. It includes a protective hood and attachments for an optional hip-worn respirator. Security forces and paramilitary groups often wear armor of this type.

Attack armor: The earliest forms of true attack armor are improvements of typical assault gear. A breastplate and helmet of lightweight polymere guards the user's vital areas, while flexible CF weaves cover his limbs.

Attack armor, powered: Powered attack armor includes a small but powerful computer to manage a simple sensor and communication suite. Built-in extra devices include:

Targeting system: Binoculars reduce long range penalties by 1 step.

Image enhancement system: Night-vision and infrared goggles re-

How to Read the Armor Table

Here are brief descriptions of what the column headings on TABLE P41: ARMOR mean:

Armor: The common name of the armor.

Skill: If the Armor Operation skill or one of its specialty skills is necessary to use the armor with full effectiveness, this listing identifies the skill in question. For more information on the Armor Operation skill, see page 64 in *Chapter 4: Skills*.

AP: Action Penalty. The mass and bulk of heavier armors act to slow down its user. A number other than 0 here indicates a penalty that is applied to each action check made by the wearer, and to the wearer's Dexterity resistance modifier. For full details, see the Armor Operation skill on page 64 in *Chapter 4: Skills*.

Type: The toughness rating of the armor, either Ordinary (O) or Good (G). (The Amazing (A) armor rating is reserved for vehicles; see Chapter 12.) A weapon with an Ordinary rating has its damage degraded by one level (mortal to wound, wound to stun, or stun to no damage) when used against armor with a Good rating. Armor with an Ordinary rating provides the wearer with no such benefit.

LI / HI / En: Each type of armor is rated for its effectiveness in stopping primary damage in each of the three categories: low impact (LI), high impact (HI), and energy (En). When a character wearing armor is hit by an attack, the number in the appropriate section of this column is subtracted from the damage caused by the attack. If the subtraction of a number from a die roll (such as d4–1) yields a result of 0 or less, the armor failed to absorb any damage on that attack. For shields and helmets, a number without a die roll (such as +1) represents a constant quantity that is subtracted from any damage caused.

Hide: If a character attempts to conceal the fact that he's wearing armor (by putting another garment over it), a number here represents the penalty applied to an opponent's Awareness–*perception* check to spot the armor. A listing of "—" indicates that the armor can't be concealed.

Mass: The armor's mass, in kilograms.

Avail: The availability of the armor—Any, Common, Controlled, Military, or Restricted, ranging from easiest to most difficult to obtain. For definitions of these terms, see "How to Read the Weapons Tables" on page 174 earlier in this chapter.

Cost: The average cost of the armor.

duce penalties due to poor lighting or visual conditions by 1 step.

Communication suite: Signal laser and comm gear allow communication over long distances and supervision of remote sensor devices.

Trauma pack type I: Two trauma packs are attached at the thigh pocket and in the small of the back.

Battle jacket: A more complete version of the battle vest, this garment includes panels for the thighs and arms, as well as an open-faced hood. It offers significantly more coverage than the vest, but is correspondingly heavier and more awkward. Most battle jackets feature face-seals and attachments for respirators or heating elements.

CF long and short coat: In situations when it isn't wise to display heavy armor, a bulletproof coat can be a lifesaver. Designed to resemble a well-made duster or jacket, the CF coat uses extensive weaves of resistant carbonate fibers to defeat slashing weapons and projectiles.

The long coat almost touches the ground, and it can pass for a duster or overcoat of some kind. The short coat comes down to the waist and can be worn as part of a suit, or as a simple jacket.

PL 7: Gravity Age

As energy weapons begin to replace projectile weapons, the first serious attempts at countering them appear. The new science of gravitonics, combined with preexisting atom laser technology, provides the means. Using the intense, controlled gravitational fields made possible by the gravity inducer, tungsten metal is compressed at the atomic level. A mesh of disassociated neutrons is then pressed into the metal. The alloy, known as neutronite, has a density several times that of depleted uranium. Not only is neutronite extremely hard to pierce, it tends to rapidly dissipate energy. Naturally, neutronite armor is extremely heavy, so a personal suit requires numerous power-assist servos and pistons in order to allow movement.

Body tank: The invention of sturdy, small, and powerful servos makes the powered "body tank" armor possible. Most of the armor consists of neutronite alloy plate, with only a few awkward joints made of flexible carbonate fiber. A body tank is just that—a heavy, full suit of armor that turns the soldier wearing it into a mobile fortress. Systems included in a body tank are:

Targeting system: Binoculars reduce long range penalties by 1 step.

Image enhancement system: Night-vision and infrared goggles reduce penalties due to poor lighting or visual conditions by 1 step.

Communication suite: Signal laser and comm gear allow communication over long distances and supervision of remote sensor devices.

Aliens in Armor

Some alien species find it difficult to fit into armor that was originally designed for humans. Fraal and mechalus heroes have little trouble adapting, but other species are not so fortunate.

In any campaign that includes alien heroes (and, necessarily, other aliens of the same species), the Gamemaster has the option of declaring that certain types, or all types, of armor available to humans have also been tailored to fit the alien body shape. In most cases, however, this means that members of other species can't make use of the armor of a fallen comrade (or enemy).

Even if such tailored armor is available, some combinations of aliens and armor may be impossible—a sesheyan in a body tank, for instance—and others might only be obtainable for a price that exceeds the listed cost.

Degrading Damage

In addition to being able to absorb damage, armor that's especially thick or tough protects its wearer in another way—by causing the type of damage he or she suffers to be degraded.

Here's how it works: If a character using a weapon of Ordinary firepower gets a successful hit against someone wearing armor with a Good toughness rating, the severity of the primary damage is degraded by one level—mortal damage becomes wound damage, wound damage turns into stun, and stun damage is negated. Secondary damage is calculated after the original damage is degraded.

◆ *Example:* A character wearing a body tank (Good toughness) is targeted by an enemy wielding a quantum rifle (energy weapon, Ordinary firepower). The enemy gets an Amazing success and deals out 6 points of mortal damage. This damage is immediately degraded to 6 wounds, and then 3 points of secondary stun damage are assessed. The result of the armor roll for the body tank (2d4+2 vs. En) is 5, meaning that only 1 point of wound damage gets through to the wearer. Also, because the character in the body tank has rank 2 in Armor Operation–powered armor, he is able to shake off 1 point of the secondary damage. (See "Armor Operation Rank Benefits" on page 66 in *Chapter 4: Skills.*) What started out as a potentially lethal hit has ended up causing only 1 point of wound damage and 2 points of stun damage.

Note: When a character is struck by a weapon whose damage will degrade against his armor, he is not subject to being knocked out as the result of being hit by an Amazing success (as set forth on page 53 of *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*).

Some vehicles (see Chapter 12) and other objects have Amazing toughness ratings. Even a weapon of Good firepower has its damage degraded against such an object, and damage done by weapons of Ordinary firepower is degraded twice—mortal damage becomes stun damage, and wounds and stuns are ignored.

The *Gamemaster Guide* contains more information on the toughness ratings of various objects.

Trauma pack type II: One of two trauma packs activates when the suit's occupant suffers damage; the other one is a spare. Mortal wounds are automatically staunched; the wearer doesn't need to make a Stamina–*endurance* check.

Threat receiver: An electromagnetic/infrared sensor detects active fire control and rangefinding systems directed at the wearer, who gains a –2 bonus to Awareness checks to detect such threats.

Smart display: Geomapping system provides a view of the surrounding area, granting the user a –1 bonus to Tactics checks.

Laser designator: Helmet-mounted device allows the soldier to instantly relay requests for fire support or air strikes through his data uplink.

Bantam launcher: A built-in bantam launcher contains a magazine of four loads. The loads can be of any type, or multiples of one type, but once the launcher is loaded the order of launch can't be changed without manually reloading the rockets.

Body tank, recon: The recon body tank is lighter and more expensive than the regular version, but somewhat more common. The recon body tank features the same onboard systems as the standard body tank.

Body tank, zero-g: The heaviest armor available at PL 7 is equipped with all the features of the standard body tank in a suit slightly larger than the normal body tank. It also includes the following features:

Air/space radar: A small but powerful radar system allows a soldier to keep an eye on enemy aircraft or spacecraft movements. Consider this a vehicular radar system.

Instead of a bantam launcher, the purchaser of a zero-g body tank can include any one of the following:

Grenade launcher: Two magazines hold six grenades each. The magazines feed into the launcher independently, so the user can choose which magazine to load and fire.

Direct fire heavy weapon: Choice of heavy charge machine gun, arc gun, rail cannon, or plasma gun.

Close-combat weapon: Choice of chainsword, gravmace, mass pistol, or autoflechette shotgun.

Cerametal armor: This is one of the last developments of heavy, unpowered armor. Cerametal technology combines lightweight ceramic weaves with more standard armor materials. The cerametal plates cover most of the body, including the head. The protection is fantastic by previous standards, but can't match that of a body tank.

CF softsuit: The CF softsuit represents the highest level of carbonate fiber advancement. It can be woven into lightweight clothing styles, providing protection that doesn't look like protection at all.

Deflection harness: The deflection harness creates a powerful nondirectional graviton field around the wearer. Physical objects are deflected away from the protected character, and even energy-based attacks may be bent enough to miss the user. The deflection harness is built in several different styles, including a pair of bracelets or wristbands, me-

Layering Armor

A character might have his reasons for wearing one type of armor over another one, but doing so does not provide extra protection.

On any particular attack, someone who wears layers of armor only enjoys the protection of one of those layers: Use dice rolls to determine how much damage each layer of armor absorbs, but apply only the best result. Note also that even though only one layer of armor actually provides protection, the penalties to a character's action check and Dexterity resistance modifier are cumulative, as is (obviously) the mass.

The Gamemaster will determine whether two types of armor can even be put on at the same time; many combinations are outright impossible.

This restriction also applies to characters who have natural armor, such as a t'sa, and those who possess body armor as the result of a mutation or a cybernetic enhancement.

dallions, or belts. It's not possible to combine a harness with other armor.

The deflection harness improves the user's applicable resistance modifier (either Strength or Dexterity) by +2 steps. A character using a deflection harness suffers from a +2 penalty when he tries to attack someone outside the field due to the same deflection effect.

The harness consumes a lot of power, and a charge pack lasts for only 10 rounds of use. The wearer must use an action to turn the harness on or off, but can take another action in the same phase with a +1 penalty.

PL 8: Energy Age

As practical, personal energy weapons become common in this age of wonder, defensive technology undergoes great advancement.

Ablative harness: The discovery of controlled mass-energy transformation leads to the invention of effective force fields. The ablative harness makes use of a field of quantum particles that respond to force or energy by spontaneously transforming into semitangible virtual matter. The device consists of a sturdy belt with an attached hip-carried power supply. Small power leads run along the user's limbs and torso and fasten to concealable cuffs at wrist and ankle.

The ablative harness provides 50 points of protective energy when fully charged. Every point of mortal damage reduces the field by 3 points; every point of wound damage reduces the field by 2 points; and every point of stun damage reduces the field by 1 point. When the harness's energy is reduced to 0 points, the protective field collapses. Ablative harnesses can be recharged via any standard power source, but the recharging process requires 1 hour per 10 points of field energy.

Since the field produced by the harness hugs the body, it doesn't affect the user's ability to use weapons the way the deflection harness does. Also, it is possible to wear other protection along with an ablative harness, as a safeguard against the possibility that the harness's energy could be exhausted. The only types of armor that *can't* be combined with an ablative harness are the various body tanks, powered attack armor, the deflection harness, and any other PL 8 armor.

Body tank, overland: This device represents the highest achievement in heavy powered armor. The overland body tank has all the features of a zero-g body tank with even higher protection values, but retains a light and streamlined look reminiscent of the recon body tank.

The overland body tank adds a final touch—a flight-capable, gravity-based engine, allowing its user to soar meters over the ground at up to 100 kilometers per hour for as long as 8 hours.

Displacer softsuit: This is a CF softsuit with gravitonic circuitry that makes the image of the user appear to blur and shift. This provides protection from weapons that require a direct target, but doesn't provide any protection against weapons with a blast radius. The displacer softsuit can't be used with other armor, because the softsuit must be near the body and exposed to operate.

By phasing the wearer and projecting his image about a meter away from where he really is, the displacer softsuit provides a +3 step increase to the wearer's Strength and Dexterity resistance modifiers.

After 10 rounds, the displacer softsuit's charge cell must be replaced. Extra cells cost $100.

Energy web: The energy web is a CF softsuit with an interwoven energy dispersement web. While largely ineffective against physical attacks, it provides excellent protection from energy weapons by dispersing the energy and directing it harmlessly away. The energy web doesn't require a power source, because it works like a lightning rod to ground and disperse the energy. The energy web can't be used with other armor.

Stealth softsuit: The combination of a CF softsuit with energy technology, the stealth softsuit renders its wearer almost invisible. The stealth softsuit can't be used with other armor, since the suit must be near the body and exposed to operate.

The primary benefit is to the user's Stealth skill (or the user's untrained Dexterity feat check, if he or she does not possess the skill): a +3 penalty to all observers attempting to spot the user. If an observer notices the wearer, the wearer still receives a +1 resistance modifier increase on attacks directed against him or her.

The stealth softsuit has a limited power supply. After 2 hours of use, its charge cell must be replaced. Extra cells cost $100.

Damage to Armor

Depending on the type of campaign you're in, your Gamemaster may ignore damage to armor, or may decide that armor gets hurt just as characters do, and therefore needs to be repaired. Here's a simple system for handling damage to armor:

If a character wearing armor suffers enough wound damage to use up more than half of his wound points, or if he suffers any amount of mortal damage, then his armor has been damaged and must be repaired in order to regain its full effectiveness.

Damaged armor doesn't stand up as well against later attacks, which translates into a 1-point (for wound damage) or 2-point (for mortal damage) subtraction from the amount of damage the armor absorbs on any successful attack made after it becomes damaged. These subtractions are not cumulative. For example, a CF softsuit worn by a character who has less than half of his wound points remaining becomes rated at d6–1/d6–1/d6–2 (instead of the normal d6/d6/d6–1)—unless the wearer has any amount of mortal damage, in which case his armor is weakened to d6–2/d6–2/d6–3 until it's repaired.

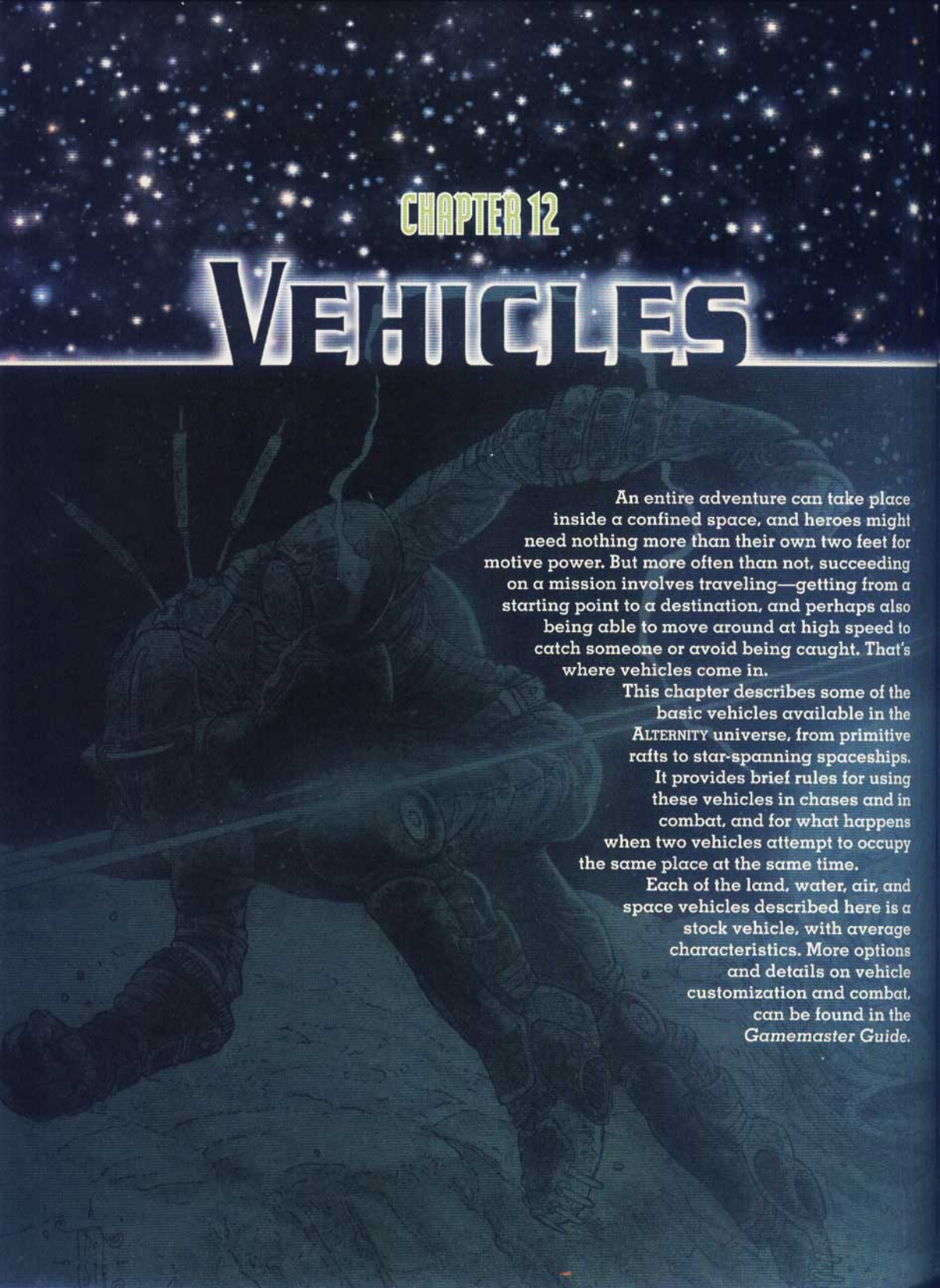
For special types of armor such as the deflection harness, displacer softsuit, and stealth softsuit, the subtraction is applied to the benefit the wearer receives from the armor.

Damaged armor can be repaired by succeeding at a complex skill check using the Technical Science–*repair* skill. This is a check of Amazing complexity (requiring 8 to 10 successes) if the wearer of the armor has any mortal damage, or a check of Good complexity (5 to 7 successes) if the wearer has only wound damage.

If all of a character's mortal points are used up while he is wearing armor, the Gamemaster can declare that his armor can't be salvaged.

CHAPTER 12

VEHICLES



An entire adventure can take place inside a confined space, and heroes might need nothing more than their own two feet for motive power. But more often than not, succeeding on a mission involves traveling—getting from a starting point to a destination, and perhaps also being able to move around at high speed to catch someone or avoid being caught. That's where vehicles come in.

This chapter describes some of the basic vehicles available in the ALTERNITY universe, from primitive rafts to star-spanning spaceships. It provides brief rules for using these vehicles in chases and in combat, and for what happens when two vehicles attempt to occupy the same place at the same time.

Each of the land, water, air, and space vehicles described here is a stock vehicle, with average characteristics. More options and details on vehicle customization and combat, can be found in the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Vehicle Descriptions

Table P42: Vehicles, on the following page, gives characteristics and statistics for all available vehicles. They are grouped on the table and described in the text in order of the Progress Level at which each type of vehicle was developed. Vehicles that came into being at a lower Progress Level remain available at higher Progress Levels, and often have better characteristics (and higher prices) than the table indicates, depending on what the Gamemaster decides.

PL 0-3: Stone Age through Age of Reason

Early vehicles that did not rely on animal power used the medium of water for transport. These vehicles appeared early in humanity's history, but modern versions can be crafted with little trouble. Descriptions and game data for these vehicles are subject to change through the advance of time. Also, the "Cruise" and "Max" figures are highly variable, since these vehicles are not independently powered; the velocity of a primitive water vehicle is a function of wind speed or water current.

Canoe: This category includes any small boat powered by oars or paddles. The canoe described here is a two-person version, though larger canoes are available for higher cost.

Raft: A flat flotation device, usually made by tying logs together or by attaching pontoons on opposite sides of a flat surface. Rafts are useful for transporting passengers or cargo down rivers. On a shallow river, the operator can use a pole to maneuver the raft.

Rowboat: A rowboat works much like a canoe, though its size and shape give the rowboat more stability. Locomotion is provided by oars. A larger vessel powered by several rowers would have improved durability, at least twice the values given on the table.

Sail: This category includes any small boat powered by wind caught in a sail. A standard vessel can hold six people; larger sailing vessels, such as the Spanish galleon, have much greater durability and can be outfitted with weapons.

PL 4: Industrial Age

Improvements in naval vessels occur during this age, but the greatest advance is the appearance of the first automobiles and air vehicles.

Bicycle: Two-wheeled vehicles come in many styles with various functions. The table describes a simple, one-person multi-speed bike.

Cabin cruiser: This water vessel typically provides bunking for up to six people, and can travel 500 kilometers before requiring refueling.

Motorcar: The first automobile. While lacking any features of aerodynamics or comfort, cars quickly replace animal power as the popular form of transport.

Motor yacht: This luxury boat combines some of the best features of the speedboat and the range of a cabin cruiser to create a beautiful vessel capable of days of travel at a respectable speed.

Propeller plane: This type of aircraft comes in many styles, but all make use of the aerial propeller to achieve and maintain flight.

Speedboat: No sleeping facilities are provided on a small speedboat, unlike the cabin cruiser. It has an effective range of 100 kilometers before requiring refueling.

Tank: A military development to replace cavalry, the tank serves the purpose of heavy assault on the modern battlefield. The standard tank of PL 4 is equipped with a 76mm cannon: d6w/d4+1m/d6+1m, HI/G, and moderate alloy armor: d4+1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4 (En).

A PL 5 tank is even more heavily armed and armored, with a 120mm cannon: d8w/d6+1m/d6+3m, HI/A, and much thicker alloy armor: d6+1 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6 (En).

PL 5: Information Age

This era achieves refinements and improvements over the previous age's developments. Jet engines, developed late in PL 4, come into widespread use.

Compact car: This is a small, inexpensive automobile. At PL 6, the compact car runs on electricity instead of fossil fuels.

Executive jet: A jet aircraft with all the accoutrements of a modern office. Corporations, governments, and wealthy businessmen purchase executive jets to move quickly and in comfort.

Fighter jet: The military jet provides reconnaissance, air defense, and bombardment of ground targets. A basic PL 5 fighter has air-to-air missiles (d8s/d8+1w/d6m, HI/G) and a

TABLE P42: VEHICLES

Vehicle	Skill	Drv	Acc	Cruise	Max	Type	Dur	Avail	Cost
Progress Levels 0-3: Stone Age through Age of Reason									
Canoe	Water	+1	2	10	18	O	3/3/2	Any	75
Raft	Water	+2	2	8	16	O	3/3/2	Any	50
Rowboat	Water	—	2	10	22	O	5/5/2	Any	100
Sail	Water	+1	2	10	15	O	4/4/2	Any	2000
Progress Level 4: Industrial Age									
Bicycle	Daredevil	—	8	28	40	O	1/1/1	Any	300
Cabin cruiser	Water	+1	6	16	30	G	10/10/5	Any	50K
Motorcar	Land	+1	30	50	80	O	5/5/3	Any	8000
Motor yacht	Water	-1	10	20	40	G	6/6/3	Any	80K
Prop. plane	Air	+1	20	200	400	O	4/4/2	Com	20K
Speedboat	Water	—	20	60	80	G	6/6/3	Any	12K
Tank	Land	+1	10	40	60	A	20/20/10	Mil	250K
Progress Level 5: Information Age									
Compact car	Land	—	40	100	130	O	7/7/3	Com	8000
Executive jet	Air	-1	50	500	1000	G	10/10/5	Con	250K
Fighter jet	Air	-1	100	700	3000	G	13/13/5	Mil	1.2M
Helicopter	Air	+1	40	110	400	G	10/10/5	Con	80K
Jet ski	Water	+1	20	30	70	O	3/3/2	Any	14K
Luxury car	Land	-1	50	100	200	G	11/11/5	Com	45K
Mid-sized car	Land	—	50	100	180	G	10/10/5	Com	15K
Motorcycle	Land	+1	60	110	220	O	4/4/2	Com	15K
Pickup truck	Land	—	40	100	180	G	15/15/7	Com	18K
Private jet	Air	—	50	500	1000	G	10/10/5	Con	150K
Semi	Land	+1	20	100	160	G	20/20/11	Com	50K
Snowmobile	Land	—	20	40	90	O	5/5/2	Any	12K
Sport utility	Land	—	40	110	200	G	17/17/8	Com	30K
Sports car	Land	-2	60	130	320	G	9/9/4	Com	35K
Ultralight	Daredevil	—	10	60	100	O	3/3/2	Com	3000
Van	Land	+1	30	100	180	G	16/16/8	Any	25K
Progress Level 6: Fusion Age									
Electric car	Land	-1	30	100	180	G	10/10/5	Com	15K
Jetpack	Daredevil	+1	30	120	300	O	4/4/2	Con	15K
Reentry capsule	—	—	—	—	—	G	Hull 1/1	Con	5000
Skybike	Air	-2	250	750	1500	O	8/8/4	Com	25K
Skycar	Air	-1	200	1000	3000	G	11/11/5	Com	50K
Skytank	Air	—	100	500	2000	A	25/25/12	Mil	400K
STG shuttle	Space	—	500	50K	—	A	Hull 16/4	Con	400K
System liner	Space	—	.03M	.15AU	—	A	Hull 32/8	Con	700K
Progress Level 7: Gravity Age									
Cutter	Space	-1	2M	1.5AU	—	A	Hull 20/4	Mil	1000K
Escape pod	—	—	—	—	—	G	Hull 2/1	Any	50K
Launch	Space	-1	.05M	.15AU	—	G	Hull 8/2	Any	250K
Trader	Space	—	.03M	0.1AU	—	A	Hull 24/6	Con	750K
Transport	Space	—	.03M	0.1AU	—	A	Hull 40/10	Con	900K
Yacht	Space	—	2M	1.5AU	—	A	Hull 24/6	Con	900K
Progress Level 8: Energy Age									
Space fighter	Space	-1	4M	3AU	—	A	Hull 10/2	Res	1200K

K = thousands M = Megameters per phase per phase
AU = Astronomical Units per hour

How to Read the Vehicles Table

Here are brief descriptions of what the column headings on TABLE P42: VEHICLES mean:

Vehicle: The common name of the item.

Skill: The name (sometimes abbreviated) of the skill a character needs to improve his ability to use the vehicle. "Water," "Land," "Air," and "Space" refer to the four Vehicle Operation specialty skills.

Drv: Drive rating, an indication of how the vehicle handles, reflected as a bonus or penalty to the operator's Vehicle Operation skill check.

Acc: Acceleration, a figure that indicates how responsive a vehicle is to changes in speed, measured in meters per phase per phase (mpp) for land, air, and water vehicles and megameters per phase per phase (Mpp) for vehicles capable of interstellar travel. (One megameter equals 1,000 kilometers.) For information on how to apply this figure, see "Speeding Up and Slowing Down" on page 199.

Cruise and **Max:** The vehicle's velocity at cruising speed and its maximum speed. For determining how far a vehicle can travel in an extended period of time, read the figures as kilometers per hour (kph). To keep track of the distance between two vehicles during a combat scene, read the figure as meters per phase (mpp). Interstellar vehicles are exceptions to the above; for them, velocity is measured in astronomical units (AUs) per hour. One AU is equal to the distance between the Earth and the Sun, or about 150 million kilometers.

Type: The combat toughness of the vehicle, either Ordinary (O), Good (G), or Amazing (A). Damage caused by weapons of lesser firepower degrades (mortals become wounds, wounds become stuns, stuns are ignored) when those weapons are used against vehicles of a greater toughness. (A weapon that does Ordinary damage against a Type G vehicle, for instance.) See "Degrading Damage" on page 190 in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor.*

Dur: A vehicle's durability, expressed as stun/wound/mortal points for most planetary vehicles, or as hull size/number of compartments for ships with multiple compartments.

Avail: The vehicle's availability, ranging from "Any" to "Restricted." For definitions of these terms, see "How to Read the Weapons Tables" on page 174 in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor.*

Cost: The base cost of the vehicle. The given number is for a new vehicle constructed at the base Progress Level of the campaign.

25mm chain gun (2d4w/3d4w/ 2d4m, HI/G).

Helicopter: This category includes various aircraft that rely on rotary force for lift and movement. The basic model is a light utility helicopter that holds a pilot and six passengers, capable of traveling up to 500 kilometers on a load of fuel.

Jet ski: A form of recreation on most worlds, the jet ski can carry two people over a body of water. Its range is 100 kilometers.

Luxury car: This category refers to any large, expensive automobile with lots of accessories and luxurious amenities.

Mid-sized car: A medium-sized automobile of the type usually owned by ordinary families.

Motorcycle: This two-wheeled, motorized vehicle has room for the operator and one passenger.

Pickup truck: The typical flatbed pickup truck holds an operator and up to two passengers, plus room for cargo.

Private jet: A small jet aircraft, usually with enough room for a pilot and three to eight passengers.

Semi: A powerful cab and engine that can pull large trailers of various length and capacity.

Snowmobile: Like the jet ski, the snowmobile is used for both recreation and transportation. The standard vehicle holds two people, and can only be used over snow-covered or icy terrain.

Sport utility vehicle: A powerful and ruggedly stylish all-wheel-drive vehicle, the sport utility roves over many types of terrain.

Sports car: A small, sleek automobile with a powerful engine and an aerodynamic design.

Ultralight: A hang glider with a tiny engine attached, the ultralight is handy because it weighs only 50 kg and can be stowed in a large backpack-style case. The ultralight has a range of 200 kilometers.

Van: The panel van usually has seats for the operator and one passenger, while the open rear of the interior compartment has room for cargo. Delivery vans fall into this category.

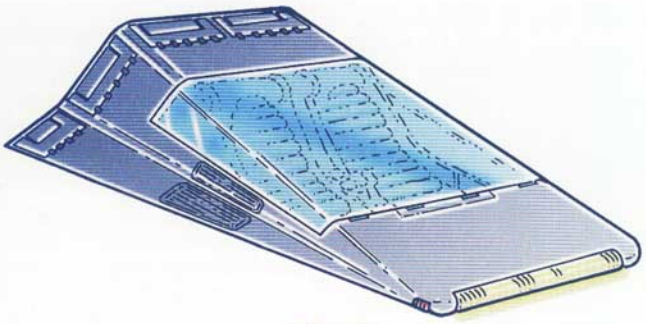
PL 6: Fusion Age

Gravity induction technology, developed late in this era, brings personal air travel and commercial space travel into the reach of many individuals. PL 6 space vehicles may use a mass reactor, but the stardrive has yet to be invented.

All personal ground and air vehicles of this age are powered by lanthanide capacitors that must be recharged after 24 hours of use. A full recharge takes 1 hour, and can be obtained through the use of any external source of electricity.

Electric car: Technology improves to the point that the electric car becomes affordable and functional. Silent and easy to handle, the elec-

Motorcycle



Skycar

tric car runs for 24 hours before requiring recharging; recharging takes one hour. By adding a turbo-capacitor (25K), the electric car's acceleration increases to 60—though it must be recharged after 12 hours due to the increased power drain.

Jetpack: Relying on advanced low-heat, high-thrust engines, the jetpack allows flight at speeds of up to 300 kph, with a range of about 500 kilometers. It weighs about 25 kg and is worn like a backpack on a secure harness. A hand-held remote and smart body-position sensors make up the jetpack's control system.

A space-capable version is commonly referred to as a thruster. In space, the thruster's *practical* maximum speed is 1,000 kph—once the vehicle has been accelerated up to that velocity, exactly half of its fuel has been used. The other half of the fuel supply is typically, and wisely, saved to bring the thruster to a halt at the end of its journey. (Higher velocities are certainly possible, but at the expense of not having enough fuel to come to a safe stop later on.)

Reentry capsule: This is a personal emergency escape device that allows the user to leave a ship or station and survive the trip to a planet or moon below. The capsule is about the size of an aircraft ejection seat, with a 48-hour supply of air and rations. After ejection, the user can drift through space hoping for rescue (the capsule includes an emergency beacon and a survival kit), or he can fire braking rockets to slow the capsule and bring it out of orbit. A parachute can be deployed to slow the capsule's descent to a planet's surface, but this feature is useless in a vacuum or a thin atmosphere. Finally, the capsule includes an automatic flotation ring to make a serviceable life raft if it comes down in water.

The capsule may run out of air before it has time to come down from a very high orbit, and all kinds of things can go wrong in reentry or on landing—but the device at least offers a fighting chance.

Skybike: This single-person flying machine uses gravity induction technology to achieve a high velocity. Transparent polymere shielding (equivalent to attack armor) prevents the pilot of this maneuverable vehicle from being buffeted by the air he travels through.

Skycar: The skycar, introduced late in PL 6 after gravity induction technology was developed, is an air vehicle that comes in a variety of styles and makes; a sport coupe is a two-seater with higher speed and better handling, while a luxury sedan can seat six comfortably but can't travel as fast and is less maneuverable (maximum speed 2,000 kph, no Drv bonus).

Skytank: This vehicle performs all the functions of helicopters and jets, but it also serves as the backbone of ground assaults. A 120mm rail cannon (d8+1w/d8m/d12+2m, HI/A) and heavy plates of *cerametal armor* (d8 (LI), d8 (HI), d8 (En)) are standard.

STG shuttle: The space-to-ground shuttle is a fast, relatively inexpensive means of getting people and cargo from a planet to ships or stations in planetary orbit. Powered by a planetary thruster engine and a fusion generator, this vehicle doesn't require separate rockets to achieve orbital velocity, working much like an airplane. The STG shuttle is incapable of deep space travel.

Statistics: Hull size 16, 4 compartments. Weapon: none. Armor: light polymeric, d4–1 (LI), d4–1 (HI), d4–2 (En).

Compartments: C1 = Command 6/6/3; C2 = Engineering 16/16/8; C3 = Cargo 6/6/3; C4 = Passenger hold 4/4/2.

Random damage: 1–2 = C1; 3–5 = C2; 6–12 = C3; 13–20 = C4.

System liner: This vessel can't enter a planet's atmosphere, but it can meet a shuttle in orbit and then carry cargo or passengers to other places in the star system. It is driven by a fusion torch engine with a fusion generator power plant.

At PL 7, a system liner can be outfitted for drivespace at a cost of $1,000,000.

Statistics: Hull size 32, 8 compartments. Weapon: CHE missile rack, d8s/d6+1w/d4m, LI/A. Armor: light alloy, d6–1 (LI), d6–1 (HI), d4–1 (En). Drivespace: 5.

Compartments: C1 = Command 10/10/5; C2 = Engineering 14/14/7; C3 = Engineering 12/12/6; C4 = Auxiliary 10/10/5; C5 = Cargo 4/4/2; C6 = Cargo 6/6/3; C7 = Cargo 4/4/2; C8 = Cargo 4/4/2.

Random damage: 1 = C1; 2 = C2; 3–4 = C3; 5–6 = C4; 7–9 = C5; 10–12 = C6; 13–16 = C7; 17–20 = C8.

PL 7: Gravity Age

The Gravity Age continues to use many older vehicles, with new components added—more efficient power plants coupled to PL 6 engines, for instance. The true advance in transportation is the propagation of vessels that traverse the space between the stars.

Cutter: The typical cutter, a small warship designed for high speed and long endurance, has an induction engine powered by a mass reactor and guided by a stabilizer that gives a –1 bonus to the helmsman's Vehicle Operation–*space vehicle* skill checks. Stardrive-capable cutters, *known as drive cutters, cost* $500,000 more than the listed price.

Statistics: Hull size 20, 4 compartments. Weapon: plasma cannon, d6+2w/d8+2w/d6+1m, En/A. Armor: moderate neutronite d6+1 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6 (En). Defenses: deflection inducer (+2 penalty to any attack). Drivespace: 10.

Compartments: C1 = Command 8/8/4; C2 = Engineering 20/20/10; C3 = Weapon 6/6/3; C4 = Auxiliary 6/6/3.

Random damage: 1–2 = C1; 3–5 = C2; 6–12 = C3; 13–20 = C4.

Escape pod: A small sphere that can hold up to eight people, an escape pod, or emergency pod, has food, water, and environment supplies sufficient to last up to four

Used Vehicles

If a character is strapped for cash, or for some other reason doesn't want to buy a new vehicle, the Gamemaster may allow the purchase of a used vehicle for anywhere from 20% to 80% of the listed cost (roll 2d4 × 10 to determine randomly).

Of course, vehicles with some wear and tear on them already won't be as reliable. In any situation when a vehicle breaks down or is damaged, its lower price translates into a penalty to any Technical Science–*repair* or *juryrig* skill checks made to fix the vehicle: +1 for a price of 70% or 80%, +2 for 50% or 60%, +3 for 30% or 40%, and +4 for 20%.

weeks. It has no engine, but it does have a continuous-broadcast beacon that can be traced.

Statistics: Hull size 2, 1 compartment. Weapon: none. Armor: light polymeric, d4–1 (LI), d4–1 (HI), d4–2 (En).

Compartments: C1 = Command 4/4/2.

Launch: Sometimes referred to as a lifeboat, a launch is a light space-only vehicle suitable for short interplanetary runs of 100 million kilometers or so.

Around space industrial facilities, launches of various types are workhorses. A launch can be carried in one compartment of a larger ship and provides accommodations for up to 12 passengers and crew. The typical launch's ion engine (PL 6 technology) is powered by a mass reactor. Launches aren't usually fitted with stardrives.

Statistics: Hull size 8, 2 compartments. Weapon: none. Armor: light polymeric, d4–1 (LI), d4–1 (HI), d4–2 (En). Drivespace (if applicable): 5.

Compartments: C1 = Command 6/6/3; C2 = Engineering 10/10/5.

Random damage: 1–7 = C1; 8–20 = C2.

Trader: A common spacecraft is the trader, or tramp freighter. It's smaller and faster than a transport, and is usually the ship of choice of spacefaring heroes. One or two experienced space hands can handle a trader, although it can carry up to 10 additional passengers or crew. The typical trader's ion engine (PL 6 technology) is powered by a mass reactor. A drive trader requires an additional investment of $750,000.

Statistics: Hull size 24, 6 compartments. Weapon: mass cannon, d6+2s/d6+1w/d6+3w, LI/A. Armor: moderate cerametal, d4+1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4+1 (En). Defenses: point-defense gun (destroys incoming missile before it can detonate). Drivespace: 5.

Compartments: C1 = Command 8/8/4; C2 = Engineering 16/16/8; C3 = Auxiliary 8/8/4; C4 = Weapons 6/6/3; C5 = Cargo 6/6/3; C6 = Cargo 4/4/2.

Random damage: 1–2 = C1; 3–4 = C2; 5–7 = C3; 8–10 = C4; 11–15 = C5; 16–20 = C6.

Transport: One of the most common spacecraft encountered, the transport can be handled by a two- to four-person crew and carries up to a dozen passengers. The transport is typically powered by a mass reactor with an ion engine (PL 6 technology). For an extra $1,000,000, it can be equipped with a stardrive.

Transports are typically used for carrying high-density cargo, or cargo that commands a high value for a little space.

Statistics: Hull size 40, 10 compartments. Weapon: IR laser, d4+1s/d4+1w/d6+1w, En/A. Armor:moderate alloy, d4+1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4 (En). Drivespace: 5.

Compartments: C1 = Command 6/6/3; C2 = Engineering 18/18/9; C3 = Auxiliary 16/16/8; C4 = Weapons 6/6/3; C5 = Passenger quarters 6/6/3; C6 = Crew quarters 4/4/2; C7 = Cargo 6/6/3; C8 = Cargo 6/6/3; C9 = Cargo 6/6/3; C10 = Cargo 6/6/3.

Random damage: 1 = C1; 2 = C2; 3 = C3; 4 = C4; 5–6 = C5; 7–8 = C6; 9–10 = C7; 11–13 = C8; 14–16 = C9; 17–20 = C10.

Yacht: One of the ultimate symbols of wealth and luxury, the yacht is a small spacefaring palace. It's small and usually minimally armed, but many yachts are equipped with the finest engines available and are very fast. Facilities are provided for a small crew of space hands, cooks, valets, or other servants, and four to eight passengers in very comfortable private cabins. The typical yacht's induction engine is powered by a grav-fusion cell. Most yachts do not carry stardrives, but a drive yacht can be purchased for an additional $750,000.

Statistics: Hull size 24, 6 compartments. Weapon: X-ray laser, d6+1s/d4+2w/d4m, En/A. Armor: moderate cerametal, d4+1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4+1 (En). Drivespace: 10.

Compartments: C1 = Command 10/10/5; C2 = Engineering 10/10/5; C3 = Auxiliary 10/10/5; C4 = Passenger quarters 6/6/3; C5 = Passenger quarters 6/6/3; C6 = Cargo 6/6/3.

Random damage: 1–2 = C1; 3–4 = C2; 5–7 = C3; 8–10 = C4; 11–15 = C5; 16–20 = C6.

Space Vehicle Statistics

Every space vehicle has a number of characteristics that aren't mentioned on TABLE P42: VEHICLES but are included in the descriptions of those vehicles:

► Hull size is a general indicator of how large and how durable a space vehicle is. For a stock vehicle, this number is always equal to the total of the mortal ratings of all the vehicle's compartments.

► Weapon, Armor, and Defenses listings identify how a typical vehicle of the type is equipped. Damage statistics for weapons and armor and a brief description of how defenses function (for ships that are equipped with them) are given inside the ship's description. The *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on all three of these characteristics.

► Drivespace applies only to ships that are outfitted with a stardrive and gives the amount of distance in light-years that the ship can cover in one trip through drivespace.

► Compartments is a list of all the sections within a typical vehicle, identifying each one with a key number (for instance, C1 generally refers to the command compartment) and giving the damage rating in stun/wound/mortal format for each section.

► Random damage provides a way to determine which compartment of a ship is hit when the attack is not targeted against a specific location. Roll a d20 and find the result on this list to see which compartment takes damage.

PL 8: Energy Age

While vehicle forms remain familiar, miniaturization of previous technologies allows for wider distribution of vehicles to the masses, and for smaller vessels.

Space fighter: This is a small, personal fighter, piloted by only one or two individuals. The first appearances of drivewave units and anomaly inducers allow the small craft to both traverse the stars and engage in combat. The typical space fighter's anomaly inducer engine is powered by a matter converter. The drive fighter has an extra cost of $1,000,000.

Statistics: Hull size 10, 2 compartments. Weapon: kinetic lance, d4+1w/2d4w/d4+3m, HI/A. Armor: moderate nanofluidic, 2d4 (LI), 2d4 (HI), 2d4 (En). Defenses: displacer (+3 penalty to any attack). Drivespace: 25.

Compartments: C1 = Command 8/8/4; C2 = Engineering 12/12/6.

Random damage: 1–7 = C1; 8–20 = C2.

Vehicle Combat

In vehicle combat, two or more vehicles battle or chase each other, or a vehicle takes on a character on foot. Vehicle combat scenes revolve around high-speed attacks and high-speed chases—usually both at the same time.

Heroes use Vehicle Operation and its specialty skills to operate vehicles. If a vehicle requires more than a single operator, such as large spaceships and ocean vessels, Vehicle Operation is the skill used by the pilot or driver, and other operators use some aspect of the System Operation skill.

Some vehicles can't be operated untrained. This includes all air and space vehicles, and some military land and water vehicles. (Depending on the campaign, some vehicles that require trained operators may have computer-assistance programming to talk a hero through the process. Computer programs can also be used to operate some vehicle systems, including the actual driving, in futuristic settings.)

For vehicles that can be operated by a single character, the Vehicle Operation skill covers not only driving or flying the craft but also firing its weapons (if it has weapons) and operating any built-in equipment, including communications, sensors, navigation, computers, and defensive gear.

Vehicles are treated much like heroes and other characters. They have their own game statistics, their own advantages and disadvantages, and sometimes even their own personalities that make them unique characters in their own right. Some heroes become so attached to their vehicles and so identified with them that the vehicles take on greater significance over the course of a campaign.

Vehicle vs. Vehicle

When single-operator vehicles such as cars, helicopters, speedboats, and jets engage in combat, use these rules.

The Battle or Chase Begins

The Gamemaster sets the opening distance between the vehicles, depending on the needs of the scene and the nature of the situation. Throughout the scene, the most important consideration is where the vehicles are in relation to each other—how far one vehicle is from the other in any given phase. Their surroundings are only important because of the obstacles, hazards, and conditions they might present.

The Rounds of Action

Vehicle combat works much like personal combat, in that activity takes place within rounds that are divided into four phases, and every round starts with an action check.

But vehicle combat differs from personal combat in a couple of significant ways. First, a vehicle in motion continues to move in each phase of the round. Second, regardless of whether he has an action available, the driver or pilot can control his vehicle in every phase by performing a Routine maneuver. (Maneuvers are explained in more detail in the following section.)

During a phase in which the operator of a vehicle is entitled to an action, he can attempt to perform a Moderate or Extreme maneuver, try to employ vehicular systems such as weapons or defenses, or attempt a Tactics check.

Characters riding as passengers in a vehicle can also perform actions according to their action check result. The options open to passengers are: performing an action with a vehicle system, using a piece of personal equipment or a weapon, or making a Tactics check. The results of all actions and any penalties associated with those actions are applied at the end of each phase, just like normal, so a weapon that strikes in the Good phase may destroy a vehicle before its operator can do anything other than use a Routine maneuver.

The scene continues for as many rounds as necessary until one side wins the combat or chase, both vehicles stop moving due to damage, or one or both vehicles get away, successfully hide, or simply decide to end the combat or pursuit.

Maneuvers

A maneuver is an activity undertaken by a vehicle operator to control or direct his moving vehicle. Every maneuver is rated as either Routine, Moderate, or Extreme, depending on its complexity or innate difficulty. The operator of a moving vehicle can

Just So You Know . . .

This combat system doesn't pretend to be utterly realistic and all-encompassing. Instead, it's designed to simulate the types of battles and chases seen in heroic fiction—and it's designed to handle these scenes quickly and in a roleplaying fashion. With that in mind, don't look for counters or miniatures or markers of any kind. This isn't that type of combat system. (The *Gamemaster Guide* does provide an additional level of detail if you're into that, however.)

Also note that everything discussed herein is meant for use in dramatic situations. In other words, Vehicle Operation checks aren't needed for everyday driving or flying. Skill checks only come into play when the stakes are raised and the situation gets hairy. Remember the basic rule—not every action requires a die roll!

perform one Routine maneuver in every phase, even if his action check indicates that he's not entitled to an action in that phase. To perform a Moderate or Extreme maneuver, he must spend an action during a phase in which he is entitled to do so.

► **Routine maneuvers** are simple course changes and reflexive activities such as accelerating, decelerating, braking, swerving, turning, taking off, landing, hovering, or diving. In its simplest form, a Routine maneuver allows an operator to follow a road or fly straight and not run into anything.

► **Moderate maneuvers** are more difficult, requiring concentration and thought. To perform any Moderate maneuver, a driver or pilot must make a successful Vehicle Operation skill check. Moderate maneuvers include such activities as making a tight turn, stalling or recovering from a stall, reversing direction, pulling out of a dive, attempting to ram another vehicle, slamming on the brakes, or trying to regain control of a vehicle in a skid or spin. Using a vehicle system or making a Tactics check while performing a Routine maneuver to guide a vehicle is also considered a Moderate maneuver. Attempting to change intentions (see the next section, "Range and Intention") is a Moderate maneuver. Finally, a Moderate maneuver is required for an operator to perform a Routine maneuver in any situation when his skill check carries a situation penalty of +1 or +2.

For example, it's easy—a Routine maneuver—for the driver of a car to tap the brakes and make a right-angle turn at a reasonable rate of speed if the road is smooth and dry. But if he tries to do the same thing at high speed (+1 penalty) on a slippery surface (another +1 penalty), he'll most likely have to perform a Moderate maneuver (using an action and making a skill check) to have a chance of pulling it off.

If no other penalty applies because of the situation, attempting a Moderate maneuver automatically carries a +1 penalty to the operator's skill check.

► **Extreme maneuvers** are the most difficult to perform. They include a variety of special stunts such as rolls, loops, and zigzag driving; high-risk defensive driving such as screeching to a halt and doing a 180-degree turn simultaneously; and performing a Moderate maneuver while using a vehicle system or making a Tactics check in the same phase. Also, an Extreme maneuver is required for an operator to perform a Routine maneuver in any situation when his skill check carries a situation penalty of +3 or more. (See "Vehicle Operation Modifiers" on this page, and also take into account other possible modifiers such as for the operator being wounded.)

If no other penalties apply because of the situation, attempting an Extreme maneuver automatically carries a +3 penalty to the operator's skill check.

Range and Intention

For purposes of these vehicle combat rules, everything you need to know about who's chasing whom and which way they're going is represented by two factors: the range separating the vehicles, and each vehicle's intentions regarding the other.

The range between two vehicles is determined by the Gamemaster at the beginning of the scene. The setting and circumstances of the battle govern the initial range of the fight; two cars in a close-quarters chase might only be 50 or 60 meters apart, while two spaceships might open the battle at a range of several thousand kilometers. The range between the two vehicles changes each phase—if a car moving at 200 kph is chasing another car traveling at only 100 kph, the faster car will close the gap at a relative speed of 100 kph, or 100 meters per phase. If the two cars were 600 meters apart at the beginning of the round, the faster car will reduce this to 500, 400, 300, and finally 200 meters in the Amazing, Good, Ordi-

Vehicle Operation Modifiers

Clear conditions	−2
Normal conditions	0
Crowded conditions	+1
Hazardous conditions	+2
Traveling faster than cruising speed	+1
Traveling at max speed	+3
Moderate maneuver (if no other penalties)	+1
Extreme maneuver (if no other penalties)	+3
Vehicle damage:	
More than half of stun points lost	+1
More than half of wound points lost	+1
Mortal, per point	+1

Speeding Up and Slowing Down

Stepping on the gas, pushing the throttle forward, and hitting the brakes are some of the Routine maneuvers used to control a vehicle. No skill check is necessary—the driver simply states if he's changing his speed in any given phase. The maximum amount of change possible in a single phase depends on the "Acc" (acceleration) figure given on Table P42 for the vehicle in question.

For example, a mid-sized car, with an Acc of 50 meters per phase per phase (mpp) can go from a standstill to a speed of 100 kph in two phases and can reach its maximum speed of 180 kph in the fourth phase after it starts moving. While the car is moving, its operator can change its speed during any phase by an amount equal to or less than its Acc figure.

The Gamemaster may allow some vehicles to be accelerated at a faster rate than what's given on the table; flooring the gas pedal on a sports car will get the vehicle to its maximum speed more quickly than gradually accelerating it at 60 mpp—but any such attempt is a Moderate maneuver, meaning that it requires a Vehicle Operation skill check (and an available action) with a penalty of at least +1.

The rate at which a vehicle can be decelerated is equal to its Acc figure; a mid-sized car traveling at 100 kph needs two phases to come to a stop safely (without hitting anything). However, any vehicle that's in contact with the ground (a land vehicle, or an air vehicle in the process of making a landing) can decelerate at twice the rate indicated by its Acc figure if the operator is able to perform a Moderate maneuver to accomplish this; a mid-sized car traveling at 100 kph can be brought to a stop in one phase if the driver makes a successful Vehicle Operation check with a +1 penalty.

He's on My Tail!

If your Gamemaster is using the simple vehicle combat rules described in this chapter, a hero can put his vehicle in an excellent attacking position against an enemy by succeeding at an Extreme maneuver. Explain to your Gamemaster what your hero wants to try—an Immelmann turn, a dramatic jump, whatever. If the feat makes sense to him within the context of the story, the Gamemaster will allow your hero to attempt an Extreme maneuver to pull it off. (Remember, any Extreme maneuver carries at least a +3 penalty.)

If your hero succeeds, he's on the enemy's tail, in perfect position to fire weapons, ram, board, or try anything else within reason. Depending on the result of his Vehicle Operation skill check, the tailing character gains a –1, –2, or –3 bonus to all subsequent action checks and skill checks for as long as he stays on the enemy's tail.

The vehicle being chased needs to succeed on a Moderate maneuver to get out of the tailing vehicle's path—or may be able to make an Extreme maneuver to reverse the situation and get on the other guy's tail!

nary, and Marginal phases of the action round.

However, not all vehicle combats are as cut-and-dried as a simple linear chase on a straight highway. What if the first car suddenly slows down and makes a hairpin turn, or veers off in another direction? What happens then? This is where each combatant's intentions come into play. The four basic intentions are *close, hold, open, and break.*

Close indicates that the driver wants to reduce the distance between his vehicle and his quarry. Maybe he wants to get into weapon range, set up a ram or a sideswipe, or just make sure the other fellow doesn't get away. Usually this means that he's driving toward the other vehicle, or taking an intercept course.

Open means that the driver or pilot is trying to increase the distance between him and his pursuer, perhaps to get out of weapon range or to escape the fight altogether. Generally, this means that the vehicle operator is driving or flying away from the other vehicle.

Hold is an in-between category for those times when it's not clear if the operator is moving toward or away from his adversary. It's also useful for remaining at a range where your weapons are better than your opponent's, or when you want to continue following an opponent at the same distance for whatever reason.

Break signifies an intent to get out of the combat via some unusual or abrupt maneuver—ducking behind a passing asteroid, veering onto the exit ramp at the last moment, putting your aircraft into a steep dive. Breaking contact isn't always an available option. If two vehicles are slugging it out in the open with no cover or complications, there really isn't much a pilot or driver can do to get out of range. Your Gamemaster will let you know on a situation-by-situation basis if a break attempt could work.

Note that any attempt to change intentions (from *close* to *hold*, for instance) is considered a Moderate maneuver, which requires the vehicle operator to spend an action during a phase in which he is entitled to do so.

The combination of both drivers' intentions should make the current status of the battle fairly obvious from phase to phase. Here's how intentions affect the range each phase:

▶ **Close vs. close:** The distance between the vehicles drops by the sum of their speeds.

▶ **Open vs. open:** The distance between the vehicles increases by the sum of their speeds.

Overshooting the Target

If a vehicle passes the vehicle it's chasing, the operator overshot the target and is now pulling away on the other side. For example, two cars barreling head-on toward each other at a speed of 150 kph each might begin a phase only 200 meters apart. Each will move 150 meters toward the other . . . which means that at the end of the phase, the cars will be 100 meters apart and moving away from each other (provided they didn't collide, of course).

▶ **Close vs. open:** The distance between the vehicles changes by the difference in their speeds. The distance decreases if the closing vehicle is moving faster, or it increases if the closing vehicle is the slower of the two.

▶ **Hold vs. hold:** No change in relative distance.

▶ **Hold vs. close or open:** The distance between the vehicles changes according to the speed of the closing or opening vehicle.

▶ **Break vs. any:** If successful, the break ends the combat scene.

A driver or pilot may decide to shift his intention from time to time during an encounter with another vehicle. Doing this is a simple matter of using maneuvers to change the speed of his vehicle or the direction in which it's moving.

Prevailing Conditions

Prevailing conditions refers to the terrain and environment in which a chase or vehicle battle takes place, usually involving factors that could hamper visibility or make travel more dangerous. For game purposes, the four types of prevailing conditions are: *clear, normal, crowded,* and *hazardous.*

▶ **Clear conditions** include a bright, sunny day; a moonlit night; a straight, well-paved, empty road. A highway, clear skies, and smooth, open water are clear conditions.

▶ **Normal conditions** include typical driving conditions such as what would be experienced on a mostly empty, gently winding road with the occasional pothole or wayward pedestrian. Light seas and partly cloudy skies fall into this category.

▶ **Crowded conditions** occur when traffic is heavier; road conditions are slightly hazardous; visibility is impaired by winding roads, darkness, or bright sunlight; or weather (light rain, fog, or light snow) makes travel more difficult. Overcast skies and high seas fall into this category. For space vehicles, asteroid belts and moon-sized gravity wells constitute crowded conditions.

▶ **Hazardous conditions** include congested city streets at the height of rush hour, off-road travel or perilous road conditions, total darkness, and severe weather such as torrential rain, blizzard, heavy fog, or high winds. For space vehicles, planetary gravity wells fall into this category.

Cruising Speed

A vehicle's cruising speed is the fastest speed at which the vehicle can be safely controlled in a combat or chase situation. If an operator decides to push his craft beyond its cruising speed, a penalty is applied to his Vehicle Operation checks: +1 if cruising speed is exceeded, or +3 if the vehicle is pushed all the way to its maximum speed.

The Gamemaster may decide to invoke this +3 penalty even if a vessel isn't literally traveling at its maximum speed. For instance, although a sports car's maximum speed is 320 kph, an operator should not be able to avoid the +3 penalty by having the car do "only" 300 kph for an indefinite length of time.

Failing a Vehicle Operation Check

In addition to possibly not moving according to his intention, an operator who achieves a Failure or Critical Failure result on his Vehicle Operation skill check could lose control. He must immediately attempt a second Vehicle Operation skill check (applying any appropriate bonus or penalty) and consult TABLE P44: LOSING CONTROL OF A VEHICLE. The possible outcomes are described below. In addition to what's discussed here, the Gamemaster may decide that when a vehicle goes out of control, it suffers some sort of mechanical breakdown that could prevent it from functioning properly or even render it useless until repairs are made.

Crash: The vehicle strikes any nearby barrier or obstacle in spectacular fashion, suffering impact damage as appropriate for its speed. A spacecraft in deep space can't crash; it goes into a spin instead, but the pilot suffers a +4 penalty on all attempts to regain control.

Spin or spinout: The vehicle goes wildly out of control. A car spins out; a plane stalls and begins to lose altitude. The spin or spinout continues until the operator is able to make a successful Vehicle Operation check. Roll d8 to determine the direction the vehicle ends up facing when the spin ends: 1 = forward; 2 = forward/right; 3 = right; 4 = backward/right; 5 = backward; 6 = backward/left; 7 = left; 8 = forward/left. The operator can't do anything else until he manages to regain control of the vehicle (by making a successful Vehicle Operation check), and all characters in the vehicle—including the operator—suffer a +2 penalty to any actions they attempt.

If the operator of a vehicle that's already in a spin or spinout fails another Vehicle Operation check and then gets any outcome on TABLE P44: LOSING CONTROL OF A VEHICLE other than "Under control," the vehicle crashes.

Skid or yaw: The vehicle slides at an angle to the right or left while continuing to maintain forward momentum. Roll d6 to determine which side the vehicle slides toward: 1–3 = right, 4–6 = left.

The skid or yaw continues until the operator's next available action, at which time he can end the skid immediately by using that action (no skill check is required) to bring his vehicle under control. Alternatively, he can attempt a Vehicle Operation check with a +1 penalty (in addition to other penalties that may apply). If this check succeeds, he ends the skid and is able to perform a Routine maneuver in the same phase. If this check fails, the vehicle crashes or stalls.

Under control: The operator either experiences no trouble and continues on his way, or manages to get an out-of-control vehicle back on track.

Ramming and Crashing

If a vehicle with the intention to close can reach or pass its opponent in the current phase, the driver can attempt to ram his opponent. He has to succeed in a Moderate maneuver in order to strike his target—if he fails his Vehicle Operation check, he misses and continues on his way. Obviously, some rams are easier than others; hitting a stationary target, or a target so big you just can't miss it, might be ruled an automatic success by the Gamemaster.

If a ram occurs, the rammed vehicle's driver makes a Vehicle Operation check and consults TABLE P43: CRASH AND COLLISION DAMAGE. The column is determined by the velocity of the ramming vehicle—slow-moving vehicles inflict a lot less damage than fast-moving ones. Use the relative speed to govern ram damage; if two vehicles strike head-on, add their speeds together!

If the ramming vehicle is considerably larger or smaller than its target, shift the damage suffered by the victim one column in favor of the bigger vehicle—in effect, increasing the ramming vehicle's speed. For example, a semi moving at 100 kph rams a sports car. Normally the sports car would take damage as indicated in the 61–120 column, but since it was flattened by a much bigger vehicle, you'll move up to the 121–300 column (which should wreck the sports car pretty thoroughly). If the situation were reversed, the semi would sustain damage on the 21–60 column.

TABLE P43: CRASH AND COLLISION DAMAGE

Check Result	Speed of Impact (kph)				
	5–20	21–60	61–120	121–300	301+
Crit. Failure	d6w	d6+2w	d6+2m	d8+4m	d12+8m
Failure	d4w	d4+2w	d4+2m	d8+2m	d12+6m
Ordinary	d6s	d4w	d4+1m	d6+2m	d8+6m
Good	d4s	d4+2s	d8+2w	d4+2m	d6+4m
Amazing	—	d4–2s	d6+2w	d8+4w	d12+6w

TABLE P44: LOSING CONTROL OF A VEHICLE

Skill Check Result	Outcome
Critical Failure	Crash
Failure	Spin or spinout
Ordinary	Skid or yaw
Good	Under control
Amazing	Under control

Example of Vehicle Combat

Gamemaster: Jason Steel of the Anti-terrorism Task Force slowly turns his car into the dark alley. Sitting beside him, Agent Sara Okana peers through the windshield. Suddenly headlights ignite deeper in the alley, and you hear the roar of an engine! Another car rockets toward you, maybe 40 meters away. What are you going to do, Steel?

Jim (playing Jason Steel): You always get me into these situations, Okana! I'm throwing it into reverse and backing up!

Sean (playing Sara Okana): Wait, I want to go after them!

J: Yeah, but you're not driving.

GM: Okay . . . the other car's trying to overtake you. You're going about 20 kph in reverse, which is going to give you a +1 penalty to your Vehicle Operation checks. Everyone make action checks.

J: I got a Good.

S: I rolled an Amazing action check!

GM: Okay, I've rolled for the individuals in the other car. They're starting out at 40 kph. It's the first round of this combat scene—the Amazing phase. You back up 20 meters, but they advance 40 meters toward you, so they're only 20 meters away now. What's Sara doing, Sean?

S: What does Sara always do? She leans out and fires a shot from her .38 into the glare of light. My base situation die is –d4, and there's a +1 penalty for medium range. Any other modifiers?

GM: No, so you roll with a +d0.

S: Yes! A 2 on the control die! That gives Sara an Amazing hit for . . . (Sean rolls 3 on a d4) . . . 3 mortals!

GM: Okay, that damage degrades to 3 wounds on the car. Jason continues to back up, which is a Routine maneuver. Good phase?

J: I've got an action this phase. Are we close to the end of the alley?

GM: It's only about 20 meters behind you.

J: Okay, I want to accelerate and wrench the wheel around in a reverse bootlegger turn when we hit the street. I'm going 40 kph this phase.

GM: That sounds like an Extreme maneuver to me. Call it a total penalty of +3 for the hazardous conditions in the alley.

S: You'll never make it!

J: Sure I will. . . . Oops! That's a Failure on my Vehicle Operation check.

GM: Okay, make another roll and let's see how bad you crashed.

J: Hah! There's a Good success. I keep the car under control!

GM: Hmmm . . . I'll say that you got out into the street and turned sideways, but couldn't actually spin around. You're driving backward up the street at 40 kph. The villains are still at 40 kph, so they stay with you, only 20 meters away. But they're driving forward while you're still backing up. Sara, you've got another action. Want to take it now?

S: I'll shoot again. That's a Good hit, for . . . (Sean rolls a 4 on d4) . . . 5 wounds!

GM: Okay, that turns into 5 stun points. The car's got some damage, but it's still coming. On to the Ordinary phase. Are you taking your next action now, Steel?

J: Yeah, I want to try that bootlegger reverse again.

GM: Take a +1 penalty for the crowded conditions on the street, making your penalty +2 overall.

J: Hey, I did it! That's an Ordinary success.

GM: Okay, they're behind you now, and you're going the wrong way up the street at 40 kph. Now the bad guys finally get to go. The driver makes a Routine maneuver and punches his car up to 60 kph. They're right on your bumper now, and a man with a submachine gun hoses down the back of your car. Let's see . . . that turns into a 5-wound hit, a 3-wound hit, and a miss. Both of you wearing your seat belts?

S: You know it, with Steel driving.

GM: Okay, that turns into a 5-stun hit on Jason and a 3-stun hit on Sara.

J: I've got a CF coat . . . (rolls a 3 on d4) . . . I only end up taking 2 stuns.

S: I'm wearing a battle vest . . . (rolls a 2 on d4) . . . no damage!

(The scene continues. . . .)

The ramming vehicle also suffers damage. The driver or pilot of the ramming vehicle must roll on Table P43 as well, but he gains a –1 step bonus to his skill check—since he initiated the ram, he's able to prepare himself a little better. Remember that the relative size of the vehicles may force the rammer to roll on a worse column than his victim. It just doesn't pay to drive your sports car into a 60-ton battle tank.

A crash—one vehicle hitting a stationary object—is treated basically the same as a ram. To determine damage to the vehicle, the driver or pilot must roll a Vehicle Operation skill check and refer to TABLE P43: CRASH AND COLLISION DAMAGE. Use the column indicated by the vehicle's speed. (If the driver wasn't trying to crash, he doesn't get the –1 step bonus for initiating the collision.)

In addition, if the object that the vehicle crashes into isn't as large or as durable as the vehicle, shift the column to the left—one column for objects that are smaller, two columns for objects that are made of less durable material than the vehicle, and three columns for objects that are smaller, less durable, and not anchored in place (pedestrians usually fall into this last category). Crash damage to the vehicle that crashed can never be less than the amount indicated in the 5–20 column.

Damage to Objects

The damage suffered by an object that's struck in a crash is determined by essentially the same procedure outlined above for damage to vehicles. The *Gamemaster Guide* has information on the toughness and durability of many different types of objects and structures.

Damage to Passengers

When a vehicle suffers damage, any passengers inside the vehicle can also suffer damage.

How much damage the passengers sustain when a vehicle takes damage from a weapon, collision, or crash depends on the type of damage and whether or not the passengers are properly using safety equipment such as seat belts, air bags, harnesses, or other restraints.

A strapped-in character suffers primary damage one grade less than the primary damage his vehicle suffers. If the vehicle sustains mortal

damage, he suffers an equal number of wounds; if it takes wound damage, the strapped-in character takes stun damage; and stun damage to the vehicle has no effect on him.

Before any damage is assessed, the vehicle's armor and the armor being worn by a character are taken into account; if a spaceship is hit for 7 wounds but its armor stops 4 of those wounds, the strapped-in pilot inside only suffers 3 points of stun damage—at most. The character's personal armor may reduce or negate any damage that gets through the vehicle's armor.

An unharnessed character isn't using any safety equipment, or he's using it improperly. Such a character gets thrown around when his vehicle takes damage, receiving injuries as he smashes into the vehicle's interior. He sustains damage equal to the damage the vehicle suffers. His personal armor may offset some or all of this damage. A motorcycle rider is considered unharnessed.

The Use of Tactics

A vehicle operator can make a Tactics check by using an action in order to gain an advantage over his opponent. A passenger can make a Tactics check by using an action, but it only helps if he can communicate his observations to the vehicle operator and the operator is inclined to listen.

Tactics checks are made according to the Tactics skill description on page 89 in *Chapter 4: Skills*. A successful use of the skill provides a penalty to your opponent's next skill check, indicating that you developed a strategy and employed it against him.

Effects of Vehicle Damage

All vehicles are rated for damage just as characters are, but the effects of damage on vehicles is defined somewhat differently.

Stun Damage

Stuns represent cosmetic damage and sometimes minor damage to a vehicle's internal systems (electrical, fuel delivery, etc.). When a vehicle loses more than half of its stun points, its operator must immediately (with his next available action) make a successful Vehicle Operation check to avoid losing control of the vehicle. If he fails, he must proceed to TABLE P44: LOSING CONTROL OF A VEHICLE. As long as the vehicle remains in this condition, the operator must take a +1 penalty on all Vehicle Operation checks (including the one just mentioned).

When a vehicle runs out of stun points, a *durability check* must be made for the vehicle. A vehicle's skill score for this check is equal to its original stun point total, so a mid-sized car with 10 stun points needs a 10 or less to pass its check. Don't forget to include the modifiers for excessive stun or wound damage.

If the vehicle passes its durability check, nothing happens. If the vehicle fails, it conks out and can't be started again until it's repaired or juryrigged. (Most aircraft begin an abrupt and unplanned descent at this point.)

Stun damage to a vehicle can be repaired during a combat scene by use of the System Operation–*engineering* or Technical Science–*repair* skill, provided the repairer can reach the problem area.

Wound Damage

Wounds represent significant damage that affects the overall performance of a vehicle. When a vehicle loses more than half of its wound points, or when it runs out of wound points, the procedure outlined under "Stun Damage" above is followed.

Damage that inflicts wounds on a vehicle also causes secondary stun damage. For every 2 points of wound damage a vehicle suffers in a single attack, it also suffers 1 point of stun damage (disregard the leftover point of wound damage, if applicable).

Wound damage can be repaired during a combat scene by use of the System Operation–*engineering* or Technical Science–*repair* skill, provided the repairer can reach the problem area.

Mortal Damage

Mortal damage represents critical problems that actually destroy portions of a vehicle. Mortal damage requires time and extreme effort to repair, and these repairs usually can't be accomplished during a combat scene. In some cases, mortal damage is so bad that it can only be counteracted by replacing the destroyed portion of the vehicle.

For each point of mortal damage a vehicle suffers, its operator receives a +1 penalty to all Vehicle Operation checks. Each time a vehicle suffers 1 or more points of mortal damage from a single attack, the driver must attempt a Vehicle Operation skill check to keep control of the vehicle as described above, and a *durability check* must be made for the vehicle. A vehicle's skill score for this check is equal to its original wound point total, so a mid-sized car with 10 wound points needs a 10 or less to pass its check. Add a +1 penalty for each point of mortal damage the vehicle has sustained, and don't forget to include the modifiers for excessive stun or wound damage, too.

If the vehicle passes its durability check, nothing happens. If the vehicle fails, it conks out and can't be started again until it's repaired. (Most aircraft begin an abrupt and unplanned descent at this point.) If a vehicle suffers a Critical Failure on its check, damage to the fuel tank or power system causes the vehicle to explode. The vehicle is a total loss, and any passengers inside suffer d8+1m of energy damage. Anything within 6 meters of the exploding vehicle receives 2d6+1w of energy damage, and objects or characters from 6 to 12 meters away suffer d8–1w of energy damage. Again, personal armor provides normal protection against explosion damage.

For every 2 points of mortal damage a vehicle suffers in a single attack, it also suffers 1 point of secondary wound damage and 1 point of secondary stun damage (disregard the leftover point of mortal damage, if applicable). This wound damage does not also cause secondary stun damage, as described above in "Wound Damage."

Vehicle Scale

Most vehicle combat takes place between vehicles of a similar nature (cars vs. cars, jet fighters vs. jet fighters, etc.). But it can happen that two vehicles that are significantly different in size or speed, or both, will find themselves in opposition. In such a case, locate each vehicle type on TABLE P45: VEHICLE SCALES (on the following page). When a vehicle from higher up on the table meets a vehicle of a lower scale, they can engage in just one round of combat. Then the faster, higher-scale vehicle speeds away.

The faster vehicle can return for

Table P45: Vehicle Scales

Space Vehicles:		
STG shuttle	Cutter	Lt. freighter
Trader	Yacht	
Air Vehicles:		
Helicopters	Jet aircraft	Prop. aircraft
Skybikes	Skycars	Skytanks
Surface Vehicles:		
Motorcycles	Automobiles	Trucks
Boats	Groundcars	Ultralights
Tanks	Snowmobiles	Jet skis
Personal:		
Characters	Armor	Jetpacks
Bicycles	Animals	

Table P46: Vehicle Scale Return Time

Scale vs. Scale	Number of Phases Until Re-engagement
Personal vs. Surface	3
Personal vs. Air	6
Personal vs. Space	9
Surface vs. Air	3
Surface vs. Space	6
Air vs. Space	3

another round of combat in a number of phases, according to Table P46: Vehicle Scale Return Time (on this page). For example, if a jet fighter strafes a car, it can return in 6 phases, or approximately 18 seconds. Naturally, these time limits are highly variable; the numbers on the table should be considered as minimums, assuming a situation in which the operator of the faster vehicle tries to reestablish contact as quickly as possible.

Getting Away

There are three ways for a vehicle combat scene to come to an end. First, the destruction or incapacitation of either vehicle usually ends the scene. If your hero makes the tight turn while the bad guys skid off the road into a ditch, they're out of the scene and your hero can go about his business. Of course, a vehicle combat scene that ends this way might be immediately followed by a personal combat scene, if the heroes circle back to capture the villains who are fleeing on foot.

Second, a vehicle combat scene ends if no one wants to fight anymore. If both vehicles have the intention to open and both drivers or pilots decide they don't want to press the fight, the scene ends. They've both had enough.

Finally, a vehicle can declare the intention to break in order to get away from a pursuer who isn't ready to give up the chase. Break isn't always available as an intention; there has to be some unusual condition or ploy involved for a vehicle to be able to change its intention to break. Typically, the Gamemaster will ask you to describe the trick your hero is trying to pull off before he'll let you attempt a maneuver that will break contact; there's not much that a car racing across the Bonneville salt flats could do to suddenly get away from a helicopter gunship. Being faster than the fellow chasing you and opening the distance faster than he can close it definitely counts as a condition in which your hero can break contact.

Vehicle vs. Character

When a single-operator vehicle targets a character on foot, use these rules.

Because vehicles are on a higher scale than characters, one round of combat can occur before the vehicle speeds away. The vehicle can return for another round of combat after a number of phases, as shown on Table P46.

In the round of combat, the vehicle can make as many as four attacks on the character, one per phase, plus a ram in the Marginal phase. Of course, characters in the vehicle must have available actions to use all of these attacks. Assume that the vehicle will end the Ordinary phase right at its target, and overshoot in the Marginal phase. For example, let's say a car that's moving at 80 kph, or 80 meters per phase, starts the scene 240 meters away from a pedestrian. At the end of the Amazing phase, it's 160 meters away; at the end of the Good phase, 80 meters away; at the end of the Ordinary phase, 0 meters distant; and at the end of the Marginal phase, 80 meters distant and now driving away from the pedestrian it attacked.

Many vehicles are targets of Good or Amazing toughness, which means that personal weapons just aren't very effective against them. More information about weapon firepower and toughness grades appears in *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor* and in the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Ramming a Character with a Vehicle

Running over a pedestrian who's trying to get out of the way isn't always easy—the victim adds his Dexterity-based resistance modifier to the driver's Vehicle Operation check when the driver actually tries to execute the ram, and he can also attempt an Acrobatics–*dodge* skill check. If the pedestrian can't get out of the way, he suffers damage based on the speed of the vehicle that hits him. The victim must make a Dexterity feat check (or Acrobatics–*fall* skill check) and refer to Table P43: Crash and Collision Damage. This feat check or skill check is modified by the type of vehicle that strikes him:

Vehicle	Modifier
Motorcycle	–2
Compact car	–1
Mid-sized car	None
Large car, van	+1
Truck or tank	+2

What's in a Spaceship?

Every hero dreams about owning his own starship. With a ship, a hero no longer has to rely on predictable schedules of commercial liners, the vagaries of working for passage on freighters, or the command structure of military transports. He's the master of his own destiny, able to come or go as he pleases. A ship can become a crucial member of a hero party, especially if it has been equipped with the finest devices that money can buy.

The *Typical Trader Record Sheet* printed on page 206 provides essential information for the modest sort of space vehicle that might come into the possession of a hero at the start of his career. The *Gamemaster Guide* has a more detailed record sheet designed to be used in conjunction with the rules in that book concerning customizing of ships and constructing different types of space vessels.

Ship Compartments

Every spaceship has a certain number of compartments, ranging from only one in the smallest of vessels up to a dozen or more. (The largest stock vehicle described in this chapter, the transport, has ten compartments. The *Gamemaster Guide* has detailed information on how to construct ships of this size.)

Each compartment is dedicated to a certain purpose, or multiple purposes in smaller ships. When the purpose of a compartment is directly related to the operation of the ship or one of the ship's systems, that compartment will contain a station devoted to that task.

To supplement the information given here, the *Gamemaster Guide* has full rules for constructing ships and customizing existing models.

Command Compartment

Every space vessel must have a command compartment. It contains a ship's main computer, a sensor package, the helm control, and a communications system. Among ships with less than four compartments, it is also common for the command compartment to carry a defensive or weapons system.

In larger ships with four or more compartments, the command compartment is the ship's control center. All crew stations are here, and all major control stations (computers, sensors, communications, engineering, weapons, defenses) are centralized in this compartment unless specifically placed elsewhere.

The ship's main computer monitors ship systems, operates automated functions, and generally allows the crew to interact with the ship and its systems.

On ships that are specially constructed—not the stock models described in this chapter—dedicated, specialized computers can be added to a specific station or compartment to enhance the performance of that part of the ship. Pages 153–156 in *Chapter 10: Computers* contain information on the types of computers available at PL 6 and PL 7, and the *Gamemaster Guide* has more information on how to create a ship outfitted with these devices.

Ship Systems Interaction

Station	Skill	Role(s)
Command	Leadership–*command*	Provide bonus to station operators
	Tactics–*space tactics*	Provide action check bonus to crew
Pilot	VO–*space vehicles*	Drive vessel
Copilot	VO–*space vehicles*	Drive vessel
		Provide bonus to pilot
		Operate defenses
		Operate sensors
		Operate communications
Communications	SO–*communications*	Encode and send messages
		Jam/overcome jamming
		Decode opponent's messages
		Jam certain weapon systems
Damage Control	Technical Science–*repair* or *jury-rig*	Perform hands-on repairs of damaged compartments/systems
Defenses	SO–*defenses*	Apply penalty to attacker
Engineering	SO–*engineering*	Repair stun damage
		Assist in damage control
Sensors	SO–*sensors*	Provide bonus to weapons operator
		Target specific compartments on enemy vessel
		Provide bonus to defenses operator
Weapons	SO–*weapons*	Operate primary or secondary weapons systems

Command Station

The ship's commander works from this station, using Tactics and Leadership to get the most out of his crew. Successful Tactics checks apply penalties to an opponent's Vehicle Operation checks, as described earlier.

Leadership–*command* is used to improve the overall effort of the crew by encouraging teamwork, providing direction, and inspiring confidence with a commanding, forceful air. See page 101 of *Chapter 4: Skills* for details on how this skill is used in play.

By making a successful Tactics–*space tactics* skill check, the commander can provide the rest of the crew with a warning that translates as a modifier to their action checks in the next round. Skill check results: Critical Failure, +2 penalty for all

▶ Typical Trader Record Sheet ◀

Ship Name _____ **Ship Type** _____ **Captain's Name** _____

Durability: Hull Size 24 Compartments 6 **Weapon:** Mass cannon d6+2s/d6+1w/d6+3w LI/A

Speed: Acc .03 Mpp Cruise 0.1 AU/hr

Drive: No modifier **Defenses:** Point-defense gun (success destroys incoming missile)

Armor: Moderate Cerametal d4+1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4+1 (En)

Stardrive? Yes **Drivespace:** 5 light-years/starfall

Ship Stations	Station Location	Operator's Name	System Location	Skill Score
Command	C1	_____	C1	[___/___/___]
Pilot	C1	_____	C1	[___/___/___]
Copilot	C1	_____	C1	[___/___/___]
Communications	C1	_____	C1	[___/___/___]
Damage Control	—	_____	C2	[___/___/___]
Defenses	C1	_____	C2	[___/___/___]
Engineering	C1	_____	C2	[___/___/___]
Sensors	C1	_____	C3	[___/___/___]
Weapons	C1	_____	C4	[___/___/___]

C1: COMMAND

Stun (8) □□□□□□□□■■■■■■■■
Wound (8) □□□□□□□□■■■■■■■■
Mortal (4) □□□□■■■■

Random damage: 1–2

C2: ENGINEERING

Stun (16) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
Wound (16) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
Mortal (8) □□□□□□□□

Random damage: 3–4

C3: AUXILIARY

Stun (8) □□□□□□□□■■■■■■■■
Wound (8) □□□□□□□□■■■■■■■■
Mortal (4) □□□□■■■■

Random damage: 5–7

C4: WEAPONS

Stun (6) □□□□□□■■■■■■■■■■
Wound (6) □□□□□□■■■■■■■■■■
Mortal (3) □□□■■■■■

Random damage: 8–10

C5: CARGO

Stun (6) □□□□□□■■■■
Wound (6) □□□□□□■■■■
Mortal (3) □□□■■

Random damage: 11–15

C6: CARGO

Stun (4) □□□□■■■■■■
Wound (4) □□□□■■■■■■
Mortal (2) □□■■■

Random damage: 16–20

C7: _____

Stun ( ) □□□□□□□□□□
Wound ( ) □□□□□□□□□□
Mortal ( ) □□□□□

Random damage: _____

C8: _____

Stun ( ) □□□□□□□□□□
Wound ( ) □□□□□□□□□□
Mortal ( ) □□□□□

Random damage: _____

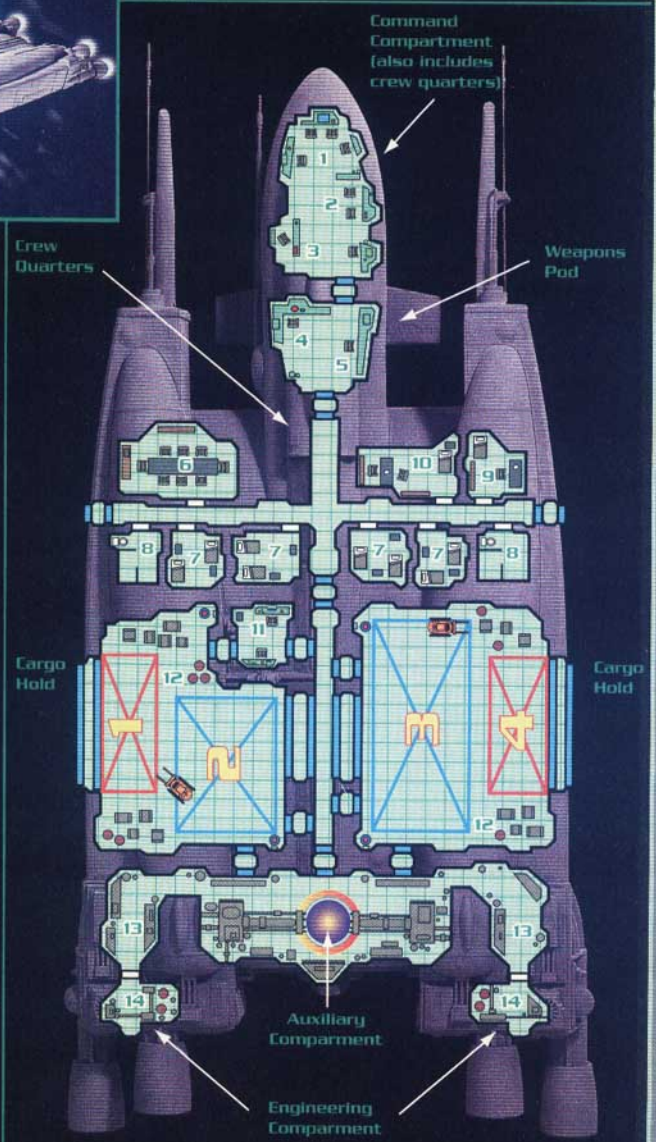
Trader-Class Starship

Detailed Information

1. Command Deck
2. Missile Control
3. Computer/Sensors
4. Mass Cannon Control
5. Point Defense Gun Control
6. Mess Hall
7. 2-3 person quarters
8. Head/Shower
9. Officer Quarters
10. Captain's Quarters
11. Crane Control
12. Cargo Hold
13. Life Support System
14. Engine Access Room

Airlock
Door
Access Hatch/Ladder
Bed/Bunk
Desk
Chair
Shelf
Toilet
Footlocker
Forklift
Cargo
Computer
Cargo Bay Door (floor)
Cargo Bay Door (roof)
Stardrive

One square equals 2 meters



Datastream Image Transmission: 0900 Hours
Transmission by: D.T.K., R.E.L.

Stations vs. Systems

The "What's in a Spaceship?" section is a general discussion of the compartments a ship can have, and which one is likely to contain a certain *station* or *system*. Those terms can sometimes be used interchangeably, but at other times the difference between them can be important.

A station is a location from where a member of the crew operates one of a ship's systems (weapons, sensors, defenses, and so forth). A station is not necessarily in the same compartment as its associated system.

No ship has more than eight types of stations—the five that relate to the System Operation specialty skills (*communications, defenses, engineering, sensors,* and *weapons*), a damage control station (often subsumed within the engineering station) whose operator makes use of Technical Science–*repair* or *jury-rig* skills, a station from which the ship is guided (pilot's or copilot's station) using the Vehicle Operation–*space vehicles* skill, and a command station from where the person in charge uses his Leadership and Tactics skills.

A single station can control more than one system of the appropriate type; for instance, if a ship has two weapons, a single operator may handle both of them—or, each weapons system could be tied to a separate station in different compartments, so that if one compartment is damaged or destroyed, the other weapon station could still function.

The text here is only a general overview of what a ship can contain and how the vessel is configured. The *Gamemaster Guide* has complete information on constructing ships of many different types and sizes.

other crew members; Failure, no modifier; Ordinary, –1 bonus for one other crew member; Good, –1 bonus for all other crew members; Amazing, –2 bonus for all others.

Pilot's Station

The pilot flies the ship, determining speed, selecting maneuvers, plotting courses (if he has the Navigation skill), and deciding on destinations. In combat, a pilot makes Vehicle Operation–*space vehicle* skill checks to perform maneuvers and operate the vessel's primary weapon (if no other character is controlling it).

Copilot's Station

The copilot's station can handle any or all of the duties of the pilot. In addition, if a copilot uses an action to assist the pilot, this assistance may provide the pilot with a modifier on his next skill check: Critical Failure, +2 penalty; Failure, no effect; Ordinary, –1 bonus; Good, –2 bonus; Amazing, –3 bonus.

Sensors Station

Typically, sensors are located in the command compartment, though a hero may choose to add a more sophisticated sensor systems pod to a dedicated electronics compartment when he customizes a vessel. Without sensors of some kind, a starship can't see its enemies or defend itself. Sensors consist of sophisticated radar systems, infrared detectors, instantaneous mass detectors, and similar devices. Sensors come in two classes: *passive* and *active*.

Passive sensors have a longer range and don't give away the ship's position, but they don't provide a very accurate fix on the target.

Active sensors require power and can pin down an enemy for an exact firing solution, but they also reveal the ship's location. A ship can't fire accurately at its opponent until it obtains a sensor fix on the target.

In addition to scanning and analyzing data from all ship sensing devices, the sensors operator has a few opportunities to make a difference during a combat scene.

He can use an action to help the weapons operator hit enemy vessels. A System Operation–*sensors* check can provide a modifier to the weapons operator in his next available phase: Critical Failure, +2 penalty; Failure, no modifier; Ordinary, –1 bonus; Good, –2 bonus; Amazing, –3 bonus.

Or, the sensors operator can target specific compartments on an enemy vessel, thus directing where damage from a specific weapon is applied. Skill check results: Critical Failure, weapon misses; Failure, random determination as usual (roll d20); Ordinary, adjust random determination by +1 or –1; Good, adjust by +2 or –2; Amazing, adjust by +3 or –3.

Finally, he can help the defenses operator protect the ship, providing a modifier to that operator's checks for the rest of this round and all of the next round. Skill check results: Critical Failure, +2 penalty; Failure, no modifier; Ordinary, –1 bonus; Good, –2 bonus; Amazing, –3 bonus.

Communications Station

The hero at the communications station operates a ship's communication transmitters and receivers, and the computers associated with them. During combat, he can send messages to ships or other distant locations, encoding them if desired. The result of a System Operation–*communications* check may provide a modifier to decoding attempts made by others: Critical Failure, –2 bonus; Failure, none; Ordinary, +1 penalty; Good, +2; Amazing, +3. If the operator wants to jam the transmissions of enemy ships, his check results provide penalties to the opponent's *communications* checks.

If the enemy sends coded transmissions, or if the opponent uses an alien language, the hero at the communications station can attempt to decode or translate the messages by making a successful complex skill check (see page 62 in *Chapter 4: Skills*). The complexity of the code, in addition to determining the number of successes needed, also provides a modifier to each segment of the complex check: Marginal code, –1 bonus; Ordinary code, none; Good code, +1 penalty; Amazing code, +2 penalty.

Finally, certain weapons systems (such as missiles) and targeting sensors are susceptible to jamming. The result of the communication operator's skill check may provide a modifier to the weapon or targeting system as follows: Critical Failure, –2 bonus; Failure, none; Ordinary, +1 penalty; Good, +2; Amazing, +3.

Engineering Compartment

Every powered space vessel must have an engineering compartment. The ship's engine is located here, and often its power plant. A drive unit, if the ship has one, is also here.

Although a ship's power plant typically resides in the engineering sec-

tion, some starships place their primary or a secondary power system in an auxiliary compartment.

Engineering Station

The hero manning the engineering station can have an enormous effect on how his vessel performs during combat. The obvious uses of the station include monitoring other ship systems, tracking damage, and initiating repairs.

From the engineering station, a hero can repair stun damage to any ship compartment. The hero uses the System Operation–*engineering* skill for this type of remote repair, with a bonus if he also has the Technical Science–*repair* skill: ranks 1–3, –1 step; ranks 4–6, –2 steps; ranks 7–12, –3 steps. The *engineering* skill check result determines how much damage is repaired: Critical Failure, compartment suffers d4 points of stun damage; Failure, no effect; Ordinary, 1 stun point repaired; Good, 2 stun points repaired; Amazing, 3 stun points repaired.

A hero at the engineering station can also aid heroes making hands-on repairs in a damaged compartment. The result of a System Operation–*engineering* check may provide a modifier: Critical Failure, +2 penalty; Failure, no modifier; Ordinary, –1 bonus; Good, –2; Amazing, –3.

Damage Control

A character assigned to damage control doesn't have a station. He's the person who heads to a damaged compartment to initiate hands-on repairs. The engineering station interacts with the damage control team.

A hero uses the Technical Science–*juryrig* skill to perform on-the-spot repairs to systems or compartments that have gone off-line as a result of taking damage. These repairs are temporary; Technical Science–*repair* is necessary to fully restore functionality to damaged systems or compartments.

Defense Compartment

Many space vehicles have special defenses in addition to their armor. All defenses are controlled by a station in the defense compartment (or at the pilot's or copilot's station if no crew member is available). If a ship has no defense compartment, a defenses station is usually located either in the weapons compartment or the command compartment.

Some defenses are passive, requiring no special action on the part of the defenses operator. Others can be enhanced by the operator, making it even harder for an attacker to damage the vessel they're protecting, depending on the result of a System Operation–*defenses* skill check: Critical Failure, –2 bonus to opponent; Failure, no modifier; Ordinary, +1 penalty to attacker; Good, +2 penalty; Amazing, +3 penalty.

The *Gamemaster Guide* has complete information on defenses available at each Progress Level.

Weapons Compartment

Smaller vessels are forced to use command compartment space for weapons systems, but many larger ships devote a full compartment to weapons. A weapons compartment often also holds a defensive system.

The weapons operator has perhaps the most straightforward job of all crew members: He targets enemy vessels (possibly with the help of a sensors operator) and fires the ship's weapons. These weapons work just like any other ranged weapon, except the action is related to the System Operation–*weapons* skill. The success of an attack and the damage the attack causes depends on the weapons operator's skill check.

Actions of the opposing crew, defensive systems, and any damage the operator or his ship has taken may add modifiers to this check. Most weapons can be fired whenever the operator has an available action.

Auxiliary Compartment

Sometimes referred to as the secondary engineering compartment, the primary function of an auxiliary compartment is to monitor life support and secondary power systems.

Electronics Compartment

An electronics compartment, on a ship large enough to have one, is reserved for fragile, valuable systems such as computers and sensors. Electronic defense systems may also be contained here. While rare among smaller vessels, the electronics compartment serves in larger vessels to free up space in the command and weapons compartments. At PL 7 or PL 8, a compartment of this sort is often used to house a ship's AI computer bank, if the vessel has one. (See page 167 in *Chapter 10: Computers* for more information on artificial intelligence units.)

Cargo Compartment

The cargo compartment provides the space necessary to carry anything other than the crew and minimal provisions and supplies.

Crew Compartment

The crew compartment provides living space for crew members or passengers. Depending on the amount of space allotted to each individual, accommodations range from spartan to luxurious. Specialized areas such as laboratories, sick bays, dining chambers, and ballrooms are often located within a crew compartment.

Other Compartments

On large ships, compartments can be added for more cargo space, additional engines, backup power plants, special passenger quarters, hangar bays, medical facilities, labs, or any other purpose the ship's designer sees as necessary or desirable.

Space Vehicle Combat

Space vehicle combat works almost exactly like the vehicle vs. vehicle combat described earlier; the only significant differences are the range at which a battle can take place, the way in which damage is assessed, and the effect of damage.

When a space vehicle has multiple stations and room for more than one operator, then there's something for everyone to do. Specifically, characters use System Operation skill checks. How the various System Operation skills are used is described

in the preceding section. In a combat scene, *communications, engineering, sensors, defenses,* and *weapons* skills are likely to come into play, as well as the pilot's skill in Vehicle Operation–*space vehicles.*

Maneuvers and Range

All the guidelines discussed for vehicle combat apply, but the speeds and ranges of a battle in space tend to be much greater. Most spacecraft at PL 6 maneuver at speeds of 100,000 to 1,000,000 kilometers per hour during a space battle. Even this is only a fraction of the speed a high-tech spacecraft is capable of—but it's so difficult to intercept a ship moving at a substantial portion of light speed that battles don't take place in open space. Battles are fought near planets or in the confines of a moon or ring system, and vessels must travel much slower in these places.

Typically, PL 6 spacecraft can engage each other at ranges of several hundred to a few thousand kilometers. Moving at speeds of about 100,000 to 1,000,000 kph (or 0.1 to 1.0 megameters per phase), it takes a long time to significantly change range for open-space encounters.

Spacecraft of PL 7 design can engage each other at greater ranges and higher speeds. Typically, they're dueling at a range of 5,000 to 10,000 kilometers, and their speeds range from 1,000,000 to 10 million kph (or 1 to 10 megameters per phase). However, in confined areas, even PL 7 ships have to fight at the speeds and ranges common to PL 6 battles.

▶ **Ramming:** Given the speeds and distances involved, trying to fly a spaceship into another one is next to impossible—unless both parties want to crash into each other.

Doing Damage

To destroy a space vessel, you have to destroy each of its compartments. When a ship is struck by weapons fire, the damage is not applied to a single set of stun, wound, or mortal points. Instead, the damage is localized in one of the ship's compartments. It's possible to destroy one compartment while leaving the rest of the ship largely unaffected.

Each ship compartment has a separate durability rating. Most space

Spaceship Engines Explained

The two essential components of every spaceship are the power plant and the engine. The power plant provides the energy necessary to run all of a ship's systems, including its engine. The engine propels the craft through space.

Power plants come in four distinct types: the fusion generator, the grav-fusion cell, the mass reactor, and the matter converter. The *fusion generator,* a highly efficient, very reliable nuclear plant, is the common power plant on PL 6 vessels, and sometimes shows up as a backup system on PL 7 ships.

The *grav-fusion cell,* developed at PL 6 after the fusion generator was in widespread use, manipulates the gravitational fields of stars and planets to enhance the operation of a fusion generator. The more powerful *mass reactor,* a PL 7 device, collects, stores, and processes dark matter (the theoretical and as yet unknown material that makes up the majority of the universe) to produce massive amounts of energy.

This technology is taken one step farther at PL 8 with the *matter converter,* which does just what its name suggests—turns any form of matter directly into energy with no leftovers or by-products.

The two basic types of engines are sublight engines and faster-than-light (FTL) drives.

All spaceships carry at least one sublight engine to move them around a planetary system. Sublight engines can't reach the speeds necessary to make interstellar trips practical, but they can traverse the void between planets in relatively quick fashion.

Progress Level 6 sublight technologies include the *fusion torch,* which uses controlled hydrogen blasts to propel a ship like a rocket, and the *ion engine,* which does the same thing with less volatile charged particles.

At PL 7, the most common sublight engine is the *induction drive.* It employs gravitonic induction technology to "bend" gravity through the ship's engine, creating a powerful and agile motive force.

The next step in the evolution of sublight engines is the *inertial flux engine* at PL 8. This device manipulates matter at the quantum level, allowing a pilot to change the inertial state of his ship, directing its course through space.

FTL drives don't come into existence until PL 7, when the *stardrive* is developed. Combining a mass reactor with a graviton inversion coil, the stardrive uses a tachyon-charged and extremely temporary surge of incredible power to force its vessel through the dimensional barrier of normal space and into drivespace.

It's thought that everything connects to everything else by a tenuous thread of attraction. In drivespace, also called the gravity plane, these threads are much stronger than they are in normal space. Vessels drop into drivespace (through a process called *starfalling*) and ride these threads to their destinations. A strange property of drivespace is that all travel through it, no matter what the distance, requires a length of 11^2 hours, or approximately five days.

The ship returns to normal space by rising from a short-lived black hole. When a ship emerges from drivespace, it must rebuild its tachyon charge before it's capable of another starfall; this takes as little as two and as many as five days.

The actual distance that can be spanned during a starfall depends on the amount of power that a ship's mass reactor is capable of delivering to its stardrive. Small vessels (with small power plants) can cover 5 to 10 light-years in a single starfall, while larger vessels can cover from 25 to 50 light-years in a single starfall. No PL 7 vessel can span more than 50 ly in one starfall.

PL 8 technology, centered on the ability to manipulate matter at the subatomic level, produces the *drivewave generator.* This is essentially a more efficient stardrive, able to propel even small ships such as the space fighter through drivespace in only 11 hours.

These devices are described in more detail in the *Gamemaster Guide.*

vessels that heroes have access to contain two to eight compartments. The early part of this chapter describes many common space vessels, including the trader-class craft detailed on pages 206 and 207.

If the attacker is not using sensors to target a specific location, or if the sensors operator fails in his attempt, then damage is applied to a compartment determined at random by a d20 roll. The ship descriptions earlier in this chapter include random damage listings for each type of craft.

Stun Damage

When a compartment loses more than half of its stun points, then all stations or systems housed in that compartment receive a +1 penalty. When all of a compartment's stun points are used up, stun damage suffered in any single attack rolls over to wound damage at the rate of 1 wound for every 2 points of additional stun (disregard the leftover point of stun damage, if applicable).

Wound Damage

When a compartment loses more than half of its wound points, its systems function with a +1 penalty (cumulative with other damage penalties). For every 2 points of wound damage a compartment suffers in a single attack, it also takes 1 point of secondary stun damage. When all of its wound points are used up, the compartment sustains 1 point of mortal damage for every 2 points of additional wound damage (disregard the leftover point of wound damage, if applicable).

Mortal Damage

For each point of mortal damage a compartment sustains, any systems contained within this compartment receive a +1 step penalty (cumulative with other damage penalties).

For every 2 points of mortal damage a compartment sustains in a single attack, the compartment also suffers secondary damage of 1 point of wound damage and 1 point of stun damage (disregard the leftover point of mortal damage, if applicable).

Each time a compartment suffers mortal damage from a single weapon attack, a durability check must be made for the compartment, as described under "Effects of Vehicle Damage" on page 203. Apply a +1 penalty for each point of mortal damage that the compartment has suffered up to that point, as well as penalties for excessive stun and wound damage.

If the compartment passes its durability check, there is no additional effect. If the compartment fails, all stations within it stop working until it's possible to make extensive repairs, although the Technical Science–*juryrig* skill may allow a character to keep the compartment's stations working for a short time. (One station can be affected for each successful application of the *juryrig* skill.) If the compartment fails its durability check with a Critical Failure, it's destroyed, and d4 other compartments (randomly rolled) sustain 2d4w each due to decompression, power fluctuations, electrical fires, and so forth.

When a compartment has no mortal points left, it's destroyed and no longer counts as a valid hit location. If a random roll indicates damage to a wrecked compartment, simply apply the new attack to the next lower-numbered compartment that has mortal points left (wrapping from the lowest-numbered compartment to the highest-numbered one if needed).

◆ ***Example:*** If the heroes decide to continue the fight against the pirates (see "Example of Space Combat" above), compartment 4 of their ship is now especially vulnerable—if the pirates get a result of 8 through 15 on a random damage roll, the heroes' weapons compartment will take the hit, because compartment 5 has already been knocked out.

Example of Space Vehicle Combat

The same sequence of play for all vehicle combat is used when the opposing craft are space vehicles. Damage is a bit different, however, so let's look at how it works in play.

The heroes' trader encounters a cutter belonging to the Asimoor pirates, who open fire without any preliminaries. During the surprise phase, the pirates score a Good hit on the heroes' ship. The pirates (represented by the Gamemaster) roll a d20, determining that the damage strikes compartment 5. The pirates have a plasma cannon, which inflicts d6+1w of energy damage. The heroes can reduce the primary damage by d4+1 points due to the ship's armor. The pirates roll 4 wounds; the heroes get a result of 3 (a roll of 2, plus 1), reducing the damage to 1 wound—so the compartment suffers 1 wound point of primary damage and 2 stun points of secondary damage (because armor only reduces primary damage, not secondary damage).

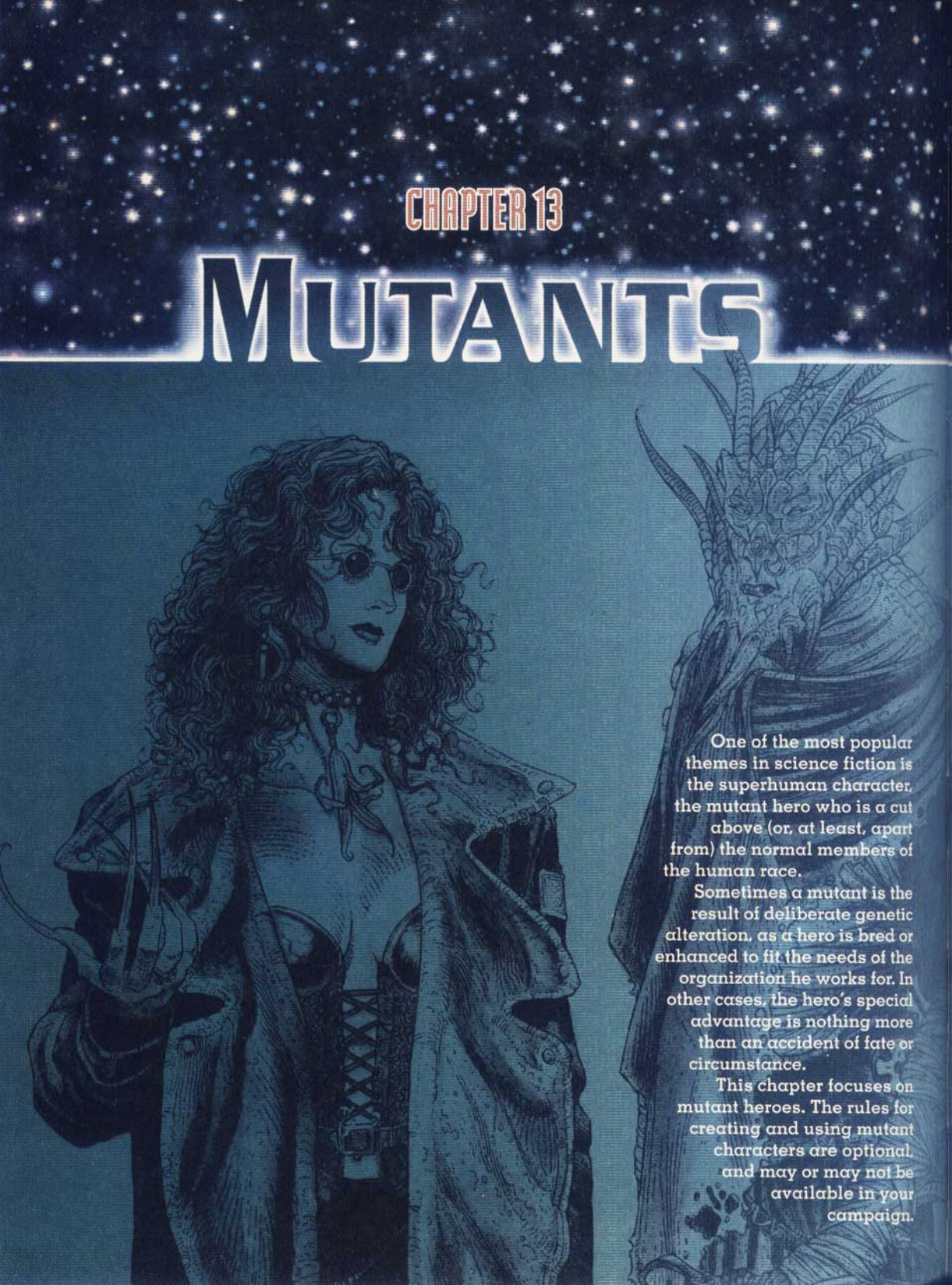
In the following round, the pirates' weapons operator gets an Amazing action check and lets fly with another energy blast. The attack is an Amazing hit. Another random roll determines that compartment 5 again takes the strike. The pirates roll 4 points of mortal damage; the heroes reduce that to 1 thanks to the ship's armor. So, compartment 5 suffers 1 point of mortal damage (primary damage) and 2 points of both stun and wound damage (secondary damage). This compartment must now attempt a durability check, with a +2 step penalty (+1 for the point of mortal damage and +1 for having lost more than half of its stun points). Since the compartment started with 6 wound points, the target number for its durability check is a 6 or less on d20 plus d8. The durability check is a Failure, and one of the heroes' cargo compartments is knocked out.

The heroes' weapons operator returns fire in the next phase and gets a Good hit, but an Amazing skill check result by the sensors operator allows him to adjust the random roll by +3 or –3. The result of the d20 roll is 8; the sensors operator takes the –3 adjustment, turning it into a 5 so that the shot hits the pirate ship's engineering compartment. The damage roll (d6+1w) comes up a 5, meaning that the compartment takes 6 points of wound damage and 3 points of secondary stun damage (before the ship's armor is taken into account).

Even considering the damage they've just caused to the enemy, it might be a good idea for the heroes to run in the Ordinary phase instead of trying to continue the fight. Their ship is hurting pretty badly already—one compartment knocked out after only two phases of combat—and the pirates' plasma cannon is a weapon not to be taken lightly.

CHAPTER 13

MUTANTS



One of the most popular themes in science fiction is the superhuman character, the mutant hero who is a cut above (or, at least, apart from) the normal members of the human race.

Sometimes a mutant is the result of deliberate genetic alteration, as a hero is bred or enhanced to fit the needs of the organization he works for. In other cases, the hero's special advantage is nothing more than an accident of fate or circumstance.

This chapter focuses on mutant heroes. The rules for creating and using mutant characters are optional, and may or may not be available in your campaign.

Mutant Heroes

In game terms, a mutant is a character species derived from human stock. Just as other nonhuman characters do, a mutant gains certain special abilities and powers just for being of a different species.

After a player creates a mutant hero and determines the character's special abilities, he takes the hero through the rest of the creation process in the same fashion as for any other hero; see *Chapter 2: Hero Creation* for a full description of that process.

The supplemental hero sheet, printed just ahead of the hero sheet at the back of this book, has spaces to record a mutant hero's characteristics. (If other parts of the supplemental hero sheet aren't being used in your campaign, some of that space can be used to hold additional details about your hero's mutations.)

Although every mutant originates from human stock, each one's basic makeup has been altered significantly enough that he is considered an alien for the purpose of determining the skills he possesses at the beginning of his career. Mutant heroes use TABLE P5: HERO STARTING SKILL POINTS (see page 34) to determine the number of skill points, broad skills, and specialty skills they start with. (They don't receive the skill bonus that nonmutant human characters do; see page 30 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*.)

One of the major differences between a mutant hero and an alien hero is that the mutant's special advantages aren't predefined by his race; every mutant in a campaign may have unique powers and capabilities. No two mutants are necessarily alike, as detailed in the rules later in this chapter covering how mutants' abilities are determined.

Types of Mutants

A mutation is a change to the basic blueprint of an organism. This may be an accidental or random process, either naturally occurring through evolution, or a change brought about by manufactured conditions such as a nuclear accident, exposure to mutagenic compounds, or deliberate genetic engineering. When you create a superstrong mutant who was "just born that way," you're assuming that the hero's mutation is a random, more or less natural event.

While the evolution of organisms has been a natural process throughout the Earth's existence, humanity has been tinkering with this process ever since the earliest geneticists discovered that such tinkering is possible. The selective creation of animal and plant breeds is an excellent example of the impact of human influence on natural selection. However, the process of breeding for desirable traits requires many generations to produce significant results. Recently, advances in genetic technology have opened the door to the creation of custom-designed organisms that can be shaped as needed within a single generation. Already, engineered microorganisms show a great deal of promise for many industrial purposes.

In the future (Progress Level 6 and higher, in game terms), genetic manipulation may allow the creation or alteration of entire species of highly organized and complex creatures—if your Gamemaster determines that such technology is right for his campaign. This can lead to humans specialized for living and working in nonterrestrial environments, engineered for better combat traits, or designed to resist disease and biological agents. The ethical questions surrounding this topic are serious ones, but since we're dealing with imaginary science in an imaginary world, your Gamemaster can give genetic engineering any slant he likes—it's his campaign.

Regardless of whether a mutant is a natural improvement on the human model (*random mutation*) or a predesigned specimen of genetic technology (*engineered mutation*), he may or may not be alone in the universe. Some environmental conditions may induce *all* the people living in a particular region to change in the same way.

For example, hardy colonists who settle a high-gravity world may eventually, over the course of many generations, develop abnormally strong skeletons and musculature. A hero who comes from a setting like this would be a "mutant" compared to the standard human found elsewhere in the galaxy, although he's a perfectly normal representative of his race. It's possible that the adaptive process of the colonists may be accelerated by genetic engineering

before they reach their new world, to make them more tolerant of the conditions when they arrive.

Common Traits

▶ ***Ability Score Range:*** The range of Ability Scores for a beginning mutant hero is the same as for humans: a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 14 in each Ability.

No score can be assigned a value greater than 14 during the early phase of the hero creation process. It is possible, however, for one or more of a mutant's Ability Scores to exceed the maximum after all of the character's mutations have been determined. (Some mutations allow Ability Scores to be raised permanently; others provide an increase to a score in particular situations.)

▶ ***Free Broad Skills:*** A mutant hero starts play with the same free broad skills as a human hero: Athletics, Vehicle Operation, Stamina, Knowledge, Awareness, and Interaction.

▶ ***Special Abilities:*** All mutant heroes possess at least one advantageous mutation and one mutation drawback, as described below.

Determining Mutations

The defining characteristic of a mutant hero is a special power, ability, or improvement that a human hero doesn't have.

Table P47: Mutation Costs

Type	Cost
Ordinary mutation (or Slight drawback)	1
Good mutation (or Moderate drawback)	2
Amazing mutation (or Extreme drawback)	4

You have two choices for determining your hero's mutation—random generation or personal selection. Both of these options are available unless your Gamemaster says otherwise. In both cases, you have to balance the advantages by also taking mutant drawbacks, as described below.

Mutant Origin

The origin of a hero's mutation has a direct effect on the extent of his powers. The maximum power of any mutation, and the number of mutations the hero possesses, are determined by the hero's origin. Start by consulting Table P48: Mutant Origin, either selecting the option that fits most closely with your hero concept (if your Gamemaster permits such selection) or rolling a die for random determination.

Personal Selection

If your Gamemaster allows free selection, you get to decide your mutant's origin (engineered or natural) and the uniqueness of his mutation (member of a community or a unique individual).

Random Generation

If you are using random generation, first roll d8 and refer to Table P48: Mutant Origin. You will discover that your hero is either an *engineered* mutant or a *natural* mutant.

Naturals tend to be more powerful than engineered mutants, though they also have more extensive drawbacks. After determining your hero's origin, refer to the appropriate subtable (A or B) and roll d8 again to find out whether he or she is a member of a community of mutants or an isolated individual.

An individual mutant of either type tends to be more powerful and have more significant drawbacks than a member of a community.

Number of Mutations and Drawbacks

Once you've determined the nature of your hero's mutation(s), you're ready to figure out how many muta-

Table P48: Mutant Origin

d8	Origin of Mutation(s)
1–5	Engineered mutation(s); roll on Table P48A below
6–8	Naturally occurring mutation(s); roll on Table P48B below

Table P48A: Engineered Mutations

d8	Uniqueness of Mutation(s)	Mutation Pts.	Drawback Pts.
1–5	Belongs to mutant community	d4	d4
6–8	Individual with unique mutation(s)	d4+1	d4+1

Table P48B: Natural Mutations

d8	Uniqueness of Mutation(s)	Mutation Pts.	Drawback Pts.
1–3	Belongs to mutant community	d4+2	d4+1
4–8	Individual with unique mutation(s)	d4+3	d4+2

tions he or she has. Along with the number of mutations, you'll also determine how powerful these mutations will be.

Refer to the line on either TABLE P48A: ENGINEERED MUTATIONS or TABLE P48B: NATURAL MUTATIONS that identifies the origin of your mutant hero. The result of a roll of d4, plus (in most cases) the addition of a constant, determines the number of *mutation points* you receive. Use these points to purchase mutations for your hero. The origin of your hero sets the range for the points you'll be generating—the smallest range for a member of an engineered community, the greatest range for an individual with a natural mutation.

Immediately after you find out how many mutation points your hero gets, roll d4 again to determine the number of *drawback points* you must spend on drawbacks.

Then, before you proceed any farther with the hero creation process described in Chapter 2, determine exactly what your hero's advantageous mutations and drawbacks are. If any of the character's powers have a permanent effect on his Ability Scores, make those adjustments before continuing with the creation process.

How to Spend Your Points

If your hero has more than 1 mutation point, you must decide how many mutations you want your character to have, and how powerful each of them will be. The list at right gives all the possible combinations for each amount of mutation points. Once you've made those decisions, proceed with determining your hero's mutations.

This list also applies to drawbacks; before you determine which ones your hero has, look here to see how your drawback points can be spent. "Ordinary" relates to Slight; "Good" to Moderate; and "Amazing" to Extreme drawbacks. For example, if you must spend 2 points on drawbacks, you can take one Moderate or two Slight drawbacks.

Number of Points	Number & Type of Possible Mutations
1	1 Ordinary
2	2 Ordinary
	or 1 Good
3	3 Ordinary
	or 1 Good + 1 Ordinary
4	2 Good
	or 2 Ordinary + 1 Good
	or 1 Amazing
5	2 Good + 1 Ordinary
	or 1 Good + 3 Ordinary
	or 1 Amazing + 1 Ordinary
6	1 Amazing + 1 Good
	or 1 Amazing + 2 Ordinary
	or 2 Good + 2 Ordinary
7	2 Good + 3 Ordinary
	or 1 Amazing + 3 Ordinary
	or 1 Amazing + 1 Good + 1 Ordinary

Advantageous Mutations

Advantageous mutations are rated for power—either Ordinary, Good, or Amazing—which is a measure of both potency and how extensively the mutation varies the human form. The costs for these mutations are shown on TABLE P47: MUTATION COSTS.

Ordinary mutations are low-powered alterations and minor improvements that require little in the way of physiological redesign of the human form. A mutant can't have more than three Ordinary mutations.

Good mutations are mid-powered alterations and major improvements that push the human frame to its maximum potential, sometimes re-

TABLE P49: ADVANTAGEOUS MUTATIONS

d20	Ordinary	Good	Amazing	d20
1	Adaptation, Environment	Acid Touch	Chameleon Flesh	1
2	Adaptation, Gravity	Dermal Armor	Dermal Plating	2
3	Adrenal Control	Electric Aura	Energy Absorption	3
4	Biorhythm Control	Enhanced CON	Energy Reflection	4
5	Dermal Reinforcement	Enhanced DEX	Flight	5
6	Improved CON	Enhanced Durability	Hyper CON	6
7	Improved DEX	Enhanced Healing	Hyper DEX	7
8	Improved Durability	Enhanced Immunity	Hyper Durability	8
9	Improved Healing	Enhanced INT	Hyper Healing	9
10	Improved Immunity	Enhanced PER	Hyper Immunity	10
11	Improved INT	Enhanced Reflexes	Hyper INT	11
12	Improved PER	Enhanced Senses	Hyper Metabolism	12
13	Improved Reflexes	Enhanced STR	Hyper PER	13
14	Improved Senses	Enhanced WIL	Hyper Reflexes	14
15	Improved STR	Increased Metabolism	Hyper Senses	15
16	Improved WIL	Natural Attack	Hyper STR	16
17	Night Vision	Psionic Power	Hyper WIL	17
18	Psi Sensitivity	Radiation Tolerance	Imp. Natural Attack	18
19	Toxin Tolerance	Redundant Vital Organs	Poison Attack	19
20	Vascular Control	Thermal Vision	Psi Resistance	20

sulting in an alteration that is visible or detectable. A mutant can't have more than two Good mutations.

Amazing mutations either drastically change the human form or add capabilities of tremendous power. A mutant can't have more than one Amazing mutation.

TABLE P49: ADVANTAGEOUS MUTATIONS (on the preceding page) lists all of the possibilities of each type and assigns each mutation a number for use in randomly determining which one(s) your hero has.

The purchase or selection of certain mutations can prohibit a hero from having certain other mutations. If a die roll yields a result that is not allowed because of a mutation the hero already has, disregard that result and roll again.

Ability Score Increases

Some mutations make it possible for a mutant character to attain an Ability Score greater than 14 (which is the highest number that can be assigned to an Ability when the scores are determined). If one of these mutations is selected or randomly determined, the character's score is raised to a higher level permanently (unless something happens in the course of the campaign that reduces the score).

There are three mutations (one Ordinary, one Good, one Amazing) that permanently increase a certain Ability Score. However, a character may not possess two mutations that permanently increase the same score. If you determine mutations by die rolls and you get a second result that increases an Ability Score (for instance, Improved Will followed by Hyper Will), disregard the second result and roll again.

Some mutations allow temporary increases to Ability Scores in certain situations. (See Adaptation, Gravity on this page for an example.) These temporary increases may also cause an Ability Score to exceed the normal maximum of 14. A character is permitted to possess any mutations that temporarily increase an Ability Score in addition to one mutation that provides a permanent increase to that score.

Advantageous Mutation Descriptions

Each advantageous mutation has a different game effect. A mutation may confer combat, survival, or interaction advantages to the hero.

Each advantageous mutation is tied to an Ability. When a mutant needs to see how effective his power is, he makes either a skill check (if he has the skill in question) or an untrained check using one-half of the related Ability Score with a base situation die of +d4. The related Ability for a mutation, when it's not self-evident, is identified in the heading that leads off the mutation's description.

Ordinary Mutations

Ordinary mutations are the most common form of mutations in most campaigns. Each Ordinary mutation costs 1 mutation point. A mutant character can't have more than three Ordinary mutations.

Adaptation, Environment (CON)

Changes in the mutant's physiology make him comfortable in an inhospitable environment. For each point spent on this mutation, a character can have only one type of adaptation; additional adaptations require multiple purchases of this mutation. The available types are hot climate, arid climate, cold climate, thin atmosphere, and thick atmosphere. A character can't select two environments that are opposites; for instance, a mutant can't be adapted to both hot climates and cold climates, but one could possess this mutation for hot climate, thick atmosphere, and arid climate at the same time.

The range for all these environments must be within human toleration; the mutant is not able to withstand lethal environments, he or she is just more comfortable in a particular environment than a human would be. He or she might not be hampered by heat and humidity, or may be able to function in cold weather without the need for bulky protective clothing, or may be able to extract enough oxygen for strenuous activity from a thin atmosphere (such as that found atop a high mountain on Earth).

When the character is in an environment tied to the mutation, any penalties associated with functioning in such an environment are reduced by 2 steps, and the character's Stamina–*endurance* checks receive a –2 bonus.

Penalty Reductions

Some mutations (such as the Adaptation powers described on this page) enable a character to benefit from a reduction to a penalty to the situation die modifier in certain circumstances. It's important to remember that although such a reduction can eliminate a penalty, it can't be used to turn a penalty into a bonus.

For instance, if a mutation provides a penalty reduction of 2 steps and all other conditions in a certain situation indicate that a +1 step penalty should be applied to the situation die, the mutation reduces the penalty to 0 (no modifier) but does not enable the character to have a –1 bonus.

Adaptation, Gravity (DEX or STR)

The mutant is able to function more easily than a normal human in a gravitational field that's either less than or greater than the normal gravity of Earth. The adaptation applies to light gravity (as light as one-sixth of Earth normal, such as that found on the Moon) or to high gravity (up to two times Earth normal). A character can select only one type of adaptation; additional purchases of this mutation aren't allowed, because a character capable of functioning in light gravity can't also handle high gravity conditions (and vice versa).

A light gravity mutation produces a tall, thin, athletic body and is tied to Dexterity. The mutant receives a temporary 1-point Dexterity score increase in light gravity conditions. Also, the penalties associated with performing actions in light gravity or zero gravity are eliminated. (See "Operating in Zero Gravity" on page 56 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action.*) In

Earthlike gravity, the mutant receives no benefits. In high gravity, he suffers a +2 penalty in addition to any other penalties that may apply.

A high gravity mutation produces a shorter, stockier, muscular body and is tied to Strength. The hero receives a temporary 1-point Strength score increase in Earthlike gravity, but also takes a temporary 1-point reduction to his Dexterity score. Penalties associated with operating in high gravity are reduced by 2 steps. In light gravity or zero gravity conditions, the mutant suffers a +2 penalty to all actions involving physical activity, in addition to any other penalties that may apply.

Adrenal Control (WIL)

A character with this mutation can boost his adrenaline production at will, granting bursts of exceptional strength and speed. When boosted, the character receives a –1 bonus to the following skill checks: Athletics, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Attack, Acrobatics, and Movement. He also gains a 1-point increase to any damage inflicted on a successful Unarmed Attack or Melee Weapons skill check.

Each adrenaline boost lasts for d4+1 rounds. At the end of this time, the character loses 1 fatigue point. A character continues to lose fatigue points from each use of the mutation in the same day. If he becomes exhausted as a result of this fatigue damage, he must wait for 24 hours before using the mutation again.

Biorhythm Control (WIL)

This mutation enhances a character's ability to fight off adverse physical effects. He gains a –1 bonus to checks involving Stamina (or either of its specialty skills) or Resolve–*physical resolve*.

Dermal Reinforcement (CON)

Layers of tough tissue exist just beneath the mutant's skin, providing the benefit of armor with a rating of d4+1 (LI), d4 (HI), d4–1 (En). The reinforcement is not a complete covering and retains a normal fleshlike resilience, so the appearance of the character's body isn't obviously deformed by the added protection. If it is used in conjunction with actual armor, the character makes an armor roll for each type of protection and applies the more favorable result (see "Layering Armor" on page 190 of *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*).

Improved Constitution

A character with this mutation has his Constitution score permanently increased by 1 point.

Improved Dexterity

This mutation permanently raises a character's Dexterity score by 1 point.

Improved Durability (CON)

A character with this mutation becomes more resistant to damage without visibly altering his form. His stun rating improves by 3 points.

Improved Healing (WIL)

This mutation manifests as a physical improvement that helps a character repair damage his body has sustained. Once per day, the character can consciously activate this mutation. To do so requires a full round, in which no other actions can be attempted. If the character is unconscious, the mutation activates once per day anyway, provided that healing is needed.

This mutation provides a certain amount of healing without medical assistance, determined by the result of a Resolve—*physical resolve* skill check: Ordinary, recover 1 stun point; Good, recover 2 stun points; Amazing, recover 3 stun points and 1 wound point.

Improved Immunity (CON)

A character with this mutation receives a –2 bonus to Constitution feat checks made to counter the effects of disease, infection, or biological agents. When the mutant is being treated to heal damage from disease, infection, or biological agents, the character providing the treatment receives a –2 bonus.

Improved Intelligence

This mutation permanently raises a character's Intelligence score by 1 point.

Improved Personality

This mutation permanently raises a character's Personality score by 1 point.

Improved Reflexes (DEX)

This mutation makes a character's natural reflexes more acute, granting a –1 bonus to his action check.

Improved Senses (WIL)

A character with this mutation gets a –1 bonus on Awareness–*perception* or Investigate skill checks (or Will feat checks) in which touch, taste, smell, sight, or hearing play a part.

Only One to a Character

In addition to the mutations that permanently raise an Ability Score (see "Ability Score Increases" on the facing page), there are several other groups of mutations that provide the same effect at more than one of the three different quality levels (Ordinary, Good, and Amazing). A character can't possess more than one mutation that provides the same benefit. For example, a mutant can't possess both Improved Durability and Hyper Durability. If you determine mutations by die rolls and you get a second result that duplicates an earlier benefit, disregard the second result and roll again.

These are the groups of mutations from which only one of each type can be taken:

Ordinary	Good	Amazing
Adrenal Control	Increased Metabolism	Hyper Metabolism
Dermal Reinforcement	Dermal Armor	Dermal Plating
Improved Healing	Enhanced Healing	Hyper Healing
Improved Immunity	Enhanced Immunity	Hyper Immunity
Improved Durability	Enhanced Durability	Hyper Durability
Improved Reflexes	Enhanced Reflexes	Hyper Reflexes
Improved Senses	Enhanced Senses	Hyper Senses
	Natural Attack	Improved Natural Attack

Improved Strength
This mutation permanently raises a character's Strength score by 1 point.

Improved Will
This mutation permanently raises a character's Will score by 1 point.

Night Vision (WIL)
A character with this mutation has eyes that are extraordinarily sensitive to ambient light, which reduces obscurity penalties he would otherwise suffer by 2 steps. This mutation provides no help in total darkness.

Psi Sensitivity (WIL)
This mutation can only be selected if the Gamemaster uses psionics (see Chapter 14) in his campaign; if this is not the case, disregard any die roll that corresponds to this mutation and roll again.

A mutant with this power has a special sensitivity to psionic energy. He may be able to detect the use of mental powers in his immediate vicinity, depending on the result of an Awareness–*intuition* check. The situation die for the check may be modified according to the distance between the mutant and the source of the psionic energy:

Distance (meters)	Situation Die Modifier
0–2	–3
3–6	–2
7–10	–1
11–14	none
15–18	+1
19–22	+2
23–25	+3
25+	can't sense psionics

The Gamemaster should make this check secretly, informing a player if his or her character succeeds in sensing anything pertinent.

Toxin Tolerance (CON)
The mutant's body is able to process toxic substances with more efficiency, thus rendering many poisons and drugs harmless, or at least greatly reducing their lethality. It provides a –2 bonus to Constitution feat checks made for the purpose of combating poisons or drugs.

Vascular Control (WIL)
The major blood vessels in the mutant's body are able to limit dangerous blood loss due to injury by constricting and then rerouting blood around damaged areas. If a character with this mutation suffers mortal damage, that damage is reduced by 1 point. This has no effect on secondary damage, however.

For example, an injury that inflicts 4 points of mortal damage is reduced to 3 points of mortal damage instead. The character still takes 2 wound points and 2 stun points of secondary damage.

This mutation also provides a –1 bonus to all Stamina–*endurance* checks related to mortal damage.

Good Mutations
Good advantageous mutations are rare in most campaigns. These mutations push the human form to its limits, possibly even altering it in some major way. Each Good mutation costs 2 mutation points. A mutant character can't have more than two Good advantageous mutations.

Acid Touch (CON)
The mutant has glands that allow him to secrete a corrosive substance from the pores in his fingertips. The power itself is activated on demand at the beginning of a round; the character doesn't have to spend an action to start the acid secretion. Acid is considered an energy attack for purposes of armor protection.

Against an inanimate and stationary object, the use of a single action enables the mutant to touch the object and stay in contact with it as long as desired.

Making contact with an inanimate object in motion requires a successful Dexterity feat check, after which the mutant may be able to stop the object's motion and remain in contact with it. (Being able to do this depends primarily on the nature of the object; the Gamemaster will determine if this is possible.)

Making contact with a living being requires a successful Unarmed Attack–*brawl* skill check. The mutant receives a –1 bonus to this check because he just has to touch his target.

Damage inflicted on any type of target is tied to the result of a Constitution feat check made by the mutant: Critical Failure, the caustic agent causes d4w damage to the mutant; Marginal, d4s to the target; Ordinary, d4w; Good, d4+2w; Amazing, d6+2w. (The *Gamemaster Guide* has information on how to assess and keep track of damage suffered by inanimate objects.)

This power can be used for one round (four phases) in every 24-hour period without causing harm to the mutant who possesses it. If it's used more than once per day, the character loses d4 fatigue points at the end of each later round in which the mutation is activated (whether or not it causes any damage). Acid must be used immediately after it's produced (in the same round), or else it dries out; it can't be saved for later use.

Dermal Armor (CON)
The mutant is protected by tough organic plates that are located just beneath the surface of the skin. The plates are not visible, but are obvious to anyone who touches the character's bare skin or feels his body through light clothing.

The protection provides the effect of armor with the following statistics: d6+1 (LI), d4+1 (LI), d4 (En). If the character is wearing actual armor, he or she makes an armor roll for each type of protection and applies the more favorable result (see "Layering Armor" on page 190 of *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*).

Electric Aura (WIL)
This mutation alters a character's nervous system, giving him special capacitorlike organs that produce an electrical field along the surface of his body. This electricity is capable of damaging objects or beings that come in contact with it. The power is activated on demand at the beginning of a round; the character doesn't have to use an action to "turn it on."

Against an inanimate and stationary object, the use of a single action enables the mutant to touch the object and stay in contact with it as long as desired. The mutant's Electric Aura can short out or otherwise damage the circuitry of electronic equipment, but the power can't inflict physical damage on objects (in the way that a bolt of lightning can damage a tree, for instance).

To use this power in combat, the hero must make a successful skill check using Unarmed Attack–*brawl* (if he's not wielding a weapon) or Melee Weapons (if he's holding a weapon capable of conducting electricity). He gains a –1 bonus to this check because he just has to touch his opponent instead of delivering a solid punch or weapon strike.

Damage inflicted on a living being depends on the result of a Will feat check made by the mutant: Critical Failure, the mutant shocks himself for d4s; Marginal, d4s to target; Ordinary, d4+2s; Good, d8+2s; Amazing, d4+1w.

When this power is activated, it remains in effect for 2 rounds, during which time the mutant can use it as often as he desires or is able to. At the end of that period, the power shuts off and the mutant loses 1 fatigue point.

Enhanced Constitution

This mutation permanently raises a character's Constitution score by 2 points.

Enhanced Dexterity

This mutation permanently raises a character's Dexterity score by 2 points.

Enhanced Durability (CON)

A character with this mutation becomes more resistant to damage at the cost of slightly altering his form. (Other characters have a –1 bonus to Awareness checks to see if they can detect anything unusual about the mutant.) His wound rating improves by 3 points.

Enhanced Healing (WIL)

This mutation speeds up cell regeneration and otherwise helps a character repair damage his body has sustained. Once per day, the character can consciously institute this improved healing. To do so requires a full round, in which no other actions can be attempted. If the character is unconscious, the mutation manifests once per day anyway, provided that healing is needed. This mutation provides the following benefits:

- A –1 bonus to all Stamina–*endurance* checks related to mortal damage.
- A certain amount of healing without medical assistance, determined by the result of a Resolve—*physical resolve* skill check: Ordinary, recover 2 stun points; Good, 3 stun points and 1 wound point; Amazing, 4 stun points, 2 wound points, and 1 mortal point.

Enhanced Immunity (CON)

This mutation provides a –3 bonus to Constitution feat checks made to counter the effects of disease, infection, or biological agents. When the mutant is being treated to heal damage from disease, infection, or biological agents, the character providing the treatment receives a –3 bonus.

Enhanced Intelligence

This mutation permanently raises a character's Intelligence score by 2 points.

Enhanced Personality

This mutation permanently raises a character's Personality score by 2 points.

Enhanced Reflexes (DEX)

This mutation improves a character's natural reflexes, granting a –2 bonus to his action check.

Enhanced Senses (WIL)

A character with this mutation receives a –2 bonus to Awareness–*perception* or Investigate skill checks in which touch, taste, smell, sight, or hearing play a part.

Enhanced Strength

A character with this mutation has his Strength score permanently increased by 2 points.

Enhanced Will

This mutation permanently raises a character's Will score by 2 points.

Increased Metabolism (WIL)

This mutation allows a character to consciously control his metabolic rate, boosting it as he see fit. When boosted, the character receives a –2 bonus to the following skill checks: Athletics, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Attack, Acrobatics, and Movement. He also gains a 2-point increase to any damage he inflicts on a successful Unarmed Attack or Melee Weapons skill check.

The metabolic boost lasts for d6+1 rounds. At the end of this period, the character loses d4+1 fatigue points. A character continues to lose fatigue with each later use of the mutation in the same day, perhaps eventually exhausting his body to the point of unconsciousness.

In addition, Increased Metabolism makes the mutant extraordinarily hungry. As soon as possible after using the mutation, the character must eat—and he must eat twice the amount of food someone of his size and build usually requires. Without this food, lost fatigue points are recovered half as quickly as normal.

Natural Attack (STR)

This mutation provides a character with a natural attack form, usually claws, fangs, spikes, horns, or some similar alteration. A natural weapon is made of bone, hair, or some other naturally tough material. If the player so desires, this mutation can be hidden, usually by making the natural weapon retractable.

A Natural Attack uses the Unarmed Attack–*brawl* skill. Damage inflicted is d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w, plus any increase for high Strength. This is considered low impact (LI) damage for purposes of determining the effect of armor protection. If the weapon is retractable, the damage it can inflict is reduced by 2 points (to a minimum of 1), so that it becomes d6s/d4–2w/d4w.

Psionic Power (varies)

This mutation can only be selected if the Gamemaster uses psionics (see Chapter 14) in his campaign; if this is not the case, disregard any die roll that corresponds to this mutation and roll again.

A character with this mutation is able to use any single psionic specialty skill at rank 3. The skill's rank can never be improved. The related Ability for this mutation is the same as the Ability (CON, INT, WIL, or PER) tied to the specialty skill. A character with this mutation is considered to be a talent (see page 228 in *Chapter 14: Psionics*) for purposes of determining his psionic energy points.

It is possible for a character with a sufficient number of mutation points to have two different psionic powers.

Radiation Tolerance (CON)

This mutation provides a –3 bonus to Stamina–*endurance* checks for purposes of overcoming the harmful effects of radiation. (The *Gamemaster Guide* contains information on what happens when heroes are exposed to radiation.)

Redundant Vital Organs (CON)

This mutation protects a character's vital life systems —cardiovascular, respiratory, nervous, and digestive—

by providing backup organs that can function and maintain life if the primary systems are damaged. This is reflected in game play by reducing all mortal damage in half (round down). In addition, this mutation provides a –3 bonus to all Stamina–*endurance* checks related to mortal damage.

This mutation doesn't reduce secondary damage. A character who suffers 3 points of mortal damage and has it reduced to 1 point still receives 1 wound and 1 stun as secondary damage.

Thermal Vision (WIL)

This mutation allows a character to see into the infrared spectrum, spotting objects by the heat they radiate. As long as objects and other characters aren't the same temperature as the surrounding area, the mutant receives a 3-step reduction to penalties related to obscured situations, including total darkness.

Amazing Mutations

Amazing advantageous mutations are the rarest of all mutations in most campaigns. Some of these mutations change the human form so drastically that it is impossible for the mutant to conceal his true nature from onlookers. Each Amazing mutation costs 4 mutation points. A character can't have more than one Amazing mutation.

Chameleon Flesh (CON)

This mutation grants a character the ability to alter his skin color and texture so that he can blend into most backgrounds and seem to disappear.

A character using this mutation must concentrate on changing the appearance of his flesh, and it takes an entire round to change. (During the change, any other actions a character makes receives a +2 penalty.) Once the change is complete, the character becomes harder to spot: an opponent suffers a penalty to skill checks involving Awareness–*perception*, Investigate–*search*, or any Ranged Weapons skill.

Of course, this mutation works best when the character is scantily clad, exposing more of the camouflaged flesh. It also helps to be in conditions where visibility is bad to begin with because of obscuring factors such as darkness or fog, or against a good natural background such as found in a jungle or forest.

Modifier to Opposing Character	Background Conditions
+4	Poor visibility, good natural background (jungle, rock, forest, etc.)
+3	Good visibility and good natural background, or poor visibility and poor natural background
+2	Good visibility, poor background
–1	Hiding character in motion
–2	Hiding character's body half covered by clothing
–3	Hiding character's body covered normally by clothing (shirt, pants, shoes)

Dermal Plating (CON)

This mutation provides a character with the most extensive form of natural armor. It manifests itself as large sections of chitinous or semiorganic plating that grow over a character's skin. Such a character may appear to be vaguely blubbery, insectile, or crustacean, depending on the form of the armor.

Dermal Plating permanently reduces a character's Dexterity score by 1, but also provides armor protection with the following characteristics: d6+2 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6+1 (En). If the character is wearing actual armor, he or she makes an armor roll for each type of protection and applies the more favorable result (see "Layering Armor" on page 190 of *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*).

Energy Absorption (CON)

This mutation gives a character a natural energy conduit—in effect, a "lightning rod"—that redirects and drains off 2d4 points of energy damage inflicted on any attack. Primary damage *and* secondary damage are absorbed. For example, if a mutant with this power is hit for 6 wound points of energy damage and his player rolls a 4 on 2d4, the character receives only 2 wounds of primary damage and 1 stun of secondary damage. If the character is wearing actual armor, he or she makes a die roll for each type of protection and applies the more favorable result (see "Layering Armor" on page 190 of *Chapter 11: Weapons & Armor*).

Energy Reflection (CON)

This mutation is similar to Energy Absorption (see above), giving a character the ability to neutralize d4+1 points of energy damage (both primary and secondary damage) inflicted on any attack. In addition, the amount of damage that's neutralized is reflected back at the attacker. So, if a mutant with this power is hit for 5 points of energy damage and the player gets a result of 3 on a roll of d4+1, then the mutant takes 2 points of primary damage (plus secondary damage, if applicable) and 3 points of the damage are reflected back against the attacker (who can then make an armor roll if he's wearing protection against energy).

When the mutant is wearing actual armor, energy can be absorbed but not reflected, and the better of the protections (d4+1 from the mutation or whatever the armor provides) takes precedence.

Flight (DEX)

A mutant with this power has a large and powerful pair of wings attached to his back. The wings can be whatever the player chooses: bat wings, feathered wings, gossamer wings, etc. The mutant's body is exceptionally light-framed, with hollow bones and efficient musculature to operate the wings; she permanently loses 1 point from her Strength score and 2 points from her Constitution score, while adding 1 point to Dexterity. The mutant's wingspan is about 6 meters, so it's nearly impossible to conceal her wings.

The character is able to use the fly and glide movement rates, as given on TABLE P8: COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES (see page 39 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*). By purchasing ranks in the Acrobatics–*flight* skill, she can improve her ability to move through the air. For a character who does not have at least the Acrobatics broad skill, the success of any attempt to fly is determined by the result of an untrained skill check using one-half of the character's Dexterity score. See the description of the *flight* skill on page 71 in *Chapter 4: Skills* for more information.

Mutants: It takes all kinds

Hyper Constitution
This mutation permanently raises a character's Constitution score by 3 points.

Hyper Dexterity
A character with this mutation has his Dexterity score permanently increased by 3 points.

Hyper Durability (CON)
A character with this mutation becomes more resistant to damage at the cost of substantially altering his form. (Other characters have a –2 bonus to their Awareness checks to see if they succeed in detecting anything unusual about the mutant.) The mutant's mortal rating improves by 3 points.

Hyper Healing (WIL)
This mutation speeds up cell regeneration and otherwise helps a character repair damage his body has sustained. Once per day, the character can consciously institute this improved healing. To do so requires a full round, in which no other actions can be attempted. If the character is unconscious, the mutation manifests once per day anyway, provided that healing is needed. This mutation provides the following benefits:

- –2 bonus to all Stamina–*endurance* checks related to mortal damage.
- A certain amount of healing without medical assistance, determined by the result of a Resolve–*physical resolve* skill check: Ordinary, recover 3 stun points and 1 wound point; Good, 4 stun points and 2 wound points; Amazing, 4 stun points, 3 wound points, and 1 mortal point.

Hyper Immunity (CON)
A character with this mutation receives a –4 bonus to Constitution feat checks made against disease, infection, or biological agents. When the mutant is being treated to heal damage inflicted by disease, infection, or biological agents, the character rendering treatment receives a –4 bonus.

Hyper Intelligence
This mutation permanently raises a character's Intelligence score by 3 points.

Hyper Metabolism (CON)
This powerful mutation adapts the character's major muscles and organs to utilize high-energy biochemical fuels for short periods of time. When the cells of the character's body break up these compounds, the character gains much more energy than he does during normal cellular respiration. When his metabolic supercharger kicks in, the character gains a –3 bonus to the following skills: Athletics, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Attack, Acrobatics, Stamina, and Movement. He gains a 3-point increase to any damage he inflicts on an Unarmed Attack or Melee Weapons skill check. Finally, the character's action check receives a –1 bonus.

A supercharged metabolism uses a great deal of energy. The mutant can sustain this condition for d4+2 rounds, but immediately loses 2d4+2 fatigue points (perhaps causing him or her to fall unconscious) when this period ends. He or she must wait 3d8 hours before trying to use the power again, during which time the body is replenishing its supply of biochemical fuel.

Hyper Personality
A character with this mutation has his Personality score permanently increased by 3 points.

Hyper Reflexes (DEX)
This mutation increases a character's natural reflexes, granting a –3 bonus to the character's action check.

Hyper Senses (WIL)
This mutation improves a character's senses, granting him a –3 bonus to Awareness–*perception* or Investigate skill checks in which touch, taste, smell, sight, or hearing play a part.

Hyper Strength
This mutation permanently raises a character's Strength score by 3 points.

Hyper Will
This mutation permanently raises a character's Will score by 3 points.

Improved Natural Attack (STR)
This mutation provides a character with a powerful natural attack form, usually claws, fangs, spikes, horns, or some similar alteration. A natural weapon is made of bone, hair, or some other naturally tough material. If the player desires, this mutation can be hidden, usually by making the natural weapon retractable.

An Improved Natural Attack uses the Unarmed Attack–*brawl* skill. Damage is d4w/d4+2w/d4m, plus any increase for high Strength. This is considered low impact (LI) damage for purposes of determining armor protection. If the natural weapon is retractable, damage is reduced by 2 points (to a minimum of 1), so that it becomes d4–2w/d4w/d4–2m.

Poison Attack (STR)
This mutation gives a character the ability to produce a toxin and use it as an attack form. A character with this mutation receives one form of poison and one method of delivery; these attributes may be selected by the player, decided by die rolls, or assigned by the Gamemaster. The mutant is immune to his own poison.

Poison Type	Delivery System
Hemotoxin	Insinuative
Neurotoxin	Insinuative or inhaled
Irritant	Inhaled

An *insinuative* delivery system injects the poison directly into the target's bloodstream through the use of a natural weapon such as fangs, claws, or a stinger. A character can only have this type of delivery system if he also has the Natural Attack mutation (see page 219). A successful Unarmed Attack–*brawl* skill check is required to inflict damage on a target with this type of poison.

Inhaled poisons are delivered via a sharp exhalation of breath or a burst of gas released from an internal bladder. The range of a spray of inhaled poison is 4 meters in the direction the mutant is facing, and the poison remains airborne for 1 round after it's released.

Hemotoxins don't damage a target until 5 rounds after they are introduced, but during that time they provide a +1 penalty to all actions attempted by the target. On the fifth round after it is introduced, the poison causes the following damage, depending on the result of a Constitution feat check made by the target: Critical Failure, d4+2m; Failure, d4m; Ordinary, d6+1w; Good, d4w; Amazing, d6s.

Neurotoxins don't damage a target until the round after they are introduced, but during the remainder of the current round they provide a +1 penalty to all actions attempted by the target during that time. On the first full round after it is introduced, the poison causes the following damage, depending on the result of a Constitution feat check made by the target: Critical Failure, d6+1m; Failure, d4+1m; Ordinary, d8+1w; Good, d6+1w; Amazing, d6+1s.

Irritants have the following effects beginning in the phase after they are introduced, depending on the result of a Constitution feat check made by the target: Critical Failure, +3 penalty to all actions for 2 rounds; Failure, +2 penalty to all actions for 2 rounds; Ordinary, +1 penalty to all actions for 2 rounds; Good or Amazing, no effect.

A mutant can produce one dose of hemotoxin, two doses of neurotoxin, or four doses of an irritant during the course of a single scene, and is unable to use his Poison Attack more than twice in any 24-hour period.

Psi Resistance (WIL)
This mutation can only be selected if the Gamemaster uses psionics (see Chapter 14) in his campaign; if this is not the case, disregard any die roll that corresponds to this mutation and roll again.

A character with this mutation has an extraordinary ability to withstand the effects of psionic powers. It provides a +2 improvement to the mutant's Will resistance modifier when psionic abilities are being used directly against him.

Mutation Drawbacks
Even the least significant mutations have some negative effect associated with them. A mutant has not only points to spend on advantageous mutations, but points that must be spent on mutation drawbacks. Based on their power, drawbacks are rated as either Slight (the least powerful), Moderate, or Extreme. See "How to Spend Your Points" on page 215 for the ways in which mutation points may be assigned to drawbacks.

Slight Mutation Drawbacks
Slight drawbacks aren't readily apparent to the casual observer, but they manifest in weaknesses that can hinder a mutant character in some situations.

Environmental Sensitivity, slight
Select one of the following environments: water, light gravity, inhospitable climate (hot, cold, or arid), high gravity. In that particular environment, the mutant operates with a +2 penalty to all skill and action checks he attempts. This penalty is cumulative with any other penalties that may apply.

Light Sensitivity
This drawback manifests as eyes that are sensitive to light. In any light that's brighter than twilight, the character suffers penalties to any actions he attempts. In Ordinary light, he receives a +1 penalty; in Good light, the penalty increases to +2 steps; in Amazing light, he receives a +3 penalty. (Page 59 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* contains brief information on types of illumination. The subject is covered more fully in the *Gamemaster Guide*.)

Note that protective goggles (see *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*) can be

Table P50: Mutation Drawbacks

d8	Slight
1	Environmental Sensitivity, slight
2	Light Sensitivity
3	Reduced Ability Score, slight
4	Sound Sensitivity
5	Temporary Weakness, slight
6	Thermal Intolerance
7	Toxin Intolerance
8	Weak Immunity

d8	Moderate
1	Environmental Sensitivity, moderate
2	Inefficient Metabolism
3	Minor Physical Change
4	Reduced Ability Score, moderate
5	Slow Reflexes
6	Susceptible to Damage
7	Temporary Weakness, moderate
8	Wild Immunity

d8	Extreme
1	Deadly Immunity
2	Environmental Sensitivity, extreme
3	Highly Susceptible to Damage
4	Major Physical Change
5	Reduced Ability Score, extreme
6	Temporary Weakness, extreme
7	Weak Metabolism
8	Wild Mutation

worn to reduce these penalties. Even with goggles, however, the penalty can never be reduced to less than +1.

Reduced Ability Score, slight

Select one of your character's mutations. Find the Ability related to that mutation on Table P51: Related Abilities. The corresponding Ability Score is permanently reduced by 1 point.

Sound Sensitivity

This drawback manifests as ears that are sensitive to sound. A sound louder than a whisper causes the character to suffer penalties to any actions he attempts: Ordinary sound, +1 penalty; Good sound, +2 penalty; Amazing sound, +3 penalty. (Page 59 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action* contains brief information on types of sound. The subject is covered more fully in the *Gamemaster Guide*.)

Note that protective earplugs (see *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*) can be worn to reduce these penalties. Even with plugs, however, the penalty can never be reduced to less than +1.

Temporary Weakness, slight

This drawback manifests as a temporary weakness that lasts for a certain amount of time after the use of an advantageous mutation. Find the Ability related to the mutation on Table P51: Related Abilities. The corresponding Ability Score is temporarily reduced by 2 points, starting in the round in which the mutation is activated and lasting for the rest of the scene or for d4 hours, whichever makes more sense to the story.

Table P51: Related Abilities

Mutation Ability		Reduce This Score:
STR	▶	INT
DEX	▶	STR
CON	▶	DEX
INT	▶	PER
WIL	▶	CON
PER	▶	WIL

Thermal Intolerance

This drawback saddles a character with a poorly developed temperature-regulating system. This makes it hard for him to endure temperatures that most humans would find comfortable. The character suffers a +2 penalty to any Stamina or Survival skill checks made in hot or cold conditions.

Note that wearing an e-suit (see page 143 in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*) eliminates the need for these checks.

Toxin Intolerance

This drawback indicates that a character has trouble processing toxic substances. The character receives a +2 penalty to any Constitution feat checks made for the purpose of defeating poisons or drugs.

Weak Immunity

This drawback indicates that the mutant has a weak immune system. The character receives a +2 penalty to Constitution feat checks made against disease, infection, and biological agents. When the mutant is being treated to heal damage inflicted by such conditions, the character rendering treatment receives a +2 penalty.

Moderate Mutation Drawbacks

Moderate drawbacks often have some visible sign of their presence and greatly hinder a mutant in certain situations.

Environmental Sensitivity, moderate

Select one of the following environments: water, light gravity, inhospitable climate (hot, cold, arid), high gravity. In that particular environment, the mutant operates with a +3 penalty to all skill and action checks

Incompatible Drawbacks

When you determine the drawbacks that your mutant hero will have to put up with, don't select—and don't let a die roll dictate—a drawback that isn't sensible because it counteracts one of the advantageous mutations that have already been determined.

For instance, if a mutant has Improved Immunity, Enhanced Immunity, or Hyper Immunity, the character can't also have Weak Immunity or Wild Immunity, since those drawbacks are simply opposites of the advantageous mutations.

The Gamemaster has the final say on whether a certain drawback is appropriate for a mutant character to have.

he or she attempts. This penalty is cumulative with any other penalties that may apply.

Inefficient Metabolism

Because the mutant's metabolism works inefficiently, the character suffers a +2 penalty to the following skill checks: Athletics, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Attack, Acrobatics, and Movement. In addition, for every phase (or other time unit, as selected by the Gamemaster) in which the character attempts a physical action, he loses 1 fatigue point.

Minor Physical Change

The mutant has an obvious though minor physical alteration that marks him as not quite human. This change inflicts a +2 penalty to all checks involving Personality skills and any other skills used to interact with other characters.

Minor physical changes include strange skin color, strange eye color or shape, strange skin texture (thin pelt, scales, etc.), tapered ears, visible natural weaponry, webbed fingers, strange hair color, or some similar alteration to the normal human form.

Reduced Ability Score, moderate

Select one of your character's mutations. Find the Ability related to that mutation on Table P51: Related Abilities. The corresponding Ability Score is permanently reduced by 2 points.

Slow Reflexes

This drawback decreases a character's natural reflexes, causing him to suffer a +1 penalty to all action checks he makes.

Susceptible to Damage

Select a type of damage: energy, low impact, or high impact. Whenever the mutant is hit by that type of damage, increase the primary damage by 1 point. So, if a mutant is susceptible to energy damage and gets hit for 3 wounds, the primary damage is increased to 4 wounds before any armor protection is accounted for. Secondary damage is not affected, so that (in this example) the mutant suffers 1 stun of secondary damage instead of 2 stuns.

This drawback can be selected (or indicated by a die roll) more than once. If it comes up a second time, this means that either the mutant is susceptible to more than one type of damage (choose another type), or he suffers an extra 2 points of primary damage on any attack involving the type of damage that was previously selected.

Temporary Weakness, moderate

This drawback manifests as a temporary weakness that lasts for a certain amount of time after the use of a mutant ability. Find the Ability related to the mutation on Table P51: Related Abilities. The corresponding Ability Score is temporarily reduced by 3 points, starting in the round in which the mutation is activated and lasting for the rest of the scene or for 2d4 hours, whichever makes more sense to the current story.

Wild Immune System

This drawback indicates that the mutant's immune system runs wild. Sometimes it helps him by providing a –3 bonus to Constitution feat checks made against disease, infection, or biological agents, and grants a character treating such conditions in him a –3 bonus. At other times, the Wild Immunity turns on the character, providing a +3 penalty to Stamina and Resolve checks, and a +3 penalty to a character treating such conditions in the mutant.

To determine how the Wild Immunity behaves, the Gamemaster secretly rolls d6 whenever the drawback comes into play. On a result of 1–4, the penalties apply; on a result of 5–6, the bonuses apply. The condition indicated by this die roll persists until the mutant has fought off the ill effects, until he or she has been successfully treated to cure the effects, or until the Gamemaster determines that (for the time being) the Wild Immunity has run its course.

Extreme Mutation Drawbacks

Extreme drawbacks have a clearly visible appearance as they greatly change the human form. In addition, these flaws significantly hinder a mutant in certain situations.

Deadly Immunity

This mutation manifests as an immune system that works to attack organisms *outside* the mutant's body. Once per day, the mutant makes a Constitution feat check with a –2 bonus. The result determines the potency of the infectious disease the mutant produces that day.

Sometime during that day, at a moment determined by the Gamemaster and lasting for d4 hours, the mutant becomes contagious. During that period, whoever comes in contact (within 2 meters) of the mutant must make a Constitution feat check to resist the disease (with the modifier listed below). A Failure on the part of the potential victim indicates that the disease infects that character; a Critical Failure indicates that the disease infects the victim and the effect is doubled.

Disease potency: Critical Failure, the disease infects the mutant, making him ill for the next 24 hours (+2 penalty to all skill checks and action checks); Failure, the potential victim receives a –1 bonus to his Constitution feat check to resist the disease; Ordinary, +1 penalty to victim's check; Good, +2 penalty; Amazing, +3 penalty.

During the contagious period, the mutant's body changes grotesquely, leaving little doubt in any observer's mind that this is a person to stay away from. Boils or disease-filled sacs may develop on his body, or disease-infected fluid might be exuded from the pores of his flesh.

The disease begins to affect its victim(s) 24 hours after contact. During the second 24 hours after contact, the infected character suffers from the illness, receiving a +2 penalty to all skill checks and action checks. At the start of the third day, the victim makes a Constitution feat check (the +2 penalty applies to this check as well).

On a Critical Failure, the victim takes a turn for the worse; the penalty to all his skill checks and action checks increases by 1 step. On a Failure result, there is no change in the victim's condition. On any successful result, the disease has run its course and the victim is back to normal. Until he gets a successful result, a victim is allowed additional Constitution feat checks once per day to fight off the disease.

Environmental Sensitivity, extreme

Select one of the following environments: water, light gravity, inhospitable climate (hot, cold, or arid), high gravity. In that particular environment, the mutant operates with a +4 penalty to all skill checks and action checks he attempts.

Highly Susceptible to Damage

Select a type of damage: energy, low impact, or high impact. Whenever the mutant is hit by that type of damage, increase the primary damage by 3 points. So, if a mutant is susceptible to energy damage and gets hit for 3 wounds, the primary damage is increased to 6 wounds before any armor protection is accounted for. Secondary damage is not affected, so that (in this example) the mutant suffers 1 stun of secondary damage instead of 3 stuns.

Major Physical Change

The mutant has an obvious, major physical alteration that marks him as distinctly different from humans. This change causes a +4 penalty to all skill checks involving encounter skills (see page 97 in *Chapter 4: Skills*) and any other skills used to interact with other characters.

Major physical changes include rocky skin, shell-like protective growths, alterations in the humanoid form, alterations to make the mutant look more animallike or reptilian or birdlike, significantly larger than human-sized, significantly smaller than human-sized, or some similar major alteration to the normal human form.

Ability Score Reductions

Some drawbacks, and even a couple of advantageous mutations, have the effect of reducing a character's Ability Scores. These reductions, whether permanent or temporary, can drop one of a mutant's Ability Scores below the normal minimum of 4 (which is the smallest number that can be assigned to a score).

It's not possible, however, for a character to have a combination of mutations that *permanently* lowers an Ability Score to 0. A mutant who starts with an Ability Score of 0 is simply not viable (which is a polite way of saying he's dead).

If a *temporary* condition causes an Ability Score to fall to 0, the character does not cease to function—but he isn't able to perform any actions related to that Ability until conditions change so that the temporary reduction no longer applies.

Reduced Ability Score, extreme

Select one of your character's mutations. Find the Ability related to that mutation on Table P51: Related Abilities. The corresponding Ability Score is permanently reduced by 3 points.

Temporary Weakness, extreme

This disadvantage manifests as a temporary weakness that lasts for a certain amount of time after the use of a mutant ability. Find the Ability related to the mutation on Table P51: Related Abilities. The corresponding Ability Score is temporarily reduced by 4 points, starting in the round in which the mutation is activated and lasting for the rest of the scene or 2d6 hours, whichever makes more sense to the current story.

Weak Metabolism

Because the mutant's metabolism is weak, the character suffers a +3 penalty to Athletics, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Attack, Acrobatics, and Movement skill checks. In addition, for every phase (or other time unit as determined by the Gamemaster) in which the character attempts a physical action, he suffers 2 points of fatigue damage.

Wild Mutation

One of the character's advantageous mutations is "wild," meaning that he has no control over when it activates. Whenever the mutant faces a dramatic or tense situation (usually a combat scene or challenge scene, though some encounter scenes can be deemed tense), there's a chance that his mutation kicks in—whether he wants it to or not.

This drawback may be used in conjunction only with the following advantageous mutations. *Ordinary*: Adrenal Control. *Good*: Acid Touch, Electric Touch, Increased Metabolism, or Natural Attack. *Amazing*: Chameleon Flesh, Hyper Metabolism, or Improved Natural Attack.

When the mutant faces a stressful situation, or when the mutant thinks he's in danger, he must make a Will feat check. If the check fails, his mutant ability is activated. The wild mutation simply means that the conditions of the mutant ability go into effect whether the character wants them to or not—the character's metabolism becomes accelerated (perhaps causing him to lose fatigue points); his natural weapons (if they are retractable) spring out of their sheaths and become his preferred attack form; his flesh changes to match his surroundings, etc.

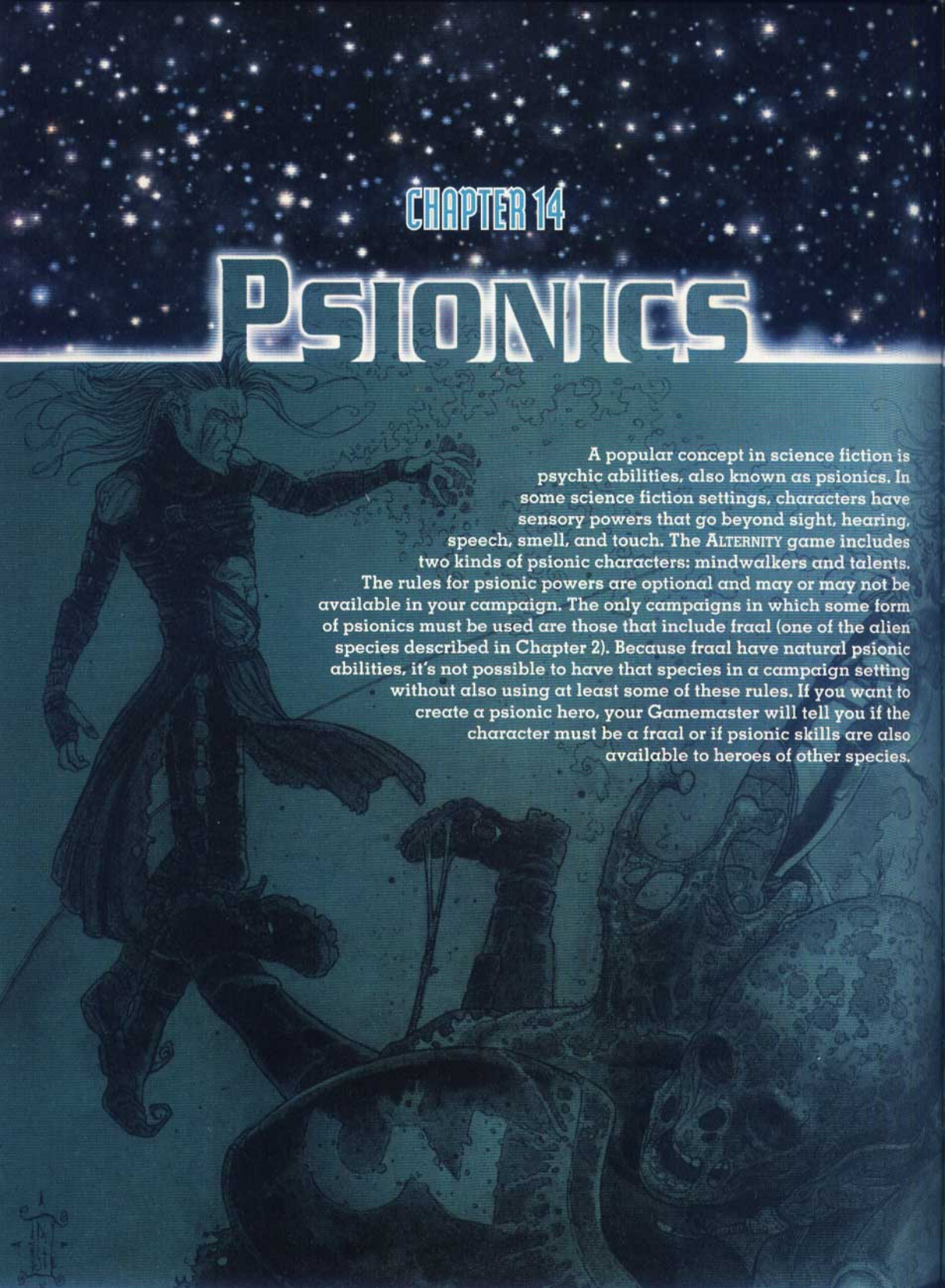
If the Will feat check succeeds, the character retains control of his mutation and can activate it or not as he sees fit.

If the result of the check is a Critical Failure, the mutation not only activates, but if possible it must be used against the nearest other character—friend or foe.

A mutant who loses control of his power is allowed a Will feat check once per round to see if he regains control of his power. Any successful result negates the "wild" aspect of the mutation, but does not deactivate it, so the mutant can continue to make use of it in a controlled manner if he so desires.

CHAPTER 14

PSIONICS



A popular concept in science fiction is psychic abilities, also known as psionics. In some science fiction settings, characters have sensory powers that go beyond sight, hearing, speech, smell, and touch. The ALTERNITY game includes two kinds of psionic characters: mindwalkers and talents. The rules for psionic powers are optional and may or may not be available in your campaign. The only campaigns in which some form of psionics must be used are those that include fraal (one of the alien species described in Chapter 2). Because fraal have natural psionic abilities, it's not possible to have that species in a campaign setting without also using at least some of these rules. If you want to create a psionic hero, your Gamemaster will tell you if the character must be a fraal or if psionic skills are also available to heroes of other species.

Mindwalker Heroes

If psionic powers are available in your campaign, you might want to try your hand at playing a Mindwalker. Mindwalkers are powerful psionics-users who have been trained to harness and exploit the powers of their minds. Essentially, a Mindwalker hero is generated using the rules in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*. However, there are a few alterations to those rules, which are discussed below.

The supplemental hero sheet, printed just ahead of the hero sheet at the back of this book, has spaces to record a psionic hero's characteristics. A blank line is provided at the end of each group of psionic skills in case your Gamemaster allows the existence of some psionic skills beyond those described in this chapter. (If other parts of the supplemental hero sheet aren't being used in your campaign, some of that space can be used to hold additional details about your hero's psionic powers.)

Species

As long as your Gamemaster agrees, a hero of any species can choose to be a Mindwalker. The alien species known as the Iraal receive special bonuses related to this profession; see the description of this species in Chapter 2 for details.

Career

Mindwalker careers focus on different ways to utilize mental powers. Possible Mindwalker careers include biokineticist, biowarrior, ESPion, mystic, telekineticist, psiguard, telepath, and mind knight. These careers are detailed later in this chapter.

Profession

Mindwalker is a profession, just as Combat Spec, Diplomat, Free Agent, and Tech Op are. Mindwalkers are a select group of characters who are gifted with great mental powers and trained to use them. These individuals may be extremely rare, depending on the setting, and some may be trained in a particular tradition.

Hero Mindwalkers must have the following scores or greater in these Abilities: Will 11, Intelligence 9, Constitution 9.

Mindwalkers have these benefits:

► ***Action Check Score Increase:*** A Mindwalker's action check score is increased by 1 point.

► ***Situation Bonus:*** Choose one psionic broad skill. This broad skill and all of its specialty skills receive a situation die improvement of 1 step. The broad skill now has a base situation die of +d0, and all of its specialty skills have a base situation die of –d4.

Note: Diplomats in a campaign that allows Mindwalkers can use this profession as their secondary profession (see page 31 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*).

Broad Skills

Psionic broad skills provide a Mindwalker with a basic knowledge of and proficiency in the use of mental abilities.

The psionic broad skills are Biokinesis (Constitution), ESP (Intelligence), Telekinesis (Will), and Telepathy (Personality). No psionic broad skill can be used untrained.

Specialty Skills

Psionic specialty skills provide a Mindwalker with detailed knowledge and training in the use of a specific aspect of the broad skills they're associated with. Some psionic specialty skills can be used by a character who only possesses the broad skill, while other specialty skills can't be used untrained. Each rank purchased in a specialty skill increases the potency of that skill, making it easier to use and generally more powerful.

A complete list of psionic specialty skills is presented on TABLE P52: PSIONIC SKILLS on page 229.

Rank Benefits

Several psionic specialty skills provide special benefits to characters who achieve higher ranks. However, none of these rank benefits can be purchased ahead of time, as indicated by the "⊗" symbol preceding their descriptions. (See "Purchasing Rank Benefits" on page 63 in *Chapter 4: Skills* for more information.)

Purchasing Psionic Skills

A player must use his Mindwalker hero's starting allocation of skill points to purchase psionic broad and specialty skills, as well as any other skills he wants the hero to have. The

Talents

If your Gamemaster doesn't have a place for Mindwalkers in his campaign setting but doesn't object to some use of psionic abilities, or if you want to create a psionic character who isn't a Mindwalker, your hero can be a talent.

In most respects, a talent is created the same way as any other non-Mindwalker character: Begin by selecting a species, a career, and a profession from among those available in the campaign setting, exactly as outlined in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*.

Skill selection takes a slightly different course, because a talent is entitled to purchase one psionic broad skill in addition to any of the other skills described in Chapter 4.

He is allowed to purchase as many as two psionic specialty skills, either during hero creation or at any later point in his career. One of those specialty skills can be improved to as high as rank 6, while the other one can be raised to rank 3.

A talent pays 1 point more than the listed cost to purchase a psionic skill, and a talent has a number of psionic energy points equal to one-half of his Will score, rounded up.

Mindwalker must make some hard choices between skills that will help him in the physical world and those that will take advantage of his mental abilities.

The "Cost" column on Table P52 gives the full price a Mindwalker must pay to acquire a certain skill. All other rules concerning the purchase of skills, as detailed in Chapter 2, must be adhered to.

Psionic Energy

Because the use of psionic skills requires a lot of mental energy, a psionic character is not able to use his special skills all the time. This limitation is reflected in the number of psionic energy points a character has.

Each Mindwalker starts with psionic energy points equal to his Will score. A Diplomat with the Mindwalker secondary profession has psionic energy points equal to one-half his Will score. There's a place to mark this information on the supplemental hero sheet printed in the back of this book.

Using Mental Abilities

Psionic skills work just like other skills in the game. A player can decide that his hero is going to use a psionic skill in place of any other action (assuming he has psionic energy points available).

Whether a psionic skill check succeeds or not, the character suffers a loss of psionic energy points with every attempted mental action:

Action	Energy Lost
Critical Failure result	3
Broad skill, success or failure	2
Specialty skill, success or failure	1

If a character runs out of psionic energy points, he can't use his psionic abilities until he recovers at least some of his points. (See "Psionic Energy Recovery" below.)

If a character uses a psionic ability and loses more points than he has available (for instance, getting a Critical Failure result when the character only had 1 point left), he suffers 1 point of fatigue damage for each point that wasn't available to spend.

A character must have 2 points available to attempt the use of a broad skill.

Extended Duration

Many psionic skills remain in effect for a time after they are activated, without the need for the character to make more skill checks to keep the power "on." In the descriptions that follow, these skills are identified by the line *"Extended duration."*

If a character attempting to use one of these skills makes a successful skill check, the power or benefit of the skill goes into effect at the start of the phase immediately following the skill check. It remains in effect automatically for the remainder of the current round and throughout all of the next round.

The effect of the skill can be further extended on a round-by-round basis if the character is willing and able to spend 1 psionic energy point to keep it going. This decision to keep the skill active or to let the power lapse must be made at the start of a round—before any action checks are rolled.

Psionic Energy Recovery

A character can attempt to recover psionic energy points at the end of any hour in which he did not use a psionic skill. The outcome of the attempt depends on the result of a Will feat check or a Resolve–*mental resolve* skill check: Critical Failure, character loses 1 point (suffering fatigue damage if he had no points); Failure, no points recovered; Ordinary, 1 point recovered; Good, 2 points; Amazing, 3 points. If a character spends 8 hours resting and not attempting to use mental abilities, all of his psionic energy points are recovered (no check necessary).

Resisting Mental Abilities

If a mental ability is directed at another character, that character's Will resistance modifier is figured into the psionic-user's skill check. Also, a target's skill in Resolve–*mental resolve* can provide additional modifiers, as detailed in the skill description on page 94 in *Chapter 4: Skills*.

Psionic Skill Descriptions

The four psionic broad skills are Biokinesis, ESP, Telekinesis, and Telepathy. Each broad skill has a number of psionic specialty skills associated with it. No psionic broad skill can be used untrained.

Constitution Skills

The following psionic broad skill and its specialty skills are connected to a character's Constitution score. The broad skill has a base situation die of +d4; each of the specialty skills has a base die of +d0.

Biokinesis

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to harness the power of his mind to enhance his body's functions.

With just the broad skill, a character can attempt to use any of the related specialty skills except those that can't be used untrained. The difficulty of such an action is reflected in the increased psionic energy cost and the higher base situation die for using just the broad skill.

Bioweapon

Extended duration.

When employing this skill, a character generates a staff or club of biokinetic energy that extends from his hand and can be used as a melee weapon. The bioweapon requires the Melee Attack–*bludgeon* skill to be wielded effectively.

The bioweapon has a damage rating of d4/d4+2/d6+2 (plus any adjustment for Strength, if applicable), depending on the result of each Melee Attack–*bludgeon* skill check. The initial skill check used to generate the weapon determines the type of damage the weapon does for as long as the current weapon is maintained: Ordinary, stun; Good, wound; Amazing, mortal.

Control Metabolism

Extended duration.

Through the use of this skill, a character can regulate his metabolic processes. This allows him to survive longer without food and water, in extreme climates, and in other hostile conditions. He can also slow his bodily functions to a point where he can pretend to be dead, should he need to fool others in some situation.

A check is made when a character enters a hostile environment or otherwise wants to employ this skill.

In the case of a hostile environment, the result of a skill check determines the type of protection a character can simulate by manipulating his own body: Ordinary, vacuum mask; Good, jumpsuit; Amazing, soft e-suit. (See *Chapter 9: Goods & Services* for descriptions of these items.) After the initial use of the skill, the level of protection can be maintained every hour thereafter at a cost of 1 psionic energy point.

Table P52: Psionic Skills

Constitution Skills

Skill Name	Cost
Biokinesis	6
Bioweapon	3
Control metabolism	2
Heal	4
Morph	4
Rejuvenate	3
Transfer damage	2

Intelligence Skills

Skill Name	Cost
ESP	5
Battle mind	4
Clairaudience	2
Clairvoyance	2
Empathy	1
Mind reading	3
Navrognition	3
Postcognition	3
Precognition	4
Psychometry	3
Sensitivity	2

Will Skills

Skill Name	Cost
Telekinesis	6
Electrokinetics	3
Kinetic shield	2
Levitation	2
Photokinetics	1
Psychokinetics	3
Pyrokinetics	4

Personality Skills

Skill Name	Cost
Telepathy	5
Contact	3
Datalink	4
Illusion	3
Mind blast	4
Mind shield	2
Suggest	3
Tire	3

Note: Skills printed in blue can't be used untrained.

Heal

This skill can't be used untrained.

By concentrating, a character using this skill can heal himself of wound damage or disease.

How much damage can be healed depends on the result of a skill check: Ordinary, 1 wound point; Good, 2 points; Amazing, 3 points.

For disease, the following results apply: Ordinary, reduce the degree of illness by one grade (from Good to Ordinary, for instance); Good, reduce by two grades; Amazing, reduce by three grades. (The *Gamemaster Guide* has full information on diseases and their grades of severity.)

Psionic healing requires time. The results are immediate, but the body's reaction to the use of the skill lasts one hour. For this reason, the *heal* skill can't be attempted more than once per hour, even if the check result is a Failure.

⊗ ***Healing Mortal Damage:*** At rank 6, a character becomes able to heal mortal damage. Skill check results change to: Ordinary, 2 wounds; Good, 3 wounds or 1 mortal; Amazing, 4 wounds or 2 mortals.

Morph

This skill can't be used untrained.

By using this skill, a character can alter his physical features so as to disguise himself or to accomplish something he wouldn't be able to do in his normal form, such as squeeze into a small hole, reach higher than his height or arm length normally allows, or shift his body mass to slip loose of bonds.

Morphing requires an entire round (4 phases) to complete, from the moment the skill is activated to the moment the alteration is finished. The character can do nothing else while this process is taking place.

The initial skill check determines how long the morphed form lasts: Ordinary, 1 round; Good, 2 rounds; Amazing, 3 rounds. Thereafter, a character can extend his morphed form by spending 1 psionic energy point per round (or other time unit as designated by the Gamemaster).

Morphing doesn't allow a character to alter the mass of his body, but he can change the apparent volume by compressing or expanding the space between molecules.

A morphed body part retains its original characteristics; no game statistics change, except for those directly related to the morphing. For example, a hero with elongated fingers might get a –1 bonus to his Manipulation–*pickpocket* skill checks.

Morphing has no effect on a character's clothing or possessions.

A character can only accomplish certain types of form changes, depending on his rank in the skill and the forms he has chosen to specialize in. These changes can't be used in combination unless otherwise noted; one change must be undone before a different one can be activated.

⊗ ***Rank Benefits:*** At rank 1 and again at rank 3, select one of these forms:

Elongate fingers, adding one-half meter to reach.

Elongate arms, adding 1 meter to reach.

Elongate legs, adding 1 meter to height.

At skill ranks 5 and 7, choose one of these forms:

Disguise; alter one's facial features to hide identity (+2 penalty to Awareness checks involving an attempt to recognize the character).

Elongate arms and legs simultaneously.

Elongate entire body and alter bone construction to allow passage through small openings (as small as one-half meter wide).

At skill ranks 10 and 12, choose one of these forms:

Improved disguise; alter one's facial and body features to hide identity (+4 penalty to Awareness checks).

Lessen damage; body becomes so flexible and malleable as to reduce the effects of low impact damage. A skill check is made (at no psionic energy cost) to determine how much damage is reduced: Ordinary, d4; Good, d4+2; Amazing, d6+2. Note that this benefit isn't received if the character is wearing armor.

Morph control; activate any two forms simultaneously.

Rejuvenate

When using this skill, a character can offset fatigue or stun damage, or some of each, that he has suffered. The skill does nothing to alleviate psionic energy loss.

A successful skill check provides the character with a certain number of "rejuvenation points." It costs 2 of these points to restore 1 point of fatigue damage, and 1 of these points to restore 1 point of stun damage. On an Ordinary success, the character receives 2 "rejuvenation points"; on a Good success, 4 points; and on an Amazing success, 6 points. The character can use these points in any combination to restore stun points, fatigue points, or some of each. "Rejuvenation points" that can't be used immediately are lost.

Psionic rejuvenation requires time. The results are immediate, but the body's reaction to the use of the skill lasts one hour. For this reason, the *rejuvenate* skill can't be attempted more than once per hour.

Transfer Damage

By laying hands upon another character and making a successful skill check, the hero alleviates that character's damage or disease by absorbing it into himself.

The damage that can be absorbed is tied to the result of a skill check: Critical Failure, character suffers 1 wound; Failure, no effect; Ordinary, hero absorbs 1 wound; Good, hero absorbs 2 wounds; Amazing, hero absorbs 3 wounds or 1 mortal.

An Ordinary result reduces the patient's illness by one grade (from Amazing to Good, for instance), simultaneously infecting the hero with that one grade of disease; a Good result reduces the patient's disease by two grades, transferring the ailment into the hero; and an Amazing result transfers any illness from the patient into the hero. (The *Gamemaster Guide* has full information on diseases and their grades of severity.)

Once the hero absorbs the damage or disease, he must either use the *heal* specialty skill, heal naturally, or receive medical or psionic attention to alleviate the damage or cure the disease he now suffers from.

Intelligence Skills

The following psionic broad skill and its specialty skills are connected to a character's Intelligence score. The broad skill has a base situation die of +d4; each of the specialty skills has a base die of +d0.

Extrasensory Perception (ESP)

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to experience his environment through an agency beyond the normal senses, using the power of his mind.

With just the broad skill, a character can attempt to use any of the related specialty skills except those that can't be used untrained. The difficulty of such an action is reflected in the increased psionic energy cost and the higher base situation die for using just the broad skill.

Battle Mind

Extended duration.
This skill can't be used untrained.

To use this skill, a hero focuses on the battle at hand and makes a skill check. The success achieved indicates the benefit he receives while the current application of the skill remains active.

A successful skill check gives the hero a bonus to his action checks: Ordinary, –1; Good, –2; Amazing, –3.

Clairaudience

With this skill, a hero selects a location and projects his mind to that spot, hearing sounds as though he was physically there.

Clairaudience doesn't screen out noise around the user, so he might have trouble hearing what's going on at a distance. It provides no help in interpreting unknown languages or recognizing unfamiliar sounds, and the mental ear can't move from the location it's projected to. Because the user remains conscious within his body, he is aware of what's happening around his body.

The better the result of the skill check, the longer the ability lasts: Ordinary, 1 round; Good, 2 rounds; Amazing, 3 rounds. This duration can be extended by spending 1 psionic energy point for every additional round. Situation modifiers for the familiarity of the location and the distance at which *clairaudience* is being used are as follows:

Situation/distance	Modifier
Familiar location	–1
Unfamiliar location	none
1–10 meters	–1
11–100 meters	none
101 m –1 km	+1
2–10 km	+2
11–100 km	+3
101–1,000 km (low orbit)	+4
1,001–10,000 km (high orbit)	+5

Clairvoyance

To employ this skill, a hero selects a location and projects his mind to that

spot. He can then see everything going on around that spot as though he was physically there. This projection must be to an unobstructed location, not (for instance) to a place inside a solid object.

The use of the skill doesn't block the user's normal vision, so he sees double images unless he closes his eyes. It also provides no help in seeing through obscuring elements, such as walls, closed doors, or darkness, and the mental eye can't move from the selected spot. Because the user remains conscious within his body, he is aware of what's happening around his body.

The better the result of the skill check, the longer the ability lasts: Ordinary, 1 round; Good, 2 rounds; Amazing, 3 rounds. This duration can be extended by spending 1 psionic energy point for every additional round. Situation modifiers for the familiarity of the location and the distance at which *clairvoyance* is being used are the same as for *clairaudience*, given in the description above.

Empathy

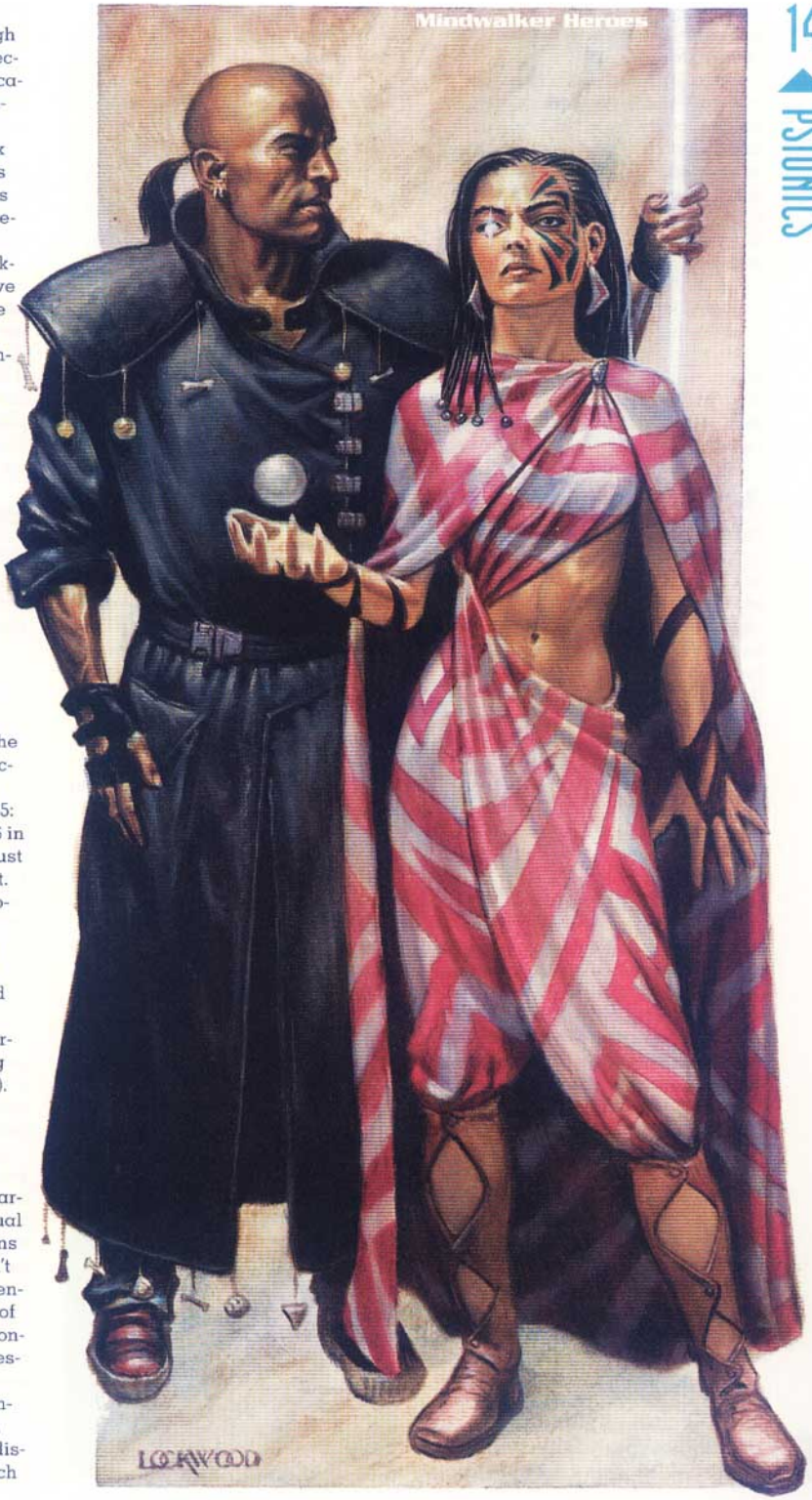
This skill allows a hero to "read" the surface emotions of another character. This ability assists the user in encounter situations. (See TABLE P25: ENCOUNTER SKILL EFFECTS on page 96 in *Chapter 4: Skills.*) The skill user must be in visual contact with the target.

A successful use of *empathy* provides a character with an understanding of the target's emotional state (Combative, Hostile, Neutral, Friendly, Charmed, or Fanatic) and provides a bonus when using encounter skills upon that target character (–1, –2, or –3 steps, depending on the degree of success achieved).

Mind Reading

This skill enables a hero to "read" the surface thoughts of another character with whom the user is in visual contact. The mental contact remains in effect for a limited time and can't be extended by the use of psionic energy points. The better the degree of success achieved, the longer the contact lasts and the clearer the impressions of the thoughts being read:

On an Ordinary success, the contact lasts for 1 phase after the skill check is made. Only random and disjointed thoughts are perceived, such



as the target's name or the identity of someone or something he is thinking about or looking at.

On a Good success, the contact lasts for 2 phases after the skill check is made. In addition to random thoughts of the sort described above, more detail and more coherence is received, such as why the target is thinking about someone or something, or why the target is in his present location.

On an Amazing success, the contact lasts for 3 phases after the skill check is made. Complete surface thoughts can be read—the sort of information that's recovered on an Ordinary or Good success, plus some key fact that's related to what the psionics-user hoped to discover.

Navcognition

This skill can't be used untrained.

A character who uses this skill can instinctively determine his present location and mentally plot a course to a distant location. This can be accomplished on a planetary surface, in normal space, and even through drivespace, depending on how the character applies this skill.

This mental ability replaces the use of the Navigation skill (if the character has it) whenever the character decides to spend psionic energy points. All the modifiers that pertain to the use of the Navigation skill apply (see the "Navcognition Situation Modifiers" sidebar on this page), except the character doesn't make use of charts, instruments, or computers to determine his location and plot courses.

At rank 1, the character selects one specialty of the Navigation skill to which to apply this mental ability, either *surface navigation, system astrogation,* or *drivespace astrogation.*

⊗ ***Extra Specialty Skills:*** At rank 5, a second Navigation specialty can be selected. At rank 9, the remaining specialty becomes available.

Postcognition

With this skill, a character can sense the mood of an area and even "see" events that happened there in the recent past. What a character senses depends on the result of a skill check:

On an Ordinary success, the character senses general emotions that have been left in an area.

On a Good success, he also receives brief flashes of events that may or may not make sense to him.

On an Amazing success, he actually experiences a brief encounter as though he were at the scene when the events occurred.

One successful skill check can be made in an area, and only recent events can be revealed. In general, a character can see a number of time units (usually hours or days) into the past equal to his skill rank. (With just the broad skill, less than one time unit is available to the character.)

This skill can be used by a player to gain clues for his hero, or it can be used by the Gamemaster to provide clues or direct story elements in a certain direction. The Gamemaster can automatically activate this skill (no psionic energy point cost) to provide clues.

Precognition

This skill is the ability to receive impressions about possible future events—what the psionics-user sees will probably happen if he takes no action to change it. A character usually doesn't consciously employ this skill. Instead, the Gamemaster calls for a character to make a skill check whenever a precognitive flash might occur. If the character is not willing to spend psionic energy points to make the skill check, nothing happens and the scene continues.

What a character senses depends on the result of a skill check:

On an Ordinary success, the character perceives vague images of a future event.

On a Good success, he receives brief flashes of coming events that may or may not make sense to him.

On an Amazing success, he actually experiences a brief encounter as though he is at the scene when the events transpire.

In general, a character can see a number of hours or days into the future equal to his skill rank. (With the broad skill, less than one hour or day is available to the character.)

If a character wants to force a precognitive flash, the cost in psionic energy points is doubled—2 points to use the specialty skill, 4 points if he has only the broad skill, and 6 points if the check results in a Critical Failure. In addition, a +3 penalty is applied, and whether the check succeeds or not, the skill can't be used again consciously for 2d6 days.

Navcognition Situation Modifiers

Combat conditions	+4
Hostile conditions	+2
Calm conditions	0
Unexplored territory	+4
Partially explored territory	+2
Known territory	0
Familiar territory	–2
Less than 5 minutes	+1/min.
More than 5 minutes	–1/min.
For *surface navigation* only:	
Darkness	+3
Inclement weather	+2
Rough terrain/turbulence	+2

Psychometry

This skill gives a hero the ability to read psychic impressions from inanimate objects. The character must touch the object to gain insight into who has used it and in what context. What a character senses depends on the result of a skill check:

On an Ordinary success, the character receives simple emotions associated with the object.

On a Good success, he receives simple images associated with the object.

On an Amazing success, he experiences a brief encounter as though he is the person using the object or its owner.

To be affected by this skill, an object must be an item that the character can hold and manipulate to pick up psionic impressions. Tools, weapons, clothing, jewelry, books, other personal items, and even dead bodies can be studied using *psychometry.* Living people and creatures can't be studied with this skill.

Dirt, the ground, dust, or other casually encountered objects aren't affected because people don't make the sorts of connections with these objects that result in psionic residue being left behind (though postcognition picks up impressions left in an area).

The Gamemaster can automatically activate this skill (no psionic energy point cost) to provide a clue or otherwise direct a story.

Sensitivity

This skill enables a hero to realize when a psionic skill is being used in his or her vicinity. Unlike the Psionic Awareness perk, the *sensitivity* specialty is consciously invoked by the hero whenever he or she desires to do so, and the check to determine success is made by the player of the hero, not by the Gamemaster.

Activating the skill requires the hero to use 2 psionic energy points. The *sensitivity* persists for 1 minute, and can be kept active in subsequent minutes by expending 1 psionic energy point per minute thereafter. The skill check made when the specialty is first invoked determines the extent of what the hero learns during all the time when the specialty remains in use:

On an Ordinary success, the hero becomes aware that one or more psionic skills are being employed within a range of 20 meters, and can tell which character(s) the psionic energy is emanating from. A Good success also enables the hero to identify the broad skill(s) being used, and an Amazing success tells the hero the exact specialty skill(s) being used. (The use of *sensitivity* can itself be detected by another character who successfully employs the skill.)

Will Skills

The following psionic broad skill and its specialty skills are connected to a character's Will score. The broad skill has a base situation die of +d4; each of the specialty skills has a base die of +d0.

Telekinesis

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a hero to manipulate his physical environment with only the power of his mind.

With just the broad skill, a character can attempt to use any of the related specialty skills except those that can't be used untrained. The difficulty of such an action is reflected in the increased psionic energy cost and the higher base situation die for using just the broad skill.

Electrokinetics

This skill can't be used untrained.

With this skill, a character can cause an electrical charge to build up in the air around him, and he can direct that charge up to 16 meters away (range 4/8/16), delivering a shock to a single target.

During the phase in which the character makes a successful skill check, the charge builds up. It can be released (for no added point cost) in any phase after that during the current round or the next one, but discharging the energy requires an additional skill check. If the charge is not released, it simply dissipates. The character can't initiate any other psionic skill while the charge is present around his body.

The amount of energy damage caused by the shock depends on the result of the skill check made in the phase when it is discharged and the character's rank in the skill.

When a character first acquires this skill, he is able to cause damage of d4+2s/d6+2s/d4w.

⊗ ***Increased Damage:*** At rank 5, damage becomes d6+2s/d4w/d4+2w. At rank 9, the damage caused by the skill goes to d4+2w/d6+2w/d8+2w.

Psychometry solves a crime

Kinetic Shield

Extended duration.
This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to create an invisible defensive barrier that moves with him and provides protection from physical attacks (high impact or low impact damage) by manipulating the air molecules around him. The barrier is so close to his body that it doesn't hinder other actions the hero might take.

The quality of the shield depends on the result of a skill check: Ordi-

nary, HI +1/LI +2; Good, HI +2/LI +3; Amazing, HI +3/LI +4. If the shielded character wants to perform other actions while maintaining the shield, those actions receive a +1 penalty due to the character's need to concentrate on maintaining the shield.

Levitation

Extended duration.

This skill allows a character, with only the power of his mind, to lift himself into the air and propel himself as though he were flying.

How high and how fast a character can move while levitating depends on the result of a skill check, as shown below. The first entry is how many meters he can ascend or descend per phase, the second is the speed at which he can fly. These figures are doubled in gravity conditions lighter than Earth normal and halved in gravity conditions heavier than Earth normal.

Ordinary	2 meters/walk × 1
Good	4 meters/walk × 1.5
Amazing	6 meters/walk × 2

If a character chooses to stop levitating or runs out of psionic energy points while he's out of touch with the ground, he suffers damage from a fall as indicated on TABLE P15: IMPACT DAMAGE (see page 58 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*).

Performing an additional action while levitating provides a +1 penalty to that action.

Photokinetics

With this skill, a character can excite the molecules in an object so that they give off illumination.

It takes one phase for the object to reach maximum luminosity, and the molecules remain excited for the rest of the current round and all of the next round.

The object provides Ordinary light (roughly the same as normal daylight) that illuminates an area of up to 6 meters in diameter, depending on the result of a skill check: Ordinary, 2 meters; Good, 4 meters; Amazing, 6 meters.

Psychokinetics

Extended duration.

This skill is the ability to move objects using the power of the mind. A character can lift objects that weigh a number of kilograms equal to his Will score × 10, or push objects that weigh his Will score × 20 in kilograms. So, a character with a Will score of 14 can lift an object that weighs as much as 140 kg, or he can push an object that weighs as much as 280 kg.

How high and how fast an object can move while being influenced by *psychokinetics* depends on the result of a skill check. The first entry is how many meters an object can be lifted, the second is the speed at which it can be pushed, both in meters per phase. These figures are doubled in gravity conditions lighter than Earth normal and halved in gravity conditions heavier than Earth normal.

Success	Lift	Push
Ordinary	1	2
Good	2	4
Amazing	3	6

If a character chooses to stop using *psychokinetics* or runs out of psionic energy points while the object he's manipulating is out of touch with the ground, the object immediately falls and suffers damage as indicated on TABLE P15: IMPACT DAMAGE (see page 58 in *Chapter 3: Heroes in Action*). The *Gamemaster Guide* has detailed information on the durability of various types of objects, which has a bearing on how seriously they are affected by impact damage.

Pyrokinetics

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to excite molecules within an object or even in the air until enough heat is generated to cause the object or area to burst into flame.

In the phase following a successful skill check, the target catches fire and sustains energy damage. It may continue to burn in later phases. Armor provides protection against this attack form.

The target must be within visual contact of the user and up to 30 meters away (range 10/20/30). The skill check carries a +1 penalty if *pyrokinetics* is used at medium range, and a +3 penalty at long range.

If the user targets the air around a character or object, the result is a flash fire storm that has an effect similar to that of an incendiary grenade. Objects and characters up to 6 meters away from the blast can be hurt, but the fire is less intense. The primary and secondary damage from this use of *pyrokinetics*, as indicated by the psionics-user's rank and skill check, is reduced by 2 points for targets within 2 meters of the blast, by 3 points for targets out to 4 meters away, and by 4 points for targets out to 6 meters away. (It is possible for this reduction to cause a target to suffer no damage at all.)

If a character or object is targeted, the result is an intense burn from the initial damage and the possibility of the character or object catching fire and taking more damage in every phase thereafter until the fire goes out or is extinguished.

The *Gamemaster Guide* has detailed information on the durability and flammability of various types of objects, which are the major factors in determining whether something is capable of catching fire.

The intensity of the fire depends on the result of a skill check and the character's rank in the skill.

When a character first acquires this skill, he is able to cause damage of d4+2w/d6+2w/d8+2w.

⊗ ***Increased Damage:*** At rank 5, damage becomes d6+2w/d8+2w/d4m. At rank 9, the damage caused by the skill goes to d8+2w/d4m/d4+2m.

Personality Skills

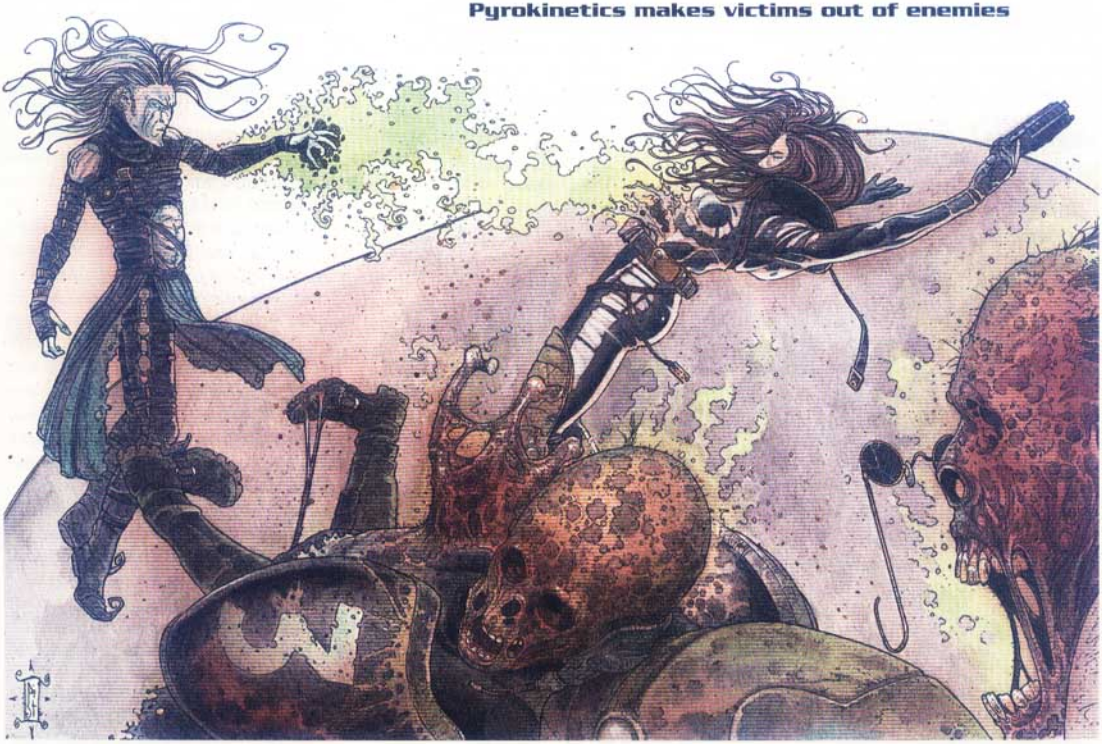
The following psionic broad skill and its specialty skills are connected to a character's Personality score. The broad skill has a base situation die of +d4; each of the specialty skills has a base die of +d0.

Telepathy

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows a character to open his mind to the thoughts of others or send his own thoughts into the minds of others.

With just the broad skill, a character can attempt to use any of the related specialty skills except those that can't be used untrained. The difficulty of such an action is reflected in the increased psionic energy cost and the higher base situation die for using just the broad skill.



Pyrokinetics makes victims out of enemies

Contact

Extended duration.

With this skill, a character can send and receive thoughts to and from another character, usually for the purpose of exchanging information. Modifiers may apply, depending on the range, familiarity, and willingness of the target mind to be contacted.

The type of thoughts that can be exchanged depends on the result of a skill check:

On an Ordinary success, simple concepts (brief questions and one-word answers) can be exchanged.

On a Good success, moderate discussion (pass notes back and forth, one note per 2 phases) can occur.

On an Amazing success, the communicating characters can have a detailed discussion, as though they were conversing vocally.

If the psionics-user's intended target isn't willing to communicate, the target's Will resistance modifier is applied as a penalty to the skill check, in addition to any other situation modifiers. If contact is established anyway, an unwilling mind can expel the user by making a successful Will feat check or a Resolve–*mental resolve* skill check, with a penalty (+1, +2, or +3) depending on the psionics-user's degree of success.

Situation/distance	Modifier
Familiar mind	–1
Unfamiliar mind	none
Combative mind	+2
Hostile mind	+1
1–10 meters	–1
11–100 meters	none
101 m –1 km	+1
2–10 km	+2
11–100 km	+3
101–1,000 km (low orbit)	+4
1,001–10,000 km (high orbit)	+5

Datalink

Extended duration.
This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill is the ability to link one's mind with a computer (or a cybernetic machine, if the optional rules for cybertech are being used) without using a physical connection of any kind.

The *datalink* skill can be used to operate computers or cybernetic machinery with mental commands, to project one's mind into the datastream without using a neural interface jack or gridcaster, or to examine computer data by mentally scanning the storage unit.

Once inside the datastream, a cyberlinked mind can travel throughout a networked computer system. To initiate the link, however, the user must be a short distance away from the computer, interface port, or other piece of machinery that serves as a point of entry. If this location is more than 2 meters away, the user's skill check is made with a +1 penalty. The penalty goes up to +2 if the location is more than 4 meters away, and the skill can't be used if no point of entry is within 6 meters of the character.

A computer's normal defenses protect it against a datalink, providing a penalty to the psionics-user's skill check. Otherwise, datalink can be used to accomplish any task that can be performed with the use of any computer.

Illusion

Extended duration.

This skill enables a character to fool a target's mind by projecting an illusion into it. An illusion can be a

sight or a sound, but no other senses can be affected. An illusion is not capable of directly causing damage, but might do so indirectly—for instance, if the target is fooled into believing that the terrain up ahead is smooth, when actually a deep crevasse splits the ground only a few paces away. The skill is usable only against targets the character can see, and it has a maximum range of 5 meters per skill rank of the user. Any actions the user attempts while maintaining an illusion receive a +1 penalty.

The result of the character's skill check determines how powerful the illusion is, which provides a penalty to the target's Awareness–*intuition* skill check to realize he's seeing an illusion: Ordinary, +1; Good, +2; Amazing, +3.

Multiple targets can be selected to receive a single illusion, but each additional target beyond the first one provides a cumulative +1 penalty to the psionics-user's skill check. Each target is entitled to make an Awareness–*intuition* check to see if the illusion is effective against that individual.

Mind Blast

This skill can't be used untrained.

This skill allows the user to direct a powerful blast of pure mental energy at another mind. The target must be within visual contact and no more than 40 meters away (range 10/20/40). Penalties for medium and long range are +1 and +2 respectively.

Damage depends on the result of a skill check and the user's rank in the skill. Armor doesn't protect against a *mind blast*.

When a character first acquires this skill, he is able to cause damage of d4+1s/d4+2s/d6+2s.

⊗ ***Increased Damage:*** At rank 5, damage becomes d4+2s/d6+2s/d8+2s. At rank 9, the damage caused by the skill goes to 2d4+2s/2d6+2s/2d8+2s.

Mind Shield

This skill allows a character to establish a mental defense against psionic powers. *Mind shield* protects against these psionic skills: *contact, empathy, illusion, mind reading, mind blast, suggest,* and *tire.*

A mind shield provides a penalty to the skill check of another psionic character who's attempting to use any of the abovementioned skills. The amount of the penalty depends on the result of the user's skill check: Ordinary, +1; Good, +2; Amazing, +3. These penalties are cumulative with any other resistances or protections a character might have (Will resistance modifier, Resolve–*mental resolve,* etc.).

The shield created by this skill remains in place for 5–8 hours (d4+4) or until it fails to stop a psionic power directed against it, at which point it collapses.

Suggest

This specialty skill allows a character to mesmerize another character. If successful, *suggest* plants a thought into another person's mind and convinces that person that the thought is her own.

No suggestion can have a permanent or immediately detrimental effect on the character it's directed at. A suggestion lasts for as long as 1, 2, or 3 hours, depending on the degree of success of the user's skill check (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing). It could expire before its time limit is reached, but it can't be extended beyond its limit without another successful application of the skill at precisely the time when the original suggestion is due to run out.

The Gamemaster will assign a bonus or a penalty to the user's skill check to reflect how extreme the suggestion is. Enticing someone to perform an act she would be inclined to do anyway might carry a –1 or –2 bonus, while a suggestion to do something entirely opposed to the character's nature would provide a severe penalty of +3 or more.

If the Gamemaster allows it, the target character is entitled to a Will feat check after the suggestion has worn off, to determine whether the character realizes that he or she was the victim of a suggestion. This feat check carries a bonus or a penalty that is the reverse of the situation die modifier used for the skill check. For example, if a suggestion was successfully implanted despite a +3 penalty, the victim of that suggestion receives a –3 bonus to his or her feat check. Or, if the nature of the suggestion provided a –2 bonus to the user's skill check, then the victim's feat check is made with a +2 penalty.

Tire

This skill inflicts fatigue damage upon a target, perhaps prompting that character to decide that he is in need of rest. The target must be within visual contact and no more than 30 meters away (range 10/20/30). Penalties for medium and long range are +1 and +2 respectively.

The amount of damage inflicted depends on the result of a skill check: Ordinary, 1 fatigue point; Good, 2 points; Amazing, 3 points.

Mindwalker Careers

Most Mindwalkers follow a similar course in the practice of their profession. Some of the various careers summarized here have shades of difference that many non-Mindwalkers find hard to fathom. The training a mindwalker undergoes often has a lot to do with attitude and general outlook. Training can be obtained in one of three basic ways: at an academy, at a temple, or as a rogue.

Academy-trained Mindwalkers are taught a scholarly approach to psionic abilities. Study, practice, and the pursuit of Mindwalker knowledge are the ingredients of an academician's life. After a character graduates from the academy (becoming a level 1 hero), his career could involve at least part-time service to the government or corporate entity that sponsors the academy.

Temple-trained Mindwalkers approach the craft of mental discipline with a fervor. To these characters, being a Mindwalker isn't just a profession; it's a way of life that shapes all their attitudes and beliefs. Discipline, devotion, and mind expansion remain with the templar forever after, and he often retains contact with the order that trained him.

Rogue Mindwalkers began their training in one of the above systems but left the university or the order before the training was complete. For this reason, rogues are more individualistic, self-reliant, and harder to predict. They're also less disciplined, less dedicated to form, and more open to trying new techniques to perform old functions.

Below are a few sample careers for Mindwalkers. Any of the specific information given here may change, depending on a hero's campaign and

character concept, as well as the way a player decides his character was trained.

Biokineticist

A biokineticist concentrates on the Biokinesis broad skill and its specialty skills. This is the psionic healer, the character who takes damage and disease upon himself and alleviates it through concentration.

The biokineticist usually augments his psionic abilities with a few mundane skills. He enjoys science-related skills, but avoids diplomatic skills because biokineticists are generally introspective and self-absorbed. Among the other psionic skills, ESP is often a biokineticist's second choice.

► ***Skill Package:*** Biokinesis–*heal 2, rejuvenate, transfer damage 2;* Medical Science–*treatment.* Cost: 35 points.

Biowarrior

The biowarrior's primary Mindwalker focus is the Biokinesis skill. He starts with the *bioweapon* specialty, thereafter quickly adding *heal, control metabolism, morph,* and *rejuvenate* to his psionic repertoire.

As a psionic soldier, the biowarrior seeks combat-oriented mundane skills at the first opportunity. Since he prides himself on never being without a weapon (he can always create one from his own psychic energy), he often learns Melee Weapons and Unarmed Attack. The *bludgeon* specialty skill is virtually essential for using *bioweapon.*

When the biowarrior decides to expand his psionic base of skills, he often adds ESP so that he can take advantage of *battle mind, empathy,* and *mind reading.*

► ***Skill Package:*** Biokinesis–*bioweapon 2, control metabolism, rejuvenate;* Melee Weapons–*bludgeon.* Cost: 30 points.

ESPion

The ESPion walks among the shadows of society, staying inconspicuous so as to make the best use of his ESP abilities. ESPions act as spies, advisers, and investigators of all types, using their various psionic abilities to discover information and reveal secrets.

Mundane skills such as Investigate, Deception, Interaction, and even Culture can prove very useful to characters who pursue this career.

The ESPion often adds the Telepathy broad skill to her Mindwalker repertoire. The specialty skills associated with it, especially *contact, illusion,* and *suggest,* provide important abilities not covered by ESP.

► ***Skill Package:*** ESP–*clairvoyance 2, empathy 2, mind reading, precognition, psychometry 2;* Knowledge–*deduce.* Cost: 35 points.

Mystic

The mystic cloaks himself in an air of mystery and arcane knowledge. There is sometimes a religious or supernatural flavor to the mystic, as he plays upon the fears and confusions of those with little or no Mindwalker experience. Mystics serve as advisers, diplomats, and sometimes even templar warriors, using ESP to look into the past, present, and future for answers to life's many questions.

The mystic often adds Biokinesis and its specialty skills to his psionic repertoire to increase his apparent power and control of mysteries. *Control metabolism, morph, transfer damage,* and *heal* are the specialty skills most useful to a mystic hero.

► ***Skill Package:*** ESP–*clairaudience, clairvoyance, postcognition 2, precognition 2.* Cost: 25 points.

Telekineticist

The telekineticist career often appears to be the most powerful of the opportunities open to Mindwalkers, especially from a standpoint of highly visual abilities.This character serves as a psionic soldier. His abilities can cause lots of damage, and most non-Mindwalkers think twice about tangling with a character who can fire lightning bolts or command the very air to burst into flame.

Any Combat Spec skills are applicable to the telekineticist. Usually, the character's psionic abilities serve as a backup or to pull off a surprise attack; a telekineticist doesn't like to wear himself out early in a battle.

When the telekineticist seeks another mental discipline, he often looks to Telepathy, which provides a few other mental attack forms, a psionic defense, and the ability to mentally communicate with allies on other parts of the battlefield.

► ***Skill Package:*** Telekinesis–*kinetic shield 2, levitation, psychokinetics, pyrokinetics;* Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol.* Cost: 35 points.

Psiguard

In effect a bodyguard or security expert with a special, psychic "kick," the psiguard provides both offense and defense of formidable levels.

To make best use of this career, the psiguard combines Telekinesis with ESP. *Battle mind* makes this hero more formidable in combat, while the detection skills under ESP allow her to spot attacks before they occur or uncover evidence that might elude mundane investigators.

► ***Skill Package:*** Telekinesis–*electrokinetics 2, photokinetics 2, levitation;* Modern Ranged Weapons–*pistol;* Security–*protection protocols.* Cost: 40 points.

Telepath

The telepath has a mix of Mindwalker and Free Agent qualities. His abilities serve many functions; he can be a psionic communications specialist, providing mental links by which distant agents can keep in touch. With the ESP skill, he can be an effective spy, bounty hunter, tracker, or investigator. Taking Telekinesis increases his offensive and defensive skills, making him a formidable soldier, assassin, or security operative.

Telepaths tend to shun mundane skills, preferring to rely on their psionic abilities to get the job done.

► ***Skill Package:*** Telepathy–*contact 2, illusion, suggest 2;* ESP–*mind reading.* Cost: 30 points.

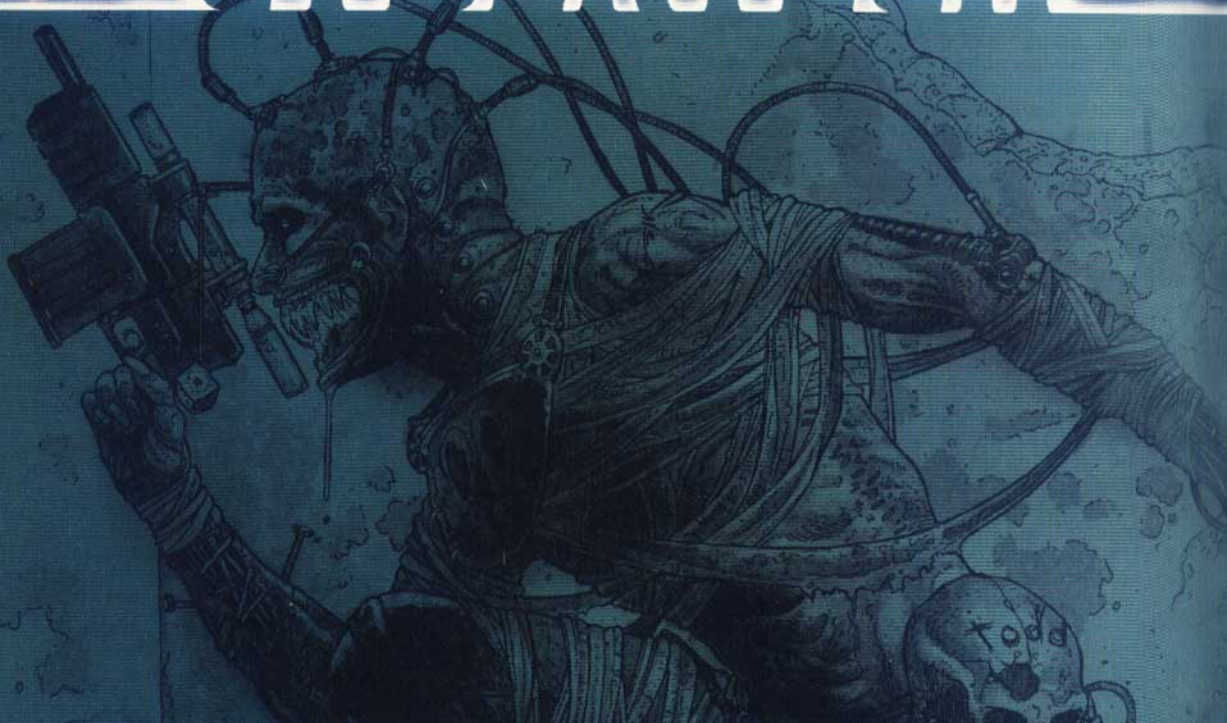
Mind Knight

The mind knight is a Mindwalker warrior who uses nothing but mental abilities to provide his offense and defense. Like the telepath, the mind knight starts with the Telepathy broad skill and disdains mundane physical skills. In fact, many mind knights refuse to take any Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution skills beyond those they receive for free. Instead, the mind knight quickly adds the other psionic broad skills to his repertoire, starting with Telekinesis, then ESP, and finally Biokinesis.

► ***Skill Package:*** Telepathy–*contact 2, mind blast 2, mind shield 2;* Telekinesis–*psychokinetics.* Cost: 35 points.

CHAPTER 15

CYBERTECH



Cybernetic technology combines complex computer electronics with the human nervous system. Some cyber gear is purely decorative, used to make a techno fashion statement. Other cyber gear serves a necessary function, replacing limbs or organs lost to accident or disease. Finally, there's the gear that users believe give them an edge—cyber weapons, defenses, and utilities to make a cyberknight stand out from the crowd.

Cyber gear may or may not be available in a given campaign, and even in those where cyber gear can be purchased, the Gamemaster might limit quantities and availability. The only campaigns in which some form of cybernetics must be used are those that include the mechalus (one of the alien species described in Chapter 2). Because mechalus have natural cybernetic enhancements, it's not possible to have that species in a campaign setting without also using at least some of these rules. If you want to create a hero who uses cybertech, your Gamemaster will tell you if the character must be a mechalus or if cybernetics are also available to heroes of other species.

Installing Cyber Gear

Any living creature can be outfitted with cyber gear. There are two important things to remember about cyber gear: the initial skill point cost to train a character in the use of the equipment, and the limits imposed by the character's own Constitution.

A character must spend skill points to prepare himself for cyber gear installation. The cost is 10 skill points. Why a skill point charge? Because learning to use a nanocomputer isn't an easy thing to do, and even learning to function with passive implants such as body plating requires intensive training. (There is no skill point charge for some items, as outlined on TABLE P53: CYBERNETIC GEAR on the following page.)

A character's Constitution score determines the upper limit of the amount of cybernetics his body can support. All cyber gear has a "size" associated with it. No character can possess gear whose sizes total more than his Constitution score. For example, Kreg has a Constitution score of 10. He can handle gear that totals up to 10 points, but his body automatically rejects any gear that puts him above this number of points.

Cyber Surgery

Any character with the Medical Science–*surgery* skill and the cyber installation rank benefit (see "Cybernetic Surgery" on page 85 of *Chapter 4: Skills*) can attempt to install cyber gear. A reputable cybernetic surgeon or a cheap cyber "chop shop" might both be available from which to purchase and have cyber gear installed, though each has its own costs and risks.

A reputable cyber surgeon is more expensive, but has tools and facilities rated Good (–2 bonus to skill check). Good cyber surgeons have *surgery* skill scores ranging from 17 to 19. Of course, Good facilities and those who work in them are rare.

Reputable but lesser cyber surgeons have Ordinary facilities (–1 bonus to skill check), and *surgery* skill scores ranging from 13 to 16. These facilities are more common than Good facilities, but you won't find one on every street corner.

A chop shop is much less expensive, but substandard tools and facilities provide the surgeon with a +2 penalty to his skill check. Typical chop shop surgeons have *surgery* skill scores ranging from 6 to 12.

A cyber surgery procedure is considered a single skill check if the hero purchases cyber gear during the hero creation process or between

Cyber Gear for Starting Heroes

Even if the Gamemaster has decided to allow the use of these optional rules in his campaign setting, the cost of purchasing cybernetic equipment and having it installed may put such enhancements beyond the financial reach of a hero who's just about to begin his career (in other words, a character that's being created by a player). There are two basic ways to deal with such a situation:

- **The Gamemaster may select (or allow the player to select) one or more pieces of cyber gear that are considered to be automatically installed in the hero-to-be. The cost of the equipment and its installation might be ignored (or absorbed by an organization that employs the hero), or it could be that the hero will have to work to pay off the expense of having his body enhanced. (The 10 skill point cost must always be paid, however.)**
- **A hero who wants cyber gear might be required to save his money and skill points until he can pay for the installation himself.**

If a hero is being created with cyber gear already in place, the hero's player must decide what equipment to have installed immediately after assigning the hero's Ability Scores (see page 33 in *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*). Ability Score adjustments that need to be made because of cyber gear can be taken into account before the creation process continues.

The supplemental hero sheet, printed just ahead of the hero sheet at the back of this book, has spaces to record a hero's cybertech information. (If other parts of the supplemental hero sheet aren't being used in your campaign, some of that space can be used to hold additional details about your hero's cyber gear.)

adventures. If another hero attempts to install a character's cyber gear, the Gamemaster might consider it a complex skill check requiring multiple successes.

In scenes in which a cyber surgery installation is played out, remember to apply situation modifiers based on the quality of the facilities being used and the number of items being installed during the same procedure (each additional item provides a cumulative +1 penalty).

Surgery Results

In cyber surgery, the possible results of the surgeon's skill check are as follows:

Critical Failure: Installation not successful, patient suffers d4 points of mortal damage.

Failure: Installation not successful, patient suffers 1 point of mortal damage.

Any success: Cyber gear installed. In some circumstances (see "Cyber Tolerance" below), the patient may be required to immediately make a Constitution feat check to determine if his body accepts or rejects the implant. If this check fails, the implant does not take hold, and the result of the surgery is considered a Failure (see above).

Even if the surgery results in a Failure or a Critical Failure, the surgeon will almost certainly demand payment for his or her services.

Cyber Tolerance

The Supplemental Hero Sheet has a section for listing cyber gear and a set of boxes for keeping track of a hero's cyber tolerance score. This number, which is the same as his Constitution score (except for mechalus characters, who use CON +4), is a measure of how much cyber gear a character can have, how easy it is for the character's body to accommodate a new piece of gear, and how a character who's loaded with cybernetics

Table P53: Cybernetic Gear

Progress Level 6	Mass	Size	Cost per Quality 0	G	A
BattleKlaw*	1	2	300	600	900
BioArt**	—	—	50	100	200
BioWatch**	—	—	50	100	300
Body Plating:					
Ordinary	20	2	1500	—	—
Good	40	3	—	3000	—
Amazing	60	4	—	—	4500
Cyberlimb*	10	2	1000	2000	3000
Cyberoptics*	—	1	500	1000	2000
Fast chip*	—	2	1000	1500	2000
MusclePlus*	2	2	1000	2000	3000
Nanocomputer	—	1	2000	3000	4000
NIJack*	—	1	500	—	—
Optic screen*	—	—	250	—	—
Self-repair unit*	2	2	1000	2000	3000
Subdermal comm	—	1	—	500	—
Subdermal weapon mount:					
Ordinary*	2	2	250	—	—
Good*	2	3	—	500	—
Amazing*	2	4	—	—	750

Progress Level 7	Mass	Size	Cost per Quality 0	G	A
CF skinweave**	—	1	1000	2000	3000
Data slot, passive**	1	1	500	700	900
ER slot*	1	1	500	1000	1500
ER slot, passive**	1	1	500	1000	1500
Exoskeleton*	30	3	2000	3000	4000
Neural 3D, ext.*	1	1	500	750	1000
Reflex*	—	2	—	2000	—
Subdermal NIJack*	—	1	—	700	—
Wireless NIJack*	—	1	—	1000	—

Surgery	Score	Mod	Cost
Chop shop	6 to 12	+2	Item cost ×1/2
Ordinary	13 to 16	–1	Item cost
Good	17 to 19	–2	Item cost ×2

* Nanocomputer required to use this device.
** Can be installed at no cost in skill points.

How to Record Cyber Tolerance Scores

Here are three examples of how to fill out the cyber tolerance portion of the Supplemental Hero Sheet.

A hero with a Constitution score of 11 leaves 5 open boxes (one-half of 11, rounded down) in the first section, 3 open boxes in the second section, (one-quarter of 11, rounded up), and 3 open boxes (to bring the total of open boxes to 11) in the third section, like so: 5/3/3 □□□□□■■■■/□□□■■/□□□■

A hero with a Constitution score of 14 leaves 7 open boxes, 4 open boxes, and 3 open boxes in each section, respectively: 7/4/3 □□□□□□□■■/□□□□■/□□□■

A mechalus hero has a cyber tolerance score equal to CON +4, so a mechalus with a Constitution score of 14 (which translates to 18) leaves every box open: 9/5/4 □□□□□□□□□/□□□□□/□□□□

is affected by damage he or she suffers (see the section on "Damage to Cyber Gear").

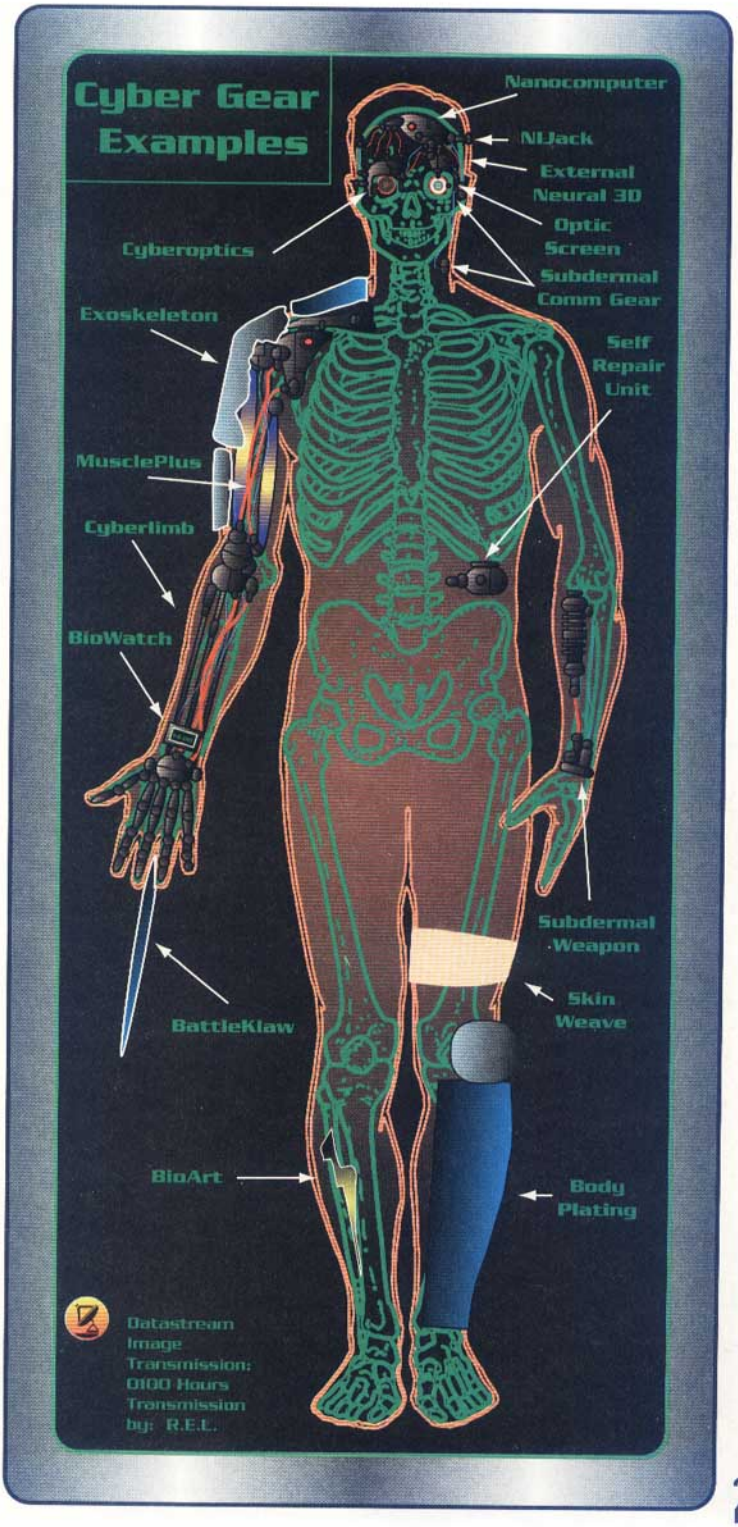
A character's cyber tolerance score is recorded on the Supplemental Hero Sheet in this fashion:

- Inside the small box, to the left of the first slash mark, write one-half the character's Constitution score, rounded down.
- Between the two slash marks, write one-quarter of the character's Constitution score, rounded up.
- To the right of the second slash mark, write the number that makes the total of all three numbers equal to the character's Constitution score.
- In each section of boxes (left, center, right), blacken enough boxes to leave open a number of boxes equal to the corresponding number. (See "How to Record Cyber Tolerance Scores" on the previous page.)

Every time a character has a new piece of cyber gear installed, mark off a number of boxes equal to the size of the equipment (see TABLE P53: CYBERNETIC GEAR), moving from left to right through the different sections.

When a surgeon succeeds in the installation of a new device that would cause more than half of the character's cyber tolerance boxes to be marked, then the character must make a Constitution feat check to determine if his or her body can accommodate the new gear (see "Surgery Results" on the previous page). This check is modified by the quality of the surgeon's facilities (–2, –1, or +2), the number of items being installed in the current procedure (cumulative +1 penalty for every item after the first), and the degree of success achieved by the surgeon (–1, –2, –3 bonus on Ordinary, Good, or Amazing result). ***Note:*** Mechalus characters are exempt from having to make this Constitution check.

◆ ***Example:*** The cybered-up hero Taylor Windsor has a cyber tolerance score of 12 (6/3/3). He is already equipped with a reflex (size 2) and Good body plating (size 3). He goes through another surgical procedure to have MusclePlus (size 2) installed. The surgery succeeds, so he has now used up more than half of his cyber tolerance boxes (7 out of 12). This means he has to make a Constitution feat check to see if his body accepts or rejects the new gear. If the check fails, the surgery result becomes a Failure instead—Windsor suffers 1



point of mortal damage, and the MusclePlus doesn't get installed after all. If the check succeeds, the MusclePlus is now part of his body—but since he has used up more than half of his cyber tolerance boxes, he'll have to make Constitution feat checks from now on every time he has a new piece of gear added.

Note: When all of a character's cyber tolerance boxes are marked, he or she is unable to receive any more cybernetic enhancements.

Damage to Cyber Gear

Damage to a cyber-equipped hero is recorded normally, and repaired normally, as long as the hero has not had a significant amount of cyber gear installed. But the circumstances change when a hero has enough gear installed to use up more than half of his cyber tolerance boxes.

If one or more boxes in the center section of the line are marked, any mortal damage the hero suffers is considered damage to his or her cyber gear—it remains (and all penalties associated with the damage continue to apply) until it is successfully repaired by a cyber surgeon.

If one or more boxes in the right section of the line are marked, any mortal damage or wound damage to the hero is considered damage to his or her cyber gear, with restrictions as noted above.

If a cybernetic character suffers damage amounting to more than half of his total mortal rating in a single battle, then the Gamemaster can declare that some or all of the character's cyber gear has been destroyed. Destroyed cyber gear must be replaced, as described in "Installing Cyber Gear" on page 239.

Cyber Gear Descriptions

The following cyber gear may be available in your campaign. Check with your Gamemaster before purchasing any cyber gear.

BattleKlaw

A BattleKlaw is a cybernetic weapon that improves the damage a character can inflict on a normal Unarmed Attack. It appears as a single metal talon that ends in a sharp point.

> **Allergic Reaction**
>
> **For flavor or as a story and roleplaying element, either the Gamemaster or a player can determine that a supporting cast member or hero is "allergic" to cyber gear. In such a case, the character has a high-degree of body rejection for cyber implants, and is thus prohibited from using and receiving such items.**

An Ordinary BattleKlaw (damage d4w/d4+1w/d4+2w) is fixed in position, either attached to living bone or a cyberlimb.

A Good BattleKlaw (damage d4+2w/d6+2w/d4m) is retractable, either attached to living bone or a cyberlimb.

An Amazing BattleKlaw (damage d6+2w/d4m/d4+2m) requires an exoskeleton and a cyberlimb to use.

The cost, mass, and size listed on Table P53 is for a single BattleKlaw. If a character adds a second BattleKlaw to his body, the cost, mass, and size are doubled.

BioArt

BioArt is a subdermal neon implant that produces a glowing tattoo on the surface of the skin (it's lit from beneath). It can also come in the form of fiber-optic filaments in the hair, eyelashes, or beard. BioArt is purely decorative. The better the quality, the flashier the design.

BioArt requires no expense in skill points and no nanocomputer, and it can't be rejected by the recipient (no Constitution feat check necessary).

BioWatch

A BioWatch is a subdermal timepiece, either analog or digital, that shows the current time and has a variety of other functions, including day and date, alarm, and time zone memory readout. A BioWatch is hidden beneath the flesh, invisible until a fingertip or some other small object is tapped against it. Then the glow shines through the flesh, showing the time and other information on the surface of the skin for a few seconds. The better the quality, the more functions the timepiece has.

A BioWatch requires no expense in skill points and no nanocomputer, and it can't be rejected (no Constitution feat check necessary).

Body Plating

Body plating combines metal and plastic armor, which is then bonded to a character's body. Even the best camouflaged body plating is obvious on close inspection, and many characters who opt for this protection don't bother to try to hide it anyway.

Body plating doesn't require a nanocomputer, but skill points must be spent to learn to move with the protective covering.

Ordinary body plating provides protection of d4 (LI), d4 (HI), d4–1 (En).

Good body plating provides protection of d6 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4+1 (En).

Amazing body plating reduces the character's Dexterity score by 2 points and provides protection of d8+1 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6+1 (En).

CF Skinweave

CF skinweave is carbonate fiber woven together with living flesh to provide hidden protection against damage. The level of protection is determined by the quality of the CF skinweave:

Ordinary, add 2 stun points to durability rating; Good, add 2 stun points and 1 wound point; Amazing, add 2 stun points, 1 wound point, and 1 mortal point.

No nanocomputer is required for CF skinweave, and no skill points must be spent to have it installed.

Cyberlimb

A cyberlimb replaces a limb lost to damage or disease, or is installed simply as an "improvement" over the original flesh and bone. Cyberlimbs can have other equipment installed within them—weapons, hidden compartments, computer gauntlets, and so forth—for additional cost. In addition, a cyberlimb adds to a character's Strength, as detailed below.

An Ordinary cyberlimb adds +1 to Strength; a Good cyberlimb adds +2 to Strength and requires an exoskeleton; an Amazing cyberlimb adds +3 to Strength and also requires an exoskeleton.

The Strength increase applies only to the cyberlimb being used. For instance, a hero with an actual Strength of 12 has a +1 increase to damage he inflicts on an Unarmed Attack. If he has an Amazing cyber arm installed, his effective Strength with that arm rises to 15, and any attack he makes with that arm now has a +3 increase to damage.

The cost, mass, and size listed on Table P53 refers to purchasing and installing a single cyberlimb.

Cyberoptics

Cyberoptics replaces a living eyeball or adds an extra sensory device to a character. It can be attached to another part of the body, such as the hand, the forehead, or the back of the neck, or mounted to the side of the head, instead of being placed in an eye socket.

The Ordinary version of this device provides normal vision and also operates as a digital camera, recording images into a character's nanocomputer or neural 3D.

A Good cyberoptic device provides extended vision (operates as a 300× zoom lens).

An Amazing cyberoptic device provides extended vision (operates as a 500× zoom lens) and improved vision, allowing the character to shift between normal, night, and thermal vision.

Data slot, passive

A passive data slot is an external storage facility for a 3D or other data medium. Most are designed to be hidden, and are used by couriers and others seeking to move data without the knowledge of others. A data slot is considered to be passive because it isn't connected to a nanocomputer—the character can't access the data stored within him but can only transport it to its destination.

No nanocomputer is necessary to add this gear, and no skill points need to be spent.

ER Slot

An ER slot (short for "emergency room") is an attachment designed to contain a trauma pack II (see page 139 in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services*). With the pack and the ER slot, the pack's contents are automatically injected into the character when he falls unconscious due to knockout. The ER slot can also be manually activated by the character at any time.

ER Slot, passive

The passive ER slot works just like the regular ER slot, except it can't be manually activated by the character.

Exoskeleton

An exoskeleton provides reinforcement and structural integrity to a character's natural skeleton. Cyber

Free Agent Heroes

gear that enables the body to perform beyond its normal limits requires an exoskeleton; without such reinforcement, the cyber-equipped body can tear itself apart when powerful servomuscles interact with relatively fragile natural equipment.

In addition to anchoring powerful cyber gear, an exoskeleton increases a character's durability rating, depending on the quality of the implant: Ordinary, add 2 stun points; Good, add 2 stun points and 2 wound points; Amazing, add 2 stun points, 2 wound points, and 2 mortal points.

Fast Chip

A fast chip is a device that has been banned in most civilized locales due to the dangers associated with its use. A character equipped with a nanocomputer, a fast chip, and reflex operates at a level above most other people. The fast chip provides a bonus to the character's action checks: –1, –2, or –3 depending on the quality of the chip (Ordinary, Good, Amazing). The fast chip must be accessed to provide its benefit; once accessed, it remains active for a number of rounds related to the quality of the character's nanocomputer (Marginal, 1; Ordinary, 2; Good, 3; Amazing, 4), or until the character shuts it off, whichever comes first. At the end of a period of use, the character suffers 1 point of fatigue damage.

The quality of the fast chip also determines how many hours between uses a character must wait before reactivating the device: Ordinary, 1; Good, 2; Amazing, 3. Activating the chip before the allotted down time inflicts fatigue damage on the character: Ordinary chip, d4–1 points (minimum of 1); Good chip, d4 points; Amazing chip, d4+1 points.

This device has its downside, though. Use of a fast chip leads to the condition known as cykosis (see the sidebar on this page).

MusclePlus

MusclePlus replaces living muscle with strong, highly durable synthetic material that increases a character's normal Strength score in those limbs that receive the treatment. Ordinary MusclePlus provides a +1 Strength increase; Good provides a +2 Strength increase but requires an exoskeleton; Amazing provides a +3 Strength increase but requires both an exoskeleton and a cyberlimb. These increases are cumulative with the Strength improvement granted by a cyberlimb (see page 242), but note that a character's bonus to damage because of high Strength can never be more than +5 (see TABLE P9: STRENGTH & DAMAGE on page 40 of *Chapter 2: Hero Creation*).

Cykosis

An inherent danger associated with some cyber gear installation (particularly the fast chip and the reflex), is the mental illness known as cykosis. This ailment twists a character, making him behave more like a machine than a living being. This twist is homicidal and unpredictable, and it shouldn't be the goal of any hero. When a character succumbs to cykosis, he or she goes violently insane. If this happens to a hero, he becomes a supporting character (controlled by the Gamemaster) who seeks out others with the same condition—the cybernetic misfits known as cykoteks (pronounced "psychotics").

Every character with an installed fast chip must make a successful cykosis check (a Will feat check used for this specific purpose) to stave off the onset of cykosis. These checks are made whenever a character accesses the fast chip to improve his or her action check.

A character's cykosis score is listed on the supplemental hero sheet. It is equal to one-half of the character's Will score, rounded up. On any Failure result, one of the character's available boxes is used up (indicate this by putting an "x" or some other mark through it). On any Critical Failure, two boxes are used up. On any success, the boxes are left unchanged.

With each box used up, the character moves closer to becoming a cykotek. If all of a character's boxes are used up, he or she succumbs to cykosis. The Gamemaster may rule that other situations in addition to the use of a fast chip require a character to make a cykosis check.

Nanocomputer

A character who wants to use a gridcaster or most forms of cyber gear must have a nanocomputer system installed in his body. In addition to the computer itself, the installation includes a cytronic circuitry system. This biowire allows electronic signals to travel between neural pathways and cybernetic machinery. The nanocomputer features an internal 3D drive and a memory storage system. Its power source is the body's natural bioelectric field.

An internal 3D provides computer memory space inside a character's head or other body cavity, operating much like an internal hard drive. (See *Chapter 10: Computers* for more information.)

Neural 3D Data Slot, external

An external neural 3D is cyberware that can be added to a character who has already had a nanocomputer and cytronic circuitry installed. An external neural data slot provides an input drive that can be accessed from outside the body; an open slot is visible where a 3D or other data storage medium can be placed.

An external neural 3D data slot provides excess memory for a gridcaster and storage space for important data files. With an installed nanocomputer, a data slot provides limited access to programs without the use of a gridcaster or other external computer.

An Ordinary data slot can use 3Ds; a Good or Amazing slot can use both 3Ds and X3Ds.

NIJack

A neural interface jack, or NIJack, is a plug located in the neck or head that allows data cables to be connected to a character's cytronic circuitry system. A NIJack is required to use a gridcaster. All NIJacks are of Ordinary quality.

Optic Screen

An optic screen is a lens attached to a living eyeball or cyberoptic gear. It acts as a heads-up display, showing data from a nanocomputer or other computer source. The optic screen doesn't interfere with a character's normal vision (or the vision provided by the cyberoptics); the images it projects are translucent and set out of the direct field of view. All optic screens are of Ordinary quality.

Enhance Programs

Enhance programs are a special kind of computer software that can only be used by cyber-equipped characters. For a character who has a nanocomputer and reflex wiring installed in his or her body, each different type of enhance program provides a bonus to the character's use of a particular physical skill or physical characteristic, as the program and the reflex wiring work together to augment the character's physical skill.

The use of an enhance program inflicts stun damage on the user for every round or portion of a round that the program is running. The amount of damage depends on the quality of the program: Ordinary, 1 stun; Good, 2 stuns; Amazing, 3 stuns. (There are no enhance programs of Marginal quality.) Stun damage from multiple enhance programs running in the same round is cumulative.

Each enhance program provides a –1, –2, or –3 bonus, depending on its quality (Ordinary, Good, or Amazing). Physical skills that can be stored on an enhance program include Athletics, Melee Weapons, Unarmed Attack, Acrobatics, Manipulation, Primitive Ranged Weapons, and Modern Ranged Weapons.

An enhance program takes up 3 slots of active memory. The standard cost of such a program is $1000 for Ordinary quality, $2000 for Good quality, and $3000 for an Amazing program.

Each specific type of enhance program must be purchased separately. It does no good for a character to have two copies of the same specific program running in the same round, because the benefit provided by the second program is not cumulative—but the stun damage *is*.

Characters must be careful about how they acquire enhance programs, because some aren't what they appear to be. Enhance programs can be rigged to inflict wounds instead or stuns, or they can be designed to give penalties instead of bonuses, and some might even do both types of harm to an unsuspecting user.

Reflex

Reflex is specialized cytronic circuitry that can be added to a body's cytronic circuitry system for the express purpose of allowing that body to make use of enhance programs. Enhance programs utilize the reflex wiring to allow the body to perform faster, more accurately, and with better control. (See the sidebar on this page for more details.)

There is a downside, however. For every round or portion thereof that a character activates his reflex circuitry, that character suffers stun damage based on the quality of the enhance program (Ordinary, 1 point; Good, 2 points; Amazing, 3 points). On a Critical Failure, the Gamemaster may also call for a cykosis check (see the sidebar on page 244).

All reflex is of Good quality.

Self-Repair Unit

The cybernetic self-repair unit is an internal piece of equipment that includes a supply of raw material and a horde of nanite robots. This piece of equipment requires a nanocomputer. When commanded via the nanocomputer, the nanites turn the raw material into components and begin repairing damaged cyber gear. It takes the nanites 1 hour to repair each point of wound damage and 2 hours to repair each point of mortal damage that a cybernetic component has suffered.

The amount of raw material contained in a self-repair unit depends on the quality of the gear. An Ordinary unit contains enough to repair up to 4 wound points or 2 mortal points; a Good unit can fix up to 6 wounds or 3 mortals; and an Amazing unit can repair up to 8 wounds or 4 mortals before its supply must be replaced. Replacement raw material costs $1000, $2000, or $3000, depending on the quality of the unit.

Subdermal Comm Gear

This is standard comm gear that's installed in the throat and head, providing a character with a hidden communications system. No one can hear incoming calls, and a whisper is all that's needed to send back a message.

Subdermal comm gear has a range of 1,000 kilometers for surface communications, and can reach into high planetary orbit to contact a ship or space station, provided an unobstructed path exists between the receiver and the sender.

All of this gear is of Good quality.

Subdermal NIJack

These mostly hidden NIJacks are installed in the wrist or forearm so that a gridcaster gauntlet can be plugged into the arm without the need for running exposed cables to the neck and head.

All subdermal NIJacks are of Good quality.

Subdermal Weapon Mount

Subdermal weapons are offensive devices hidden within a character's body that can be exposed to inflict damage. Most weapons of the campaign's base Progress Level can be purchased to be mounted as subdermal weapons.

Weapons that weigh 1 kg or less require Ordinary mounts. They can be installed in natural limbs or in cyberlimbs.

Weapons that weigh up to 3 kg require Good mounts. These must be installed in cyberlimbs.

Weapons that weigh more than 3 kg and up to 6 kg require Amazing mounts. These must be installed within cyberlimbs that are attached to exoskeletons.

Weapons that weigh more than 6 kg can't be made into subdermal equipment.

Wireless NIJack

The wireless neural interface jack is a sensor located on the outside of a character's head, usually high on the side or back of the neck where it can be hidden by hair if the character so desires.

When activated, the wireless NIJack completes a data link with a computer or gridcaster that has a similar sensor. A wireless NIJack performs all of the functions a regular NIJack, except it requires no hardwire connection; data is transferred via radio emissions.

A character equipped with a wireless NIJack must be within line of sight and no farther than 10 meters from the system he's interfacing with.

Actions per Round

CON + WIL	Actions per Round
8–15	1
16–23	2
24–31	3
32+	4

Situation Die Modifiers

Extreme	+3
Moderate	+2
Slight	+1
Marginal	None
Ordinary	–1
Good	–2
Amazing	–3

Complex Skill Checks

Conditions	Modifier
Critical (worst)	+4 steps
Extreme	+3 steps
Moderate	+2 steps
Slight	+1 step
Marginal	None
Ordinary	–1 step
Good	–2 step
Amazing (best)	–3 steps

Complexity	Successes Required
Marginal	2
Ordinary	3 or 4
Good	5 to 7
Amazing	8 to 10

Resistance Modifiers

Ability Score	Resistance Modifier
4 or less	–2 steps
5–6	–1 step
7–10	0
11–12	+1 step
13–14	+2 steps
15–16	+3 steps
17–18	+4 steps
19+	+5 steps

Metric Conversions

Metric	Multiply By	Standard
Millimeters	0.04	Inches
Centimeters	0.4	Inches
Meters	3.3	Feet
Kilometers	0.62	Miles
Sq. Meters	1.2	Sq. Yards
Sq. Kilometers	0.4	Sq. Miles
Kilograms	2.2	Pounds
Metric Tons	1.1	Short Tons
Liters	0.26	Gallons
Cubic Meters	35	Cubic Feet
Celsius	9/5, then add 32	Fahrenheit

Combat Movement Rates

STR + DEX	Sprint	Run	Walk	Easy Swim	Swim	Glide	Fly
2–7	6	4	2	1	2	6	12
8–9	8	6	2	1	2	8	16
10–11	10	6	2	1	2	10	20
12–13	12	8	2	1	2	12	24
14–15	14	10	4	2	4	14	28
16–17	16	10	4	2	4	16	32
18–19	18	12	4	2	4	18	36
20–21	20	12	4	2	4	20	40
22–23	22	14	4	2	4	22	44
24–25	24	16	6	3	6	24	48
26–27	26	16	6	3	6	26	52
28–29	28	18	6	3	6	28	56
30–31	30	20	8	4	8	30	60
32+	32	22	8	4	8	32	64

Skills & Resistance Modifiers

Acting Character's Skill	Resisting Ability
Deception	Intelligence
Entertainment	Intelligence or Will
Heavy Weapons	Dexterity
Interaction	Will
Leadership	Will
Melee Weapons	Strength
Modern Ranged Weapons	Dexterity
Primitive Ranged Weapons	Dexterity
Psionic Skills	Will
Stealth	Will
Street Smart	Intelligence or Will
Unarmed Attack	Strength

Last Resort Points

PER	Max	Cost
7 or less	0	—
8–10	1	3
11–12	2	2
13–14	3	1
15+	4	1

Knowledge Categories

Category	Modifier	Complexity
Trivial	None	Marginal
General	+1 step	Ordinary
Specific	+2 steps	Good
Expert	+3 steps	Amazing

Achievement Level Summary

Lvl	Needed	Earned
1	0	0
2	6	6
3	13	7
4	21	8
5	30	9
6	40	10
7	51	11
8	63	12
9	76	13
10	90	14
11	105	15
12	121	16
13	138	17
14	156	18
15	175	19
16	195	20
17	216	21
18	238	22
etc.	etc.	etc.

ALTERNITY®
Science Fiction Roleplaying Game

Overland Movement

Mode of Travel	Kilometers per Hour	Hours per Fatigue Check
Stroll	4	3
March	6	2
Forced march	8	1

Profession Requirements

	Minimum Ability Score					
Profession	STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIL	PER
Combat Spec	11	—	9	—	—	—
Diplomat	—	—	—	—	9	11
Free Agent	—	11	—	—	9	—
Tech Op	—	9	—	11	—	—
Mindwalker	—	—	9	9	11	—

Encounter Skill Effects

Skill Check Result	Target's Starting Attitude			
	Hostile	Neutral	Friendly	Charmed
Failure	Combative	Hostile	Neutral	Friendly
Ordinary	Hostile	Neutral	Friendly	Charmed
Good	Neutral	Friendly	Charmed	Fanatic
Amazing	Friendly	Charmed	Fanatic	Fanatic

Attitude Modifiers:

Combative .....+3
Hostile .....+2
Neutral 0
Friendly .....–1
Charmed .....–2
Fanatic .....–3

Encounter skills include:

Business (INT)
Law (INT)
Administration (WIL)
Street Smart (WIL)
Culture (PER)
Deception (PER) (*bribe, bluff* only)
Entertainment (PER)
Interaction (PER)
Leadership (PER)

Damage Summary

Stun Damage: Light damage; bumps, bruises, and mild abrasions.

▶ ***Dazed (optional):*** Damage amounting to more than half of total stun points results in a +1 penalty to all actions.

▶ ***Knockout:*** If all stun boxes are marked off, character is unconscious.

▶ ***Heavy Stun:*** Additional stun damage after all stun boxes are marked off becomes wound damage. Every 2 points of stun damage become 1 point of wound damage.

Wound Damage: Injuries that cause lasting harm to the body.

▶ ***Secondary Damage:*** For every 2 wound points suffered, also mark off 1 stun. (Armor does not absorb secondary damage.)

▶ ***Dazed (optional):*** Damage amounting to more than half of total wound points results in a +1 penalty to all actions.

▶ ***Knockout:*** If all wound boxes are marked off, character is unconscious.

▶ ***Heavy Wound:*** Additional wound damage after all stun boxes are marked off becomes mortal damage. Every 2 points of wound damage becomes 1 point of mortal damage.

Mortal Damage: Severe trauma and deadly damage.

▶ ***Secondary Damage:*** For every 2 mortal points suffered, also mark off 1 wound and 1 stun. (Armor does not absorb secondary damage.)

▶ ***Dazed:*** Each point of mortal damage results in a cumulative +1 penalty to all actions.

▶ ***Dying and Death:*** At the end of any scene in which mortal damage is suffered, make a Stamina–*endurance* check to see if condition worsens: Critical Failure, suffer 2 additional points of mortal damage; Failure, suffer 1 additional point of mortal damage; any success, no change.

Check again hourly, or daily if helped through Knowledge–*first aid* or Medical Science–*treatment*.

If all mortal boxes are marked off, a character dies.

Fatigue Damage: Exhaustion.

▶ ***Dazed:*** Each point of fatigue damage results in a cumulative +1 penalty to all actions.

▶ ***Knockout:*** When all fatigue boxes are marked, make a Resolve–*physical resolve* check to avoid falling unconscious. If successful, character remains conscious until suffering any further fatigue damage.

Amazing Damage: If a character suffers damage as the result of an opponent's Amazing success during combat, the character makes a Stamina–*endurance* check as soon as the damage is applied. Failure on this check results in a character being knocked out; all stun boxes are marked, and the character is unconscious until at least 1 stun point is regained.

Recovery from Damage: See pages 54–55.

Throw Situation Modifiers

Type of Object	Short	Medium	Long
Designed for throwing	–1 step	+1 step	+2 steps
Not for throwing	+1 step	+2 steps	+3 steps
Heavy	+4 steps	—	—

Accuracy by Range*

	Distance from Target		
Skill Check Result	Short	Medium	Long
Critical Failure	4 m	8 m	12 m
Failure	2 m	4 m	6 m
Ordinary	on target	2 m	4 m
Good	on target	on target	2 m
Amazing	always on target		

* For thrown objects or indirect fire weapons

Range Modifiers by Weapon Type

Weapon	Short	Medium	Long
Primitive*	–1 step	+1 step	+2 steps
Pistol	–1 step	+1 step	+3 steps
Rifle	–1 step	None	+1 step
Submachine gun	–1 step	+1 step	+3 steps

* Bow, crossbow, sling only; flintlocks use figures for pistol or rifle, as appropriate

Impact Damage

Check Result	Severity of Impact Ex	S	M	L	T
Crit. Failure	d6w	d6+2w	d6+2m	d8+4m	d12+8m
Failure	d4w	d4+2w	d4+2m	d8+2m	d12+6m
Ordinary	d6s	d4w	d4+1m	d6+2m	d8+6m
Good	d4s	d4+2s	d8+2w	d4+2m	d6+4m
Amazing	—	d4–2s	d6+2w	d8+4w	d12+6w

Heavy Weapons Range Modifiers

Range	Direct	Indirect
Short	–1 step	+2 steps
Medium	None	–2 steps
Long	+1 step	None

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▶ ALTERNITY® Game Supplemental Hero Sheet ◀

Hero's Name _____ Player's Name _____

Setting/Progress Level _____ Gamemaster _____

PSIONICS

Psionic Energy

◯ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Action	Psionic Energy Loss
Critical Failure result	3
Broad skill use, success or failure	2
Specialty skill use, success or failure	1

CON Skills ◯	Rank	Score
Biokinesis		[__/__/__]
Bioweapon	____	[__/__/__]
Control metabolism	____	[__/__/__]
Heal	____	[__/__/__]
Morph	____	[__/__/__]
Rejuvenate	____	[__/__/__]
Transfer damage	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]

INT Skills ◯	Rank	Score
ESP		[__/__/__]
Battle mind	____	[__/__/__]
Clairaudience	____	[__/__/__]
Clairvoyance	____	[__/__/__]
Empathy	____	[__/__/__]
Mind reading	____	[__/__/__]
Navcognition	____	[__/__/__]
Postcognition	____	[__/__/__]
Precognition	____	[__/__/__]
Psychometry	____	[__/__/__]
Sensitivity	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]

WIL Skills ◯	Rank	Score
Telekinesis		[__/__/__]
Electrokinetics	____	[__/__/__]
Kinetic shield	____	[__/__/__]
Levitation	____	[__/__/__]
Photokinetics	____	[__/__/__]
Psychokinetics	____	[__/__/__]
Pyrokinetics	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]

PER Skills ◯	Rank	Score
Telepathy		[__/__/__]
Contact	____	[__/__/__]
Datalink	____	[__/__/__]
Illusion	____	[__/__/__]
Mind blast	____	[__/__/__]
Mind shield	____	[__/__/__]
Suggest	____	[__/__/__]
Tire	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]

MUTATIONS

Mutant Origin _____ Uniqueness _____

Mutation Points ____ Drawback Points ____

Ordinary Mutations

Good Mutations

Amazing Mutation

Slight Drawbacks

Moderate Drawbacks

Extreme Drawback

CYBERTECH

Cyber gear Installed

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Cyber tolerance [__/__/__]

□□□□□□□□□□/□□□□□/□□□□

Cykosis ◯ □□□□□□□□□□

COMPUTERS

Computer Model _____

Processor Quality ____ Active Memory ____

Programs	Active	Storage
_____	□	□
_____	□	□
_____	□	□
_____	□	□
_____	□	□
_____	□	□
_____	□	□

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WEAPON DATA

Weapon	Skill	Acc	Actions	Clip Size/Ammo Used	Hide	Mass
				/_____		
				/_____		
				/_____		
				/_____		
				/_____		

EQUIPMENT

SKILLS

Abil	Skill	Rank	Score	Abil	Skill	Rank	Score
			[/ /]				[/ /]
			[/ /]				[/ /]
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NOTES

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ALTERNITY® Science Fiction Roleplaying Game Hero Sheet

Hero's Name _____ Player's Name _____

Species _____ Gender _____ Profession _____ Career _____

Attributes _____ Last Resorts _____ □□□□□

Setting _____ Gamemaster _____ Last Resort Cost _____

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength			
Dexterity			
Constitution			
Intelligence			
Will			
Personality			

ACTION CHECK SCORE

Marginal	Ordinary	Good	Amazing
+			

DIE ( ) ACTIONS PER ROUND ( )

COMBAT MOVEMENT RATES

Sprint____ Run____ Walk____

Easy Swim____ Swim____ Glide____ Fly____

DURABILITY

Stun ( ) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ Fatigue ( ) □□□□□□□□□□

Wound ( ) □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ Mortal ( ) □□□□□□□□□□

ARMOR

(LI)	(HI)	(En)

GAME DATA

Special Abilities _____

Perks _____ Flaws _____

Other _____

PERSONAL DATA

Age _____ Height _____ Weight _____

Appearance _____

Allegiance _____

Social Status _____

Contacts _____

Enemies _____

Wealth _____

ATTACK FORMS	Score	Base Die	Type	Range (S/M/L)	Damage
Unarmed	____/____/____		LI/0	Personal	____/____/____
	____/____/____			____/____/____	____/____/____
	____/____/____			____/____/____	____/____/____
	____/____/____			____/____/____	____/____/____
	____/____/____			____/____/____	____/____/____

SITUATION DIE STEPS SCALE

BONUS												PENALTY
-d20	-d12	-d8	-d6	-d4	+d0	+d4	+d6	+d8	+d12	+d20	+2d20	+3d20

ACHIEVEMENT TRACK Skill Points Spent _____ Stored _____

□ □

Hero's Level 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

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STR Skills	Rank	Score
Armor Operation		[__/__/__]
Combat	____	[__/__/__]
Powered	____	[__/__/__]
Athletics		[__/__/__]
Climb	____	[__/__/__]
Jump	____	[__/__/__]
Throw	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
Heavy Weapons		[__/__/__]
Direct fire	____	[__/__/__]
Indirect fire	____	[__/__/__]
Melee Weapons		[__/__/__]
Blade	____	[__/__/__]
Bludgeon	____	[__/__/__]
Powered	____	[__/__/__]
Unarmed Attack		[__/__/__]
Brawl	____	[__/__/__]
Power martial arts	____	[__/__/__]

DEX Skills	Rank	Score
Acrobatics		[__/__/__]
Daredevil	____	[__/__/__]
Defensive martial arts	____	[__/__/__]
Dodge	____	[__/__/__]
Fall	____	[__/__/__]
Flight	____	[__/__/__]
Zero-g training	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
Manipulation		[__/__/__]
Lockpick	____	[__/__/__]
Pickpocket	____	[__/__/__]
Prestidigitation	____	[__/__/__]
Ranged Wpns. Mod.		[__/__/__]
Pistol	____	[__/__/__]
Rifle	____	[__/__/__]
SMG	____	[__/__/__]
Ranged Wpns. Prim.		[__/__/__]
Bow	____	[__/__/__]
Crossbow	____	[__/__/__]
Flintlock	____	[__/__/__]
Sling	____	[__/__/__]
Stealth		[__/__/__]
Hide	____	[__/__/__]
Shadow	____	[__/__/__]
Sneak	____	[__/__/__]
Vehicle Operation		[__/__/__]
Air	____	[__/__/__]
Land	____	[__/__/__]
Space	____	[__/__/__]
Water	____	[__/__/__]

CON Skills	Rank	Score
Movement		[__/__/__]
Race	____	[__/__/__]
Swim	____	[__/__/__]
Trailblazing	____	[__/__/__]
Stamina		[__/__/__]
Endurance	____	[__/__/__]
Resist pain	____	[__/__/__]
Survival		[__/__/__]
Survival train.	____	[__/__/__]

INT Skills	Rank	Score
Business		[__/__/__]
Corporate	____	[__/__/__]
Illicit business	____	[__/__/__]
Small business	____	[__/__/__]
Computer Science		[__/__/__]
Hacking	____	[__/__/__]
Hardware	____	[__/__/__]
Programming	____	[__/__/__]
Demolitions		[__/__/__]
Disarm	____	[__/__/__]
Scratch-built	____	[__/__/__]
Set explosives	____	[__/__/__]
Knowledge		[__/__/__]
Computer op.	____	[__/__/__]
Deduce	____	[__/__/__]
First aid	____	[__/__/__]
Language		
_____	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
Law		[__/__/__]
Court proc.	____	[__/__/__]
Law enforc.	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
Life Science		[__/__/__]
Biology	____	[__/__/__]
Botany	____	[__/__/__]
Genetics	____	[__/__/__]
Xenology	____	[__/__/__]
Zoology	____	[__/__/__]
Medical Science		[__/__/__]
Forensics	____	[__/__/__]
Medical know.	____	[__/__/__]
Psychology	____	[__/__/__]
Surgery	____	[__/__/__]
Treatment	____	[__/__/__]
Xenomedicine	____	[__/__/__]
Navigation		[__/__/__]
Drivespace	____	[__/__/__]
System	____	[__/__/__]
Surface	____	[__/__/__]
Physical Science		[__/__/__]
Astronomy	____	[__/__/__]
Chemistry	____	[__/__/__]
Physics	____	[__/__/__]
Planetology	____	[__/__/__]
Security		[__/__/__]
Protection	____	[__/__/__]
Sec. devices	____	[__/__/__]
System Operation		[__/__/__]
Communication	____	[__/__/__]
Defenses	____	[__/__/__]
Engineering	____	[__/__/__]
Sensors	____	[__/__/__]
Weapons	____	[__/__/__]
Tactics		[__/__/__]
Infantry	____	[__/__/__]
Space	____	[__/__/__]
Vehicle	____	[__/__/__]
Technical Science		[__/__/__]
Invention	____	[__/__/__]
Jurygig	____	[__/__/__]
Repair	____	[__/__/__]
Technical know.	____	[__/__/__]

WIL Skills	Rank	Score
Administration		[__/__/__]
Bureaucracy	____	[__/__/__]
Management	____	[__/__/__]
Animal Handling		[__/__/__]
Animal riding	____	[__/__/__]
Animal training	____	[__/__/__]
Awareness		[__/__/__]
Intuition	____	[__/__/__]
Perception	____	[__/__/__]
Creativity		[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
Investigate		[__/__/__]
Interrogate	____	[__/__/__]
Search	____	[__/__/__]
Track	____	[__/__/__]
Resolve		[__/__/__]
Mental	____	[__/__/__]
Physical	____	[__/__/__]
Street Smart		[__/__/__]
Criminal elem.	____	[__/__/__]
Street know.	____	[__/__/__]
Teach		[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]

PER Skills	Rank	Score
Culture		[__/__/__]
Diplomacy	____	[__/__/__]
Etiquette		
_____	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
First encounter	____	[__/__/__]
Deception		[__/__/__]
Bluff	____	[__/__/__]
Bribe	____	[__/__/__]
Gamble	____	[__/__/__]
Entertainment		[__/__/__]
Act	____	[__/__/__]
Dance	____	[__/__/__]
Musical inst.	____	[__/__/__]
Sing	____	[__/__/__]
_____	____	[__/__/__]
Interaction		[__/__/__]
Bargain	____	[__/__/__]
Charm	____	[__/__/__]
Interview	____	[__/__/__]
Intimidate	____	[__/__/__]
Seduce	____	[__/__/__]
Taunt	____	[__/__/__]
Leadership		[__/__/__]
Command	____	[__/__/__]
Inspire	____	[__/__/__]

Note: Skills printed in blue can't be used untrained.

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Player's Handbook

by Bill Slavicsek and Richard Baker

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