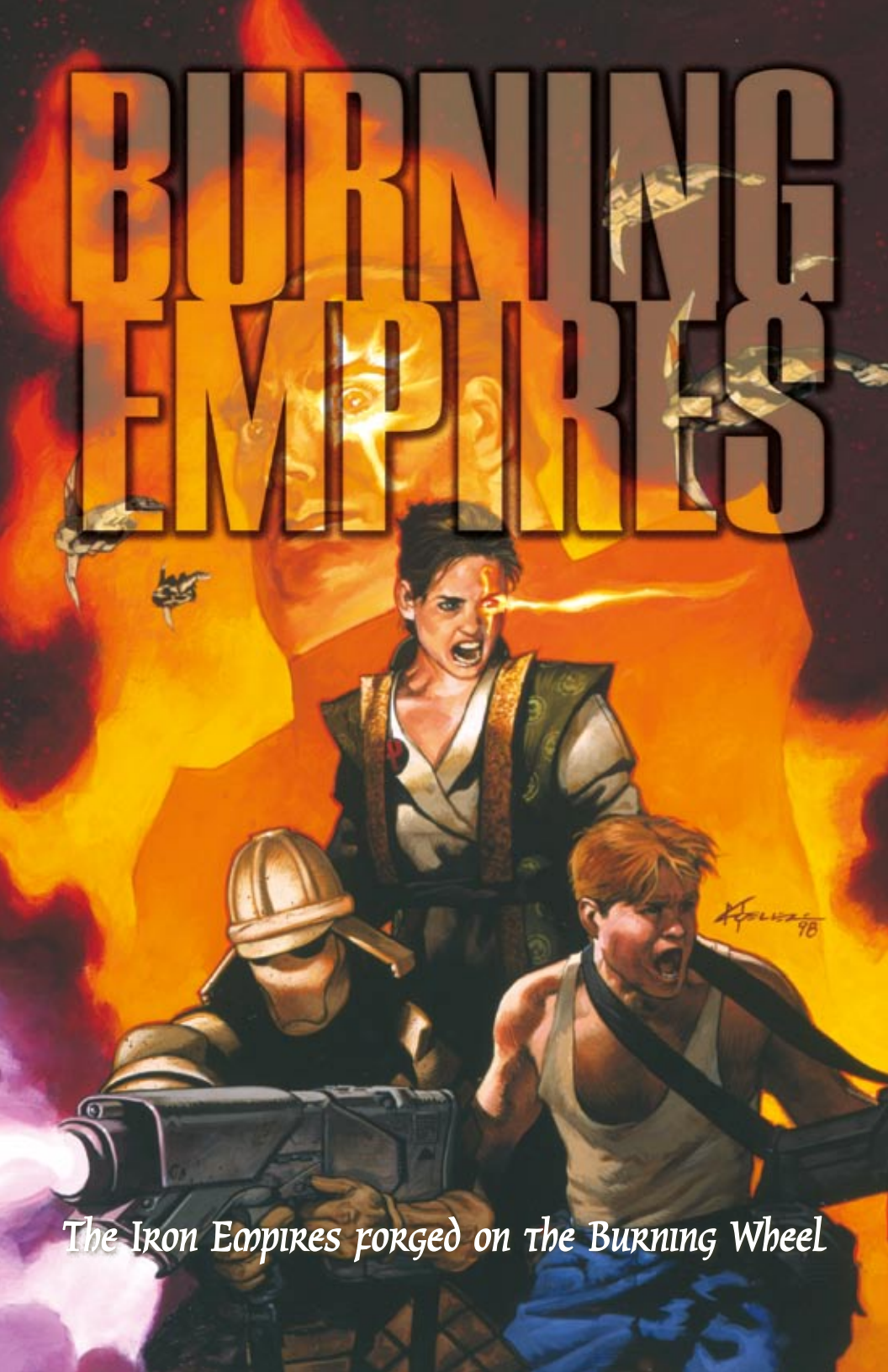


# BURNING EMPIRES



*The Iron Empires forged on the Burning Wheel*

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And thanks to my fans for their patience and support during the madness. You rock!

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## **Colophon**

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# FOREWORD

*Eight weary nations, spanning three million light years of the Milky Way Galaxy.  
They are the withering remains of a human civilization once immeasurably vast.  
Their dying has not been quiet.*

The Iron Empires grew out of a series of love affairs, the earliest of which was my boyhood infatuation with the work of J.R.R. Tolkien. His *Lord of the Rings* was the first alternate reality that I can remember being convinced was “real.” In part, it was its history. Tolkien’s characters didn’t spring into being from nowhere, they grew out of a shared past, influenced by the lovingly crafted cultures that formed it.

Barbara Tuchman’s history of 14th century Europe, *A Distant Mirror*, captured my heart later in life. Tuchman, a gifted storyteller in addition to her talents as a historian, encouraged me to journey to that most alien of worlds, the past: History, that deep, unseen current that carries everything we know, all of our lives, forward. We believe ourselves to be unique. We believe in free will and individual creative expression. One has only to look at the artwork of other cultures to see how lost we all are in our particular historical seas.

My third love, the consummation of which led directly to the Iron Empires, was Marc Miller’s roleplaying game, *Traveller*. I still own most of my rumpled, pamphlet-sized *Traveller* books, the first of which I purchased at the now-defunct Nebulous Books in Syracuse, NY. My friends and I spent many a sleepless night exploring that ambitiously vast universe. Playing *Traveller* made me want to create something similar, a universe with a history and culture all its own.

These influences are obviously just signposts along the way. The comics of Moebius, Enki Bilal and Juan Gimenez contributed, as did the profound historical games of Kevin Zucker, and the novels: Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Robert Heinlein’s *Starship Troopers*, and Isaac Asimov’s *Foundation Trilogy*, with its fascinating exploration of history as science.

Imagine if you can, dear reader, what a joy it is to see my offspring join hands with that of visionary designer Luke Crane. Luke’s ground-breaking game system is all about beliefs and motivations. When you play *Burning Empires*, your characters won’t be ciphers; they’ll have a history. Whether they’re good or evil, fighting for themselves or for the survival of their species, you will discover what it is that drives them. Grab a pencil and a sheet of paper.

It’s time to burn.

*There is only one real path,  
The river of fire.  
Everything else is an illusion.*

—Christopher Moeller  
Pittsburgh 2006



# the FACE of GOLLAARSE



DELLE 093





# THE FACE OF COLLAPSE

All life as we know it is ending. It seems too dramatic a statement to believe, almost trite. What's more, daily lives carry on heedless of the danger, full of concern and hurry: Love is had and hearts are broken; wars are fought, blood spills; sweat is spent, money earned; children are born; the old wither and die.



But the end times have come. Some have seen the face of collapse—have witnessed its gemini essence, human and inhuman, and it has shaken them to the core. Shivering and near mad, these survivors have returned to the light and security of worlds untouched by this terror. They preach warnings in vain; those who haven't experienced the terror themselves can never understand. The drama of life

itself is too seductive, too important, to fully grasp the breadth of the end, to understand that it is real this time. Inevitable.

Perhaps they cannot grasp the breadth of it because the end has come upon us so slowly, almost gently. It has taken millennia to arrive. There has been no dousing of the suns, no cataclysmic implosion; only an infection eating at the edges, a darkening of the outer rim—as if a shadow has passed over the moon.

Perhaps it is because the end wears a human face. It seems so unbelievable, so far-fetched: a race of aliens whose utmost desire is to be human, to wear our skin, to think our thoughts.

But it is true: They want us—need us. They have come, and it is the end. This time we live in is the very face of collapse.

Once, the human race was great, creating a wondrous civilization that spanned a galaxy. Unthinkable, but true, but all things come to an end, and this sprawling utopia has sunk into desuetude, riven with infighting, strife, pride and greed. Only the core remains, the center. What was once little more than the Capital Sector of the Central Prefecture of the Federated Empires is now the total span of human civilization. What was once one harmonious government is now eight squabbling empires vying for supremacy, yearning for the glory days and ignoring their inevitable, impending end. Casiguran, Comoran, Darikahn, Dunedin Gonzagin, Karsan, Kudus and Urfan—vast realms, containing myriad worlds each, but tiny and impotent compared with the glory of the past.



It's not that we wish to die. We simply cannot agree on who should be the one to restore us to our former glory. And so bitter are we—are all of us!—that we say 'tis better to watch our neighbor gutted by the enemy than support him against a common foe.

To the galactic south of these powerful and petty empires, engulfing what were once the Sovereign, River, Golden and Glorious Prefectures of the great empire, dwells the enemy: the terror, the worm, the Vaylen.

Inexorably and fiercely, the Vaylen have preyed upon our divisiveness, upon our nature to be unique, individual and independent. Preyed upon



us and swallowed us, world by world. Taken body and *mind* of countless billions. Farmed us, hulled us and used us—as vessels, templates and surrogates.

In humanity, the Vaylen have found what they have fundamentally lacked: emotion, unpredictability, utility, artistic creativity and most importantly, true, unbounded sentence. Without us, *they* are doomed, confined to an animal state, or something less than human. Placed inside the human mind, they are complete. They can dwell in our minds and live the lives they would never—could never—have without us.



The worm comes now, again, hungry for hosts for their trillions of offspring. The eight empires are all that remain to stem their feverish tide. Now is the last push. Surrounded and doomed, now is humanity's final moment to burn brightly. To stave off the end and live to rebuild, perhaps even attain greater heights!

Is there hope left? It is up to you. What will you choose? Will you sacrifice your duty, your obligations, your loves, your entanglements, your concerns, your children, your very life to fight this shadow war? Or will you fail to



recognize that the end times have come, and succumb to the worm—tragically remaining true to what you believe, what you think is important, until it is too late. Until what you hold dear—your mentors, your companions, your lovers, spouses and children—have all become one of them, the worm, the terror. Until they take you firmly by the arm and lead you to a chamber

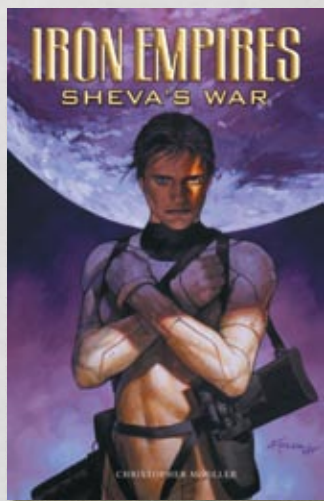
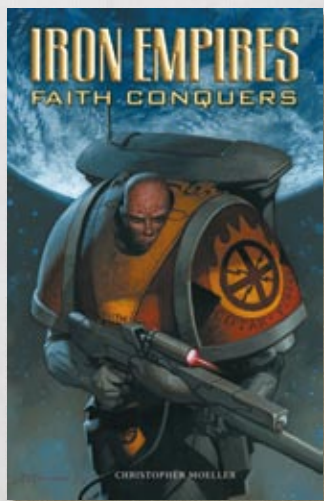


where a surgeon awaits, strange tool in hand, a worm for you writhing in a jar beside him. *Your* end, but the birth of another Vaylen, your memories now part of the Vaylen, while you watch, powerless, through eyes that were once your own.

Choose wisely. And pray you are wise enough to recognize which choice you have made.

## The Iron Empires

The term “Iron Empires” refers to a factionalized galactic government on the brink of destruction. It also refers to the critically acclaimed comic books of Christopher Moeller: *Faith Conquers*, *Sheva's War*, *The Passage* and *The Second Passage* (from *Negative Burn*). These are stories of people entangled in the fate of their homes, their families, their vocations and their communities. People forced to make decisions about what is most important to them. Complex characters with divided loyalties who may objectively know the right course, but find that following it is far from an objective matter. Powerful individuals, vulnerable to their own humanity.



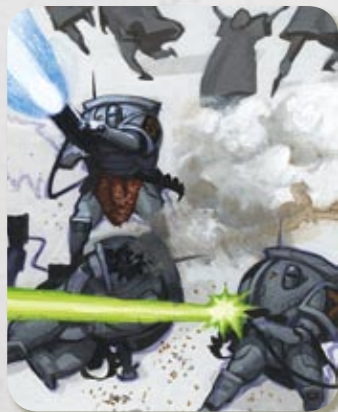
The stories of the Iron Empires take place in a future where humanity is a great spacefaring civilization. Where nations span multiple systems, governable only with distortion drives that carry cargo and people faster than light. Where humanity has surpassed the zenith of its development, and now slowly slips toward its nadir.

### What do We do in This Game?



This game allows the player to take on the role of a protagonist in a story that decides the fate of his world. It is not a single player game. In fact, it works best with three to six people. The group uses the rules to create a world, decide what the conflict on the world will encompass, build characters who are a part of that conflict and then play out the fate of the world as mirrored by the struggles of the characters. One player plays the opposition to the main group, and both sides play to win.

These conflicts and struggles are resolved using the abilities of characters within the context of the game's structure. Infection, Duel of Wits and Firefight are the main methods of resolution.

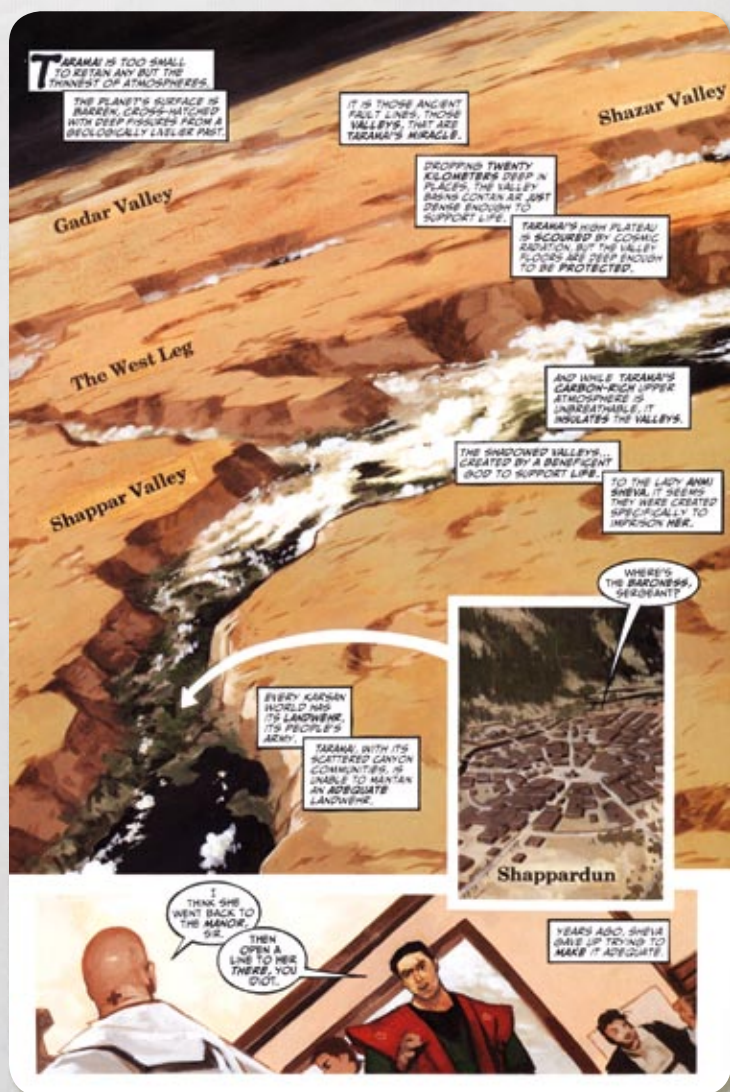


### Reading Material

This game is designed so that the players can create stories similar to those found in Christopher Moeller's comics. All of the mechanics and descriptive color focus on that task, which makes the game fairly alien reading material. It certainly doesn't read like one of Chris' comics. Nor does it attempt to dump Chris' setting into the lap of the reader in the form of 30 pages of fiction. Instead, the setting is portrayed in the fabric



of the game mechanics—the feel and structure of the comics emerges in play. In fact, the text presents the barest of details, hints of setting and culture in order to spark your imagination so that you will go and create your own unique worlds. If you're interested in more setting, background and fiction, buy *Faith Conquers* and *Sheva's War* from Dark Horse Comics, [www.darkhorse.com](http://www.darkhorse.com). They are excellent comics.







## IT REVOLVES ON THIS

Burning Empires is a roleplaying game. Its rules contain a philosophy: There are consequences to your choices. Moreover, recognizing that the system *enforces* these choices will help you navigate play. These consequences range from the very black and white, “If I engage in this duel, my character might die,” to the more complex, “If my character undertakes this task, he’ll be changed, and I don’t know exactly how.” I always encourage players to think before they test their characters. I ask them, “Are you prepared to accept the consequences of your actions?”

In the game, players take on the roles of characters inspired by history, current events and works of science fiction. These characters are represented by a series of numbers that designate their abilities, and a list of player-determined descriptions and goals. The synergy of inspiration, imagination, numbers and priorities is the most fundamental element of Burning Empires. Manipulating these numbers and goals within situations presented by the game master (GM) is what the game is all about.

The mechanical consequences of the players’ decisions are described in this chapter, in the World Burner, Character Burner and the Burning Wheel. The emotional, ethical and moral ramifications are left to you.

### *Voices of Iron Empires*

As you read through the rules, you will encounter three characters. These characters represent the author’s voice and attitude in



certain parts of the text. The voices are portrayed as characters from Chris' comics, but don't worry. You don't have to be familiar with them to navigate the game.



*Lieutenant Urci Fox* was Trevor Faith's trusted ally on Hotok during the story of *Faith Conquers*. In the text, Urci will appear to give the reader commentary or further advice on various rules.



This is *Gopher*. He's a Kernn and a member of Trevor Faith's unit, the Grey Rats. Gopher rears his ugly head whenever we need harsh advice or warnings regarding the limits of Burning Empires. Take what he says with a grain of salt. He's kind of crazy.



*Rhiannon* is a strange one. She's Vaylen—Philippe of Artois' handler in *Sheva's War*. Beneath her calm visage lurks the worm, the terror. She's volunteered to offer some advice and commentary on the darker parts of the Burning Empires rules.

Basic rules text is not preceded by any of the characters. This "rules voice" is used to convey most of the information in the game. The characters offer comment on the rules.

## STRUCTURE of The Book

This book is divided into four major sections: The Face of Collapse, the World Burner, the Character Burner and the Burning Wheel.

The Face of Collapse and It Revolves on This—which you're reading right now—give a taste of the setting and mechanics.

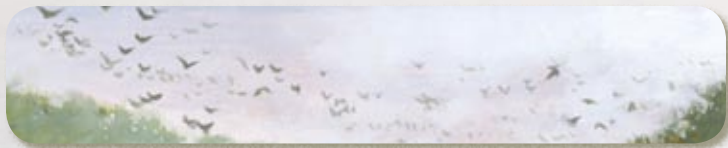
The World Burner throws the players into the thick of it: Make your setting now. While the players make their setting, they learn about the Iron Empires as a whole and put their own stamp on it as well. The fabric of the setting is integral to the game. It shapes the mechanics at play.

The Character Burner provides setting and color for the players as it walks them through the process of creating a protagonist for this story.

Lastly, the Burning Wheel describes all of the conflict resolution mechanics that will be used in play. It also details how advancements and rewards work.



It  
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on This



### The Flow of The Game

Burning Empires is inherently a social game. You play face to face with your friends. As you interact with one another, you come to decisions and have your characters undertake actions.

There are two sides you can take: Either your actions are helping humanity overcome the Vaylen threat, or you're aiding the Vaylen. You may choose to remain philosophically neutral, but if you're not actively helping the human side, you're helping the Vaylen. The struggle for the fate of each world is too desperate to be otherwise.

One of you must be the GM (game master). The GM plays the side the other players aren't on. Usually it's the Vaylen, but sometimes it'll be the human side. The GM makes all of the strategic, tactical and personal decisions for his side. He expresses these decisions through the Infection mechanics, which guide the action and pacing of the events of the story at hand. The GM is, quite literally, trying to ensure that his side *wins*. (The mechanics ensure there is no abuse of power.) In addition, he plays the roles of the relationships and background characters for both sides. Lastly, he arbitrates rules calls and interpretations so that play progresses smoothly.

Everyone else plays a protagonist (a.k.a., "a character") in the story. Even if the players decide to take on the roles of farm boys, no matter how green or naive, their exploits are the main focus of play. The conflicts created by the players' priorities for their characters shape the situations to resolve. Resolving conflicts (and creating new ones) is the mainstay of play.

As conflicts develop, the players use their characters' abilities to overcome challenges and survive. To do this, scenes are roleplayed, dice are rolled and the results interpreted via the rules presented in this book.

As a group, the players are responsible for their "side," human or Vaylen. They make the strategic, tactical and personal decisions to ensure *their side wins*: Either the planet is saved from Vaylen incursion, or it falls to the worms. Through play, you'll determine how it happens.





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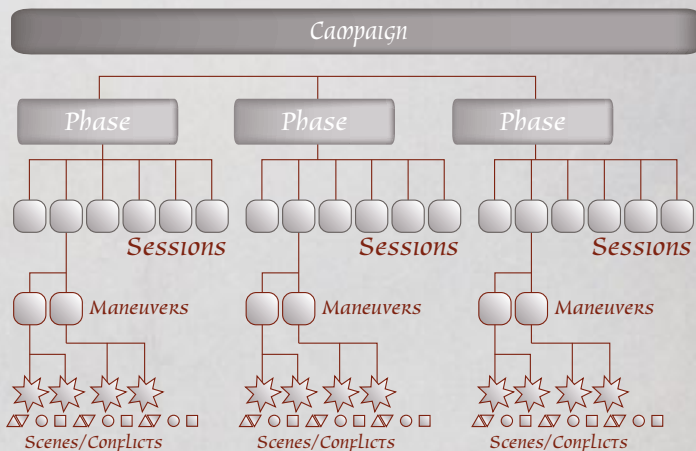
## Structure of Play

There are five levels of play for this game: campaign, phase, session, maneuver, scene. The overarching umbrella is called a campaign. This level contains a story arc that is going to span the entire battle for the planet. A full campaign happens over about 18 sessions of play and is divided into three parts, called phases.

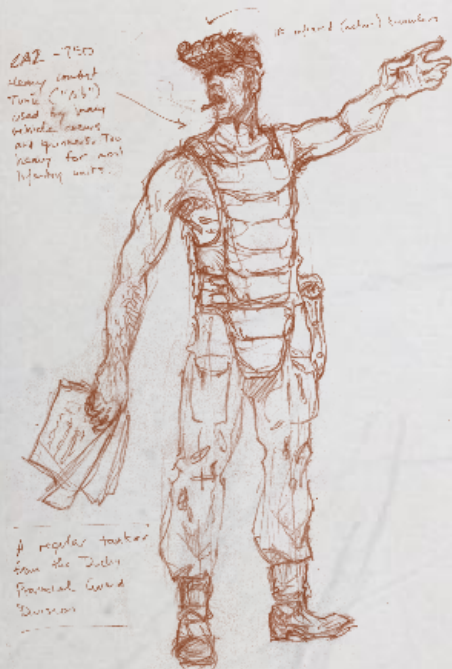
The phases of a Burning Empires campaign are: infiltration, usurpation and invasion. They correlate to the stage of the Vaylen infection on the planet: Are they just arriving and trying to set up inroads? Infiltration. Have the Vaylen managed to create a beachhead on the planet and hull key individuals so that they are poised to take over more? Usurpation. Or have the Vaylen come in force in a gambit to conquer the planet with pure military might? Invasion. The players can play out the fate of their world using all of the phases, or just pick one or two.

Contained in each phase are a number of sessions. These are the actual units of play—the time you have agreed to get together with your friends and play this game. An ideal Burning Empires session lasts four to five hours. A phase lasts, on average, about six sessions of play. In the first phase, one session is dedicated to world burning and character burning. The other five determine the outcome of the conflicts and the end result of the phase.

Each session is subdivided into what we call *maneuvers*. Maneuvers are twofold in nature. They are goals, scenarios or adventures in which the characters participate. They are also moves in the strategic game. Players strategize about maneuvers before diving into the scenes. There are one or two maneuvers per session.



Scenes are the most valuable unit of play. They exist for the player to attempt to push his agenda forward. In scenes, the players take on the roles of their characters—almost like in a performance. Each player usually engages in at least one major scene per maneuver. Within the scenes, the players use their characters' abilities to initiate and resolve conflicts. These conflicts are tests for the character. Tests earn experience and reward, and they grant a small degree of narrative control with which the player can push his agenda forward. In order to enact the strategy decided upon for the phase, session and maneuver, a player must engage his character in a series of conflicts.



### Sheets of Paper

Each player is required to keep a written record of his character. Character sheets are provided in the back of this book and on [burningempires.com](http://burningempires.com) for just this purpose. Characters in Burning Empires evolve and grow as play progresses, so I recommend using a pencil to mark the sheet. There are a few other sheets used in play to keep track of moment-to-moment stuff, but they'll be discussed later down the line.



The GM must keep track of the characters he uses in play. Most don't need to be fully fleshed

out—a few numbers usually suffice. But there are certain characters that will need to be described fully in order to give them their due.

## Dice

### D6

Burning Empires uses common six-sided dice for all rolls. From here on out, these dice are referred to as "D." Groups of them are referred to as 3D, 4D, 5D for short: three dice, four dice, five dice, etc.

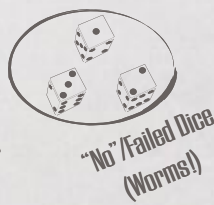


## Yes and Worms

Dice in Burning Empires are rolled in handfuls (or pools) of usually three to six dice. In each roll, every die is counted as its own result, either a “yes” or a “no.” The more yeses, the better. Any die that comes up as a “no” result is a traitor to your cause and doesn’t count toward success. We call them “worms.”



It  
Revolves  
on This



A “yes” result is a 4, 5 or 6 on a die. A “no” result is a 1, 2 or 3. (Worms!).

## Successes

When a die comes up a 4 or higher, we call it a *success*. After the dice are rolled, count up all your successes.

*Rolling a handful of five dice, my luck gives me a 1, 2, 2, 4, 5 result. Two of the dice came up 4 or higher, thus I rolled two successes.*

When a player rolls dice, he needs successes so that his character passes the tests set before him in the game.

### *The Little S*

Sometimes you will see a number listed as “2s”. This notation is shorthand for “two successes.” Successes represent dice already rolled that came up successes. The “s” notation is used most often when describing a pool of successes the players must attack and reduce via successes from their own rolls.

## Ability Ratings

### Exponent

The number next to your character’s stats, attributes and skills—Perception 3, Resources 4, Tactics 5, for example—indicates how many dice to roll when that ability is called upon. We here at Burning Wheel Headquarters call that number the *exponent* of the ability. In the



dictionary, exponent is defined as “one that represents” (not X to the Nth power). In the game, the number is representative of the character’s ability in that area. Throughout the text, you’ll see me refer to an ability as, for example, exponent 3 or even exp 3. That’s just me saying, “You roll three dice for that, bub.”

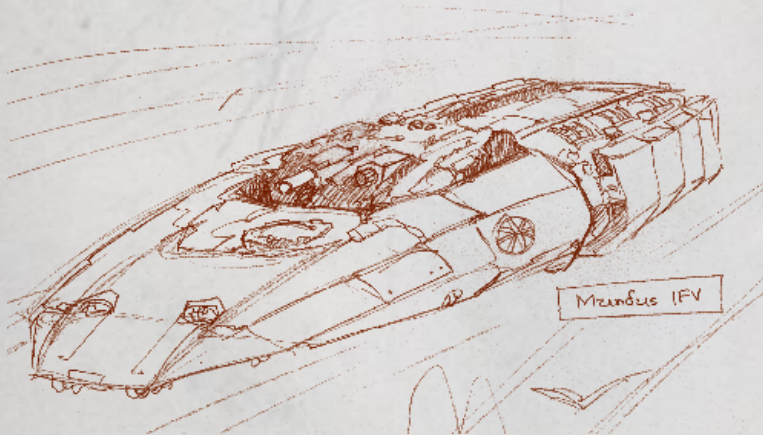
### Expertise by Exponent

Below is a list of exponents (exp) in Burning Empires and what they imply about the ability they represent. This list should help you get a feel for the system:

- Exp 1 is naturally disinclined, crippled or utterly incompetent
- Exp 2 is untrained, raw, weak or unpracticed
- Exp 3 is nominally trained and practiced
- Exp 4 is competent; everyday stuff doesn’t pose a challenge
- Exp 5 is expert
- Exp 6 is near mastery
- Exp 7 is excellence defined
- Exp 8 is total mastery, complete understanding
- Exp 9 is uncanny; incomprehensibly good
- Exp 10 is as near perfection as the system allows

## When to Roll

Burning Empires is very much a game. Although players undertake the roles of their characters and embellish their actions with performance and description, rolling the dice determines success or failure and, hence, where the story goes.





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on This

## Tests

Tests are the teeth in the gears of this game. They are the most basic unit of currency. Without tests, nothing moves forward. In fact, in a situation involving conflict, tests are *required*. A player cannot narrate an act in the game that will affect another character without testing an ability to back it up.

When a player's character comes into conflict with another element of the game, the player must test one of his character's abilities to try to overcome the obstacle or accept that his opponent has "won this round." Both are mechanically binding in game.



Testing abilities is a good thing! Not only do tests drive the story by providing tangible results for our embellishments and performances, they allow the character a chance to improve his abilities so he may succeed at more difficult tasks in the future.

Tests are described in detail in the Scenes and Conflicts chapter.

## Obstacles to Overcome

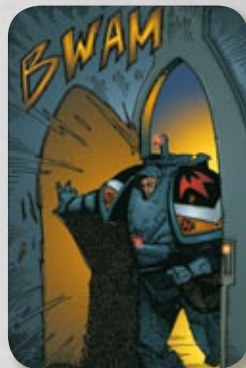
So now we know how to test an ability—roll the number of dice indicated, 4s or better count as successes, the more successes the better. Why do we need multiple successes?

Players need to generate multiple successes in order to pass more difficult tests. The number of successes needed to pass a test is called the *obstacle* (*Ob*). It is the GM's role to assign appropriate obstacles based on the inherent complexity of the task at hand and the examples in this book.

The higher the obstacle, the more difficult the test, and the more skilled and lucky the character will need to be to pass it:

### Difficulty by Obstacle

- Ob 1 Easy
- Ob 2 Routine
- Ob 3 Difficult
- Ob 4 Extremely Difficult
- Ob 5 Master-Level
- Ob 6 Heroic Effort
- Ob 7 Ludicrously Difficult
- Ob 8 Nearly Impossible
- Ob 9 Phenomenally Difficult
- Ob 10 Miraculous






## Open-Ended Tests

*Steel tests are open-ended by default.* Other tests can be made open-ended by spending a special character point called “fate.” Fate points are discussed in the Artha Wheel chapter.

## Marshaling Dice



 Often times, the cost of failure is too great to risk, so you'll want to gather as much aid as possible before throwing the dice. Later, in the Scenes and Conflicts chapter, you'll read about four methods of marshaling more dice to your side via the mechanics: advantage, fields of related knowledge, help and artha.







# Probabilities

	Ob 1	Ob 2	Ob 3	Ob 4	Ob 5	Ob 6	Ob 7	Ob 8
1D	50/50	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2D	3 in 4	1 in 4	—	—	—	—	—	—
3D	●	50/50	1 in 10	—	—	—	—	—
4D	◆	2 in 3	1 in 3	↘	—	—	—	—
5D	★	●	50/50	1 in 5	↘	—	—	—
6D	★	◆	2 in 3	1 in 3	1 in 10	↘	—	—
7D	★	◆	3 in 4	50/50	1 in 5	↘	↘	—
8D	★	★	●	2 in 3	1 in 3	1 in 10	↘	↘
9D	★	★	◆	3 in 4	50/50	1 in 4	1 in 10	↘
10D	★	★	★	●	2 in 3	1 in 3	1 in 5	↘

It  
Revolves  
on This

## Key to Exponent vs Obstacle Table

The coordinate number lists rough odds for gaining success with a given number of dice against the indicated obstacle. For example, for a 1 in 3 chance, say to yourself, “I am going to pass this test about once every three times I throw the dice.” Aside from the listed odds, the symbols equal:

- = Not possible without artha
- ↘ = Not very likely (~ 1 in 20)
- = Very likely (~ 8 in 10)
- ◆ = Extremely likely (~ 9 in 10)
- ★ = Near-guaranteed success (better than 9 in 10)

## Basic Dice in Brief

- Roll dice when a conflict arises.
- The number of dice rolled is determined by the character’s ability that applies to the conflict.
- The number of dice thrown is equal to the number next to the ability. This is called the *exponent*.
- 4s and better are *successes*. 3s and lower are *worms*.
- The *obstacle* is the inherent difficulty of the task being attempted. You need successes equal to or greater than the obstacle to pass the test.
- *Open-ended rolls*—6s on Steel tests allow you to pick up another die for each 6 and roll it again, hopefully adding more successes.

### Iron Empires Terminology

- Ahmilakh**— the six-fingered prophet. Founder of the Mundus Humanitas.
- Anvil**— planet-based armed forces: soldiers, tanks and planes. Also refers to unpowered infantry armor.
- Bright Mark**— a scar that the vast majority of psychologists bear. It glows when they use their psychological power.
- Corvus**— ritual depilation required of anyone who joins the lords-pilot.
- Crucis**— a cross-shaped cybernetic interface implanted at the base of the skull. A crucis is necessary to pilot iron and hammer.
- Distortion Drive**— a drive technology that manipulates the value of time to allow faster-than-light interstellar travel.
- Fusor**— a squad support weapon that projects a tongue of plasma, energized to the point of nuclear fusion, at great distance and with great effect.
- Grav/Pressor**— a technology that manipulates gravity to provide reactionless drive inside a gravity well.
- Hammer**— space-based naval forces: battleships, cruisers and transports.
- Hanrilke**— the last dynasty to rule the old Federated Empire. Their collapse brought on the age of the Iron Empires.
- Iron**— powered battle armor symbolic of and exclusive to the nobility in the Iron Empires.
- Kerrn**— a plant-based species artificially created by the Vaylen. They rebelled and now fight against their creators.
- Lord-Pilot**— a noble rank that allows its bearer to own and operate iron or hammer-class spacecraft.
- Mukhadish**— a bioengineered slave race created by the Vaylen as a labor force. They and the Kerrn despise one another.
- Mundus Humanitas**— the foremost religion of the Iron Empires. Their symbol is a burning wheel. They believe all fate is predetermined.
- Naiven**— a worm. It is the natural state of a Vaylen. Once implanted in a host, a Naiven becomes Vaylen.
- Psychology**— the power to read thoughts, communicate telepathically and forcefully alter a target's behavior or personality with only a thought.
- Sled**— a small vehicle, typically using grav/pressor technology.
- Vaylen**— a creature consisting of a host and an implanted Naiven worm. The worm dominates the host's personality and intelligence with its own. Vaylen is the common name for the enemies of humanity. Also referred to as "the worm" and "the terror."

# WORLD BURNER



Art by [Signature] 9/8





# WORLD BURNER

Countless worlds have fallen to the Vaylen nightmare and countless more stand to be devoured. Using the World Burner, you and your group answer a series of questions in order to determine what type of world you defend against the threat—or give over to the worm.

The following questions serve a four-fold purpose. First, they provide overarching color in which to play Iron Empires scenarios.

Second, within that color, the questions define the shape of scenarios to be played. On strictly quarantined worlds, for example, the Vaylen must develop clever ways to smuggle in their Naiven worms so that they can take over from within. Uncovering those plots is a major part of game play.

Third, the answers to the World Burner questions also determine what kind of characters exist on this world. Players choose which lifepath settings they want and which they don't.

Fourth and most importantly, the answers provide the numbers to generate a pool of points for both sides of this conflict. This pool is called your *disposition*. It is used to determine the fate of the world in the Vaylen Infection macromechanics.

## Designing a World

Read through the following categories: Galactic Location of the World, Atmospheric Conditions, Hydrology, Topography, Tech Index, Dominant Form of Government, Factions, Predominant Military, Planetary Attitude Toward the Vaylen, Primary Industry or Export, Level of Quarantine, Level of Regulation and Figures of Note. Choose one option from each section—except for Factions—that you think is fitting for your world. You may choose multiple factions as described in the Factions section.



Your choices create the setting for your game. You and your group are literally building the world or environment in which your story will take place. As you choose from the options, think about what characters you would like to play, what options you find interesting and what concepts just leap out at you.

## Devil in the Details

The World Burner creates the world in broad strokes. So, as you go through it, try to imagine how the answers and choices fit together. Fill in the gaps with your own details. You will most likely become inspired as you go along and think of cool stuff to make the world mesh. How does a Military Junta mesh with a Civilian Commune? What is life like in a high index anarchic society? Why is there an Imperial Stewardship on this world? Or why *isn't* there an Imperial Stewardship on this crucial military outpost? What's life like? What are the people like? What's the culture like? How is your world shaped by all of these options and questions?



It is the GM's responsibility to note down these cool details and embellishments. They are the first bits of flesh for your world.

## Native versus Non-Native

Many answers to the World Burner questions determine which character options are "native" to your world and which are "non-native." Native means that the choices are available on your world. Non-native means that choosing these options imposes a minor penalty during character creation. The precise effects of native vs non-native are discussed in the Character Burner, but bear in mind that as you make choices about your world, it is going to affect the options you have for your character.

### Default Native Settings

You don't know what a lifepath "setting" is yet, but in the interest of being explicit: *The human settings, Freeman, Outcast and Criminal, the Mukhadish Underworld setting, and the Vaylen setting in the Vaylen lifepaths are native to every world. The Spacefarer setting is native to low and high index worlds, not to sub and zero index worlds.*

## Two Sides to This Coin

Before going further, the players should decide if they want to play for the human side or the Vaylen side. This choice will definitely color the choices made in the next section. Playing the human side is the default for the game and setting, but it is possible to play the Vaylen side. In this case, the players would undertake the roles of Vaylen sleepers, spies, infiltrators, strategists, collaborators and

sympathizers trying to undermine the planet's resistance to their invasion. Not all of the players would have to be Vaylen—some could be humans working with the Vaylen for their own ends.

### Making Choices

To burn a world, the group should set aside a session of play—the process usually takes about two hours. The GM reads the category titles and the questions associated with each one. The players pick from each category based on their preferences for this world.

### Picking and Choosing

World burning is a collaborative process. The best way to build a world is by consensus—each choice is discussed by the group and a decision is reached via that discussion.

There are 11 main categories to make choices about plus two special ones—Factions and Figures of Note. The GM must monitor the group's decisions and make sure that each player gets at least one thing that he wants put into the world—not including Factions and Figures of Note. Each player may put in a faction if he wishes, so no consensus is necessary there. Figures of Note are just special.



If at the end of the world burning process, a player feels like he hasn't contributed to the world, the group must go back and address his issue. He should be allowed to change one of the options to better suit his decision—so long as it does not completely wreck the world as it's built. The group must compromise with dissatisfied players and try to bring them into the fold. Reenvision your world under new conditions, be imaginative and generous. Make sure everyone is going to have a good time in play.

And in case it wasn't clear, the GM is a player, too. He gets to participate in the discussion and input his ideas.

### Totaling the Points

Each entry in the World Burner has one or two sets of points listed with it: *Infil*, *Usurp*, *Inv*. The abbreviations stand for Infiltration, Usurpation and Invasion phase disposition pool bonuses. In other words, the points represent how much each choice is worth to your world in the Infection mechanics. Some choices favor the human side, some favor the Vaylen. The GM keeps a running total of the points for the choices. When you get to Factions, do not add faction points to either side. They remain separate.





For example, the players decide on a Void World for their galactic location. The points look like this:

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	8		3	2	1

They then choose Alien-Life-Supporting for Atmospheric Conditions.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	1	2		2	2	2

The current point totals for this world are: Vaylen Infiltration, 5; Vaylen Usurpation, 3; Vaylen Invasion, 10; Human Infiltration, 5; Human Usurpation, 4; Human Invasion, 3.

As the world burning process continues, those pools will grow and develop, topping out between 20 and 40 points each, depending on the choices made about the world.



At the end of the process, you're going to choose in which phase of the Vaylen Infection you want to play: infiltration, usurpation or invasion. Both sides take their total for the world for *that* phase and use it in the Vaylen Infection mechanics. Those rules are described after we make characters and learn the basic rules. So sit tight.

## Galactic Location of the World

The galactic location of your world is primarily color, but it does have an effect on the background of the characters. It determines where your world is in relation to the Vaylen threat: if you're on the front lines or if you're insulated by layers of systems and bureaucracy.

### The Iron Empires c. 587 H.E.





## The Iron Empires

There are eight empires scattered throughout the ashes and wreckage of the old Federated Empire: the Casiguran Matriarchy, the Comoran Worlds, the Darikahn Empire, the Dunedin Worlds, the Gonzagin Empire, the Kudus Theocracy, the Karsan League and the Urfan Worlds. The following section offers a brief description of each.

*The Casiguran Matriarchy* is the most insular, defensive and culturally uniform of the Iron Empires. Bordering the Urfan, the Casiguran Empire is ruled by ennobled women—birthright passed from mother to daughter, rather than father to son. They are despised by the Mundus Humanitas clergy and the Comoran Cyrean heretics alike and therefore keep their borders closely watched. The Casiguran Matriarchy is entirely unconcerned with the Vaylen.

*The Comoran Worlds* are well-situated in the old Central Prefecture and possess resources and strong armies with which to support their claims. What's more, they are insulated from the Vaylen threat. The Comoran could very well be the last holdout in this struggle, if they were not riven with internal strife. A full-blown holy war between the Mundus Humanitas and the Cyrean sectarians burns away the Comoran strength. If this simple matter of faith and orthodoxy could be resolved, perhaps the Comoran worlds could rally its northern neighbors to a common cause.

*The Darikahn Empire* is the most powerful of the eight empires. They control the heart of the old empire—the Hanrilke throne itself. They seek to assert their claim via conquest of the other seven empires. Unfortunately, they share a border with the Vaylen and their imperial ambitions weaken them in this greater struggle for survival.





*The Dunedin Worlds* are known for their fiery, zealous spirit. They are devout followers of the Prophet Ahmilahk, and since the Darikahn have outlawed the Prophet's voice, the Dunedin have pledged holy war to restore the faith and the throne. The Dunedin view the Vaylen as a righteous plague visited upon their hated enemies, the Darikahn. They have no immediate border with the Vaylen, so it is easy for them to maintain their ignorance.



*The Gonzagin Empire* contains the heirs to the Hanrilke throne. They are the true successors to the Federated Empires. However, the Gonzagin are militarily weak. Their dukes are fiercely independent and only pay their nominal emperor the barest of obeisance. Unless they unite, they will never be powerful enough to oust the Darikahn and put the heir back on the throne. To complicate matters further, the Gonzagin share a border with the Vaylen and are subject to constant attacks and incursions.

*The Karsan League* is a group of independent-minded worlds aligned under an emperor called the Tirkahn. They traditionally keep themselves separate from the internal struggles of the other empires, as they are more focused on their struggle with the Vaylen to the south. The League the most technologically advanced, and least riven by internal conflict because it is the front line in this war.

*The Kudus Theocracy* is a newly established nation in the center of the Iron Empires. It is a religious state ruled by the Mundus Humanitas. The Theocracy opposes the Darikahn Empire with the support of the Gonzagin Empire and the Comoran and Dunedin Worlds.

Philosophically, the Theocracy follows the religion of the Prophet Ahmilahk. This faith is a doctrine of fatalism and mystery. The Church believes everything is preordained. There is no way to alter one's destiny. The only true way to live is to observe the natural order of things and live in harmony with fate's plans. Resistance to this truth only begets misery. By accepting this mystery and one's unknowable destiny, one



can profit and even gain insight into one's purpose. However, it does not bode well to be too presumptuous about one's fate. It cannot truly be known. In the end, destiny will unfold as it desires, not as human beings try to make it or hope for it to occur. Only by observing the patterns of the Wheel of Fire—the symbol of Ahmilahk's religion—can humanity hope to prosper. The flames of the wheel represent the living souls of all humanity.

Following fate doesn't mean blindly stumbling around in the dark waiting to see what happens. By divining the patterns of fire on the wheel with guidance of the Mundus Humanitas' Cotars, one can fulfill one's destiny. Fate is a path to be followed with open eyes, not a road to blindly stumble down. Hence the politics, crusades and holy wars.

*The Urfan Worlds* are a loose collection of baronies lying on the northern fringes of the old Central Prefecture. The golden age of this province has been lost and much of the Urfan has fallen into hard-bitten survival and barbarism. They are the furthest from the Vaylen threat.

World  
Burner

## Choose a Location

Where is your world located in relation to the old Federated Empire? Is it an old imperial core world, an interior world distant from any border, an outworld hanging on the frontier or a void world, lost in wreckage of the fringe? In which empire does your world sit? Use the map provided for reference.



## Old Imperial Core World

The old imperial core worlds fall in the vicinities of the northern Darikahn Empire, northern Gonzagin Empire, northern Karsan League, the Kudus Theocracy, Dunedin or Comoran Worlds. These worlds are heavily insulated from the Vaylen threat and focus on the pressing matters of the wars of succession and wars for territory that currently grip them all.



Though the core worlds are insulated, it's foolish to assume that the Vaylen are not already making designs on them—sending their infiltrators ahead to begin building inroads for the ultimate invasion.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	3	1		2	2	8

## Interior World

Interior galactic worlds feel the tug of the twin gravities of the border war to their south and the imperial and theocratic politics to their north, east and west. They exist within the central Darikahn, central Gonzagin, central Karsan League, Urfan or Casiguran worlds. Interior Worlds are often the ones to sound the alarm when their empire's borders crumble under assault—first to rally to defense, and first to be swept up by opportunistic warlords once they have spent their resources helping their neighbors.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	2		1	2	3

## Outworld

Outworlds refer to the southern reaches of the Karsan League, Darikahn or the Gonzagin Empires or the northern frontier of the Urfan or Casiguran worlds. Once, these systems sat firmly in the center of the old empire's borders. Now, these worlds hang in ragged succession—fruit waiting to be plucked by the ever encroaching Vaylen. No matter how shrill their warnings, how dire their tidings, the lords of the outworlds never convince their secure brethren to the north of the severity of the threat. The northern and central princes and warlords are far too preoccupied solidifying their territorial bases in their incessant war for supremacy. And inevitably the pleas of the outworlds cease—as they are choked down by yet another Vaylen incursion.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	1	4		2	2	2

## Void World



Denizens of the Iron Empires refer to anything beyond their borders as “the void.” Void worlds are inhabited worlds and most were, in ages past, part of the vast Federated Empire. Now they are lost, independent or in ungovernable reaches.

Spacefarers speak frequently of the treasures of the Void. According to their yarns, there are worlds abandoned in the



age-old struggle, spinning empty in space, waiting for the enterprising soul to come and drink deeply of their secrets. Tales of wondrous high index technology abound from the spacers who ply the Void.



Of course, those who do navigate those dark warrens of lost space are distrusted by the good people of the Iron Empires. Inevitably, such travelers and traders bring the worm with them....

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	8		3	2	1



World  
Burner

## Atmospheric Conditions

What are the atmospheric conditions for this world? When considering the breadth of the galaxy, atmospheric conditions vary wildly—from an airless moon to a tempestuous gas giant or a lush Earth. Is your planet Alien-Life-Supporting, Human-Life-Supporting, Non-Life-Supporting or Partial-Life-Supporting? If the atmosphere is hostile to human life, artificial habitats will be necessary. Describe how the planet's culture exists under these conditions.

### Alien-Life-Supporting

An Alien-Life-Supporting atmosphere is hostile to both human and Vaylen creations. It does, however, support another kind of life-form that roams about. Players can design the alien life using the Alien Life-Form Burner mechanics if they so desire. The human/Vaylen culture exists inside surface stations, biodomes or another type of sealed, self-supporting environment.

## Requirements

This choice requires the *Artificially Created Environs* choice from the Topography section. Also, the players must take an *Indigenous Life-Forms* faction. This does not count as one of the players' faction choices. See Factions for what that means.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	1	2		2	2	2

## Human-Life-Supporting

Human-Life-Supporting worlds have nitrogen- and oxygen-rich atmospheres with enough water vapor to make human life sustainable without need for artificial mechanisms.

### Lifepath Setting Options

In addition to the standard settings, Human-Life-Supporting planets make the Wild Mukhadish setting native.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	2		1	3	2

## Non-Life-Supporting

This planet either has no atmosphere or one too toxic for any form of life. Civilization exists within zones of artificial life support: warrens burrowed into the surface, small installations scattered across the land, massive, domed cities containing a thriving culture inside their airlocks or generation ships containing the surviving remnants of a destroyed world.

## Requirements

This choice requires *Artificially Created Environs* from the Topography section.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	2	3		3	2	1





## Partial-Life-Supporting

Certain worlds have such a bizarre topography that they support atmosphere in one area but not in another: worlds where life may only survive in deep valleys, along the equatorial belt or on the surface of the ocean's sargasso seas.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	0	3		2	3	1



World  
Burner

## Hydrology

Is your planet covered mostly with liquid or with land? Predominantly liquid conditions are favorable to both Vaylen and human, as both creatures need ample water supplies to exist. But it is particularly favorable to Vaylen due to their aquatic origins.

### Predominantly Liquid

Most life-supporting planets are predominantly liquid, containing vast, rich oceans that in turn support continental life, like the storied Earth.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	1	2		0	2	4

### Predominantly Land

Planets that are predominantly covered with land may still have oceans and seas, but they are uniformly more arid than predominantly liquid-covered worlds. Earth's ancient brother, Mars, was said to be dry and windswept, containing only frozen oceans beneath his surface.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	2		1	2	3



## Topography

What is the topography of your planet's surface? There are four options: Artificially Created Environs, Naturally Rugged and/or Broken Terrain, Naturally Tame and/or Habitable and a Broad Range of Conditions. Describe the lay of the land—or lack of land—on the surface of the planet. Consider how the topography will mesh with the atmospheric conditions and hydrology.

### Artificially Created Environs

Artificially Created Environs are needed to make habitable areas of planets without atmosphere or with severely inhospitable terrain. This choice can represent many things: a terraformed habitat, a space station, a colony ship or surface bases.

These habitats are livable and often cramped—perhaps biodomes, arcologies or underground warrens—but the exterior topography is extremely hostile. It's either vacuum or terrain unsuitable to Vaylen and human life.

#### Requirements

If the Alien-Life-Supporting or Non-Life-Supporting Atmosphere is chosen, Artificially Created Environs must be taken.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	3	2		3	1	2

### Naturally Rugged and/or Broken Terrain

This category represents many different possibilities: young worlds, rife with volcanic activity; frozen, glacial worlds; worlds without supercontinents where the land mass is broken into smaller mountainous islands; planets where blasted deserts cover most of the landmass; and worlds predominantly covered with dense, untameable vegetation.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	1	3		1	3	2

### Naturally Tame and/or Habitable Terrain

These worlds consist of rolling hills, placid bays, broad forests and gentle plains.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	4	1		2	2	2

## Broad Range of Conditions

Most habitable planets contain a broad range of topographical conditions: polar ice caps, seething oceans, jagged mountains, broad plains, sweeping forests and wild deserts. The fabled homeworld, Earth, contained such a range of topography.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	2	1		1	2	3

## Tech Index

Tech Index describes the technological development of the world in relation to the rest of the Iron Empires. It is a crucial decision that determines how modern and vital the world is in galactic politics.

There are four Tech Indices: Sub Index, Zero Index, Low Index and High Index. Choose one that best suits your world.

### Customizing the Tech Index

Each tech index category lists a range of technological developments. The players may customize this list for their world. They may omit any and all items they deem incongruous, and they may add one item from the next level up on the tech index. For example, players may take one item from the zero index list if they deem it appropriate to their sub index world.

### Sub Index

Technology of sub index worlds consists of electricity, fossil fuels, internal combustion, plastics, radio, telephone, steel and medicine. If the world does not have the power to project its aims into space, it is a sub index world. It may be home to many disparate peoples and cultures, but if it cannot *produce* spacecraft and other higher index capital, then the world falls off the scale.



There are two types of sub index worlds: densely inhabited worlds trying to crawl out of the mire of planet-bound life and sparsely populated backwaters with no industry to speak of.

To a modern mind, the first type of sub index world is a fractious mess of fledgling nation states all vying for power on the world's stage. Merchant leagues and powerful factions struggle for dominance. Some factions try to take the stage for themselves. Others vainly attempt to support one world government. The truth of the matter is these worlds are too technologically young and naive to be actors in the great game of politics in the Iron Empires. They have strategic importance in the war with the Vaylen—for they contain billions of souls to be devoured by the worm—but they are otherwise nonentities in galactic politics.

So-called backwater worlds, inhabited but primitive in their technological and political development, are likewise beneath the notice of galactic politics. These can be worlds newly settled or worlds utterly ravaged by war.

## *Lifepath Settings Restrictions*

A sub index world is a purely planetary-based society. No interplanetary travel, no starports or space stations. Therefore, they may not have Spacefarer, Hammer or Psychologist Foundations as native settings—even if these options are opened by other choices later in the process they are still counted as non-native.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	1	3		3	2	1

## Zero Index

Zero index worlds are capable of producing jet engines, personal microcomputers, personal wireless communication, cryonics, fission technology, robotics and rudimentary spacecraft in addition to the products of a sub index world.

Zero index worlds are interplanetary-travel capable, but are limited to chemical thrust. They have a small space-based economy, involving satellite technology, small orbiting stations or perhaps a moonbase.

To the galactic powers of the Iron Empires, the technological economy of a zero index world is quaintly insular. Nations struggle to form a single, monolithic government. Merchant leagues exist on a multinational level, knitting together the fabric of the world's culture. But there is not enough cohesion to unify the planet and project its power out into the system.





### Lifepath Setting Restrictions

These worlds may not have Hammer, Spacefarer or Psychologist Foundations as native settings—even if these options are made available by other choices later in the process.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	2		2	3	1

## Low Index

Low index worlds have access to grav/pressor technology, fusion power, hammer spacecraft, iron, psychology, electrical superconductors, distortion drives, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, human cloning and genetic engineering.

Superconductivity, quantum computing and grav/pressor drives bind low index worlds into a cohesive, accessible whole. Nanotechnology, fusion power and distortion drives allow the denizens of the low index world to conduct interstellar commerce and to maintain a space-based navy. These elements are the basic requirements for a viable political power, and therefore most of the worlds of the Iron Empires fall into this category. Note that this level of tech indicates the planet has at least one starport capable of repairing and refueling hammer vehicles. It's common for these worlds to have a large space station as well that acts as a quarantine, customs and immigration point.

The economies of low index worlds exist on a system-wide and possibly interstellar level. Just as nations and corporations are the trading partners and factions for sub and zero index worlds, low index worlds are interdependent on the worlds and economies in their system and in near-by systems.



Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	3	1		2	2	2

World  
Burner

## High Index

High index worlds are rare, nearly mythical, in the Iron Empires. Only a handful of worlds among the eight remaining empires can be said to be truly high index. They possess wondrous and powerful technology like force field technology, transhuman biomodification, the ansible, matter converters, micro-blackhole reactors and technology capable of enhancing or restricting psychological power.

A high index world is a very potent political and military entities. The economies of high index worlds are most often based on services and information traded on an interstellar level. A high index world attracts to it myriad travelers, traders and supplicants in search of its wonders.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	4	1		2	1	3

## Dominant Form of Government



In a space-based society, planetary power structures must be of a type to support projection outward toward additional power—to other planets and systems. In such governments, the *world* is the smallest measure of power, and therefore most worlds must have a single, dominant form of government in order to be actors on the “international” stage.

What form of government rules this world: a Civilian Commune, an Imperial Stewardship, a Lawless world without formal government, a Merchant League, a Military Dictatorship, a Noble Fief or a Theocracy? The Dominant Form of Government says a lot about your world's character. Choosing it also helps determine which lifepath settings are native to this world.

Choose one form of government from the following list. Rivals, coalitions and offshoots are described in the next section, Factions.

### Civilian Commune

One of the most rare forms of world government in the Iron Empires is the Commune. This world has either never known imperial governance or has managed to successfully throw off the yoke of serfdom. A rarity in this dark age, but they do exist as idealist pockets of self-determination in a sea of cynical fascism.



### Native Lifepath Settings

Choosing this form of government makes the Commune setting native to the planet.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	2		2	2	2



World  
Burner

### Imperial Stewardship

Oftentimes, worlds in the Iron Empires are run by an imperial bureaucracy headed by an officially appointed Lord Steward. The steward is aided by his chamberlain, treasurer and lord constable. The bureaucracy is run by mandarins and bureaucrats, while ambitious lords-pilot and courtiers vie for power as favored subjects of the court.

#### Native Lifepath Settings

This form of government makes native the Stewardship and Court setting.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	3	1		1	2	3

### Lawless or Anarchic

Lawless planets have simply never bothered to establish formal governments. They are hives of free thinkers, smugglers, travelers and traders. Often dangerous and exotic, planets without government also usually try to maintain some secrecy as to their location and situation. Their natives are generally independent and antiauthoritarian and in no hurry for an opportunistic warlord to sweep in and take that all away.



Anarchist planets are not violent antiauthoritarian groups by nature. These collections of individuals advocate social relations based upon voluntary association of autonomous individuals, mutual aid and self-governance.

## Native Lifepath Settings

Lawless or Anarchic societies do not have any native settings for government, rulership or military. These worlds have access to the settings common to all worlds: Outcast and Criminal, and Freeman. Spacefarer is native if the planet is low or high index.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	1	2		0	6	0

## Merchant League

Certain planets have managed to buy charters of liberty and trade from the Imperial Bureaucracy and become legal trade communes. These governments are commonly called Merchant Leagues because they rely on traders and manufacturers to provide the impetus of their wealth and freedom. Governance is conducted via a council of magnates and executives who each own a share in the league's charter. Leagues tend to be militarily weak—not for lack of resources, but because their charters forbid them from raising anvil or hammer. They rely on their neighbors for protection but are fierce and shrewd in their own defense when need be.

## Native Lifepath Settings

Choosing this form of government makes the Merchant League setting native to the planet.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	2	1		1	1	4

## Military Dictatorship

This form of government refers to warlords outside of imperial power who have taken over planets for their own uses. They can be rogue or tyrannical Forged, Hammer or Anvil Lords, but they are just as often rebels who have risen up to overthrow their governments and seize control.

## Native Lifepath Settings

Choosing this setting makes the Anvil setting native to the planet. Hammer is native so long as the planet is low or high index. Characters are typically born into the Freeman or Servitude and Serfdom settings—unless other factions provide alternatives.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	5	0		2	1	3



## Noble Fief

Certain planets are divvied into hereditary fiefs, passed down from father to son since before even the Hanrilke era. The entire planet may be one fief, or just certain predominant areas. A fief is ultimately ruled by a Forged Lord. He, in turn, devolves power to his Anvil and Hammer Lords, who then pass power down to their relatives in the Pilotry—granting them the ability to own land and bear iron and hammer. Noble Fiefs are considered crude outposts of rough men by the courtly members of the imperial stewardship. Yet the Forged Lords of these fiefs have a grip on the true power of the Iron Empires—military might—and thus often consider themselves above the courts swarming with intrigue.



### *Native Lifepath Settings*

The Nobility setting is native to Noble Fiefs.

### *Requirements*

A Noble Fief requires that the world have the Slaves and Serfs faction. It does not count toward the group's faction choices. See the Factions section for details.

Vaylen Disposition	Infl	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infl	Usurp	Inv
	2	4	0		2	1	3

## Theocracy

Theocracies are states that are run according to religious law rather than imperial or civic law. Government officials are ranking priests, called cotars in the Mundus Humanitas church hierarchy. The highest ranking religious official on the planet is the Archcotare. He is in turn supported on one hand by his Dregutai—his religious advisors—and on the other by the Cotar Fomas, a warrior priest. The Fomas runs the Church's armed forces—the sodalities. Beneath them is the body of the church, the legions of students, notaries, firewards, archivists, interpreters, custodians of holy relics and cotars.

### *Native Lifepath Settings*

Choosing a Theocracy as the form of government makes the Theocracy setting native to the planet.

### *Restrictions*

The Theocracy may not have a Professional Volunteer Force.

Vaylen Disposition	Infl	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infl	Usurp	Inv
	1	4	1		3	0	3

## Factions



Most worlds have factions and rivals to the primary power. Factions can often make for a healthy body politic and economy, but they are potential breeding grounds for Vaylen.

Choosing factions allows players to flesh out which settings and sub-settings are native to their planet. In fact, choosing your factions is one of the most important aspect of the world burning process. The conflict between the Vaylen and humans is often played out as a struggle between and for the factions.

Do you wish to have factions present on your world? If yes, carry on in this section. If no, skip to the Predominant Military section. If the players chose an Alien-Life-Supporting atmosphere or a Noble Fief government, they are required to take factions—Indigenous Life-Forms and Slaves and Serfs respectively.

### Presence of Factions

If factions are present on the world, the following points are added to the *Vaylen* disposition. This bonus is only added once, no matter how many factions are present.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	4	1	1

### The Power of Factions

As you choose factions, do not add their numbers to your disposition. Factions are independent organizations that must be activated and won over in the game. Set the numbers off to the side for now. They represent a potential bonus to the disposition of whichever side wins over the faction in play. See the Take Action maneuver in the Infection section for the mechanics on activating factions.

### Choosing Factions

There are twelve types of factions to choose from: Civilian Communes Factions, Cult Churches, Imperial Bureaucracy, Indigenous Life-Forms, Kernn Diazspherah, Merchant Leagues/Corporate Entities, Military Junta, Organized Crime, Psychologist Foundations, Rebel Line/Royalists, Slaves and Serfs, and Theocratic Institutions.

There are two special faction options: Removing the Freeman setting from your world and blockading Spacefarers. See the Special Faction Options heading at the end of this section.

In world burning, each player may choose to add one faction to the world if he so desires.





## Civilian Communes

Civilian Commune factions represent opposition or minority governments on the planet. It's rare for such entities to rest quietly. More often, the Communists agitate for democratic change and reform.

### *Lifepath Setting Options*

This makes the Commune setting native.

Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	0	3	3

## Cult Churches

There are thousands of cults and sects that populate planets across the empires—either advising the secular authorities or maneuvering to create theocratic states of their own. These cults have no ties whatsoever to the Mundus Humanitas. They are not heretics or offshoots from the mother religion. Rather, they believe in radically different religious and spiritual schema.



World  
Burner

### *Lifepath Setting Options*

On planets overtaken with Cult Churches, the Theocratic setting is native. However, the cultists do not follow the Mundus Humanitas line. Any Doctrine skills in that setting count as Heretical or Cult Doctrine at the player's discretion. Alternately, Cultists may remain outcasts and utilize the Cultist and Rebel Priest lifepaths.

Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	0	1	5

## Imperial Bureaucracy and/or Court

Supporting the world's government is a hive of bureaus, departments and offices populated by appointed officials, mandarins, bureaucrats and scheming courtiers. The Imperial Bureaucracy functions as an adjunct to the primary power, helping it manage the planet and ensuring it doesn't stray too far from the fold.

### *Lifepath Setting Options*

This faction makes the Stewardship and Court setting native to the planet.

Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	2	1	3

## Indigenous Life-Forms

Vaylen often manufacture their own life-forms to suit the needs of their invasion plans. However, they are not opposed to using indigenous life-forms to their own ends. Are there any indigenous life-forms on your planet that might be valuable to the Vaylen?



Activating the Indigenous Life-Form faction in play can indicate that the Vaylen have culled these beings and hulled them for their own purposes. Or if a human player activates this faction, it can represent his side either exterminating them, rounding them up or tracking them in such a fashion that hulling them is not possible for the Vaylen in this phase.

### Lifepath Setting Options

The Indigenous Life-Forms faction makes the Vaylen Shudren and Mukhadish Wild and Slave settings native to the planet. If the players come up with something really wild, like kraken or uplifted cetaceans, use the Alien Life-Form chapter to design any creatures or characters from the Indigenous Life-Forms faction.

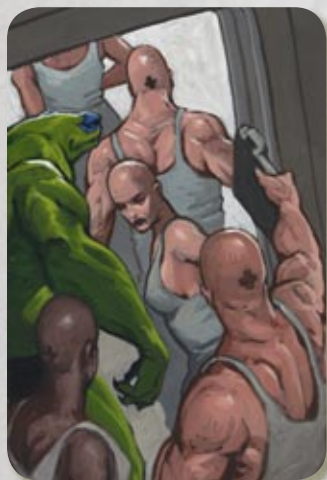
### Requirements

Indigenous Life-Forms are required for Alien-Life-Supporting atmospheres.

Disposition Bonus	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	0	3

## Kernn Diazspherah

The Kernn are a mysterious and far-flung race of aliens who inhabit odd corners of the old empire. Once Vaylen slaves, they threw off their yoke



and escaped their lot. They founded a secret homeworld—Omshiip—built of wrecked spacecraft and allied themselves with humanity against the Vaylen threat. Since then, they have integrated themselves with and been accepted by human society. Kernn can be found on many worlds scattered throughout the various empires. They are valued as technicians for hazardous duty—like EVA or fusion plants—and as soldiers. But they are a multifaceted people, full of humor, sympathy and determination.



A Kernn Diazspherah represents a settlement of Kernn on this world. They often reside in urban ghettos living as laborers. The close-knit quarters in the ghettos remind them of Omshiip; the labor helps them forget their troubles and their past. Even so, they are a powerful ally to have when fighting off the Vaylen threat.

#### *Lifepath Setting Options*

This faction makes the Kernn Diazspherah setting native to the planet.

Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	2	1	3

### **Merchant League/Corporate Entity**

A Merchant League or Corporate Entity faction represents a powerful trade/mercantile group on the planet. Merchant Leagues have byzantine hierarchies supplemented with stores of wealth and materials. Both can be very useful.

#### *Lifepath Setting Options*

Choosing this faction makes the Merchant League setting native to the planet.

Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	2	0	4

### **Military Junta**

If a Military Junta faction is chosen, the planet's primary government is either propped up by or threatened with the presence of a powerful military organization. The junta can be the government's own military organization or it can represent independent warlords who hold sway on the planet or its satellites.

#### *Lifepath Setting Options*

The Military Junta makes the Anvil setting native to the planet. The Hammer setting is native if the planet is low or high index.



Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	0	1	5



## Organized Crime

Organized crime plays many roles on a planet. It operates the black market and represents the violent cast-offs of society. Occasionally, organized crime will be well-structured enough to represent a political force unto its own. While the Organized Crime faction does not bring any new settings to the world—Outcast and Criminal is native to all worlds—it does offer a nice juicy faction to activate in play. Use the Criminal lifepath in the Outcast and Criminal setting to represent the upper echelons of Organized Crime.

Disposition	Infl	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	2	2	2

## Psychologist Foundation

A Psychologist Foundation represents a group of individuals who bear the Bright Mark and openly acknowledge they are psychologically active. The group might work for the primary government or against it, in the shadows or in the open, but there's no doubt who and what they are.



This faction can represent a number of possibilities in the Iron Empires. The Psychologist Foundation can represent a shadowy body of psychologists acting in unison for their own obscure purposes. If the world is part of the Karsan League, it can represent the Circle of 10,000—a powerful militant sect of noble psychologists. If the world has the Theocracy government or Theocratic Institutions faction, it might represent the presence of a High Inquisition. The High Inquisition is an ecclesiastical body dispatched by the Primarch of the Mundus Humanitas to investigate charges of malfeasance and heresy among the clergy. The High Inquisitors are often church-trained psychologists.

### *Lifepath Setting Options*

This choice makes the Psychologist Foundation setting native to the planet. You don't need this faction to play a psychologist.

### *Restrictions*

This faction may not be taken if your world is sub or zero index.

Disposition	Infl	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	2	3	1

## Rebel Line/Royalists

A Rebel Line is a subset of the nobility who push a claim to the world's throne. Royalists are an outsider faction of nobility—marginalized by the Theocracy, Military Dictatorship, Commune or Merchant League—who seek to regain their land, power and royal rights.

### *Lifepath Setting Options*

The Rebel Line/Royalist faction makes the Nobility setting native to the planet. Since these nobles are out of power, consider limiting the upper echelon noble lifepaths like Forged Lord, Anvil Lord or Hammer Lord.

Disposition	Infl	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	0	2	4

## Slaves and Serfs

Detestable as it may seem to an enlightened mind, slavery is still prominent and prevalent throughout the Iron Empires. Merchant Leagues use slave labor in their works, mines and combines. Military Dictatorships encourage the capture of slaves as war booty. Even Civilian Communes are known to keep a slave class as workers in order to keep their society functioning.

Among the imperials and nobility, there is no proscription against slavery. In fact, the typical tenant of an Imperial world or Noble Fief is little more than a slave—working the land and factories for his liege, owning nothing and provided with few rights.

### *Requirements*

This faction *must* be included if the world's primary form of government is a Noble Fief, Lords-Pilot are the predominant military (as described in the following section) or if Freeman is removed from the world. It is optional for all other planets.

### *Lifepath Setting Options*

This faction makes the Servitude and Serfdom and Mukhadish Slave settings native to the planet.

Disposition	Infl	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	4	1	1



## Theocratic Institutions

The Theocratic Institution faction represents a powerful and influential presence from the predominant religion in the system. Typically, this role is filled by the Mundus Humanitas, but it can also be filled by a branch church that does not keep precisely to doctrine—like the Cyreans. These are not cults, though! Use Cult Churches if you want a radical non-burning wheel religion on the world.



Theocratic Institutions can represent immense parishes of worshippers, religious fortresses or popular pilgrimage routes administered by the church.

### Lifepath Setting Options

This faction makes the Theocracy setting native to the planet.

*On many worlds beyond the Kudus Theocracy, the Mundus Humanitas is subordinate to the Imperial Bureaucracy but is still a powerful institution in its own right.*

Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
Bonus	3	1	2

## Special Faction Options

### Remove Freeman

The Freeman setting is included on all worlds by default. The players may opt to excise this lifepath setting from their world, but doing so *requires* them to take the Slaves and Serfs faction. The Freeman setting may not be removed if the players have the Civilian Commune government or Civilian Commune faction. If removed via this option, the Freeman setting counts as non-native for this world.

Removing the Freeman setting from your world adds +3 to the Human Disposition in Infiltration. However, it adds +3 to Vaylen Disposition in both the Usurpation and Invasion phases. Add these points now.

### Remove Spacefarer: Blockade

The Spacefarer setting is native by default to low and high index worlds. It is accessible, but non-native, for sub and zero index worlds.



Players who have designed a world with a strong Military Dictatorship or Military Junta, Tight Regulation and Advanced or Strict Quarantine can declare that their world is *blockaded*. This cuts out the Spacefarer setting. Lifepaths from this setting may not be



taken whatsoever by the players or the GM. *It is not even non-native. It's simply unavailable.* There is no bonus or penalty to the disposition for doing this.

## Predominant Military

After choosing factions, the players must decide on their world's primary military body. This is the military of either the predominant form of government or one of the factions. Although it must be associated with the government or one of the factions, it does not represent the sole military power on the planet, just the most potent one. Does your world use a Levy, the Lords-Pilot, a Professional Volunteer Force or Religious Orders?

### Levy

A Levy is a military formed by the involuntary requirement of its government that certain of its citizens serve in the armed forces. A levy is often referred to as "conscription." Most governments in the Iron Empires do not maintain citizen levies, instead relying on a professional military, noble peerage or religious orders. Citizen Levies are often poorly trained and ill-disciplined, but it is possible to forge them into an effective fighting force.

A Levy is available to any government type.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	1	2		1	3	2

### Lords-Pilot

*Lord-Pilot* is a noble rank that grants the bearer the right to captain hammer spacecraft or wear iron. Being a lord-pilot makes one a member of the Pilotry. These are the noble warriors of the Iron Empires— the elite soldiers and commanders of the armed forces. In most cultures, one cannot advance far in rank without first being inducted into the Pilotry.



Lords-Pilot specialize their training based on the history of their lineage and their own reputation. They are either *hammer*—piloting starships—or *anvil*—piloting iron.

A military rooted in the lords-pilot indicates that this world is run by a feudal overlord, called the Forged Lord, who controls both the hammer and the anvil. Underneath him are multiple Anvil and Hammer Lords who make up a patchwork quilt of the armies and navies. The Forged Lord typically owns the majority of the planet and grants portions of it to the Hammer and Anvil Lords in trade for their vassalage. The lords-pilot are the lesser nobility who serve as vassals and soldiers for the Hammer and Anvil Lords.

Most worlds of the Iron Empires rely on the nobility to supply their armed forces. In fact, the right to bear arms is generally only granted to those noble born or those who can afford to buy rank. A military force consisting only of lords-pilot indicates this world operates on those traditional lines. The soldiers are noble born or common men elevated by deeds of valor (or money). Infantry forces are typically extensive, with companies of iron-bearing lords-pilot leading battalions of anvil-trained soldiers. Naval operations are equally elaborate, with the lords-pilot vying for status via luxurious and ornately designed ships, which are often less effective than their professional counterparts.

## Requirements

Lords-Pilot may only be taken if the world is a Noble Fief, Imperial Stewardship or contains a powerful Royalist or Rebel Line faction.

## Lifepath Setting Options

Lords-Pilot grants access to the Nobility, Hammer and Anvil settings.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	3	2		2	1	3



## Professional Volunteer Force

A Professional Volunteer Force indicates the military body accepts recruits from the general population, regardless of rank, privilege or religion. It trains these recruits according to military tradition and doctrine to become soldiers, specialists and officers. This type of military can represent state-run armed forces or a well-funded mercenary outfit. Historically, the Professional Volunteer Force has proven the most effective and reliable form of military.



If chosen by the Commune, its soldiers are represented by the Volunteer Soldier and Professional Officer lifepaths, but these may be supplemented by lifepaths from the Hammer and Anvil sub-settings. However, Communist professional forces may not use the Cæptir or Lord-Pilot lifepaths.

If chosen by the Merchant League, use the Anvil and Hammer settings—without Cæptir or Lord-Pilot—to represent a mercenary force at the disposal of the governing council. The Freebooter lifepath in the Outcast and Criminal setting also makes a nice mercenary.



If chosen by the Nobility or Bureaucracy, this choice represents a powerful mercenary contingent—paid for by the nobles. Use the Anvil and Hammer settings to represent it.

#### Restrictions

The Professional Volunteer Force may *not* be chosen if the predominant form of government is a Theocracy, nor may it be run by Theocratic Institutions or Cult Churches.

#### Lifepath Setting Options

The Professional Volunteer Force makes Hammer and Anvil native to the world.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	3	1		2	2	2

## Religious Orders

The Mundus Humanitas and its myriad successors maintain their own private, religious fighting forces called *sodalities*. These men and women are volunteers who study religion and warfare under the tutelage of the church. These forces are led by a Cotar Fomas, a lord-pilot enticed into service with the church.

Religious Orders can be as extensive as any professional or noble fighting force. The body of their soldiers are Sodalis, Sodalis-Pilot, Sodalis-Brothers and Sodalis-Captains. The chief officer is the Cotar Fomas, who ranks over any other fighting member of the church. Additional ranks are filled out with attached and adjunct hammer and anvil forces—units on permanent loan from sympathetic and faithful noble lords (these settings are not made native via this choice, though).



## Restrictions

Religious Orders are only available if the government is a Theocracy, or the Theocratic Institutions and Cult Churches factions are chosen.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	3	1		1	1	4

## Planetary Attitude Toward Vaylen

Every planet has a general attitude toward the Vaylen threat—even if they've never heard of them. Is your world Educated or Informed, gripped with Hysterical Fear, Ignorant, Indifferent, Paranoid or do they have Personal Experience?

The planetary attitude becomes a character trait that is required for all characters born into a native setting.

Planetary attitude also sets Propaganda and Journalism skill obstacles, which are described in the respective skill listings.

### Educated or Informed

The government of this planet has taken great expense and effort to inform its populace about the nature and danger of the Vaylen threat. Educated worlds are rare, but they do exist. While these people have never experienced the terror themselves, the differences between field hulls, spinal hulls and ocular implants have been stressed in propaganda.



Most governments are wrapped up in the wars that have been raging for generations. The Vaylen are bogeymen. No one's ever seen one and no one knows anyone that's seen one. They are something that you scare your children with. They are not a matter of policy, and certainly not worth wasting any budgetary funds on.



The Outworlds and Void worlds know differently. They know the threat is real. They've either beaten off the terror, or traded with worlds that have fallen to or driven off the terror. For worlds that can afford it, education is of primary import.

## Restrictions

Educated or Informed is only available to Outworlds and Void Worlds.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	2		5	5	5



## Hysterical Fear

Hysterical fear is a dual-edged blade. On one hand, it strengthens the human disposition against incursion—because anything that remotely resembles Vaylen is hunted and destroyed. On the other, the attitude is so full of ignorant assumptions that the Vaylen have plenty of room to maneuver. Hysterical fear involves discrimination, bigotry and suspicion toward anything that is foreign to the world. Planets under the sway of hysterical fear are the first to give up their liberties and succumb to xenophobia, witch hunts and show trials. Hysterical fear is used by cynical governments as a form of political maneuvering, masking its own designs on matters with little to do with the Vaylen. All too often, the power brokers behind the hysterical fear are themselves Vaylen.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	4	4	4		3	3	3



World  
Burner

## Ignorant

This unfortunate world has either never heard of the Vaylen threat or completely misunderstands the true nature of what the alien threat is. Such ignorance is an open invitation to the Vaylen.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	6	6	6		0	0	0

## Indifferent

An indifferent world believes it is immune to the dangers of the Vaylen. Sure, you've heard about the alien invaders, but they're halfway across the galaxy. Nothing like that could ever happen here. Besides, there are much more pressing matters to deal with right now. Most of the worlds of the Iron Empires are sadly indifferent.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	5	5	5		2	2	2

## Paranoid

Paranoia engulfs this world. It's not a government policy; it's a part of the people's character. They are naturally suspicious, saturnine and skeptical. Even so, their attitude reaches into the realm of mania, so their actions tend to be elaborate, bizarre and not entirely effective at stopping the Vaylen threat.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	3	3		4	4	4

## Personal Experience

There are some worlds on the southern fringes of the Karsan League, Gonzagin and Darikahn empires that have successfully fought off Vaylen incursions and remember the lessons learned. These are battle-scarred worlds, full of dire veterans and stern warnings. In order to protect themselves and preserve their best defense—their knowledge—these worlds often cut themselves off from the politics of the inner empires.

### Requirements

Personal Experience is only available to Outworlds or Void Worlds.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	1	1		6	6	6

## Primary Export or Industry

Trade and industry are, quite simply, vectors for infection: vectors to infect this world and vectors by which other worlds may be infected.



If the Vaylen can usurp control of a planet that exports cheap labor to other systems in the quadrant, they have a ready-made path to spread their infection. If the Vaylen can usurp control of a world that manufactures military capital, they know they can spread their infection by force if necessary. Therefore, while the prime function of this choice is to build setting and color, it also focuses the conflict. The planet's industry is one of the means by which the Vaylen will attempt to gain entry.





Most planets will not be monolithic in nature in regard to industry. They'll have a mix of the following categories that will support their local economy. However, all planets have one particular facet at which they excel. What does your planet specialize in: Agriculture, Industrial Capital, Military Capital, Raw Materials, Refined Goods, Services, Skilled Labor or Unskilled Labor?

## Agriculture

This planet's main economy has either never moved past the agricultural phase—grain farming and livestock, common to Noble Fiefs—or it is used exclusively as an agri-world by a nearby system. Merchant Leagues occasionally maintain worlds dedicated to industrialized farming and export the surplus to neighboring worlds and systems.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	4	1	1		1	3	2

World  
Burner

## Industrial Capital

Planets that specialize in the manufacture of industrial capital output heavy machinery: factory robots, construction vehicles, spacefaring vessels and civilian vehicles.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	2		1	2	3

## Military Capital

The Military Capital industry indicates this world has the capability to output military-grade heavy machinery, primarily hammer spacecraft and military-grade space stations. In addition to these tremendous projects, smaller military vehicles and weapons are manufactured on these worlds as well: artillery, assault shuttles, attack sleds and other fighting vehicles.

Military Capital does not necessarily include the construction of small arms, armor or iron. Small arms and armor are considered refined goods. Iron is simply not mass-produced. It is manufactured by artificers and their assistants working under the patronage of a noble lord.



## Restrictions

In order to choose Military Capital as the primary export, the world must be low or high index. Of course, any index of technology can and will produce its own military capital—warships and war machines—but the Vaylen forces are far enough up the tech index that sub and zero index technologies are simply no match for them and provide no bonus to the world's disposition.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	3	1		0	1	5

## Raw Materials

This world possesses some unique quality or abundance of natural resources like minerals, ores, fossil fuels, animal matter or lumber. The rulers of this world exploit the resource, harvesting it and shipping it off-world to be processed into goods and materials.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	2	3		1	3	2

## Refined Goods

This planet is one of factories in which raw materials are taken and made into a variety of consumer-grade goods: electronics, clothing, furniture, appliances and luxury goods, for example.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	3	2		2	2	2

## Services or Skilled Labor

This world provides some service or maintains some specialist trade that is in such high demand that other worlds contract for the service. Services and Skilled Labor can stand for craftsmen, financiers, trainers, instructors or something else similar and suitable to the world. The players should decide what service their world specializes in before play begins.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	3	0		2	2	2

## Unskilled Labor

This world has an excess of manpower, and it exports those bodies to neighboring worlds for use in the service industries, factories or labor camps.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	1	2		1	2	3

## Level of Quarantine

Quarantine reflects how tight planetary transportation security is surrounding the shipment and importation of livestock, foodstuffs and tourism. Quarantine is typically developed to shield indigenous life-forms and peoples from foreign diseases. Such measures often have the side effect of thwarting certain Vaylen vectors. However, Vaylen infections can be very difficult for a quarantine to detect. Therefore, only the most technologically advanced and stringently applied procedures have an effect on curtailing Vaylen incursions.



What's more, the level of quarantine speaks volumes about how the very power structure of the planet will react to the Vaylen threat. Often, attitude and quarantine are tightly bound. Yet it is possible to have worlds ignorant of the Vaylen, but whose ruling bodies still impose a strict quarantine for other reasons—religious or military being the most common.

Quarantine has the side effect of affecting the player's Resources obstacles on this world. The more strict the level of quarantine, the higher obstacle certain Resources tests will be. If players want to explore a developing world where goods are cheap and abundant, they should consider keeping their quarantine minimal. But if the players want to be a part of a highly developed and strictly controlled world—one suited for holding off the Vaylen Infiltration—they should turn up the quarantine levels. See the Quarantine section of the Resources chapter for more on the obstacle modifiers.

Does your world have No Quarantine, a Standard Quarantine, an Advanced Quarantine or a Strict Quarantine?





## No Quarantine

This choice is typical of Lawless/Anarchic states. There is no restriction placed on the transportation of livestock and travelers.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	4	4	4		0	0	0

## Standard Quarantine

The basic quarantine involves holding livestock and pets at certain travel hubs and assessing their health for a short period of time. Immunization is required for travelers journeying off-world or to exotic locales on-planet. Sick travelers may be detained by health services, but it is rare and unlikely.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	3	3		2	2	2

## Advanced Quarantine

Advanced Quarantine comprises secure, planet-side spaceports in which all passengers, livestock and pets are screened and treated for foreign disease. This procedure is exhaustive and expensive, but it does not specifically look for Vaylen. Detection of any Vaylen-infected life-forms would be incidental via their point of hulling. It does protect adequately against the direct importation of Naiven, however!

### Requirements

Advanced Quarantine requires a low or high tech index.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	2	2	2		3	3	3

## Strict Quarantine

Strict Quarantine is similar to Advanced Quarantine, but focuses on the internal functions and medical history of the travelers and livestock. Strict Quarantine thoroughly scans all life-forms for disease, foreign matter, parasites or modification. This kind of scan will literally show the Naiven huddled in the skull.

### Restrictions

A Strict Quarantine typically utilizes secure orbital space stations. The world must be high tech index.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	1	1		4	4	4

## Typical Quarantined Items

After deciding your level of quarantine, choose which of these items and animals are quarantined on your world (feel free to add or embellish): fresh fruit and food, livestock, pets, tourists/travelers, off-world labor, medical machinery/instruments or cryonic machinery. For Standard Quarantine, choose a few items under quarantine. For Advanced Quarantine, choose two or three items that are *not* quarantined—everything else is. For Strict Quarantine, choose one that is *not* quarantined.

## Level of Economic Regulation

Regulation indicates how much governmental control exists for the sale or manufacture of certain goods and services. Determining your world's level of economic regulation is vital to deciding its fate in the war against the Vaylen. Conflicts surrounding embargoes, tariffs, industrial and economic espionage and sabotage are utilized by the enemy to get a foothold on your world.



Regulation acts as the first front in those battles.



The Vaylen utilize strategic economic warfare in all of their aims. There are certain types of goods and services that make the Vaylen infiltration easier. But once they have infiltrated, the Vaylen don't merely sabotage and cripple an economy. They take it over from within. Administrators and regulatory officials are made Vaylen. This in turn allows more of their sleepers and spies to infect the planet and prepare it for the ultimate invasion.

In play, regulation adds a lot of color and conflict to the game. Choosing regulated goods shapes the Resources obstacles for the planet. And choosing your level of regulation determines what type of black market and criminal underworld trades on your world.

Consider how the economic regulations affect relationships between government, commerce and crime. The Vaylen often thrive in the cracks between these relationships.

Is the economy of your world Unregulated, Loosely Regulated, Moderately Regulated or Tightly Regulated?

## Unregulated (0)

In an Unregulated economy, the scope and power of the government in economic matters is negligible.

### *Red Tape*

Obstacles for Administration, Bureaucracy and Finance skills are 1 in Unregulated economies.

Another side effect of having complete free trade is the lack of a substantial black market. Since all goods are available to any prospective buyer without restriction, there's little need for criminals and black marketeers to offer them.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	3	0	3		1	3	2

## Loosely Regulated (1)

In a Loosely Regulated economy, the government institutes and enforces certain laws that curtail or restrict the sale of certain goods. This regulation has the simultaneous effect of raising the price of those goods on the legal market and fostering a small black market that makes those goods available cheaply or provides goods otherwise unavailable.

### *Regulated Goods and Services*

If you choose a Loosely Regulated economy, pick one item from the Regulated Goods and Services list that is restricted and unavailable under the primary government's laws, and a few others that fall under tariffs or high taxes.

### *Red Tape*

Administration, Finance and Bureaucracy skill tests are Ob 2 in Loosely Regulated economies.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	1	3		2	2	2

## Moderately Regulated (2)

Most Merchant Leagues and Communes are Moderately Regulated economies. They monitor, tax and restrict the flow of certain goods and services within their domain to protect their own economic interests.





Moderate regulation usually gives birth to a sizeable black market, typically supported by pockets of organized criminal elements. Another interesting side effect of this level of regulation is occasional shortages of product due to market chokepoints. Natural disasters, wars and bank runs can trigger these types of shortages.

***Regulated Goods and Services***

Choose one or two items from the Regulated Goods and Services list that are unavailable under the primary government and a handful of others that are taxed or otherwise regulated.

***Red Tape***

Administration, Bureaucracy and Finance skill obstacles are 3 in Moderately Regulated economies due to the red tape that must be navigated.

***Restrictions***

Lawless/Anarchic worlds may not be Moderately Regulated.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	0	4	2		3	2	1



**Tightly Regulated (3)**

Tightly Regulated economies are typically found in either aged, potent bureaucracies, in police states or under religious guise. Items thought of as commonplace or street legal in other economies are strictly regulated here. Regulations are even imposed on people's private lives.

Tightly Regulated economies give birth to a high-stakes black market—black market goods are usually available, but quite expensive, because the legal penalties for smuggling are severe. Additionally, the black market thrives in the pockets left open by the frequent shortages of supply in these types of economies. Since the market is not free to

use its power to acquire capital and goods, consumers are often left wanting as bureaucrats maneuver and negotiate in order to satisfy the regulatory bodies.

## *Regulated Goods and Services*

Choose two items from the Regulated Goods and Services list that are simply unavailable on your planet. Everything else on the list (plus anything the players would like to add) is heavily regulated and taxed.

## *Red Tape*

Administration, Finance and Bureaucracy skill obstacles are 4 in Tightly Regulated economies..

## *Restrictions*

Lawless/Anarchic worlds may not be Tightly Regulated.

Vaylen Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv	Human Disposition	Infil	Usurp	Inv
	1	5	0		4	1	1

## Regulation Codes

The number listed with each regulation category corresponds to the following Regulated Goods and Services list.

Category 1 comprises big ticket items or services that are regulated on most worlds in the Iron Empires. Category 2 comprises tariffs and trade agreements, usually designed to restrict the sale of goods on-planet that would adversely affect the local economy. Category 3 regulation usually entails religious or ideological reasoning and methodology, having little to do with actual trade.

Regulation might seem like a good idea to defend your world from incursion, and it is. But it also wreaks havoc on Resources obstacles. See the Resources chapter for details.

After determining which items are simply unavailable in your economy, choose how the rest are regulated. For Tight Regulation, choose one item from the code 3 list, two items from the code 2 list and three items from the code 1 list. The world's primary export must be chosen as a regulated item. For Moderate Regulation, choose one or two items from the code 2 list and two items from the code 1 list. If the world's primary export is a code 1 or 2 item, it must be regulated. For Loose Regulation, choose a handful of items from the code 1 list. The primary export does not need to be regulated.



### *Regulated Goods and Services Codes*

Listed below are some examples of regulated goods and services and the suggested codes for each. Feel free to customize or add to this list to suit your world.

- (1) Psychology
- (1) Slavery
- (1) Military Manufacture (military weapons, vehicles)
- (1) Immigrant Labor
- (2) Power Infrastructure (electricity, gas, water)
- (2) Medical Practice/Hospitals
- (2) Pharmaceuticals
- (2) Weaponry
- (2) Livestock
- (2) Sex Trade
- (2) Recreational Drugs—alcohol, tobacco, etc.
- (3) Food Preparation
- (3) Waste Disposal
- (3) Marriage
- (3) Music

**World  
Burner**

## *Figures of Note*

Who are the leaders, the key figures, the dark horses, the power players, the chosen ones who will be vital to this conflict? Who is at the center of this maelstrom? These are the “figures of note” on your world. These characters enhance your side’s disposition against the enemy and vice versa.

Brainstorm some possible characters who are important to this world and its struggle. Choose at least one figure of note for each side—human and Vaylen—but no more than three per side, six total.



### **Humans**

A human figure of note can be an able administrator, a genius minister, a cunning spy master, a great general, a scheming court lord, a young heir, a cult leader, etc. Any character who you want to be central to the story and who will be helpful in keeping the planet unified and resistant to the Vaylen threat can be a figure of note.





It is not important for the figures of note to understand the Vaylen threat or even know they are fighting a war for survival. These characters need only be acting in the best interest of the planet.

*Trevor Faith—a veteran Cotar Fomas exiled to the edge of the Void due to his unflinching, unyielding nature.*

*Baroness Ahmi Sheva—an aging baroness, captain and psychologist who rules a backwater world that she feels is beneath her.*

*Hardi—an idealistic young farmer willing to stand up and make a difference in the fight against the Vaylen, no matter the cost.*

## Vaylen

A Vaylen figure of note can be a powerful turncoat, a rebellious lord, a well-placed sympathizer, a scheming executive, a spy, a brilliant clan leader, etc. These characters do not have to be Vaylen themselves. They do not have to be hulled or carry the worm. Nor do they even have to be aware that they are working for the other side. *In fact, any character who acts in opposition to the human side's aims is aiding and abetting the Vaylen.* Any internal power struggle creates room for the Vaylen to maneuver. Therefore, it is more common for worlds to have only one or two actual Vaylen to start. These masterminds then use others as their unwitting pawns in the game.

*Commander Tarrak Fike—an ambitious Vaylen sleeper and cult leader who has managed to climb to the top of his cult's military. He sits poised to overthrow the ruling powers and insert himself as leader.*

*Philippe d'Artois, Count of Karshun—An aging psychologist war hero who sees his power and influence slipping away from him. He's willing to strike an alliance with the Vaylen in order to gain ultimate power over all who oppose him.*

*Rhiannon—a Vaylen clan leader possessed of the secrets of archives lost to the Void. She comes willing to trade those secrets to one who would betray his world and hand it over to the worm.*



## Who Are You?

Who are you in this setting? What type of character grabs your guts and begs to be played in this conflict? *Which figure of note are you going to play?* You just thought of these great character concepts, now which one are you going to jump into?

Players in Iron Empires are the protagonists in the story. They do not all have to be figures of note, but at least one must be. In a larger game, not every player will take on the role of a figure of note. However, these other characters are still central to the story and tied to the fate of the figures of note and the world itself.

### *Protagonists*

Discuss the characters you would like to play. Each player must voice his preferences loud and clear. As each character concept is announced—spy master, able administrator, fallen heir, etc.—the other players agree whether or not that concept is appropriate to the world.

### *Modify the World to Suit the Players*

If a player cannot find a concept that he's interested in that is tied to the world, go back into the World Burner and see if changes can be made to better interest him. If the world can't be changed, it is up to the player to change his character concept to fit the group's ideas for the world and conflict. Concepts that involve all non-native settings, for example, should be red-flagged. It indicates that the player might not be satisfied with the content of the world.



## Antagonists

We know who the players are, now who is their opposition? The players must discuss this. Who do they want on the *other* side. In this conflict, the opposition (the side you're not on) is made up of your lifelong companions, your husbands, wives, sons, daughters, lovers, mentors, captains, liege-lords and friends. They are all of these things, and they are the enemy. Their loyalties or their personalities have led them down a separate path. Even if they don't realize it, they're on the other side. Describe the concepts for these characters. For example: a brutal governor, a Vaylen infiltrator, a well-meaning but wrong-headed noble, etc. These characters will be turned over to the GM and used to oppose the players.

Each player character must have a *relationship* with a character on the other side. Relationships are discussed in Step 8. Circles of the Character Burner.

## Featured Figures of Note

Each figure of note must be associated with a phase. This part of the story is where the figure of note is most prominent. The group can decide which figures of note go where. Only one figure of note may be featured per phase per side—a maximum of two figures of note, one for the Vaylen, one for the humans.

When starting a phase, the featured figure of note adds to the disposition of his side. Figures of note, phases and disposition are all discussed in detail in the Vaylen Infection chapter.

## Name Your World

The side who comes up with a name for the world that the majority of the group likes gains a +1s to their disposition for one phase—Infiltration, Usurpation or Invasion—in which they are at a deficit.

*Taramai, Hotok, Mosum, Morelia, Agra, Omac, Baldon, Endovo, Novi Grozny, Meno XI, Solace, Otos, Ozur, Imacet Prime, Ogun, Xu.*





## Phase of Infection

The fate of this world the players just designed will be played out in an arc that we call an Infection—from the infiltration of the Vaylen all the way to the final conflict to decide if the Vaylen can overthrow the world's government and invade.

The players choose the phase of Infection they want to play out for this world. They can start in the beginning with the Infiltration, jump to the end with the Invasion or play out the Cold War-esque spy games in the usurpation.

If they start with Infiltration, the group can continue the story into the usurpation and invasion phases. If they start with usurpation, they can follow up with the invasion phase. But if they start with invasion, then they're playing out the final struggle for this world!

### **Infiltration**

In the infiltration phase, the Vaylen attempt to set up a base of operations on the planet. This stage involves them scouting viable locations, importing Naiven, producing genetic material for Shudren and building, importing and stealing medical equipment so that they may start hulling and the usurpation process can begin.

### **Usurpation**

In the usurpation phase, the Vaylen have already established supply lines to the planet and on the planet. Their presence on the planet is not at issue. Rather, now they begin the process of co-opting key public, military, church and imperial figures. The goal of this stage is to get all key personnel under Vaylen control the full invasion can begin unhindered. To this end, individuals are kidnapped/disappeared, power balances shift and seemingly innocuous phenomena spring up on the planet—religious cults, health crazes, drastic changes in fashion/style and increased use of recreational drugs—as key Vaylen figures attempt to mask their activities and soften the populace for the full invasion.

### **Invasion**

There are two types of Vaylen invasion. The first is rare but by far the most frightening. If the usurpation of the planet's key figures was successful, the governing bodies simply open the gates to the Vaylen. Ships with cargo holds full of Naiven land peacefully and openly. The population is rounded up and hulled. Few escape, because so few know what's really happening at this point.

The second type of invasion is more traditional. If the usurpation failed, or was only marginally successful, the Vaylen will launch a full-on military invasion of the planet. This type of invasion involves activating Vaylen guerillas inserted in the infiltration phase, as well as utilizing hammer assets and ground assault infantry. While potent and well-organized, the Vaylen navies are overmatched by their imperial counterparts. Therefore, the Vaylen strike quickly at outlying worlds and attempt to take them before naval reinforcements can arrive. It is difficult for an Imperial hammer commander to issue the order to bombard a world that is ostensibly a friendly human population.

### **Appropriate Skills by Phase**

When building a character, it's important think about how the character will operate in the big picture: the Infection mechanics. The following lists describe vital skills and the phase in which they are useful. It's unlikely that one character is going to have all of the skills necessary, but be sure to take at least one or two for your character. Discuss where you want to focus your character so that as a whole, the group covers a lot of ground.

#### ***Infiltration Phase Skills***

Accounting, Administration, Bureaucracy, Command, Counterfeiting, Cryptography, Doctrine, Estate Management, Eugenics, Extortion, Falsehood, Food Services, Forgery, Investigative Logic, Journalism, Law, Manufacture, Observation, Oratory, Persuasion, Philosophy, Physics, Psychology, Research, Security, Security Rigging, Ship Management, Signals, Smuggling, Streetwise, Suasion, Tactics, Ugly Truth

#### ***Usurpation Phase Skills***

Accounting, Bureaucracy, Cryptography, Doctrine, Engineering, Extortion, Finance, Investigative Logic, Journalism, Law, Manufacture, Philosophy, Propaganda, Psychology, Recon, Security, Seduction, Signals, Smuggling, Surgery, Tactics

#### ***Invasion Phase Skills***

Cryptography, Finance, Fortifications, Fusion Dynamics, Journalism, Logistics, Manufacture, Propaganda, Psychohistory, Shipwright, Signals, Strategy, Tactics

## SETTING Accomplished

By answering the World Burner questions with your group, you've built the skeleton for your setting and determined what the overarching conflict for it will be. Gritty details get fleshed out as you burn up characters and populate your world.

At this point you should, based on the discussion surrounding the figures of note, have a concept for your character. The Character Burner is going to further shape and refine that idea.



World burning should take about two to two and a half hours: the first half of the first session. The second half of the first session is devoted to character burning. Get a move on!




## SITUATION



As you move on to the next step, Character Burning, start talking about your world in detail. Talk about the people in the factions, government and military. What are they doing? What do they want? You've built a world: You have a government and factions at odds with each other; there are choking regulations and draconian quarantines. You've got great generals and insidious spies. The final spark you need to set the whole pile alight is the *situation*. One idea, one goal, for each character that will create conflict with another character. It's easiest to toss this burden on the villain's shoulders: What is that Vaylen spy trying to accomplish? What is so valuable on this planet? Who has he targeted for hulling? And those things of value, those targets? These are the things you hold dear: *These are your character's*







property, technology and relationships. Stealing them, subverting them and destroying them is the first order of business in the story. That's right: The first session (and every one after) is about getting into the players' business!

## **You Are All in the Same Situation**

The player characters are all protagonists in this piece of shared fiction. Briefly discuss how they all know each other and how they will intersect at the beginning of the coming story. They don't have to be siblings or best friends, but sharing common goals is imperative. Otherwise, the other side is going to eat them for lunch.

Now stop fooling around and hit the Character Burner so we can play!

## **World Burning Example**

*Luke, Thor, Alexander, Chris and Mayuran want to play a Burning Empires game. Luke's going to GM. During World Burning, Luke reads through the options and descriptions for the various categories.*

*Luke: OK, let's burn your world. Galactic Location: Imperial Core, Interior, Outworld or Void World?*

*Chris: Void.*

*Mayuran: Void.*

*Alexander: Void.*

*Thor: Void.*

*Luke: That was easy. Were you previously part of one of the empires? Maybe Darikahn, Gonzagin or Karsan League?*

*Mayuran: I'd like to play a psychologist, so I'd prefer the Karsan League.*

*All: Sounds good. Sure.*

*Luke: Atmospheric Conditions: Non-Life-Supporting, Alien-Life-Supporting, Partial Life-Supporting or Human-Life-Supporting?*

*Chris: Human.*

*Mayuran: I'd like Human-Life-Supporting.*

*Alexander: Why?*

*Mayuran: Because the atmosphere doesn't matter so much to me.*

*Thor: Fair enough. I'd like a desert world. Human-Life-Supporting fits that fine.*

*Luke: Sounds good. That means you're after Predominantly Land Hydrology, Thor?*

*Thor: Actually, no. I want something like the Persian Gulf: Crystal blue oceans bordered by searing desert.*

*Chris: I'd prefer Predominantly Liquid, too. It gives the Vaylen an advantage.*

*Luke: Mayuran, Alexander?*

*Mayuran: That sounds great.*

*Alexander: Good.*

*Luke: OK, how about Topography: Tame, Rugged or Artificial?*

*Chris: Rugged.*

*Thor: Why?*

*Chris: Because it gives the Vaylen an edge.*

*Mayuran: Rugged's good. What about a world without supercontinents? Civilization exists on smaller continents the size of Madagascar?*

*Alexander: Why give the Vaylen an edge?*

*Thor: Makes it more interesting to play the humans if there's a real threat of losing big.*

*Alexander: Hm. OK, I'm fine with Rugged.*

*Luke: OK, the basics: A former Karsan Void World, Human-Life-Supporting, Predominantly Liquid and Rugged Terrain. How about the Tech Index? Sub, Zero, Low or High?*

*Alexander: High!*

*Chris: Sub.*

*Mayuran: Sub.*

*Thor: Why do you want High Index, Alexander?*

*Alexander: It's not a matter of want. It is need. We must have tech prOn: spaceships, gigantic space stations and planet-busting mass drivers. And I want to play a hotshot pilot.*

*Luke: Well?*

*Mayuran: Fine, let him have it.*

*Thor, Chris: OK.*

*Luke: What do you want to eliminate from the Tech Index?*

*Alexander: Force fields, they're lame.*

*All: Agreed. Sure. Fine.*





*Luke: Primary Form of Government: Civilian Commune, Imperial Stewardship, Lawless/Anarchic, Merchant League, Military Dictatorship, or Noble Fief?*

*Thor: I don't know. I suppose, to follow the Bahraini theme, we could do Merchant League, Dictatorship or Noble Fief.*

*Mayuran: Noble Fief, definitely. Merchant Leagues are boring. Alexander can play a Hammer Lord. I want to play a psychologist prince.*

*Chris: I wanted a Merchant League, but Noble Fief is fine. I'll take a Merchant League faction.*

*Alexander: What's a Hammer Lord?*

*Thor: They are the nobles who control the space fleets.*

*Alexander: Excellent. Sounds fine.*

*Luke: So a Noble Fief full of rivalries and intrigue?*

*Thor: Looks like it.*

*Mayuran: Yes.*

*Luke: Fine. Now for the fun stuff. Are there factions on your world?*

*All: Of course! Yes!*

*Luke: OK, what do you want? Alexander?*

*Alexander: Organized Crime. I want my brother to be a smuggler.*

*Thor: Theocratic Institutions. I want the church to be a powerful presence on the world, but not dominant.*

*Mayuran: Psychologist Foundation! They are open about their presence and they are a holdover from the past. They are a remnant of the High Index world.*

*Chris: Merchant League.*

*Luke: What does the Merchant League do?*

*Chris: They control the production of much of the High Index tech. They're wealthy and liberal, but not too powerful.*

*Luke: OK. We also have to take Slaves and Serfs, since we're a Noble Fief. Excellent. What type of military does this world support? You can have any of the choices: Levy, Professional, Lords-Pilot or Religious Orders.*

*Alexander: Professional! With a huge navy.*

*Chris: Professional's nice.*

*Mayuran: Professional.*

*Luke:* Boo! Come on! Professional? Why the hell would your Bahraini, High Index isolated Noble Fief have a Professional Volunteer Force? Come on. That's boring.

*Alexander:* What's Lords-Pilot?

*Chris:* The nobility.

*Thor:* Knights, squires, pages, that sort of thing.

*Mayuran:* Let's go with that then.

*Alexander:* I'm fine with it either way, so long as I get a big ship.

*Luke:* Excellent, Lords-Pilot. What's your Planetary Attitude to the Vaylen? Indifferent, Ignorant, Educated, Personal Experience, Hysterical Fear or Paranoid?

*Thor:* We're a Void World, right? So we must know about the Vaylen. We've been cut off for who knows how long. I want a world where personal physical contact is verboten. The measures against the Vaylen have distorted and permeated the social culture. Touching is taboo.

*Mayuran:* That's hot.

*Alexander:* So, Hysterical Fear?

*Chris:* Nah, Paranoid.

*Thor:* Yes, Paranoid.

*Mayuran:* Excellent.

*Luke:* Paranoid it is. Nice, the cultural atmosphere will reflect the topography— isolated desert islands full of wondrous secrets and wealth. Now, what shall this wondrous and strange jewel of a world produce as its major industry? Agriculture, Industrial Capital, Military Capital, Raw Materials, Refined Goods, Services or Unskilled Labor? Come on, Unskilled Labor!

*Alexander:* High Index Military Capital.

*Thor:* Military Capital.

*Chris:* Military Capital.

*Mayuran:* Military Capital.

*Luke:* What? Why? It makes no sense! You're a Void World. You would never have been left alone if you had major military assets like shipyards.

*Alexander:* That's right. We fought off the invasions.

*Thor:* Everyone else around us fell. We are the last remaining survivor, isolated in the Void.



*Luke: What do you produce?*

*Alexander: Gigantic hammer-class warships, of course.*

*Luke: Ugh. Fine. Military Capital. What's next? Quarantine: None, Standard, Advanced or Strict?*

*Alexander: Strict.*

*Luke: Stop it! Choosing all the best stuff isn't going to make it any more fun.*

*Alexander: Look, there's no way this High Index Paranoid world that fought off the Vaylen is going to have lax quarantine.*

*Thor: Luke's right.*

*Chris: I'm fine with Standard Quarantine.*

*Mayuran: How about Advanced?*

*Alexander: I'll go down to Advanced, but no lower.*

*Thor: Advanced it is.*

*Luke: What items are quarantined?*

*Mayuran: Well, let's make this interesting. How about all the standard stuff: food, people, pets, etc., but not medical tech or Cryonics? The world is so confident in their high index tech and their military might, they've forgotten something obvious.*

*Chris: OK.*

*Thor, Alexander: Sounds good.*

*Luke: How about Regulation? None, Loose, Moderate or Tight?*

*Alexander: Tight.*

*Luke: Come on.*

*Chris: Sure, we can do Tight. We'll divvy up the regulation between the church and the nobility.*

*Thor: Excellent. What does the church control?*

*Mayuran: How about the church controls the shipyards, the power infrastructure and the medical stuff. They're responsible for the quarantine, too.*

*Alexander: So what does that leave for the nobility?*

*Thor: It's kind of interesting. That means they regulate the psychologists, livestock, food production, marriage and of course their serfs. I like it. It's a nice twist.*

*Alexander: So what's unregulated?*



*Mayuran:* Recreational drugs, waste disposal, music and pharmaceuticals. I don't get the drugs. Why are they unregulated? On a Paranoid world like this with all this regulation I feel like they would be controlled.

*Chris:* No. Think about it. There's such tight control at the top—military, medical, power, all that stuff—and there's this taboo about physical contact, the only way people could open up to each other is via a drug induced euphoria. Drugs are the only way people can touch.

*Mayuran:* But wouldn't that make them even more tightly regulated?

*Luke:* Not necessarily. Marriage is regulated by the nobility, but maybe everything before marriage is fair game. Once you get married you get tested and enter this rigid, orthodox society.

*Mayuran:* I don't know.

*Luke:* Look at it this way. Do you want conflicts surrounding recreational drugs and pharmaceuticals?

*Mayuran:* Not really, no.

*Luke:* Then don't regulate them. If you regulate them, you're giving me cause to make an issue out of them.

*Mayuran:* Good point. Let's move on.

*Luke:* OK, so you've got your regulations in place. I like that there are heavy economic regulations on the cryonics and medical stuff but a lack of quarantine. I'm going to use that. Now, who are the important people on this world? Who are the powerful figures? Who do you want to play on a world like this?

*Mayuran:* A psychologist. A noble son who has the Bright Mark and is working for the Foundation. But I don't want him to be a figure of note. I want his father to be. His father is a moderate prince.

*Alexander:* I want to play the hotshot pilot.

*Luke:* You want to just fly spaceships around? How about we play X-Wing instead?

*Thor:* He's telling you to push it. Make your character more than a pilot.

*Alexander:* Fine. What's this Hammer Lord thing again? Can I have a fleet?

*Luke:* Sure!

*Alexander:* Fine, I'm a hotshot Hammer Lord who's risen from the ranks to attain her command. I'll bet the nobility hates me.



*Luke: Yes! In fact, the Forged Lord has declined to give you command of certain parts of the fleet after the recent death of another Hammer Lord. Elements of the fleet which should be yours! Hm. I guess the Forged Lord should be a figure of note, then. He's on the Vaylen side because he's opposing Alexander's character.*

*Thor: I want to play a Cardinal Richelieu-type character. I want to be the power behind the throne—the Forged Lord's advisor. I want him to appear a dandy, but really be a kick ass Anvil Lord. I'll be a figure of note.*

*Chris: That's fine, I don't want to be a figure of note. I want to be a security rigger/fabricator who's working for the other side.*

*Luke: Huh. Interesting. You know this isn't a good game to play techies in?*

*Chris: I think if I tie myself to both sides, I could prove very useful.*

*Luke: Only if you promise not to sit in your lab building shit for the whole time we play. Only if you promise you'll be proactive.*

*Chris: I want to try it.*

*Luke: Well, that leaves me two figures of note. Hrm. We need some opposition. Let's see, we have the Mundus Humanitas and a Psychologist Foundation. How about an Inquisitor? How about if, just as the Forged Lord returns from a journey to mourn the death of his long-time friend, the Inquisition is summoned to the Mundus temple. Something funny's going on and someone's going to burn on the wheel. The High Inquisitor is, of course, a psychologist.*

*Mayuran: Great! I want him to be my father-in-law. I married his daughter, but she has since died. Committed suicide. Obviously, we hate each other because of this.*

*Thor: If the Archcotare is under threat, I want to be tied to him. He and my character went to seminary together. I'm going to save him from the Inquisition.*

*Chris: I work for the Inquisition. In fact, I'm on the secret payroll of the High Inquisitor.*

*Luke: Damn! OK, I'm cool with that so long as you're willing to at least allow everyone to try to turn you to their side—to the human side.*

*Chris: Of course!*

*Luke: Awesome. Now a third figure for the Vaylen. I know. How about an honest to God Vaylen? How about a Makara—one of those crazy jellyfish things? I know! I know! The Forged Lord met the Makara on his journey*

*and, thinking that Vaylen are human, failed to see the obvious. Now it's an "Emperor Wears No Clothes" scenario. He's brought this monster back to your world claiming he's made first contact with an intelligent friendly species, but everyone thinks he's insane.*

*Alexander: Yes! I'm going to make my Hammer Lord a xenophobe. She's disgusted by the thing and wants to destroy it.*

*Luke: Destroying the Forged Lord's new pet ought to get you into a nice bit of trouble. Excellent stuff, gentlemen! Let's get to character burning.*

### Agra

**Galactic Location:** Void World

**Atmosphere:** Human-Life-Supporting

**Hydrology:** Predominantly Liquid

**Topography:** Naturally Rugged—small continents covered with deserts, separated by crystal blue oceans.

**Primary Government:** Noble Fief

**Tech Index:** High

**Predominant Military:** Lords-Pilot

**Factions:** Merchant League, Organized Crime, Psychologists, Theocratic Institutions and Slaves

**Attitude:** Paranoid

**Export/Industry:** Military Capital

**Quarantine:** Advanced

**Regulation:** Tight—Church controls military manufacture, hospitals and power infrastructure; Noble government controls psychology, slavery, livestock, food and marriage.

**Human Figures of Note:** Prince and able administrator, a scheming Court Lord/Anvil Lord and an ambitious and troublesome Hammer Lord.

**Vaylen Figures of Note:** An arrogant and mad Forged Lord, a zealous High Inquisitor and a Makara Eugenicist.

**Human Disposition:** Infiltration, 24. Usurpation, 21. Invasion, 30.

**Vaylen Disposition:** Infiltration, 25. Usurpation, 34. Invasion, 28.





# the CHARACTER BURNER





## ELEMENTS OF CHARACTER

Burning Empires is a gritty game. It is designed so the characters appear and feel like living, breathing creatures. They bleed, strain and sweat. They have limitations, but are often skilled and occasionally lucky.

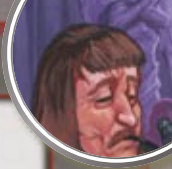


As I mentioned in *It Revolves on This*, characters are the most important part of Burning Empires. They are the players' incarnations in the game, and nothing happens in the game world that doesn't involve—or isn't connected to—a player character. Let's take a look at what comprises a character in this system: He has *stats*, *attributes* and *skills*; *Beliefs*, *Instincts* and *traits*; *relationships*, *reputations* and *affiliations*; and of course, he's got his *gear* and *technology*.

All of these elements affect how the character is played, and thus how the game is shaped by the character's actions. To help you get a feel for the system, these aspects are described in general terms in the following section. Individual uses of the abilities are described in detail in later sections. How to generate the exponents—the number next to an ability—is described in the following Character Burning chapter.







## Stats

There are six stats to describe a character's core mental and physical composition in *Burning Empires*: Will, Perception, Agility, Speed, Power and Forte.

### Will

Will is the social stat—it represents the character's strength of mind, empathy and social intelligence. It's not often rolled directly in game, but it does factor heavily into a number of skills and attributes.

### Perception

Perception is the awareness and mental acuity stat. It's rolled when searching an area or trying to spot something or someone concealed.



### Agility

Agility represents the hand-eye coordination of the character. It is tested when a character must keep hold of something, snatch something or toss an object. It is also the basis for nearly all martial skills.

### Speed

This quirky stat represents the “body control” of the character—how fast he moves and how coordinated he is overall. It's rolled in a chase and pursuit when on foot, and serves as the basis for a number of skills.

### Power

Power is the inevitable “physical strength” stat. It's rolled in game when the character has to push something over or grapple with someone. It modifies how much damage a character does in hand to hand. And it determines whether or not a character can carry heavy weapons.

### Forte

Forte (pronounced “FORT”) represents the character's physical mettle—how tough and durable he is. Forte is rolled to recover from injury and illness.



# Attributes

There are four attributes. These are abilities that don't quite fall into the stat category, and they certainly aren't skills.



## Circles

Who does the character know from his days as a cœptir? Can he call on his former gang mates for help? Such questions are answered using the Circles attribute. It's a measure of the character's social influence, and its scope is shaped by the character's life experiences.

Circles is also heavily dependent on a character's affiliations and reputations.

## Resources

Whether wealthy or destitute, every character has a Resources attribute. Its starting exponent is determined by how the player spent his character's resource points during character burning. Thereafter, it is used like a skill in game. Its function is to determine how economically and financially viable a character is.

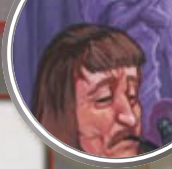
Resources is also used to determine what technology a character has access to in the game. These are not purchases, per se. Resources is used to determine what technology is within his means.

## Steel

Steel combines factors from many different stats and elements of the character's background to determine how steady a character's nerves are. Use of Steel is discussed in the Duel of Wits, Firefight and Anatomy of Injury chapters.

## Mortal Wound

Mortal Wound combines Power and Forte to set the point at which the character dies via the injury mechanics. Mortal Wound is never tested. It is just a marker.



## Skills

In Burning Empires, a skill is a specialized field of knowledge or particular technique known by the character. A skill allows a character to achieve his goals more easily than using stats. Examples of skills include: Logistics, Close Combat, Dark Shattered Underbelly-wise, Infiltration and Ugly Truth.



Characters tend to have many skills—from five to fifteen is normal. Twenty is not unheard of.

## Beliefs

A player must determine the three top priorities for his character. These are fundamental ideas important to the character. They are a combination of the outlook of the character and the goals of the player. Beliefs are always tied into the conflict built into your world.

*"Nothing matters anymore, so I might as well work for the enemy when it suits me," is an example of a Belief.*

Using Beliefs is discussed in its own chapter in this book. Creating Beliefs is described in the next chapter.



Elements  
of  
Character

## Instincts

Instincts are similar to Beliefs—they are player-chosen priorities and reactions for the character. They are based on the character's pre-game experiences and have a very tangible game-mechanical function.

An Instinct is essentially an "if/then" statement for the character's behavior: "If traveling alone, pack heat." The player is allowed to program these actions and reactions into his character. Therefore, he

can be assured that his character will react within certain parameters whether the player explicitly states it or not. Even to the point of being able to make a test when he otherwise should not.

Think of them as a hardwired reaction stemming from training and experience. Instincts have their own section in this book. Creating them is discussed in the next chapter.

### Traits

Traits are quirks and odd abilities that the character acquires through the course of his life. A player starts by purchasing traits in character burning, but they will also be earned in play.



Traits can affect a character's personality, his appearance, or even grant special abilities. Using traits is discussed in the Burning Wheel. Purchasing them is talked about in the next chapter.

### Technology

No science fiction roleplaying game is complete without *technology*. Mostly, technology is just a bit of window dressing that adds spice and detail to the setting. But there is a vast segment of the stuff that acts as a means to enhance a character's abilities—weapons, armor, sensors and vehicles, to name the big ones. These have their own sections. Everything else is lumped together in the Technology chapter. Players can evoke color and incidental bits of tech as needed using these rules.

### Psychology

A select few humans have developed potent mental abilities referred to as Psychology. While not as potent as manifestations in works like Otomo's *Akira* or Lucas' *Star Wars*, the psychologist is a powerful figure in the game. His ability to tap into and manipulate the minds of those around him is no small thing! Psychology has its own chapter toward the back of the book.









## CHARACTER BURNING

The Character Burner contains the instructions for building characters. It's a detailed process and practically a game in and of itself. Players are presented with myriad options they knit together into a shape and form that their characters manifest at the table and in the game.




Making a character in Burning Empires is not a free-form “this is what I want and this is what I get” process. Players must make decisions about what is important to them, and these choices have consequences. Opting for certain paths excludes others; more importantly, some choices scar or change the character before he even hits the table. Don't like the ramifications of your decisions? Make different ones. There's no set way to build a character type in Burning Empires, but there are consequences on each path and compromises that must be made. Moreover, the Character Burner contains the majority of the setting for this game. It describes how life works in the Iron Empires. Without a doubt, a player will have to tailor his concept to the social structure of this desperate, far-flung future.

This system is designed to make characters complex and give them the seeming weight of experience and personality. It allows characters to feel like they've lived a little before they enter the game—full of bruises, prejudices, invisible scars and little victories. It's all fuel for the fire—to drive them on to greater heights.

One benefit of this depth is that the character's backstory is built as you design him. By the time you start, your skills, traits, Beliefs and Instincts in place, present you with a product of some imagined





future—a glimpse into another time and another place—ready to spring to life and grab fate by the throat. Ready, in fact, to join forces with your imagination and power intense and enjoyable game play.

Creating a character in *Burning Empires* is divided into three overarching categories: developing a concept, choosing lifepaths and assigning up the points earned on those lifepaths. There are twelve steps to this process. Each step is crucial as we try to meld our ideas with the hard reality of the numbers on paper and produce a satisfying result. This chapter walks you through them. It's mostly just one big example.



Once you run through it a few times, you'll be an expert and be able to whip up characters in minutes. For players new to the game, the process usually takes about 45 minutes to an hour.

## *From the Day You Were Born...*

A character is built step-by-step, from birth through the tumult of life, up to the day he is inextricably drawn into the fate of the Iron Empires. This section describes the bits and pieces of the character burning process. In this system, the basic currency of character creation, or “character burning” as we like to call it, is the lifepath.

### **Lifepaths**

A lifepath (LP) is a short slice of life, usually just a handful of years. This slice of life provides skills, bestows traits, toughens a character, and can make him richer or poorer.



Ultimately, the character is the sum of his lifepaths. The total of all the experience that brought him to where he is today can be prosperous and fruitful, miserable and painful or a combination of the two. The player determines the paths his character walked before he became embroiled in the conflict on his world.

### **Setting**

In this book, lifepaths are grouped together in loose categories called settings. A setting is a segment of the character's culture that contains many related lifepaths. This relationship is often indirect; the bounds of a setting are usually political or sociological and occasionally geographical. For example, the Merchant League setting has paths reaching far into all levels of society, from wealthy ministers to lowly clerks, whereas the Spacefarer setting is confined to the crew of civilian spacecraft.



## CHARACTER BURNER



A character may choose lifepaths within the setting he was born into—until, of course, life leads him in another direction.

### *Native and Non-Native Settings*

Based on the choices made in the World Burner, the group determined which lifepath settings were native to their planet and which were not. If

a player wants his character to go from one native setting to another native setting, he must pay a one year premium, added to his final starting age.

If a player wishes his character to travel *to* a non-native setting, he must pay a two year premium each time. His character has either left his homeworld for a time to gain these experiences, or the character has not yet arrived on the world in question—perhaps he's on his own distant homeworld, or perhaps he's traveling throughout the galaxy during this part of his life.

If a player wishes to go *to* a native setting, he must pay a one year premium. Going from a non-native setting to a native one indicates the character has returned to his homeworld or the world in conflict.

Once in the new setting, he may choose lifepaths as per the normal rules.

### *Lifepath Sort Order*

In each setting, the lifepaths are ordered—first to last—from the most basic, lowly or unskilled up through the mid-ranks to the most powerful, skilled or wealthy.

## Character Stock

The Character Burner provides players with four character stocks to choose from: Human, Kerrn, Vaylen and Mukhadish.

Each character stock has a unique culture, complete with myriad settings and dozens of lifepaths. A player may never choose lifepaths outside of his character stock.

The various character stocks also grant access to particular traits, certain skills and cultural artifacts. Each stock uses the core rules for Resources, Circles, relationships, affiliations and reputations.



# The Elements of a Lifepath

Each lifepath ages the character and grants him resource points, circles points, stat points, skill points, skills, trait points, and traits. These are the building blocks of every character.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
----------	------	-----------	---------	------

Vaishya	10 yrs	3	2	+1 M
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**Skills:** 11 pts: Finance, Bargaining, Supply-wise, Bureaucracy, Ksatriyen-wise, Shudren-wise, Vaylen-wise, Factions-wise, Vaylen Farm World-wise

**Traits:** 1 pt: Meticulous

**Requirements:** Controller, Encoder or any Ksatriyen or Human Caste lifepath

## Time

The Time column indicates how long in years it takes to walk this particular path. Years are totaled after all lifepaths are chosen. This, added with jumps between settings, determines the age of the character.

## Resources

Players use resource points (rps) to purchase technology and gear that is vital to the player's concept. The remainder of these points become the starting exponent for Resources.

## Circles

Circles points are spent on purchasing reputations, affiliations and relationships for the character. These points do not automatically become the Circles exponent—they must be divided between affiliations and reputations.

## Statistics (Stat)

Stat points are garnered from two sources: lifepaths and starting age (or body in the case of Vaylen). Once all of a character's lifepaths have been chosen, his age (or body) is determined and used to find his Starting Stat Pool. Many lifepaths give the character a bonus point toward either a mental or physical stat.

## Skills

Each lifepath presents a set of skills that may be learned. As he chooses lifepaths for his character, the player is also building a roster of skills he may choose from. If a player wants different skills for his character, he has to choose lifepaths that offer those skills or use special skill points called "general points."

Character  
Burning

### Traits

The traits category of each lifepath describes how this segment of the character's life marked him and what other potential effects it could have if the player so chooses. Traits are purchased like skills—the lifepaths create a list of options for the player to choose from. If you want different options, choose different traits.

### Requirements

Many lifepaths have a Requirements heading after the Traits listing. Requirements list lifepaths, traits or other restrictions that must be taken or fulfilled before the player can choose this path.

If the path indicates that it “requires two of...” the Born lifepath does not count toward that requirement.

## 1. CHARACTER CONCEPT

In the Figure of Note stage of the World Burner, you discussed your character concept with your group. Let's examine that concept in greater detail. Each player should be grilled about his character in turn:



Is your character a member of a faction? The government? The military? What does he do in that organization? How does he serve? In what capacity? Is he experienced? A veteran? A neophyte? Incompetent?

If your character is not a member of any of the elements you brought into the world via world burning, what the hell is doing here? If he's an outsider, what ties him to this conflict? Who are his family? His friends? How are they entangled in the fate of this world?

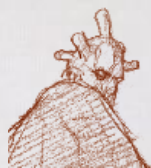
What does your character want in this struggle? What does he hope to gain? What is he willing to sacrifice? How far will he go to get what he wants?

Your character has family, friends, students, mentors and allies. Who are they? Some of them work for the other side. Why?



Your character has a sordid/tangled/difficult past that led him to this juncture. Describe it briefly.

Build your character into the conflict. Embrace it. Playing this game is about diving headlong into the conflict—you don't know if you'll surface again, but that's part of the thrill.



When thinking about a character's concept, stay loose. The lifepaths dictate how life works in the Iron Empires. The concept will have to change and develop a bit once you start making hard choices about points, skills and traits. It's best not to start with too rigid a concept. Ideas that can twist and bend are the ones that work best.

*Mayuran's character concept for Agra: A psychologist. A noble son who has the Bright Mark and is working for the Foundation. After further discussion with Thor, Mayuran decides that his character will work for Thor's Anvil Lord as his spy master.*

## Concept Relationships

Before exiting the concept stage, a player should have at least two relationships fleshed out. Think about how and why this character is related to one of the figures of note—working for this side or the other—and choose a family member, friend or ally to be working on the other side.



There's going to be a quiz in Step 2. Beliefs, so stay sharp.

*Mayuran says, "I want to have a relationship with my father, who is a Prince in rank, but not the Forged Lord. And I want the High Inquisitor to be my father-in-law. Also, my son has joined the Mundus Humanitas and is now working for the High Inquisitor."*

## I Want to Be a...

Often players have a general concept in mind for their characters: a ship captain, a soldier, a negotiator, a spy, a stern lawman, a wild warrior, an infiltrator, a pilot and so on. When choosing a concept, I strongly urge players to build characters at the top of their food chain and who have a broad enough base that they can help the other characters in play.



If you want to be a soldier, play an officer. If you want to be a pilot, play a captain. If you want to be a rogue, play a spymaster. For your initial run through Burning Empires, you're

## CHARACTER BURNER

probably going to want to be potent and in control. It takes a skilled and savvy player to take on the role of a powerless country boy and make a difference. It can be done, but it takes experience.

For martial characters, lifepaths with the Tactics and Command skills are absolutely necessary. For social characters, lifepaths with Persuasion, Rhetoric or Oratory must be taken. For infiltrators, lifepaths with the Infiltration, Recon, Close Combat and Squad Support Weapons skills are a must.



If I might make a recommendation: Don't play a grunt. Don't play someone who just shoots his gun or mouth off. The conflict mechanics favor commanders and leaders.

## 2. Beliefs



Beliefs are the most important part of your character. They are the method by which we breathe life into all those numbers and lists. They are your goals in play and how you want to be rewarded for playing your character.

After discussing his character concept with the group, each player in turn describes a Belief for his character until all of the players are satisfied. The group helps him sharpen and focus the ideas until they are finely pointed goals.



## Beliefs and the World

What does your character think about the government? The factions? The industry? The military? What does he think of the figures of note? How is your character involved in the conflict? What does he want from it? What will he do to get it?

## Designing Beliefs

A player must design three Beliefs for his character.

### Character Priorities



Get inside your character's head. Figure out what he's all about. How does he view the fate of your world? Is he complicit in its destruction? Ignorant because he's focused elsewhere? Or dedicated to the fight? How does he view his relationships? The government? The military? The factions? What does he believe in? What does he want? What does he hate? How does he see the world? What does he love? Think about him. These are all important aspects of a character's Beliefs. In order to get perspective, look to the concept you've chosen for your character, reflect on how that would affect him and make some notes.

### Player Priorities

Beliefs serve another, more important, function. They are the venue for the player's desires and priorities in the game. They do this in two ways. First, your Beliefs are a chance to accomplish what *you think is cool* in the game. Don't worry about the character. This is about you, the player. What interests you most about the conflict at hand? Where do you want to be involved? How do you want to be challenged as a player?

Do you want issues of loyalty? Of greed? Of violence? Then write Beliefs that contain those issues. Do you want to confront another character or player? Then write a Belief about it. Do you want to change the shape of the world you've built—oust a faction, topple the government, take over the military? Then write a Belief about it.



Second, there's another message coded into Beliefs: When you write out a Belief for your character, you—the player—are explicitly telling the GM and the other players what you want from the game. If you write a Belief like, "The only good alien is a dead alien," you are saying: "I want to kill some aliens!" If you write, "I'll not accept my arranged marriage—I'd sooner die than consummate with this oaf!" as a Belief, you are practically shouting at the group: "My arranged marriage is important to me. I need



conflict with my so-called husband right now.” The game itself will not solely be about the arranged marriage, but it will be in there. Why? Because it’s one of your top three priorities!



And in case it wasn’t obvious, in order to have your priorities addressed, you must discuss them with the group at large. Share them. Do not hide them; that’s against the rules! Players are allowed to know secrets about other characters; it only makes the game better. Characters, however, do not know each other’s secrets. There’s a big difference.

### *To be Challenged*

Challenging Beliefs is what this game is about. Write Beliefs that will get your character into trouble right off the bat. Write Beliefs that you want to come into conflict—write them so the GM can challenge them.

### *Writing Beliefs*

Beliefs must be active, present things. They’ve got to be tied into the situation—the factions, your relationships, the enemy, the government, etc. The world you’ve burned is rife with conflict. What do you want to accomplish? What do you want to change? Who do you want to protect? Who do you want to see dead? Make that a goal and put it in your Beliefs!

Follow these three guidelines to get you started:

- A Belief should contain an ideological stance of some sort.
- A Belief should contain a goal in the “I achieve this goal and am rewarded for it” sense.
- A Belief should express how the ideological stance drives the character to achieve the goal.

Start with a broad concept: “This world is doomed,” “I will protect the Church,” “I only look out for number one.” Then refine the Belief by adding action and details relevant to your world.



“This world is doomed.” So what? *What are you going to do about it?* “This world is doomed unless I step forward from the shadows and command the court to action.” Now that’s a Belief. It’s got action—stepping forward and commanding!—and it’s got place, in the form of the shadows and the court. It tells the GM and the other players a couple of things: The fate of the world is important to this character; it’s got to be doomed, otherwise why come out of hiding? This character wants to exist in the shadows, but he’s compelled to come forward. What’s going to get him to come

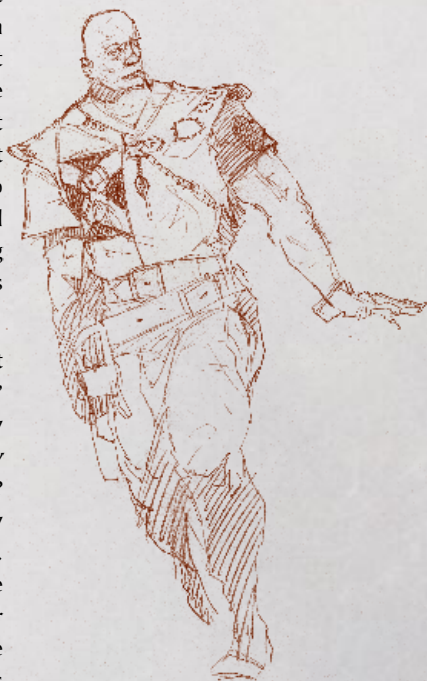
forward? Doom. And what's he going to do when he comes forward? Command. Doom, shadows and command. Cool. Now the GM knows that he needs doom to lure you out, and he needs to challenge the character's authority to command the court so as to create conflict surrounding your salvation of the world. Awesome.

"I will protect the Church." That's an OK Belief, but it doesn't really tell us much about the character. Let's ask some questions: From what? What's threatening the Church on your world? How will you protect it? How far will you go? "I will protect the Church from heretic cultists with my very life. Nothing shall dim the Burning Wheel's greatness!" Now that's hot. We know that the player wants the Church threatened, and we know that he will lay his character's life on the line in order to protect it. So the GM knows that violence is going to have to be a part of this threat. And that heretic cultists are going to have to be a part of this violence. Excellent.



"I only look out for number one."

Beliefs like this are pretty common, actually. *And they are dangerously bad.* Why? Because they can too easily pull a character out of action. What happens if you're threatened? "I look out for number one" and avoid the danger. Boring. Ask players who write survival Beliefs this: What does your character really want? Why is she so self-serving? Why is her survival so important? What is your character going to do in order to "look out for number one?" Often, such Beliefs can be refined quite nicely: "No one will stand in my way on my climb to the top. I will be a Hammer Lord come hell or high water." Or, "It doesn't matter anymore, so I may as well work for the enemy when it suits me." Ah, a little ambition and a little nihilism and suddenly we've got action and emotion.



Character  
Burning



### External Conflict

If another player writes a Belief that you fundamentally oppose, *write a Belief into your character to conflict with his*. This is good! Conflict is what we want. The mechanics will support any and all conflicts, no matter how brutal or ideological.

If the GM sets up a figure of note whom you find yourself drawn to, *write him into one of your Beliefs*. "I will pull Archcotare Farouq from the clutches of the Inquisition," for example.

And if there is an aspect of the world that you want to preserve or change, *write a Belief about it*. These kind of external conflicts create story.

### Internal Conflict



I've found that one of the best ways to get multiple Beliefs tied into a situation is to create internal conflict within your character. Set up one Belief to conflict with another. "No one will stand in my way on my climb to the top. I will be a Hammer Lord come hell or high water." OK, that's an excellent statement of purpose. Now how about a counter-Belief? "My brother is my life; without him I cannot live."

Uh oh. Suddenly there's a character who can stand in your way on your climb to the top. At some point, you're

going to have to decide which is more important, achieving social power or your love for your brother.

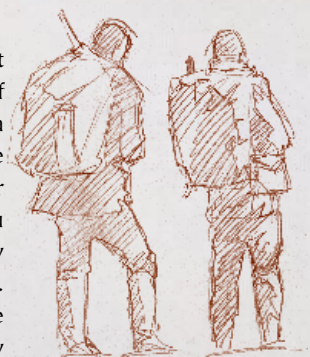
Setting your characters up for internal conflict can be immensely helpful. Not only does it keep you, the player, engaged because your Beliefs are going crazy-haywire, but it works great with the rewards system!



### Interface



And just in case you thought this was all theoretical “art of roleplaying” garbage: Beliefs have a mechanical effect on the game and the character. Playing them earns the player *artha*. Artha is that reward system you keep hearing about. It is spent to modify rolls important to your priorities. Manifesting your priorities in the game earns artha. It’s a cycle, and a very beneficial one.



*Mayuran’s Beliefs for his militant psychologist: When my father sits on the throne, he will bring reform to our world. As my father’s strong right hand, I protect his interests by bringing allies to our cause and eliminating his enemies.*

*Karem cannot be allowed to waste his life in the Church; I will free him from his slavish devotion to the Burning Wheel, regardless of his wishes.*

*I will protect the Foundation from the Inquisition witch hunt.*

## 3. Choose Lifepaths

Your character concept described your character’s history. In this step, you’ll wrap your concept around the setting through the lifepaths. These are short segments of the character’s life—usually centered around an occupation, a diversion or a class role. Each lifepath gives the player an amount of points with which to build his character. In *Burning Empires*, a character’s numbers are generated by choosing a series of lifepaths. Remember, stay flexible.

### Number of Lifepaths

Players choose lifepaths based on their concepts. Most characters should enter the game with six or seven lifepaths. This makes them powerful and competent in many areas. Eight-lifepath characters are permissible, if necessary to fulfill the concept. Nine- and ten-lifepath characters must be scrutinized. Anything that is not completely necessary to the concept must be jettisoned.

The key to using lifepaths to create a strong character is to take just what you need. Don't take too much. Anyone can create a cool, powerful character in nine lifepaths, but can you slightly alter that concept and do it in seven? Trust me, less is more.

The fewer lifepaths you begin the game with, the more you are rewarded. See the Starting Artha heading at the end of this chapter.

### Choose Character Stock

Decide if you want your character to be a Vaylen, Kerrn, Mukhadish or Human. You may only choose lifepaths from your own character stock.



### Where to Start?

Look back at your world again. Your character concept is attached to one of the elements of the world: What faction are you a part of? Or are you a

part of the government? The military? The industry? The World Burner indicates a native setting for those choices. What's the native setting for your concept?

Are you a noble lord? Start in the Noble setting. Are you a soldier? Start in the Anvil setting. Are you a member of the imperial court? Stewardship and Court, then. Are you a naval officer? Hammer setting is the place to start. Are you a priest? Then begin looking in the Theocracy. A scheming psychic? The Psychologist Foundation is the best place to start. A civilian politician? The Commune is the place for you. The Merchant League is for organized trading associations, while Spacefarer is for rogue, individual spacers who take big risks to bring their cargo from world to world. Are you a humble citizen of the Iron Empires? Freeman is your ironic setting. You are anything but free.

Are you a freaky alien tech? Kerrn Opvraeta is a great place to start. Hardy alien warrior? Kerrn Solzjah. An alien who's lived most of his life among humans? Kerrn Diazspherah.

Ksatriyen is the Vaylen warrior setting. The Vaishyen setting is for technicians and prison guards. The Human setting represents the ruling elite, while the Vaylen setting contains spies and infiltrators. Shudren are the Vaylen's slaves.

Mukhadish are wild animals in the Wild setting, thugs and cast-offs in the Underworld setting and slaves in the Slave setting.

## Born

The first lifepath chosen must be a Born lifepath. This represents not only the character's actual birth, but where he spent his childhood. Choosing a Born lifepath starts the character off in a particular setting. Once the Born lifepath is chosen, the player may choose any lifepath in that setting in any order so long as it isn't restricted by a requirement. Or the player may have his character jump to another setting, native or non-native, if he's willing to pay the premium in years.



## Pick 'Em

After choosing a character stock and a born lifepath, players choose lifepaths for their characters.

### *Getting There is Half the Fun*

It's possible to get to some of the upper echelon lifepaths quickly and without trouble. This is deliberate, because in this age of the Iron Empires, it is not so much your title or position that makes you, but how you arrived there. In the lifepaths, players may find the hard road much more rewarding than the easy one.

### *Life in Reverse*

For players just getting started in Burning Wheel, I recommend picking lifepaths in reverse order. Find the point at which your concept gels—an upper echelon path that really embodies the ideas you brainstormed in the World Burner. Paths like Hammer Lord, Anvil Lord, Court Lord, Void Lord, Hammer Captain, Anvil Captain, Psychologist, Speaker, Executive, Official, Traveler, Offisah, Emsheef, Ghetto Sheef, Cult Leader, Philosopher King, Chamberlain, Lord

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Steward, and so on. Starting with that path, work backward. Find a path among the requirements that interests you, take it and then consult its requirements, choose one and keep working backwards until you reach an appropriate Born lifepath. Using this method, you start with a concept and build the history of how your character got there. Later, when you're more experienced with the setting and Character Burner, you can build a character from the Born path up.

### Native and Non-Native Settings

The settings native to the players' world are determined in the World Burning process. Review your Atmosphere, Tech Index, Dominant Government, Predominant Military and your Factions. Your choices will give you a list of native settings.

For Human stock characters, the Freeman and Outcast and Criminal settings are native to all worlds. Mukhadish Underworld is native by default. All Vaylen settings are considered native—due to their ability to infiltrate. Kernn have special rules about native and non-native settings. Check out the Kernn chapter for details.

#### *Jumping to a Native Setting*

Jumping to a native setting costs one year. For each jump so taken, add one year to the character's starting age.

#### *Jumping to a Non-Native Setting*

Going to a setting that is non-native costs two years. For each jump so taken, add two years to the character's starting age.

*On Mayuran's worksheet, Foundation Student and Propagandist are listed with a "+1" in the time category. Mayuran had to jump a setting to get to those paths. The settings were both native, therefore he pays one year premium for changing setting.*

### Use the Worksheet, Make a List

As you decide on the various paths, make a list of the points provided in the Time, Resources, Circles, Stat, Skill and Trait categories.

### Repeating Lifepaths: The Law of Diminishing Returns

You can repeat a lifepath as many times as you like. The second time a path is taken, time, resources, circles, stat and skill points are earned as normal. The second skill and trait are required (see 5. Skills and 6. Traits sections). If there is no second trait, subtract one trait point from the path. The third time a character walks a lifepath, he only receives half of the skill and resource points (rounded down)—no



circles, traits or stats. Round down. If a lifepath is taken a fourth time, the character only earns half of the resource points (round down) and nothing else aside from years.

<b>Concept:</b> <i>A psychologist. A noble son who has the Bright Mark and is working for the Foundation and the Anvil.</i>							
	Time	Resources	Circles	Stat Bonus	Skill Points	General Skill Pts	Trait Points
Lifepaths							
<i>X-O</i>	3	1	1	—	6		1
<i>Lieutenant</i>	4	2	1	+1MP	4		1
<i>Anvil Elite</i>	3	1	0	+1P	6		2
<i>Propagandist</i>	5+1	1	1	+1M	5		1
<i>Psychologist</i>	6	1	1	+1MP	7		2
<i>Foundation Student</i>	8+1	1	1	+1MP	8		1
<i>Born to Rule</i>	8	2	1	—	—	5	1
<b>Totals:</b>	39	9	6	11/15	36	5	9

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## 4. Age

After you're finished choosing your character's lifepaths, total up the Time category. Add one year for each native lead taken and two years for each non-native lead. This is the character's starting age. Humans age differently in the Iron Empires. A human character in his 40s or 50s is often in the prime of his life, while Kernn and Mukhadish are rather short lived in comparison. Naiven worms only live about 70 years, themselves (so it's possible for a host body to have multiple worms).

*Mayuran's character turns out to be 39 years old.*

## 5. STATS

### Age Chart

Take the character's starting age and consult the stat pools for the appropriate stock. The age charts follow at the end of each lifepath section.

### Mental and Physical Pools

Look up your character's starting age on the table and note his starting mental and physical pools. Add in any bonus stat points earned on the lifepaths: + M goes in the mental pool, + P goes in the physical.

If you took a lifepath that had a + M/P, that means you can put one point in *either* mental *or* physical. "/" means "*either, or.*"

A "+ M, P" means you can put one point in *both* the mental and physical pools. A "," means "*and.*"

*39 years old gives starting pools of 7 mental, 13 physical. Mayuran got +1 to both pools from Foundation Student, +1 to physical from Anvil Elite and +1 to mental from Propagandist: 9 mental, 15 physical. He has two either/or points from Lieutenant and Psychologist. He decides to put them both into the mental pool for a final total of 11/15.*

### Divide

Mental points may be spent on Perception and Will. Points raise the exponent on a one for one basis. If you put five points into Will, the character starts with a 5 Will.

Physical points are divided between Agility, Speed, Power and Forte. Players may divide the points as they see fit, so long as they abide by any common trait restrictions and stat maximums from their character stock. Note that Kernn, Mukhadish and some Vaylen may start the game with certain stats at 7 or 8. I recommend that, until you become familiar with the game, stats start no lower than exponent 3.

*Mayuran chooses Will 6, Perception 5, Agility 4, Speed 3, Power 4 and Forte 4 for his character.*







## 6. Skills

### Set General Skill Points Aside

Total up any general skill points earned from the lifepaths. Set them aside for a moment.

*Born to Rule gives 5 general skill points.*

### Skill Points

Total up the skill points earned from all of the character's lifepaths (except general points).

*Mayuran's psychologist has a total of 36 skill points.*

### Skill Choices

Each lifepath comes with a variety of skills that combine to make a master lifepath skill list for the character. The player may only spend his points on these skills (except for general points).

*Mayuran's skill choices consist of: Psychologist-wise, Research, Rhetoric, History, Advanced Mathematics, Psychohistory, Persuasion, Conspicuous, Inconspicuous, Psychology, Propaganda, Media-wise, Signals Tech-wise, Composition, Command, Intimidation, Sergeant-wise, Squad Support Weapons, Vehicular Weapons, Zero G, Administration, Unit-wise, Bureaucracy and Regulations-wise.*

### Required Skill

The first skill listed with each path is required. The player must *open* the skill, *but he does not have to advance it*. If the character already has the skill required from another, previous path, the next skill in the list is required (and so on).

*His required skills are: Psychologist-wise, Psychohistory, Propaganda, Command, Squad Support Weapons and Administration.*

### Skill Descriptions

Skill descriptions can be found in the Skill List toward the back of the Character Burner. Wises are not described. They all fall under the rules governing wises described in the Wise entry in the Skill List.

### Opening Skills: Roots

Skills are all based on a stat to start. This is called its root. Root stats are listed with each skill in the Skill List. It costs one point to *open* a skill. Freshly opened skill exponents start at half the root stat rounded down. If a skill has two roots, add the roots together, divide by four and round down.

*Mayuran opens: Psychology 2, Propaganda 2, Administration 2, Psychologist-wise 2, Psychohistory 2, Command 3, Squad Support Weapons 2, Unit-wise 2, Regulations-wise 2, Persuasion 3, Research 2, History 2, Advanced Mathematics 2, Inconspicuous 3, Media-wise 2, Signals Tech-wise 2, Intimidation 3 and Sergeant-wise 2. Eighteen skills opened costs 18 points.*

### Advancing a Skill

It costs one point to advance a skill exponent in character burning. One point adds one die. Skills may not start higher than exponent 6.

*He advances: Psychology  $2+4=6$ , Propaganda  $2+3=5$ , Administration  $2+1=3$ , Psychologist-wise  $2+2=4$ , Psychohistory  $2+2=4$ , Command  $3+2=5$ , Squad Support Weapons  $2+1=3$ , Persuasion  $3+2=5$  and Sergeant-wise  $2+1=3$ . Eighteen more points spent to advance skills.*

*The rest of his skills start the game at the exponent at which they were opened.*

### Spending General Skill Points

General skill points represent natural talent or additional experience not detailed in the lifepaths. After all the other points are spent, general points may be spent to open or advance a skill in the character's starting list. More importantly, they may be spent to open and advance any skill from the general list.

Skills opened with general points may not be advanced using regular skill points, which is why general points need to be set aside until the end of the skill buying process.

*Noting that his character lacks in courtly manners, Mayuran opens Etiquette. He also wants another social skill to use to fit his character concept: Falsehood. And while his character has Command, he doesn't have Tactics. Having both can be very helpful, so he buys Tactics with one general point. Lastly, he decides to buy Theocracy-wise. Part of the game will be centered around a conflict between himself and the Inquisition. The wise could prove useful. Opening four skills costs four points. He's got one point remaining and decides to advance Tactics from 2 to 3. Four opened skills plus one advancement is five points: Etiquette 2, Falsehood 3, Tactics 3, Theocracy-wise 2*

## Appropriate Skills by Phase

When burning a character, it's important to think about how the character will operate in the big picture, the Infection mechanics. The following lists describe vital skills and the phase in which they are useful. It's unlikely that one character is going to have all of the skills necessary, but be sure to take at least one or two for your character. Discuss where you want to focus your character so that as a whole, the group covers a lot of ground.



### *Infiltration Phase Skills*

Accounting, Administration, Bureaucracy, Command, Counterfeiting, Cryptography, Doctrine, Estate Management, Eugenics, Extortion, Falsehood, Food Services, Forgery, Investigative Logic, Journalism, Law, Manufacture, Observation, Oratory, Persuasion, Philosophy, Physics, Psychology, Research, Security, Security Rigging, Ship Management, Signals, Smuggling, Streetwise, Suasion, Tactics, Ugly Truth

### *Usurpation Phase Skills*

Accounting, Bureaucracy, Cryptography, Doctrine, Engineering, Extortion, Finance, Investigative Logic, Journalism, Law, Manufacture, Philosophy, Propaganda, Psychology, Recon, Security, Seduction, Signals, Smuggling, Surgery, Tactics

### *Invasion Phase Skills*

Cryptography, Finance, Fortifications, Fusion Dynamics, Journalism, Logistics, Manufacture, Propaganda, Psychohistory, Shipwright, Signals, Strategy, Tactics

### *Conflict Skills*

Conflict skills are necessary for winning Duels of Wits and Firefights. Make sure your character has one or two of these skills: Command, Extortion, Interrogation, Observation, Oratory, Persuasion, Psychology, Rhetoric, Signals, Sensors, Tactics



## 7. TRAITS

### Trait Point Pool

Total up the trait points earned from the character's lifepaths. This is the trait point pool.

*The Lieutenant Psychologist earned nine trait points on his lifepaths.*

### Required Lifepath Trait

Like skills, the first lifepath trait on each path is required. *The player must purchase this trait.* It costs one point. If the character already has this trait from a previous path, the next trait must be purchased (and so on). If a player already has all of the traits listed, the points on the path are free of requirements. If a lifepath is listed with points but no traits, that indicates there is no requirement for this path: The points may be spent at the player's discretion. If a lifepath is listed with no points or requirements, no trait points are gained on that path.

*His required traits are: Mark of Privilege, Bright Mark, The Psychologist's Code, Clever Bastard, Clean Cut, Anvil Trained, Scut Work. Seven traits eat up seven points.*

### Lifepath Traits

Lifepath traits cost *one trait point* to purchase—no matter what their cost in the general list.

*His optional traits include Your Grace and Privileged Position. Your Grace costs 7 pts and Privileged Position costs 3 pts in the general Trait List. However, since they are available on his lifepaths, they only cost one point each for Mayuran. That brings his total to nine points.*

### Other Traits

Trait points left over after purchasing required and optional lifepath traits may be spent on additional traits. A player may purchase additional optional lifepath traits from his paths, or he may buy from the Trait List at the end of the Character Burner. Traits from the general list are priced from 1-10 points.

Trait points cannot be saved. Spend all of them now. Each trait may only be taken once, but the effects of different traits do compound.

*Rather than buying optional traits from his paths, Mayuran could have gone to the list and spent his points there. He could have bought traits like Forked Tongue (2 pts), Meticulous (2 pts) or Useful (2 pts). Alternately,*

*he could have bought two additional character traits for his psychologist like Vindictive or Ambitious. Character traits cost one point each.*

## Planetary Attitude and Empire Traits

Be sure to take your free trait from your planet's Attitude: Educated, Hysterical Fear, Indifferent, Ignorant, Paranoid or Personal Experience (with the Vaylen).

*Mayuran's planet, Agra, is Paranoid. Therefore, his character gets the Paranoid character trait for free.*

Also, each human empire has a few traits associated with it. The player must choose one trait from his empire to add to his character. It's free.

*Agra was once part of the Karsan League. The available traits are Kunmai, Technical or Formal. Mayuran chooses Technical. It suits his concept for this straight-laced psychologist turned soldier turned spy.*

## Common Traits

Characters start the game with all of their stock's common traits for free.

## A Mix of Traits



Your character is going to begin the game with many traits. Some will conflict with each other. Some will conflict with your concept. Note that no one trait is intended to trump or outshine any other. They all have equal weight on the page, and the ones that are important to you, the player, will develop in play. Let the traits that you don't stress become accents and hints to the personality, perhaps even popping to the forefront in times of stress or adversity.



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# 8. Resources

Total your character's resource points (rps) from the Resources column of the lifepaths. This is how many points the player may spend on the character's gear, property and other technology vital to the player's concept. The unspent remainder becomes the character's starting Resources exponent.

*X-O, Lieutenant, Anvil Elite, Propagandist, Psychologist, Foundation Student and Born to Rule grant 9 rps total.*

### Resources Attribute

Resources is an attribute. All characters start with Resources (even if the starting exponent is zero). The uses of Resources are described in detail in the Resources chapter of the Burning Wheel.

### Resources and Technology

Resources are deeply tied to the Technology Burner. Portions of this section refer to rules described in the Technology Burner. It's not necessary to know those rules to buy tech, but it can help. Feel free to skip ahead and read that chapter if you're interested in technology.

### Technology and Color

A character enters play with all of the personal trappings and accoutrements suitable to his position and role—clothing, shoes, vestments, personal effects, interesting jewelry, ceremonial items and other bits of color. These items may be described as the player sees fit. *They do not and may not have a mechanical effect on the game.* They are color. For the purposes of the Technological Color rules in the Technology Burner, this tech starts the game as if it were established in a scene, but unchallenged. If a player wishes to bring the tech into the mechanics, he'll have to make a roll.

*For color, Mayuran decides on a clean black uniform without insignia or rank marker, high polished boots, a signals earpiece and a sidearm.*

### Lifepaths Govern Gear and Technology

The limits of what gear and technology a character may acquire are determined by what would be easily available on his lifepaths. A character may take an item if it is legal for his station, appropriate to his occupation and not banned on the planet.



The GM has final say on what's available and what's not: Accountants can't have squad support weapons and anvil armor. Even soldiers in civilian life may not purchase military gear; on the other hand a noble lord-pilot would have access to quite an arsenal no matter where life leads him.

Items that are infeasible, illegal or subject to regulation may be purchased at the discretion of the GM.

### Skills, Technology and Tools

Many skills require technology in the form of "tools" so that they can be utilized in play without penalty. Check the entry with each skill to see if it requires tools or a workshop, color tech or none at all. A tool set or workshop appropriate to your lifepaths costs 1 rp.



## Gear and Hard Technology

If a player wants a piece of technology that will have a mechanical effect in play, he must spend one of his starting resource points to acquire it. A player may purchase weapons, vehicles, armor and technology for his character. Take only what you'll absolutely need.

### *The Most Basic Iteration*

One resource point gets the player the most basic variant of the item in question so long as it is appropriate to the tech index of the world and the character could feasibly have acquired it on one of his lifepaths.

*On a zero index world, 1 rp will buy a stet gun or an infrasonic disrupter.*



If a player wants more advanced technology or technology that's illegal or restricted he must get the consent of the GM. Such tech costs 2 rps.

## Burning Technology

One resource point may be spent to modify a purchased piece of gear or create a new piece of tech from new traits. The cost of this gear depends on the world's tech index. Don't get bound up in the idea of gear lists. There are none. If you want some tech, you just create it.

- On sub index worlds, one resource point counts as two technology trait points.
- On zero index worlds, one resource point counts as three technology trait points.
- On low index worlds, one resource point counts as four technology trait points.
- On high index worlds, one resource point counts as five technology trait points.

Multiple points may be spent to purchase more costly traits. See the Technology Burner for the rules on creating hard technology.

*Mayuran wants a device that will allow him to record and project his own memories. In addition, he wants his psycho-helmet to grant him a +1D advantage to Psychology. Consulting the Technology burner, he sees that this would count as an Enhancement and an Advantage and would cost 11 trait points. He's on a high index world, so each rp converts into*

*five trait points. He can buy it for 3 rps or 2 rps if he can find a way to knock the price down by one trait point.*

If you miss something for your character, don't worry about it. You'll be able to acquire it in play.

### Traits That are Tied to Gear

#### **Anvil Trained**

Only characters with the Anvil Trained trait may purchase anvil armor. 1 rp gets basic anvil armor. 2 rps gets anvil armor with an additional Ob 4 technology trait.

*Mayuran wants a suit of anvil armor for his character. This is perfectly appropriate to his lifepaths and his station. It costs 1 rp.*

*He considers adding a +1D advantage to Infiltration onto the suit, but that would drop his Resources exponent down to 4 (and anvil adds +3 Ob to Infiltration anyway). He opts to stick with the basic anvil and start with a Resources 5.*



#### **Iron Trained**

One must have the Iron Trained trait in order to purchase Iron. No other restrictions apply. It's the character's right to bear this armor. For low index worlds, 1 rp purchases index 4 Iron. 2 rps purchases index 5 Iron. If the world is high index, then 1 rp purchases index 5 iron.

#### **Hammer Lord, Anvil Lord and Forged Lord**

In order to purchase attack sleds, assault sleds, assault shuttles, patrol craft, and hammer cruisers, one must have the Hammer Lord, Anvil Lord or Forged Lord traits.

Anvil Lords may not purchase anything bigger than an Assault Shuttle.

#### **Owning Spacecraft**

In order to purchase civilian hammer or mercators, one must have the Illegal Crucis, Corvus and Crucis, Merchant Fleet Captain, Meshhen, Vibhuuten, Makara, Offisah, Omshiip Officer, Omshiip Staff, Omshiip's Master or Owner Aboard trait, in addition to appropriate lifepaths.



## Assigned Gear

The GM may, at his discretion, assign gear to the characters. For example, if you're playing an Invasion scenario with all soldiers on military missions, do not spend resource points on gear that will be provided by the player's benefactors—the military. Assign the gear, technology and vehicles as appropriate. If the players want to buy personal gear that's better than the junk provided to them, by all means let them.

## Property

If a player wishes to establish a location in the game, he must spend a resource point on property. This can be a fortress, a safe house, his business, etc. The character starts the game with sole access to and knowledge of the property. He may share it as he wishes. Players who wish to enter the property—or find out about secret locales—must make the appropriate overtures to the owning player. They must ask permission, do some legwork or break in.

Property comes bundled with free technology traits. Each resource point spent on property gives the player one resource point equivalent in tech for his index. This tech must be spent on security systems, defenses, hidey holes, medical suites and other goodies that are part of the property.

## Starting Resources Exponent

The remainder of the resource points not spent on gear, technology, property, etc. is the character's starting Resources exponent. Please see the Resources chapter for details on Resources tests.

*Mayuran spent 4 of his 9 rps on technology. His starting Resources exponent is 5.*

## Zero Resources

Some characters are going to start with an exponent 0 Resources. In order to advance this, the character will need help, a loan or a payment. You can't test zero dice, so someone's got to give you one die to start with.

## GM's Resources Reserve

The GM does not have to spend his resource points on technology and property for his figures of note. He may spend his points later, during the game as the need arises. See the GM's Resources Reserve heading in the Resources chapter.



## 9. Circles

Circles represents the character's sphere of influence in his community—through his profession, class and family. All characters have it, and it is tested often in the game.

### Base Circles

Circles is an attribute that has a low starting base exponent. Circles exponent starts at half the character's Will rounded down.

*With a Will of 6, Mayuran's character's base Circles exponent is 3.*

### Scope of Circles

The scope of the base Circles is determined by the character's lifepaths—anyone he could have met throughout the course of his life can be accessed via his Circles. Players may add to that scope with affiliations and reputations.

### Spending Circles Points

Total the circles points earned on your lifepaths. These points may be spent to boost your base Circles or buy affiliations, reputations or relationships.

### Boosting Base Circles

Players may increase their base starting Circles. It costs three circles points per die of increase.

### Affiliations

At its core, each lifepath grants the character loose membership to a particular group. These are his Circles. However, to start, the character has little or no power in these venues. If he wants power or more direct ties, a player may buy his character an affiliation with an organization appropriate to his Circles.

It costs one circles point per die of affiliation. Affiliations can be up to 3D strong. Characters may have multiple affiliations.

The amount of points spent and the dice granted indicate how powerful the organization is and where the character stands within it. Lastly, affiliations must be accompanied by a short description from the player. No "army, 1D" affiliations. Be specific and descriptive.

*1D: a small, local or specialized group—my mother's side of the family, a psychologist's cabal or Omei's Black Lynx black ops group*

*2D: a large, regional or expansive group—a trade guild, a manor or estate, pirate fleet or powerful clan*

3D: a planetary, powerful or ruling group—a merchant league, a duchy, a governor's council, a wealthy priesthood



Forged insignia

Do not add affiliations directly to Circles. Keep them separate; an affiliation is an advantage added to the base Circles. Also, Circles advance independently of affiliations.



Anvil insignia



Hammer  
insignia

### Affiliations from Traits

Many traits grant free affiliations. These affiliations may be bolstered with circles points in character burning. They may be increased up to 3D as per the standard rules.

*Mayuran has one affiliation from his Mark of Privilege trait: 1D with the nobility of Agra. He decides he wants his character to command a small force of anvil elite—the Black Lynxes. That's a another 1D affiliation.*

## Reputation

A character's reputation refers to his renown and influence within his Circles and affiliations. Is he a nobody? No reputation to speak of. Is he a known affiliate, a proud member or a local hero? 1D reputation. Is he a member in good standing, famous or high ranking? 2D reputation. Is he the boss or world famous? 3D reputation.

Describe your reputations so the other players understand how they apply.

It costs one circles point per 1D of reputation. Reputations can be up to 3D strong.

*1D: Local or minor member reputation—best shot in the King's Own 39th, the drunk, the neighborhood thug, the knowledgeable guide*

*2D: Regional or powerful member reputation—an old war hero, a religious figurehead, a famous army captain, a lord, a notorious smuggler, a famous entertainer*

*3D: Planet-wide or the boss reputation—a munificent baron or duke, a wealthy magnate, an infamous psychologist, a planet's undefeated military leader, the head of a massive public business, the tyrannical leader of the planet's religion, the Forged Lord of the planet*

Reputations are more fluid and broadly applicable than affiliations, but they are not universal. They are still dependent on the lifepaths of the character, so it's possible that, despite your fame, there are a few people that have never heard of you.

### **Reputations from Traits**

Many traits grant free reputations. These reputations may be added to with circles points in character burning. They may be increased up to the 3D as per the standard rules.

*The Bright Mark grants a 1D reputation as a psychologist in the Karsan League. In addition, Mayuran buys a 1D reputation among the Black Lynxes as "a loyal commander who demands loyalty in return."*

## **Multiple Reputations and Affiliations**

A player may buy as many reputations and affiliations as he can afford for his character. Each one must be with a specific and different organization. For example, an iron artificer could have affiliations with the artisans guild, the government and a noble family for whom he designed iron.

## **Relationships**

A relationship is a GM-controlled character who the player absolutely wants involved in an important recurring role in the game. He is family, a friend, an ally or an enemy. By adding this character to the game, the player explicitly agrees to bring him into play—once a relationship is paid for, he becomes part of the plot. He must either be a figure of note, be associated with a figure of note, the primary form of government, the military, the industry or one of the factions on your world.

### **One Free Relationship**

- All characters begin with one relationship for free.

*Sgt... Eliazar, second-in-command of the Black Lynxes, is Mayuran's free relationship (see the I Need a Gang or Crew rules following).*

### **Mandatory Relationships**

- Each character must have a relationship with a *figure of note* on the current world.
- Each character must have a relationship with a character on the other side of the conflict.

These two conditions can be combined in one character—a figure of note for the other side—or divided among two separate characters. The player may use his free relationship to cover this requirement, or he may purchase it as an additional relationship. The relationship



for the other side does qualify as a complicated relationship (see below).

*Hm. Mayuran wants relationships with two figures of note (his father, the Court Lord and Prince) and the High Inquisitor. He pays 2 rps for his dad for now.*

### **Additional Relationships**

A player may purchase additional relationships for his character—as many as he can afford. Each additional allied relationship costs two circles points.

### **Complicated Relationships**

A player may buy a relationship with a character on the other side of the conflict for 1 rp, rather than 2. If you're human, he's working with the Vaylen; if you're Vaylen, he's working with the humans. This means he makes rolls for or gives help to the other side in the Infection mechanics.

*Ah ha! So the Inquisitor father-in-law will only cost 1 rp, because he's working for the other side.*

Alternately, a player may buy a relationship with a character who is neutral or even on his side, but also his enemy or rival. This costs 1 rp. The character

begins the game as your enemy or rival as described in the *Enmity Clause* in the Relationships and Circles chapter. He doesn't necessarily work for the Vaylen, but he's not on your side, either.

*Mayuran wants a relationship with his son. It's important to his character concept! So he decides to take a complicated relationship wherein his son isn't necessarily working for the Vaylen, but he hates his father. Mechanically, this will give his son a bonus in any conflicts that try to sway him to his father's side.*



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Burning**

## The Rest of the World

Any non-player characters not bought as relationships—secondary background characters—fall into the sphere of the character's Circles attribute. In fact, it is the intention of these rules that each player only develop one or two relationships important to his character—everyone else is in the Circles.

## Player Characters Are Not Relationships

Player characters do not count as relationships under these rules. Assume the player characters are all associated or related in one way or another. You get to decide how. Building bonds between them doesn't cost any circles points.

*Being tied to Thor's Anvil Lord does not cost any rps. Mayuran and Thor simply agree that the psychologist secretly works for Thor's Anvil Lord and that's that!*

## I Need a Gang or Crew

If your character concept requires a group of supporting characters, like the staff of a restaurant, crew of a ship or members of your

psychologist's cabal, do the following: Purchase a relationship with the senior-most member of the group (if

you're the boss, that'd be the second-in-command), then buy an affiliation to the group and a reputation within that affiliation that puts you in charge.

*Sgt... Eliazar is the second-in-command of the Black Lynxes, a special forces operations team under the command of Mayuran's shadowy psychologist.*



## I Need a Kernn or a Stentor

Some character concepts require a bodyguard or assistant to accompany the PC at all times. Players may buy their characters direct subordinates in order to flesh out their character concepts. Such characters cost two circles points. The cost may not be reduced by putting them on the other side. These characters must be burned up as full player characters



with the following limits: They must take two fewer lifepaths than the character they are associated with, and their skill exponents are capped at 4s.

The subordinate character must pay for a two-point relationship with the PC, as well, and pay for all his own gear. The burden for creating and managing such characters is on the player who brought them into the game. It is permissible for a player to take on two roles in this case, but if he doesn't burn him, he can't benefit from him.

### **Players: Spend All of Your Circles Points**

Please spend all of your circles points: Buy appropriate affiliations, reputations and relationships; increase the base Circles exponent at a three to one cost. You cannot save any of these points for later. And, unlike Resources, the remainder does not directly go into the base exponent.

*A 1D rep, 1D affiliation, two complicated relationships (2 rps total), one relationship with a friendly figure of note (2 rps) and one free relationship: Six circles points altogether.*

### **GM's Circles Reserve**

The GM may reserve circles points for his figures of note; he does not have to spend all of his points now. See the GM's Circles Reserve heading in the Circles chapter. The GM does not have to spend circles points for his figures of note to have relationships with player characters who have spent circles points to have relationships with them.

**Character  
Burning**

## **10. INSTINCTS**

Choose three Instincts for your character. Instincts are game-mechanical priorities that you describe for your character. When you set an Instinct, you're telling the GM, the other players and even the system, "This is how I want my guy to act in this situation."

An Instinct is a declaration of action—ideally an if/then statement. Describe exactly what the character is doing and when: "When traveling alone, pack heat." Simple enough.

Simple is key. Instincts, in general, should be actions that can be accomplished in one glance, one sweep of the hand.

You can use *always*, *never* and *when* statements as well. The best Instincts are defined as clear statements—either "Always do X," or "Never do Y," or "If this condition arises, then take this action."



What an Instinct does is set a condition and a reaction to that condition for the character. *This reaction/behavior of the character is sacrosanct: So long as the conditions are met, the action is done.* The player doesn't even have to announce it. It either happens behind the scenes or instantly, without hesitation.

*A common Instinct is something like, "When on patrol, always have my ship ready to jet." Even if the player never states this, so long as it's written on the character sheet, it is fact.*

Instincts cannot allow you to bypass a test, but they can let you make a test *before* trouble starts or allow you to sneak in a test when it's not "your turn."

### **Instincts Break Rules Before We Roll, Not After**

Instincts allow players to set conditions for their characters that otherwise bend the rules. Any time you can slip in a "my guy would have already done that" based on a written Instinct, you're on the right track.

### **"So Instincts are Action-Oriented Macros?"**



Absolutely, that's one way of looking at it; think of it as the mechanical level. In a way, what the Instincts do is help the group to establish its social contract. At the mechanical level, my Instincts tell the group that "my guy" functions in a slightly different manner than the baseline rules.

Then there's what I'll call the character level. This works on the principle that actions speak louder than words. Instincts are the most primal, compact way of telling everybody at the table what your character is about. Sure, my character has a few Beliefs that do that too, but those are more of a big picture thing.

Finally, there's the story level. On this level, an Instinct is a direct statement to the GM, "I want to showcase this aspect of my character."

### **Specific Actions to Specific Stimulus**

"Protect my friends from harm" is a terrible Instinct. It's too vague. How do you protect your comrades from harm? What defines harm? It could be a gun shot, a falling rock or a faux pas at a ball. Ways to protect comrades are equally undefined. Therefore, it's too much ground for an Instinct to cover. Instincts are split second actions/decisions/reaction. If something requires even a moment of thought, it's probably not an Instinct. Remember: specific actions to specific stimulus; simple, direct, focused. Following this rule will help you create better characters and better games.

*Keep Sgt... Eliazar nearby—he's the brawn to my brain.*

*Always read a target before making a connection.*

*Always remain inconspicuous in public.*

*So his sergeant will always be assumed to be with his character unless Mayuran states otherwise. And his other two Instincts will allow him to slip in a test for Psychology or Inconspicuous even if it's not his scene or he's caught unawares.*

## 11. Steel

This section describes how to factor the Steel attribute.

### Steel

Base starting Steel is 3. Answer the following questions regarding the character's history. Each answer can raise or lower Steel.

- Has the character taken a soldier, lord-pilot or warrior-type lifepath? If so, add one to Steel.
- Has the character ever been severely wounded? If yes, and the player answered yes to the question above, raise Steel by one; if he was severely wounded but not a soldier, lower Steel by one.
- Has the character ever murdered or killed with his own hand? If he has done so more than once, raise Steel by one.
- Has the character been tortured, enslaved, beaten terribly over time or otherwise severely traumatized? If yes and his Will is 5 or higher, raise Steel by one. If yes, and Will is 3 or lower, reduce Steel by one.
- Has the character led a sheltered life, free from violence and pain? Reduce Steel by one.
- Has the character been raised in a competitive (but non-violent) culture—sports, debate, strategy games, courting? Raise Steel by one.
- Has the character given birth to a child? If so, raise Steel by one. Kernn are asexual. Players may answer yes to this if they have taken the Kernn Fazio or Mamma lifepaths.
- Does the character have the Bright Mark or Mule trait? If so, raise Steel by one.
- If the character's Perception is exponent 6 or higher, raise Steel by one.
- If the Will stat is exponent 5 or higher, raise Steel by one.
- If the character's Forte is exponent 6 or higher, raise Steel by one.

*Mayuran answered yes to four questions: His character is a soldier, he has been raised in a competitive environment, he has the Bright Mark and has a Will of 6. His Steel is 7.*



### Hesitation

Hesitation, the base Steel obstacle, is 10 minus the Will exponent. This can be further reduced with traits like Cool-Headed, Stoic and Fearless.

## 12. MORTAL Wound and Physical Tolerances

Physical Tolerances are used to determine how badly injured a character is when he's shot or struck with a weapon. The mechanics for weapons and injury are discussed later in the Burning Wheel. There are four tolerances: Superficial, Injured, Maimed and Mortal.

### Mortal Wound

Average Power and Forte. Round down. Add six. This is the character's Mortal Wound tolerance. All characters' Mortal Wounds go in the Human shade (H) on the Physical Tolerances Scale.

*With a Power and Forte of 4, his Mortal Wound is H10.*

### Superficial

Start at H1, add half Forte rounded down. That's the Superficial Wound tolerance.

### Injured Tolerance

Take half of your character's Forte, rounded down. Add that to Superficial tolerance. That's your Injured tolerance.

### Maimed

The Maimed result is placed two pips to the left of Mortal.

### Armored Tolerances

Underneath the regular physical tolerances is a second row. The numbers are listed A01, A02, A03, etc., instead of with an "H." These are *armored tolerances*—they reflect your character's tolerances while



wearing armor. Factoring armored tolerances is described in detail in the Armor and Iron chapters, but it's as simple as adding the armor's "AT" value to each of your tolerances.

## Human Scale

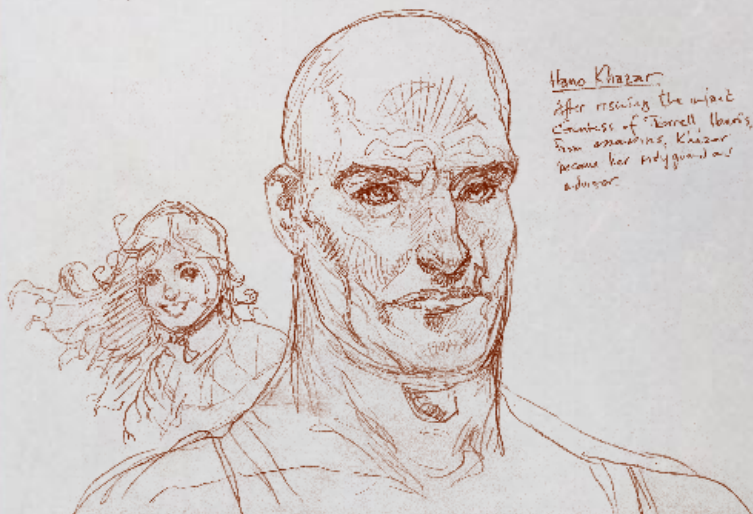
Wound Effects: 2x Superficial = -1D. 1x Injury = -1D. 1x Maimed = -3D. 1x Mortal = Out!

H 01	H 02	H 03	H 04	H 05	H 06	H 07	H 08	H 09	H 10	H 11	H 12	H 13	H 14	H 15	H 16
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<i>Sup</i>				<i>Inj</i>			<i>Mai</i>			<i>MW</i>					
A 01	A 02	A 03	A 04	A 05	A 06	A 07	A 08	A 09	A 10	A 11	A 12	A 13	A 14	A 15	A 16
<i>Anvil (AT 3):</i>						<i>Sup</i>		<i>Inj</i>		<i>Mai</i>		<i>MW</i>			

## Name Him and You're Finished

Think of a name and you're done! There's a list of names at the end of the Character Burner section.

*Our world, Agra, is inspired by the coastal states of the Persian Gulf. Therefore, Mayuran choose an appropriately inspired name: Prince Faisal Mossadegh.*



Character  
Burning

## Prince Faisal Mossadegh, Lieutenant

39-year-old Karsan Human Male. Homeworld: Agra. Index: High.

### Lifepaths

Born to Rule, Foundation Student, Psychologist, Propagandist, Anvil Elite, Lieutenant, X-O

### Beliefs

When my father sits on the throne, he will bring reform to our world. As my father's strong right hand, I protect his interests by bringing allies to our cause and eliminating his enemies.

Karem cannot be allowed to waste his life in the Church. I will free him from his slavish devotion to the Burning Wheel, regardless of his wishes.

I will protect the Foundation from the Inquisition witch hunt.

### Instincts

Keep Sgt. Eliazar nearby. He's the brawn to my brain.

Always read a target before making a connection.

Always remain inconspicuous in public.

### Stats

Will 6, Perception 5, Agility 4, Speed 3, Power 4, Forte 4

Resources 5, Circles 3, Mortal Wound H 10, Steel 7, Hesitation 4

### Skills

Psychology 6, Propaganda 5, Command 5, Persuasion 5, Psychologist-wise 4, Psychohistory 4, Administration 3, Squad Support Weapons 3, Intimidation 3, Sergeant-wise 3, Inconspicuous 3, Falsehood 3, Tactics 3, Unit-wise 2, Regulations-wise 2, Research 2, History 2, Advanced Mathematics 2, Media-wise 2, Signals Tech-wise 2, Etiquette 2, Theocracy-wise 2.

### Traits

Paranoid, Technical, Mark of Privilege, Bright Mark, The Psychologist's Code, Clever Bastard, Clean Cut, Anvil Trained, Scut Work, Your Grace, Privileged Position.

### Affiliations and Reputations

- Mark of Privilege trait—1D affiliation with the nobility of Agra.
- The Black Lynxes—a small force of anvil elite, 1D affiliation.
- Bright Mark—1D reputation as a psychologist in the Karsan League.
- 1D reputation—"a loyal commander who demands loyalty in return."

### Relationships

Prince Mossadegh, prince and father. Karem Mossadegh, son. Sigismund Weller, father-in-law. Sgt... Eliazar, second-in-command of Black Lynxes. Lord Omei al Matawakil, Thor's Anvil Lord.

### Technology

Anvil Armor, Psycho-Mnemonic Amplification Gear (project memories, +1D to Psychology).

# Setting Your Game's Starting Power Level

Restricting how many lifepaths each character may take is one step in limiting the power level of your game. However, the exponent cap is a more potent tool.

The default setting for the game is: No character may start with a skill exponent higher than 6. Unless the group decides to change this, consider the “6” switch automatically flipped on. This allows a great range of characters—from the incompetent to the masterful—but holds back the major munchkinisms.

However, you can get a lot of mileage out of the game by raising or lowering this number. Before starting a game, the whole group should discuss the power level and decide what is appropriate.

## Starting Skill Exponent 5

Capping starting exponents at 5 creates a grittier, “more human” game. Characters can be experts, but none of them has truly mastered anything. It provides a lot of room for growth and development. This is my personal favorite starting power level. Six or so lifepaths are recommended for this cap.

## Starting Skill Exponent 3 or 4

Starting exponents at 4 or lower gives the feel of a very mundane world. This is often suitable when characters are young or coming from everyday backgrounds into a life of adventure. This cap is best for long-term games (or very focused one-offs)—the development in the characters will be spectacular and dramatic. This cap is recommended for five or fewer lifepaths. It's worth noting that capping skill exponents at 4 or lower will extend the length of the game due to the nature of the Infection mechanics. So if you want a quick game, use the 6 cap. But if you want a nice long campaign, start everyone out at 3s or 4s.

## Stats and Attributes and the Starting Cap

Stats and attributes do not have a starting exponent cap. Stats are limited by the character's racial stock traits. Attributes don't have caps.





## Min Maxing

The Burning Empires character burning system is basically an intricate point-buy character creation system. It seems that the instinct among players of roleplaying games is to min-max in point-buy games. Focus and gain maximum benefit for your character, right? Not so much in Burning Empires. Min-maxing produces some odd results in the system. Such characters are often very unsatisfying to play. Taking a 3 in one stat to get a 5 or 6 in another is cool. Setting 1s and 2s against 6s and 7s is not cool. Such creatures are more like Frankensteinian monsters than playable characters. A well-rounded character will generate the most satisfying results in play.



Therefore, I hereby pass the Pencil of Veto power to the GM: A GM may veto a character that he feels has been obscenely min-maxed. The vetoed character must have his points redistributed in a way suitable to both the GM and the group at hand. This is one of the few aspects of outright GM power in the game. Use it wisely.

To the players, I give their own special trait: Heckler. It's a die trait. If the group feels that, heaven forfend, the GM has been remiss in his veto duties, they may begin the heckling chant. Do they heckle the GM? No! They heckle the min-max-monster creator! Chant with me: "Dude, what is this thing? He's got an 8 Perception and 2 Will, a fusor, iron and not a single relationship! 'I'm number one' is not a Belief; 'Kill all my enemies' is not an Instinct!" I find that it's best to start the chant low and gradually rise in cadence.

Above all, be nice to each other. That means don't min-max when you don't have to and don't make a player uncomfortable because he wants to play a powerful character. Just make sure the group is comfortable with the overall power level of everyone's characters.

## GM's Figures of Note and NPCs

As the players are taking care of their characters and their relationships, the GM burns up any figures of note not taken on by the players—the opposition and the allies. Burning up these characters is one of the prime duties of the GM. The rest of the game simply will not function unless they are as fleshed out as the player characters. Generally, figures of note obey the same rules and strictures as the player characters. The GM may raise their exponent cap by one and/or give them up to two extra lifepaths to reinforce them if need be. Also, as perk for the GM, his

figures of note are not required to pay for relationships with the player characters. So long as the PC has a relationship with the NPC, the figure of note gets the same relationship in reverse for free.

If the GM burns up subordinate characters for his figures of note, they abide by the same guidelines: They are relationships, so they must take two fewer lifepaths and have skills capped at 4s, but the GM may raise their cap by one or give them two extra lifepaths as needed!

The good news is that this is the most prep work the GM will have to do. After this, he'll make a conflict map of the world (which takes about ten minutes) and then make some notes at the end of each session. The GM's additional duties are described in the Playing the Game section.



**Character  
Burning**

### STARTING ARTHA

Artha is the term that describes the Burning Empires rewards system—points the players get for bringing their character's Beliefs into play and accomplishing their goals. There are three types of artha: fate, persona and deeds. We don't need to worry about what they do right now, only that there are three types.

The amount of artha each player begins with depends on how many lifepaths he took for his character. If a player has two characters—due to a bodyguard/assistant relationship—factor artha based on the main character. The player may divide his starting artha between the two characters.

10-LP Character — no starting artha

9-LP Character — 1 fate point

8-LP Character — 1 fate, 1 persona point

7-LP Character — 2 fate, 1 persona

6-LP Character — 3 fate, 2 persona

5-LP Character — 3 fate, 2 persona and 1 deeds point

### Opposition Artha

Each of the GM's opposition figures of note and relationships get an amount of artha based on the total number of lifepaths on the players' side.

Total number of lifepaths for all player characters.

24 LPs— Each figure of note starts with 3 fate and 2 persona points.

Relationship characters in the GM's camp starts with 1 fate and 1 persona.

28 LPs— Each figure of note starts with 3 fate, 3 persona. One figure of note also starts with a deeds point. Relationship characters in the GM's camp starts with 2 fate and 1 persona.

32 LPs— 3 fate, 3 persona and 1 deeds for all opposition figures of note. 2 fate and 2 persona for relationships.

36 LPs— 4 fate, 3 persona and 1 deeds for figures of note. 3 fate and 2 persona for relationships.

40+ LPs— 4 fate, 4 persona and 1 deeds for figures of note. 3 fate and 3 persona for relationships.









# THE CORONER'S STORY

*Arthemus pulled back the sheet to examine the corpse beneath it. He ran a hand over its lithe, young skin, tracing the lacerations and bruises with his fingertips. "This is...brutal."*

*"Just make it look like a Kerrn mauled him." Herod said.*

*"Do what?" Arthemus exclaimed, "How am I supposed to..."*

*"You'll figure it out, I'm sure." Herod said, "The Duke has every confidence in your abilities."*

*"I'm the damned coroner." Arthemus replied, "Covering up the Duke's excesses is not my job."*

*"It is now." Herod said, and shot Arthemus a wolfish grin. He gave a mock salute, and turned to go. "Be quick about it too, I need to dump the body before daybreak."*

*Arthemus sighed and waved Herod off. He flipped the switch on the biologic forensic analyzer and the antiquated machine hummed as it came to life. First thing was to scrub the Duke's DNA. As he made a pass with the scanner and waited for the results, he lit a cigarette and laid out the rest of his tools on the tray. The BFA chirped in an odd fashion. He glanced at the screen. His jaw went slack and the cigarette tumbled to the floor.*

*"No." he said, "No. No. No." He zoomed in on the brain and cursed. There it was: a worm. Arthemus turned the youth's head to the side and felt around the back of his scalp. He grimaced as his finger found the hulling site, small and crudely drilled. Keeping his eyes on the screen, he dug into the resin cap with the forceps, and gave it a tiny tug. The worm twitched. It was still alive.*

*A knock on the door startled him, and he switched the BFA's screen off as he went to answer. As he reached for the knob, Arthemus hid a scalpel behind his back in a white-knuckled grip. He opened the door a crack to peer out. In the hallway stood the most feared man in the palace—Baron Castor. His crisp, black uniform bristled with medals and accolades, and a low-slung pistol hung from his hip.*



*"Your Eminence," Arthemus managed a formal tone. "How can I help you?"*

*"The Duke asked me to check on you, Lord Coroner," Castor boomed. "Wanted to see how it was coming along."*

*"I..." Arthemus stammered, his eyes flicking to the pistol and back. "I'm nearly done. About to do the bite marks."*

*"Wanted to know if you'd found anything unusual," Castor pried. His dark eyes probed Arthemus' face. The coroner felt the hairs on his neck stand straight up.*

*"Nothing at all," Arthemus said. "Should I have?"*

*Castor's eyes narrowed. "Very well, then," he said. "You will, of course, alert me if you do."*

*"Of course," Arthemus replied. He shut the door and backed away, holding his breath until he heard the click of Castor's boots echo down the hallway. He dropped the scalpel and fumbled for another cigarette.*

*I should have told him about the worm, he thought. But what if he's one of them? And what about the Duke? Arthemus shook his head and thought about the worm. Destroy it, and he would be safe—for the time being. If he alerted Herod or Castor or even the Duke—what if they were Vaylen? Who could he trust? How would he know until he scanned them? And if he started scanning openly, the Vaylen in the palace would know they'd been discovered—and they would come for him.*

*His gaze drifted across the room and fell upon the battered body on the table, leaving him to wonder just what he was protecting in the first place. He lit another cigarette and whispered a prayer to the wheel. He hurriedly finished his duties and paged Herod to tell him the body was ready for disposal.*

*Lord Arthemus Kessel, Coroner*

*Age: 37*

*Stats: Will 4, Perception 5, Agility 4, Speed 3, Power 3, Forte 4*

*Resources: 6      Circles: 2      Steel: 5 (Hesitation 6)      Mortal Wound: H9*

*Skills: Investigative Logic 5, Murder-wise 5, Imperial Law 4, Bureaucracy 4, Surgery 4, Persuasion 4, Etiquette 3, Bribe-wise 3, Human Biology 2, Instruction 2, Astronomy 2, Musical Instrument (Piano) 2, Doctrine 2, Writ-wise 2, Court-wise 2, Paperwork-wise 2*

*Traits: Mark of Privilege, Your Lordship, Mustache, Iron Stomach, Eye for Detail, Privileged Position*

*Technology: Field Kit, Calvaria Integrity Scanner, Coroner's office with clinic/lab*

*Affiliations: Nobility 1D, Duke Brasso's Household 2D, Local security forces 1D*

*Reputations: Thorough Lord Coroner of the Forged Lord 1D*

*Relationships: Herod—Anvil Lord, brother. Baron Castor—Justiciar, rival.*





## THE IRON EMPIRES

For humanity, it is the year 597 of the Hanrilke Era. The Great Civil War has come to a close. Rather than settle the succession, it fractured humanity into numerous warring states.

The Hanrilke Empire, once a symbol of order and peace, is a distant memory. The noble houses of the Darikahn Empire possess the Hanrilke throne. The Gonzagin asserts its claim to the Hanrilke bloodline. Where once there was a single emperor who oversaw all of human life, there are now “Iron Empires;” interstellar states run by petty, warlike nobles.

The Mundus Humanitas, once the Hanrilke state religion, has been officially outlawed in the Darikahn Empire, and its influence throughout the human realm is crumbling. Where it was the one true faith, galvanizing all of humanity, it now competes with hundreds of local cults. The Church desperately tries to quash these heretics, but as one nest is crushed, another bursts into the light to infest and infect.

This is a civilization on the brink of disaster. The human race threatens to tear itself apart with jealousy and greed.

### *The Great Civil War (455–471), The Formation of the Iron Empires*

In 422, the Hanrilke Emperor Ober VI inherited a shattered and demoralized demesne. Miraculously, he managed to rule for 33 years before open civil war erupted, largely because the major dukes ignored him and did as they pleased. In 455, Duke Darikahn and Duke Gonzagin amassed their fleets at each other's borders over a trade dispute. Emperor Ober VI sent the imperial fleet to halt the conflict. Darikahn assumed the emperor was siding



with his Gonzagin cousin and opened fire on the Imperials. The conflict escalated rapidly, factions chose sides, and the Great Civil War began.

The imperial fleet, outgunned by the wealthier and more heavily armed Darikahn, collapsed quickly. The emperor was unable to summon significant aid. The Phaesian worlds saw their opportunity. They declared independence and opposed imperial peacekeepers wherever they found them. The Cyreans heretics in the Comoran Worlds turned the conflict into a holy war against the Mundus Humanitas.

In 461, Duke Alvanar Darikahn captured the imperial palace and executed Ober VI and his line, declaring himself emperor. Duke Quantis Gonzagin, second cousin to Ober VI, disputed the claim and turned the Great Civil War into a war of succession. The Church openly supported the Gonzagin duke, reasoning that his claim was the more legitimate. The Darikahn response was to withdraw their support from the Church, and to expel or arrest cotars preaching against Darikahn legitimacy. (Once the war died down, Mundus leaders within the Empire learned to keep a low profile. In this way, while not officially tolerated, the Church has avoided a complete expulsion.)

In 467, a number of southern lords, fed up with the civil war and frightened by Vaylen massing on their borders, declared their neutrality and formed the Karsan League. The Darikahn and Gonzagin were too embroiled in their own conflict to oppose them. As the war continued, several other houses solidified control of their regions. Power in the far north coalesced around the Urfan and Casiguran families, while the Dunedin and ancient Comoran families came to prominence in the central sectors. The longer the Great Civil War went on, the weaker central authority—and therefore the Darikahn's claim to the Hanrilke throne—became.



The major houses, their resources exhausted, agreed to a ceasefire in late 471. The Darikahn declared victory and established themselves as the “rightful heirs” to the Hanrilke throne. Unfortunately, their empire was only a fraction of the size of the previous Hanrilke one. Though the Darikahn Empire is the wealthiest of the modern Iron Empires, encompassing the inner districts around Zhetan, it is only a sliver of that to which Ober VI laid claim.

From 471 to the present, border wars have continued between the various empires. Each spies on the others and engages in sabotage wherever possible. Most disregard the Vaylen threat altogether.

### *Human Common Traits*

Humans have one common trait which describes them, Human. Why? Because, in general, traits are used to describe how a character is different from the norm and humans are that norm.

#### Human

01.

Human characters have the following stat maximums: 8 Perception, 8 Will and 6s in all physical stats. Human characters may not begin the game with stats higher than 6, but they may advance their Will and Perception to 7 or 8 in the course of play.

### *Human Cultural Traits*

The structure of the cultures of the Iron Empires is represented in the various lifepath settings in this section. While the individual empires are similar in structure, the following traits describe the various cultural philosophies and viewpoints that differentiate the societies of the Iron Empires.

Available cultural traits for characters are determined by the galactic location of your world—as decided in the World Burner. You must take at least one cultural trait from your empire. It’s free. Other cultural traits from your empire or any of the others may be bought. They are optional and cost one trait point each.

#### **Casiguran Matriarchy**

Though they trade actively with the Comoran and Urfan Worlds, the Casiguran Worlds are very insular. Their borders, which lie to the galactic north of the Comoran Worlds, are officially closed to outsiders.





They are ruled by a matriarchy, a system of government the rest of the human realm, with its Mundus-inspired mistrust of women, finds suspicious. In fact, the Mundus Humanitas classifies the Casigurans Matriarchy as a cult. While it does have a few outposts, the Church has trouble making headway there. The female-dominated culture finds the Church understandably distasteful.

### Deferential

Char 1 pt

Casigurans men and women, whatever their political disposition, are deferential to women.

### Matriarchal

Char 1 pt

The majority of Casigurans believe in a matriarchal system of governance—women are best suited to rule, and therefore they hold the political and military roles.

### Patriarchal

Char 1 pt

There are some among the Casigurans who seek to overthrow the matriarchy and install the system of patriarchal governance common to the other Iron Empires.

### Private

Char 1 pt

As a rule, the Casigurans are an intensely private people. They prefer to keep their affairs to themselves.



## Comoran Worlds



The Comoran Worlds are not so much a political as a cultural entity. They are located in the northern part of the human realm and cover several different nations. In fact, it was the Comoran lords who founded the Kudus Theocracy.

All of the Comoran Worlds are religious. Outside of the Kudus Theocracy, the Mundus Humanitas is strongest here, with tens of billions of devotees and the largest concentration of Church officials and forces anywhere.

The Comoran Worlds are also home to the Cyreans. This splinter group accepts all the teachings of Ahmilahk but disagrees on protocol and ceremony. They long ago established an orthodox version of the faith and compete with the Mundus Humanitas for believers.

As the Federated Empire plunged into civil war, a number of independent-minded lords in the Phaesian Arm of the Comoran Worlds saw an opportunity. They launched an offensive to take territory in a bald-faced planet grab. The most successful lords were all devotees of the Cyrean arm of the Church. These lords transformed the fight into a civil holy war against the orthodox and corrupt (in their view) Comoran worlds. While the Darikahn waged war to unify the empire, the northern worlds tore themselves apart over religion.

### Pious

Char 1 pt

Many of the Comoran believe in the supremacy of the Mundus Humanitas with such piety that it verges on zealotry. Left to their own devices, these pious souls would join with the Dunedin and assault the Darikahn to restore the Mundus Humanitas. However, their piety is currently inwardly focused, as they must deal with the Cyreans at home.

### Cyrean Heretic

Char 1 pt

Cyrean "heretics" are as pious as any good Comoran, but they do not believe in the supremacy of the Mundus Humanitas. They believe the church is morally



bankrupt, decadent and corrupt. Their own churches preach the Prophet's teachings, but they have no fortress temples, no primarch and no massive church bureaucracy. Their religious power is decentralized and their faith more egalitarian. Cyreans are vehement in their beliefs—they believe the Mundus Humanitas jeopardizes souls, not saves them. Devout Cyreans are committed to its eradication.

### World Weary

Char 1 pt

There is a segment of the Comoran people who tire of the fighting and bloodshed in the prophet's name.

## Darikahn Empire

The Darikahn are the most potent noble house of the eight Iron Empires. Their emperor, Magnans Darikahn, moves now to marshal his forces and crush the Gonzagin claims.

In theory, the Darikahn military is controlled directly by the emperor. He can call up troops wherever he likes without the lords who supervise them having any say. However, the Empire is populated by a number of powerful dukes who resist this type of policy. Many of them have agreements with each other to defy the emperor if he abuses his authority. Therefore, The emperor is careful not to cross that line. He knows that if enough dukes rebelled he would be unable to stop them. Consequently, he has appointed counts and earls to shore up his position and counter the threat of independent-minded dukes.



### Darikahn Loyalist

Char 1 pt

Darikahn Loyalists believe utterly in the Darikahn claim to the throne. To them the Darikahn Empire is the true successor of the old Federated Empire—hitherto known as the Hanrilke Empire—and all else are pretenders and upstarts.

### Agnostic

Char 1 pt

An agnostic Darikahn cares little for the power plays and political struggles of his home empire. Perhaps he feels there are more important things at stake?

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### Turncoat

Char 1 pt

The Darikahn Turncoat once believed the Darikahn were the inheritors to the imperial pedigree, but experience has taught him otherwise. This character has thrown his lot in with the Gonzagin or another lesser nation.

### Baroque

Char 1 pt

The Darikahn are often categorized by their baroque sense of style and fashion. They often choose complex, ornate, oddly shaped and colored clothing, accessories and jewelry.

## Dunedin Worlds

### *The Dunedin Crusade (530-533)*



Toward the end of the Great Civil War, Emperor Darikahn outlawed the Church, an act contributing to the Theocracy's formation. The Mundus Humanitas opposed his claim, and so he sought to destroy them as Ober I had their predecessors, the Church of the Divine Machine. In 530, with Church backing, Hanse Norsadek, a Dunedin overlord, launched a crusade into Darikahn space with the intention of bringing the true faith back to the empire.

In reality, this crusade focused on filling Norsadek's coffers and giving fractious nobles something to plunder besides one another. The raids were immensely profitable, and if the Church was willing to help, he was willing to spread their creed.

Unfortunately, things went awry early. Norsadek's father had contested the overlordship of the Dunedin worlds with House Gadazh. With Norsadek off conquering, Countess Shari Gadazh, the eldest in her line, launched a coup. Norsadek had to recall his forces to beat her back. He managed to exterminated her entire line by 534, but his holy crusade was over.

### *The Second Dunedin Crusade (588-Present)*

Hanse Norsadek's son, Hanset III, decided in 588 to complete his father's quest. Like the first crusade, this one was backed by the



Church and was ostensibly waged to bring the true faith back to the Darikahn Empire. Also like its predecessor, it was principally geared toward acquiring booty.

The second crusade continues to this day, with the Darikahn Empire's entire northern border awash in blood. It has been considerably more successful than the first. Dunedin treasure chests have been enriched, and they have made considerable territorial gains as well, but it has done little to win more converts back to the faith.

### Crusader

Char 1 pt

The vast majority of Dunedin believe it is their holy duty to topple the Darikahn and reinstall the Mundus Humanitas as the galactic state religion.

### Crypto-Missionary

Char 1 pt

While many Dunedin claim to be agnostic in the religion-fueled war blazing along their borders, most are not. Most are, in fact, crypto-missionaries: zealots who are sent out to neighboring systems to spread the Dunedin cause via trade and marriage.

### Opportunist

Char 1 pt

The Dunedin opportunist is a hard and cynical type. He uses the veil of religious warfare to hide his own aims to profit amidst the destruction.

*Gonzagin Empire*

## Gonzagin Empire

The Gonzagin maintain their claim that the Darikahn are usurpers. Though the Gonzagin Empire is small, it continues to encourage all right-thinking citizens to oppose the Darikahn. Unfortunately, it currently lacks the resources to continue the fight.

### *The Gonzagin Civil War (576-579)*

In 576, Duke Astor Gonzagin and Duke Illien Evans went to war over Gonzagin policy toward incursions from the Karsan League. They represented the two most powerful factions in the Gonzagin court, and they took the rest of the empire with them, polarizing Gonzagin politics. The conflict had been brewing for three years, and



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Evans finally lost patience, making a military claim for the Gonzagin throne.

The conflict spilled into Darikahn space, and, at first, the Darikahn quietly aided the rebels. However, the Darikahn nobles on the border smelled opportunity. In 578, they began raiding Gonzagin territory under the cloak of aiding one side or the other in the civil war.

By 579, the Gonzagin Civil War metastasized into the Eight Years War. United by the presence of their old rivals, the Gonzagin turned from fighting one another and drove back the Darikahn raiders. However, weakened by three years of civil war, the Gonzagin didn't have the strength to take the fight into Darikahn space.

### Austere

Char 1 pt

In seeming direct reaction to their Darikahn brethren, the Gonzagin prefer an austere style to their clothing and ceremony. Simple architectural shapes and monochrome colors in dress are preferred even in court.

### Cniht

Char 1 pt

Cnihts are Gonzagin who identify with the old guard of Gonzagin nobility—even if they are not nobles themselves—and use this identification to justify the Gonzagin pretensions to the Hanrilke throne.

## Karsan League

The Karsan League is not so much a nation as a collection of independent worlds. It includes 89 different states with mutual trade agreements that help create a national economy of sorts, but there is no overarching state government. Resting as it does between the Darikahn and Gonzagin Empires, it is a thorn in the side of both. And the Kudus Theocracy views its tolerance of psychology as heretical.

While the Gonzagin and Darikahn fought one another in the Eight Years War (579-587), the Vaylen launched an assault across the Karsan galactic border. After three years of intense fighting, the League managed to push the invaders back across the border and end the conflict in 585.



Despite its dire situation with Vaylen, the Karsan League is independent of the insanity of the rest of the realm and uses its freedom to pursue scientific research and development. It trades openly with the Darikahn and Gonzagin, but it is a culture





focused on war and survival. A near perpetual state of war grips the League as it seeks to fend off Vaylen invaders. The League has suffered greatly at the hands of the Vaylen, with whom they share a long border, but the formidable psychologist-warrior sect, the Circle of 10,000, call the Karsan League home. They and the Kunmai nobility are prepared to make the Vaylen pay when the coming final assault sweeps away the rest of humanity.

### Kunmai

Char 1 pt

The Kunmai are one of the more powerful groups in the Karsan League. They hold to imperial tradition, while ascribing to the more liberal views common to the people of the Karsan League. Since the collapse of the Hanrilke dynasty, the Kunmai have promoted their own imperial lineage under their own emperor, the Tirkahn.

### Technical

Char 1 pt

Most citizens of the League place a premium on technological prowess, innovation and science.

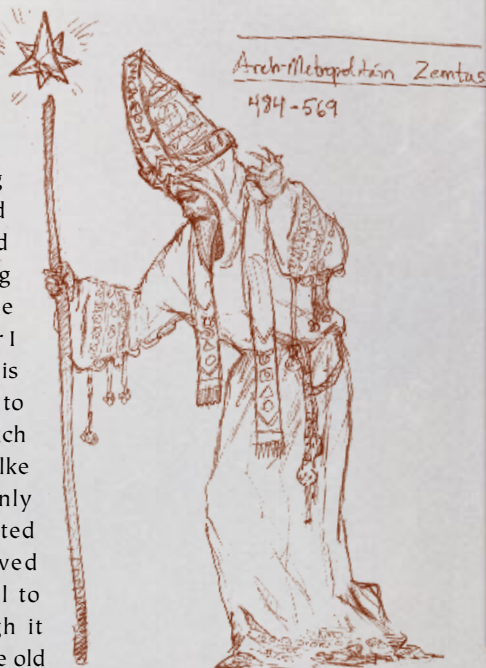
### Formal

Char 1 pt

Many who are not from the Karsan League consider its social customs rather formal and rigid. Karsans merely think they are being polite. This formality extends to their dress and contracts, but not into private life.

### Kudus Theocracy

The Mundus Humanitas, the Hanrilke state religion, opposed the Darikahn claim from the outset of the Great Civil War. During the conflict, it worked hard through the Gonzagin and Comoran factions to bring the Darikahn down. The Darikahn Emperor Alvanar I outlawed the religion. In this way, though he managed to grab the throne, he lost much of his claim to the Hanrilke legacy. He ruled over only a fraction of the Federated Empire, and he outlawed the very religion integral to Hanrilke culture. Though it established its court on the old



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imperial homeworld and claimed to be the rightful heir, the Darikahn Empire is not the Hanrilke one, and the Kudus seek to ensure it never will be.

The Kudus Theocracy was established in 462 during the Great Civil War. The allied Comoran lords proposed establishing the exiled Mundus theocracy on Mosum, the most important of their worlds. They supported the creation of a theocratic state under the spiritual and temporal rule of the Mundus Humanitas' Primarch. The Comoran nobility and the church negotiated the Theocracy's boundaries in 465, formally creating the Theocracy. The Comorans view this concession a gift to the church and feel a sense of propriety toward the Theocracy they helped create.

The Kudus Theocracy seeks to restore the Mother Church as the proper authority in the Darikahn and to crush the Cyrean upstarts in the Comoran Worlds. In the interest of securing its position and furthering its agenda, the Church supported two recent crusades against the Darikahn, both staged from the Dunedin Worlds. This has the dual effect of binding the Dunedin Worlds closer to the Church and giving the Church a measure of deniability.

### Devout

Char 1 pt

Kudusites almost universally identify themselves as devout and worshipful members of the Mundus Humanitas. They see the Prophet Ahmilahk as their savior and can often be heard invoking his name for aid and succor.

### Atheist

Char 1 pt

There are those few who live in the oppressive regime of the Theocracy who resent its autocratic rulership. They have no faith in the Primarch nor in the Prophet, and care nothing for the religious state.



### Urfan

The Urfan Worlds lie at the extreme northern edge of human space. They are very poor, lying along both Silver and White Courses, regions of dim, failing stars. Like the Casigurans, they distrust outsiders. Moreover, they are very conservative. They share the other northern peoples' religious fervor, but they claim their faith is the orthodox strain. The Urfan differ with the Mundus Humanitas on points of ecclesiastical structure and worship. The Urfan believe that they have the pure



distillation of the teachings of the Prophet and do not like to associate with those who have “lost the way.”

The Urfan Worlds are harassed on their frontiers by formidable pirates—former hammer lords who have resorted to banditry and pillage to support their fleets. The Urfan are fierce fighters, but their poverty keeps them from mounting more than disjointed military operations.

The Urfan Worlds are led by a Grand Lord called the U’zar, whose lineage can be traced back to Ahmilahk. The U’zar is also the metropolitan and head of the Mundus faith in the north. He does not have the authority to force the petty nobles to do his bidding like the Dunedin Emperor, and he lacks the support that the lords in the Kudus Theocracy give their metropolitan.



### Inscrutable

Char 1 pt

Urfan are often noted for their odd manners and inscrutable demeanor. Whether it is their foreign bearing or natural inclination, Urfan are hard to read.

### Redoubtable

Char 1 pt

Many a commander has thanked Ahmilahk for the sturdy nature of his Urfan troops. The frontier life and relative poverty of their systems has turned the Urfan into a resourceful and pragmatic people, ready to stand up to any challenge.

### Remote

Char 1 pt

If they have one flaw, they are emotionally remote. Perhaps withholding their affection helps them deal with the hardships of life on the galactic frontier.

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## Nobility

The Iron Empires subscribe to a system of hereditary rule, in which the right to govern is passed by blood, from father to son, mother to daughter. In the distant past, this right was granted to the nobles' forebears by the divine Emperor. Therefore, this right to rule is divinely inherited as well.

But these are dark times for the venerable noble class. Their once great works are crumbling around them, their power undermined by rebels, heretics,

challengers and the very worm itself. It is all the nobility can do to hold on to what it has, to protect itself from further depredation by its enemies who wish to devour the class whole and use its power for their own ends.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
<b>Born to Rule</b>	8 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Mark of Privilege, Your Lordship, Your Eminence, Your Grace, Your Majesty				
<b>Cæptir</b>	5 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Close Combat, Etiquette, Stentor-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<i>Requirements:</i> Mark of Privilege. If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				
<b>Bastard</b>	4 yrs	0	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Family Secret-wise, Extortion				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Bastard, Contender				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second lifepath and may only be taken once.				
<b>Companion</b>	8 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Etiquette, Astronomy, Musical Instrument, Doctrine, Persuasion				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second or third lifepath and may only be taken once				



<b>Armiger</b>	5 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Assault Weapons, Armiger-wise, Intimidation <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Anvil Trained, Tough <i>Requirements:</i> Cœptir, Sergeant or Court Cœptir				
<b>Lord-Pilot Anvil</b>	5 yrs	1	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Squad Support Weapons, Tactics, Iron-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Corvus and Crucis, Iron Trained <i>Requirements:</i> Armiger, Court Armiger or Magnate				
<b>Lord-Pilot Hammer</b>	5 yrs	2	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Pilot, Helm, Navigation, Tactics, Vehicular Weapons, Zero G <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Corvus and Crucis <i>Requirements:</i> Armiger, Court Armiger or Magnate				
<b>Lady</b>	7 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Soothing Platitudes, Child Rearing, Estate Management, Seduction, Inconspicuous, Court-wise, Husband-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt <i>Requirements:</i> Companion				
<b>Court Lord</b>	8 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Persuasion, Falsehood, Etiquette, Conspicuous, Court-wise, Lord-wise, Scheme-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Wiggid, Effeminate, Scheming <i>Requirements:</i> Chamberlain, Treasurer, Constable, Coroner, Lord-Pilot Hammer or Lord-Pilot Anvil				
<b>Hammer Lord</b>	9 yrs	3	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Strategy, Command, Physics, Artillery, Hammer-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Hammer Lord, REMF <i>Requirements:</i> Lord-Pilot Hammer				
<b>Anvil Lord</b>	7 yrs	3	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Command, Strategy, Oratory, Artillery, Anvil-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Anvil Lord <i>Requirements:</i> Lord-Pilot Anvil				
<b>Void Lord</b>	10 yrs	0	2	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Void-wise, Vaylen-wise, Bureaucracy, Lost Secrets-wise. 1 pt: General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Bitter, Frustrated, Righteous <i>Requirements:</i> Hammer Lord or Anvil Lord				
<b>Forged Lord</b>	12 yrs	3	2	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Administration, Logistics, Noble-wise, Hammer-wise, Anvil-wise, Planet-wise. 2 pts General. <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Forged <i>Requirements:</i> Hammer Lord and Anvil Lord or the Your Grace or Your Majesty traits				

## Stewardship and Court

The governments of the Iron Empires are complex. Maintaining an empire across the vast gulfs of space requires the effort and dedication of a massive bureaucracy. Nobles, militarists and learned men are inducted into the bureaucracy to ensure that their imperial overlord's will is done from system to system and planet to planet.



An imperial bureaucracy is called a Stewardship. Stewards are planetary governors and the imperial bureaucracy underneath them is overlaid upon the feudal structure of the nobility, so that lords-pilot serve as lesser members of the court, and powerful barons and dukes serve as Treasurers, Constables, Chamberlains and Stewards.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
<b>Court Clerk</b>	4 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Bureaucracy, Bribe-wise, Paperwork-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<b>Courier</b>	4 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Streetwise, Palace-wise, Inconspicuous <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Late				
<b>Man-at-Arms</b>	4 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Close Combat, Intimidation, Etiquette, Security <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Muscle <i>Requirements:</i> Discipline Officer, Anvil Elite, Sergeant, Sodalis				
<b>Court Cœptir</b>	4 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Court-wise, Etiquette, Stentor-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt <i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				
<b>Herald</b>	5 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Heraldry, Noble Family-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Formalist, Eidetic Memory <i>Requirements:</i> Cœptir, Court Cœptir or Born to Fire				
<b>Bureaucrat</b>	6 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Bureaucracy, Soothing Platitudes, Form-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Adumbrate Veil <i>Requirements:</i> Courtier, Court Clerk, Cœptir, Court Cœptir or Student				





<b>Court Armiger</b>	5 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Etiquette, Assault Weapons, Armiger-wise, Intimidation <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Anvil Trained, Pragmatic <i>Requirements:</i> Novitiate, Cœptir, Court Cœptir, Sergeant or Man-at-Arms				
<b>Stentor</b>	6 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Iron-wise, Fabrication, Repair <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Appreciative of Good Craft <i>Requirements:</i> Cœptir or Court Cœptir <i>without</i> noble rank (Your Lordship, etc.)				
<b>Lord-Pilot Anvil</b>	5 yrs	1	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Etiquette, Squad Support Weapons, Tactics, Iron-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Corvus and Crucis, Groundhog, Iron Trained <i>Requirements:</i> Mark of Privilege and Armiger/Court Armiger, or Anvil Captain, Executive Official, Magnate, Treasurer, Financier or Chamberlain				
<b>Mandarin</b>	6 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Imperial Law, Church Law, Instruction, Province-wise, Bureaucracy, Discipline-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Mustache, Scheming <i>Requirements:</i> Student, Court Clerk, Foundation Student or Courtier				
<b>Courtier</b>	6 yrs	1	2	—
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Ugly Truth, Persuasion, Seduction, Inconspicuous, Court Gossip-wise, Noble-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Fop, Rapier Wit <i>Requirements:</i> Cœptir or Court Cœptir				
<b>Hostage</b>	4 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Foreign Languages, Foreign History. 1 pt General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Homesick <i>Requirements:</i> Mark of Privilege trait				
<b>Duenna</b>	6 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Child Rearing, Heir-wise, Ugly Truth, Instruction <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Dismissive, Curt <i>Requirements:</i> Companion with no noble rank trait				
<b>Artificer</b>	10 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Iron Artifice, Lord-Pilot-wise, Weapon Technology-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Artisan <i>Requirements:</i> Stentor				
<b>Ravilar</b>	5 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: History, Composition, Propaganda, Obscure History <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Ear for Voices <i>Requirements:</i> Companion, Student, Foundation Student or Courtier				
<b>Coroner</b>	6 yrs	2	2	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Human Biology, Investigative Logic, Writ-wise, Murder-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Iron Stomach <i>Requirements:</i> Mandarin, Court Lord, Magnate, Dregus or Advocate				

## CHARACTER BURNER

Constable	5 yrs	2	2	—
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**Skills:** 6 pts: Imperial Law, Outlaw-wise, Province-wise, Spaceport-wise, Tax-wise

**Traits:** 1 pt: Nose for Trouble

**Requirements:** Mandarin, Lord-Pilot (Hammer or Anvil), Coroner, First Officer or X-O

Justiciar	6 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
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**Skills:** 5 pts: Interrogation, Torture, Criminal-wise, Amercement

**Traits:** 1 pt: Stern Demeanor

**Requirements:** Mandarin, Constable, Coroner, Anvil Captain, Hammer Captain

Treasurer	5 yrs	3	0	—
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**Skills:** 6 pts: Treasury-wise, Estate Management, Accounting, Tax-wise, Debt-wise

**Traits:** 2 pts: Pecunious, Lavish Taste

**Requirements:** Banker, Financier, Constable, Coroner, Anvil Lord, Hammer Lord, Court Lord or Void Lord

Chamberlain	8 yrs	3	2	—
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**Skills:** 10 pts: Soothing Platitudes, Intimidation, Ugly Truth, Bureaucracy-wise, Power Player-wise, Diplomat-wise, Lord Steward-wise, Intrigue-wise, Ancestry-wise, Patron-wise. 1 pt: General.

**Traits:** 1 pt

**Requirements:** Justiciar, Treasurer or Court Lord

Lord Steward	5 yrs	3	2	—
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**Skills:** 5 pts: Imperial Edict-wise, Imperial Official-wise, Imperial Capital-wise

**Traits:** 2 pts: Under Pressure, Emperor's Steward

**Requirements:** Court Lord, Forged Lord, Void Lord





# Hammer

Hammer, in the Iron Empires, represents the space-based navies of the nobility. In an empire that spans multiple star systems, the hammer is the ultimate expression and projection of power. No instrument of policy in the Iron Empires can be enforced without hammer assets. These warships and their crews are the first line of defense and the first to attack. The mere movements of a hammer fleet can cause a planet-bound rebel lord to surrender. And time and time again, it is the hammer assets that smash wave after wave of Vaylen invaders—before they can set down on the planet and corrupt the population.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
<b>Yeoman</b>	3 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Crew, Back-Breaking Labor, Cleaning-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Hazed, Distortion Sickness				
<b>Shipfitter</b>	3 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Repair, Damage-wise, Fire Control, Ship-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Black Fingernails				
<i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Sensors Tech</b>	3 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Sensors, Glitch-wise, Profile-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Twitchy				
<i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Signals Tech</b>	3 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Signals, Cryptography, Sferics-wise, Emissions Footprint-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Vacant Stare, Jumpy, Paranoid				
<i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Turret Crew</b>	3 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Vehicular Weapons, Vehicular Weapon-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Cocky, Fatalistic, “Hammer Flies, Anvil Dies”				
<i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Fire Control Tech</b>	3 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Artillery, Big Guns-wise, Attack Vector-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pts: Serious as a Heart Attack				
<i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Cook</b>	5 yrs	2	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Cooking, Local Ingredients-wise, Intestinal Disorder-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Weird, Mangled, Thousand-Yard Stare				
<i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Cæptir</b>	3 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Ship-wise, Crew-wise, Officer-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Naive, Idealist, Tailhook				
<i>Requirements:</i> Mark of Privilege trait. If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				

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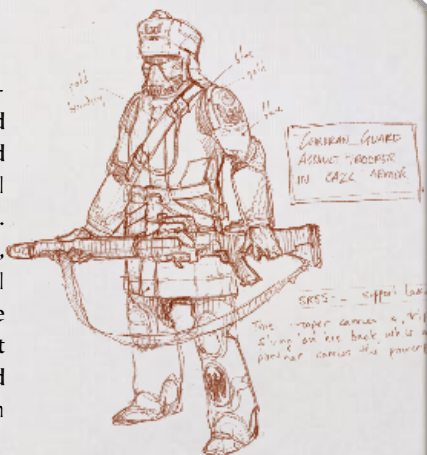
## CHARACTER BURNER

<b>Surgeon</b>	5 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Surgery, Pharmacology, Triage-wise, Illness-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Grim, Practical <b>Requirements:</b> Two previous Hammer or Spacefarer lifepaths, Doctor, Physician, Coroner, Foundation Student, Court Cœptir, Cœptir or Student				
<b>Discipline Officer</b>	4 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Intimidation, Interrogation, Security, Regulations-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Hard Hearted <b>Requirements:</b> Two previous Hammer lifepaths, Constable or Justiciar				
<b>Hammer Engineer</b>	5 yrs	1	0	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 6 pts: Munitions, Fabrication, Engineering, Armorer, Cryonics <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: I Know This Ship Like My Own Hands <b>Requirements:</b> Shipfitter, Student, Foundation Student, Court Armiger or Armiger				
<b>Physicist</b>	5 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 6 pts: Physics, Science, Technology-wise, Phenomenon-wise, Distortion-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Smarter Than You, Bookworm <b>Requirements:</b> Navigator, Student or Foundation Student				
<b>Hammer Master</b>	5 yrs	1	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 6 pts: Bargaining, Accounting, Supply-wise, Contraband-wise, Prostitute-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Harried, Fits of Generosity, Withering Stare, Hard Nosed, <b>Requirements:</b> Discipline Officer, Companion, Hammer Engineer, Surgeon or Ship's Captain				
<b>First Officer</b>	5 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Ship Management, Tactics, Officer-wise, Crew-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Number One!, No Nonsense <b>Requirements:</b> Hammer Master, Discipline Officer, Navigator, Physicist, Hammer Engineer or Lord-Pilot Hammer				
<b>Lord-Pilot Hammer</b>	5 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 7 pts: Command, Pilot, Helm, Navigation, Vehicular Weapons, Zero G <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Corvus and Crucis, Distortion Sickness, Distortion Monkey, "Hammer Flies, Anvil Dies" <b>Requirements:</b> Armiger, Circle of 10,000, Court Armiger, Magnate or three Hammer lifepaths				
<b>Navigator</b>	4 yrs	1	1	—
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Navigation, Star-wise, Trade Route-wise <b>Traits:</b> — <b>Requirements:</b> Lord-Pilot Hammer				
<b>Hammer Captain</b>	6 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 6 pts: Strategy, Hammer-wise, Space Station-wise, Spaceport-wise, Interdiction-wise. 1 pt: General. <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Officer, Stern Demeanor <b>Requirements:</b> Lord-Pilot Hammer or the Your Majesty trait				



# Anvil

In the Iron Empires, a planet-based military force is called an anvil. Infantry, armor and atmospheric attack craft all fall within the arms of the anvil. Between hammer and anvil, there's a teeming rivalry. Anvil forces think the hammer are arrogant flyboys. They know that once the big guns have pounded down the defenses, it's boots on the ground that win the wars.



LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Runner	2 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Anvil-wise, Inconspicuous, Officer-wise, Message-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Seen Too Much, Too Young				
Soldier	3 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Soldiering, Assault Weapons, Close Combat <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: FUGAZI				
Medic	3 yrs	1	1	—
<b>Skills:</b> 3 pts: Field Dressing, Triage-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Burned <b>Requirements:</b> Soldier, Foundation Student or Student				
Scout	3 yrs	1	0	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Recon, Observation, Infiltration, Survival <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Cold <b>Requirements:</b> Soldier				
Signals Tech	3 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 3 pts: Signals, Cryptography <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Sig Geek <b>Requirements:</b> Soldier, Foundation Student or Student				
Machinist	4 yrs	1	0	—
<b>Skills:</b> 6 pts: Fabrication, Repair, Driving, Engine-wise, Grav-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Grease Monkey <b>Requirements:</b> Soldier				
Sergeant	4 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Tactics, Intimidation, Slacker-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Oddly Likeable, Booming Voice <b>Requirements:</b> Soldier				

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<b>Anvil Elite</b>	3 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Squad Support Weapons, Vehicular Weapons, Zero G <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Anvil Trained <i>Requirements:</i> Sergeant or Psychologist or Scout and Soldier				
<b>Stormtrooper</b>	4 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Close Combat, Explosives, Propaganda, Foreign Languages, Torture, Security Rigging <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Brutal, Unflinching <i>Requirements:</i> Lord-Pilot Anvil, Circle of 10,000, Anvil Elite or Sergeant				
<b>Anvil Pilot</b>	5 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Pilot, Driving, Navigation, Sensors, Grav Sled-wise, Assault Shuttle-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Daredevil <i>Requirements:</i> Soldier				
<b>Armorer</b>	5 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Armorer, Munitions, Repair, Weapon-wise, Armor-wise, Fire Control <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: No Nonsense <i>Requirements:</i> Machinist, Stormtrooper or Hammer Engineer				
<b>Anvil Engineer</b>	5 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Fortifications, Munitions, Recon, Infiltration, Matériel-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Smartest Guy in the Room <i>Requirements:</i> Student, Foundation Student, Armorer, Machinist or Lieutenant				
<b>Lieutenant</b>	4 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Command, Intimidation, Sergeant-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Clean Cut <i>Requirements:</i> Cœptir, Novitiate or Anvil Elite				
<b>Propagandist</b>	5 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Propaganda, Media-wise, Signals Tech-wise, Composition <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Clever Bastard <i>Requirements:</i> Circle of 10,000, Psychologist, Ravilar, Lieutenant, Court Cœptir, Cœptir or Companion				
<b>X-O</b>	3 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Administration, Persuasion, Unit-wise, Bureaucracy, Regulations-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Scut Work, Privileged Position <i>Requirements:</i> Psychologist, Circle of 10,000, Lieutenant, Court Cœptir, Cœptir or Companion				
<b>Anvil Captain</b>	7 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Strategy, Anvil-wise, Forged Lord-wise, Hammer-wise, Terrain-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Seen it All, Kilgore <i>Requirements:</i> Lieutenant or Lord-Pilot Anvil				





# Theocracy

The Theocracy setting describes the theocratic state founded on the back of the Mundus Humanitas. The Kudus Theocracy is one of the Iron Empires, and this setting represents its structure of government. But this setting also counts for any theocratic state or major theocratic institution in the Iron Empires. These organizations are ruled by ecclesiastical officials, who draw their laws from the divine writings of prophets.



LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Born to Fire	9 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Born on the Wheel				
Student	6 yrs	0	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Doctrine, Research, History, Astronomy, Oratory, Church Law, Imperial Law				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Well-Read, Bawdy Fool				
Notary	5 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Bureaucracy, Accounting, Forgery-wise, Tithe-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<i>Requirements:</i> Student				
Fireward	4 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Fire-wise, Fire Control, Pyromaniac-wise, Ritual-wise, Temple-wise, Cotar-wise, Worshipper-wise, Secret Stash-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
Devoted to Fire	3 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Doctrine, Temple-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Devoted to Fire				
Mystes	4 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Meditation, Field Dressing, Suasion, Locals-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Order of the Mystic Fire				
<i>Requirements:</i> Devoted to Fire				
Archivist	8 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Church Records-wise, Ancient History, Symbology				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Harried				
<i>Requirements:</i> Devoted to Fire and Student				

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<b>Interpreter</b>	7 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Foreign Languages, Ancient Languages, Instruction, Foreigner-wise, Traveler-wise, Lecture-wise, Monograph-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Odd, Linguist <i>Requirements:</i> Devoted to Fire and Student				
<b>Custodian</b>	7 yrs	0	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Relic-wise, Obscure History, Folklore, Martyr-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Nose for Trouble <i>Requirements:</i> Devoted to Fire and Student				
<b>Bringer of Fire</b>	5 yrs	0	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Suasion, Locals-wise, Mystes-wise, Infidel-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Zealot, Jaded <i>Requirements:</i> Devoted to Fire				
<b>Sodalis</b>	3 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Assault Weapons, Explosives, Driving <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Anvil Trained, Loyal, Fearless <i>Requirements:</i> Devoted to Fire				
<b>Sodalis Technician</b>	3 yrs	0	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Technology-wise, Signals, Sensors <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt <i>Requirements:</i> Devoted to Fire				
<b>Sodalis Pilot</b>	3 yrs	0	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Pilot, Vehicular Weapons, Repair <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Flyboy <i>Requirements:</i> Devoted to Fire				
<b>Sodalis-Brother</b>	2 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Cotar Fomas-wise, Sodalis-wise, Church Transport-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Devoted to Fire, Zealot, Tough, Resourceful <i>Requirements:</i> Lord-Pilot Anvil				
<b>Sodalis-Captain</b>	5 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Tactics, Command, Sodalis-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Sworn to the Fire <i>Requirements:</i> Sergeant, Court Armiger, Armiger, Sodalis-Brother or two Sodalis lifepaths				
<b>Cotar</b>	5 yrs	2	2	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Divination, Oratory, Parish-wise, Suasion <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Keeper of the Fire <i>Requirements:</i> Devoted to Fire or Your Lordship				
<b>Dregus</b>	6 yrs	2	2	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Bureaucracy, Tithe-wise, Cotar-wise, Archcotare-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Dregutai, Order Before Chaos, Venal, Wise, Charismatic <i>Requirements:</i> Born to Rule and Cotar				



Cotar Fomas	4 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
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**Skills:** 5 pts: Command, Sodalis-wise, Temple-wise, Dregus-wise

**Traits:** 2 pts: Cotar Fomas

**Requirements:** Devoted to Fire plus Lord-Pilot Anvil or Sodalis-Captain.

Archcotare	10 yrs	3	2	+1 M
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**Skills:** 4 pts: Religious History, Obscure History, Administration. 2 pts General.

**Traits:** 2 pt: Arbiter, Independent, Liberal, Traditionalist, Leech

**Requirements:** Dregus and the Your Eminence or the Your Grace trait

Adjutant Inquisitor	4 yrs	2	1	+1 M
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**Skills:** 4 pts: Church Law, Investigative Logic, Mundus Humanitas-wise

**Traits:** 1 pt: Order of the Seeking Fire

**Requirements:** Cotar, Archivist, Custodian or Interpreter

Inquisitor	7 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
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**Skills:** 5 pts: Interrogation, Torture, Heresy-wise, Psychology

**Traits:** 1 pt: Skeptical, Bright Mark

**Requirements:** Adjutant Inquisitor

High Inquisitor	6 yrs	2	2	—
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**Skills:** 5 pts: Observation, Demonology, Command, Scheme-wise

**Traits:** 1 pt: Domineering Presence

**Requirements:** Inquisitor

Cotar Antistes	8 yrs	3	2	+1 M
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**Skills:** 2 pts: General

**Traits:** 2 pts: Word is Law, Metropolitan

**Requirements:** Your Grace or Your Majesty traits

Cotar Arderes	10 yrs	3	2	—
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**Skills:** 2 pts: General

**Traits:** 2 pts: Primarch

**Requirements:** Cotar Antistes



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## Merchant League



The Merchant League is an oligarchical or corporate structure run by a council of appointed officials and executives. The prime concern of a Merchant League is making a profit while maintaining its legal charter.

This setting contains the various staff positions necessary to run the massive bureaucracy of a Merchant League. The workers and underclass exist in the Servitude and Slavery, Freeman, and Outcast and Criminal

settings. Merchant Leagues hire mercenary hammer and anvil forces to help protect and project their interests. Their charters prevent them from maintaining such a force themselves, though they often maintain extensive security forces.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Born to the League	10 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: General <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Capitalist at Heart, Misanthropic, Elitist				
Student	8 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Institutional Drudgery-wise, League History, Sports-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Agitated, Broken				
Clerk	4 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Bureaucracy, Bribe-wise, Paperwork-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
Scrivener	8 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Composition, Cartography, Research, History <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Crooked Fingers <i>Requirements:</i> Student or Clerk				
Accountant	6 yrs	2	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Accounting, Books-wise, Embezzlement-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Follow the Money <i>Requirements:</i> Student or Clerk				



<b>Security</b>	3 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Security, Intimidation, Close Combat				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Bored, Thug, Professional				
<i>Requirements:</i> Character must be 18 years or older to start this path				
<b>Security Officer</b>	5 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Interrogation, Torture, Rebel-wise, Corporate Hierarchy-wise, Pilot, Crowd Suppression-wise, Assault Weapons				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Mean, Cunning				
<i>Requirements:</i> Discipline Officer, Sergeant, Stormtrooper or two Security lifepaths				
<b>Agent</b>	6 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Investigative Logic, Security Rigging, Signals, Extortion, Intimidation, Bribe-wise, Frame-wise, Blackmail-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Cold Blooded				
<i>Requirements:</i> Security Officer, Propagandist, Commentariat, Ravilar or Stormtrooper				
<b>Commentariat</b>	5 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Propaganda, Composition, Journalism, Dissent-wise, Screed-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Casuist				
<i>Requirements:</i> Student, Scrivener, Propagandist, Media, Ravilar or any lifepath from the Psychologist Foundation setting				
<b>Physician</b>	5 yrs	3	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Pharmacology, Surgery, Malady-wise, Executive-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Steady Hands, Self-Satisfied				
<i>Requirements:</i> Foundation Student, Student, Doctor or Surgeon				
<b>Merchant</b>	6 yrs	3	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Bargaining, Goods-wise, Traveler-wise, Trade-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> —				
<i>Requirements:</i> Foundation Student, Student, Accountant, Companion, Traveler, Hammer Master, Cargo Master or Ship's Captain				
<b>Advocate</b>	6 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: League Law, Imperial Law, League Court-wise, Imperial Court-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Cog in the Machine, Well-Spoken, Hopelessly Corrupt				
<i>Requirements:</i> Foundation Student, Student				
<b>League Official</b>	5 yrs	2	2	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Bureaucracy, Persuasion, Accounting, League-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Clean Cut, Ambitious, Venal				
<i>Requirements:</i> Chamberlain, Merchant, Commentariat, X-O, Security Officer, Lieutenant or any Engineer type lifepath				
<b>Banker</b>	7 yrs	3	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Finances-wise, Market-wise, Debt-wise, Currency-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Penny-wise				
<i>Requirements:</i> Financier or Merchant				

**Requirements:** Financier, Merchant, Treasurer or Bureaucrat

**Requirements:** Magnate

**Traits:** 2 pts: Citizen of the Commune, Realistic, Cynical, Idealist

**Traits:** 1 pt: Educated, Drunk, Broken

**Requirements:** Foundation Student or Student

**Requirements:** Character must be 17 years or older to take this path





<b>Professional Officer</b>	6 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Command, Tactics, Soldier-wise, Anvil-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: No Nonsense, Zealot <i>Requirements:</i> Volunteer Soldier, Sodalis-Captain, Sergeant, Man-at-Arms, Lord-Pilot Anvil or Lord-Pilot Hammer				
<b>Philosopher</b>	6 yrs	0	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Philosophy, Doctrine, Science, Composition <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Frustrated, Humanist, Constitutional Activist <i>Requirements:</i> Student				
<b>Instructor</b>	6 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Instruction, Student-wise, Textbook-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Patient, Idealist, Jaded, Pedantic <i>Requirements:</i> Foundation Student or Student				
<b>Law Enforcement</b>	5 yrs	1	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Investigative Logic, Security, Perp-wise, Cover Up-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Tool of the State <i>Requirements:</i> Student, Foundation Student, Volunteer Soldier or any security-type lifepath				
<b>Media</b>	5 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Journalism, Composition, Corruption-wise, Skeletons-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt <i>Requirements:</i> Foundation Student or Student				
<b>Lawyer</b>	7 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Commune Law, Imperial Law, League Law, Oratory <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Calculating, Law-Obsessed <i>Requirements:</i> Student and Clerk or Psychologist				
<b>Judge</b>	8 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Observation, Ugly Truth, Amercement. 1 pt: General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Hard Hearted, Strict Constructionist <i>Requirements:</i> Mandarin, Lawyer or Advocate				
<b>Local Official</b>	6 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Local Politics-wise, Neighborhood-wise, Problem-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Public Servant, Venal, Idealist <i>Requirements:</i> Clerk, Merchant, Mandarin, Bureaucrat, Courtier, Instructor or Law Enforcement				
<b>Municipal Official</b>	6 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Municipal Politics-wise, City-wise, Administration <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: City Official, Glad Hand <i>Requirements:</i> Lawyer, Local Official or Professional Officer				
<b>Legislative Official</b>	4 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Bureaucracy, Legislation-wise, Oratory, Constituency-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Senator, Righteous, Bulldog, Mouthbreather <i>Requirements:</i> Lawyer, Local Official or Municipal Official				

## CHARACTER BURNER



<b>Financier</b>	5 yrs	3	2	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Finance, Money-wise, Bribe-wise. 1 pt: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Well-Heeled, Savvy, Venal				
<i>Requirements:</i> Student				
<b>Governor</b>	5 yrs	2	2	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Province-wise, Administration, Budget-wise, Deal-wise.				
1 pt: General.				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Public Face, Gracious				
<i>Requirements:</i> Municipal Official or Legislative Official				
<b>Appointed Official</b>	4 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Bureaucracy, Logistics, Persuasion, Balance of Power-wise.				
1 pt: General.				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Picked Man, Mover, Lame Duck				
<i>Requirements:</i> Governor, Financier, Judge or Legislative Official				
<b>Diplomat</b>	5 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Persuasion, Bargaining, Faction-wise, Back Room Deals-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Well-Travelled				
<i>Requirements:</i> Governor, Financier or Legislative Official				
<b>Politico</b>	5 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Contributions-wise, Merchant League-wise, Skeletons-wise, Media-wise. 1 pt: General.				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Ambitious, Corrupt, Determined				
<i>Requirements:</i> Lawyer, Financier or Judge				
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	4 yrs	2	2	—
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Inner Circle-wise, Commune-wise, Department-wise, Budget-wise, Commune Law, Diplomacy-wise. 1 pt: General.				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<i>Requirements:</i> Diplomat, Governor or Appointed Official				
<b>Executive Official</b>	4 yrs	2	2	—
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Commune-wise, Legislature-wise, Cabinet-wise, Imperial-wise, League-wise, Media-wise. 2 pts: General.				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Skeletons in the Closet				
<i>Requirements:</i> Legislative Official or Governor				



## Psychologist Foundations

True to type, those who bear the Bright Mark are feared, reviled and envied throughout the Iron Empires. Most psychologists are trained in either secret cabals called "Foundations" or individually by hermits living in the wilds of sparsely populated worlds. The Church molds them into fearsome Inquisitors (but those lifepaths are in the Theocracy setting).



### Circle of 10,000

Only the Karsan League has managed to form an organized and sanctioned structure for the psychologists born into their empire. It is called the Circle of 10,000—though no one knows its true membership. Young men and women who bear the Bright Mark are brought into the Circle, trained in the use of their talent and fostered on the precepts of the order.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Apprentice	7 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Meditation, Eremite-wise, Remote Location-wise, Cold-wise, Begging, Persuasion <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Bright Mark, Unwelcome, Gift of Ahmilahk <i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				
Novitiate	8 yrs	1	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Circle of 10,000-wise, Close Combat, Etiquette, Oratory, Psychologist-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Bright Mark, Bastard <i>Requirements:</i> Mark of Privilege. If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				
Foundation Student	8 yrs	1	1	+1 M, P
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Psychologist-wise, Research, Rhetoric, History, Advanced Mathematics <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Bright Mark <i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				
Circle of 10,000	8 yrs	2	1	+1 M, P
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Psychology, Strategy, Tactics, Command, Intimidation <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Warrior's Code, Cool-Headed, Codebreaker, Anvil Trained <i>Requirements:</i> Novitiate or Inquisitor. This path may only be taken once.				



## CHARACTER BURNER

<b>Psychologist</b>	6 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 7 pts: Psychohistory, Persuasion, Conspicuous, Inconspicuous, Psychology <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: The Psychologist's Code, Fearless, Imperious, Vainglorious, Pharisical, Codebreaker <b>Requirements:</b> Foundation Student or Apprentice				
<b>Speaker</b>	8 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 6 pts: Administration, Ugly Truth, Soothing Platitudes, Apprentice-wise, Student-wise, Foundation-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Eerily Confident <b>Requirements:</b> The character must have taken Psychologist twice.				
<b>First Speaker</b>	12 yrs	3	2	—
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Oratory, Circle of 10,000-wise, Speaker-wise. 4 pts: General. <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Weight of the Galaxy <b>Requirements:</b> The character must have taken Speaker twice.				
<b>Eremit</b>	10 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 6 pts: Psychology, Strategy Games, Composition, Ugly Truth. 1 pt: General. <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Garlic Breath, Lonely, Genius <b>Requirements:</b> Mule, Apprentice or First Speaker. This may not be the third lifepath.				

## Spacefarer

The Spacefarer Setting consists of the merchant marine, private ships, public transport and pirate vessels. These are individuals who crew non-military hammer assets, bringing news and supplies to the scattered worlds of the Iron Empires. Spacefarers are vital to the survival of these worlds, yet they are universally distrusted. There's just something suspicious about a person who spends his whole life in space. Never know what he could encounter there.



LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
<b>Son of a Gun</b>	12 yrs	1	0	—
<b>Skills:</b> 2 pts: General <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Distortion Monkey, Cynical, Chronic Depression, Distrustful				
<b>Yeoman</b>	3 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Crew, Back-Breaking Labor, Cleaning-wise, Close Combat <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Hazed, Distortion Sickness, Bulldog				



<b>Ship Rigger</b>	3 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Repair, Damage-wise, Fire Control, Ship-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Black Fingernails <i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Cook</b>	5 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Cooking, Stone Soup-wise, Commissary-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Strange <i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Sense Rigger</b>	3 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Sensors, Glitch-wise, Profile-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Light Sleeper <i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Sig Rigger</b>	3 yrs	1	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Signals, Jury-Rigging, Strange Signals-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Good Listener <i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Gun Rigger</b>	2 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Vehicular Weapons, Vehicular Weapon-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Alert <i>Requirements:</i> Yeoman				
<b>Pilot</b>	4 yrs	2	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Pilot, Helm, Ship-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Illegal Crucis, Flyboy <i>Requirements:</i> Sense Rigger, Navigator, or two Yeoman lifepaths				
<b>Cargo Master</b>	5 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Bargaining, Cargo-wise, Supply-wise, Black Market-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Shrewd, Self-Satisfied, Hungry <i>Requirements:</i> Navigator, or two Spacefarer lifepaths				
<b>Doctor</b>	5 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Surgery, Pharmacology, Triage-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Grim, Practical <i>Requirements:</i> Apprentice, Novitiate, Physician, Surgeon or any Student				
<b>Navigator</b>	4 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Navigation, System-wise, Trade Route-wise, Space Anomaly-wise <i>Traits:</i> — <i>Requirements:</i> Corvus and Crucis or Illegal Crucis trait				
<b>Ship's Engineer</b>	6 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Engineering, Life Support-wise, Cryonics, Fabrication, Armorer <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Practical <i>Requirements:</i> Shipfitter, Ship Rigger or Machinist				

## CHARACTER BURNER

Scientist	5 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Physics, Science, Technology-wise, Phenomenon-wise, Distortion-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Curious <i>Requirements:</i> Ship's Engineer, Physicist or Navigator				
First Officer	5 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Ship Management, Intimidation, Command, Persuasion, Tactics, Crew-wise, Mercator-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Undeterred <i>Requirements:</i> Lieutenant, Hammer Master, Discipline Officer, Navigator, Physicist, Scientist, Cargo Master or Ship's Engineer				
Ship's Captain	6 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 9 pts: Embargo-wise, Void-wise, Border-wise, Spacefarer-wise, Captain-wise, Hammer-wise, Bargaining. 1 pt: General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Aloof, Privateer, Owner-Aboard, Well-Known <i>Requirements:</i> First Officer, Psychologist or Lord-Pilot Hammer				
Owner-Aboard	4 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Exotic Locations-wise, Obscure Locations-wise, Foreign Languages. 2 pts: General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: My Ship, My Rules; Uneasy, Dashing <i>Requirements:</i> The character must purchase a ship as part of his starting resources and must begin with an exponent 7 or higher Resources.				

## Freeman

The Freeman are the working class of the Iron Empires, skilled labor who support the body of nearly every power structure, whether it be a Noble Fief or a democratic Commune. Freeman are born into their class and owe no allegiance to a lord or master—save for taxes.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Born to Freeman	10 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: General <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Working Class, Morose, Sullen, Troubled				
Kid	4 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Ugly Truth, Trouble-wise, Inconspicuous <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Good for Nothing, Bad Egg <i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second lifepath and may only be taken once.				
Student	6 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Institutional Hell-wise, Repair, Drugs-wise, Parent-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Bruised Eyes, Rebel				
Lazy Stayabout	4 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Lazy-wise, Work-wise, Wife-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Laconic, Pudgy				





<b>Peddler</b>	5 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Persuasion, Inconspicuous, Falsehood, Trinket-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Odd				
<b>Courier</b>	4 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Streetwise, Inconspicuous, Client-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Late				
<b>Laborer</b>	4 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Back-Breaking Labor <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Proud, Drunk, Wife-Beater				
<b>Pilgrim</b>	2 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Holy Sites-wise, City-wise, Temple-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Stinky				
<b>Functionary</b>	4 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Office Politics-wise, Office Technology-wise, Accounting <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Crushing Boredom <i>Requirements:</i> Student or Foundation Student				
<b>Service Worker</b>	3 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Customer-wise, Food Service, Body Service <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Abused, Hater				
<b>Parent</b>	8 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Child Rearing, Child-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Raw-Nerved <i>Requirements:</i> May not be the character's second lifepath				
<b>Driver</b>	4 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Driving, Sled-wise, Highway-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Sleep Disorder <i>Requirements:</i> May not be the character's second lifepath				
<b>Hosteler</b>	6 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Cooking, Soothing Platitudes, Guest-wise <i>Traits:</i> — <i>Requirements:</i> Parent, Shopkeeper, Cargo Master, Hammer Master or Smuggler				
<b>Shopkeeper</b>	6 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Bargaining, Goods-wise, Trader-wise, Manufacturer-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: This Is a Store Not a Library!, Friendly Face, Mean <i>Requirements:</i> Smuggler, Criminal, Parent, Driver, Lazy Stayabout or Service Worker				
<b>Fabricator</b>	5 yrs	2	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Fabrication, Technology-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Scarred Hands, Clever <i>Requirements:</i> Student, Laborer				

## CHARACTER BURNER

Apprentice Craftsman	6 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Mending, Codger-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Resigned				
Craftsman	7 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Craft, Appraisal, Bargaining <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Professional Pride <i>Requirements:</i> Apprentice Craftsman				
Trader	6 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Bargaining, Merchant-wise, Shopkeeper-wise, Manufacturer-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Open-Minded, Penny-wise, Well-Traveled <i>Requirements:</i> Shopkeeper, Hosteler, Manufacturer, Craftsman or Traveler				
Engineer	7 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Engineering, Excavation, Structure-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Practical, Erudite <i>Requirements:</i> Student plus Fabricator or Craftsman				
Manufacturer	8 yrs	3	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Manufacture, Administration, Accounting, Worker-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Automator, Think Big <i>Requirements:</i> Trader, Engineer or Craftsman				
Artisan	10 yrs	3	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 8 pts: Client-wise, Shipwright, Architect, Physics, Fusion Dynamics <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Steady Hands, Genius <i>Requirements:</i> Engineer				



## Servitude and Serfdom

The Iron Empires could not exist without serfs and slaves to perform the vast labors necessary to keep these cyclopean societies lurching forward. Servants, slaves and serfs perform the agricultural work and the unskilled labor vital to the planetary governments.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Born Slave	8 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 1 pt: Slavery-wise. 2 pts: General. <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Destined for Slavery, Beaten, Resigned, Despondent, Bleak				
Slave Labor	6 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Back-Breaking Labor, Rules-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Whipped				



<b>Sentenced Criminal</b>	5 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Court System-wise, Prison-wise, Torture-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Bitter, Vindictive				
<b>Migrant Labor</b>	4 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Back-Breaking Labor <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Exhausted, Wanderlust				
<b>Tenant Labor</b>	6 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Farming, Husbandry, Mending, Almanac <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Earnest				
<b>Prostitute</b>	4 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Falsehood, Persuasion, Pimp-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Tolerant, Abused, Broken				
<b>Slave Jockey</b>	3 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Riding, Camel-wise, Horse-wise, Betting-wise, Criminal-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Slight Build, Resigned to Death				
<b>Clown</b>	4 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Mummery, Falsehood, Disguise, Sleight of Hand <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Wrecked Self-Esteem, Ennui, Garbo				
<b>Footman</b>	5 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Back-Breaking Labor <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Bored, Sickly				
<b>Servant</b>	6 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Soothing Platitudes, House-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Deferential, Humble, Arrogant, Murderous <i>Requirements:</i> One previous Servitude and Serfdom lifepath				
<b>Captive of War</b>	3 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Tragedy-wise, Dungeon-wise, Beating-wise, Defeat-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Captured, Broken, Defiant, Bitter <i>Requirements:</i> Any lifepath from Anvil, Hammer or Nobility, or Volunteer Soldier, Freebooter or Pirate				
<b>Bondsman</b>	6 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: The player may choose his master's lifepath from the Nobility or Freeman settings. The Bondsman may choose from those skills. <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Lucky <i>Requirements:</i> One previous Servitude and Serfdom lifepath				
<b>Taskmaster</b>	5 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Intimidation, Command, Close Combat <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Brutal, Hard Hearted <i>Requirements:</i> Four Slave and Serfdom lifepaths or any thug, soldier, law enforcement, security or discipline lifepath				



## Outcast and Criminal

All societies have their fringe elements. The Outcast and Criminal setting includes the cast-offs, runaways, outlaws, criminals and heretics who dwell in the vast shattered underbelly of the former glory of the Iron Empires.



Shivakahi frequently use static discharges to create improbable & destructive unit hairstyles. This is a line trooper in Sheban Division - a mercenary unit operating within the New Kingdom.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Born on the Streets	9 yrs	0	1	—
<b>Skills:</b> 3 pts: General <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Orphan, Worried, Distrustful, Dark				
Alien Mutant Freak	4 yrs	0	0	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Bigotry-wise, Hatred-wise, Beating-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Deformed, Fuur Blood, Martyr, Prophet <b>Requirements:</b> If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				
Mule	4 yrs	0	0	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Inconspicuous, Conspicuous, Mummery <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Mule, Cunning <b>Requirements:</b> Taking this path requires the approval of the gaming group.				
Urchin	4 yrs	0	0	—
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Inconspicuous, Streetwise, Sleight of Hand <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Addicted <b>Requirements:</b> If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				
Cripple	4 yrs	0	0	—
<b>Skills:</b> 3 pts: Begging, Spit-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Mangled				
Deranged	5 yrs	0	0	—
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Inconspicuous, Quack-wise, Conspiracy-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Sickly, Dirty				
Filthy Worm Lover	4 yrs	0	0	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Blackmail-wise, Ugly Truth, Ad Hominem Attack-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Blacklisted, Wrongly Accused <b>Requirements:</b> One previous professional or mid-tier lifepath from any setting except Outcast or Servitude				



<b>Matchstick Girl</b>	5 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Bleeding Heart-wise, Conspicuous, Tchotchke-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Aura of Innocence, The Story <i>Requirements:</i> The character must currently be female.				
<b>Beggar</b>	4 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Begging, Streetwise, Scam-wise, Softie-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Downtrodden, Broken, Hurt, Mangled				
<b>Vagrant</b>	5 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Road-wise, Hostel-wise, Hospital-wise, Beggar-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<b>Pickpocket</b>	4 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Sleight of Hand, Inconspicuous, Streetwise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Plain Face, Flamboyant <i>Requirements:</i> Urchin, Cripple, Vagrant or Beggar				
<b>Mummer</b>	4 yrs	0	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Conspicuous, Mummery, Begging, Play-wise, Mummer-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Odd				
<b>Beggar King</b>	6 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Oratory, Disguise, Soothing Platitudes, Ugly Truth <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt <i>Requirements:</i> Beggar plus one of the following: Mummer, Urchin, Pickpocket, Deranged or Cripple. Or just Heretic Priest.				
<b>Acrobat</b>	4 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Conspicuous, Physical Training <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Contortionist				
<b>Cultist</b>	4 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Cult Doctrine, Falsehood, Persuasion, Cult-wise, Apocalypse-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Zealot, Rabble-Rouser, Speaker of the Secret Language				
<b>Rebel Priest</b>	5 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Oratory, Heretical Doctrine, Cult Doctrine, Heretic-wise, Cultist-wise. 1 pt: General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Strange Airs, Cultist, Heretic, Lunatic, Fiery, Googly Eyes <i>Requirements:</i> Cotar, Philosopher, Thinker or two Cultist lifepaths				
<b>Hive Thug</b>	3 yrs	1	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Intimidation, Streetwise, Murder-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Cold Blooded <i>Requirements:</i> This may not be the second lifepath				
<b>Freebooter</b>	3 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Intimidation, Anvil-wise, War-wise, Assault Weapons <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Mercenary <i>Requirements:</i> Desperate Killer, Pirate, Smuggler. Circle of 10,000 or any soldier-type lifepath				

## CHARACTER BURNER

<b>Desperate Killer</b>	3 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Inconspicuous, Assassination-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Desperate <i>Requirements:</i> One previous soldier-type lifepath				
<b>Insurrectionist</b>	4 yrs	0	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Regime-wise, Rebel-wise, Explosives, Propaganda <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Rebel, Royalist, Democrat, Militant, Anarchist				
<b>Outlaw</b>	4 yrs	0	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Authority-wise, Inconspicuous, Crime-wise, Mob Justice-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Outlaw				
<b>Confidence Man</b>	3 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Falsehood, Intimidation, Streetwise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Swindler, Pathological Liar, Logorrhea <i>Requirements:</i> Previous Outcast, Servitude, Commune or Freeman lifepath				
<b>Pirate</b>	4 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Close Combat, Zero G, Fat Merchant-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Scum of the Galaxy, Insane, Funny Accent, Murderous, Cold-Blooded <i>Requirements:</i> One previous Spacefarer or Hammer lifepath				
<b>Duelist</b>	3 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Close Combat, Trial by Combat-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Loathed, Brave, Stupid, Suicidal, Mangled <i>Requirements:</i> Desperate Killer, Freebooter, Boxer, Alien Mutant Freak or Hive Thug				
<b>Boxer</b>	3 yrs	1	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Conspicuous, Sleight of Hand, Close Combat <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Showboat, Hat-Passer <i>Requirements:</i> Born on the Streets or any Anvil lifepath				
<b>Kidnapper</b>	3 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Extortion, Intimidation, Falsehood, Child-wise, Victim-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Slightly Warped, Feckless, Hard Hearted				
<b>Blackmailer</b>	4 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Intimidation, Falsehood, Forgery, Mark-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Scheming, Bungler, Clinical, No Nonsense				
<b>Breaker</b>	5 yrs	2	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Security Rigging, Security, Guard-wise, Infiltration, Physical Training <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Homme Dur, Man of Few Words, Affinity for Locks <i>Requirements:</i> Two previous Outcast lifepaths or any security-related lifepath				
<b>Smuggler</b>	5 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Smuggling, Regulation-wise, Quarantine-wise, Faction-wise, Hidden Compartment-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Cool-Headed, Alert, Unglued, Useful <i>Requirements:</i> One previous Outcast, Spacefarer, Hammer or Anvil lifepath				





Counterfeiter	5 yrs	2	1	+1 M
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**Skills:** 5 pts: Counterfeiting, Falsehood, Forgery  
**Traits:** 1 pt: Eye for Detail, Nimble, Eidetic Memory  
**Requirements:** Two previous Outcast lifepaths, Banker, Shopkeeper, Functionary, Financier or Merchant

Fence	6 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
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**Skills:** 4 pts: Appraisal, Bargaining, Black Market-wise  
**Traits:** 2 pts: Shrewd, No Nonsense, Sharp Dresser  
**Requirements:** Smuggler, Counterfeiter, Breaker, Shopkeeper, Merchant, Cargo Master or Hammer Master

Whoremonger	4 yrs	2	1	—
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**Skills:** 6 pts: Intimidation, Prostitute-wise, Bargaining, Slave-wise, Young Girl in the City for the First Time-wise  
**Traits:** 1 pt: Life under a Different Code, Colorful, Casually Violent  
**Requirements:** Kidnapper, Cargo Master, Hammer Master or Smuggler

Gunsel	3 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
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**Skills:** 6 pts: Close Combat, Assault Weapons, Infiltration, Streetwise, Thug-wise  
**Traits:** 2 pts: Loyal to the Family, Tall-Dark-and-Murderous, Shut Up, We Rule These Streets  
**Requirements:** Sergeant, Man-at-Arms, Volunteer Soldier, Desperate Killer, Boxer, Duelist, Freebooter, Task Master or two Hive Thug lifepaths

Criminal	5 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
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**Skills:** 9 pts: Intimidation, Persuasion, Streetwise, Tactics, Outcast-wise, Criminal-wise, Black Market-wise  
**Traits:** 2 pts: Family, Vig, Sharp Dresser  
**Requirements:** Gunsel, Advocate, Mandarin, Lawyer, Politico, League Official, Psychologist or any two of the following: Kidnapper, Blackmailer, Whoremonger, Fence, Counterfeiter, Breaker or Smuggler

Thinker	8 yrs	0	0	+1 M
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**Skills:** 5 pts: Philosophy, Strategy Games, Strategy. 1 pt: General.  
**Traits:** 2 pts: Bearded, Ideologue  
**Requirements:** Character must be older than 30 when he takes this path.

Traveler	5 yrs	3	1	—
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**Skills:** 7 pts: Bargaining, Pilot, Helm, Navigation, Technology-wise, Alien Culture-wise. 1 pt: General.  
**Traits:** 2 pts: Optimist, Shrewd, Affinity for Trade, Illegal Crucis, Affinity for Technology  
**Requirements:** Trader, Fence, Criminal, Merchant, Physicist, Scientist, First Officer or Ship's Captain



**The Iron  
Empires**

## Stat Pools by Age for Humans

Starting Age	Mental Pool	Physical Pool
01-10 years	5 pts	10 pts
11-14 years	6 pts	13 pts
15-16 years	6 pts	16 pts
17-25 years	7 pts	16 pts
26-29 years	7 pts	15 pts
30-35 years	7 pts	14 pts
36-40 years	7 pts	13 pts
41-55 years	7 pts	12 pts
56-65 years	7 pts	11 pts
66-79 years	7 pts	10 pts
80-100 years	6 pts	9 pts









# THE PHYSICIAN'S STORY

*"Will it hurt?" President-Elect Yacob Makel looked up at his old friend. The white-coated physician smiled. Laugh lines made a web around his eyes.*

*"Why do I worry, Samil? Every tune-up you've ever given this tired face was smooth as silk. Just nervous about my inaugural speech, I suppose."*

*Samil pursed his lips and whistled while he reached over the President's body and fastened a wide strap across his chest, securing his patient to the table.*

*"You're in a good mood, Samil," the president said with a smile.*

*"How long have we prepared you for this?" The surgeon asked.*

*He reached under the operating table and pulled out a glass cylinder. He set the cylinder on a tray next to the president. The doctor rubbed lotion just under the president's right ear.*

*"Can we start with the mole on my bottom lip? My image consultant said that's the big issue. I chew on it when I'm nervous."*

*"Decades of preparation, all hinging on one small operation." Samil picked his bio-effector. In three quick sweeps the doctor shaved a small patch behind the ear. A bead of red blood formed like a teardrop on the white scalp. Samil had the tolerances set too low. The president stoically bit his lip, bringing his top teeth over the mole and then closed his mouth.*

*"A genius, that consultant. Really knows her stuff. I told her I wanted my forehead smoothed out, but she said 'no way.' It was all about the mole. Turns out she read some monograph. It said that when a painter puts a mole too close to the mouth it makes people uncomfortable. A mole, right there on the lip, like mine, makes folks squeamish."*

*The doctor opened the cylinder with a snap. Briny water splashed onto the tray.*

*"Some kind of gene therapy or something, eh? Will it hurt?"*

*The doctor stopped whistling. "Pleasure, excitement, success, pain...the fruits of humanity to be plucked from the tree of experience."*

*"A bit philosophical, but not bad," the president said. "Maybe I'll use that in my speech."*

## CHARACTER BURNER

*"They vary in flavor, and in intensity, these emotions. You'll learn the subtleties, the deep pleasure of nuance."*

*"Now you've lost me, Samil," the president said. "Better stick to cosmetic surgery and leave the speeches up to me."*

*"You'll find that fear is always there, the baseline of human feeling. Even when joy is at its sweetest, most ecstatic, it's laced with a bitter tinge of fear. It's exquisite really." He reached into the cylinder with forceps and withdrew a long, slender worm. He stroked it once, gently, before holding it over the president's upturned face.*

*"What the hell has got into you? What is that? What are you doing?"*

*The doctor raised his right hand. He held a gleaming trephine. The president saw a warped reflection of himself in the metal of the handle.*

*"I'm starting you off with the purest, most intense memory of fear your host can produce." Out of the brine, the worm began to twitch and flop between the surgeon's fingers.*

*"You'll awaken in a fog of terror and pain. Use those twin emotions in your first speech, invoke them in your new constituents. If you're going to launch your career with war, then you must start with terror and fear. The hate will come of its own accord."*

*Samil placed the trephine behind the president's ear and began to whistle again. His whistle joined the high-pitched whine of the saw. The president screamed; the mole on his lip danced.*

*Samil, Governor's Physician*

*Age: 48 (Naiven)      Apparent Age: 56-year-old human*

*Vaishyen Body: Will 3, Perception 6, Agility 6, Speed 4, Power 3, Forte 3.*

*Human Body: Will 4, Perception 6, Agility 6, Speed 3, Power 3, Forte 3*

*Resources: 5      Circles: 2      Steel: 5 (hesitation 5)      Mortal Wound: H9*

*Skills: Surgery 5, Propaganda 5, Human Behavior-wise 5, Infrastructure-wise 5, Mad Experiment-wise 4, Torture 4, Interrogation 4, Logistics 4, Persuasion 4, Science 3, Physics 3, Cryonics 3, Engineering 3, Human Technology-wise 3, Human Biology 3, Alien Biology 3, Human Body-wise 3, Alien Biology-wise 3, Pain-wise 3, Clinical Study-wise 3, Prison Camp-wise 3, Falsehood 3, Security-wise 3, City-wise 3, Close Combat 3, Explosives 3, Spaceport-wise 3, Technology-wise 3, Phenomenon-wise 3, Tech Index-wise 3, Inconspicuous 2*

*Traits: Aadau Clan, Steady Hands, Practical, Unassuming, Calculating, Meticulous, Cold Blooded*

*Special Vaishyen Traits: Membranous Bat Wings*

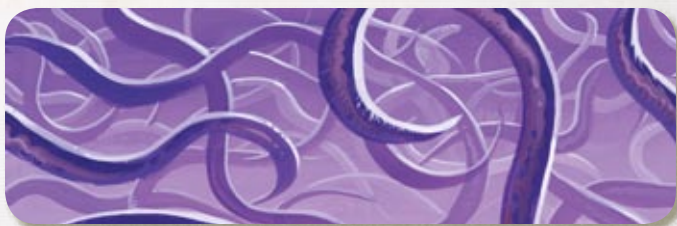
*Technology: Operating Theater, Surgical Field Kit, Supply of Naiven, Vaishyen Body, Secret Cryonics Facility*

*Reputations: 2D—Aadau Clan. 1D—Makel's respected physician. 1D—well-placed Vaylen sleeper.*

*Affiliations: 1D—Makel's Commune, 1D—Vaylen sleeper cells on Kralman Secundus*

*Relationships: Governor Makel—"boss", Grung—secret Mukhadish bodyguard, Elizabeth Chu—unwitting assistant*





# VAYLEN

The Vaylen are a galactic civilization. Their reach extends from their remote homeworld across the ruined expanse of the former Federated Empire, stretching now to humanity's final shore.

Vaylen are more variegated in body than the people of the Iron Empires: They have incorporated—enslaved—a number of alien organisms, and genetically constructed and bred others to serve them. But none are so versatile and beautiful as humanity.

## **For Caste, Clan and Host**

The Vaylen culture and civilization are not monolithic. Influences from the various organisms and civilizations they have absorbed can be seen throughout. Their typical worlds are more varied in tone than those of the Iron Empires, which tend to be culturally conservative. However, there are three factors which are a constant in Vaylen society: clan, caste and the profound need for host bodies.

All Vaylen are born into a clan, and their loyalties most often remain with that clan for their entire life. Clans situate their offspring into one of the four castes as needed and as they can afford: Human caste is for the wealthy and the ruling elite, Ksatriyen caste for the military, Vaishylen caste for the technical and economic needs of the clans and Shudren for labor and military fodder.

The loyalties drawn from profession and clan create factions and rifts among the Vaylen. Clans are eternally maneuvering to purchase a better caste for their offspring and to topple and hinder their rivals' own ambitions.

But the third common factor among Vaylen binds them together. As a populous galactic civilization, their need for host bodies is overwhelming. There are hundreds of billions of Vaylen with hosts, but there are trillions of their Naiven offspring waiting in

breeding vats to be given a host—to be given life. It is this final pressure which unifies the clans and forces them to send their Vaylen spies and Ksatriyen warriors into human space. If they wish to be able to better their themselves, they must have hosts!



The older clans jealously guard their supply of hosts—farm worlds are nurtured and protected. In order to make their fortune and elevate their clan, younger families are forced to the frontier in search of vulnerable human worlds to capture and farm. All the while, the miserly elder clans, hungry for human minds, plot to deprive their younger siblings of their human stock upon their triumphal return. Vaylen culture is a polite, well-structured predatory cycle playing out on a galactic scale.

### **Eternal Sunshine of the Human Mind**

The human mind is the most heartbreakingly beautiful piece of artwork Vaylenkind has ever seen. Its range of emotion, experience, intelligence and adaptability far exceeds that of all their previous hosts. The others exist as a washed out photograph of a sunset across a windswept beach. The mind of humanity is the brilliant heat of the setting sun and enervating brush of wind on bare flesh. There simply is no comparison.

### **What's in a Name?**

The term *Vaylen* is actually a misnomer when used to refer to this race of endoparasites. A Vaylen does not attain sentience or sapience until it is integrated with an intelligent host. Until they are placed within a host body, Vaylen are referred to as Naiven. A Naiven is simply a worm with some rather frightening natural adaptations and advantages.

# Naiven Common Traits

## Alien Control

01.

While a Naiven experiences the world just as its hosts do, it may dampen its own reaction to injury by temporarily breaking its linkage to the pain receptors. It still retains control over the body and may continue to function. Using the Alien Control trait, a Naiven may ignore penalty dice from an Injury or Maimed result. Temporarily breaking the linkage requires a Will test. The obstacle for the test is equal to the number of injured dice the Vaylen wishes to ignore. He may choose all of the injured dice from a wound or some. The effect lasts for one scene. This comes with a cost to the host. In the next scene, the Vaylen host suffers the effects of any remaining injury dice (that he didn't suppress), plus *double* the number of dice he did suppress. It is quite possible that this will incapacitate him.

## Encoder

01.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Vaylen is their ability to jump hosts. Jumping hosts is done almost exclusively in emergencies, and it reduces them to the natural state—to Naiven worms. While it is out of the body, a Naiven is not sentient, but it is “smarter” than when it was first implanted. Before leaving a host, the worm encodes its memories chemically into its nervous system—the Naiven uses its whole body as if it were brain matter capable of storing memory. It is therefore possible for a Naiven to leave one host, move to another, and reattach itself to the new one. Moreover, once it acquires a new host, it can retrieve nearly all of its memories from its previous one. When a Vaylen jumps from one body to another, he risks much. His stats become that of the new host—all of them, mental and physical. It may bring with it all of the Will-rooted and Perception-rooted skills of its previous host at their full exponents, but Agility, Perception/Agility, Power, Forte or Speed-based skills lose any advancements made. They become encoded at their roots. When the Naiven takes a new host, factor these new roots. See the Jumping Bodies in Play heading in this chapter for more on this.

## Psycho-Endoparasitic

01.

Naiven truly thrive when they attach themselves to a host. Attached to the nervous system, they are capable of manipulating the host electrochemically. If they can reach the brainstem of a sentient or sapient creature, the Naiven's own latent *sentience* is triggered, supplanting that of the host creature. The first Vaylen—which is to say, the first dual creature that had a Naiven inside using its intelligence to control the host—was born when a race of sentient jellyfish, the *Cnidaria Makara*, were victimized by this process.

It's not known when the Vaylen first encountered humanity, but one thing is certain: Naiven cannot penetrate a human skull on their own. The bone is too hard for the Naiven to chew through to implant itself. In order for the first Naiven/human merger to have occurred, someone or something must have cut open a human to implant a Naiven. It did not happen naturally or by chance. What the Vaylen discovered shortly after contact with humanity was that the human form was better adapted and more practical to life in space.

Vaylen



## CHARACTER BURNER

Humans were superior to their aquatic hosts and to the other hosts they had developed through eugenics. The Vaylen naturally wanted to use them. See the Vaylen Host Bodies and Hurling headings in this chapter for details on how to take a host for a Naiven.

### Worm

Dr.

The Naiven are aquatic flatworms. As a result of being a good food source for other creatures on their native world, they employ an r-reproductive strategy (meaning they produce many young but don't care for them; they beat environmental hazards by numbers). These worms can also compress their bodies into a film a few millimeters thick. This serves them well when they are inserted into the tight confines of a human skull. A Naiven has the following stats: Will 1, Perception 3, Agility 2, Speed 2, Power 1, Forte 1.



## Caste is Body

There are four castes in Vaylen society: Human, Ksatriyen, Vaishyen and Shudren. A Vaylen's Caste determines his host body type. If he changes caste, he changes body. When building a Vaylen character, be sure to note which stat pool bonuses were earned from which body/caste/setting. Stat points earned with one body, stay with that body.

## Native and Non-Native Vaylen Settings

Due to their ability to infiltrate, all Vaylen settings are considered native.



## Naiven Clans

While one's *caste* is indicated by his *body*, one's *clan* is determined by *birth*. Clans can stretch across multiple castes—a powerful clan will have members in all castes—but it is typical for clans to exist only in one or two castes.

Loyalties and fundamental power lie along *clan lines*, not caste. These clans are not literal families, but lineages that Vaylen trace back to significant events in their racial history. The *Yaadasahm*, for example, were the first to become true Vaylen by usurping the *Makara* race, whereas the *Vibhuuten* claim it was they who discovered humanity. The *Meshhen* harken back to the great Ksatriyen Tiruchelvam who first led the Vaylen across space to conquer and enslave. The honorable *Aadau* trace their lineage back to a family of industrialists widely believed to have lifted the Vaylen from the dark ages. *Annelida*, when they are sentient at all, believe they are descended from Vaylenkind's greatest warriors. Lastly, the *Amedhyen* are the great unnamed, uncountable mass of Naiven who can claim no ties to the Vaylen history. They are the vast majority of Vaylen, but they are beneath the contempt of the other clans. Vaylen culture takes these lineages very seriously and ascribes a degree of power and reputation to an individual simply for the clan he was born into.

Choose one of the following clans for your Naiven to be born into. The maturation period for a Naiven is about a year. The times listed with the lifepaths reflect the availability of hosts and are not indicative of youth:

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Amedhyen Naiven	12 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 1 pt: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Amedhyen Clan				
<i>Requirements:</i> Must take its next path in the Shudren Caste				
Annelida Naiven	10 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Annelida Clan				
<i>Requirements:</i> Must take its next path in the Shudren Caste				
Aadau Naiven	8 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Aadau Clan				
<i>Requirements:</i> Must take its next path in the Vaishyen or Shudren Caste				
Meshhen Naiven	6 yrs	2	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Meshhen Clan				
<i>Requirements:</i> Must take its next path in the Shudren or Ksatriyen Caste				

Vaylen

Vibhuuten Naiven	4 yrs	2	2	—
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**Skills:** 4 pts: General

**Traits:** 2 pts: Vibhuuten Clan

**Requirements:** May take its next path in the Human, Ksatriyen or Shudren Castes

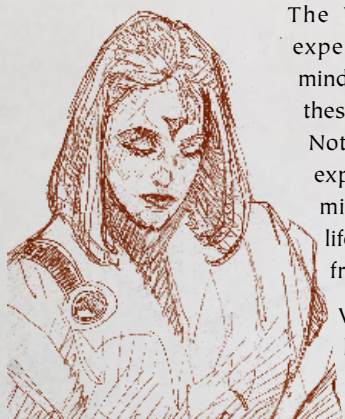
Yaadasahm Naiven	3 yrs	2	2	—
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**Skills:** 5 pts: General

**Traits:** 3 pts: Makara Clan

**Requirements:** May not take Human Caste or Vaylen setting lifepaths

## Human Caste



The Vaylen crave the memories and experiences of a human life. Unspoiled minds, unfettered by Vaylen conditioning—these are the sweetest meat for the Naiven. Nothing can compare to devouring the experiences of a fresh, untamed human mind. To then continue to live out that life in the midst of the human's unwitting friends and family is pure ecstasy.

Vaylen purport to be precisely human. They crave human memory and experience, and therefore seek to recreate what they find scattered in the memories of their victims. However, Vaylen are decidedly not human—not in their way of thinking and not in the bizarre culture that they have constructed as a parody of human life.

The Human Caste represents that parody. The lifepaths are broad roles that the Vaylen enact in their desperate and queer quest to become human. Despite their extravagant attempts to recreate human life, a creature who can change consciousnesses can never be human. Human Caste is the upper echelon and elite of Vaylen society—they are the wealthy, the nobility, the celebrities and the indolent inheritors of fortune. They reenact their concept of human life and culture via these stereotypes and archetypes. This is what they think we are, and what they make us.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Child	6 yrs	1	1	—

**Skills:** 5 pts: Child-wise, Ugly Truth, Falsehood, Manipulation-wise

**Traits:** 2 pts: Bizarre, Child, Disturbing, Innocent

**Requirements:** Meshhen or Vibhuuten clan; Vaishya or Ksatriya lifepath.

This lifepath can be taken at any time in the Vaylen character's life. If taken as the last lifepath, the character *must* take the Child trait.





<b>Ascetic</b>	12 yrs	0	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 8 pts: Survival, Meditation, Philosophy, Human-wise, Obscure History, Misery-wise. 1 pt: General. <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Stoic, Saturnine <b>Requirements:</b> Meshhen, Vibhuuten, Cult Leader, Vaishya or Ksatriya				
<b>Dilettante</b>	3 yrs	1	1	—
<b>Skills:</b> 11 pts: Body-wise, Conversation-wise, Drug-wise, Begging, Folklore, Mummer, Journalism, Pilot, Riding, Sleight of Hand. 1 pt: General. <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Cosmopolitan, Dispassionate, Flexible, Indulgent, Liberal, Permissive, Cannibal <b>Requirements:</b> High Official, Vibhuuten, Vaishya or Ksatriya				
<b>Eris</b>	4 yrs	1	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 9 pts: Seduction, Falsehood, Disguise, Inconspicuous, Relationship-wise, Erotic-wise, Love-wise, Rivalry-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Beautiful, Bathetic, Amorous, Charming, Chimerical <b>Requirements:</b> Meshhen, Cult Leader, Diplomat, Vibhuuten, Vaishya or Ksatriya				
<b>Syzygy</b>	6 yrs	1	1	—
<b>Skills:</b> 6 pts: Etiquette, Bureaucracy, Bargaining, Deal-wise, Intrigue-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Rule of Three, Diplomatic, Savvy, Macbeth <b>Requirements:</b> Meshhen, Diplomat, Dilettante, Eris or Ascetic				
<b>Princess</b>	5 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 8 pts: Persuasion, Etiquette, Soothing Platitudes, Foreign Languages, Caste-wise, Clan-wise, Tension-wise. 1 pt: General. <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Peacemaker, Coy, Hidden Venom, Graceful <b>Requirements:</b> Vibhuuten, Vaishya, Syzygy, Eris, Child or Prince				
<b>Prince</b>	4 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 8 pts: Command, Intimidation, Conspicuous, Close Combat, Physical Training, Zero G, Jock-wise, Leader-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Handsome, Charismatic, Commanding Aura, Anvil Trained <b>Requirements:</b> Vaishya, Princess, Child, Dilettante or Syzygy				
<b>Philosopher King</b>	8 yrs	3	2	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 12 pts: Vaylen Philosophy, Rhetoric, Soothing Platitudes, Administration, Instruction, Ksatriya-wise, Void-wise, Human Space-wise, Human History, Human Culture-wise. 1 pt: General. <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Wizedened, Seemingly Concerned, Wise Aphorisms, Solipsistic <b>Requirements:</b> Prince, Princess, Queen or Ksatriya				
<b>Queen</b>	8 yrs	3	2	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 9 pts: Conspicuous, Child Rearing, Instruction, Administration, Estate Management, Child-wise, Shudren-wise, Vaylen-wise, Vaishya-wise. 1 pt: General. <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Matronly, Imperious Demeanor, Domineering Presence <b>Requirements:</b> Prince, Princess, Queen or Ksatriya				

## Ksatriyen Caste

Ksatriyen are the Vaylen warrior caste. They are not human, but they are anthromorphs, and they are sentient and sapient. In fact, they are an interesting quirk in Vaylen society. They could become the ruling caste were they to take their position by force, but the Vaylen are so obsessed with human life that the powerful Ksatriyen will abandon their able bodies for a human one without a second thought.



LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
<b>Bhrigu</b>	6 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Soldiering, Assault Weapons, Field Dressing				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Obedient, Disciplined				
<b>Ansa</b>	8 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Squad Support Weapons, Driving				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Anvil Trained, Fearless				
<i>Requirements:</i> Bhrgu				
<b>Sakti</b>	8 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Sensors, Signals, Security, Profile-wise, Void Signal-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<i>Requirements:</i> Bhrgu				
<b>Ansaka</b>	8 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Pilot, Vehicular Weapons, Atmospheric Vehicle-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<i>Requirements:</i> Sakti, Ansa or Karttikeya				
<b>Dharakka</b>	7 yrs	1	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Fortifications, Explosives, Recon, Terrain-wise, Sabotage-wise, Structure-wise, Detonator-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Slaggah				
<i>Requirements:</i> Bhrgu				
<b>Karttikeya</b>	9 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Armorer, Munitions, Weapon-wise, Explosives-wise, Ammunition-wise, Angiris-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<i>Requirements:</i> Bhrgu				



Angiris	9 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Tactics, Command, Observation, Bhṛigu-wise, Conspicuous

*Traits:* 1 pt: Galvanizing Presence

*Requirements:* Ansa, Atri Vibhuuten Naiven, Meshhen Naiven or Prince

Daityas	9 yrs	1	0	+1 M
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Artillery, Advanced Mathematics

*Traits:* 1 pt: Cool-Headed

*Requirements:* Karttikeya, Ansaka or Sakti

Atri	8 yrs	1	1	+1 M
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Propaganda, Cryptography, Imperial Cryptography-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Calm Demeanor

*Requirements:* Vibhuuten, Sakti, Controller or Angiris

Vayu	9 yrs	2	1	+1 M
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Helm, Navigation, Void-wise, Space Lane-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Cool-Headed, Illegal Crucis

*Requirements:* Ansaka, Daityas or Sakti

Ksatriya	10 yrs	2	2	+1 M
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Rhetoric, Clan-wise, Strategy, Administration, Bureaucracy

*Traits:* 1 pt: Clan Leader, Organized, Quick-Witted, Remote, Seen It All

*Requirements:* Any Human Caste lifepath, Vayu, Vaishya or Controller



Vaylen



## Vaishyen Caste

The Vaishyen are the administrators of the Vaylen farm worlds and the geneticists who breed the various Vaylen castes. They are sentient and utterly inhuman.



LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
<b>Karttikeya</b>	7 yrs	1	0	—
<b>Skills:</b> 10 pts: Supply-wise, Armorer, Munitions, Anvil-wise, Weapon-wise, Bhriгу-wise, Hammer-wise, Artillery-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt <b>Requirements:</b> Yaadasahm, Aadau or Annelida				
<b>Technician</b>	8 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 10 pts: Science, Physics, Cryonics, Engineering, Hydrology, Fusion Dynamics, Distortion-wise, Human Technology-wise, Lost Secrets-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Calculating <b>Requirements:</b> Yaadasahm or Aadau				
<b>Sculptor</b>	10 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 8 pts: Surgery, Human Biology, Alien Biology, Human Body-wise, Alien Biology-wise, Mad Experiment-wise, Pain-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Steady Hands, Brutal, Forceful <b>Requirements:</b> Technician, Yaadasahm or Aadau				
<b>Encoder</b>	10 yrs	3	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 7 pts: Eugenics, Genetics-wise, Naiven-wise, Human Biology, Brainwashing-wise, Memory-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Cold, Genius <b>Requirements:</b> Sculptor, Technician or any Ksatriyen or Human Caste lifepath				
<b>Controller</b>	10 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 8 pts: Torture, Interrogation, Propaganda, Logistics, Human Behavior-wise, Clinical Study-wise, Prison Camp-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Practical <b>Requirements:</b> Encoder, Sculptor or any Ksatriyen or Human Caste lifepath				
<b>Vaishya</b>	10 yrs	3	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 11 pts: Finance, Bargaining, Supply-wise, Bureaucracy, Logistics, Ksatriyen-wise, Shudren-wise, Vaylen-wise, Factions-wise, Vaylen Farm World-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Meticulous <b>Requirements:</b> Controller, Encoder or any Ksatriyen or Human Caste lifepath				

## Shudren Caste

Shudren are the Vaylen workers, laborers and slaves. Kernn and Mukhadish both began their existence as Vaylen Shudren.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Dalit	10 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Back-Breaking Labor, Cleaning-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Animal Life <i>Requirements:</i> Amedhyen Naiven or Annelida Naiven				
Shudra	12 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Repair, Fire Control <i>Traits:</i> — <i>Requirements:</i> Dalit, Annelida Naiven, Aadau Naiven or Meshhen Naiven				
Seeker	5 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Recon, Observation, Survival, Terrain-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Quiet, Eye for Place <i>Requirements:</i> Vibhuuten Naiven, Aadau Naiven or Shudra				
Skanda	6 yrs	1	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Hunting, Infiltration, Close Combat <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Cunning, Charging Blindly <i>Requirements:</i> Vibhuuten Naiven, Meshhen Naiven or Seeker				

## Vaylen Setting

This setting serves two purposes. It is the primary means by which Vaylen spies make their way into human space—therefore it is utilized by skilled and ambitious Vaylen seeking to better their clan's status. It also functions as the outcast and exile setting for the Vaylen. Those who are no longer wanted or needed in clan politics are given a human body, a high distortion jump ship and sent north. Either they earn wealth for their clan and forgiveness for themselves, or, more likely, they disappear from clan politics forever.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Slave Labor	6 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Back-Breaking Labor, Rules-wise, Tools-wise, Slave-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Lucky to be in a Human Body, Child				
Cultist	4 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Gullible Mark-wise, Cult Doctrine, Falsehood, Persuasion, Cult-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Surreptitious, Ambitious, Forked Tongue, Child				

Vaylen

## CHARACTER BURNER

Spacer	4 yrs	1	1	+1 P
<b>Skills:</b> 8 pts: Crew, Repair, Back-Breaking Labor, Smuggling, Cleaning-wise, Security-wise, Close Combat, Pilot, Sensors <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Quiet, Distortion Sickness, Illegal Crucis, Child				
Soldier	3 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<b>Skills:</b> 8 pts: Soldiering, Assault Weapons, Close Combat, Anvil-wise, Military Hardware-wise, Commander-wise, Signals <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Just Following Orders, Fragger <b>Requirements:</b> Any Ksatriyen lifepath or Skanda or Seeker				
Sleeper	5 yrs	1	2	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 11 pts: Inconspicuous, Smuggling, Falsehood, Security-wise, City-wise, Infrastructure-wise, Close Combat, Explosives, Spaceport-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Unassuming, Child <b>Requirements:</b> Any Human Caste lifepath				
Trader	6 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 10 pts: Helm, Navigation, Bargaining, Technology-wise, Alien Culture-wise, System-wise, Void-wise. 1 pt: General. <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Shrewd, Tenacious, Chameleon, Owner-Aboard, Illegal Crucis <b>Requirements:</b> Technician, Vaishya, Ansaka, Syzygy or Prince				
Scientist	5 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 9 pts: Cryonics, Surgery, Physics, Science, Technology-wise, Phenomenon-wise, Distortion-wise, Tech Index-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Calculating, Strangelove, Frighteningly Clinical <b>Requirements:</b> Technician, Vayu or Dilettante				
Cult Leader	6 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 8 pts: Heretical Doctrine, Oratory, Cultist-wise, Persuasion, Propaganda <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Manipulative, Imperious Demeanor, Dregutai, Order Before Chaos, Metropolitan, Arbiter <b>Requirements:</b> Controller, Dilettante, Eris, Syzygy or two Cultist lifepaths				
Commander	7 yrs	2	2	+1 P
<b>Skills:</b> 9 pts: Anvil-wise, Anvil Lord-wise, Forged Lord-wise, Hammer-wise, Terrain-wise, Traitor-wise, Strategy, Command <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Usurper, REMF, Kilgore, Mark of Privilege, Corvus and Crucis <b>Requirements:</b> Vibhuuten Clan or any Human lifepath				
Captain	8 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 9 pts: Hammer-wise, Hammer Lord-wise, Space Station-wise, Spaceport-wise, Interdiction-wise, Insubordination-wise, Strategy, Logistics <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Usurper, REMF, Officer, Mark of Privilege, Corvus and Crucis <b>Requirements:</b> Vibhuuten Clan or any Human lifepath				
Diplomat	5 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 7 pts: Etiquette, Persuasion, Bargaining, Faction-wise, Back Room Deals-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Well-Traveled, Charismatic, Cool-Headed, Linguist, Ear for Voices <b>Requirements:</b> Vaishya, Eris, Princess or Ksatriya				



High Official	7 yrs	2	2	—
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**Skills:** 12 pts: Bureaucracy, Persuasion, Province-wise, Administration, Budget-wise, Deal-wise, Logistics, Balance of Power-wise, Contributions-wise, Merchant League-wise, Skeletons-wise, Media-wise, Inner Circle-wise, Commune-wise, Department-wise. 1 pt: General.

**Traits:** 1 pt: Odd, Public Face, Child

**Requirements:** Vaishya, Controller, Queen, Philosopher King, Prince or Cult Leader

## Vaylen Host Bodies

Human, Ksatriyen, Vaishyen and Shudren castes represent body types. A Vaylen character begins the game with a body appropriate to the caste of the last lifepath he took. If his last lifepath was Philosopher King, he gets a human body. If his last lifepath was Bhrigu, he's got a Ksatriyen body. If Dalit, then he's got a Shudren body. If he's a Controller, then he's Vaishyen caste.



### Stat Pools, Caste and Bodies

When changing caste among Ksatriyen, Vaishyen and Shudren, the Vaylen must change bodies. Stat pool bonuses are tied to the body that earned the bonus. They do not carry over to the new setting/body. You may not "return to your old body." It is recycled for use while you're out.

If going from Human Caste to Vaylen setting or vice versa, *stat pool bonus points carry over from one setting to another*. The same host body is retained.

Total up the stat pool bonuses you've earned for your current body. Rather than consulting an age chart, add the bonuses to the base stat pools for the appropriate body listed below. Divide the points as instructed to do so in Step 5 of the Character Burner.

Do not add your stat pool bonuses to the Naiven body stats listed in the Worm trait. Those numbers do not change.

Vaylen

## Vaylen Age

Naiven can inhabit a body of any age, but Naiven themselves only live to be about 80 years old. Therefore, no Vaylen can exceed 70 years old in character burning.

A Vaylen player may choose the actual age of his body—and hence his outward appearance. Naiven age and body age do not have to correspond.

## Vaylen Host Bodies

Since Vaylen bodies are not their own, there is no age chart for stat pools. Use the appropriate body trait to determine the character's starting base stat pools:

### Human

Dr.

Stat pools: 8 M, 15 P. (Maximums: P 8, W 8, A 6, S 6, P 6, F 6.) Human bodies may only be taken as a host body if the Vaylen character has taken Human Caste or Vaylen setting lifepaths.

A human body is the most precious commodity for Vaylen. To inhabit such a host is to exist in the highest echelons of Vaylen society. Human bodies are precious because they grant the ability to think clearly, to reason abstractly, to know and enjoy art and to feel subtle and refined emotions and sensations. Even more so, they are desired because they are comparatively rare: There are hundreds of billions of humans scattered throughout the crumbling Iron Empires; there are hundreds of *trillions* of Naiven without hosts, waiting in nutrient tanks for their families to provide them with a body.

### Child

Dr.

Stat pools: 6 M, 11 P. (Maximums: P 7, W 7, A 5, S 5, P 5, F 5.) One of the truly bizarre aspects of Vaylen life is that they may, if they are wealthy and powerful enough, choose to inhabit the mind of a child host and see the world through its eyes. It can best be described as an adventurous vacation for Vaylen potentates. You must have the Child trait to start the game in a child body. Vibhuuten or Meshhen characters with this trait may take an extra child body if they can afford it.



### Ksatriyen

Dr.

Stat pools: 6 M, 16 P. (Maximums: P 6, W 6, A 6, S 6, P 6, F 7.) Ksatriyen (K-saht-tree-en) bodies may be taken by characters with Ksatriyen Caste lifepaths. There is no set Ksatriyen body. They are anthromorphs, sentient and sapient—so they are useful, but they lack the adaptability of the highly developed human mind. Players are free to develop traits for their Ksatriyen Caste bodies using the Alien Life-Form rules. However, since the

Kernn disaster, Vaylen keep tight restrictions on the capabilities bred into the Ksatriyen Caste.

Ksatriyen bodies may be embellished with five points of traits from the Alien Life-Form chapter. Choose from the Natural Weapons, Natural Armor and Inhuman Ability categories. Players may supplement these trait points with excess trait points from their lifepaths.

## Makara

Dr.

Stat pools: 7 M, 14 P. (Maximums: P 7, W 7, A 6, S 4, P 4, F 6.) Makara bodies are only available to the Yaadasahm clan. The name Makara comes from the original Vaylen stock—*Cnidaria Makara*—great, intelligent jellyfish that plied the oceans of the Vaylen homeworld. They were the first race enslaved by the Naiven, and the first creatures to become true Vaylen. Long since naturally extinct, the Makara exist only in the Yaadasahm breeding vats. The clan has genetically preserved the creatures, because they prefer these hosts above all others. In fact, the Yaadasahm disdain other hosts. They will only take Ksatriyen hosts in times of war and need, and even then only reluctantly.

Makara are massive aquatic creatures with pliable, jelly-like flesh, a large, complex brain and multiple tentacles and pseudopods capable of manipulating tools.

They have the following Alien Life-Form traits: Membranous Flesh (character trait), Tentacles (Advantage: +1D to Surgery and Close Combat) and Aquatic (Inhuman Ability to breathe water and swim without penalty).

## Shudren

Dr.

The Shudren (Shoo-dren) caste is considered little more than cattle among the Vaylen, and are taken only as hosts as the last resort. Some families can do no better than Shudren caste, but even for the more powerful families, there are so many raw Naiven that most



Vaylen



are consigned to the clan's Shudren hosts as a labor pool. Shudren caste Vaylen may take one of two bodies, the generic Shudra or a Mukhadish. The stat pools are the same for both types—5 M, 20 P—but the stat maximums and traits are different. Shudra maximums: P 4, W 4, A 6, S 4, P 7, F 7. Mukhadish maximums: P 5, W 3, A 4, S 5, P 8, F 8. If you choose a Mukhadish, use the Mukhadish Common Traits described in the Mukhadish chapter to describe the creature's body. If not, take eight trait points worth of traits from the Alien Life-Form chapter.



### Vaishyen

Dr.

Stat pools: 8 M, 14 P. (Maximums: P 6, W 6, A 7, S 6, P 4, F 4.) Vaishyen (Vy-sh-ee-en) bodies may be taken if the character has Vaishyen Caste lifepaths. Vaishyen Caste bodies are decidedly inhuman. They are insectile, arachnidial or cephalopodal and were bred for their role by the master eugenicists in the Vaishyen Caste. Their function is to be able to operate in a highly technical/technological environment. The Vaylen eugenicists have designed their own bio-organic tools—fine manipulators, multiple sets of eyes and the ability to doggedly concentrate on complex technical tasks. Therefore they often prefer these less adaptable hosts to the fashionable human form.

Players who choose Vaishyen bodies may embellish these bodies with six points of traits from the Alien Life-Form chapter. They may choose from the Inhuman Skill, Advantage and Tweak categories. They may supplement these trait points with excess trait points from their lifepaths.

### **Additional or Multiple Bodies**

Vaylen players may buy additional bodies for their characters only if they are members of the Meshhen, Vibhuuten or Yaadasahm clans and only if the player took lifepaths from multiple castes when burning his character. Other clans are not powerful enough to warrant such largesse!

Shudra cost one resource point, Ksatriyen or Vaishyen cost two resource points and human bodies cost three resource points each.

The bodies start with the stat pools listed for the body types Vaylen Host Bodies heading. The Vaylen's last setting determines what his current main host is. That host gains access to all of the skills earned on the lifepaths. An additional body may only take skills and stat bonuses



from the lifepaths in its caste. A Ksatriyen body cannot benefit from Human lifepaths, for example. The process is similar to burning up a relationship, but the additional host body's choices are much more limited.

## *Vaylen Relationships*

Vaylen may purchase relationships like any other character. Vaishyen administrators, as well as Ksatriyen and Shudren bodyguards, may be purchased.

Vaylen may not purchase human or Kerrn bodyguard/assistant relationships unless they have taken lifepaths in the Vaylen setting. If a player is trying to be sneaky and pay two circles points for this relationship so that he may hull him and take his mind in the first scene, the GM may deduct the resource points cost of the additional body—3 rps—from the player's starting resources.

## *Vaylen Resources*

Sometimes, a Vaylen character is going to need a whole bunch of Naiven so he can start hulling the local populace. Naiven can be bought as a resource in character creation. It costs one resource point for a few million Naiven from your own or a lesser clan.

Also, Vaylen may always begin the game with one piece of low index technology costing one resource point no matter the world's tech index.

Vaylen

## Hulling



When a Naiven infects a human mind, that person is no longer human. He is now Vaylen and, aside from the Kernn, no sentient creature has been able to recover from the process.

Technically, “hulling” is human slang that refers to the process of puncturing the skull in order to insert and implant a Naiven. For our purposes, it is used to refer to the implantation of Naiven in a more broad sense.

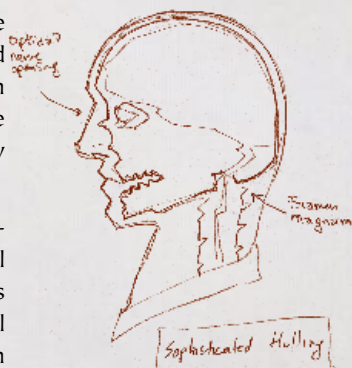
There are three types of “hulls”: the optic nerve hull, the field hull and the foramen magnum hull.

In the optic nerve method, a very young Naiven is inserted along the optic nerve and allowed to grow in the brain fluid. This is virtually undetectable and is usually a highly successful process. However, it takes a very long time to complete. This means that the host must be held in sedation for upwards of a month while the Naiven grows, develops, and takes over. If done improperly, it can cause blindness in the eye along whose optic nerve the Naiven was inserted.



The field hull is the simplest. A hole is drilled at the base of the skull and the Naiven inserted into the brain pan. The hole is filled with a bone substitute which can be detected by certain security devices.

The foramen magnum hull is essentially a more careful and technical version of the field hull. It involves slipping the Naiven along the spinal column through the foramen magnum into the interior of the skull. If successful, the Naiven makes its way into the brain of the host.

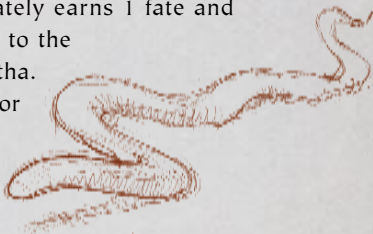


## Surgery Obstacles for Hulling

- The optic nerve hull is an Ob 4 Surgery test. If failed, the victim goes blind in one eye and the Naiven cannot make its way to the brain. Blinded characters are + 1 Ob to all shot opportunities.
- The field hull is an Ob 2 Surgery test or an Ob 4 Field Dressing test. If failed, the Naiven cannot make its way to the brain. Regardless, a field hull causes a Maimed injury result to the victim. See the Anatomy of Injury for how that works.
- The foramen magnum hull is an Ob 4 Surgery test. If successful, the Naiven makes its way into the brain of the host. The host suffers an Injury. If the Surgery test is failed, the host suffers a Maimed result and the Naiven cannot make its way into the brain pan.

## Hulling a Player Character

If a player's character is hulled by the GM during the game, there are two options. The player may, if he chooses, leave the game. It's a pretty traumatic experience, so I wouldn't blame him. Alternately, the player may take over the Vaylen and work for the other side. He's the bad guy now and he may choose which traits, Beliefs and Instincts to keep and which to discard. If the player chooses this option, his new Vaylen character immediately earns 1 fate and 1 persona. This artha is added to the character's existing stock of artha. See the Wheel of Artha chapter for the details of what artha does.



Vaylen

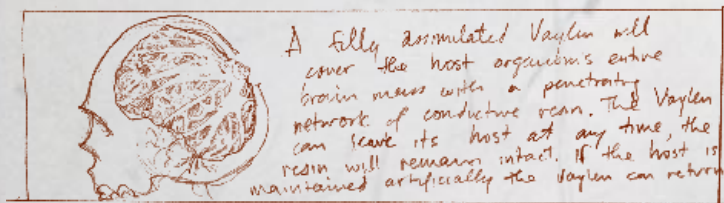
If a *player* hulled another *player's* character and took over his body for his own use, that's a slightly different story. The hulled player is out of luck in this scenario. Unless he's got a bodyguard or assistant to play, he's out of the game until the next phase when he can make a new character and jump in.

### ***Hulling a Psychologist***

If a psychologist is successfully hulled and invested with a Naiven, the character immediately loses the Bright Mark or Mule traits. The invasive nature of the Naiven destroys this ability in its hosts. There are no Vaylen psychologists. Note, however, that the Vaylen may use the Psychology skill to read people and conduct maneuvers. They just do not have access to the additional powers.

### **The Mind's Eye**

The mind of the hulled creature remains active and alive. However, it can no longer control its own body. All voluntary function is taken over by the Naiven. The worm takes over the intelligence of the host body, supplementing it with its own experiences while feeding off of the new ones. This new dual creature is a true Vaylen.



## ***Jumping Bodies in Play***

It is possible that a Vaylen player will have the opportunity to jump bodies in play. A Vaylen spy on a human world often finds himself with the opportunity to build a stable of bodies.

Vaylen bodies that are without Naiven must be cared for and tended. For all intents and purposes, they are in a coma. Their autonomic functions—respiration, cardiovascular—continue, but without care, they will die of dehydration and/or starvation.

### **Stats**

When you jump bodies, you take the stats of the new body—mental and physical.

## Character Traits

The player may opt to leave behind any character traits he desires in the old body and choose which he wants to take with him into the new body. Any character traits left behind are lost. Erase them from the old body's character sheet. Even if the Naiven returns to this body, the process of being hulled has drained something from the host's mind. Any character traits taken from one host are encoded into the worm and may not be discarded on future jumps. They may be voted off as per the usual rules, though.



## Call-On and Die Traits

Call-on and die traits remain with their respective hosts. They may not be encoded by Naiven. The exception to this rule is, of course, the Naiven's own clan trait. This trait cannot be lost, removed or voted off.

## Beliefs and Instincts

The Vaylen may encode his Beliefs and Instincts before he jumps. The player may choose between his old Beliefs and Instincts and the new ones. He may keep those which he likes and discard the others.

## Resources

Resources are typically attached to a person via some form of identification. Therefore, unless a player makes provisions for his various bodies to have access to one another's Resources, he is stuck with whatever his current host has.

If he makes provisions, he may give himself loans and help between the different Resource pools.

## Circles

Circles are attached to the host body. The Vaylen player has the base Circles, reputations and affiliations of his current host. In addition, he may access any reputation or affiliation granted by his clan trait.

## Relationships

Relationships are also governed by the host, unless the relationship himself is Vaylen and knows about his friend's various bodies.

Vaylen



### Skills

Skill exponents fluctuate from body to body. When a Vaylen jumps bodies, it may take its Will- and Perception-rooted skills as is. The rest of its skills—Agility, Perception/Agility, Power, Forte or Speed-based—lose any advancements made. *Existing skills become encoded at the new host's roots.* When the Naiven takes a new host, factor these new roots. Occasionally this will be beneficial, but generally it is like starting over.

The Naiven does, however, absorb all of its new host's skills at their current exponents. If he leaves this body, he may take these skills with him to his next body, obeying the rules as stated above.

### Injury

If its host is injured, the Naiven may switch to another host and leave the injured host to recover. Naiven are not injured when their host is injured. Even if the host suffers a Mortal Wound, the Naiven may chew his way out of the skull through the eye or the hulling point and escape. If the host suffers a Mortal Wound from a weapon that does vehicular or superstructural scale damage, both Naiven and host are killed.

### Escaping a Host

A Naiven may eject from an injured host and attempt to flee. The creature may use his Infiltration skill if he has one. Otherwise test his Speed in a versus test against an opposing character's Perception or Observation. If the Naiven wins, he escapes. If the opposing character wins, another test is needed to capture or kill the worm. The Naiven may test Speed versus his opponent's Agility for capturing, or Close Combat, Assault Weapons or Squad Support Weapons if trying to kill the worm.

## Vaylen Infestation

Vaylen characters have special rules for purchasing traits in the Usurpation and Invasion phases of the Infection. In the Usurpation phase, they may purchase any traits which are restricted to a human lifepath. These traits are purchased at their listed cost in the Trait List. During the Invasion, in addition to the Usurpation option, a Vaylen player may purchase one human lifepath trait for one point. It can be any trait of his choosing, but his selection is subject to group veto—this includes the GM choosing traits for his character.





# THE GHETTO SHEEF'S STORY

*Shezrah couldn't help but sneer when he entered Talman's office. The fat bastard was sitting there looking smug as ever, suckling a fat cigar as if it were his mamma.*

*"Shezrah," Talman intoned. "A pleasure as always."*

*"Cut eet Tahlmahn," Shezrah hissed. "You know why I'm here."*

*"You want me to take your people back into my employ," Talman said, leaning back in his chair. "Which I'm afraid I can't do."*

*"My people vork, yez?" Shezrah asked. "Vork vell?"*

*"Yes."*

*"No problemz?"*

*"No problems."*

*"So explain, Tahlmahn. Why you close ze factree to us?"*

*"Simple economics, Shezrah." Talman replied, rising from his chair and crossing to the window. "You and your people do fine work... but the wages you demand... not to mention all the other concessions, health care, safety issues..."*

*"Ve deserve everyting you give yurr ooman vorkers!" Shezrah spat.*

*"Oh, I agree." Talman said, "I've never held your race against you. You are perfectly entitled to everything a human gets."*

*Shezrah grimaced at the way Talman pronounced human, stressing the "H" with a deliberate drawl, mocking the Kerrn's accent. He let a low growl escape his lips.*

*"You see, Shezrah,.." Talman continued. "You do deserve equality. I've simply found a workforce that doesn't."*

*Talman signaled to his admin drone. The office door slid open and Shezrah turned to see a figure lumbering into the office. It towered a full head above him, with dull brutish features that smacked of barely repressed savagery.*

*"Mukhadiz," Shezrah spat incredulously. "You not serious?!"*





*"I've brought in a whole herd from off-world," Talman said, gesturing at the giant. "They're being trained now."*

*"You givin ze Vaylen a whole 'erd ov foot solzjah, den."*

*"Vaylen...feh," Talman sneered. "It's not as if we're in some frontier backwater. We're in the very center of the Karsan League!"*

*"Tey come. Always do." Shezrah growled, "And you gonna be furst against ze vall."*

*"I've had enough," Talman said. "Get him out of here."*

*The Mukhadish grabbed for Shezrah, but the lithe Kerrn ducked to the side and slapped the immense hand away. He sprang back and drew his knife. Without a moment's hesitation, the Kerrn ducked underneath the Mukhadish's reach and drove his knife up into the flesh of its underarm. The thing howled with pain and anger. As the creature flinched, Shezrah savaged it brutally—stabbing again and again, precise and deadly.*

*The Mukhadish fell to its knees, clutching at its throat. It let out a small whimper and collapsed to the floor. Shezrah grabbed Talman by the throat and wiped his knife on the man's fine suit.*

*"Jou one greedy ooman, Tahlmahn," he hissed. "Get jou kilt zsomeday."*

*He let go of the magnate and strode out of the gleaming office, splattered with blood.*

*"That was my property!" Talman shouted. "I'll have you arrested! You and your whole miserable tribe!"*

*"Jou know vere to find uz, Tahlmahn," Shezrah said over his shoulder. "Just bring plenny of tose Mukhadiz when you come...cause dat vas a lot of fun."*

### *Shezrah, Ghetto Sheef*

*Age: 38*

*Will 4, Perception 4, Agility 4, Speed 4, Power 6, Forte 6.*

*Resources: 4      Circles: 2      Steel: 6 (hesitation 6)*

*Mortal Wound: H12*

*Skills: Persuasion 5, Observation 4, Administration 5, Close Combat 5, Kerrn Ghetto-wise 5, Repair 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 2, Bargaining 2, Advanced Mathematics 2, Soothing Platitudes 2, Child Rearing 2, Human-wise 2, Job-wise 2, Bigotry-wise 2, Mercenary-wise 2, Conflict-wise 2, Kerrn-wise 2, Government-wise 2, Factions-wise 2, Criminal-wise 2*

*Traits: Protective, Fazia to All, Conciliator, Dedicated, Wanderlust, Sanguine, Gentle Giant, Well-Traveled, Illegal Crucis, Charismatic. Bioengineered Organism, Kerrn Accent, Massive Stature, Not Easy Being Green, Super-Mutated IgE, Unbridled Hatred*

*Technology: Knife, Network of Ghetto Safe Houses*

*Reputations: Sheef Fazia of Kerrn Ghetto on Nikopol, 3D. Dark Past as a Crazy Mürk, 2D.*

*Affiliations: Kerrn Ghetto in Nikopol, 3D. Ba'arak's Mürks, 2D.*

*Relationships: Tahlmahn—Corporate Labor Boss. Savatah—My offspring.*



# KERRN

Kerrn began their existence as slave-hosts for the Vaylen. Designed for both intelligence and adaptability, they were largely a success. However, within the first three generations of Kerrn, a serious flaw emerged in their genome. Their autoimmune system rejected and killed their Naiven puppeteers!

Before the Vaylen completely understood what was happening, the Kerrn revolted and fled. The revolt itself spanned multiple battles, both planetside and in space. Kerrn were the crew for the Vaylen hammer fleets. One major naval engagement resulted in a pyrrhic victory for the Kerrn. They won, but the surviving ships were too damaged to make the trek to port for repair. So they decided to make these crippled ships their home. Using their intimate knowledge of the Vaylen spacecraft, they fashioned a home of wrecks and junk to house the survivors. They called it Omshiip. Today, the precise location of Omshiip is unknown to all but the upper echelons of the Kerrn government.

Since that day, the Kerrn have spread out across the human worlds in a welcome diaspora that has served both peoples well.

## *Kerrn Common Traits*

All Kerrn characters must take the following traits: Bioengineered Organism, Kerrn Accent, Massive Stature, Not Easy Being Green and Super-Mutated IgE.

### Bioengineered Organism *Or:*

Kerrn did not evolve into their current form. They were created by the Vaylen Eugenists soon after the Vaylen realized that capturing human hosts was not going to be as easy as they hoped. The Vaylen gene sculptors attempted to make a superhuman life-form, capable of withstanding great



physical stress as well as being sentient, sapient and adaptable. The Vaylen blended human stock with that of a creature called the Thaynagash—a plant-like being discovered in the upper reaches of a gas giant in Vaylen space. The creature had physical properties attractive in a slave host. Specifically, it was able to withstand intense pressure changes (from +20 gravities to vacuum), and supplemented its meager diet of water vapor and flying protozoa with photosynthesized sugars.

A Kernn character may take a scene's worth of action in vacuum conditions. After the scene is over, if the Kernn returns to relatively normal atmospheric conditions, he suffers an Injury. For every scene after the first that the Kernn remains in vacuum, he suffers a Maimed injury result. He may recover from either injury as per the standard rules.

### Kernn Accent

Char

Due to the shape of their jaws and the structure of their respiratory system, Kernn speak with a distinctive accent. There is no "w" sound in their phonology. It is replaced by a voiced labiodental fricative "v." "Water" becomes "vater." They also soften and extend the pronunciation of the soft "a." "Apple" becomes "ahpple." "O" and "u" sounds are stressed, and "h" is dropped. "Home" becomes "Om." "V" sounds not in the first syllable are usually pronounced as "f." "S" as the first consonant is hardened to a "z" sound. Lastly, Kernn often seem to vibrate or trill their "r" sounds, with the effect of a seeming "v" sound arbitrarily added to words beginning with "r." "Rarely" becomes "Vvrarely." When making an "r" sound, in order to curl the tongue, the Kernn jaw pulls the lips into contact with the teeth.

*"Vvrarely 'ahf I zeen zuch lovely vahter."*

### Massive Stature

Ph

Kernn have a massive physical stature. They stand nearly three meters tall and are solid muscle mass. Power, Forte and Speed maximums are at 7. A Kernn character's Agility and Speed exponents may not be higher than his Power and Forte exponents. If Agility and Speed are 4s, Power and Forte must be 4s or higher.

### Not Easy Being Green

Char

Kernn have bright green to dark green dermal coloration. Almost universally, Kernn have markings around their ocular orbits of a contrastive color, like bright blue, red or yellow. Many remark that Kernn resemble giant, anthropomorphic Earth-born frogs, to which the Kernn sigh in response, "Eets naht eashe being grreen."

### Super-Mutated IgE

Ph

Through a fluke in their design, the Kernn developed super-mutated immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies in their hybrid bodies. IgE attack and kill parasites. This trait grants the Kernn the ability to resist parasite infestation with their Forte and grants +3D for the purposes of the roll. This trait allows the Kernn to overcome hulling. It is an Ob 5 test to resist the effects of Naiven and defeat the worm's own natural defenses. If the Kernn wins the test, the

Kernn



Naiven is killed and rendered inert by the super-mutated IgEs. If the test is failed, the Kernn falls under Vaylen control permanently. The Kernn player may choose when he wishes to make this important test—even if he is no longer in control of the character!

## Unbridled Hatred

Char

Humans who meet Kernn are often struck by how congenial and sanguine they are. But buried in their cultural heritage is a burning coal of hatred. Kernn are



taught their history and heritage from an early age. They are taught that the Vaylen have continued to make more creatures for slaves since the failed experiment. The Kernn universally detest such creatures. They cannot tolerate the sight of another Vaylen creation, especially the Mukhadish, who were specifically designed to replace the Kernn.

## KERNN SETTINGS

Going among the Kernn settings Vreck, Omshiip, Omshec, Oprvraeta, Solzjah and Piilosihver costs one year per lead. Going to or from the Diazspherah setting always costs two years unless it's native.

### Vreck

The Kernn homeworld is a graveyard of wrecks that they have knit together into a cohesive whole. It floats lost in Void space, and Kernn are sworn to never reveal its location. Once they leave, they rarely return.

Kernn are grown and nurtured in creches called Vrecks. These are derelicts and hulls converted into breeding tanks and nurseries suitable for the Kernn physiology. The Fazia of the creche buds new Kernn and tends to the offspring.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RES	CIRCLES	STAT
Born Kahlakesh	6 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Zero G, Close Combat. 3 pts: General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Cryptic, Romantic, Sentimental, Empathic, Saccharine				
Reegah	4 yrs	0	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Jury-Rigging, Shipwreck-wise, Scavenging <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Curious, Bad Egg <i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second lifepath.				
Fazia	5 yrs	1	2	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Child Rearing, Soothing Platitudes, Kernn-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt <i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this may not be the second lifepath.				



## Oprvraeta

In order to keep Omship running and growing, Kernn have fostered a substantial technical class in their society. Most Kernn are, in fact, Oprvraeta. Omship requires constant maintenance, and the entire economic and social foundation of Kernn society is driven by the needs of the Oprvraeta. Skilled oprvraeta often leave Omship to travel the empires onboard human starships. They are gifted technicians and have no trouble finding placement among the crews of hammer and mercenaries.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RES	CIRCLES	STAT
Ay-Gāngah	2 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Crew, Back-Breaking Labor, Airlock-wise, Cleaning-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt <i>Requirements:</i> Reegah or Solzjah				
Crao	2 yrs	1	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Repair, Tools-wise, Chemical-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Tinkerer <i>Requirements:</i> Ay-Gāngah				
Mezz	5 yrs	1	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Cooking, Food-wise, Import-wise, Supply-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: A Bit Mad <i>Requirements:</i> Ay-Gāngah				

Kernn

## CHARACTER BURNER

<b>Trawttuhl</b>	3 yrs	1	1	—
<b>Skills:</b> 6 pts: Pilot, Driving, Shuttle-wise, Tug-wise, Lander-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Need for Speed <b>Requirements:</b> Ay-Gängah, Komm, Eltee or Kerrn-Ammah				
<b>Verseeay</b>	4 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Fusion Dynamics, Radiation-wise, Power Pack-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Irradiated, Spock <b>Requirements:</b> Crao, Kerrn-Ammah or Eltee				
<b>Kerrnstruct</b>	4 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Fabrication, Materials-wise, Secret Stash-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Lifting Heavy Things <b>Requirements:</b> Crao, Veps				
<b>Treffeek</b>	5 yrs	1	2	—
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Signals, Emissions-wise, Radio-wise, Tight Beam-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Radiohead <b>Requirements:</b> Crao, Komm or Eyns				
<b>Lktreek</b>	6 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Physics, Ship Systems-wise, Electricity-wise, Artificial Gravity-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Healthy Respect for Power <b>Requirements:</b> Fiyahkerrn, Kerrnstruct or Verseeay				
<b>Beeldah</b>	8 yrs	3	2	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 10 pts: Shipwright, Architect, Engineer, Manufacture, Advanced Mathematics, Secret Compartment-wise, Ship-wise, Omship-wise, Jury-Rigged-Mess-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Professional Pride, Self-Made Kerrn <b>Requirements:</b> Lktreek				







## Solzjah

Kernn military tradition is founded from precepts learned as Vaylen Shudren and Ksatriyen hosts, and via long alliance with various human empires. Since all Omshiip Kernn are taught how to maneuver in zero g and how to fight in close quarters from the day they are born, many of them take up as soldiers at some point in their lives. Unlike the rigid structures of the Vaylen and human military castes, the Kernn armed forces are more loosely organized. It's possible to move in and out of the ranks without too much difficulty. Still, it's worth noting that the lower-ranked paths do require strict discipline and training. Efficient and deadly combat is a serious concern for the Kernn!

The Solzjah lifepaths represent Kernn trained and dedicated to the defense of Omshiip, but it is not uncommon for career Solzjahs to retire from duty and head off into the human empires to help fight the Vaylen on other fronts.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RES	CIRCLES	STAT
Solzjah	4 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Soldiering, Assault Weapons <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: 1, Solzjah				
Tuug	3 yrs	0	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Crew, Pilot, Tug-wise, Profile-wise, Control Tower-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Hotshot, Maelcum				
Ahnveel	3 yrs	1	1	+2 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Squad Support Weapons, Anvil-wise, Human-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Anvil Trained <i>Requirements:</i> Solzjah				
Sayeret	3 yrs	1	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Recon, Observation, Physical Training, Close Combat <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Quiet <i>Requirements:</i> Solzjah				
Shayatet	4 yrs	1	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Explosives, Infiltration, Security Rigging, Field Dressing <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Krav Magah Trained <i>Requirements:</i> Sayeret				
Veps	4 yrs	2	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Armorer, Repair, Munitions, Explosives, Vehicular Weapons <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Fetishist <i>Requirements:</i> Ahnveel				

Kernn

## CHARACTER BURNER

Komm	3 yrs	1	1	—
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Sensors, Signals, Radiation-wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: Tweaker

*Requirements:* Solzjah

Surge	5 yrs	1	1	+1 P
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Tactics, Intimidation, Solzjah-wise, Eltee-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Gruff, Oddly Likeable

*Requirements:* Sayeret or Ahnveel

Eltee	5 yrs	2	1	+1 M
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Command, Navigation, Ship Management, Crew-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Sharp-Eyed, Illegal Crucis

*Requirements:* Sheef, Eyns, Tsvigh or Surge

Kern-Ammah	4 yrs	2	1	+1 M/P
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Helm, Vehicular Weapons, Hammer-wise,

Ramming Speed-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Swagger, Illegal Crucis

*Requirements:* Eltee, Komm or Treffeek

Günkontro	4 yrs	2	1	+1 P
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Artillery, Munitions, Big Guns-wise, Nuclear Weapons-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Slaggah

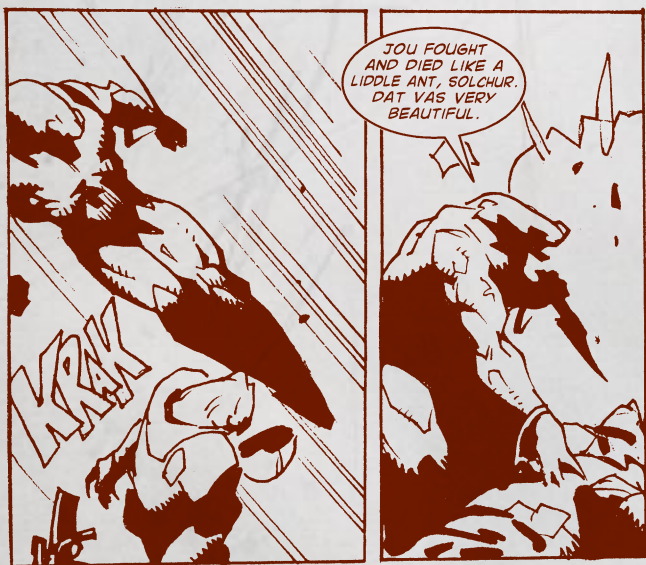
*Requirements:* Komm, Tsvigh or Veps

Offisah	6 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Strategy, Fortifications, Captain-wise, Ship-wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: Offisah

*Requirements:* Eltee, Günkontro or Kern-Ammah





# Omshec

The only thing the Kernn take more seriously than administration of Omshiip is Omshec. Omshec is the intelligence, surveillance and security branch of Omshiip. Kernn who serve in this branch of government often lose the sanguine and upbeat nature that is common to their people. But the Kernn of Omshec have a deadly serious task—it is their duty to ensure that Omshiip is kept secret and to guard against Vaylen infiltration. For if the Vaylen were to find Omshiip, they would certainly do their utmost to destroy it in order to erase the Kernn mistake once and for all.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RES	CIRCLES	STAT
Fyahkernn	4 yrs	1	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Omshiip-wise, Repair, Fire Control, Explosive-Decompression-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Vigilant, Stoic, Fearless <i>Requirements:</i> Reegah, Tuug				
Mehdeek	5 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Surgery, Pharmacology, Kernn Biology, Naiven Biology, Human Biology, Hull-wise <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Patient <i>Requirements:</i> Sayeret, Fazia, Teasha				
Sguridee	6 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Security, Interrogation, Sensors, Technology-wise, Security System-wise, Administration <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Polite, Watchful, Serious as a Heart Attack <i>Requirements:</i> Sayeret, Eyns, Eltee or Sheef				
Verm Untah	6 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Vaylen-wise, Observation, Hull-wise, Intimidation, Infiltration-wise, Investigative Logic <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Suspicious, Skeptical, Paranoid <i>Requirements:</i> Sguridee				



Kernn



## Omship

Kern refer to their homeworld as Omship. And while they do not have a massive bureaucracy or a clan structure like humans or Vaylen, they take the administration of their home very seriously. The Kern Emcheef is the highest ranking Kern in their government—and he is greatly respected among his people. He is supported by a simple staff of officers, and together they tackle the complex operations of running a completely artificial world built from salvage.

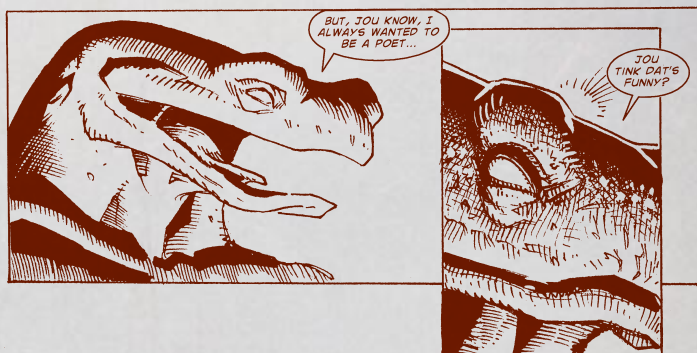
LIFEPATH	TIME	RES	CIRCLES	STAT
Drei	3 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Accounting, Bargaining, Oprvraeta-wise, Omship-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Omship Staff <b>Requirements:</b> Surge or Mehdeek				
Tsvigh	3 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Kern Weapons-wise, Armorer, Security, Omshec-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Omship Staff <b>Requirements:</b> Drei, Fyahkern, Verseeay				
Eyns	4 yrs	2	1	—
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Cryptography, Signals-wise, Encryption-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Omship Staff <b>Requirements:</b> Tsvigh, Treffeek, Komm or Veps				
Sheef	4 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Persuasion, Bureaucracy, Solzjah-wise, Diazspherah-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Omship Officer <b>Requirements:</b> Beeldah, Ydro or Drei				
Ydro	5 yrs	2	1	+1 M
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Hydrology, Farming, Oratory, Hydroponics-wise <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Public Figure <b>Requirements:</b> Lktreek, Verseeay or Sheef				
Esscheef	6 yrs	2	1	—
<b>Skills:</b> 5 pts: Omship-wise, Soothing Platitudes, Emcheef-wise, Staff-wise <b>Traits:</b> 1 pt: Omship Officer <b>Requirements:</b> Sguridee or Tsvigh				
Emcheef	7 yrs	2	2	+1 M/P
<b>Skills:</b> 4 pts: Administration, Logistics, Ugly Truth. 1 pt: General. <b>Traits:</b> 2 pts: Omship's Master <b>Requirements:</b> Sheef				



## Piilosihver

Despite appearances, the Kernn have a vigorous academic and philosophical tradition. As a people, Kernn possess the knowledge that they were built to be controllable slaves. Therefore, to many, education is of primary importance. And the nature of their birth and their place between the Vaylen and the human cultures has spawned introspection and deep consideration in many a learned Kernn. Kernn Piilosihvers wander the Omship, Vrecks and Diazspherah colonies looking for answers.

LIEEPATH	TIME	RES	CIRCLES	STAT
Vundrah	5 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Kernn-wise, Planet-wise, Ship-wise, Observation <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Wanderlust, Agoraphobic, Well-Traveled, Claustrophobic, Illegal Crucis				
Yusheva	4 yrs	0	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Advanced Mathematics, History, Symbology, Astronomy <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Dedicated				
Teasha	5 yrs	1	1	+1 M, P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Instruction, Intimidation, Student-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Hard Hearted <i>Requirements:</i> Yusheva				
Estoria	6 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Research, Kernn History, Vaylen History, Human History <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Hungry for Knowledge, Thirsty for Answers <i>Requirements:</i> Yusheva				
Piilosihver	8 yrs	1	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Ugly Truth, Philosophy, Science, Government-wise, Consciousness-wise. 1 pt: General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Deep Thinker, Boor, Bookworm, Determined <i>Requirements:</i> Estoria or Teasha				



Kernn

## Diazspherah

Outside of Omshipp and their various colonies of wrecks, Kernn have spread across the galaxy and settled on the human worlds that would have them. There are Kernn ghettos in the capitals of both the Gonzagin and Darikahn Empires. Both pretenders vie for the attention and alliance of the Kernn; both maintain substantial "Kernn"—highly-trained honor guards of hand-picked Kernn warriors.

Despite the illustrious positions available on the capital worlds, most Kernn live in working class ghettos scattered in the industrial districts of the various systems. And despite their obviously high intelligence, they experience persistent discrimination. Their demeanor and stature places them in one frame for most Humans: labor and soldiers.

LIFEPATH	TIME	RES	CIRCLES	STAT
Born Kernn	7 yrs	1	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 1 pt: Human-wise. 2 pts: General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Gentle Giant, Outcast, Empathic <i>Requirements:</i> This lifepath is for Kernn born in human cultures.				
Mamma	5 yrs	1	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Child Rearing, Kernn-wise, Discipline-wise, Instruction <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Protective, Superstitious, Worried <i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this may not be the second lifepath.				
Slave	4 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Back-Breaking Labor <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Broken				
Verker	3 yrs	1	1	+2 P
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Job-wise, Repair, Driving, Streetwise, Bigotry-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Sanguine <i>Requirements:</i> Mürk, Slave, Vundrah, Yusheva or Reegah				
Mürk	4 yrs	1	2	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Intimidation, Mercenary-wise, Conflict-wise, Bargaining, Close Combat <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: No Nonsense <i>Requirements:</i> Solzjah or two Verker lifepaths				
Kernn	5 yrs	1	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Conspicuous, Command, Imperial Anvil-wise. 1 pt: General. <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Emperor's Armor Bearer, Anvil Trained <i>Requirements:</i> Mürk, Offisah, Shayatet, Beeldah, Vurm Huntah or Emcheef				
Ghetto Sheef	7 yrs	2	2	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 10 pts: Bargaining, Persuasion, Soothing Platitudes, Kernn Ghetto-wise, Government-wise, Factions-wise, Criminal-wise, Vig-wise, Administration <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Fazia to All, Conciliator <i>Requirements:</i> Piilosihver, Sheef, Mamma or Kernn				





## Stat Pools by Age for KERN

Starting Age	Mental Pool	Physical Pool
01-08 years	4 pts	12 pts
09-14 years	5 pts	14 pts
15-20 years	6 pts	16 pts
21-25 years	6 pts	18 pts
26-29 years	6 pts	17 pts
30-35 years	6 pts	16 pts
36-40 years	6 pts	15 pts
41-55 years	5 pts	14 pts
56-60 years	4 pts	14 pts



Kern



# THE GUN'S STORY

*The air around Szmatan danced with the hum of plasma. His skin tingled painfully. The familiar smell of a fusor stung his nose. Instinctively, he closed his eyes. Heat singed his skin. He tried to stand, but secondary explosions rocked him back. When they passed, the dust was gone. Half the squad was gone. The dismembered feet of one of the mortar teams were scattered around the base plate, their mortar a twisted stub.*

*Static burst from the sergeant's comm. The forward observer called back to the unit: "Splash out. Say again, splash out. Fire team, are you there?" Szmatan squinted. The sergeant ignored the pleas of the forward observer and tried to pull himself up on the mortar tube. A glistening pink and white shard of a Mukhadish mortarman's bone stuck from his thigh. Slow moans came from a mound of dirt near the base plate of the second mortar. One Mukhadish screamed in a high-pitched wail of agony. The lower half of his body was ripped open, his guts lay tangled in the dirt.*

*Szmatan blinked.*

*"Zero on that fire! Who attacked us?" The sergeant shouted. He leaned on a mortar tube and looked around. "We are under attack! Grab your weapons and form a perimeter."*

*Another hum and crackle filled the air. A bright blue flash ripped past. Szmatan saw his shadow briefly dance across the sergeant.*

*Two more of his squad mates disintegrated. The plasma blast dug a trench of black glass across their position.*

*"Stop." Szmatan's voice was shaky. He sat down. The sergeant crawled over to him.*

*"Stop the attack," the sergeant intoned. He held Szmatan's gaze.*

*Szmatan turned and found his anti-tank laser. The landscape was dry, brown dust. He scanned the gently sloping hills through the sight of his laser until he made out the lines of a Kerrn behind a fusor. Behind the Kerrn, an anvil patrol advanced. Szmatan aimed and fired. The laser blasted through the Kerrn and splashed the nearby soldiers with red and green viscera. The humans took cover. PAC fire ripped past Szmatan from the left, burning his skin.*



*"Another squad!" The sergeant shouted. He opened fire, cursing his injured leg. Half of the flanking squad vanished. The others returned fire. The air danced and roared around Szmatan. His vision tightened around his targets. He squeezed his firing mechanism and held it down. His laser fried a soldier where he lay, rivulets of yellow fat trickled through the dust. The heat sensors on the laser blinked furiously and then went dark. He kept squeezing but the pack was burnt.*

*The sergeant looked over at Szmatan. His own fusor hissed, white tendrils of smoke rose from the back. "Good shooting. Here they come; use your claws," he said. He pulled a SCReW from his holster and ducked behind Szmatan.*

*An enemy soldier appeared from over the berm and jumped into their position. He stood up in surprise when he saw that Szmatan wasn't dead. The human raised his weapon and fired. Szmatan punched his claws into the soldier's throat, pinning him to the dirt. There was a gurgled scream. Szmatan twisted his hand and pink foam poured out of the gaping mouth.*

*There were more shouts. Two more soldiers attacked from the front. One fired past Szmatan and then turned to run. Szmatan caught his calf with a claw. The soldier pulled at the dirt and tried to kick free. Szmatan tugged on the snagged muscle and dragged the soldier toward him. The man tried to roll over to face upward, but Szmatan twisted the speared leg and then punched the claws of his other hand into the man's back. The legs stiffened when his claws punched through the lungs. The spine snapped and the body went limp. No more attackers came.*

*The sergeant lay dead, his last kill sprawled face down beside him, burning. Muffled explosions woofed from afar. Pillars of smoke held up the sky. Szmatan sat near the bodies and wondered where he should go.*

#### *Szmatan, Mukhadish Gun*

*Lifepaths: Born in Captivity, Lifter, Leg Breaker, Gun, Gun*

*Age: 28*

*Stats: Will 2, Perception 4, Agility 4, Speed 3, Power 8, Forte 6*

*Steel 7 (hesitation 5), Circles 1, Resources 1*

*Physical Tolerances: Superficial H4, Injury H7, Ma H10, MW H12*

*Traits: Obedient, Patient, Fearless, "Yes, Boss," Shark-Toothed Smile, Bred for Slavery, Gigantic Stature, Naïven Tube, Pug, Rending Claws and Tough.*

*Skills: Dark Shattered Underbelly-wise 2, Back-Breaking Labor 2, Intimidation 4, Close Combat 5, Bone-wise 2, Squad Support Weapons 5, Streetwise 2, Gun-wise 4, Observation 2*

*Technology: Ballistic Vest, Heavy Laser*

*Affiliations: Captain Radek's Raiders, 1D*

*Reputation: Very Reliable Mukhadish, 1D*





## MUKHADISH

Like Kerrn, Mukhadish are a creation of the Vaylen Eugenicians. These creatures represent the pinnacle of the art for Vaylen—not because they are excellent in any one area, but because they are pliable, adaptable and easily controlled.

The Mukhadish are the result of a patchwork of assorted DNA. Cross-sections from human sources plus a half-dozen other alien species created this masterpiece of Vaylen scientific achievement. Mukhadish are giant creatures, taller than Kerrn, and stronger.

By design, Mukhadish are more docile than their Kerrn predecessors. They accept the Naiven implantation with considerable ease. They are hermaphroditic and dim-witted. While they have an aggressive streak, Mukhadish look for someone to give them instructions. This makes them very useful.

### **Mukhadish Characters**

Since Mukhadish are born and bred to be slaves, they do not make the best leaders. This is reflected in their lifepaths. They do not start with the necessary skills to be a leader. This limits their usefulness in conflicts and in the big picture. They are fun and challenging characters to play, but they are more often found in a support role—as a bodyguard, for example—than as the leader of a faction.



## Mukhadish Common Traits

All Mukhadish characters must take the following traits: Bred for Slavery, Gigantic Stature, Naiven Tube, Pug, Rending Claws and Tough.

### Bred for Slavery

Dr.

Mukhadish were designed to be a cheap, docile labor pool. Their stat maximum exponents are: Per 5, Will 3, Agi 4, Spd 5, Pow 8, For 8.

### Gigantic Stature

Dr.

Mukhadish stand three to four meters tall and two meters across the shoulder. When factoring their starting attributes, they must have a minimum Power exponent of 6 and a minimum Forte exponent of 6. Mukhadish may always start with a Power or Forte exponent of 7 or 8 if they choose. Starting exponent maximums don't apply to these stats.

### Naiven Tube

Dr.

Mukhadish were designed to be Vaylen. Thus, in service of that design goal, the Vaylen sculptors fashioned a tube into the Mukhadish's physique. The tube is concealed beneath a flap of skin and provides direct access to the creature's brain for a Naiven worm. No surgery is required; a Naiven may simply crawl into the Mukhadish's brain and take over.

### Pug

Char

The Mukhadish possess a strange pug face and leathery skin that is oddly reminiscent of Earth-born fruit bats.

### Rending Claws

Dr.

Mukhadish have tough, rigid and sharp nails at the end of their long fingers. When using a Close Combat Overbearing action, the Mukhadish player may choose to conduct a Hand to Hand action simultaneously and thereby do damage to his opponent via an unarmed attack as he takes him down.

### Tough

Dr.

Round up when averaging Power and Forte to determine the Mortal Wound.





## Wild

Wild Mukhadish are fairly rare in the Empire. Their herds are generally found only on worlds where great battles were lost. Mukhadish Cows, pregnant and ready to birth and infest the world, ended up stranded after a battle. In the absence of a supply of Naiven, their

offspring grew without having been hulled. They grew wild and free, forming herds. Generally docile, they live peaceably in the shadow of the survivors' settlements.

NAME	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
<b>Born Wild</b>	5 yrs	0	1	—
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<b>Bogey</b>	3 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Physical Training, Infiltration				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts				
<i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second path and may only be taken once.				
<b>Manhunter</b>	5 yrs	0	1	+1 M, P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Hunting, Man-wise, Village-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
<i>Requirements:</i> Manhunter requires Bogey				
<b>Forlorn</b>	10 yrs	0	0	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 1 pt: General				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Solitary, Philosophical, Addled, Slow				
<b>Wild Cow</b>	7 yrs	0	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Child Rearing, Den-wise, Conspicuous				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Cud Chewer, Defensive				
<i>Requirements:</i> None. Mukhadish are hermaphrodites and may be both male and female throughout their lives.				
<b>Brute</b>	6 yrs	1	1	+2 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Intimidation, Close Combat, Cow-wise, Bull-wise				
<i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Brute				
<i>Requirements:</i> Manhunter, Alpha or Leg Breaker				
<b>Wild Bull</b>	8 yrs	2	1	+1 M, P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Wasteland-wise, Cow-wise, Extortion				
<i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Boor				
<i>Requirements:</i> Brute				





Mukhadish



## Underworld

The criminal underworld of the various urban hive worlds raise Mukhadish in captivity to be thugs and pets. Some Mukhadish escape and manage to find life as laborers, others wander lost in the underbelly of society. This setting is native by default, just like the Outcast and Criminal setting.

NAME	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Born in Captivity	4 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 1 pt: Dark Shattered Underbelly-wise. 2 pts: General. <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
Lost	5 yrs	0	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 7 pts: Undercity-wise, Physical Training, Drain-wise, Infiltration, Hunting, Rat-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Abandoned, Feral, Accustomed to the Dark <i>Requirements:</i> If chosen, this must be the second or third lifepath. If taken as the second, it may be taken more than once.				
Lifter	6 yrs	1	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Back-Breaking Labor, Repair, Fire Control, Crate-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Obedient, Patient, Fearless <i>Requirements:</i> Pet, Shudra, Forlorn				
Leg Breaker	5 yrs	0	1	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Intimidation, Close Combat, Extortion, Bone-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Yes, Boss <i>Requirements:</i> Lifter or Ox				

## CHARACTER BURNER

Gun	6 yrs	1	0	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Squad Support Weapons, Streetwise, Gun-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Shark-Toothed Smile, Sharp Dresser <i>Requirements:</i> Leg Breaker				
Pit Monster	5 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Close Combat, Conspicuous, Intimidation, Exotic Weapons-wise <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Broken, Aggressive, Berserker, Light Sensitive <i>Requirements:</i> Manhunter, Monstrosity, Tortured or Alpha				
Monstrosity	6 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 6 pts: Conspicuous, Circus-wise, Cage-wise, Trains-wise, Begging <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Freak, Enraged, Defeated, Brute <i>Requirements:</i> May not be the second lifepath				
Pet	8 yrs	1	1	+1 M
<i>Skills:</i> 4 pts: Master-wise, Ugly Truth, Mansion-wise. 1 pt: General. <i>Traits:</i> 2 pts: Tragic, Gentle				

## Slave

Some cultures breed Mukhadish and keep them as slaves. This setting is available when Servitude and Serfdom is available.

NAME	TIME	RESOURCES	CIRCLES	STAT
Born to the Vats	4 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 1 pt: General <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
Tortured	3 yrs	0	0	—
<i>Skills:</i> 1 pt: No skills; skill point must be spent on other lifepath skills. <i>Traits:</i> 3 pts: Broken, Numb				
Ox	5 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 2 pts: Back-Breaking Labor <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt				
Shudra	5 yrs	0	0	+1 P
<i>Skills:</i> 3 pts: Repair, Fire Control <i>Traits:</i> — <i>Requirements:</i> Tortured or Lifter				
Cow	7 yrs	0	1	+1 M/P
<i>Skills:</i> 5 pts: Child Rearing, Den-wise, Inconspicuous, Conspicuous <i>Traits:</i> 1 pt: Breeder <i>Requirements:</i> None. Mukhadish are hermaphrodites and may be both male and female throughout their lives.				



Alpha	5 yrs	1	1	+1 M, P
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*Skills:* 3 pts: Intimidation, Close Combat

*Traits:* 1 pt: Brutal, Unflinching, Booming Voice

*Requirements:* Shudra, Leg Breaker or Manhunter

Slave Bull	10 yrs	1	1	+1 M, P
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Command, Alpha-wise, Conspicuous 1 pt: General.

*Traits:* 2 pts: Cruel, Tough as Nails

*Requirements:* Alpha

Mukhadish

## Stat Pools for Mukhadish by Age

Starting Age	Mental Pool	Physical Pool
1-5 years	3 pts	13 pts
6-12 years	4 pts	15 pts
13-19 years	4 pts	18 pts
20-27 years	4 pts	20 pts
28-36 years	4 pts	19 pts
37-48 years	4 pts	17 pts
49-85 years	3 pts	14 pts







## SKILL LIST

The following is a list of all of the skills from all of the lifepaths in all four character stocks. Wises are not listed.

### *Skills, Wises and General Points*

Players may spend their character's general points on any skill in the list. They may also spend general points to purchase any wise found in the lifepaths.

### *Elements of a Skill*

A skill has five elements: skill name, skill root, description, practice cycle and technology.

#### **Skill Root**

A skill root is the stat on which a skill is based. When you purchase a skill for your character or learn the skill in game, the skill exponent starts at half the exponent of the root stat, rounded down. If the skill root is a combination of two stats, average the two and take half of that result.



## Description

The skill description contains a brief definition of the skill as it is used in the Iron Empires as well as details on the mechanics with which the skill is associated.

## Practice Cycle

Practice cycle describes how many months a character must practice in order to earn a test toward advancement. See the Advancement section for more on how those mechanics work.

## Technology

This category describes whether or not technology is required to properly use the skill in the game. There are three answers: yes, no and color.

Yes indicates that the character must purchase an appropriate machine/weapon/vehicle/set of tools in order to be able to use the skill. This purchase may happen during character burning or during play via the Technology Burner rules. No indicates that the character can perform the functions of the skill with just mind and body. Color indicates the player does not have to purchase or acquire any technology to use the skill, but he must adequately describe devices/tools/gadgets appropriate to the skill: pocket computers, a robot servant, etc. See the Technology Burner chapter for how technological color works.

## Skill Obstacles

Many skills are listed with obstacles. If there are no obstacles listed, either use the skill in versus tests or assign an independent obstacle based on the obstacle chart on page 19.

## Wises

Most of the skills in Burning Empires are, in fact, “wises.” These are skills of knowledge, trivia and experience. Their titles describe their purview—the players decide their relevance. They are meant to be loose, fluid and colorful.

Because wises all use the same mechanics and are self-explanatory via their name/title, there is no list or description. They mean what you think they mean. The following description applies to all skills ending in “-wise.”

### Whatever-Wise

Per

A wise is a skill through which a character can call upon the knowledge of various details of the game world—knowledge of “who’s who” or “what’s what” for the areas encompassed by his wises. For the most part, wises are fairly self-explanatory—their names say it all. The following are the general skill obstacles applicable to all wises: Common knowledge of the subject, Ob 1. An interesting fact, Ob 2. Details, Ob 3. Uncommon knowledge, Ob 4. Rare goods, Ob 5. Bizarre or obscure, Ob 7. Freaky details or specifics, Ob 8.

*Practice Cycle:* 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

*Technology:* No.

## Skills

### A

#### Accounting

Per

Accounting is a precise list or enumeration of financial transactions. It is used for the Assess maneuver in the Infection mechanics when the characters are going over the books looking for wrongdoing. It may be used as a job for recovering taxed Resources. In building scenes, the player may make an open test with his Accounting to hide or mask transactions. His successes count as the obstacle for the manipulation to be discovered.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** Color.

#### Administration

Per

Administration involves departmental or organizational administration—managing employees, subordinates and material assets. This skill may be used in the Infection mechanics for the Conserve and Pin maneuvers, and as a job for recovering taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** No.

#### Advanced Mathematics

Per

Advanced Mathematics may be used as a linked test for any skill involving calculations: Physics, Engineering, Eugenics, Psychohistory, Finance and many others.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** Color.

#### Almanac

Per

This particular and peculiar skill comprises a deep traditional and historical knowledge of the seasons,

tides, weather, lunar phases and other climatic phenomena. A character with the Almanac skill can always tell the time of year, nearly to the day. In addition, he can make accurate predictions about this season's weather.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/4d/12c

**Technology:** No.

#### Amercement

Per

Amercement is the knowledge of fees and criminal fines given as judicial punishment. Such amercements are almost always offered in place of corporal punishment, e.g. "You may take 30 days in the solitary cells or you may pay the court a fee." Using this skill, the character may accurately set the Resources obstacle for a fine. The skill test obstacles indicate how accurate and just the amount is according to the law. Low justice (where the punishment is only a fine), Ob 2. Middle justice (where the punishment would be amputation or branding or the amercement), Ob 3. High justice (crimes punishable by death—like murder, adultery or grand larceny), Ob 5

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 5r/10d/15c

**Technology:** No.

#### Ancient Languages

Per

Through this skill, the character knows one or two defunct languages appropriate to the game setting. This skill is primarily used for color or knowledge and information.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

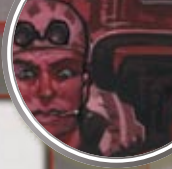
**Technology:** No.

#### Appraisal

Per

This skill is used to judge the value of certain items such as jewelry, gems, artwork and antiquities. The Appraisal skill can be used by a player before testing his Resources to ensure that he is getting an accurate





price. Common items, Ob 2. Rare items, Ob 4. Unique items, Ob 5. Also, the successes from a Counterfeiting skill test count as the obstacle for Appraisal.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/6c  
**Technology:** Color.

## Architect

Per

Architects possess knowledge of the myriad factors used in designing and constructing complex structures, such as buildings, arches and bridges. This skill can be used in game to accurately draw plans of a proposed structure, attempt to draw structural plans for an extant building or read/use existing plans and designs to navigate buildings and structures.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color.

## Armorer

Per/Agi

An armorer designs, manufactures, maintains and repairs weapons and armor. This skill may be used to repair damaged equipment, used as a job to replace taxed Resources and used to add technological traits to existing weapons and armor. The obstacles for using this skill are always based on the technological traits being added or repaired. See the Technology section for a comprehensive list. An armorer may not repair iron.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Tools and workshops of the appropriate index are required.

## Artillery

Per

The Artillery skill is used to operate ship-mounted batteries, missile pods and ground-based howitzers: the big guns. The skill is used for individual action in the Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire actions in Firefight.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Yes, a piece of artillery!

## Assault Weapons

Agi

The Assault Weapons skill allows the character to operate all of the weapons listed in the assault weapons category. The skill is used for individual action in the Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire actions in Firefight.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 m. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Yes, an appropriate assault weapon.

## Astronomy

Per

Astronomy represents the character's knowledge of the physical structure of the galaxy—important stars, nebulae, black holes, etc. Recognizing constellations from your hemisphere, Ob 1. Recognizing constellations from the other side of the world, Ob 2. From another world in your system, Ob 3. From another world in your sector, Ob 4. From another world far, far away, Ob 5.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color.

# B

## Back-Breaking Labor

Per

Back-Breaking Labor is used to perform any kind of intolerable, repetitive work in the game. It is used as a job to replenish taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/4d/12c  
**Technology:** No.

## Bargaining

Wil

Bargaining is a social skill used to negotiate price or terms of a contract. It is used in conjunction with the Resources mechanics and in the Duel of Wits when haggling for price is involved.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** No.

**Skill List**  
A, B

## CHARACTER BURNER

### Begging

Wil

Begging is a specialized form of Persuasion. Begging may be used as a dueling skill in a Duel of Wits about wheedling money or favor from another character. It may also be used to replenish taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

### Biology

Per

The Biology skill is broken down into specific areas of biology in the lifepaths: Alien Biology, Human Biology, Kerrn Biology and Naiven Biology. Each area covers an important life-form in the game. The Biology skill can be used as a field of related knowledge or a linked test with medical skills, or it can be used to test for knowledge about a particular subject. Common knowledge, Ob 1. Life cycle, Ob 2. Internal process, Ob 3. Little known facts, Ob 4.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 4r/8d/12c

**Technology:** For recalling knowledge: No. For running tests and performing studies: Yes, tools.

### Body Service

Wil/Agi

Body Service represents skills in the service industry that care for the client's personal well-being and hygiene: hair-cutting, cosmetics and massage, etc. This skill may be used as a job to replenish taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/4d/12c

**Technology:** Color.

### Bureaucracy

Wil/Per

Bureaucracy is the knowledge of the hierarchies within a codified government of officials (or bureaus). This skill allows characters to navigate said structures in order to accomplish certain tasks or impel

the bureaucracy to move in a certain direction. Often it involves filling out lots of forms, researching obscure laws and paying bribes to people who are very bored with their jobs. Bureaucracy is a vital skill in the Infection mechanics; it's used in many maneuvers. For linked tests: Filing in triplicate, Ob 1. Stalling with red tape, Ob 2. Losing your paper trail, Ob 3. Hiding your paper trail, Ob 4.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

## C

### Cartography

Per/Agi

Cartography is the school of map-making. This skill imparts a hand for illustration (or programming) and an eye for detail. Since Cartography is somewhat a language of its own, this skill also allows the interpretation of other maps. Cartography is primarily used to transmit information, or as a job to replenish taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** Yes, tools. Proper cartographical instruments are expensive and rare.

### Child Rearing

Wil

Child Rearing is a rigorous discipline invented to better raise children with the proper values and manners. The skill can also be used as Instruction, Cooking and Field Dressing, but for use on children only.

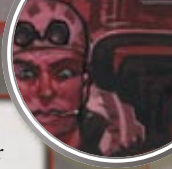
**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

### Close Combat

Wil/Agi

The Close Combat skill allows the character to fight at close quarters with close combat (or jacked) weapons—pistols, knives and grenades. Close Combat occurs when the Close Combat action is scripted



in Firefight, or when the I Corner Him and Stab Him in the Face rules are invoked.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 m. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Not necessarily. Close Combat can be conducted unarmed.

### **Command**

Wil

The Command skill represents the character's split-second decision-making abilities and his competency at conveying his instincts to his subordinates on the battlefield. This skill is used in many of the Firefight maneuvers.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** No.

### **Composition**

Wil/Per

Composition is the discipline of formally arranging one's ideas in written form. Using this skill, a character may compose lengthy books or pen erudite letters.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color.

### **Conspicuous**

Wil

Characters with the Conspicuous skill can make themselves noticed above all in a crowd or scene. Conspicuous characters tend to be flamboyant and overbearing. Test Conspicuous to set a Will obstacle. Test Will. If failed, you must look at me!

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** No.

### **Cooking**

Per

Preparing meat, vegetables and grains for consumption. This skill is primarily used for color and as a job to replenish taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/4d/12c  
**Technology:** Color.

### **Counterfeiting**

Per/Agi

Counterfeiting is the time-honored art of illegally duplicating—electron-

ically or physically—money or valuable pieces of artwork. Major counterfeiting operations are best conducted via the Take Action or Inundate maneuvers in the Infection mechanics. If duplicating a piece of art or small amounts of money via a building scene, obstacles are as follows: Primitive money, Ob 1. Art that looks good to tourists, Ob 2. Electronic money, Ob 5. Counterfeiting may also be used in an open test to set the obstacles for Appraisal or Security tests. This skill may be used as a job to replenish taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools.

### **Craft**

Per/Agi

The Craft skill represents the art of manufacturing goods by hand: woodworking, blacksmithing, carpentry, leatherworking and even jewelry-making. It is traditional for players with this skill to choose a specialization from the ones listed. This skill is only used as a job to recover taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools.

### **Crew**

Wil/Per

The Crew skill represents the knowledge and training of the average crewman aboard a hammer-class starship: basic knowledge of life support, grav-tech, engine-tech and the basic ship layout and workings. This skill may be used to quickly locate areas aboard a ship or as a job to replenish taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color.

### **Cryonics**

Per

Cryonics is the science of freezing an organism to as to prevent it from aging and/or decaying thereby

**Skill List**  
B, C



making decades long intergalactic trips feasible. Freezing simple life-forms like Naiven, Ob 1. Freezing humans and Kernn, Ob 2.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 5r/10d/15c

**Technology:** Yes, a big cryonic chamber.

## Cryptography

Per

Cryptography is the art of rapidly ciphering and deciphering data. If the player wishes to decipher enemy transmissions or to cipher his own side's data, use the Cryptography skill in the Assess, Conserve and Gambit maneuvers.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 4r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Yes.

# D

## Demonology

Per

Demonology is a specialized skill taught to the Inquisitors of the Mundus Humanitas. Using this skill, a player may correctly identify the demons possessing a character. Demons manifest in the form of wrong-thinking, heresy and illness. Once a demon is identified, this skill also provides the knowledge necessary to drive it out. Typically, such procedures involve intense interrogation and bodily privations. It is not uncommon for the subject of such treatment to succumb to the rigors and pass on to the immortal fire. This skill may be used as Torture and Interrogation so long as the victim is held in isolation by the Inquisition.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** Color.

## Disguise

Pac/Ag

Disguise is the art of changing one's face or appearance to look like another person or ethnicity. Successful Disguise tests do two

things: They act as a linked test with Inconspicuous, and they negate appearance-based obstacle penalties. The base obstacle is 1: Each obstacle penalty reduction is +2 Ob. Set the obstacle before rolling.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** Yes, some sort of appropriate kit comprised of prosthetics, cosmetics and clothing.

## Divination

Per

One of the prime tasks of the Cotars of the Mundus Humanitas is to practice divination upon their parishioners. Divination requires that the Cotar hear the faithful's confession, after which he gazes into the burning wheel and divines the proper penance for the transgressions. The idea behind this ritual is not to punish the faithful (though some sadistic Cotars take great pleasure in prescribing penance). Rather, by confessing his sins, the adherent allows the Cotar to divine (hence, the name of the ritual) where his soul has lost its way. Penance purifies the individual, and the Cotar suggests ways in which the person can find destiny's true path. Releasing the burden of secrecy causes the soul to rise, the goal of all true devotees of the faith.

The Divination skill may be used as the primary skill in a Duel of Wits against a penitent. The stakes of the duel for the cotar must be to change one of the sinner's Beliefs. Through this change the sinner must perform an act of contrition and thus find his way.

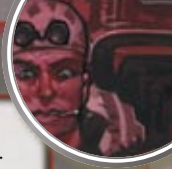
**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** No.

## Doctrine

Per

Doctrine describes the tenets and beliefs of a particular religious faith. The primary faith and doctrine in the



Iron Empires is that of the Mundus Humanitas.

The principle symbol of the Mundus Humanitas is the burning wheel. Much of the Church's doctrine is embodied in this simple icon: The consistency and stability of life is the wheel's constant turning, and the divine light of humanity is the flames. Cotars wear this symbol around their necks or emblazoned on their robes. The Mundus erects the symbol on all of its temples and inscribes it on all of its vessels. The Church's military insignia features the burning wheel set in front of a sword.

The Church understands very well the power of ceremony. It erects enormous temples everywhere it gains a foothold. Sweeping arches, golden altars and burning fires serve to remind the adherent of the power of fate and the spirit. A temple inspires one to never forget the rectitude of the Mundus Humanitas.

A character may only take the following variations of the skill if they were available on his lifepaths or through general skill points:

*Heretical Doctrine* is a set of beliefs and tenets that are an offshoot of the popular religion but are not commonly accepted by the religious power structure. The Cyreans are a heresy of the Mundus Humanitas. They do not believe in the primacy of the Theocracy's Primarch to dictate the will of the Prophet.

*Cult Doctrine* is the application of a belief system to a non-standard, unapproved or independent school of thought. The Church of the Transition (or, "CHOT," as it often calls itself) is a pantheistic cult that has taken root in the Darikahn Empire's southern reaches.

The CHOT believes in a series of gods that each has dominion over

a particular aspect of creation. There are seasonal gods, rain gods, earth gods, fire gods and others. Each is prayed to for assistance in overcoming the elements, having favorable weather and receiving blessings on the home. They are all governed by a matriarchal deity sometimes referred to as Dana but usually simply as "the Goddess."

It is called the Church of the Transition because its principal doctrine is that transition is the path of nature. All things begin as one thing and transform to another.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c  
**Technology:** No.

## Driving

Per/Agi

Driving encompasses the operation of ground-based vehicles—cars, trucks, ground-effect hovercraft and other similar machines. While most anyone in the Iron Empires can operate such a vehicle if need be, the Driving skill is used for pursuit, escape and in tests involving time and travel. It can also be used in the Firefight maneuvers Advance, Flank and Withdraw, but only as an individual action, not as a unit action.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/3d/6c  
**Technology:** Yes, an appropriate vehicle.

# E

## Engineering

Per

Engineers are learned men. They possess the knowledge of the myriad factors used in designing and constructing complex structures. This skill can be used to build structures in the game. It can be used as a job to replenish lost Resources. It can also be used in the Conserve maneuver when the player is assigned to build

infrastructure for his side during the usurpation phase.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** Yes. Engineers require precise tools for measurements.

## **Estate Management** Per

Ensuring that aspects of an estate—its workers, animals, rolling stock and crops—are all well managed and tended to is a demanding and somewhat tedious task. The primary use of this skill is to recover taxed Resources dice. It may also be used in the Pin and Conserve maneuvers when the estate in question is forefront in the action.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** No.

## **Etiquette** Wil/Per

Etiquette is proper courtly behavior. One cannot make requests of the court without knowing the appropriate social rituals. When entering a noble or imperial court, a player whose character is of a higher rank in the court may challenge the etiquette of another petitioner. Make a versus test between the two characters' skills. The winner gains a +1D advantage to his next test at court and gains the loser's margin of failure as a bonus to his body of argument in a Duel of Wits with his rival.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

## **Eugenics** Per

Eugenics is the process of the hereditary improvement of humans, Kernn and other Vaylen host races by controlled selective breeding and genetic manipulation. Eugenicians breed sentient and semi-sentient life-forms for traits and qualities as a horse breeder raises horses. Vaishyen Eugenicians are intimately

familiar with the human genome. They are forever experimenting—intermixing genetic material in order to produce suitable hosts for the trillions of Naiven waiting to be granted a body. Of course, Eugenicians can clone human bodies without trouble. However, the Vaylen find cloned bodies to be substandard. A worthwhile host is a wild one, full of natural experience from which the Naiven can benefit. See the Vaylen Eugenics section of the Alien Life-Form chapter.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 6r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Yes, a laboratory.

## **Excavation** Per/Agi

This skill teaches how to use both machines and labor to quickly, safely and efficiently remove earth from a prescribed area.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/4d/12c

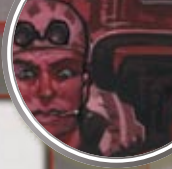
**Technology:** Yes, tools.

## **Explosives** Per/Agi

The Explosives skill teaches the techniques for demolishing builds, vehicles and personnel with explosive devices. It can be used to destroy a vehicle or other type of machine, destroy property, reduce positions and destroy fortifications.

To destroy something, the character must either have a building scene in which he sets the explosives or use the Demolitions specialist action or Grenades and Bombs actions in Firefight. Hitting a vehicle or character with explosives works just a like a shot opportunity. The obstacle is 2, extra successes from the skill test act as a bonus to the Die of Fate or can be used to hit a specific location. Use the damages for explosives listed in the Weapons heading of Firefight or the rules described in the Munitions skill.





Destroying a player's property is an Ob 3-8 Explosives test (depending on the size of the property) and an Ob 4-8 Resources test for the materials.

The Explosives skill may also be used to reduce a position in Firefight. It requires an Explosives test with an obstacle equal to the position's value. The character must have explosives on hand during the scene capable of delivering vehicular scale damage.

Destroying fortifications is a versus test between the Explosives skill and the Fortifications skill. The character must have explosives capable of delivering vehicular-scale damage before the test is made.

Rigging something to blow takes a building scene.

An Explosive detonation does damage to characters in the vehicle, property, position or fortification. When in doubt, a big explosion does V4, V7, V10 damage to characters and has the following traits: Blast and Devastator.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 4r/8d/16c  
**Technology:** Yes, explosives.

### **Extortion** Wil

Extortion is a popular and sociable skill! Who doesn't need to know how to threaten friends and enemies alike so they pay you to remain safe and healthy? Makes a great way to recover taxed Resources. It may be used as a primary skill in the Duel of Wits when one character is blackmailing another. Count it as Rhetoric. Extortion is also used in the Infection mechanics for the Flak and Pin maneuvers when the players are running a scheme on another character in the game.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** No.

## **F**

### **Fabrication** Per/Agi

Fabrication is used to take raw materials and refine them into working machines or useful industrial material. A character with this skill may construct *devices* as described in the Technology Burner. See the Fabrication section of that chapter.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/4d/12c  
**Technology:** Yes.

### **Falsehood** Wil

Falsehood is the skill of telling believable lies. It is a social skill used in the Duel of Wits for the Incite or Obfuscate actions.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** No.

### **Farming** Per

Farming is the prodigious knowledge of seeding, planting and harvesting.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c  
**Technology:** Yes.

### **Field Dressing** Per/Agi

Field Dressing is the skill acquired by soldiers in the field who are forced to tend to their own wounded. It imputes a bare knowledge of anatomy and assumes a splash of common sense. See the Treatment section of the Anatomy of Injury chapter for more. Field Dressing may also be used in specialist actions in Firefight. See the Medic! rules.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools: A first aid kit or something similar.

### **Finance** Per

Finance is the management of money, banking, investments and credit. This skill can be used to make linked tests with Resources, as a job to recover taxed Resources and in the Infection

## CHARACTER BURNER

mechanics. It can be used on the Assess, Conserve, Pin and Take Action maneuvers when financial systems, credit and investment are on the line. Tracking financial movements requires a Finances versus test. Setting up dummy accounts is Ob 3.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c  
**Technology:** Color.

### Fire Control

Per

Fire Control is a damage control skill that teaches a character how to manage blazes, controlled and uncontrolled, in contained spaces—especially on board a ship. It can be used to start fires as well as stop them. It can also be used to mitigate damage on board a vehicle. If a vehicle is damaged, an Ob 4 Fire Control test will restore 1D of Integrity. It may not restore a vehicle whose Integrity is 0.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools: hazmat suits and firefighting gear.

### Folklore

Per

Folklore is a specialized history skill. It encompasses the knowledge of the myriad “folk” beliefs of a culture—a catalog of superstitions, tall tales and legends.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c  
**Technology:** No.

### Food Service

Per/Agi

The preparation and distribution of food products in an industrialized work and retail space. This is a job for many freemen. It can also be used in the Gambit maneuver when the game involves the infiltration of fast food restaurants or industrial food manufacture to distribute Naiven among the populace.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/2d/4c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools.

### Foreign Languages

Per

This skill represents that the character has had the opportunity to learn foreign languages over the course of his life. The player may take as many foreign languages as he likes. They may be represented en masse by this skill.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** No.

### Forgery

Per/Agi

Forgery is the ability to flawlessly copy documents, signatures and seals—either electronically or manually. Forgery is a necessary skill for many criminal scams—especially those involving signatures for accounts and deeds. In the game, a Forgery test sets the obstacle for either Observation or Security to detect forged documents or identification. It may also be used for the Take Action maneuver in the Infection mechanics when the characters are trying to forge documents to deceive the opposition. Running forgery scams can also be used to replenish taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/4d/12c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools.

### Fortifications

Per

Fortifications is a specialized military engineering skill centering on the construction of defensible positions. These positions may act as cover and positions in Firefight. The obstacle for building cover is twice the value of the cover. The obstacle for creating a position—that can be occupied for bonus successes to the disposition—is three times the disposition value. Positions and cover require a building scene to create. The building player



may start his teams in his constructed positions so long as he wins the contact roll.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** Yes, tools: Digging tools and heavy equipment.

## **Fusion Dynamics**

Per

The secret of fusion power has been lost to the technicians and scientists of the Iron Empires. Only the Vaylen and the Kernn maintain the knowledge of how to build fusion-based reactors. This skill allows the character to build and repair the ubiquitous fusion power packs found in the Iron Empires—from weapons to engines.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 6r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Yes, tools. At minimum this skill requires a low index laboratory or a high index tool set.

# **H**

## **Helm**

Per

This skill describes the vast technical knowledge required to pilot hammer starships—spacefaring warships, passenger ships and cargo ships. It is used in pursuit and escape with starships, and used in the individual actions for the Advance, Flank and Withdraw maneuvers in Firefight.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/5d/10c

**Technology:** Yes. In addition to a starship, the character must have a crucis interface implanted along his spinal column. See the Corvus and Crucis and Illegal Crucis traits.

## **Heraldry**

Per

The Heraldry skill describes the knowledge of the myriad heraldic crests of the various Iron Empires and their attendant noble houses.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

## **History**

Per

History is the knowledge of the records of past events pertaining to one culture or society. Some specific histories are often listed in the lifepaths. They are fairly self-explanatory: Ancient History, Military History, League History, Foreign History, Local History, Obscure History, Religious History, Kernn History, Vaylen History, etc. Each of these is a separate skill that must be purchased and opened.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

## **Hunting**

Per/Spd

Hunting involves the knowledge of tracking, stalking and shooting animals for food or sport. Hunting can be used in Firefight for Observe, Direct Fire and Advance unit actions under the GM's discretion.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** Yes, a hunting rifle (or similar appropriate weapon) and the proper clothing.

## **Husbandry**

Wil/Per

Husbandry involves the raising, care and breeding of animals.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** Color.

## **Hydrology**

Per

Hydrology is the scientific study of the properties, distribution and effects of water on the earth's surface, in the soil and underlying rocks and in the atmosphere. A character with this skill may plan, design and implement hydrological systems. Such a skill is vital to terraforming efforts and to building ecosystems artificial environments like ships and space stations. Hydroponic garden, Ob 1. Irrigation in a temperate zone, Ob 2. Irrigation in a desert zone, Ob 3.

**Skill List**  
F, H



## CHARACTER BURNER

Small artificial hydrological system, Ob 4.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 6r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Yes, tools for implementation. No, if the skill is just being used for knowledge.

### I

#### Inconspicuous

Wil

Inconspicuous is the ability to modify one's behavior so as to go unnoticed in a crowd. When trying to pass unnoticed, Inconspicuous is tested in versus tests against Observation. Perception can be used in place of Observation, but at a double obstacle penalty. Inconspicuous tests are penalized under the following conditions: Garish or inappropriate dress, +1 Ob. Character is above/below his station, +1 Ob. Character is not from the region, +1 Ob. Character is of a different race than those he is trying to blend in with, +2 Ob.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

#### Infiltration

Spd

Infiltration is the ability to use camouflage, natural surroundings, shadow, light and a quiet step to move undetected. It relies on a versus test between the Infiltrating character and those trying to spot him. Typically, it's Infiltration versus Observation, with the sneaking character gaining advantage dice for darkness, rain or covering noise—and increased obstacles for bright light, absolute quiet or impediments like dead leaves. If the spotting characters don't have Observation, then use Perception at double obstacle penalty. Infiltration can also be used to bypass security systems—

perimeter alarms and cameras. Test Security vs Infiltration.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

#### Instruction

Wil

Using the Instruction skill, a character may teach another character. The basic obstacle is 2. If successful, the student is granted a test toward advancement for the skill being taught. If the test is failed, the instruction time merely counts as practice. See the Learning from Another section in the Burning Wheel for more details on teaching. Instruction takes place during Downtime. See the Infection mechanics for more on Downtime.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

#### Interrogation

Wil

Using a peculiar logic, interrogators gain information from unwilling subjects. Interrogation allows the players to bypass lengthy and uncomfortable roleplaying sessions in which not much is learned except one another's predilection for bondage. The skill can be used in two ways: either as a one test resolution to gain info or—if roleplay and subtlety is required—as the primary skill in a Duel of Wits. However you choose to handle it, a successful interrogation means the victim character has given up the information the player is looking for as dictated by his intent. Obstacle for one roll Interrogation is the (current) Will exponent of the character being interrogated. If the victim has Beliefs that prevent him from revealing what is being sought, the GM may award situational disadvantages to the interrogator.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.



## Intimidation

Wil

Intimidation is the non-verbal and verbal communication of threat. In Burning Empires, Intimidation can be used to cause another character to hesitate. Test skill against the obstacle. Success indicates the target character must immediately make a Steel test. Extra successes from the Intimidation add to the hesitation obstacle. Intimidation obstacles are based on the Will of the victim. However, circumstances can modify the obstacle: If the Intimidating character is of higher station/rank than his victim, +1D. If he/she is lower station, +1 Ob. If the character has a particularly nasty threat within notice of his victim (such as carrying a high index weapon of awesome might, having a wicked-looking bodyguard, or having worms crawling out of his ears...), +1D. If the intimidator is obviously not a threat, add +1 Ob.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/2d/4c

**Technology:** No.

## Investigative Logic

Wil/Per

Investigative Logic is a discipline that uses scientific thought to establish facts which can be used as evidence in a court of law. It is typically used when investigating crime scenes, dissecting testimony or collating data. The skill is used in play as the "get a clue" skill: It may be used to make a versus test with Infiltration, Smuggling and Security Rigging to establish correlation between two events. It is an Ob 3 Investigative Logic test to link a weapon discharge with the weapon itself. Also, Investigative Logic is used in the Infection mechanic Assess and Take Action maneuvers when a criminal investigation is involved in play.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/5d/10c

**Technology:** Color.

## Iron Artifice

Per/Agi

This is the skill required to manufacture the powered armor—the iron—worn by the nobility of the Iron Empires. All iron is hand-crafted and can only be manufactured via license and patronage from an Anvil or Forged Lord. Index 4 Iron is Ob 6 to create plus an Ob 6 Resources test to acquire the materials. Index 5 Iron is Ob 8 to create plus an Ob 10 Resources test to acquire the materials. This skill can also be used to repair damaged iron. Repairing devastated iron is Ob 2 for the first point of armor lost. Add +1 Ob for each additional point. The obstacle for repairing a technology trait embedded in the armor is one less than the cost of the trait. Adding a technology trait to existing armor is Ob 1 plus the obstacle for the technology trait.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 6r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Yes, a specialized workshop. It costs 2 rps during burning or an Ob 10 Resources test.

# J-K

## Journalism

Per

Journalism is the collection, writing, editing, and presentation of news—in written and moving image form—via narrow- and broadcasting. It's different from Propaganda insofar as Journalism purports to be truthful; a journalist can cite and corroborate facts from multiple sources. Journalism tests in building scenes are made against the prevailing planetary attitude: Ignorant, Ob 6. Hysterical Fear, Ob 5. Indifferent, Ob 4. Paranoid, Ob 3. Educated, Ob 2. Personal Experience, Ob 1. Tests made using factual evidence that has arisen in the game gain

Skill List  
I, J-K

+1D advantage. Tests made using non-factual evidence which are later disproved impose a double obstacle penalty for all Journalism tests for the rest of the phase. While it cannot be used to change attitudes within a phase—such an action must be the intent of the phase—Journalism is a powerful tool in the Infection mechanics. If gameplay involves media or investigative journalism, this skill can be used to test for the Assess, Flak, Go to Ground, Inundate and Take Action maneuvers. The skill can also function as a job to replenish taxed Resources.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** No.

## Jury-Rigging

Wil/Agi

This skill allows a character to restore a piece of technology or a vehicle to a functioning state for one final test. The obstacles are dependent on the condition of the technology. Generally Ob 3 or higher is fair. In the case of vehicles, Jury-Rigging allows the character to repair the vehicle to 1D of Integrity for the purposes of one test. The obstacle is equal to the number of Integrity dice lost, minus one.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color.

## L

## Law

Per

There are four distinct branches of legal studies in the Iron Empires: Church Law, Imperial Law, Communist Law and League Law. You must choose one type. Law is used in the Flak, Pin and Take Action maneuvers in the Infection mechanics. Law can be used for building scenes: Filing charges, Ob 1. Determining legality,

Ob 2. Clearing charges, Ob 4. Arguing cases should be undertaken via a Duel of Wits. Law may be used as a primary dueling skill when the Duel of Wits takes place in the appropriate court—church, imperial, communist and league.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 5r/10d/15c  
**Technology:** No.

## Logistics

Per

Logistics is the aspect of military operations that deals with the procurement, distribution, maintenance and replacement of matériel and personnel. On a personal level, the skill is all but useless. However, in the Infection mechanics, the Logistics skill is vital to winning the invasion phase. It is used in the Assess, Conserve and Gambit maneuvers.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 5r/10d/15c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools. The

logistics of a modern military are so complex as to require the aid of computational devices or even artificial, technological intelligences to process the data.

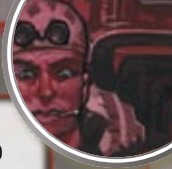
## M

## Manufacture

Per

The Manufacture skill grants the knowledge of how to design systems for processing raw materials or component parts into a finished product, especially by means of a large-scale industrial operation. Manufacture is, therefore, a large-scale skill; it won't often be tested in individual scenes. However, it can be used for the Conserve action in the Infection mechanics when the players are activating their industrial base to build up materials and resources.





This is not a skill for factory labor. It's a skill for industrialists and bosses.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c  
**Technology:** Yes, a factory.

### **Meditation**

Wil/Per

Meditation may be used as a linked test for any skill so long as the character meditates for one scene prior to the test.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 4r/8d/12c  
**Technology:** No.

### **Mending**

Pac/Agi

Mending skill allows characters to fix, repair or darn just about anything around the farm. This skill may not be used to fix anything more mechanical than a wheelbarrow.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color.

### **Mummery**

Wil/Per

Mummery is the skill of imitation and recitation used to effect a performance. It also connotes a familiarity with the mechanics of stage performance: sets, make-up and costumes.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color, for the theatrics.

### **Munitions**

Pac/Agi

This skill allows a character to manufacture ammunition and explosives. (This does not include power packs, which are covered by Fusion Dynamics). Absolute failure (no successes) while manufacturing munitions indicates a cook-off or misfire. The character takes the Mark result for the device he was building. Cleaning a weapon, Ob 1. Repairing a jam or minor damage, Ob 2. Making assault ammunition, Ob 3. Making explosives: HE grenades, Ob 3. HEAP grenades, Ob 4. SCaRE grenades, Ob 5. Anti-Hammer Mines (S4, S7, S10 for one vehicle), Ob 8. Creating an

improvised explosive (H3, H6, H9) with the Blast trait: Ob 3. Creating an improvised explosive (H3, H6, H9) with the Megablast trait, Ob 7.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools and workshops of the appropriate index are required.

### **Musical Instrument**

Wil/Agi

A variety of musical instruments are available to the erstwhile musician. Drum, flute, theremin and lyre are but a few of the many options.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/2d/4c  
**Technology:** Color.

## **N**

### **Navigation**

Per

Navigation allows the character to use the intensely complex navigational equipment required for space travel. Navigators plot the courses for hammer on intrasystem and interstellar flights. Consequently, the Navigation skill is used to operate the distortion drives that allow ships to travel at supraluminal speeds. If ever a jump needs to be made, test the Navigation skill. An on-planet trip, Ob 1. An interplanetary trip, Ob 2. Navigating to an in-system, nonplanetary body, Ob 3. Another system, Ob 4. An uncharted location, Ob 5.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/5d/10c  
**Technology:** Yes. In addition to a starship, the character must have a crucis interface implanted along his spinal column, so that he may communicate with the ship's nav computer.

**Skill List**  
L, M, N

## O

### Observation

Per

Observation is the skill used to spot concealed or hidden characters. Test this skill in versus tests against Inconspicuous, Infiltration or Sleight of Hand. Note: Observation is only used in these circumstances. Do not use it for standard Perception tests—to spot weakness in armor, to notice details of a flag or to look for an escape tunnel.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

### Oratory

Wil

Oratory is the ability to rouse the audience with a stirring speech. It teaches how to project the voice and get a point across. Oratory can also aid the commander in motivating his troops. Oratory is a useful skill for the Duel of Wits mechanics, as it can be used for most actions. But you've got to like making speeches.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/2d/4c

**Technology:** No.

## P

### Persuasion

Wil

Persuasion is the art of convincing someone to act on your behalf because it is in his best interest. This skill often involves an exchange of agreements—something very different from Falsehood or Oratory. Those two skills tell someone what to do or believe, whereas using Persuasion, one carefully crafts a suggestion for the victim to agree with. And with luck, he'll think it was his idea in the first place. Persuasion is a very useful skill in the Duel of Wits, as it can be used for most actions.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/2d/4c

**Technology:** No.

### Pharmacology

Per

Pharmacologists use medicines to cure and prevent common and chronic ailments and mitigate the symptoms of infection and illness. They may also alleviate wounded die penalties. Painkiller: If the character is wounded, an Ob 3 test will restore 1D. This lasts four hours.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 4r/8d/12c

**Technology:** Yes, tools.

### Philosophy

Wil/Per

Philosophy is the pursuit and discussion of wisdom, centering on the role of man in the great cycle. Often it is at odds with Law and Doctrine. In a war of ideas, Philosophy can be used for the Flak and Pin maneuvers in the Infection mechanics.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** No.

### Physical Training

Pow/Spd

Use this skill when the character has to make tests for climbing, swimming and long-distance running. If Physical Training is used in a versus test against Speed or Power, the character without Physical Training suffers a double obstacle penalty.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

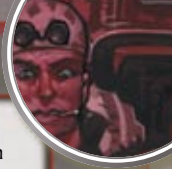
### Physics

Per

In the Iron Empires, Physics describes the intense study of how an object moves through space-time and is affected by gravity. The skill can be used by navigators to plot courses around heavy gravitational objects like gas giants, stars and black holes.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 6r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Color.



## **Pilot**

Per/Agi

The Pilot skill is used to control atmospheric craft and small spacecraft—not ships and not surface vehicles. It is used in pursuit and escape versus tests, and also in the individual action portions of the Advance, Flank and Withdraw maneuvers in Firefight.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/3d/6c

**Technology:** Yes, an appropriate vehicle.

## **Propaganda**

Wil/Per

Governments all maintain expensive and complex recording, post-production and broadcast facilities. These are used to project the desired image of the ruling power and its actions. This skill allows the character to produce slick propaganda and distribute it via the mass media. Propaganda tests in building scenes are made against the prevailing planetary attitude: Ignorant, Ob 1. Hysterical Fear, Ob 2. Indifferent, Ob 3. Paranoid, Ob 4. Educated, Ob 5. Personal Experience, Ob 6. Tests made to inflame the current attitude gain a +1D advantage. Propaganda is used in the Infection mechanics when the characters are trying to use the media to sway public opinion in the Flak, Go to Ground, Inundate, Pin and Take Action maneuvers.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** Yes, tools. There must be a means to distribute the agitprop.

## **Psychohistory**

Wil/Per

Psychohistory is the science of historical motivation. It combines the insights of psychotherapy with the research methodology of the social sciences to understand the emotional origin of the social and political behavior of groups and nations, past and present. Psychohistory is used for

the Gambit maneuver in the invasion phase of the Infection mechanics.

**Practice Cycle:** 2 yrs. Hrs/day: 6r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Yes, a specialized workshop. If bought during character burning, it costs 2 rps; if bought in play, it costs an Ob 10 Resources test.

## **Psychology**

Per

Psychologists can decipher gossamer veils of emotion, deception, clarity and purpose. Psychology is a field of related knowledge for Oratory, Persuasion, Command, Falsehood, Seduction, Suasion, Rhetoric, Intimidation, Interrogation, Etiquette, Ugly Truth and Soothing Platitudes. It may be used to help the same skills for another character. It may be tested in a Duel of Wits for the Incite action and is the primary dueling skill in the Psychic Duel mechanics. It is also used extensively in the Infection macromechanic. Psychology may also be used to read another character's emotional state and to discern his traits. Obstacles: Determining whether a subject is alive or dead, Ob 1. Reading hidden mood, Ob 2. Seeing a character trait, Ob 3. Reading a past lifepath, Ob 3. Detecting Naïven within, Ob 3. Seeing a die or call-on trait, Ob 4. Sensing a person's intent (to deceive, for example), Ob 4. Detecting the presence of a connection, Ob 5. Reading a reputation, the obstacle is 6 minus the reputation dice. Reading an affiliation, obstacle is 7 minus the affiliation dice. Reading a Belief is Ob 7.

You must declare your intent and set the obstacle for this action before rolling the dice. The psychologist

**Skill List**  
O, P



player may choose which trait his character is trying to discover.

If the psychologist character possesses the Bright Mark or the Mule trait, the Psychology skill presents him with more powerful options. See the Psychologist's Powers section.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c  
**Technology:** No.

## R

### Recon

Per

Recon involves scouting a location and noting the coordinates and measurements of its salient features. It may be used as a linked test for the Observation test for Contact in Firefight and as a linked test for Infiltration.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color.

### Repair

Per/Agi

Repair is used to repair damaged vehicles. Obstacles: Integrity, first die, Ob 2; second die, Ob 4; third die, Ob 6; fourth die, Ob 8; etc. Control, the dice of the vehicle's control rating plus the damage dice done to Control. Engine, obstacle is twice the Speed dice lost. Sensors, obstacle is the Sensors rating plus the number of damage dice done. Weapons: Ob 2 for squad support weapons, Ob 4 for vehicular weapon and Ob 6 for artillery.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools.

### Research

Per

Research is the art of navigating libraries, gathering data and collating coherent reports. Obstacles: Common knowledge, Ob 1. Interesting facts, Ob 2. Collating relevant information from a native language text, Ob 3. Deciphering a handwritten

monograph in your own language, Ob 4. Deciphering a handwritten monograph about an obscure subject, Ob 5. Deciphering a monograph about a heretofore unknown subject, Ob 6.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color.

### Rhetoric

Wil

Rhetoric is a form of discourse centered on the conveyance of thoughts, ideas and concepts in the interest of winning an argument. This skill exists only to be used in the Duel of Wits mechanics.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** No.

### Riding

Wil

This skill teaches the character to effectively maneuver an animal mount. This skill is solely the province of nobility or the most technologically-poor societies. It may be used for pursuit and escape tests while mounted, and for individual action in the Advance, Flank and Withdraw maneuvers in Firefight.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 1r/2d/4c  
**Technology:** No—but you need an animal.

## S

### Scavenging

Per/Agi

A player using his character's Scavenging skill may state what he is looking for—it can be any type of item, but it cannot be a specific or unique thing. Obstacles: Common household goods are Ob 2, hard to find items are Ob 3, rare objects are Ob 5, and really obscure or out of place items are Ob 7. A successful roll indicates that the character has found a reasonable facsimile of what he set out after.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/9c  
**Technology:** No.



## Science

Per

Science is the study of the body of knowledge, transmitted by the ancients, of the categorization and quantification of the mechanisms through which phenomena and entities in the environment affect the observable universe. It is a knowledge and history skill—since all facts of science have been previously discovered. It is not a skill of experimentation.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** Color.

## Security

Per

The Security skill is used solely to operate security systems technology. Security is used to detect intrusion, detect contraband and even detect the presence of Naiven or hulled humans and animals given the appropriate tech. Any dice or disadvantages from security systems technology are applied to the skill exponent before rolling. The mechanics for Security are described in the Security Systems section. This skill may also be used in the Infection mechanics for the Assess and Conserve maneuvers when the characters are using security tech to detect or block detection of the opposition.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/9c

**Technology:** Yes, either tools, advantage dice Security enhancements or automation.

## Security Rigging

Per/Agi

Security Rigging is used to defeat security systems. This skill is either tested against an obstacle to bypass security, or it is used in a versus test: Security Rigging + technology versus Security + technology. More detailed mechanics are described in the Security Systems section.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/9c

**Technology:** Yes, tools.

## Seduction

Wil

Seduction involves the extraction of information or the persuasion of action from a subject through the manipulation of sexual desire and intention. This does not necessarily entail sexual intercourse. It may be used in the Duel of Wits as the primary skill so long as emotional blackmail or sexual congress are at stake.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

## Sensors

Per

The Sensors skill allows the character to operate sensor systems on board iron, vehicles, installations and space stations. See the Sensors section in the Security Systems, Signals and Sensors chapter.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/9c

**Technology:** Yes.

## Ship Management

Wil/Per

The hammer master learns the daily and long-term needs of a ship and crew in space. Use this skill for factoring supplies or determining cargo capacity for long voyages. Success indicates there's no problem. A failed test and the ship runs short of supplies—food, water, medicine, matériel, ammunition, etc—and serious complications arise. Yeomen start dying from one thing or another because whatever's missing is what is sorely needed, of course! A bad hammer master is bad for morale.

Ship Management can also be used for the Conserve and Pin maneuvers in the Infection mechanics when the phase or maneuver takes place aboard a hammer.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/9c

**Technology:** Color.

## Shipwright

Per/Agi

A shipwright is a master artisan capable of designing and directing the construction of spacefaring vessels. This includes construction of the hull, subsystems and distortion drives—everything short of the design of the ship's power plant. The Shipwright skill counts as Fabrication and Repair concerning ships.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. Hrs/day: 6r/8d/16c  
**Technology:** Yes, tools.

## Signals

Per

The Signals skill can be used to monitor radio traffic, broadcast communications, get satellite imagery of a specific area or even detect the location of a ship in space via its comm traffic. See the Signals mechanics in the Security Systems, Signals and Sensors chapter.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/6c  
**Technology:** Yes, either tools, advantage dice Security enhancements or automation.

## Sleight of Hand

Agi

Sleight of Hand allows the character to perform minor tricks with small objects in the hands. Sleight of Hand also allows the character to surreptitiously place objects on and remove objects from another person. To pick a pocket or perform a similar trick of legerdemain, make a versus test: Sleight of Hand versus Observation. If the target character doesn't have Observation, then use Perception at a double obstacle penalty.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/9c  
**Technology:** No.

## Smuggling

Wil/Per

Smuggling is used to build operations designed to bypass the Security skill and security systems technology.

It can be used to build secret compartments in vehicles and use living creatures as mules in order to slip regulated or quarantined items onto the planet. In the game, use the Smuggling skill in versus tests against Security (for scans and sweeps) or Observation (for personal or on-board inspections). It can also be used in the Infection mechanics for the Gambit and Take Action maneuvers when smuggling, breaching quarantine and breaking regulation is in order.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color.

## Soldiering

Wil/Per

This skill covers all the incredibly boring minutiae of being a soldier—marching, digging latrines, setting up tents, army procedures and dealing with the paymasters.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** Color—canteens, digging tools, tents, orders, etc.

## Soothing Platitudes

Wil

Soothing Platitudes is a skill for placating angered or irksome fellows with words that say nothing but compliment everything: "Looking good today, sire." "Good show, sir!" "A masterpiece of ingenuity, lord." "The primarch isn't so benevolent as you, sire." "God's own judgment would falter where yours stands true, lord." "Your ingenious calculations are beyond compare, Lord Steward." Soothing Platitudes may be used in the Duel of Wits for the Obfuscate action.

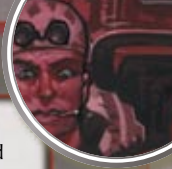
**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c  
**Technology:** No.

## Squad Support Weapons

Agi

This skill is used to operate heavy infantry weapons like heavy assault





guns, fusors, particle accelerators and shoulder-fired missile launchers. Squad Support Weapons is tested in the individual action phase of the Suppressive Fire and Direct Fire actions in Firefight.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 m. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** Yes, an appropriate weapon.

## Strategy

Wil/Per

Strategy combines tactics, logistics and cunning to guide armies through war. Strategy is not often used in the individual scenes; it is an inherently macro-level skill. It is used in all of the invasion-level Infection maneuvers except Assess and Conserve.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** Color.

## Strategy Games

Wil/Per

A character with this skill is well versed in games of strategy popular to his world. Test this skill whenever in a game of strategy. Ideally, the test should be versus another Strategy Games skill. If the opposing character does not have the skill, test his Will at a double obstacle penalty.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** Color.

## Streetwise

Per

Streetwise is the etiquette of the city streets. When entering a neighborhood or urban region, a character who is of a higher rank on the streets may challenge the cred of an interloper. Make a versus test between the two characters' skills. The winner gains a +1D advantage to his next test at against the loser and gains the margin of failure as a bonus to his body of argument in a Duel of Wits with his rival.

Also, this skill can act as navigation for urban centers, allowing characters

to find places only a native would know.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

## Suasion

Wil

Suasion is the verbal art of the clergy. It is used to enlighten the benighted. This skill allows a cotar to convince others to act on his behalf because it is in the best interest of their immortal souls. In all other respects, it acts as a Persuasion skill for the clergy.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

## Surgery

Per/Agi

Surgery is a highly specialized art that involves cutting and sewing damaged body parts back into a position where they can heal properly. Surgery can be used to repair broken limbs, stop bleeding and remove bodily aberrations. See the Anatomy of Injury for the mechanics of Surgery. It is also used to implant Naiven. See the Vaylen chapter.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 4r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Yes, tools.

## Survival

Wil/End

Survival teaches a character how to build shelters, find water and stay warm/cool in adverse conditions. Surviving without food, Ob 1. Surviving two days without water, Ob 2. Preventing exposure, Ob 3.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/9c

**Technology:** Color.

## Symbology

Per

Symbology is the study of ancient & obscure symbols. A symbologist can recognize + interpret these marks/signs.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 4r/8d/16c

**Technology:** No.

**Skill List**  
**S**

## T

### Tactics

Per

Tactics is the military science that deals with securing objectives set by strategy, especially the technique of deploying and directing troops, ships, and aircraft in effective maneuvers against an enemy. The Tactics skill represents the character's ability to make plans and see them through under stress. It is used to conduct the unit action phase of Flank, Close Combat, Advance, Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire in the Firefight mechanics. It is also used to set the disposition of your forces.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/9c

**Technology:** No.

### Torture

Wil/Per

Torture is any act by which severe torment, whether physical or psychological, is intentionally inflicted on a person as a means of intimidation, deterrent, revenge, punishment, or the extraction of information or confessions.

In this game, Torture does not extract reliable information from the victim. That's what Interrogation and Demonology are for. Torture is instead used to inflict pain and harm on the victim in the form of traits. Torture is conducted like a Duel of Wits with some notable modifications: First, the victim must have been captured in a previous scene and therefore he may not walk away; this is torture. Second, Torture is the only valid dueling skill for this conflict. Without it, the victim may use his Will as his dueling skill and the standard mechanics for Avoid, Incite and Obfuscate. He may not Dismiss with Intimidate. The victim tests his Will and counts half his successes

for the body of argument. Add these to his Will exponent to generate his body of argument. Third, the stakes for the duel cannot involve truthful information. They must involve the application of a trait. The torturer may apply Maimed, Broken, Blind, Disfigured, Sickly or any other similar trait to his victim. The victim may set his stakes to apply a character trait to himself. Compromises change the severity or nature of the traits. During the duel, the players should describe their actions and reactions to one another, rather than focusing on what is said.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 4r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Color.

## U-Z

### Ugly Truth

Wil

Ugly Truth is the singular and unique ability to strip a situation or argument to its bare, naked core. Ugly Truth is used in the Duel of Wits mechanics for the Incite action.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.

### Vaylen Philosophy

Per

Vaylen Philosophy is a bizarre admixture of their own native schools of thought and the discourse they have absorbed from their various hosts down the ages. It may be used as a Flak or Pin like regular ol' Philosophy.

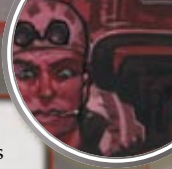
**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 4r/8d/16c

**Technology:** No.

### Vehicular Weapons

Per

The Vehicular Weapons skill is used to operate weapon systems mounted to vehicle platforms that fall short of the artillery category. Tank turrets, anti-vehicular missile systems and anti-personnel guns all fall into this



category. This skill is tested during the individual action phase of the Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire actions in Firefight.

**Practice Cycle:** 3 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/9c

**Technology:** Yes, an appropriate weapon.

taken using the Zero G skill. This means that in versus tests, Speed suffers a double obstacle penalty against Zero G.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 ms. Hrs/day: 2r/4d/8c

**Technology:** No.



## Zero G

Spd

This skill is used in place of Speed for maneuvering in zero or low G environments. Any test that would be taken on the Speed stat is instead

**Skill List**  
T, U-Z



I SHOULDN'T HAVE  
COME HERE.





## TRAITS

What follows is the general traits list referred to in the Character Burner chapter. This is a list of all of the available traits in the game—from all of the lifepaths, plus extras only available in the list.

Players may use their excess trait points to purchase traits from this list so long as they meet the restriction requirements.

### *Elements of a Trait*

A trait consists of five facets: its name, trait type, cost, description and restrictions.

#### **Trait Types**

Burning Empires divides traits into three broad categories based on how they are used mechanically in the game: character, call-on and die traits.

##### *Character Traits—Char*

A character trait illustrates a prominent aspect of the character's psychological or physiological make-up—something that affects how the character will be roleplayed at the table. They say, “You’re not just someone, you’re *it*.”



*Character traits are not listed with a description.* They have no more meaning than their name; players and groups create their meaning through play. They are listed in red in the trait list.

### **Call-On Traits—C-O**

This type of trait is powerful and subtle. When its conditions are met, a trait of this type is “called on” to save the character’s ass. Call-on traits allow a player to reroll the worms for an appropriate failed test related to the trait. Also, if there is a tie result between two characters, a character with an appropriate call-on wins the tie by one success, no need to roll.

Call-on traits may be used once per session.

### **Die Traits—Dt**

Die traits tweak an existing rule or game tenet. Either they add a die or two, change a game mechanical number—an obstacle or hesitation—or grant a new ability/new way to roll dice. Die traits modify an ability in the same way every time they are used.

Unlike call-ons, die traits can be used whenever appropriate in the game. They are limited only by the conditions listed in their description (if any).

### **Cost**

If a trait is available on one of the character’s lifepaths, it costs one point in character burning. If it is

not available on a lifepath, it costs the listed amount of points. These points are only used for character burning. Traits are acquired via other means in play.

### **Restrictions**

Many traits have restrictions to their acquisition. Generally, restrictions indicate that a trait can only be acquired via a lifepath—it may not otherwise be purchased with excess points in character burning.

Restrictions also limit traits to certain character stocks.

## **A**

### **Aadau Clan** Nt. 5 pts

Naiven who trace their ancestry back to the Aadau (pronounced: ah-dow) line have a reputation of being workman like and stolid, but of good breeding. They are traditionally Shudren caste. Aadau grants a 2D reputation among the Vaylen as member of the Aadau clan.

**Restrictions:** Aadau Naiven LP only.

### **Abandoned** Char 1 pt

### **Abused** Char 1 pt

### **Accustomed to the Dark** Nt. 2 pts

Lost Mukhadish learn to travel around the dark warrens underneath the human cities. This trait reduces any situational disadvantages due to darkness by one obstacle.

### **Addicted** Nt. 2 pts

This character is addicted to some kind of chemical substance—

## CHARACTER BURNER

medicine, recreational drugs, paint fumes or vehicular exhaust—anything that gets him high. Going without the addictive substance for more than a few hours causes the character to get edgy and jittery. The character may go one scene without getting high. If he doesn't get high in the next scene, he suffers a +1 Ob penalty to all actions until he gets his fix.

**Addled** Char 1 pt

**Adumbrate Veil** C-D 2 pts

Bureaucrats are notorious for their blank faces and dead, soulless eyes. The Adumbrate Veil acts as a call-on for any skill when performing the Obfuscate action while trying to prevent another character from getting what he wants.

**Aeumifesh** D 3 pts

The Aeumifesh is a thin, flexible sheath for a Naiven. It is coiled in the exit point of a hull, so that the Naiven may slip into it if he is forced to abandon his host. The Aeumifesh is a machine interface. It allows the Naiven to functionally control an electrical device as he would an animal: activate it, deactivate it and give rudimentary instructions. Via the aeumifesh, and when attached to a machine, the Naiven may use any technical/device operating skills he has at their encoded roots.

**Restrictions:** Vaylen only.

**Affinity for...** D 4 pts

An Affinity grants the character +1D to one ability applicable to the trait description. The ability must be decided before play begins. Examples include: Affinity for Business (+1D Resources for business), Affinity for Locks (+1D Security Rigging), Affinity for Technology (+1D to

Resources technology tests) or Affinity for Trade (+1D Bargaining).

**Aggressive** Char 1 pt

**Agitated** Char 1 pt

**Agoraphobic** D 2 pts

This character has a fear of heights and/or open spaces. Typical of spacers who've spent too long in the cramped confines of their ships. When confronted with a great height or open space, this character must pass a Steel test or hesitate.

**Alert** C-D 2 pts

Reduce hesitation by one when you're manning the guns.

**Aloof** Char 1 pt

**Ambitious** Char 1 pt

**Amedhyen** D 1 pt

Amedhyen (pronounced: ameh-thee-en) are the great unwashed of the Vaylen clans. They are Naiven who are not born into one of the great lineages. Unlike the other families, they start with no affiliation or reputation. If they are to be great or famous, they must earn it for themselves.

**Restrictions:** Amedhyen Naiven LP only.

**Amorous** Char 1 pt

**Anarchist** Char 1 pt

**Animal Life** D 1 pt

Naiven relegated to the Dalit are implanted in animals which are used for labor and simple tasks—animals similar to dogs, horses and dolphins. A character with this trait must write one of his Instincts from the perspective of his former animal life.

**Restrictions:** Vaylen characters only.





### Annelida Clan

Ot. 3 pts

The Annelida are a respectable but minor lineage in Vaylen history. They are the most numerous but least powerful and respected great lineage. They are just a step above the Amedhyen by virtue of some lost ancestor's great deed. This trait grants a 1D reputation among the Vaylen as Annelida clan.

**Restrictions:** Vaylen characters only.

### Anvil Lord

Ot. 5 pts

This trait makes the character a Peer of the Anvil. He has the right and obligation to raise a planetary-based fighting force—both ground and atmospheric troops. A character with this trait may buy an affiliation with the anvil itself to represent his armed forces. A 1D affiliation represents a small or poorly kept force comprised mostly of conscripts and *landwehr* with exponent 3 abilities. A 2D affiliation represents a competent or sizeable force of anvil trained soldiers and a smattering of Iron with exponent 4 abilities. A 3D affiliation represents a well-trained or elite force comprised of anvil trained, anvil elite and iron trained forces with exponent 5 abilities. A character with this trait is assumed to have minor functionaries appropriate to his rank available to him at all times—the first five lifepaths in the Anvil setting. No Circles test is required to bring these characters into play at the relevant exponent. If a specialist is required, test Circles, but do not use the Skill Exponent modifier. He comes with his specialist skill at the exponent of the Anvil Lord's forces. If a higher exponent is desired, you may add the obstacle modifier.

**Restrictions:** If not gained as an LP trait, the character must be Born to Rule or have the Magnate lifepath.

### Anvil Trained

Ot. 3 pts

Anvil Trained soldiers have been trained to wear heavy body armor known colloquially as “anvil” because it is the most prominent uniform of the Anvil Lord's troops. The Anvil Trained trait indicates the character has been drilled in heavy infantry combat and EVA combat. This trait negates the Cumbersome disadvantage for anvil armor.

**Restrictions:** May not be taken by Mukhadish.

### Appreciative of Good Craft

Char 1 pt

### Arbiter

Ot. 6 pts

The Archcotare is the final word on the law and policy of the Church on his planet. He gains +4s to his disposition when in a Duel of Wits over the policy of the Church on his world. This trait is negated by the Word is Law trait.

**Requirements:** Archcotare or Cult Leader LP.

### Arrogant

Char 1 pt

### Artisan

Ot. 2 pts

This trait grants a 1D reputation as a master craftsman and artisan.

### Aura of Innocence

C-O 4 pts

The Aura of Innocence counts as a call-on for Falsehood when lying to get out of trouble or for Inconspicuous when leaving the scene of a crime.

### Automator

Ot. 3 pts

This character gains a persona point whenever he automates a process that previously required physical labor. This can be accomplished in building scenes or via the Infection mechanics.

Trait List  
A

## CHARACTER BURNER

### B

#### Bad Egg Dt. 3 pts

This character has a 1D reputation as a bad egg.

#### Bastard Dt. 3 pts

This character is the illegitimate son of a noble of rank. He will be heir to the lands and income only if all the other heirs die or join the clergy. Bastards are not looked upon kindly, as they dilute claims to birthright and threaten the system of rightful inheritance. Bastards have a 1D infamous reputation among the nobility.

**Restrictions:** Born to Rule LP required.

#### **Bathetic** **Char 1 pt**

#### **Bawdy Fool** **Char 1 pt**

#### **Bearded** **Char 1 pt**

#### Beaten Dt. 2 pts

This character has been ground down since he was a child. Whenever he gives up without a fight, he earns a persona point.

#### **Beautiful** **Char 1 pt**

#### Berserker Dt. 5 pts

When injured, the character flies into a berserk rage. The player may ignore up to two dice of injury if he flies into a blind rage. The rage drives the character to hurt anyone and everything around him. The player must attempt to inflict harm on those he loves or who care for him—either bodily or to their property. If the character is alone or unable to destroy something he loves in his berserk rage, he must harm himself—roll the Die of Fate for an unarmed close combat attack—after he is out

of danger. Failure to inflict egregious harm results in the immediate loss of this trait.

#### **A Bit Mad** **Char 1 pt**

#### **Bitter** **Char 1 pt**

#### **Bizarre** **Char 1 pt**

#### **Black Fingernails** **Char 1 pt**

#### Blacklisted Dt. 2 pts

This character has made some enemies. He has a 1D infamous reputation with one of the factions on his world.

#### **Bleak** **Char 1 pt**

#### Bookworm C-O 2 pts

This trait is a call-on for one academic, research, data or book-related skill or wise.

#### Booming Voice C-O 2 pts

This trait is a call-on for Conspicuous.

#### Boor Dt. 2 pts

This character is a boor. Whenever he tries to make a joke or an overtly kind comment, it always comes off wrong. +1 Ob to Persuasion and Soothing Platitudes.

#### **Bored** **Char 1 pt**

#### Born on the Wheel Dt. 3 pts

This character was born into the clergy and is marked with a tattoo above his right shoulder of the eight-spoked burning wheel. The trait grants a 1D affiliation with others who were Born on the Wheel.

**Restrictions:** Born on the Wheel LP only.

#### Brave Dt. 2 pts

Reduce hesitation by one when doing something brave, stupid or suicidal.



### **Breeder** Nt. 1 pt.

This counts as a Yes answer for the “given birth?” question for Steel, and earns an *additional* +1D to Steel over that point.

### **Bright Mark** Nt. 5 pts.

Because psychology was so greatly feared during the Federation Era, DNA markings were placed in most citizens. Each time the Psychologist uses his innate powers, this mark glows brightly in a long line from forehead to cheek over the left eye. Eventually, as the Psychologist uses his abilities more and more, the mark scars and can be seen even when psychology is not in use. It is a mark of pride in the courts of the Karsan League, but reviled nearly everywhere else. 1D reputation in the Karsan League, 1D infamous reputation elsewhere. Most important, this trait grants the character access to the Psychologist’s Powers section of this book. It also adds +1 Ob to Inconspicuous tests.

**Restrictions:** Humans only.

### **Broken** Nt. 2 pts.

This character has been broken by extensive psychological abuse throughout his life. He’s at a -2s penalty to his Duel of Wits body of argument. The only way to get rid of this trait is to have it voted off. The only way to be eligible for a vote is to stand up to your oppressors—win or lose.

### **Bruised Eyes** Char 1 pt

### **Brutal** Char 1 pt

### **Brute** Nt. 7 pts.

This character may ignore wounded dice penalties applied to Will and Perception for purposes of incapacitation. In other words, he

can’t be knocked out by reducing Will and Perception to zero dice, only Speed, Agility, Power or Forte.

### **Bulldog** Char 1 pt

### **Bugler** Nt. 1 pt.

This character earns a persona point whenever he loses a Duel of Wits or a Firefight and accepts a compromise worse than what he would have to offer otherwise.

### **Burned** Nt. 5 pts.

Burned out, this character is beyond caring. Reduce hesitation by one, and increase all Persuasion and Seduction obstacles for and against this character by +1 Ob.

## **C**

### **Calculating** Char 1 pt

### **Calm Demeanor** C-O 2 pts.

Call-on for Steel in the Duel of Wits.

### **Cannibal** Char 1 pt

### **Capitalist at Heart** Char 1 pt

### **Captured** Nt. 2 pts.

This character was, at one point, a captive. The player may take a free relationship with his captor or a 1D infamous reputation with the group who captured him.

### **Casually Violent** Nt. 3 pts.

This character has learned some bad habits in his life. Violence toward his friends and colleagues is his way of asserting his affection and his role in their lives. Players who can horrify their group by pushing their behavior just a bit too far are rewarded with an extra fate point.

**Trait List**  
B, C



## CHARACTER BURNER

### Casulist C-0 4 pts

Call-on for Rhetoric, Falsehood or Persuasion when using specious or subtle arguments to rationalize or mislead.

### Chameleon C-0 2 pts

Call-on for Inconspicuous when trying to blend into a foreign society.

### Charging Blindly C-0 3 pts

Call-on for Steel tests when at the van of an attack and charging across the field of battle (using the Advance maneuver).

### Charismatic C-0 2 pts

Call-on for Persuasion or Oratory. Pick one.

### Charming C-0 2 pts

Call-on for Falsehood or Seduction. Pick one.

### Child Dt. 7 pts

One of the truly bizarre aspects of Vaylen life is that they may, if they are wealthy and powerful enough, choose to inhabit the mind of a child host and see the world through its eyes. It can best be described as an adventurous vacation for Vaylen potentates. You must have the Child trait to start the game in a child body. Vibhuuten or Meshhen characters with this trait may take an extra child body if they can afford it. Stat pools for the child body: 6 M, 11 P. (Maximums: P 7, W 7, A 5, S 5, P 5, F 5.)

**Restrictions:** Vaylen only. Any Vaylen character who has Human Caste LPs or whose last lifepath is Slave Labor, Cultist or Sleeper may choose to begin the game with a child body for one trait point.

### Chimerical Char 1 pt

### Chronic Depression Char 1 pt

### Citizen of the Commune Dt. 3 pts

Characters born into the Commune retain their citizenship until they renounce it. Citizenship grants a +1D affiliation with other characters with this trait.

**Restrictions:** Born Citizen only.

### City Official Dt. 2 pts

This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the municipal official's home city if, and only if, the player names the city and the office in which his character serves.

**Restrictions:** Municipal Official LP only.

### Clan Leader Dt. 12 pts

The Ksatriyen Clan Leader is the head of the Vaylen military. A Ksatriya may but an affiliation to represent his forces: A 1D affiliation represents a small or poorly kept force comprised of shudra with exponent 3 abilities. A 2D affiliation represents a competent or sizeable force of shudren and ksatriyen with exponent 4 abilities. A 3D affiliation represents a well-trained or elite force comprised of ksatriyen with exponent 5 abilities. Clan Leaders are assumed to have minor functionaries appropriate to his rank available to him at all times. These are represented by the first four lifepaths in the Ksatriyen and Shudren settings. No Circles test is required to bring these characters into play at the relevant exponent. If a specialist is required, test Circles, but do not use the Skill Exponent modifier. He comes with his specialist skill at the exponent of the Clan Leader's forces. If a higher exponent is desired, you may add the obstacle modifier.

**Restrictions:** Ksatriyen Vaylen only

**Claustrophobic** Nt. 2 pts

This character has a fear of enclosed spaces. He must pass a Steel test when forced to enter such confinement or else hesitate.

**Clean Cut** Char 1 pt**Clever** Char 1 pt**Clever Bastard** Nt. 3 pts

A Clever Bastard earns a persona point when he actively screws over his friends or allies in order to see his plans through. Be nice!

**Clinical** Char 1 pt**Cocky** Char 1 pt**Codebreaker** Nt. 3 pts

This Psychologist has a 1D infamous reputation among his colleagues and anyone else who knows him. At one point in the past, he used his psychological powers to force an innocent mind open and take what he wanted. He is a codebreaker.

**Restrictions:** Psychologist-type characters only.

**Cog in the Machine** Nt. 3 pts

This character is part of the inner workings of the machine of state. The player earns a persona point whenever he backs down from or steps into a conflict because he's just doing his job.

**Cold** Char 1 pt**Cold Blooded** Nt. 2 pts

Reduce hesitation by one when attempting to murder another person.

**Colorful** Char 1 pt**Commanding Aura** C-D 4 pts

Confidence and self-assurance roll off the character in waves. This trait is a call-on for Command.

**Conciliator** Nt. 3 pts

When trying to settle a dispute, this character grants an extra die whenever he offers help.

**Constitutional Activist** Nt. 2 pts

The constitution is the foundation of the state, and as such, it must be applied universally and without condition. The Constitutional Activist has a 1D infamous reputation among the legal establishment.

**Contender** Nt. 2 pts

If the player purchases a rival sibling relationship for his character at full price, his character is a legitimate contender for the throne. If the Rebel Line faction is present on the planet, his character must be a figure of note—at its head. The character gains a 1D affiliation with the Rebel Line.

**Restrictions:** Mark of Privilege trait.

**Contortionist** C-D 2 pts

A call-on for Speed when the character is trying to squeeze into small places or twist himself into knots.

**Cool-Headed** Nt. 3 pts

Reduce hesitation by two.

**Corrupt** Char 1 pt**Corvus and Crucis** Nt. 4 pts

Iron and hammer cannot be operated without a cybernetic cerebral interface called a *crucis*. This is an electronic port that is built into the back of the head at the occipital lobe. Through this interface,

Trait List  
C

## CHARACTER BURNER

the machine responds to mental commands and monitors vital signs. The crucis gets its name from the cross shape of the implant. It is large enough to be seen clearly on the back on the head and is a badge of honor for all who have one.

To implant the crucis, the individual must be depilated. This procedure removes all hair follicles from the head. Not only does the person become totally bald, he will never be able to grow hair again. This state is called *corvus*. Officially, one must be *corvus* to receive a crucis.

However, being *corvus* is not fashionable. Therefore, wigs are popular among the nobility. One hates to give up a fashionable hairstyle just to have the mark of a crucis. Therefore, most nobles wear a wig so that they can look beautiful, but they can remove the wig at any time to show off their crucis. In this way, one gets to make two statements at once. A small percentage of *corvus* warriors do not wear wigs, preferring to show off their crucis all the time. This is seen as gauche, and no noble concerned with his standing at court would ever do so. Those few warriors who don't wear wigs refer to the practice of wearing them as "wiggling," an insulting term meant to convey that the wearers are more interested in fashion than in fighting. See the Wiggled trait for more details about the culture war.

**Restrictions:** Characters with a human body.

### Cosmopolitan

Char 1 pt

### Cotar Fomas

Qt. 3 pts

A cotar fomas is a priest much like a regular cotar, but he is also a warrior. He has all the powers of a cotar, but

he also commands an arm of the Mundus Humanitas' military.

Unlike a cotar, who is commanded by the dregutai, a cotar fomas answers directly to the archcotare. While he cannot act without the archcotare's leave, the cotar fomas has broad-ranging powers. He deploys his units as he sees fit and is the archcotare's enforcer.

These men are often feared by other Church officials. They frequently possess a high degree of zealotry. Delicate dregutai, who must often work with local governments to keep the Church from being persecuted, fear that the cotar fomas is a lightning rod for trouble. Many cotar fomas feel that if the locals want to stand against the Mundus Humanitas, they should be met with the brutal force of Ahmilahk's fury. In the Darikahn Empire, where the Church is technically illegal, this attitude can cause all sorts of political problems. Cotar fomas are exempt from the Church's rule of celibacy. The Church deems these priests not as pure as the rest of the clergy. The taint of war makes them somewhat less holy. Most of them shrug it off. The Church may not accord them the same respect, but it is definitely interested in their services when fighting is necessary. The soldiers whom the cotar fomas commands—referred to as a sodality—technically fall outside of the church hierarchy. They are solely under the cotar fomas' command. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the Archcotare and the sodalities of his planet.

**Restrictions:** Cotar Fomas LP only.

### Coy

Char 1 pt

### Crooked Fingers

Char 1 pt





**Cruel** Char 1 pt

**Crushing Boredom** Char 1 pt

**Cryptic** C-D 2 pts

Kernn, though generally voluble, are notoriously cryptic about matters they keep close to heart. This trait acts as a call-on for any skill used in the Obfuscate action in the Duel of Wits.

*Restrictions:* Kernn only.

**Cud Chewer** Char 1 pt

**Cultist** Dt 3 pts

As an avowed member of the cult, the this character gains a +1D affiliation with a cult of his choice.

**Cunning** Char 1 pt

**Curious** Char 1 pt

**Curt** Char 1 pt

**Cynical** Char 1 pt

## D

**Daredevil** Char 1 pt

**Dark** Char 1 pt

**Dashing** Char 1 pt

**Dedicated** Char 1 pt

**Deep Thinker** Char 1 pt

**Defeated** Dt 3 pts

Having been broken and beaten so many times, what's the use of fighting any more? This character earns an extra persona point when he is confronted, concedes defeat without a fight *and* changes a Belief to throw in with the other side.

**Defensive** Char 1 pt

**Deferential** Char 1 pt

**Defiant** Char 1 pt

**Deformed** Dt 1 pt

Limbs misshapen and awkward, this character is deformed in some way. Pick one physical stat—Agility, Speed, Power or Forte—and all tests with that stat or any skill rooted in that stat are at +2 Ob.

**Democrat** Char 1 pt

**Desperate** Char 1 pt

**Despondent** Char 1 pt

**Destined for Slavery** Dt 3 pts

This character is destined to become a slave. The trait grants a 1D affiliation with other bearers of the Destined for Slavery trait. Also, if the player deliberately moves his character into a position where he could or actually does become a slave—even temporarily—he earns a persona point.

**Determined** C-D 4 pts

The Determined trait allows the character to reroll any one skill/stat/attribute test associated with one of his Beliefs. He may only do this once per phase.

**Devoted to Fire** Dt 3 pts

Being Devoted to Fire is the first step on the path to enlightenment within the Church. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with other Devotees to Fire.

*Restrictions:* Devoted to Fire LP only.

**Diplomatic** Char 1 pt

**Dirty** Char 1 pt

Trait List  
C, D

## CHARACTER BURNER

### Disciplined Nt. 4 pts

Discipline is a way of life. It creates focus, drive and purpose. The player may add an additional—fourth—Belief to his character regarding his discipline.

### Dismissive Char 1 pt

### Dispassionate Char 1 pt

### Distortion Monkey C-O 4 pts

Call-on for any tests regarding entering or exiting distortion.

### Distortion Sickness Nt. 2 pts

Too many jumps have made this character sensitive to the effects of distortion. He suffers a +2 Ob to any Forte tests regarding entering or leaving distortion.

### Distrustful Char 1 pt

### Disturbing Char 1 pt

### Domineering Presence Nt. 5 pts

Characters with the Domineering Presence trait may, once per Duel of Wits, make an independent Point or Dismiss before his opponent rolls for his action. If the character scripts a Dismiss or Point while his opponent is making a Point, then the Domineering player speaks his part and rolls his dice first. If he fails to win the Duel, then the other player may respond. Otherwise, if the Domineering player knocks his opponent to zero, he may not respond.

### Downtrodden Char 1 pt

### Dregutai Nt. 4 pts

The dregutai (singular “dregus”) are prelates elected from the cotars—priests of the Mundus Humanitas. They work as adjuncts for the archcotare, advising and assisting

him. They carry out his will and supervise the cotars.

Dregutai often officiate at temple services in the absence of the archcotare. When the archcotare does perform the duties himself, the non-celebrant officials are always dregutai. A dregus can become quite powerful if he serves a weak archcotare. Much like the metropolitans are to the Primarch, they are “the power behind the throne.” Crossing an influential one is a dangerous business. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the Church and a 1D reputation within the Church and its associated organizations.

**Restrictions:** Dregus LP only.

### Drunk Nt. 2 pts

This character has a serious problem with alcohol and seeks solace in the bottle. Whenever stress or trouble arises, he turns to drink to dull his mind. He is at a +1 Ob to all actions while drunk. The player may increase that penalty at his discretion. Also, the player earns a persona point if his character fails an important test and, in a drunken rage, engages his compatriots in a Duel of Wits to convince them that it was their fault—they drove him to drink, they made him what he is.

## E

### Ear for Voices Nt. 3 pts

The character always remembers a voice and is able to pick out conversations over distance and noise. An Ob 3 Perception test allows the character to hear perfectly that conversation across the busy bar.

### Earnest Char 1 pt



### **Educated** Int. 3 pts

Reduce the aptitude for learning academic, research-based or historical-type skills by one.

**Restrictions:** Human and Vaylen only.

### **Ferily Confident** C:D 3 pts

Possessed of an eerie confidence, this character may reroll a failed Steel test so long as the test is tied into one of his Beliefs.

### **Effeminate** Char 1 pt

### **Eidetic Memory** Int. 4 pts

The character has the ability to remember nearly anything that he has read or seen. The player is allowed to consult the GM about certain important character memories. Whenever there is a question about whether or not the character remembers something, it is assumed that he does. The GM can provide the necessary information to the player. Additionally, any fact the player makes up from his character's pre-game past is true—so long as it doesn't break genre, seem patently ridiculous or contravene any existing facts in the game.

### **Elitist** Char 1 pt

### **Empathic** Char 1 pt

### **Emperor's Armor Bearer** Int. 5 pts

According to legend, a charismatic Kern named Vasm first developed immunity to Vaylen control and learned to recognize which of his brethren were also resisting. He secretly organized them while maintaining the illusion that he and his followers were Vaylen puppets. When he had over one thousand followers, Vasm staged a revolution. He and his fellows slaughtered thousands of Vaylen and fortified

themselves within the capital stronghold of Mursan, the world on which the Vaylen were engineering them. The Vaylen responded quickly, but by then thousands more Kern had rallied to the cause, and the initial assault was repulsed.

When the Vaylen regrouped for a final assault on Mursan, they found that Vasm and his comrades had fled. The Vaylen exterminated all remaining Kern slaves in their possession and wrote them off as a failure.

Vasm's followers emerged in human space in 9020 F.E., a ragged but defiant band. They gave Emperor Broentsus (9010-9046) invaluable information on Vaylen society in exchange for sanctuary. The emperor declared them his "Kern" (armor bearers), and bade them welcome as long as they would serve him against the Terror.

Kern with this trait have either personally journeyed to one of the Imperial homeworlds and been sworn in as the Emperor's Armor Bearer, or they have inherited their right from a parent. The Emperor's Armor Bearer trait gives the Kern a 1D reputation among the Imperial court and imperial anvil troops.

**Restrictions:** Kern only.

### **Emperor's Steward** Int. 6 pts

The Lord Steward grants a 1D reputation as the chief imperial officer on the planet and a 1D affiliation with the stewardship.

**Restrictions:** Lord Steward LP.

### **Ennui** Char 1 pt

### **Enraged** Char 1 pt

### **Erudite** Char 1 pt

**Trait List**  
D, E, F



## CHARACTER BURNER

### Exhausted 0t 2 pts

Overworked and underfed, this character is exhausted. +1 Ob to all Forte tests.

### Eye for Detail C-0 2 pts

This is a call-on for any skill requiring a painstaking replication of detail: Counterfeiting, Forgery, Craft, etc. Choose before play begins, please.

### Eye for Place C-0 3 pts

This character never forgets a place. Even if shown a fragment of an image of a locale, he can piece together the details and figure out where it is. This trait acts as a call-on for Recon and Cartography.

## F

### Family 0t 4 pts

This criminal never acts alone. He is a member of an underworld network known as a "family." Related by blood or not, members of the family are always treated like brothers and sisters. To fail to show loyalty, hospitality and brotherhood to those in the family is a grave insult, and is cause for many a feud. However, a character may not be expelled from the family. The only way he leaves is by his own death—self-inflicted or otherwise. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with other characters bearing the Family trait. If the character harms, insults or otherwise runs afoul of another family member, he gains a 1D infamous reputation in the Family as well.

**Restrictions:** Kernn Diazspherah, Human, Mukhadish Underworld setting and Vaylen setting characters only.

### Fatalistic Char 1 pt

### Fazia to All 0t 5 pts

The Ghetto Sheef plays the part of the patriarch for the Kernn living in the ghettos of human (and Vaylen) worlds. This trait gives the Ghetto Sheef a 1D affiliation with the ghetto and a 1D reputation as "ze sheef fazia."

**Restrictions:** Ghetto Sheef LP only.

### Fearless 0t 4 pts

Reduces hesitation by three.

### Feckless Char 1 pt

### Feral Char 1 pt

### Fetishist 0t 3 pts

Kernn Veps are notorious mil-tech fetishists. This trait grants +1D to all technology tests used to bring weapons, military vehicles and armor into play. If the player fails to dote on and talk about—fetishize—his weapons tech to the point that the other players find it disturbing, this trait may be voted off.

### Fiery Char 1 pt

### Fits of Generosity Char 1 pt

### Flamboyant Char 1 pt

### Flexible Char 1 pt

### Flyboy Char 1 pt

### Follow the Money C-0 2 pts

This trait acts as a call-on for Accounting when the character is using the skill to uncover information he really shouldn't know about his employers.

### Fop Char 1 pt

### Forged 0t 10 pts

There are two distinct military peerages in the Iron Empires, Peers



of the Hammer and Peers of the Anvil. The Peers of the Hammer operate in space. They lead fleets of starships, keeping their lord's worlds safe from invasion and bringing his fury to bear on other planets. The Peers of the Anvil operate planetside. They command ground troops, whose job it is to garrison a planet and defend it from invasion, or land on a hostile world and take it for their master. The two peerages might most easily be thought of as a navy and an army, but those descriptions don't quite capture their nature. A peerage is a privilege. It is a status symbol to belong to one or the other, a recognition of the person's right to hold rank and maintain armed forces: What defines a noble is not his land but the power he can project—in this case, his military. Major nobles are members of both peerages. They are called *Forged*, and own both hammer and anvil units. This is where true status lies. A Forged Lord can control vast territory. Consequently, every noble attempts to become Forged. The Forged trait grants the character access to both the Anvil Lord and Hammer Lord traits. In addition, it provides a 1D affiliation among Forged Lords—a powerful galactic entity—and a 1D planet-wide reputation as a Forged Lord.

**Restrictions:** Human only.

### **Forked Tongue** C-O 3 pts

Call-on for Soothing Platitudes and Falsehood.

### **Formalist** Dt 3 pts

This character rigidly adheres to proper form. For ritualizing a ceremony until the other players' eyes water, the player is granted a persona point.

### **Fragger** Dt 3 pts

For having been implicated—but never convicted—in the untimely death of one his former officers, this character has earned a 1D infamous reputation in the planet's predominant military.

### **Freak** Dt 2 pts

So freakish is he, this character is put on display to attract customers. +2D to Conspicuous, +2 Ob to Inconspicuous.

### **Friendly Face** Dt 4 pts

Call-on for Circles when being a nice guy.

### **Frighteningly Clinical** Char 1 pt

### **Frustrated** Char 1 pt

### **FUGAZI** Char 1 pt

### **Funny Accent** Char 1 pt

### **Fuur Blood** Dt 4 pts

The Fuur are a mythical alien race who were encountered by the Federated Empire. According to legend, their small culture was absorbed into humankind and the Fuur simply ceased to be. This trait allows the player to spend four points in the Alien Life-Form Burner.

**Restriction:** Human only

## G

### **Gadgeteer** Dt 5 pts

The gadgeteer may add a technology trait to an existing piece of technology (without having to roll) so long as it is appropriate to the device and makes everyone else look foolish for not noticing it/thinking of it before.

**Trait List**  
F, G

## CHARACTER BURNER

### **Galvanizing Presence** 0t 3 pts

Add +1D to any help or FoRK die from this character's Conspicuous skill.

### **Garbo** 0t 8 pts

"Set in the face of classic structure were large, sad, luminous eyes that expressed a limited but intense emotional range." This trait grants +1D to Conspicuous and Seduction, adds +1 Ob to Persuasion tests made against the character, and grants a +1D advantage die to any character who uses Propaganda or Journalism to feature this character. However, this trait may only be used in one single phase of the Infection. After that, it's sunglasses, head scarves and a quiet life.

**Restrictions:** Human or Human-bodied Vaylen only.

### **Garlic Breath** Char 1 pt

### **Genius** 0-0 3 pts

This trait acts as a call-on for any non-martial, non-physical skill of the player's choosing. The skill may be chosen during play, but once chosen, the Genius trait becomes attached to that skill. It may only be used for that skill thereafter.

### **Gentle** Char 1 pt

### **Gentle Giant** Char 1 pt

### **Gift of Abmilahk** 0t 3 pts

The Bright Mark and psychological abilities are sometimes considered a blessing from the prophet—they help determine one's destiny, after all. This trait grants a 1D reputation as one blessed among the freemen, peasant, serfs and common folk.

**Restrictions:** Must have the Bright Mark trait.

### **Glad Hander** Char 1 pt

### **Good for Nothing** Char 1 pt

### **Good Listener** Char 1 pt

### **Googly Eyes** Char 1 pt

### **Graceful** Char 1 pt

### **Gracious** Char 1 pt

### **Grease Monkey** 0-0 2 pts

Call-on for Repair so long as the character is dirty and reeks of machines.

### **Grim** Char 1 pt

### **Groundhog** 0t 3 pts

The anvil units see themselves as the workhorses of their lord's military. It is they who do the real work: suppressing uprisings, conquering enemies and maintaining order. They see hammer units as glory hounds who go preening about in their ships. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the planet's anvil military faction and a 1D infamous reputation among the planet's hammer military faction.

### **Gruff** Char 1 pt

## H

### **Hammer Flies, Anvil Dies** 0t 3 pts

Hammer crews see their anvil brothers and sisters as planet-bound "groundhogs." They cannot move without the help of the hammer, are incapable of holding more than a small fief, and are therefore worthy only of scorn. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the planet's hammer military faction and a 1D infamous reputation among the planet's anvil military faction.





## Hammer Lord

01t 5pts

This trait makes the character a Peer of the Hammer. He has the right and obligation to raise a space-based fighting force—a force of battlecraft, transports, gunboats and even fighters. A character with this trait may buy an affiliation with the hammer itself to represent his armed forces. A 1D affiliation represents a small or poorly kept force comprised mostly of mercator and conscripted civilian craft with crew with exponent 3 abilities. A 2D affiliation represents a force of retrofitted commercial ships with a smattering of smaller military craft. Crew have exponent 4 abilities. A 3D affiliation represents a force of system patrol craft and hammer cruisers with well-trained crew with exponent 5 abilities. A character with this trait is assumed to have minor functionaries appropriate to his rank available to him at all times—the first eight lifepaths in the Hammer setting. No Circles test is required to bring these characters into play at the relevant exponent. Test Circles if a specialist is required, do not use the Skill Exponent modifier. He comes with his specialist skill at the exponent of the Hammer Lord's forces. If a higher exponent is desired, you may add the obstacle modifier.

**Restrictions:** Human only.

## Handsome

Char 1pt

## Hard Hearted

01t 5pts

They always have excuses, and this character has heard them all. He may add four successes to any body of argument in a Duel of Wits where his opponent is trying to weasel out of an obligation.

## Hard Nosed

0-0 2pts

Call-on for Bargaining.

## Harried

Char 1pt

## Hater

Char 1pt

## Hat-Passer

Char 1pt

## Hazed

Char 1pt

## Healthy Respect for Power

1pt

## Heretic

01t 4pts

This character has a 2D infamous reputation in the Church. In addition, any member of the Church may kill him on sight without provocation and be absolved from sin so long as he sees a cotar for divination.

## Hidden Venom

Char 1pt

## Homesick

Char 1pt

## Homme Dur

0-0 4pts

Call-on for Steel when “on the job” (committing a crime) and when avenging a friend's death or punishing a friend for betraying a mutual Belief.

## Hopelessly Corrupt

Char 1pt

## Hotshot

0-0 2pts

Call-on for Piloting when making your superior officers groan due to your insubordination.

## Humanist

Char 1pt

## Humble

Char 1pt

## Hungry

Char 1pt

## Hungry for Knowledge

Char 1pt

## Hurt

01t 2pts

Describe an incident in the character's past that has left him hurt and nursing a wound—physical or otherwise. Incorporate the event into one of the character's Beliefs. Resolve

**Trait List**  
G, H

## CHARACTER BURNER

the hurt—either through revenge or reconciliation—and change the Belief to earn an *extra* persona point.

I

### I Know This Ship Like My Own Hands

C-O 2 pts

Call-on for *any* ship-related skill test, so long as you say, “I know this ship like my own hands!” May only be used once per phase.

### I Solzjah

Int 3 pts

The Kernn Solzjah take their job very seriously. They are the last line of defense for their Omshiip. To be a Solzjah is to be a member of a close brotherhood, lasting throughout the Kernn's life. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with other Kernn who have this trait.

### Idealist

Int 2 pts

A player who writes idealistic Beliefs for a character with this trait is rewarded in a strange way. If his idealistic Beliefs are challenged and he abandons them, he earns two persona points and immediately loses this trait. If he keeps to his Idealist Beliefs, he earns one persona point as per the normal rules for Embodiment Beliefs.

### Ideologue

Int 3 pts

For every character he converts to his way of thinking, the Ideologue earns a persona point. The converted character must change one of his Beliefs to fall in line with the Ideologue.

### Illegal Crucis

Int 3 pts

Hammer-class starships are piloted by means of a cerebral interface called a *crucis*. This is an electronic port that is built into the back of the

head at the occipital lobe. Through this interface, the machine responds to mental commands and monitors vital signs.

The crucis gets its name from the cross shape of the implant. It is large enough to be seen clearly on the back on the head.

It is technically illegal in the Iron Empires for anyone who is not a Lord-Pilot to possess a crucis. However, most authorities look the other way so that traders, merchants and spacefarers may ply the trade routes and keep their worlds alive with vital commerce. Even so, it is not unheard of for a noble lord to fuse the crucis of smugglers, criminals or other spacefarers who've earned his ire. Fusing the crucis renders the character unable to use the Helm skill. Doing so requires an Ob 3 Surgery test. Sometimes it's just easier to rip it out (which Maims the character). Also, in the case of most illegal implants, cybernetic surgeons have even found a method of implantation that allows the person to regrow his hair—they do not have to be *corvus*.

### Imperious

Char 1 pt

### Imperious Demeanor

C-O 3 pts

Use this trait as a call-on for Circles when dealing with anyone of lower rank or station.

### Independent

Char 1 pt

### Indulgent

Char 1 pt

### Innocent

Int 1 pt

-1D to Steel.

### Insane

Char 1 pt

### Iron Stomach

Char 1 pt



### Iron Trained Dt. 5 pts

Iron is the vernacular for a particular type of mechanized armor. It is perhaps a noble's single greatest status symbol—an honor and a privilege allowed to only the nobility and the most accomplished warriors. The Iron Empires take their name from the symbolic image of wars and conquest led by nobles clad in iron. Though it is cumbersome, iron is ingenious in its design. It is a self-contained environmental suit that turns a human being into a small tank. Power, locomotion, protection, and life support are all provided by the suit. An iron company is a formidable force. *Iron cannot be operated without this trait.*

**Restrictions:** Must have the Corvus and Crucis trait.

### Irradiated Char 1 pt

## J

### Jaded Char 1 pt

### Jumpy Dt. 1 pt

May not choose Stand and Drool as a Steel reaction.

### Just Following Orders Dt. 5 pts

Anytime this character commits an atrocity and later defends himself successfully in a Duel of Wits (a compromise in his favor) by passing responsibility on to his superiors, he earns a Deeds point.

## K

### Keeper of the Fire Dt. 2 pts

The Keeper of the Fire tends the blaze surrounding the burning wheel in the Mundus Humanitas temples. This trait grants a ID affiliation with

that particular church so long as the player names the church, its location and its archcoteare.

**Restrictions:** Keeper of the Fire LP only.

### Kilgore Char 1 pt

### Krav Magah Trained Dt. 3 pts

Kern Shayatet are trained to kill efficiently with their bare hands. Krav Magah training teaches one to attack joints and soft tissue like the eyes and throat. Add +1 to the DoF for Close Combat hand-to-hand.

**Restrictions:** Human, Vaylen and Mukhadish characters may only take this if there are no Kern player characters in their group.

## L

### Laconic Char 1 pt

### Lame Duck Dt. 2 pts

This character's having a hard time getting his agenda pushed through. +1 Ob to all Circles and Bureaucracy tests.

### Late Dt. 2 pts

This character suffers +1 Ob to any skill tests to beat the clock.

### Lavish Taste Dt. 2 pts

This character just can't resist expensive items, even if he can't afford them. Any failed Resources tests to acquire luxury items or ornate versions of practical goods in which tax is incurred earns the player a Fate point. The testing player may raise his Resources obstacle as he sees fit to represent his character's lavish taste.

### Law-Obsessed Char 1 pt

### Leech Char 1 pt

**Trait List**  
I, J, K, L



## CHARACTER BURNER

### Liberal

Char 1 pt

### Life under a

### Different Code

Ot. 3 pts

This character lives by his own rules. The player may add a fourth Belief to his character to represent this code. This additional Belief must be at odds with the societal norms. It must represent deviancy or aberrant behavior in the context of the planet's culture.

### Lifting Heavy Things

C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Power when lifting something you really shouldn't be. If the call-on still fails, the character suffers a hernia.

### Light Sensitive

Ot. 2 pts

+1 Ob in bright light. Light-dampening tech can mitigate this penalty.

### Light Sleeper

Ot. 2 pts

If there is ever a conflict surrounding sneaking up on this sleeping character, the player may make a Perception or Observation test as if the character were awake.

### Linguist

Ot. 2 pts

Reduce the aptitude for learning languages by three.

### Loathed

Ot. 2 pts

This character has a 1D infamous reputation somewhere. Describe it for us, please.

### Logorrhea

Char 1 pt

### Lonely

Char 1 pt

### Louis Wu

C-O/Ot. 3 pts

When surprised or shocked by a revelation (especially when called on to make a Steel test for such

instances), this character is prone to fits of laughter. While hesitating, he belly laughs. If this doesn't infuriate friends and foes alike, something is wrong in the world. This trait also acts as a call-on for Advanced Mathematics, but the player must spit out his calculations in a confident string of numbers that melts the brains of the other players.

### Loyal

Ot. 3 pts

There is an old saying: "Death is lighter than a feather, but duty is heavier than a mountain." This character lives by these words. The player may add a fourth Belief to his character centered around his Loyalty to another character. Should this trait ever be voted off, the character loses the Belief as well; should the Belief be changed, the trait is lost.

### Loyal to the Family

Ot. 3 pts

As the Loyal trait, but the Belief must center on their criminal family.

### Lucky

Ot. 6 pts

For one test—*once*—the player may opt not to roll the dice, but to simply pass the test (by meeting the obstacle). Alternately, the player may use this trait as one free *Personal Demons deeds point*. After the trait has been used in one of those two manners, the ability is lost. It is replaced instead with a 1D reputation: Lucky! "This kid is so lucky. Remember when..."

### Lucky to Be in a Human Body

Char 1 pt

*Restrictions:* Vaylen character trait only.

### Lunatic

Ot. 1 pt

This character always knows the phases of his world's moon or moons. Even if he's locked underground for 20 years. Kind of drives him crazy.



# M

## Macbeth

Qt. 3 pts

Macbeth is doomed. His doom is, in fact, foretold and inescapable. The player is encouraged to write his doom into one of his Beliefs. It always ends in his death. Please be as gory and descriptive as possible. The trick is to ensnare other people in his doom. Each character who changes a Belief to fall in line with Macbeth's doom earns Macbeth one persona point. As he nears his fate, Macbeth's options dwindle. Once the climax of his story has been reached—it's time to confront his wife, the enemy has returned from abroad, etc.—Macbeth may only use actions in the Duel of Wits, Psychic Duel, Firefight or even the Infection mechanics *once* each. After he's played that action into his doom, he may not use that action again—ever. If he should survive his fate, which is unlikely, Macbeth should count himself quite unlucky, as he'll now live out the rest of his days dwelling on the horrors he's committed, waiting for some other young Macbeth to happen upon him and push him toward his grisly end.

## Maelcum

Char 1 pt

## Makara Body

Qt. 10 pts

The name Makara comes from the original Vaylen stock—*Cnidaria Makara*—great, intelligent jellyfish that plied the oceans of the Vaylen homeworld. They were the first race enslaved by the Naiven, and the first creatures to become true Vaylen. Long since naturally extinct, the Makara exist only in the Yaadasahm breeding vats. The clan has genetically preserved the creatures because they prefer these hosts above all others.

In fact, the Yaadasahm disdain other hosts. They will only take Ksatriyen hosts in times of war and need, and even then only reluctantly.

Makara are massive aquatic creatures with pliable, jelly-like flesh, a large, complex brain and multiple tentacles and pseudopods capable of manipulating tools.

They have the following stat pools and maximums: Stat pools: 7 M, 14 P. Maximums: P 7, W 7, A 6, S 4, P 4, F 6. They also have the following Alien Life-Form traits: Membranous Flesh (character trait), Tentacles (Advantage: +1D to Surgery and Close Combat) and Aquatic (Inhuman Ability to breathe water and swim without penalty).

Yaadasahm who take Makara bodies say to the rest of the Vaylen, "We are the original line. We have raised you all from vile animals to your present unenlightened state. Though fortune and fashion may pass us by, we still hold power." The Makara trait therefore grants a 3D reputation among all Vaylen as an elitist, traditional old guard monster!

**Restrictions:** Yaadasahm Naiven LP only.

## Man of Few Words

Char 1 pt

## Mangled

Qt. 4 pts

One of the character's limbs is mangled or non-functioning. Subtract 2D from one physical stat—Agility, Speed, Power and Forte. The stat maximum is also lowered by the same amount.

## Manipulative

Char 1 pt

## Mark of Privilege

Qt. 3 pts

Those born into nobility bear certain telltale signs of their lineage. Their nose, their bearing, their skin or even their speech mark them as one of the privileged. This confers a 1D

**Trait List**  
L, M

## CHARACTER BURNER

affiliation with nobility, but also adds +1 Ob to all Inconspicuous or Falsehood tests when masquerading as someone lower than their station.

**Restrictions:** Born to Rule, Vaylen Captain and Vaylen Command LPs only.

### Martyr

Qt. 3 pts

He will die for our sins. We all know it. We all want it (not that we would do anything to speed the process along...). In him we shall be redeemed. The player whose character possesses this trait earns a persona point when taking steps in the game to martyr his character. The character must die for a lost cause—preferably religious. Should this glorious death transpire, the character's remains instantly become holy relics. The first person to gather up those remains is granted all of the martyr's remaining artha. If he had no artha left at the time of his death, the relic grants a Deeds point to its new owner.

### Matronly

Char 1 pt

### Mean

Char 1 pt

### Mercenary

Char 1 pt

### Merchant Fleet Captain

Qt. 5 pts

This trait allows the character to purchase civilian and commercial spacecraft for his own personal use. He'll still need either the crucis or a character with one to pilot the thing. To represent the actual fleet, be sure to use the affiliation and relationship rules.

### Meshhen Clan

Qt. 6 pts

Meshhen (mes-hen) are a powerful line of Naiven with a long-standing military tradition. This lineage harkens back to the warriors of old—the Meshhen being the first

clan to take up arms in the interest of claiming Vaylen hosts. Meshhen typically follow that tradition; most are born into the Ksatriyen caste. This trait grants a 3D reputation among Vaylen as a warrior.

**Restrictions:** Meshhen Naiven only.

### Meticulous

C-0 2 pts

The Meticulous character is neat and organized to the point of obsessiveness. The trait may be used as a call-on for one academic, craftsman, artisan or military skill of the player's choosing. Choose before play begins.

### Metropolitan

Qt. 6 pts

The Metropolitan is charged with handling the secular business of running the Church's domains. He sets the rate of taxation, negotiates with other nations, communicates with the Church's powerful subjects and writes national law.

A Metropolitan has several worlds under his supervision. He is the eye of the Primarch and enforces the supreme figure's policy. A Metropolitan's word is law on all matters, since he speaks in the name of the Primarch.

A special council of metropolitans (the Council of Arch Antistes) is headquartered with the Primarch on Mosum. These men are the Primarch's chief advisors and have great reach throughout the Iron Empires.

They indirectly influence the Church's destiny because when the Primarch dies, the council elects his successor. This individual is almost always chosen from their number, although for political reasons they have in the past selected a Metropolitan who is not on the council. No individual ranking below Metropolitan is ever chosen (though the rules do allow for





it). This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the Council of Arch Antistes and a 1D reputation as a Metropolitan of the Mundus Humanitas.

**Restrictions:** Cotar Antistes LP only.

**Militant** Char 1 pt

**Misanthropic** Char 1 pt

**Morose** Char 1 pt

**Mouthbreather** Char 1 pt

**Mover** C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Circles when conducting a maneuver in the Infection mechanics that may be beneficial for your side of the disposition, but will screw over members of the political opposition.

**Mule** Dt. 5 pts

The Mule trait grants a character access to the Psychologist's powers without having to bear the Bright Mark. When using his psychology, the character does not exhibit any outward sign. No one knows his true power! However, Mules are all infertile. Any attempt to render them fertile with technology causes the loss of the Mule trait and its benefits. Characters with the Mule trait are also physically conspicuous in one manner or another and therefore suffer a +1 Ob to all Inconspicuous tests. The player must describe his character's deformity.

**Murderous** Char 1 pt

**Muscle** Char 1 pt

**Mustache** Char 1 pt

**My Ship, My Rules** C-O 3 pts

Call-on for Command or Ship Management when forcing the crew to perform some duty or action they do not wish to perform.

## N

**Naive** Char 1 pt

**Need for Speed** Char 1 pt

**Nimble** C-O 2 pts

Call-on for one Speed- or Agility-based skill. Choose prior to play, please.

**No Nonsense** Dt. 3 pts

Any time the player believes his compatriots or his opposition are not taking their mission or this character's position seriously, the player may invoke this trait. It grants +2s to the body of argument for the character's next Duel of Wits—so long as it serves to prove that this character does not screw around.

**Nose for Trouble** C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Trouble-wise.

**Numb** Dt. 5 pts

This character does not feel the effects of Superficial Wounds. Two Superficial Wounds do *not* subtract one die from this character's stats and skills.

**Number One!** Char 1 pt

## O

**Obedient** Dt. 2 pts

Obedience has been drilled into this character's head. Command tests used against this character gain a +1D advantage. Failure to inform another player or the GM of this trait grants the aggrieved character—who missed his bonus to screw you—one persona point.

**Odd** Char 1 pt

**Oddly Likeable** Char 1 pt

**Trait List**  
M, N, O

## CHARACTER BURNER

### Officer

Qt. 5 pts

The Officer trait grants the character access to the elite club of Hammer Captaincy (1D affiliation with hammer officers). Among Hammer Captains, seniority is of paramount importance. A captain who has been in the service longest has seniority over younger captains of ostensibly the same rank. If, in a Duel of Wits, a senior officer wishes to pull rank, he may rap his service ring on the table to show his displeasure. This is a warning to the junior officer. If the junior officer wishes to proceed in the Duel of Wits, the senior officer starts with a +2s bonus to his body of argument. However, if the junior officer wins the Duel with only a minor compromise, he gains a +1D to all Duel of Wits skills used against the senior officer in the future, and the senior officer cannot pull rank on the junior officer again. Such a stunt can cause quite a bit of resentment among the officers. Therefore, the junior officer may cede his moral victory (the advantage die) in deference to the senior officer's position as part of the compromise. The +1D is not available to the junior officer thereafter, but neither can the senior officer pull rank on him again.

**Restrictions:** Hammer Captain and Vaylen Captain LPs only.

### Officious

Char 1 pt

### Offisah

Qt. 5 pts

Kernn have a much more open military society than what is traditional in the Iron Empires. Rank by seniority simply isn't a factor among the Kernn solzjahs. You advance by merit, period. Therefore, this trait grants a 1D affiliation with Kernn solzjah and offisahs, and a 1D reputation as a competent leader among the solzjah, Omshiip and Omshec staff.

**Restrictions:** Kernn Offisah LP only.

### Omshiip Officer

Qt. 3 pts

The Sheef is a high-ranking administrator in the Kernn Omshiip government. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the Kernn Omshiip staff.

**Restrictions:** Kernn Sheef LP only.

### Omshiip Staff

Qt. 3 pts

Kernn Omshiip Staff are diligent and knowledgeable in their duties. They take the operation of the Omshiip very seriously. This trait reflects their training and dedication. The player may add +1D to one of his Omshiip setting lifepath skills. Please choose before play begins.

**Restrictions:** Kernn Omshiip LPs only.

### Omshiip's Master

C-O 2 pts

The Emcheef is the highest ranking Kernn civilian. He is, in effect, the president of the Kernn. His job is to administer and coordinate all branches of the Kernn government and society—Vreck, Omshiip, Omshec and Solzjah—to ensure that there is enough water, food, oxygen, space, gravity, light, heat and other necessities for living on a scratch-built space station. Emcheefs are not elected. They earn their station by climbing through the officer branch of the Omshiip and then serve a seven-year term. All Kernn are eligible for this position, so long as they fulfill the requirements. It is a stressful and demanding job, and not many are up to it. This trait acts as a call-on for Circles for the Emcheef—whether he's currently serving or not—for matters surrounding the welfare of Omshiip and her attendant colonies. The stress of it also permanently increases hesitation by one.

**Restrictions:** Emcheef LP only.

### Open-Minded

Char 1 pt



## Optimist

Char 1 pt

## Order Before Chaos

Ot. 3 pts

If, in a time of crisis, a player character with this trait ensures that a Conserve maneuver is implemented in the name of caution—when perhaps a more appropriate action was in order—the player earns a persona point.

## Order of the Mystic Fire

Ot. 4 pts

The Mystes are an itinerant monastic order among the Mundus Humanitas. While sanctioned by the Church, the exclusively female organization is regarded with some suspicion. This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the Order of the Mystic Fire, and a 1D infamous reputation among the Mundus Humanitas proper.

**Restrictions:** Female characters only.

## Order of the Seeking Fire

Ot. 5 pts

The Order of the Seeking Fire is the Church's official name for its internal investigatory arm, known popularly as "the Inquisition." This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the Order of the Seeking Fire. Use of the affiliation while not on official Order business imposes a 2D infamous reputation upon the character as a power mad member of the Church's most bloody and uncontrolled court.

## Organized

Char 1 pt

## Orphan

Ot. 1 pt

This character may not have relationships with his parents because they're dead.

## Outcast

Ot. 2 pts

This character has done something in his past that has gotten him thrown out of his community. He has a 1D infamous reputation to prove it. Please describe what happened to the character and what faction,

Figure of Note or relationship on the planet was involved in or witness to the event.

## Outlaw

Ot. 4 pts

The outlaw has either committed a grievous crime or is perceived as an enemy of the established order. No law applies to this character—he has no rights whatsoever. He cannot appeal to the courts or the mercy of a judge for anything—they are not obligated to engage him in a Duel of Wits or hear him at all. Any man or beast may kill the outlaw and suffer no legal penalty for it.

When the Outlaw trait is taken, the player must divide his resource points into two pools. Any resource points from his Born setting lifepaths go into one pool. He does not have access to these resources until the Outlaw trait is voted off. The character's remaining resource points may be spent as normal.

Outlaws gain a 1D infamous reputation among the predominant government of the planet.

## Owner-Aboard

Ot. 2 pts

This trait represent an enterprising ship captain who has worked his way up the ranks and managed to purchase his own ship. He is "Captain and Owner-Aboard": a mark of pride. The character must purchase a ship as part of his starting resources and must begin with Resources 7 or higher.

# P

## Paranoid

Char 1 pt

## Pathological Liar

Char 1 pt

## Patient

Char 1 pt

Trait List  
O, P



## CHARACTER BURNER

### **Peacemaker** C-0 2 pts

The Vaylen Princess is taught that her role is to be the peacemaker—even though her Vaylen nature sees no need for such overtures. Call-on for Soothing Platitudes.

### **Pecunious** Dt. 2 pts

+1D to Resources for all non-technology related tests.

### **Pedantic** Char 1 pt

### **Penny-wise** C-0 2 pts

Call-on for Resources when money or accounts are involved.

### **Permissive** Char 1 pt

### **Pharisaical** Char 1 pt

### **Philosophical** Char 1 pt

### **Picked Man** Dt. 3 pts

This character was appointed to his position by another more connected, more powerful character. The player may take a complicated relationship with his benefactor for free.

### **Plain Face** C-0 2 pts

Call-on for Inconspicuous when trying to avoid attention in crowds.

### **Polite** C-0 2 pts

Call-on for Etiquette.

### **Practical** Char 1 pt

### **Pragmatic** Char 1 pt

### **Primarch** Dt. 9 pts

After Ahmilahk was fed to the funeral pyre in 136 HE, the Council of Arch Antistes appointed his first successor and this began a line of church leaders designated Primarch. The Primarch (also Arch Metropolitan or Cotar Arderes) is the Church's supreme authority. He is Ahmilahk's

direct theological descendant. He holds court in the Church capital on Mosum.

There, he interprets the writings of Ahmilahk and passes on his wisdom to the flock. He makes Church policy, instructs its agents, and is generally in charge of everything the Mundus Humanitas does. He is the ultimate authority on all matters, and his word is infallible.

When the Primarch takes office, he is invested with Ahmilahk's spirit. The Prophet makes his will known to the new executive. This is handled through a specialized ritual, wherein the new Primarch drinks fomesanguine and prays for Ahmilahk's guidance. He is not allowed to eat or drink until the Prophet has visited him. Once this has occurred, the new Primarch emerges from his chambers, declares himself the new successor of Ahmilahk, and commences a feast that is celebrated throughout the entire Church.

This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the entire Mundus Humanitas and its faithful worshippers and a 1D reputation as the descendent of and heir to the most holy Prophet. In addition, the Primarch gains +4s to his body of argument in any Duel of Wits against a subject of any of the Iron Empires. They may hate him or even think him weak and old, but they still fear the power he commands.

**Restrictions:** Human only.

### **Privateer** Dt. 3 pts

This character possesses a letter of marque and reprisal from the planet's dominant form of government or an appropriate faction. This document grants the authorization to pass beyond the interplanetary borders of the nation ("marque," meaning frontier), and there to search, seize



or destroy assets or personnel of a hostile foreign party (“reprisal”), not necessarily a nation, to a degree and in a way that is proportional to the original offense. This trait grants the character +3s to his body of argument for a Duel of Wits surrounding any question of his right to capture cargo or otherwise enact reprisals.

### Privileged Position Nt. 3 pts

As part of his job, the X-O must interact with various powerful figures in government and military. This character may ignore +1 Ob of the Higher or Lower Station penalty in Circles tests.

### **Professional** Char 1 pt

### **Professional Pride** Char 1 pt

### Prophet Nt. 5 pts

This character is a prophet of a new religion. Each character whom he turns to his religion—who changes a Belief to follow him—earns the Prophet one persona point.

### **Protective** Char 1 pt

### **Proud** Char 1 pt

### **Proud Citizen** Char 1 pt

### Public Face C-O 3 pts

Call-on for Circles when trying to leverage public benefit to your favor.

### Public Figure Nt. 4 pts

Add +1D to any one of the character’s reputations. However, any Propaganda or Journalism tests made against the character receive a +1D advantage.

### Public Servant Nt. 5 pts

The public servant is beholden to the will of his constituency. Including the

demands of his constituency in the stakes for his Duel of Wits and/or Infection mechanics conflicts earns him a persona point.

**Restrictions:** Civilian Commune or Merchant League only. If taken by a Merchant League character, constituents are replaced by shareholders.

### **Pudgy** Char 1 pt

### The Psychologist’s Code Nt. 2 pts

The code to which Psychologists are sworn: Never willfully harm or invade the privacy of another individual; use psychology only in the strictest self defense when no other option presents itself; never use excessive force when a minimum will do. Breaking this code earns the character the Codebreaker trait (connections and telepathy via connections are permissible under the code).

**Restrictions:** Bright Mark trait required.

## Q

### Quick-Witted Nt. 4 pts

The Quick-Witted trait reduces hesitation by one action and grants the character +1D to any Rebuttal action in the Duel of Wits.

### Quiet C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Infiltration.

## R

### Rabble-Rouser C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Ugly Truth.

### Radiohead Nt. 3 pts

+1D to Signals, a signals-related wise or a music-related skill or wise. Please choose before play begins. If the player opts for a music-related

**Trait List**  
P, Q, R

## CHARACTER BURNER

skill or wise, the character starts with an additional persona point.

### **Rapier Wit** Dt. 4 pts

This character has a lightning-quick mind and a sharp tongue; he never hesitates to offer a cutting remark. In a Duel of Wits, if the player can interject a searing *bon mot* while his opponent is speaking, he gains +2D to his next verbal action. If the action is a versus test—Rebuttal, Obfuscate, or Incite—and the character with the Rapier Wit does not win the test, or if the action is a failed Dismiss, Rapier Wit may not be used again in the duel.

### **Raw-Nerved** Char 1 pt

### **Realistic** Char 1 pt

### **Rebel** Char 1 pt

### **REMF** Dt. 2 pts

This commander has a bad reputation among the troops for commanding from the rear. 1D infamous reputation in the military and related factions.

### **Remote** Char 1 pt

### **Resigned** Char 1 pt

### **Resigned to Death** C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Steel when the character's life is on the line.

### **Resourceful** C-O 5 pts

Call-on for Jury-Rigging, Scavenging, Soldiering *and* Survival.

### **Righteous** Char 1 pt

### **Romantic** Char 1 pt

### **Royalist** Char 1 pt

### **Rule of Three** Dt. 3 pts

The Rule of Three is an axiom of life and literature: Things happen

in threes. Whenever the character undertakes three separate conflicts (or building scenes), with the same stakes for his prey—failure, injury, humiliation, etc.—he earns a persona point. Keep the fates general and reward creativity.

## S

### **Saccharine** Char 1 pt

### **Sanguine** Char 1 pt

### **Saturnine** Char 1 pt

### **Savvy** C-O 2 pts

When a Savvy character wants something, he knows how to ask so people listen. This is a call-on for Circles when the character is implicitly threatening the use of force—physical, social, financial or otherwise.

### **Scarred Hands** Char 1 pt

### **Scheming** Dt. 3 pts

Scheming characters are always plotting and planning. It doesn't even have to be for their benefit or gain—sometimes they just plot and plan to see their cleverness at work. The player earns a persona point for creating schemes that involve either working with the opposition or a complicated/rivalrous/hateful/forbidden relationship with another character.

### **Scum of the Galaxy** Dt. 3 pts

This character has a 2D infamous reputation in every spaceport and smuggler's den in the galaxy for being a scummy pirate. The only people who will accept him are other pirates, and even they don't like him that much.





### Scut Work

C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Administration when the character has been handed a load of crap from his superiors.

### Seemingly Concerned

Ot 3 pts

The Seemingly Concerned gain +1s to their body of argument in a Duel of Wits so long as they remain composed and, well, seemingly concerned about what the other side has to say.

### Seen It All

Ot 2 pts

Reduce hesitation by one.

### Seen Too Much Too Young

Ot 2 pts

Reduce hesitation by one if the player can briefly describe some childhood trauma that has injured him. If the player goes on too long, he can't benefit from this trait.

### Self-Made Kern

C-O 2 pts

Call-on for technology-related Resources tests when the Kern is trying to do it himself—he's refusing help, loans, etc.!

**Restrictions:** Kern who have Opvraeta lifepaths only.

### Self-Satisfied

Char 1 pt

### Senator

Ot 6 pts

This trait grants a 1D affiliation with the Civilian Commune as a whole. In addition, if the Senator includes the concerns of politicians, financiers, chief executives or his constituents in the stakes for his Duel of Wits or Infection mechanics, he earns a persona point.

**Restrictions:** Legislative LP only.

### Sentimental

Char 1 pt

### Serious as a Heart Attack

1 pt

### Shark-Toothed Smile

C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Intimidation when the character is well-dressed and smiling.

### Sharp Dresser

Char 1 pt

### Sharp-Eyed

C-O 3 pts

Call-on for Observation whenever another character compliments this character, "You've got a sharp eye." Or, "Good eye, good eye."

### Showboat

C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Conspicuous whenever the character hams it up for the camera and goes over the top.

### Shrewd

Ot 4 pts

On a failed Resources test, the Shrewd character may accept the Gift of Kindness but only take 1D of tax—so long as the tax is not greater than his current Resources exponent. This trait may only be used once per Infection phase.

### Shut Up

Char 1 pt

### Sickly

Ot 2 pts

+1 Ob to all health-related Forte tests, including recovery.

### Sig Geek

C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Signals if, and only if, the player manages to play a sig geek who is not a boring stereotype.

### Skeletons in the Closet

C-O 4 pts

Call-on for Persuasion when currying political favor if the player takes a forbidden relationship that would ruin his career. If the player makes sure that another player has a relationship with the same character, he starts the phase with an extra persona point.

### Skeptical

Char 1 pt

Trait List  
R, S

## CHARACTER BURNER

### Slaggah

Alt. 3 pts

The Slaggah wants to take the easiest, safest and most direct option: Fire for full effect and slag the bitch. Unfortunately, that's not always an option. If the Slaggah character can convince his friends and superiors to let him do his job—to destroy the sum'bitch—he earns a persona point. However, that point is only earned if the *Slaggah* does the convincing, and if there is some potential use for what is being destroyed or if what is being destroyed requires some sacrifice from one of the other characters—like a relationship or a valuable piece of technology.

**Restrictions:** Only for characters with the Artillery or Strategy skills.

### Sleep Disorder

Char 1 pt

### Slight Build

Char 1 pt

### Slightly Warped

Char 1 pt

### Slow

Alt. 2 pts

Slow to react and slow on the uptake, he's not the sharpest knife in the drawer. +1 Ob to all Perception tests and increase base hesitation by one.

### Smarter Than You

Char 1 pt

### Smartest Guy in the Room

1 pt

### Solipsistic

Char 1 pt

### Solitary

Char 1 pt

### Speaker of the Secret Language

Char 1 pt

### Spock

Char 1 pt

### Steady Hands

C-D 2 pts

Call-on for one skill that requires manual manipulation (and perhaps a little artistry). Please choose before play begins.

### Stern Demeanor

Alt. 2 pts

Reduce hesitation by one when the character absolutely cannot be seen pissing his pants and crying for his mamma—in front of his girl, his father, his superior, etc. However, when he is alone, this trait does not apply.

### Stinky

Char 1 pt

### Stoic

Alt. 3 pts

The Stoic character simply does not flinch in the face of danger. Reduce hesitation by two.

### The Story

C-D 3 pts

This character is adept at playing to his audience—he's always got the right story on hand to impress them and win them to his side. Call-on for Falsehood and Begging.

### Strange

Char 1 pt

### Strange Airs

Char 1 pt

### Strangelove

Char 1 pt

### Strict Constructionist

Char 1 pt

### Stupid

Alt. 2 pts

+1 Ob to all social skills and Psychology affecting and used by this character.

### Suicidal

Char 1 pt

### Sullen

Char 1 pt

### Superstitious

Char 1 pt

### Surreptitious

Char 1 pt

### Suspicious

Char 1 pt

### Swagger

Char 1 pt

### Swindler

Char 1 pt



### Sworn to the Fire Nt. 1 pt.

Sodalis brethren may take a relationship with their cotar fomas at a reduced cost. 1 rp if friendly or loyal, 0 rps if hostile or inimical.

## T

### Tall-Dark-and-Murderous Char. 1 pt.

### Tenacious Nt. 6 pts.

A Tenacious character has a one-track mind. Once he is fixed on something, he keeps after it. If a Tenacious character's body of argument in a Duel of Wits is reduced to zero or below, this trait puts it back up to one. This allows the character to play out the next volley (or more if the success isn't lost). Once that one success is knocked off, however, the argument is over.

### Think Big Char. 1 pt.

### Thirsty for Answers Char. 1 pt.

### This Is a Store Not a Library! 1 pt.

### Thousand-Yard Stare Nt. 4 pts.

This character has seen so much death, shock, inhumanity and horror that nothing phases him anymore. This trait reduces hesitation from pain, violence and intimidation by four. Also, this character may not flee from a Firefight.

Characters with this trait tend to be quiet, remote and cold. They never seem to look into your eyes. Rather, their gaze is always fixed a thousand yards behind you. Increase the aptitude for learning new social skills by one, and the number of tests to form a new relationship via Circles by one.

### Thug Char. 1 pt.

### Tinkerer C-D 2 pts.

Call-on for Jury-Rigging.

### Tolerant Char. 1 pt.

### Tool of the State Nt. 2 pts.

If the player puts the interests of the state first and sacrifices personal relationships or resources, he earns a persona point.

### Tough Nt. 3 pts.

Round up when factoring the Mortal Wound tolerance.

### Tough as Nails Nt. 5 pts.

This character does not have to make Steel tests for suffering pain or injury.

### Traditionalist Char. 1 pt.

### Tragic Char. 1 pt.

### Troubled Char. 1 pt.

### Tweaker Char. 1 pt.

### Twitchy Char. 1 pt.

## U

### Unassuming Char. 1 pt.

### Under Pressure Nt. 3 pts.

This character earns a persona point every time he blows up and vents his anger and frustration on his inferiors—and makes them hate it.

### Undeterred Nt. 3 pts.

An Undeterred character may ignore the Let It Ride rule once per session for any test—successful or failed. He must declare that he is undeterred by his own weakness, the enemy's strength, the bizarre circumstances or what have you. He may then retest. If he fails this time, he's subject to the

**Trait List**  
S, T, U



## CHARACTER BURNER

standard rules. This is only applicable to tests for which the Let it Ride rule would apply, so it does not apply to a Duel of Wits, Firefight or Infection mechanics roll. It may only be used once per phase.

**Uneasy** Char 1 pt

**Unflinching** Dlt. 5 pts

Reduces hesitation by four.

**Unglued** Char 1 pt

**Unwelcome** Dlt. 2 pts

This character was born under bad auspices and, for whatever reason, was not welcome in the family's home, even as a child. Unwelcome imposes one (free) complicated relationship with a parent or sibling on the character. In addition, he suffers from a 1D infamous reputation in his home town. Tell us about it.

**Useful** Dlt. 2 pts

He has a knack for proving he's useful. An action that the character takes with the intent to prove his worth to another character—an employer, a lover, etc.—may be used as a linked test for the body of argument of a Duel of Wits with that character.

**Usurper** Dlt. 5 pts

This Vaylen has crawled into the head of a leader of men and taken command of his underlings. This trait grants access to the Anvil Lord (for Commander) or Hammer Lord (for Captain) trait. In the infiltration or usurpation phase, the men under his command are unwitting dupes. In the invasion, they are hulled humans.

**Restrictions:** Vaylen only

## V

**Vacant Stare** Char 1 pt

**Vainglorious** Char 1 pt

**Venal** Char 1 pt

**Vibhuuten Clan** Dlt. 7 pts

The Vibhuuten (veeb-hoo-ten) lineage is the most powerful and influential among the Vaylen. It was the Vibhuuten who discovered the humans, and their fame and honor has stretched down through the millennia, for they brought true life and hope to all of Vaylen kind. The Vibhuuten families have largely maintained their control of the human hosts in Vaylen society, and they do their best to keep them for themselves and their close allies. They are the chief rivals of the Yaadasahm, not for hosts, but for pure power among the other Vaylen clans. This trait grants a 3D reputation among all Vaylen as Vibhuuten lineage.

**Restrictions:** Vibhuuten Naiven only

**Vig** Dlt. 4 pts

Vig is a system of loan and debt administered by criminal families in the neighborhoods in which they dwell. Whenever a character with this trait grants another character a loan, whether he openly states it or not, he expects to be repaid with interest. Repayment is equal to the obstacle of the loan, +1-3 (player's choice). If this price is not or cannot be paid, the criminal may name a suitable replacement or compensation. This can be a service to the family at a later time, material goods or promises of favors—like an arranged marriage. If the vig replacement or compensation cannot or will not be paid, the criminal family takes great offense.



The offending character earns a 1D infamous reputation among the family and their friends. In addition, the family will then attempt to collect its debt by any means and make an example of the offender, including theft, injury and destruction of property. If the character makes good on his vig payment, the infamous reputation is dropped and reprisals are cancelled.

**Restrictions:** Outcast and Criminal LPs only.

**Vigilant** Char 1 pt

**Vindictive** Char 1 pt

## W

**Wanderlust** Char 1 pt

**Warrior's Code** Lit 3 pts

The Code of the Circle of 10,000 is: "at best...a few maxims handed down from mouth to mouth or coming from the pen of some well-known warrior or savant. More frequently it is a code unuttered and unwritten, possessing all the more the powerful sanction of veritable deed, and of a law written on the fleshly tablets of the heart. It was founded not on the creation of one brain, however able, or on the life of a single personage, however renowned. It is an organic growth of decades and centuries of military career."\* There are ten values to which a warrior of the Circle adheres: Rectitude, Courage, Benevolence, Respect, Honesty, Honor, Glory, Loyalty, Wisdom and the Preservation of Ethics.

Warrior's Code also grants a 1D affiliation with the Circle of 10,000.

**Restrictions:** Bright Mark required. Alternately, the player may use the Mule trait, but he must also take a

Branded character trait. The Circle brands him as one of their own.

**Watchful** C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Steel when surprised.

**We Rule These Streets** C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Streetwise when on your home turf.

**Weight of the Galaxy** Lit 7 pts

This character has an immense gravity and seriousness to his bearing. In a Duel of Wits where he is trying to impart the seriousness of a matter, he gains +4s to his body of argument.

**Weird** Char 1 pt

**Well-Heeled** Char 1 pt

**Well-Known** Lit 4 pts

+1D to base Circles.

**Well-Read** C-O 2 pts

Call-on for any academic skill on which the character is well-read. The exact skill may be chosen in play at an appropriate moment, but once chosen it becomes fixed to the trait and may not be changed.

**Well-Spoken** C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Rhetoric when composed and well-dressed.

**Well-Travelled** C-O 2 pts

Call-on for any "wise" involving place or travel. The exact wise may be chosen in play at an appropriate moment, but once chosen it becomes fixed to the trait and may not be changed.

**Whipped** Lit 2 pts

This slave will obey anyone with a whip in hand. He may not engage in a social conflict with a whip-bearing character.

**Trait List**  
U, V, W

\*With apologies to Inazo Nitobe (1862 - 1933)

## CHARACTER BURNER

### Wife-Beater

Char 1 pt

### Wigged

Dt. 2 pts

One wears a wig because it is proper, not because it is fashionable. Characters with this trait may add +1D to Etiquette tests at court so long as the Wigged outnumber the Corvus.

**Restrictions:** Must have the Corvus and Crucis trait.

### Wise

Char 1 pt

### Wise Aphorisms

C-O 4 pts

Old men are full of pertinent yet trite sayings. Use this a call-on for Persuasion, Oratory, Interrogation or Seduction *if* the player can come up with some appropriately sagacious dialogue to throw into play at the right moment.

### Withering Stare

C-O 2 pts

Call-on for Intimidation when the character is retaliating for a smart remark.

### Wizened

Char 1 pt

### Word Is Law

Dt. 9 pts

The Cotar Antistes is not to be trifled with. He gains +3s bonus to his body of argument in a Duel of Wits surrounding any aspect of the Church. Additionally, should a character win a Duel of Wits against a Cotar Antistes, the Cotar player may opt, at his discretion, to show his outrage by imposing a 1D infamous reputation upon the character—as an impertinent upstart, thuggish churl or something equally appropriate.

**Restrictions:** Cotar Antistes LP only.

### Working Class

Char 1 pt

### Worried

Char 1 pt

### Wrecked Self-Esteem

Char 1 pt

### Wrongly Accused

Dt. 3 pts

Wrongly Accused of some heinous crime, it is up to this character alone to prove himself innocent. Please describe the frame up—who's really guilty and how you were involved. It must tie into the government, a faction or a figure of note on your world. Proving your innocence earns the character two persona points.

## Y-Z

### Yes, Boss

Dt. 2 pts

You've got a boss. He makes you do things you don't like doing. Every time the player carries out an order from his boss that just sets his teeth on edge, he earns a fate point. As long as he offers a cheery, "Yes, boss," of course.

### Your Eminence

Dt. 5 pts

In the Iron Empires, barons and counts (depending on the empire) are referred to as "Your Eminence." This trait indicates that the character was born into this rank. He need not have ever lived the life of a count/baron himself, but it is his birthright to be addressed as one. Failure to address this character by his honorific, "Your Eminence," incurs a +2 Ob to Etiquette tests with this character until he decides to drop the matter. Be sure to read the Etiquette skill for details on how to use this to really punish a character. It should be noted that this trait confers no temporal power whatsoever. It is merely a title. Temporal power in the Iron Empires is conferred by one's status as a Hammer Lord, Anvil Lord, Forged Lord or Metropolitan.

**Restrictions:** Born to Rule LP only.





## Your Grace

Dt. 7 pts

Dukes, princes and archcotare bear the appellation of "Your Grace." The character need not have experienced the actual duties of a duke or archcotare, but the rank is his to flaunt. To fail to refer to him by title is to lose one's head or the sanctity of one's mortal soul. Failure to address this character by his honorific, "Your Grace," incurs a +3 Ob to Etiquette tests with the character until he decides to drop the matter. Be sure to read the Etiquette skill for details on how to use this to really punish a character. It should be noted that this trait confers no temporal power whatsoever. It is merely a title. Temporal power in the Iron Empires is conferred by one's status as a Hammer Lord, Anvil Lord, Forged Lord or Metropolitan.

**Restrictions:** Born to Rule LP only.

## Your Lordship

Dt. 3 pts

This trait indicates that the character was born into lower nobility. He need not ever have led the life of a lord. However, his birthright is that of a lord, and he is accustomed to being addressed as "Your Lordship." Failure to do so is an insult and incurs a +1 Ob to Etiquette tests with the character until he decides to drop the matter. Be sure to read the Etiquette skill for details on how to use this to really punish a character. It should be noted that this trait confers no temporal power whatsoever. It is merely a title. Temporal power in the Iron Empires is conferred by one's status as a Hammer Lord, Anvil Lord, Forged Lord or Metropolitan.

**Restrictions:** Born to Rule LP only.

## Your Majesty

Dt. 9 pts

Grand dukes, grand lords and other sovereign, most-honored potentates

are referred to as "Your Majesty" in the Iron Empires. These individuals are rich and powerful lords, and it is best not to raise their ire: Grand Duke, Grand Lord and Sovereign Most High are just synonyms for *emperor*. Failure to address this character by his honorific, "Your Majesty," incurs a +4 Ob to Etiquette tests with the character until he decides to drop the matter. Be sure to read the Etiquette skill for details on how to use this to really punish a character. It should be noted that this trait confers no temporal power whatsoever. It is merely a title. Temporal power in the Iron Empires is conferred by one's status as a Hammer Lord, Anvil Lord, Forged Lord or Metropolitan.

**Restrictions:** Born to Rule LP only.

## Zealot

Dt. 3 pts

The Zealot is a fervent believer. He has taken hold of a doctrine and made it his own. The Zealot trait allows the player to add an additional (fourth) Belief to his character. The Belief must relate to the doctrine of his cult or sect.



Trait List  
W, Y-Z



## NAMES IN THE IRON EMPIRES

The following is a short list of names common in the Iron Empires. Using these you can hopefully find something suitable and inspiring for your character.

Absyrtus  
Ahmi  
Aikus  
Akins  
Al Mutalwakil  
Ali  
Alix  
Alvega  
Amara  
Ancillus  
Aneas  
Anna  
Artemus  
Astrogon  
Avon  
Baer  
Baldwin  
Barnes  
Bernedoth

Beroun  
Blucher  
Borensen  
Brasi  
Carcajou  
Christopher  
Clarkson  
Cleon  
Cogito  
Courtney  
Crow  
Danni  
David  
Degas  
Denna  
Ding  
Diomedes  
Ditmers  
Dorman

Dutchess  
Elias  
Eliazar  
Faisal  
Faith  
Farley  
Farouk  
Fike  
Firebrand  
Fox  
Frost  
Gaius  
Garret  
Geil  
Geitan  
Gekko  
Gerard  
Gernick  
Gevas



Gil  
 Gilbare  
 Gitatsi  
 Gloria  
 Gopher  
 Gorey  
 Gornem  
 Goroda  
 Grace  
 Groy  
 Halbart  
 Hanno  
 Haralambos  
 Hardi  
 Hardin  
 Heather  
 Hecuba  
 Herodion  
 Hesse  
 Hober  
 Holbeim  
 Holma  
 Horoth  
 Hussein  
 Iberis  
 Imoshi  
 Jaik  
 Jared  
 Jaroslaw  
 Jepard  
 Jodia  
 Johnston  
 Jonah  
 Kakuda  
 Katheryn  
 Kerem  
 Kesling  
 Khazar  
 Kierutana  
 Kriati  
 Kunmai  
 Kuria



Laertes

Laila

Lamuro

Lanstev

Law

Leaf

Leon

Lev

Locke

Lucius

Lupus

Mal

Mallog

Mallow

Mamoun

Marist

Markus

Merissa

Miabolo

Micholas

Morikean

Mossadegh

Myers

Naifa

Nenox

Nestor

Norsadek

Omei

Ovis

Peter

Pollux

Polyxena

Princess

Quandus

Quinn

Rabbit

Rachelle

Raj

Ratti

Reno

Retch

Rhiandi

Richaert

Rostov

Routhy

Salvor

Sarmid

Semmins

Shah

Shansi

Shari

Sheva

Shirea

Shogun

Shoyan

Sigismund

Sipahi

Smiley

Sorensen  
 Steed  
 Strouthos  
 Sully  
 Tagus  
 Takeshi  
 Tamar  
 Tamas  
 Tar Baby  
 Tarrak  
 Tavis  
 Thomas  
 Tierny  
 Togoro  
 Tokomi  
 Tolos  
 Tonson  
 Tovey  
 Tovol  
 Trei  
 Treviso  
 Trevor  
 Triam  
 Una  
 Urci  
 Utua  
 Vell  
 Venan  
 Ventha  
 Vesli  
 Victor  
 Vienne  
 Volper  
 Voth  
 Vought  
 Vuncka  
 Wayne  
 Weller  
 Yaki  
 Zente



Names in  
 the Iron  
 Empires





COTAR • FOMAS

# the BURNING WHEEL



ALVIZ 9/3





## WHEEL MEETS FIRE

The preceding three sections of the book outlined the core dice mechanics, how to make a world and how to burn a character.

What follows are the game-play mechanics: specific systems to flesh out the broad strokes described previously. They demonstrate how to manipulate the die pools to represent a variety of situations that will likely arise in your games.

### **Scenes and Conflicts**

Scenes and Conflicts describes the nitty gritty of play: how players interact, share screen time and make the dice work for their agenda.

### **Advancement**

Through the scenes and conflicts, players push and test their characters. The more they push them, the faster they advance.

### **Beliefs, Instincts and Traits**

This chapter discusses how to challenge and evolve Beliefs, Instincts and traits in play.

### **Artha Wheel**

The reward mechanic in Burning Wheel is called artha. Artha is broken down into three types of points. Players earn these points for three different styles of play. Points are then spent on maneuvers, scenes and conflicts to push through the character's goals.



## Circles and Relationships

These mechanics describe how to utilize Relationships, Circles, affiliations and reputations in play. They kick the door wide open for running intense and deep social games.

## Resources

Resources is an abstract wealth mechanic for Burning Empires. This section details lifestyle, income, purchasing power, depleted finances, monetary rewards, financial boons and bargaining.

## Technology Burner

The Technology Burner describes how a player can easily and seamlessly bring technology into play using the scenes and Resources mechanics.

## Vaylen Infection

This chapter describes how to fight against the Vaylen threat to your world. It divides the conflict into three phases—Infiltration, usurpation and invasion. Players use a strategic mechanic to determine the fate of their planet.

## Duel of Wits

The Duel of Wits mechanic provides players with a structure to build a strategy for arguments and win debates via cleverness, tactics and luck.

## Firefight

Using mechanics similar to the Duel of Wits, Firefight describes how to run a violent conflict in Burning Empires—from making contact to flanking and firing down range.

## Anatomy of Injury

Should a character become injured, this section describes how that injury affects his future actions and how he can recover from it.



Wheel  
Meets Fire

### **Armor and Iron**

From anvil to iron, this chapter describes how personal protection works in Burning Empires.

### **Vehicles and Piloting**

No science-fiction roleplaying game is complete without mechanics for piloting vehicles and pursuing your enemies in breathtaking chases!

### **Security, Signals and Sensors**

This chapter is a short, specialized description of the mechanics for security systems, signals and sensors in Burning Empires.

### **Psychology**

The feared and reviled powers of the Psychologists—connections, transference, hindrance and the psychic duel—are covered in this chapter.

### **Alien Life-Form Burner**

The Vaylen breed a bewildering array of creatures in their search for the perfect body. Some, like the Ganasch in *Sheva's War*, are designed to capture humans so they can be hulled later. Others, like the Mukhadish, are bred to be nothing more than domesticated animals and soldiers on Vaylen worlds.

The Alien Life-Form Burner talks about the various extra-human powers the Vaylen breed into their creations, how to use them in play and how to create your own.

### **Playing the Game**

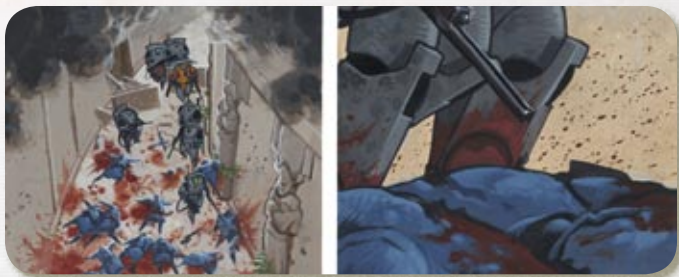
This section describes how to put the game together into a cohesive whole—how to move from World Burning to Character Burning to Infection to Scenes and Conflicts to Advancement and Artha.

## *Pick and Choose*



The next section contains the heavy-lifting mechanics for Burning Empires. It's a lot to take in. I recommend reading up through the Infection mechanics and stopping. Digest that much first. Start playing slowly and integrate Duel of Wits, Firefight, Circles, Resources, etc. as you go along.





# SCENES AND CONFLICTS

In the second chapter, *It Revolves on This*, the game is broken down into segments of play: campaign, phase, session, maneuver, scene and conflict. Scenes are the most common segments of play.

## *Scenes*

A scene is a period of time in which a player holds the spotlight at the table. His agenda is the focus of play for the moment. There are four types of scenes in *Burning Empires*: conflict, building, color and interstitial. Scenes are also a limited resource and they are part of the strategic mechanics of the game.

No matter what type of scene is being played out, players offer descriptions for their characters' actions, perform a bit "in character" and bounce ideas back and forth.

Scenes are played out one at a time going around the table. A player is the spotlight for his scene, but he doesn't have to be in the scene alone. He may invite other characters or even the GM's characters into the scene and other players may ask to join.

### **Conflict Scenes**

Conflict scenes are where the real action takes place. These are the fights, the blow out arguments, the psychic duels and the montage sequences for the construction of the spacecraft and fortresses. Conflict scenes center on the moments when you, the player, want something and are prepared to go to the wall for it. This is when stuff happens. These scenes use the extended conflict resolution mechanics described in the *Firefight*, *Duel of Wits* and *Technology* Burner chapters. There are two to five big conflicts per session.



## THE BURNING WHEEL



These are the moments in play when the dice are clattering around the table. In addition to the using the big conflict mechanics, players may make other appropriate skill tests to back up their main thrust.

*Conflict scenes: A firefight to break into a prison complex, a raid on a space station, a boarding action, a snatch-and-grab kidnapping, an argument to oust the head of a faction, a gambit to force another character into conflict, a debate to convince a character that another figure of note is Vaylen (or not). Conflicts should involve lots of shouting and shooting. Dice should be flying.*



### Building Scenes

Building scenes contain conflicts that a player needs to set up his plans, schemes and agendas—elements necessary to larger conflicts. In a building scene, the player states what he wants and how he intends to get it. He uses his abilities to build up to a more dramatic conflict.



Building scenes are where you create propaganda, buy technology, hack the Church's network, repair your hammer cruiser, file the paperwork that places an upcoming operation under anvil jurisdiction, fabricate technology and investigate a crime scene. These are tests that are not big enough to be conflict scenes, but that require a roll. This is where the majority of skill tests come from.

*"I want to take over the temple's security net," says Chris. "That's my building scene."*

*"OK, excellent. Tell me what you're doing—how are you hacking in? You want to get any help? Make any linked tests? Let's make a roll to resolve."*



Building scenes contain up to three separate tests. They require roleplaying and performance in order to build the intent and task for the roll and to bring other players into the scene so that they can help. The player is free to add color, narration and description, but ultimately, he's got to throw the dice.

Skill, Resources and Circles tests are the most common rolls in building scenes. These tests can be used to generate linked dice (see the Linked Tests section in this chapter) for future building scenes and conflicts.

The player who initiated the scene may invite other characters in. These other characters may make linked tests and may offer help, but they may not make the roll to resolve the conflict of the scene. After the roll is resolved, move on to the next player's scene.

### ***Simultaneous Building Scenes***

It's perfectly acceptable if two players want to take building scenes simultaneously so they can pass help and linked test dice back and forth between each other. In fact, it should be encouraged. Make sure the players describe how they are working together and what assistance they are providing each other.

### ***Building Scenes in Big Games***

In smaller games it's easy to toss your building scene into the flow of events where it is most needed. In bigger games, when there is a lot of action at the table, sometimes things come up that a player who is not involved in a conflict wants to be in on. In games of five or six players, the tests and rolls in a building scene may be interspersed throughout the maneuver. When using your building scene rolls, it's OK to save a test for later so you can jump in and participate.

## **Color Scenes**

Color scenes are about pure roleplaying, description and narration. In a color scene *one player* takes the spotlight and offers a bit of narration, roleplay or description about his character, his actions or his background. These scenes are used to flesh out the world and incorporate interesting and engaging details. No rolls are made during color scenes.



**Scenes and  
Conflicts**

*Color scenes are where the GM describes an NPC being hulled in gory detail. Or where a player describes his tour of the Commune to deliver rousing speeches. Or where the GM shows a figure of note loading a box of explosives into his grav sled, destination unknown. Or where a player describes his character planning and plotting, building up to a big conflict.*

*Color scenes are for foreshadowing, parallel action and flashbacks. They are for the stuff that all of the characters couldn't know, but the reader and the audience sees. Imagine the pages of a comic book in which we see the villains enacting their plans. Such exposition raises the tension of the game.*



These scenes serve to allow you to introduce color technology (see Technology Burner) and to lay the groundwork for future conflict or building scenes. These scenes are important. They are what allow us to play through the consequences of the resolution of a conflict (whether from a conflict scene or building scene), establish how it is affecting the characters and then reposition the characters for the next conflict.



### Interstitial Scenes

An interstitial scene happens when two players roleplay character interaction. A conversation, a chance meeting or an aside are all interstitials. These scenes are similar to color scenes, but they focus on the interaction between characters. If you need to pull a player character aside to coordinate for a coming action, or if the GM's villain calls you on the comm and asks you to come in for a meeting, you use an interstitial scene. No rolls are made. These are purely about roleplay and are used to patch the narrative together.

*For instance, my character has just been ordered, in a conflict scene, to bring Alexander's character before the Forged Lord for questioning (which could well lead to her arrest). Alexander is about to have a building scene in which he makes a Circles roll to bring in an ally for later use. Before he states what he wants out of the Circles roll, I interrupt and ask for an interstitial. I use it to have my character fill in Alexander's character on what's happened and how my character intends to play it.*





*Obviously, Alexander witnessed my previous scene. He knew what the implications were. But I used the interstitial so that our shared fiction showed that Alexander's character was acting on full knowledge when he had his meeting with the merchant, and also so that Alexander had a sense of where my character stood on what was happening.*

## Blending Scenes

On occasion, a color or interstitial scene will develop in such a way that it begs for a roll. Do it. Let the scene organically become what it will. Sometimes an interstitial or building scene will blossom into a full blown conflict. This result too is OK. But in this case, note well that this conflict counts toward the side's conflict limit for the maneuver.



Sometimes, the group will run out of conflict scenes for this maneuver but still want to get stuff done. Use any remaining building scenes to set up your conflict in the *next maneuver*. You don't have to win the war in one battle!

## Order of Scenes

There is no particular order that your sessions must adhere to. Scenes can be used in any configuration. They exist to make sure all players have a chance to participate, and that the game is driven forward by conflict. They are not a rigid structure.

## Scene Talk



Some groups like to talk about the scenes explicitly: "I want a color scene!" or "I need a builder!" That's fine, but I don't recommend it. The structure is meant to be underneath play, not on top. The scenes are easily identifiable—descriptions, conversations, minor conflicts and major conflicts—so calling them out isn't completely necessary. Players must think about segments of play as divided into one of the four categories and plan their action accordingly. Once they know what they want, the type of scene should be obvious to the rest of the group.

## For the Experienced Roleplayer



If you're familiar with the medium of roleplaying games, you're either nodding along at this point or shaking your head in disgust. In either case, I submit that these rules are not describing anything you don't already know and don't already do at your table. It just happens implicitly instead of explicitly.

So why have an overt scene structure mechanic? The scenes above codify what happens around the table. They break up and apportion

“screen time” so as to keep the story moving and make conflict a commodity in the game. There are no frivolous conflicts here! Everything you do *counts*. The scene structure creates a breathless pace. There’s never enough time to get everything done. Lastly, the scene structure mechanics make sure that everyone gets a chance to participate. No more sitting around, waiting for an opening. Players are guaranteed a moment in the spotlight.

### When to Roll: Vincent’s Admonition



I’m going to paraphrase a friend here. I call this Vincent’s Admonition. In his game, *Dogs in the Vineyard*, Vincent Baker articulates a convention of Burning Empires so well that I’d rather use his words than my own. He says: “Every moment of play, roll dice or say ‘yes.’”

What he’s saying in that brilliantly succinct statement is: If it’s not a conflict—if it’s not important to the character’s Beliefs, traits, relationships, etc.—then agree with each other about how cool it is, but move on. It’s color or an interstitial. Unless there is something at stake in the story you have created, don’t bother with the dice. Keep moving, keep describing, keep roleplaying, but as soon as your character wants something—needs something—that he doesn’t have, that someone else has, jump into the conflict and roll the dice.

Flip that around and it reveals a fundamental rule in Burning Empires game play: *When there is conflict, roll the dice*. Roll the dice and let the obstacle system guide the outcome. Success or failure doesn’t really matter. So long as the intent of the task is clearly stated, the story is going *somewhere*.

### I Won’t Fight You

If a player finds himself heading toward a conflict he doesn’t want to be in, he has three options. He may either escalate the conflict and change the nature of it, accept the intent of what the other player wanted or walk away. If he walks away, he may have escaped trouble, but his scene is over: no more discussion, argument or debate.

### There’s No Conflict

If during the course of a scene a player wants something, but there is no conflict—no risk—say, “Yes, sure, of course,” and move on. Keep moving until there is a risk or a conflict—until the player says “I want this” and you have to say, “No,” or, “Only if you accept *this!*” Then it’s time to move to the dice.



## Testing Your Abilities

Burning Empires is very much a *game* to be played and manipulated for fun (and profit, sort of). Conflicts between the players' goals and priorities are resolved with a throw of the dice. We call this a test—because your mettle is being *tested*. The results help drive the story.

A test involves one of a character's abilities. Whether it's a Forte test to recover from an injury or an Observation test to spot a pursuer, these rolls are the very fabric of the game. Players + Choices + Character Ability + Tests = Game.



Why roll at all? Why not just agree on what's happening? We're all fair-minded adults, right? Well, social agreement is a fantastic ideal, but it is subject to bullying, blustering, intimidation, manipulation, cajoling, persuasion and lying: all things that are separate from the *characters* and *the game*—a social dynamic happening between the players that is not part of play. By relying on the dice, everyone is on an even playing field.



Burning Empires is a game, not acting class. Tests get everyone playing the game. Besides, your characters only improve if you roll the dice!

Roll, and you'll find that dice in Burning Empires actually support and bolster the players' actions—even if they fail! Dice here help you get what you want, not frustrate your goals. There's a process to it, sure, but I'm confident that the mechanics of this game drive dramatic, intense play. Roll the dice. You'll see.



## Intent

There is always a reason the player is engaged in this conflict and wants to roll dice. This is called *intent*. Before any dice can be rolled, each player involved in the conflict must state his or her intent. Why is he here and what does he want?



You want to research shipping lanes in the system? Sure, great. Why? What do you hope to find? Only when this second question is answered can the dice be rolled.

Explicitly stating intent cuts through unnecessary tests. If you have your character burst into your mother's chambers demanding to know the whereabouts of your brother, that's great. But what kind of position does that leave the other player in? Let's say she doesn't know where your brother is. Now what? You've kicked off a scene with a fury. You've confronted your mother. You're threatening to kill your brother. Why? *Because you want your mother to help you murder your brother.* Ah ha! Now we have a conflict, and a good one.

Use intent to plainly state what you want from a conflict. Be open and honest. Don't hold back. And use that statement to stick it to the opposition. Don't be shy or soft on them—be hard, manipulative and direct. The world is ending and there's no time for nonsense.

### Deadly Intent



If you want to kill another character you've got to use either the Firefight mechanics or the micro-fight stuff in I Corner Him and Stab Him in the Face (which is a subset of the Firefight mechanics). If you want to throw someone off a bridge, use the I Corner Him and Stab Him in the Face rules. Tossing him off the bridge is your objective. Other than those rules, there is no support in this game for "Oh, by the way, you're dead."

### To Convince Him to Join My Side



The Duel of Wits mechanics are used for social conflict—especially "convincings." These mechanics provide a nuanced approach that allows for a lot of good roleplay and support for compromise. If the group is invested in the conflict at all, a Duel of Wits should be used. If the group isn't invested in the conflict and just wants to blow past it to get to something more important, perhaps it's not a conflict at all. Perhaps it's just color or an interstitial leading up to something more important.



## Tasks

Within a conflict, a character is trying *do* something. He's taking action in some manner: researching in the archives, hunting around the red light district for a lead, blasting away with his fusor, etc. This action that he is taking—this thing that he is doing to initiate the conflict or win it—is called the *task*.

When a conflict begins, after intent is described, a player must describe his *task*—how his character is accomplishing his intent.

A task is a measurable, finite and quantifiable act performed by a character: Firing down range at a target, researching shipping lanes or recovering from an injury are all applicable tasks for abilities.

Descriptions of the task are vital. Tasks, not intent, tell us which mechanics apply and which abilities to use!

Inappropriate tasks are: “I kill him!” or “I convince him.” Those are intents. After such pronouncements, the first question any Burning Empires player asks should be: How? By what means? The answer, “I shoot him in the face with my Steiner Combat Pistol,” is an appropriate task description for a murderous character. “I persuade him to take my side by explaining the affair with his wife,” is appropriate in the second case. Both of those intents would initiate a conflict scene.

*“I want to build a new factory.”*

*“How?”*

*“The Hierophant has given me land and free electricity. I have Engineering. I’ll design the factory with Engineering. Then I’ll test my Resources to buy the thing—I pay for the materials and labor to have it assembled in the Ohmic Cult’s compound.”*



## What Ability Do I Roll?

Once intent has been clearly stated and the task described, the ability needed to complete that action is usually obvious. Stabbing someone is going to require a Close Combat test, while convincing another character requires a Persuasion or Falsehood test.

The limits of a character's abilities are described in the Elements of Character section. Use those descriptions to judge under which ability a test falls.



If it is ever unclear which ability to roll, the GM should question the player. Get him to describe his actions in detail until what needs to happen is clear to both parties. Once the ability to be tested is established, then the dice are rolled.

## Independent Tests

In an independent test, the obstacle is set by the skill, maneuver/action or the GM. A player rolls his character's ability and needs to come up with a number of successes equal to the obstacle. Meeting the obstacle passes the test.

*John wants his anarchist to use his Propaganda to rile up the sensibilities of the junta. Consulting the Propaganda skill, John notes that the obstacle for this test is based on the attitude of this world. In this case, the world they are playing on is Educated. That's an Ob 5 test for Propaganda. John better get help!*

See the My Favorite Obstacle section of the Playing the Game chapter at the end of the book for a discussion on setting obstacles.

## Versus Tests

When two characters come into opposition, a *versus* test is made—one ability against the other. The character with more successes wins the contest. Most of the tests in the Infection, Duel of Wits and Firefight mechanics are versus tests.

Versus tests are the most common resolution method in Burning Empires: Two players want their characters to grab something? We roll to see who gets it. One character is striking another? We make a versus test—attack versus defense. Attacker gets more successes, he injures his target. Defender gets more successes, and he protects himself. Now what's he going to do? Want to remain hidden in a crowd? Roll, and



I'm going to roll to spot you. Want to knock down the security system? Test Security Rigging versus Security.

Anytime two characters are opposing each other's skills, the conflict is resolved with a versus test. The characters don't have to be in the same scene! And there can be lots of color and performance surrounding the conflict, but if the conflict can be reduced to a contest of skill, it is resolved with a versus test.

*Dro decides to have his Kerrn Offisah build up some fortifications around his island estate. There's no conflict right now. So we say, "yes" and move on. Later, during a building scene, Mayuran decides he needs to blow those walls and barricades before he sends in his assault team. Now we have a conflict: Dro rolls his Fortification skill versus Mayuran's Explosives skill in this scene. If Dro wins, the fortifications stand. If Mayuran wins, he reduces them to rubble before his team sweeps in.*



By using versus tests to resolve conflicts, we keep the game fair and the action moving, and we allow the players a legitimate chance to influence events. Players can spend artha on rolls, they can call for help, use traits, use fields of related knowledge and just plain do the unexpected. All of this is necessary for an evolving, engaging game. The players are both the actors and the audience, so they need to be involved in, and enjoying, the events as they transpire. Versus tests go a long way toward all of that.

## Versus Tests and Intent

Setting your intent in a versus test is a lot of fun. It's natural to make your intent opposed: "I want to blow up the fortifications," versus "I want to stop you." Perfectly valid, but you can spin it another way. You can set goals of your own: "I want to blow up the fortifications," versus "I want to detect that it was your character who did it—so I know you betrayed me." Dro's saying that, if he wins, the fortifications come down, and he knows Mayuran's character betrayed him. His goals are almost exclusive to Mayuran's.

But we're still going to roll. Opposition is inherent to a versus test. Dro's stakes now make "...and I get away undetected" implicit in Mayuran's stakes. Twisting intent like this allows a player to bring a skill to bear



that wasn't initially part of the conflict. In this case, Dro's task for detecting Mayuran isn't going to have anything to do with building fortifications. Suddenly the conflict has shifted to Infiltration versus Security and the wall is coming down no matter what.



This shifting of intent and stakes is part of play. It's a negotiation process between the players in the conflict. Dro's willing to lose the benefit of his fortifications to get a shot at learning an important piece of information. Is the destruction of the fortifications worth the risk of getting caught for Mayuran? Take a minute to decide and negotiate.

If the players cannot agree on their intent for a versus test, their scene ends without conflict. *This is not a good thing.* You need conflict to drive the game forward.



If the player and the GM cannot agree to the intent for their versus test, the *player* gets what he wants. The burden for providing acceptable opposition is on the shoulders of the GM. However, if the player is simply being truculent, the group as a whole can decide that he's just being stubborn or fearful and can skip his scene.

### Breaking Ties



A tie in a versus test is a binding result. Neither side gets what they want. The conflict is deadlocked. Players do not roll again.

#### *Tie-Breaker Rolls*

There are, however, tie breaker rolls for skill tests. If the players are tied in a versus test, they may decide to make a tie breaker roll. Both players must agree. No one side may force a tie breaker.

A tie-breaker roll is a second versus test between the two characters. However, rather than using the skills, players test the *root stat* of the skills being used in the current conflict. Occasionally a closely related skill may be used, but those circumstances are noted when they arise in the mechanics.

*If the players tie in a Piloting test, they may agree to test Perception and/or Agility to break the tie.*



Describe how the conflict has escalated or grown more intense and why the characters cannot simply break off or remain deadlocked. Do not apply the double obstacle for unskilled tests to these rolls! These are pure stat tests.

## Open Tests

Occasionally, a test will have no fixed obstacle. It is simply a matter of testing an ability and noting *how many* successes are generated. This is often the case for research, searching an area or other knowledge-based skills. The amount of information distributed by the GM is directly dependent on the number of successes generated.

The information available in open tests is rated and judged along this paradigm: One success is obvious stuff, five successes is expert knowledge and ten successes is everything you've ever wanted to know.

## Linked Tests

Once in a while, the player will engage in a long-term or complex operation that might benefit from other skills or abilities—linking their success or failure. Hence these tests are called *linked tests*. They can be performed by a single character, but more often they are undertaken by multiple characters complementing each other.

If a player can justify using the results of a test in a building scene to benefit a future test, he may link the two tests. Actions and maneuvers within the Infection, Duel of Wits and Firefight mechanics may not be linked. You may link to the body of argument and officer's rolls.

*Mayuran could declare that his Fortifications test—with the intent to destroy Dro's defenses before the coming raid—is linked to the officer's roll for the initial firefight during the raid.*

*Thor could use his investigation of a shipboard suicide to aid his inevitable Duel of Wits with the corrupt baron.*

*Chris could use his character's research of local space shipping lanes to benefit his Smuggling-wise test to determine probable routes for local bandits.*





## THE BURNING WHEEL

The subsequent linked test can happen in the same scene or in a later scene: whenever the conditions of the character's intent are met. Linked tests can therefore be very specific or fairly general.



It is OK to game this rule! Set up tests and conflicts in order to open a chance for a linked test.

### Successful Test to Link

The GM may set the obstacle for a linked test. If the player *meets* or *exceeds* his obstacle, the linked test gains a +1D advantage.

### Failed Test to Link

There's a risk to linking tests. If the test to link is *failed*, then the linked test is at +1 Ob.

### Time and Linked Tests

Linked tests are also a device that allows players to use the resolution system to accomplish goals of a broader scope. Rather than just maneuvering a ship, a series of linked tests can be used for a whole journey—Space Lane-wise, Navigation, Physics and Helm, for example—which can be resolved within just a few minutes of play.





## Advantage and Disadvantage

The conditions surrounding a test can modify the base obstacle. Trying to shove someone off a roof is a versus Power test. If the roof is slippery, it is an *advantage* to the pusher. Such advantages give a bonus

Conversely, it's pretty easy to spot someone sitting quietly in the corner of a room. But if the room is dark, and there is a howling wind blowing through the windows, these conditions make it harder to spot that person. In *Burning Empires* terms, the darkness and wind are *disadvantages* for the spotting character.

### Advantage

Whenever a player can claim his character has a clear advantage over his target—definitively favorable conditions like higher ground, pushing his opponent onto an ice patch or a weight advantage in wrestling—he gains +1D to the ability being tested.

A player may only lobby for one +1D advantage per test. In order to gain this advantage, he must state how and why he deserves such a boon in one clear sentence—no situation lawyering.

In the case of social skill tests, good roleplay, keen description or just good timing are criteria for an advantage die.



The GM has final say over what is and isn't an advantage. He can also add additional advantage dice if he thinks the character is in a strong position. If he disagrees with the player regarding the nature or benefit of an advantage, then no bonus is granted. A player may also decline an advantage die offered by the GM.

### Disadvantage

Any time the GM feels that conditions put a character at a disadvantage, he must increase the obstacle of the test. Disadvantage comes from myriad sources—moving quickly, the light is dim, the air is smoky, the ground is slippery, the character doesn't speak the language well or he's dressed inappropriately. All disadvantages are cumulative. Each one increases the obstacle by one.

### Mixing Advantage and Disadvantage

Advantage and disadvantage can be mixed. In fact, they should be. For each test, let players state their case for advantage. At the same time, the GM should lay out all the disadvantages present.

Also, advantage does not cancel disadvantage. They are both added into the test before the dice are cast. Obstacles go up to make tests harder, and dice are added to make it easier.

## Help

Players may have their characters help one another in the game. When two or more characters are acting together, only one player rolls. His character is considered the primary character for the test. He accepts much of the risk, but he shares the reward with the other characters.

### The Social Contract of Help

In order to help, there must be three social conditions met at the table. First, the acting, primary player must willingly acknowledge and accept the help from his compatriots. Help cannot be forced or surreptitious; it must be open and agreed upon. The acting player is free to turn it down. Second, any player who is helping must then physically give the acting player one or two of his dice to roll. This is so we know if you're helpful or not!

Lastly, the helping player must now participate in the scene: He *must* describe how his character is helping the other.

*"I curse the junta up and down," says John as he gives Mayuran a helping die for Ugly Truth.*

*"I'm trying to convince them the junta is a good thing! I'm not accepting your help, fool." Mayuran declines the helping die.*

### How Can I Help?

Once help has been accepted, we have to determine if and how other characters can help. First: Skills may help skills and stats. Stats may help stats. *Stats may not help skills.*

Second, the ability must be related in some way—similar skills are the best candidates for help. Often this is situational, but the help must make sense to the players. The GM is the final arbiter on who and what can and can't help.



The best helping dice often come from wises. These skills are deliberately left open to interpretation so that players may describe how their knowledge applies to various rolls.

### Helping Dice

If the exponent of the helping ability is 4 or lower, one die is given to the acting player as help. If the exponent of the ability is 5 or higher, two dice are granted. Only one skill per player may be used to help in a tests.



## Help and Artha

Only the player rolling the dice may spend artha on the roll. Helping players may not. See the Artha Wheel chapter for the rules on spending these points.

## Help, Infection and Firefight

There are strict helping conditions for the Infection and Firefight mechanics. In the Infection, only players who gave another player a helping die (or linked die) during the building and conflict scenes of the maneuver may give that player help in the maneuver roll. In Firefight, only characters in your unit with the appropriate listed skills or wises may help.

## Fields of Related Knowledge

A player may have his character use his varied experience to *help himself on a skill test*. We call this using your fields of related knowledge or FoRKs.

One *skill* and one *wise* may be used as a field of related knowledge on each roll. A player may describe how one of his other skills is related to the conflict and can be used like *help* to add +1D to the roll. He may also color the test by using one of his “wise” skills to represent how his knowledge of this particular field will aid him on this test. This adds another +1D to the roll.

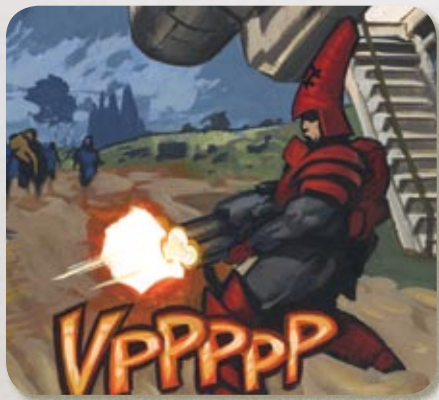
FoRKs are situational. The players suggest them, and the GM arbitrates which are applicable and which are not. Also, just to be clear, stats and attributes may never be used as fields of related knowledge or benefit from bonus FoRK dice.

*I'm playing a Vaylen sleeper. He's in a conflict with the Governor of the Commune. "Wayne," I say, "I'm doing this all with the best interest of the Commune in mind. Trust me."*

*I announce that I'm testing Persuasion and I'm adding a die for my Soothing Platitudes skill and my Human Behavior-wise.*



### The Color of a FoRK



The fields of related knowledge used in a test affect the color of success and failure. If you FoRK Conspicuous into your Command, you're calling attention to yourself. If you fail the test, you could be calling attention certain aspects that you'd rather not have noticed.

### Success

Now we have a grasp on a variety of ways to manipulate the die pools for a test, but what happens after the dice have come to rest and the successes are counted? If the successes equal or exceed the obstacle, the character has succeeded in his goal—completed the task at hand and accomplished his intent.

This is important enough to say again: Characters who are successful complete actions in the manner described by the player. A successful roll is sacrosanct in Burning Empires and neither the GM nor the other players can change the fact that the act was successful. The GM may only embellish on or reinforce a successful ability test.

The most important criteria for passing a test is that play moves in the direction of the success, even if only momentarily.

*Danny: "I want to use my Propaganda to start spreading rumors that this war is unjust. In fact, the circumstances are so suspect that only a worm could have instigated this. My intent is to convince the populace that the prince is indeed infected."*

*Luke: "Ob 1, this is an ignorant planet. Success? Excellent. The rumors take hold. The palace propagandists are scrambling to squash the slander."*

In this situation the player stated his intent and how he wanted his character to accomplish that intent. The GM set an obstacle. Success indicates that the player accomplished what he intended. Processing success versus intent is a delicate and varied process and is one of the prime duties of the GM.



# Failure

When the dice are rolled, and not enough successes are generated to meet the obstacle, the character has failed at this task. What does this mean? *The stated task goal and intent do not come to pass.* However, in failure, intent is more important than the task goal.

*"I need to disarm the security system before the guards come!" This is an easy intent to judge a failure for, right? If the player fails the test, the character doesn't disarm the security system. Wrong. Look at the intent again, "...before the guards come." Failure doesn't have anything to do with the security system. It's about the guards arriving in time to catch the interloper. And that kind of conflict keeps the game going with drama and action!*

## Two Directions

When a player sets out a task for his character and states his intent, it is the GM's job to inform him of the consequences of failure *before the dice are rolled.*

"If you fail this..." should often be heard at the table. Let the players know the consequences of their actions. Failure is not the end of the line, but it is a complication that pushes the story in another direction.

In a medium as imaginative as roleplaying games, we rarely lack options. The GM must present the players with the possible ramifications of their tests.

*"You can try to rig the door, but you don't have much time. It is highly likely that the guards will return before you finish."*

Once that is said, everyone knows what's at stake, and play can continue smoothly no matter what the result of the dice is. More importantly, the players know what's at stake. They can spend artha and get help accordingly.



If you're bowled over by the stakes the other side has set (or vice versa), it is acceptable to renegotiate and up the ante to match. If he's asking for more, you should ask for more!





## Let It Ride



One of the most important aspects of ability tests in game play in Burning Empires is the Let It Ride rule: A player shall test an ability for his intent once per maneuver. This applies primarily to building scenes or tests involving Instincts: Pass or fail, neither GM nor player can call for a retest for the same intent in the same maneuver by the same character. *Success from the initial roll counts for all applicable scenes and conflicts in play for that maneuver.* Same goes for failure.

A GM cannot call for multiple rolls of the same ability to accomplish a player's stated intent. Nor can a player retest a failed roll simply because he failed. Success and failure for a test rides across the scene and maneuver.

If a player failed a test or generated no successes, *this result stands*. If he was hot and got seven successes, *those stand* for the duration. If a player is unhappy with his failed result, he must engage in a new conflict in the next scene using a different ability.



This rule is hard, fast, fixed and non-negotiable. If a player finds a GM calling for unnecessary retests, he is free to call him on cheating.



The Let It Ride rule is designed to protect players from GMs who constantly call for rerolls until a test is failed and to reduce the overall number of rolls at the table. It means that sometimes your character is going to be hot hot hot, and other times he's going to be Mr. Dunce. Roll with it; we've found the rule to work very well in play.

*GMs may not call for a test of the same ability every time they get an itch: "You reach the foothills, test your Infiltration. OK, you reach the limits of the crater-basin, test your Infiltration. OK, you reach the CHOT compound, test your Infiltration. OK, you climb the wall, test your Infiltration." No. No! NO!*



## Let It Ride, Firefight and the Duel of Wits

Let it Ride does not apply to the extended conflict mechanics as described in the Firefight and Duel of Wits chapters. In those rules, players are going to test their Tactics, Persuasion, Assault Weapons, Falsehood, etc. many times to accomplish their intent in the scene. That's OK.

### Ties and Let It Ride

Ties are very fun results under the Let It Ride rule. You've got a tie result with your opponent? Well, you can't just retest. The tie rides. The players may agree to a tie breaking roll, but otherwise, the players can count that conflict as a wash. You've got to find another way to try and get what you want. Look at your skills. What's another way you can attack this problem?

## Time

Time is often a crucial element in Burning Empires. Someone is always under the gun, trying get something done before the clock runs down. Therefore, time serves two purposes: to determine if a task can be completed in a scene, maneuver or phase, and to add color and scope to what the characters are doing in the story.

How much time the characters have is dependent on the time scale of the game. Typically, the whole campaign transpires over a number of years of "game time." Phases happen across a few months each. Maneuvers can take place in a few days or a few weeks. Therefore scenes can take any amount of time that could logically fit in a maneuver. A conflict—and thus a test—can be as long as a few days or as short as a moment.

Given the structure of the game, it is very beneficial to play fast and loose with time. Do not go "back in time" and allow players to change already resolved actions. But if a player hasn't engaged in a conflict yet in this maneuver, it's perfectly acceptable to say, "Before that happened, I tracked down his address. I'm there waiting for him when he gets home."

In that case, time is part of success and failure. If the player makes his Investigative Logic or Research test, his character achieves his intent—he's there on time. If he fails, he misses his chance. Turns out his quarry got home before he did!

### Time on Task

How long does a test take? If there is ever a question of time, consult the skill description. Listed at the end of the entry are the practice cycle and practice hours for the skill. It looks something like this: *1 m. 2r/4d/8c*. The exact nature of this code is described in Advancement, but it can be used to judge the time of the test. If the test is very hard, it takes the rightmost amount of time in hours or days. If the test is simple or easy, it takes the leftmost amount of time in minutes or hours. Use common sense here, too. Obviously, firing a weapon or slugging someone isn't going to take any time at all, but a firefight can take an hour, and researching the contents of a crashed shuttle can take days.

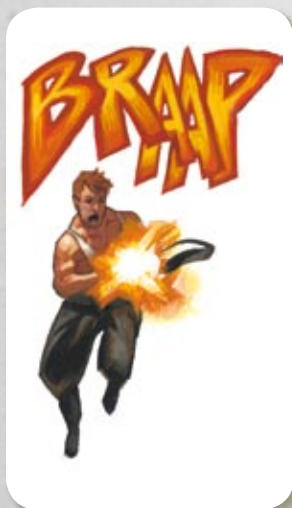
### Time and Failure

A character must spend the same time failing a test as succeeding.

### Downtime

During normal play, there is no downtime. Players go from scene to scene, conflict to conflict. Downtime is integrated into the macro scale mechanics and is described in the Infection chapter.

## Beginner's Luck



Every skill has a stat on which it is based. We call this stat its *root*. If a character does not have an appropriate skill for a test, he may test the root stat instead. Beginner's Luck dice are equal to the root stat of the skill (not half the stat, the full dice). For skills with two roots, pick the one most appropriate to the test. The obstacle for a Beginner's Luck test is doubled. Easy stuff won't be too much of a problem, but more complex tasks will be all but impossible.

#### *Double Obstacle Penalty and Modifiers*

Determine the base obstacle for a task. Double that and then add on any situational modifiers.

*My young farmer is shooting at some Vaylen monsters behind cover rated at 1. The obstacle for a Direct Fire shot opportunity is 2. I don't have the Assault Weapons skill, so that doubles to 4. Then I add the cover penalty for a total Ob 5 test.*



*Mayuran's character, Prince Faisal, has been forced into a cell by the Forged Lord's men. He's desperate and decides to escalate to violence. Unfortunately, Prince Faisal doesn't have the Close Combat skill. Therefore, Mayuran's got to test his character's Agility against the Close Combat skill of the guards. In a versus test, he'll need to get double the successes of the opposition. In an independent test, he'll need twice as many successes as the GM-determined obstacle. Ouch.*

## Informational, Academic, Knowledge-based Skill Tests

Using wises or skills like Dark Shattered Underbelly-wise, Biology and History, a player will often ask, "What do I know about this?" and want to roll some dice. In *Burning Empires*, a player doesn't have to ask. He may state a fact that his character knows. If his skill test is successful, the fact is indeed true and now is truth in the game world. If the test is failed, the GM has the option to allow the fact to remain true, but the character believes it false on second thought. Alternately, he can deem the piece of information factually false. It does not become part of the world. In fact, the GM may make the opposite true in the setting.



Facts stated may not contradict established setting or other previously established facts. They are meant to flesh out the gray areas of play, not to create ridiculous and jarring aberrations in the play space. The group as a whole may veto any information or fact that it deems outlandish or damaging to the mood.

For obstacles, consult the skill descriptions. If no information is provided there, use the same guidelines as for wises: Common knowledge, Ob 1. An interesting fact, Ob 2. Details, Ob 3. Uncommon knowledge, Ob 4. Rare goods, Ob 5. Bizarre or obscure facts, Ob 7. Freaky details or specifics, Ob 8.

### Testing Abilities in Brief

- Intent—Announce the goal of your action.
- Task—Indicate how you want your character to act to accomplish your goal. Incorporate a skill or stat into your description.
- Independent test—An ability rolled against an obstacle set by the GM. Meet the obstacle and pass the test.
- Open test—A test with no fixed obstacle; more successes means more information/results.
- Versus test—A test where two characters are pitted against one another. Highest number of successes wins the test.
- Linked test—A series of tests where, if the preceding test was successful, you get +1D. If it was a failure, you get +1 Ob.
- Advantage—A favorable condition present in the game that benefits a character. +1D to the test.
- Disadvantage—Unfavorable conditions that raise the obstacle of a test.
- Success—The character completes the task laid out by the player in the manner of the stated intent.
- Failure—The character either does not complete the task or completes the task but new conditions presented by the GM interfere with his intent.
- Let It Ride—One test per ability per character stands for the maneuver.
- Help—Exponent 4 or lower gives +1D. Exponent 5 or higher gives +2D.
- FoRKs—+1D for one related, applicable skill. +1D for one appropriate wise.
- Beginner's Luck—Use root stat in place of skill; double obstacle penalty.





## ADVANCING ABILITIES

This advancement system gives the feeling of a living, sweating, breathing, bleeding game. Characters advance their abilities in *Burning Empires* by using them in play. As players and GMs call for tests for characters, marks are made on the ability's experience log. Mark enough tests of varying difficulty, and the ability advances.

### *Routine, Difficult and Challenging*

Each test falls into one of three levels of difficulty for advancement: routine, difficult and challenging. The difficulty of a test is found by comparing the obstacle against the number of dice rolled. Notice that it's not just about an exponent versus the obstacle. Advantage, helping and FoRK dice all influence advancement.

Consult the chart on the next page to determine what obstacle counts as what level of difficulty against dice pools as big as 20D.

#### **Obstacle Versus Number of Dice Rolled**

It is important to always use the *number of dice rolled* for a test, not just the ability exponent. Extra dice are a boon that makes the test *easier* for the character. In this game, one learns less when using such crutches.

You will be confronted with difficult choices in some instances: You can opt to undertake a task that you will most likely fail, and earn a difficult or challenging test for advancement, or you can use fields of related knowledge and help to boost your die pool and pass the test—but only earn a routine test for advancement.



## Level of Difficulty for Advancement

	Routine	Difficult	Challenging
1D	Ob 1	Ob 1	Ob 2 +
2D	Ob 1	Ob 2	Ob 3 +
3D	Ob 1-2	Ob 3	Ob 4 +
4D	Ob 1-2	Ob 3-4	Ob 5 +
5D	Ob 1-3	Ob 4-5	Ob 6 +
6D	Ob 1-4	Ob 5-6	Ob 7 +
7D	Ob 1-4	Ob 5-7	Ob 8 +
8D	Ob 1-5	Ob 6-8	Ob 9 +
9D	Ob 1-6	Ob 7-9	Ob 10 +
10D	Ob 1-7	Ob 8-10	Ob 11 +
11D	Ob 1-8	Ob 9-11	Ob 12 +
12D	Ob 1-9	Ob 10-12	Ob 13 +
13D	Ob 1-10	Ob 11-13	Ob 14 +
14D	Ob 1-11	Ob 12-14	Ob 15 +
15D	Ob 1-12	Ob 13-15	Ob 16 +
16D	Ob 1-13	Ob 14-16	Ob 17 +
17D	Ob 1-14	Ob 15-17	Ob 18 +
18D	Ob 1-15	Ob 16-18	Ob 19 +
19D	Ob 1-16	Ob 17-19	Ob 20 +
20D	Ob 1-17	Ob 18-20	Ob 21 +

Obstacle of Test

*An obstacle 2 test counts as routine for exponent 4 abilities. Obstacle 3 tests are routine for exponent 5 abilities.*

*For an exponent 4 skill, obstacles 3 and 4 are difficult tests.*

*Ob 5 and higher tests are challenging for exponent 4 abilities.*



"Wait a minute," you're saying, "I can't roll five successes on four dice! My character is automatically going to fail that test." To this I say: "You're correct, but read on, read on. The Artha chapter will show you some tricks."

## Number of Tests

## Required for Advancement

To advance an ability exponent one rank, a player must accumulate a certain number of routine, difficult and challenging tests.

### Advancing Skills

#### Exponent 1

Exponent 1 skills need two tests to advance. One test must be at obstacle 1. The second can be any obstacle—1, 2 or 10.

#### Exponent 2-4

Advancing an exponent 2-4 skill requires a number of routine tests *equal to the exponent*. In addition, a character needs difficult tests equal to half the exponent, *or* challenging tests equal to his exponent divided by three (rounded up).



### Exponent 5 +

For skill exponents 5 and higher, a character needs difficult tests equal to half of the ability exponent and challenging tests equal to one-third of the exponent rounded up. Routine tests can't be used to advance a skill exponent of 5 or higher.

*In order to advance Persuasion 3, I'd need three routine tests (Ob 1-2) plus either two difficult tests (Ob 3) or one challenging test (Ob 4). To advance a 6 Assault Weapons skill, I'd need three tests at Ob 5 or 6 to meet my difficult test requirements, and two tests at Ob 7 or higher to get my challenging tests. This is not easily done! Tests of that difficulty don't come along very often, and when they do they are usually life and death.*

### Advancing Stats

Routine tests don't count for the advancement of stats. Players must get high obstacle tests in order to advance them.

### Tests Required to Advance Skills

TYPE OF TEST:	Routine		Difficult		Challenging
Skill Exponent					
1	1	and	(1	or	1)
2	2	and	(1	or	1)
3	3	and	(2	or	1)
4	4	and	(2	or	1)
5	—		3	and	1
6	—		3	and	2
7	—		4	and	2
8	—		4	and	3
9	—		5	and	3
NUMBER OF TESTS REQUIRED					

### Tests Required to Advance Stats

TYPE OF TEST:	Routine		Difficult		Challenging
Stat Exponent					
1	—		1	and	1
2	—		1	and	1
3	—		2	and	1
4	—		2	and	1
5	—		3	and	1
6	—		3	and	2
7	—		4	and	2
8	—		4	and	3
9	—		5	and	3
NUMBER OF TESTS REQUIRED					

## Pass or Fail

With one exception, tests for advancement are earned whether the character was successful or not. *Pass or fail*, a test counts toward advancement.

### Resources: The Exception

Resources tests must be *successful* to count toward advancement. You cannot try to buy the world, fail and still benefit from it with advancement.

## Advancing Attributes

Mortal Wounds advance as the parent stats increase the applicable average. Circles, Resources and Steel advance as *skills*. Circles advances from the base Circles. Although you count reputations and affiliations when factoring total dice versus the obstacle, they do not advance themselves.

## Experience Log

Listed with each ability on the character sheet is an experience log. Use this to note the tests earned toward advancement for individual abilities.

### Close Combat (4)

*I've got a Close Combat skill of 4. I need four routine tests and two difficult tests or one challenging test. I have earned three routine and one difficult test. I only need two more tests to advance: one more routine plus either a difficult or challenging test. When I get those tests, my skill advances to 5.*

## Earning Tests

The GM and players are both responsible for remembering tests for advancement. However, sometimes things get hectic during the game. It's often best to take five minutes to review what happened after the maneuver is over and make sure that players noted their tests.

Tests are earned for the rolls made during the building and conflict scenes and from Instinct tests.

### Testmongering

Testmongering involves pestering the GM for a particular test: "I need a routine. Can I make a routine test?" "Dude, it's an *assault on a high index battlecruiser*. I don't think there are going to be any routine tests." The GM's job here is to say flat out: "No." Let the difficulty of the tests arise organically, not at the player's request just so his character can advance. It makes for a much more interesting game.





## Extended Conflicts = One Test

Occasionally in play, we have situations where players are testing the same ability over and over again—martial and social conflict being the prime examples. In any instance where an ability is tested multiple times to determine the outcome, only one test is earned toward advancement. Only note one test per scene per skill.

*During a Firefight, I test my Tactics six times. I only note one test for advancement though.*

When deciding which test counts for advancement, a player generally takes the highest obstacle test from the encounter. However, if the character is in need of a particular level of test to advance the ability, the player may note an appropriate obstacle test

as soon as it comes up. This is *only* done for “series tests” during which the character would advance (one test away from going up).

*If Chris needs a routine test to advance his Oratory during a Duel of Wits, he may disregard difficult and challenging tests. When and if a routine test comes up, he may count that test toward advancing his skill. If no routine tests come up, he's out of luck.*

## I Just Learned Something!

There's nothing more pleasing to my ears than a player crowing, “I just learned something!” When the requirement is met, the exponent immediately advances. Doesn't matter if it's in the middle of a firefight, while researching a ship's logs or while practicing during downtime. Once the test is earned, the ability increases one exponent number—from 3 to 4, 5 to 6, etc.



### Wipe the Slate Clean

After the ability has advanced, all extra tests are discarded. It doesn't matter if the character had nine challenging tests; once the requirements to advance are met, you start over with a clean slate.

### Converting or Substituting Tests



What if my character is one routine test from advancing his skill, but has three extra difficult tests logged? I can just convert a test, right? No. Hard and fast rule: Players *cannot* convert or substitute tests.

## Advancement for Open and Versus Tests

When logging open tests for advancement, the obstacle is always 1. These tests always count as routine. "Open test" does not mean Steel or dice affected by fate artha, but rolls that have no fixed obstacle.

For versus tests, use the number of successes your opponent generated as the obstacle for the test when consulting the Dice versus Obstacle table at the beginning of this chapter.

## Help, FoRKs, Advantage and Advancement

### Helping and Advancement

Helping dice add to the dice total for the acting character, making it harder to earn higher level tests for advancement.

*For example, my character's got to patch up this hole in the hull before we head into our next engagement. I have a Repair skill of 3. The GM sets the obstacle at 2. I want to get this done as quickly as possible and ensure success, so I ask one of the other players, "Can you help?" His character has Jury-Rigging 2. The GM agrees that this is an applicable skill. He gives me an extra die to roll.*

*Without his help, the test would have counted as a difficult test for advancement—3D against Ob 2. With his help, the test counts as a routine—4D against Ob 2.*



### Helpers Learn

Although he doesn't roll any dice or risk himself, a character who helps earns tests for advancement. The level of the test is the same as if he had tested against the obstacle with his own skill. Giving help is a great way to earn tests.

*The helper with Jury-Rigging 2 from the previous example just earned himself a difficult test.*

### FoRKs and Advancement

Like helping dice, FoRKs can reduce the difficulty of a test for purposes of advancement. FoRKs count toward total dice when consulting the Obstacle versus Dice Rolled table. Relying on FoRKs all the time can stymie growth.

FoRKed abilities *do not* earn tests toward advancement. Only the primary ability earns the test.

### Advantage, Bonus Dice and Advancement

Advantages and bonus dice from equipment count toward the dice total when determining the difficulty of tests for advancement.

*My Olavsrud Systems SS104 targeting reticle gives me +1D to my Assault Weapons skill tests. Direct firing at a target in cover is Ob 3. I've got a 4 skill. Normally that's a difficult test, but a bonus die bumps my skill up to 5, and thus the test difficulty drops to routine (Ob 3 is a routine test for 5D.)*

## Artha and Advancement

You don't know what artha is yet, but there needs to be a mention here about it for clarity: Bonus dice from artha *never* count toward the total dice rolled for purposes of advancement.

*If you have a skill of 4 and add three dice from artha, the test still counts as if you rolled four dice.*

## Advancement Is Lifeblood

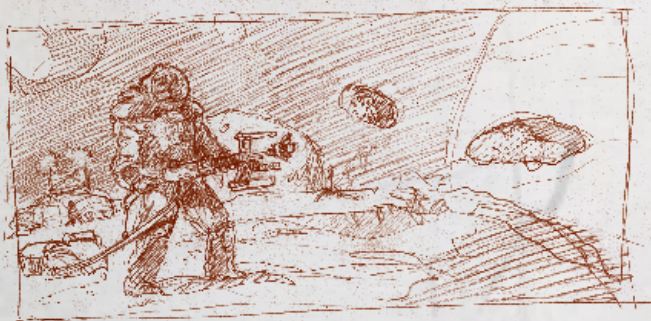


Advancement is the lifeblood of Burning Empires play. It allows players to shape their characters in a variety of ways. Therefore, it is imperative for the GM and players to understand and use the obstacle system. Why? The right obstacle level provides challenge for the players and tests for the characters.



Doling out Ob 1 tests makes for a very boring game. It's too easy, and characters never advance, whereas flinging out Ob 6 tests all the time is no fun either. It's too hard: Characters will fail all the time and never advance. In order to create a rich tapestry of play for the game, the GM must throw in a variety of tests—routine stuff at Ob 2 mixed with an occasional whopper of an Ob 5 or 6. Most tests should fall in the 1-3 obstacle range, but don't be afraid to push it once in a while.

Conversely, don't just hand out the tests a character needs to pump his skills up. Instead, give what the situation demands. Allow the players to tailor *their characters' actions* to their advancement needs. They can be cautious when they only need low obstacle tests, and elaborate, dangerous or risky when they need high obstacle tests.



## Practice

When there is downtime during the phase, players may have their characters undertake a practice regimen in order to polish their skills. Mechanically, this serves one purpose: to aid characters in advancing their skills. Practice helps fill in the gaps in a character's active experience.

### Downtime

Honestly, there's very little time for practice in Burning Empires. Once the Vaylen Infection is on, the player characters are thrust into the middle of a conflict like a category 5 storm. The story jumps from scene to scene, with no time for the players to catch their breath. The only way to get breathing room is to create it.

Players may only have their characters engage in practice during *downtime*. Downtime is generated by the Conserve, Go to Ground and Pin maneuvers in the Infection mechanics. Check out the Downtime heading in that chapter for more on how much downtime you get. This section just talks about how to use it to advance.



## Practice Cycles

Practice time comes in many forms: exercising, studying and even trying out your skills on your friends. Each ability is listed with a Practice Cycle. The first number is how many *months (or years)* a character needs to practice in order to earn one test. The next set of numbers, *2r/4d/8c* for example, indicates the actual hours per day that the character must spend practicing during the cycle to earn routine (r), difficult (d) and challenging (c) tests.

*For example, my character has the Physics skill:*

### Physics

Per

In the Iron Empires, Physics describes the intense study of how an object moves through spacetime and is affected by gravity. The skill can be used by navigators to plot courses around heavy gravitational objects like gas giants, stars and black holes.

**Practice Cycle:** 1 yr. hrs/day: 6r/8d/16c

**Technology:** Color.

*During downtime, I have him practice Physics for six hours every day for a year. He earns a routine test for advancement.*

If a character maintains the daily hours time requirement for one practice cycle, he earns the listed test for that ability for the purposes of advancement.

Listed below are the practice cycles for stats and attributes. Skills have their practice cycles listed with their individual descriptions.

STAT/ATTRIBUTE	CYCLE	ROUTINE	DIFFICULT	CHALLENGING
Will	1 year	4 hours	8 hours	16 hours
Perception	6 months	3 hours	6 hours	12 hours
Agility	3 months	2 hours	4 hours	8 hours
Speed	3 months	3 hours	6 hours	9 hours
Power	1 month	2 hours	4 hours	8 hours
Forte	2 months	4 hours	8 hours	16 hours
Steel	2 months	1 hour	3 hours	9 hours
Circles	6 months	4 hours	8 hours	16 hours
Resources	1 year	4 hours	8 hours	16 hours

*Rich wants to practice his cotar fomas' Agility. During downtime, he has him work out every morning and practice doing hand drills to test his Agility. He'll need four hours a day for three months to earn a difficult test for advancement.*

### Maximum Practice

A character may practice multiple skills at once. He may only be forced to practice for hours equal to four times (4x) his Will exponent per day. For most people, that's 16 hours a day maximum. The most a character can practice in a day, no matter the Will exponent, is 20 hours. Most people, due to their lives and needs as individuals, can only bear to practice eight hours in a day.

Time spent recovering from injury cannot be used for practice time. If a character is injured going into downtime, he spends that time healing up rather than practicing.

## Learning New Skills

### Root Stats

Every skill has a stat or combination of stats on which it is based. This is called its root. Skills are listed with their roots in the Character Burner.

*The root for Persuasion is Will.*

### Beginner's Luck: Testing When Unskilled

As mentioned in the Scenes and Conflicts section, when a character doesn't have an appropriate skill, he may test against his Beginner's Luck at a *double obstacle* penalty. Beginner's Luck dice are equal to the root stat of the skill (not half the stat, the full dice). For skills with two roots, pick the one most appropriate to the test.

### Aptitude

Aptitude is the number of Beginner's Luck tests a character needs in order to gain a new skill. Aptitude is equal to 10 minus the *root stat*. If the root is a combination of two or more stats, the aptitude is 10 minus the average of the root stats rounded down.

*A character with a 4 Agility has a 6 Aptitude for learning the Close Combat skill (10 minus his exponent 4 Agility).*

Every time the player tests against Beginner's Luck when trying to use a skill he doesn't have, he notes one test toward earning it. After he has accumulated a number of tests equal to the Aptitude, he opens the skill.

### Opening the Skill

Once the Aptitude requirement is met, the character automatically and immediately opens the skill. It is now written on the character sheet in the skills section. The starting exponent for all skills is half of the





root rounded down, or half the average (rounded down) if there are two roots.

*With a 4 Will, after six Beginner's Luck tests, I open a Persuasion skill. The skill opens at half of the root stat. That's a 2 Persuasion for my character.*



After the skill is opened, it advances normally like any other skill.

## Double Obstacle Penalty, Stat Tests and Learning New Skills

When the base obstacle (before the doubling penalty) for a Beginner's Luck test would count as a *routine for the stat*, the test is logged toward learning the *new skill*. If the test (before doubling) would count as a *difficult or challenging for the stat*, it's logged as a *stat test* for advancement.

*I've got a 4 Agility. Direct fire is a base Ob 2 test. That would count as a routine test toward Agility, so the test is logged toward learning the Assault Weapons skill. If the test had been Ob 3, that'd be a difficult test for Agility. I take that toward advancing the stat.*

## Practice and New Skills

Practice may be used to start learning a new skill or for earning tests against your aptitude requirement to open a new skill.

# INSTRUCTION

Characters may learn from each other during downtime. This requires the Instruction skill and is a much more efficient way to gain tests than simple practice.

## Instructors

To begin the process, the instructor must pass an Ob 2 Instruction skill test. If successful, the instructor may teach as described below. If the test is failed, then time spent with the instructor merely counts as practice during downtime.



### Test Me

Instructors give their students tests for advancement. The instructor can offer his student obstacles for a test equal to or less than his exponent in the skill he's trying to impart.

*If he's got a skill of 4, he can offer obstacle 1-4 tests to his students. Compare that to the student's own exponent to find what difficulty level tests the student can earn toward advancement.*

The time for each test is days equal to 10 minus the instructor's Will plus 10 minus the student's Will. Also, take the *hours per day* requirement for the appropriate skill practice level and add that on to the test as a number of days.

*An instructor with a Will B5 (five days) gives a student with a Will of B4 (six days) one test in 11 days plus additional days based on the type of test. If he was schooling his student's 4 Close Combat skill, and wanted to give him a difficult test (four hours for a difficult test for this skill), the total time would be 11 days plus the 4 from the practice cycle: 15 days all together.*

After the required time, the student earns a test for advancement. This can be put toward advancing the skill in question, or toward learning a new skill if the student didn't already have it.

### All Day, Every Day

Instruction eats up all of the character's free time. He may not practice other skills during the instruction period.



## Advancement in Brief

- Obstacle of the test compared to the number of dice rolled determines the difficulty of the test for advancement. Consult the table for details.
- Skills exponent 1-4 must be advanced by filling up the routine tests requirement and meeting either the difficult or challenging test requirement. Doing so advances the skill to the next exponent level.
- Exponent 5+ skills only advance via difficult and challenging tests. Routine tests no longer count.
- Stats only advance via difficult and challenging tests regardless of their exponent.
- Attributes—Steel, Resources and Circles advance as skills.
- Experience Log—Note the level of the test on the experience log for the appropriate skill.
- A series of rolls in a single scene/conflict equals one test for advancement.
- Open Tests—A test with no fixed obstacle counts as a routine test.
- Versus tests use your opponent's number of successes as the obstacle.
- Help and Advancement—Helping dice count toward the total number of dice rolled for a test thereby making the test easier to pass, but less significant for advancement.
- FoRKs and Advancement—FoRKs also count toward the total dice rolled. They make the test easier and usually lower the difficulty.
- Advantage and Advancement—Advantages also count toward the total dice rolled and potentially reduce the difficulty of the test.
- Dice added from artha do not count toward the total pool for purposes of advancement.
- Practice—Time per day devoted to a skill nets a test after a period of downtime equal to the practice cycle.
- Learning New Skills—To learn a new skill, a player must get a number of tests equal to his aptitude for the skill. Aptitudes are 10 minus the root stat of the skill. Once the required tests are earned, the new skill is opened at half the root stat (rounded down).







# BELIEFS, INSTINCTS AND TRAITS



There are three sets of player-chosen priorities: Beliefs, Instincts and traits. Each has a different effect on the game mechanics of how a character is played and grows.

## Beliefs

Burning Empires is about Beliefs. No part of the game is more central. The World Burner simply sets up a framework for the Beliefs. It gives them context. The Infection mechanics, Firefight and the Duel of Wits are the vehicles by which the Beliefs are tested within the story.

Challenging and changing Beliefs creates the story. This is a game about conflicts of ideology and inner turmoil writ large. Beliefs that go unchallenged are dead limbs.

### Challenging Beliefs

*"The only good alien is a dead alien; I will see the alien interloper destroyed by my own hand."*



As a GM, what do you do with a Belief like that? You put the alien interloper in power, in a place where the player cannot safely attack him without jeopardizing his own position. You give that alien interloper power over the character in



the game. You have all the character's friends join the alien interloper. You have the character's children playing with his tentacles and laughing. You dangle and flaunt that alien interloper in front of the player until he's apoplectic with rage. Until all he can think about is the smell the creature will make when he fries him with a fusor. You shove it under his nose until the player is willing to sacrifice everything to destroy the bastard.

*"The chamberlain is evil in nature and never to be trusted; I will expose his schemes to the Lord Steward."*



That chamberlain is going to be the most unimpeachable, innocent-seeming person this side of Gandhi. If he really is scheming, he's going to be good at it. He's going to hide it from the Lord Steward, but he's going to dangle it in front of the player. In fact, he's either going to suborn the player's character so he becomes complicit in the schemes, or he's just going to outright blackmail him. The Lord Steward's position is also implicit in this belief. He simply cannot be on the character's side in regard to the chamberlain. If he is, there's no conflict, and this Belief is dead weight. Therefore, he thinks the chamberlain is great! Until the player shows him otherwise via conflicts and maneuvers in the game, that is.

*"To secure our destiny and dreams on Omac, I will sacrifice the safety and prosperity of the ghetto."*



This is a broad Belief of a type often given to leader characters. How far is he willing to go in service of this dream? His ghetto must be threatened constantly—the businesses, the families, the security and sanctity of it. It must be the focal point for tension. Its fate is now the world's. Will he allow militia from the junta to patrol his neighborhood? Will he sacrifice his own home and wealth for his vision? Will he send his friends to serve and die in war? Will he send his partner and offspring into harm's way so that Omac may have a future? How far does this megalomania extend? If the only way the Kerrn could have a future on Omac resulted in the ghetto being destroyed, would he aid in its destruction?

Beliefs must be conflicted, challenged, betrayed and broken. Such emotional drama makes for a good game. By openly and honestly setting down their top three priorities, players are helping the GM and the other players get the most out of the game. When the other players are in on the irony and the drama, they can help you achieve your goals.

Of course, this doesn't mean the *characters* are aware of each other's Beliefs. A separation of player and character knowledge helps emphasize the tension.

Lastly, there is more to Beliefs than just melodrama. They are the reward mechanic. Players manipulate their character's Beliefs and the situations of game play in order to earn points that they can spend to enhance later rolls. This is discussed in the Artha Wheel chapter.

### Changing Beliefs

Beliefs change over the course of play. When a player accomplishes the goal explicit in his Belief, he changes it and develops a new perspective and goal.

When a Belief no longer has any emotional traction with the player, it must be changed. It can be rewritten or reworded, or it can just be changed to a wholly new goal. Regardless, if you don't care about a Belief any longer, *change it*.

*Alexander's Hammer Lord, Lady Kate, has the Belief, "Like it or not, my brother Peter is my heir." During play, he and the GM, playing Lady Kate's brother, get into a brutal argument resolved via the Duel of Wits mechanics. Based on the compromise from the argument, Alexander announces that he's changing that Belief: "I will not judge Peter for what he has become, but I will try to change him!" Awesome stuff.*



If a Belief has slipped through the cracks—its goal hasn't been accomplished, but neither is it being challenged—change it. Change it right now. This is a tough one to call, since more often than not, the player still likes the Belief, but it's just not helping him in any way. If it's not helping, it's a dead limb. Change it.

*Later, Lady Kate's brother is disappeared by one of the other player's characters. This becomes a point of tension between them, but after a couple of maneuvers, Alexander decides that he likes the fact that his brother has been kidnapped and is out of the way for now. He, as a player, still cares about his brother, but he's not going to pursue that conflict. So he frees up that Belief and changes it: "Inquisitor Weller is my key to becoming Forged Lord. No matter how unsavory, I will do as he asks."*

It is worth noting that in situations like this, the dangling Belief may be elevated. See the Trait Vote heading in this chapter for more.



During play, a player may change his character's Beliefs as he sees fit so long as he announces his intention to the group. He must tell them the Belief he is changing and what he is changing it to.





The GM has absolute final say over *when* a Belief may be changed. If he feels the player is changing a Belief to wriggle out of a difficult situation and not as part of character growth, then he may delay the change until a time that he sees as appropriate. But the GM can never tell a player to change a Belief right now or write the content of a player's Belief for him.

## INSTINCTS

Instincts are also player priorities for a character, but they have a different mechanical application than Beliefs. Rather than reflect who or what the character is, Instincts help define *how* the character acts.

What's been drilled into the character's head? What life lessons has he been forced to learn? What has he taught himself in order to survive? These are Instincts in *Burning Empires*. Players choose three for their characters.

### Insurance

Instincts can also be described as player character insurance against GM onslaught. They are a mechanical way to ensure that your character behaves in a certain manner that can't be contravened by the GM.



They don't need to be adversarial. In fact, they work better when the player and GM cooperate, using the Instincts to drive the character in play.

Beliefs,  
Instincts  
and Traits

When a situation arises for which a character has an Instinct, the character is considered to have already acted. Whatever it is, he's done it. Sometimes this will engage a test, sometimes it won't. Sometimes you'll need to rewind a bit and incorporate an Instinct. That's cool.

### Technological Instincts

Instincts involving technology count as if the player had established technological color in a previous scene. See the Technology Burner for more on what technological color means in the game.

### Going Against Instinct

An Instinct is an action that the character takes without thinking, right? Well, Instincts are meant to be challenged like Beliefs. A player can choose *not* to activate his Instincts. If he is challenged and chooses to go against an Instinct, he's rewarded.

*"Have my handgun on me at all times."*



Without even discussing it, this character has his sidearm with him. In the shower, at a meeting, when making it with the hot Vaylen spy, he's got his gun. But if he's making it with that Vaylen spy and the GM initiates a conflict, he can opt to go against his Instinct. "Nah, I trust her! Why would I need my piece?" Doing so gets him rewarded.

*"Always shoot the escape pods."*



This is an excellent Instinct for a fighter pilot-type character. No one escapes after he's blasted through a hammer cruiser! But what if the escape pods launch and one of his friends may be trapped on board one? Will he go with his guts and fire, or go against Instinct and let his friend live?

*"Never attend a meeting without a friend's company."*



This is a nice, easy Instinct. This character's always got a buddy with him—probably his sergeant, stentor or ravilar. Even in sensitive meetings, he's got company. But GMs are forever trying to get player characters alone, right? What if he's invited into a private meeting with the High Inquisitor? The High Inquisitor is a psychologist and a bastard, so having a witness might help prevent him from getting mind-raped. But if he leaves that bodyguard at the door, if the player goes against Instinct, he's rewarded.

Rewards come in the form of artha and are discussed in the next chapter, The Artha Wheel.



## Always Test Instincts

Instincts like “Always read a person when first meeting” can be used to sneak in a test when the player otherwise shouldn’t—like if he’s used his building scene or is in an interstitial scene, for example. If the Instinct is triggered, the player may make a single roll to satisfy it.



*Always read a person entering my presence—test Psychology. Always observe for exits—test Perception.*

*Always check a guest for weapons—test Perception, Observation or Security, whichever is appropriate. Always recon an area for ambush points—test Recon. Always assess my enemy’s resources for weakness—test Logistics, Strategy or Tactics.*



These Instinct tests are made whenever the conditions are met, regardless of scenes. However, Instincts cannot be used to garner free conflicts or building scenes. If at any point the GM feels the Instinct is being abused to dominate screen time, he can either forbid the Instinct or declare that the player has forfeited his building/conflict scene for this maneuver.

## Changing Instincts

A player may change his character’s Instincts as he sees fit—as the character’s experience in play changes him. When a player wishes to change one of his character’s Instincts, he must announce his intention to the group, tell them the Instinct he is changing and explain what he is changing it to.

*Rich’s insurrectionist watched his friend get hulled. As soon as the scene ended, Rich turned to the GM: “I’m changing one of my Instincts. I’m losing ‘Always scrounge for tech after a battle,’ and changing it to ‘If captured by the Vaylen, I blow my brains out.’” Quite a brutal Instinct, but it’s something he felt very passionately about.*

The GM has absolute final say over *when* an Instinct may be changed. If he feels the player is changing an Instinct to be a munchkin and powergamer and not as part of character growth, then he may delay the change until a time that he sees as appropriate.



### Traits



Traits are different from Beliefs and Instincts. There is less choice in regard to traits—often, players have traits imposed upon their characters—but traits can have a much more tangible and dramatic impact on game play.

In brief, there are three kinds of traits: *character*, *call-on* and *die* traits. Each type affects the game in a different way (as described at the beginning of the Traits chapter).

A character trait illustrates a prominent aspect of a character's psychological or physiological make-up—something that affects how the character will be roleplayed at the table. Something that says, “You’re not just someone, you’re *it*.” Character traits do not modify rolls.

Call-on traits allow the player to reroll the failed dice on one test. Players decide when and how they’ll “call on” this type of trait (hence the name). Call-ons may only be invoked once per session. They are a powerful aid, meant to represent an unpredictable edge the character possesses.

*Revered is a call-on for Oratory. When delivering speeches to the faithful or gullible, the player may call on this trait to reroll failed dice once per session.*

Die traits modify an ability in the same way every time they are used. Either they add a die or two, change a game mechanical number—an obstacle or hesitation—or grant a new ability/new way to roll dice.

The mechanical effects of traits are described in more detail at the beginning of the Traits chapter.

#### Traits as Setting

The most important role of traits is that they serve to define the setting. More than color or fluff, they describe how the setting and the lifepaths have impacted the character—they describe how this cold, hard world works. They do this both before play, in character burning and during play via the trait vote.



*Traits like Hammer Flies, Anvil Dies, Codebreaker and FUGAZI demonstrate elements of the core setting and how those elements impact the characters.*

Character traits also serve another important role: They add necessary color to the game. Color is vital to capturing our imaginations and further involving us in the story at hand. This is precisely the role of these traits.

## Changing Traits and Earning New Ones

It is important that characters grow and change through play. Burning Empires uses a system where the outward perception of how the character was played is just as important as the player's inward perception of what he thinks the character is all about.

### Elevating a Belief

A Belief that has been fulfilled in play may be elevated to a *character* trait. This is for a Belief that is no longer in direct conflict, but that the player stills feels emotionally tied to. Elevating a Belief to a character trait may be done between maneuvers. You don't have to wait until the end. The player whose Belief is in question nominates himself for the new character trait and explains why. Unanimous vote gets it.

*Mayuran's first Belief, "When my father sits on the throne, he will bring reform to our world. As my father's strong right hand, I protect his interests by bringing allies to our cause and eliminating his enemies," falls to the wayside during the course of play. He knows he needs to change it, but he also likes that particular Belief a lot. He announces to the group that he's played the Belief out and wants to elevate it to a character trait: Loyal to the Mossadeghs (his family).*

### Trait Vote

The way the character is *played* changes him. This can be a deliberate effort on the part of the player—to change his character via his roleplaying—or an unintended side effect.

At the end of the phase, the GM and the players nominate characters to receive new traits. Go around the table and discuss each character who participated in the phase. Make a list of the possible traits suggested for

all the characters. After all characters have been discussed, vote on each trait suggested for each character. A unanimous decision grants the trait. All three types—character, call-on and die traits—can be awarded.

Characters can be awarded traits that change their bodies—scars, limps or even missing digits—to reflect their in-game experiences. Characters can also be awarded character traits according to how the other players perceived their personalities in the course of play. This is not punishment. It is an honest outward reflection of what's been happening at the table.



Earning call-on and die traits requires a successful vote *plus* an expenditure of artha. This process is discussed in the next chapter, The Artha Wheel.

### Voted Off the Planet

In addition to voting for new traits for a character, the GM or owning player may propose that a character lose one of his traits. If the GM proposes the loss of trait, a unanimous result is required for the trait to be voted off. If the owning player suggested it, a simple majority will do.

## Beliefs, Instincts and Traits in Brief

- Belief— A goal, drive or short statement of ethical or moral priority the player assigns to the character.
- Instincts— An *if/then*, *always*, *never* or *when* statement that the player assigns to his character to dictate a reaction or course of action.
- Character traits— Guideposts for roleplaying that announce to the group, “This is what is important to me about my character.”
- Call-on traits— Break ties or allow for a reroll on a failed test.
- Die traits— Add dice, add/reduce penalties or allow access to additional abilities the character would not otherwise have.
- Trait Vote— At the end of the adventure, all players vote for traits for the other characters based on how they were played.









## THE ARTHA WHEEL

You've heard so much about it, and here it is: *artha*. If the mechanics are the fuel and players are the fire, then artha is the spin of the wheel and the flare of the flames. It's an interface and interaction between GM, player and system. GMs reward players for driving the story forward and players reward themselves by using their characters to further complicate and dramatize the story at hand.

### *Spiritual Rewards in a World on Fire*

Burning Empires uses a point-based rewards system. Most often, the points are awarded for creating interesting situations by playing out or playing against a character's Beliefs and Instincts.

#### **Artha**

The system of reward is called *artha*. It's a Sanskrit word that means something equivalent to a person's power and success in his community/immediate surroundings. It is the middle ground between obsession with self and enlightenment. In the game, it helps the character overcome obstacles. There are three types of artha—fate, persona and deeds—each with its own effect on the game.

#### **Why Three Types?**

Why three types of artha and not just one? Three types of reward allow for distinctly different benefits conferred for different types of play. In order to be rewarded, a player must engage with the game



in a variety of ways. Doing the same thing over and over again will only garner one type of reward. Playing a character with depth and a dab of unpredictability will provide multiple types of rewards.

## Interface

The flow of artha creates a connection between player, character and GM based on themes and issues important to their game.



Beliefs, Instincts and traits are the primary interface between the player, his character and the artha system. When he designs and chooses his BITS, a player states to the GM and the group what his goals in play are for his character. *He lets everyone know how and when he wants to be rewarded for playing his character.*

### GM's Role

The GM's role in the artha interface is to challenge characters' Beliefs and tempt them to go against their Instincts. Check with each player at the end of a maneuver and ask him if he's played his character's Beliefs. If the player hasn't pushed a Belief enough—he's touched on it, but not engaged in a conflict over it—he doesn't get artha for it.

## Fate, Persona and Deeds

As mentioned above, there are three types of artha: *fate*, *persona* and *deeds*. Fate is earned simply by walking the character's destined path. It can be spent on minor boosts and aids. Persona is earned by idiomatic roleplaying, by breaking out of the mold of the aforementioned destiny and by accomplishing personal goals. It can be spent to modify die rolls. Lastly, Deeds artha marks a character's accomplishments beyond his immediate and personal goals—going beyond what is *desired* to what is needed. Deeds points are the hardest to earn and can be spent to heavily modify die rolls.

## Earning Artha

Artha is awarded to the players and GM at the end of a maneuver. After rolling for the maneuver and calculating the current disposition totals, review the session. Go over what happened in play. Cite how and when you used your Beliefs, Instincts and traits. Discuss if goals were accomplished.

Use the criteria below to determine how and what rewards are given.



### Earning Fate

#### Beliefs

Fate points are earned for manifesting the character's Beliefs in a convincing and entertaining manner. Entertaining doesn't only mean funny. We all enjoy a good dramatic performance now and again. *This award is given when playing a Belief serves a purpose and drives the game forward.* It is a very open condition, so there's a lot of room to get a character's Beliefs involved. Both players and the GM may get this reward for their characters.

*"When my father sits on the throne, he will bring reform to our world. As my father's strong right hand, I protect his interests by bringing allies to our cause and eliminating his enemies." If Mayuran confronts the Forged Lord and denounces him, he earns a fate point. If he agrees to join Thor's secret cabal against the vizier who stole his father's position, he earns a fate point.*

#### Instincts

If the player could use an Instinct to get his character out of trouble, but decides to ignore it—and get into trouble—he earns a fate point.

*"Have my handgun on me at all times."*

*Without even discussing it, this character has his sidearm with him. In the shower, at a meeting, when making it with the hot Vaylen spy, he's got his gun. But, if he's making it with that Vaylen spy and the GM initiates a conflict, he can opt to go against his Instinct. "Nah, I trust her! Why would I need my piece?" Doing so gets him a fate point.*

#### Traits

Fate artha is earned for using traits *only* if invoking that trait alters the direction of the story in an unforeseen way or makes life difficult for the character.

*If a player's character has the Clumsy trait and he opts to fumble the MacGuffin at the absolutely "wrong" time, that's worth a Fate point.*

#### Engaged

This reward is for the players to give the GM. If one of the players felt engaged, energized or even frightened by one of the GM's color or interstitial scenes, he may award a fate point to the character that engaged him. Any and all of the players may grant this reward.

#### Right Skill, Right Time

Lastly, if a character has the right skill (when no one else does) to keep the story moving, he should be rewarded with a Fate point. Consider



it a reward for clever character burning. This point should be awarded to a player no more than once per session.

## Earning Persona

### *Embodiment*

When a player or the GM captures the mood of the table perfectly and further drives the story onward with his performance, one Persona point is awarded. Moments of great speeches, desperate decisions or gruesome revenge fall into this category. The group may decide which character deserves this reward at the end of the maneuver.

### *Moldbreaker*

If a player or the GM comes to a point in the story where one of his Beliefs conflicts with a decision he must make, and he plays out the inner turmoil, the conflict within his own guts, in a believable and engaging manner, then he earns a persona point. This award is traditionally granted when the player goes against one of his Beliefs in play.



Artha



### *Personal Goals*

A player who fulfills one of the goals written into his character's Beliefs earns a persona point. This is the award for accomplishing all the various high points of a story—the assassinations, the betrayals, the kidnappings, recovery of lost artifacts, learning of ancient secrets, etc. After achieving your goal in play, it is usually time to rewrite that Belief and set a new goal.

### *Workhorse*

Being the workhorse character—the most relied upon in a given maneuver—is worth a persona point. This is for the mundane stuff—having that piece of gear to make a scene go, having that skill to get the other characters safely through danger and just generally slaving away behind the scenes to make it all work. Workhorse is for the players only, not the GM.

### *MVP*

Being voted the “most valuable player” for the maneuver earns a Persona point. MVP is for the character who drives the story to its conclusion, the character who shines in the last moments and about whom everyone agrees, “Damn, we couldn’t have done it without him!” MVP is for the players only, not the GM.

## **Voting for Workhorse and MVP**

These awards are given at the end of a maneuver—usually twice a session. They are not granted by the GM. Once the maneuver is concluded, all participating players vote for who the workhorse of the scenario was and who the MVP was. The GM gets one vote like all the other players.

## **Earning Deeds**

Deeds points are rare and awarded solely for accomplishing goals larger than a character's personal agenda. Each character on the winning side of a phase is awarded a deeds point.

## *Spending Artha*

Artha may be spent at appropriate junctures in game to modify the outcome of die rolls, thereby allowing characters to perform heroic acts they otherwise would not be able to perform. Artha may only ever





be spent by and for the character who earned it. It may not be given to another player. For example, a helping player with artha may not give the testing character any of his artha to use on the roll.

*Excepting Will to Live and Grit Your Teeth, artha must always be spent on a roll. Something dramatic has to be happening. The dice have to roll, then the artha can flow.*

Warning: Some of the artha expenditures explained below contain mechanics yet to be discussed. Skim them for now and come back to them later after you've read through the following sections.

## Spending Fate

### *Luck*

A player may spend a fate point to make the dice of a single roll open-ended (6s rerolled as new dice). If the roll is already open-ended—Steel or Inhuman Skill—then the player may reroll a single worm (*this is not open-ended*). Luck is purchased *after* the dice have been rolled.

*I roll four successes with two sixes. I decide to spend a fate point for luck. I pick up two more dice—one for each six—and roll them to try to get more successes.*

## Spending Persona

### *Boon*

A player may choose to spend one to three persona points on an ability test. Each point spent grants a bonus die (+ 1D) to roll on the test. A boon must be announced *before* the dice are cast.

### *Grit Your Teeth*

If a character is incapacitated due to wounded dice—not a Mortal Wound—his player may spend a persona point to haul him back to his feet. The point temporarily alleviates 1D of wounded dice, just enough to get him conscious. This lasts for the remainder of the scene, after which the character passes out in a heap.

### *Will to Live*

Players whose characters have been struck down with a Mortal Wound must spend a persona point in order to earn the Will to Live. The player decides whether or not he wants to continue on with his character. If the player does not spend the Will to Live point, then no art nor technology can save the character from the Mortal Wound—he has exhausted his life. If the Will to Live point is spent, then the character is allowed to attempt a recovery test against the Mortal Wound after being tended to. See the Anatomy of Injury.

### Spending Deeds

#### *Divine Inspiration*

One point of deeds artha may be spent to double the exponent of a single stat, skill or attribute test. When doubling a test that uses additional dice from advantage, technology, FoRKs, helping or other means, do not double the bonus dice. Only double the base skill/stat and then add in the bonus dice. Divine Inspiration must be announced before the dice are cast.

*Dro is making a Fabrication 5 skill test. He's using FoRKs from Engineering and Technology-wise. Thor's given him a linked die from a previous Resources test. Dro spends a deeds point and doubles the exponent 5 of the skill. He rolls 10 dice plus his two FoRKs and the linked die: 13 dice all together.*

#### *Personal Demons*

A deeds point may be spent to reroll all dice that failed to come up successes on any given test. To do so, the player must offer two details: first, the cost his demons exact for saving him this time. What price must he pay? Personal Demons may exact a human, material or temporal cost: an injury suffered, a piece of technology destroyed or damaged, property annihilated, a relationship severed or time lost. The fate that the player described—what his demons have in store for him—is handed over to the GM. He may use this new knowledge as he sees fit.



Second, the player must describe why his character's personal demons want him alive/intact/cogent. What worse fate are his demons saving for him? There's always another twist in fate's hand.

As a rule, the player may choose his new fate. It's got to be bad and/or costly, though. Otherwise, the GM can simply declare that the initial failed test result stands.

*Rich's Cotar Fomas is chasing an escaping Vaylen. He fails his Close Combat versus Withdraw. The Vaylen escapes. However, Rich opts to spend a deeds point for Personal Demons. He may reroll his failed Close Combat test. However, he must pay a price: Rich describes that the Cotar Fomas is caught in the backblast of his SCrEW pistol as he annihilates the Vaylen. He's Maimed by the blast. In addition, Rich says, "The Monkey King (his name for his personal demons) is saving me for the final confrontation with the cult leader. He knows that we'll destroy each other and possibly even destroy Hotok in the process."*



Artha



Spending a deeds point for Personal Demons is announced after the dice have been rolled.

### Spending Limits

Players may only spend 1 Fate, 1-3 Persona points and 1-2 Deeds points per roll (2 Deeds would come from doubling your dice and rerolling the worms).

## Artha and Advancement



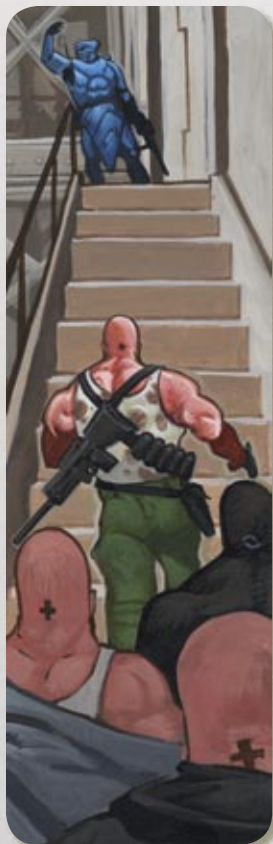
Just a reminder: Dice from artha never count toward the "total dice rolled" number when determining the difficulty of tests for advancement.

## Evolving a Belief or Instinct

The character sheet lists each Belief and Instinct with a "P/D." If artha is spent in a scene revolving around a Belief or an Instinct, note if persona or deeds are used. During the trait vote, Beliefs or Instincts that were used in conjunction with Persona points are eligible to become minor die traits (three points and lower) and call-ons. Those that were used in conjunction with Deeds points are up for major die traits (four points and higher).

This does not bypass the trait vote mechanic. This rule simply gets you nominated for the vote. *Traits must be voted on to be earned.* If the trait is voted against in the trait vote, the investment is lost and you've got to start the process again.





## STARTING ARTHA

The amount of artha each player begins with depends on how many lifepaths he took for his character. If a player has two characters—due to a bodyguard/assistant relationship—factor artha based on the main character. The player may divide his starting artha between the two characters.

**10-LP Character** — no starting artha

**9-LP Character** — 1 fate point

**8-LP Character** — 1 fate, 1 persona point

**7-LP Character** — 2 fate, 1 persona

**6-LP Character** — 3 fate, 2 persona

**5-LP Character** — 3 fate, 2 persona and 1 deeds point

## Opposition Artha

Each of the GM's opposition figures of note and relationships get an amount of artha based on the total number of lifepaths on the players' side.

Total number of lifepaths for all player characters.

**24 LPs**— Each figure of note starts with 3 fate and 2 persona points. Relationship characters in the GM's camp start with 1 fate and 1 persona.

**28 LPs**— Each figure of note starts with 3 fate, 3 persona. One figure of note also starts with a deeds point. Relationship characters in the GM's camp start with 2 fate and 1 persona.

**32 LPs**— 3 fate, 3 persona and 1 deeds for all opposition figures of note. 2 fate and 2 persona for relationships.

**36 LPs**— 4 fate, 3 persona and 1 deeds for figures of note. 3 fate and 2 persona for relationships.

**40+ LPs**— 4 fate, 4 persona and 1 deeds for figures of note. 3 fate and 3 persona for relationships.



## Artha in Brief

### Spending in Brief

NAME	COST	EFFECT
Luck	1 <i>Fate</i>	Open-ends 6s
You're Out, Buddy!	1 <i>Fate</i>	Force an ammo check in the middle of a Firefight exchange (See the Ammo Check heading in Firefight)
Boon	1 <i>Persona</i>	+ 1D to an ability for one test; max three points per roll
Grit Your Teeth	1 <i>Persona</i>	To get back up when incapacitated
Will to Live	1 <i>Persona</i>	Allows player to test Health so his character may recover from a Mortal Wound
Divine Inspiration	1 <i>Deeds</i>	Double stat, skill or attribute dice for one test; not help, advantage or FoRKs
Personal Demons	1 <i>Deeds</i>	Reroll failed dice from one test for a price!

### Earning in Brief

NAME	EARNs	DESCRIPTION
Belief	1 <i>Fate</i>	Driving the game forward with a Belief
Instinct	1 <i>Fate</i>	Not playing an Instinct to make the character's life difficult
Trait	1 <i>Fate</i>	Invoking a trait that sends the story in an unforeseen direction
Engaged	1 <i>Fate</i>	A good color/interstitial scene from the GM. Awarded by the players.
Right Skill, Right Time	1 <i>Fate</i>	For having a skill to make the story go
Embodiment	1 <i>Persona</i>	For really good or distinctive roleplaying
Moldbreaker	1 <i>Persona</i>	For pushing the character's Beliefs to the next level
Workhorse	1 <i>Persona</i>	For doing the most work during the maneuver
MVP	1 <i>Persona</i>	For being the crucial element of success
Personal Goals	1 <i>Persona</i>	Resolving a Belief: Revenge, triumph, seduction, victory!
Greater Goals	1 <i>Deeds</i>	Winning the phase





# RELATIONSHIPS AND CIRCLES

## *Relationships*

When burning a character, a player in Burning Empires designs a series of relationships that are important to him and the character. (In the context of this game, a *relationship* is shorthand for a person with whom the character has a relationship.) Relationships exist in order to define important personae not controlled by the players. These personae are known as non-player characters (NPCs). They are used by the players and the GM to get into and out of trouble in play, provide background depth and create leads into new conflicts.

Relationships are either a figure of note, associated with a figure of note, tied to a faction, the military or the government or they are a Kernn, a stentor, a sidekick, bodyguard or lieutenant.





Meeting and consulting with a relationship character doesn't require a roll. By spending points on establishing a relationship, it is assumed that all the details of contact and communication are worked out ahead of time. So long as it is reasonably feasible in the game context, a player can include his relationships in his interstitial, building and conflict scenes as need be.

With friendly relationships, tests to extract information are unnecessary. Information flows between the two characters via roleplay. However, an occasional Duel of Wits may be used to extract information from these characters when they have something they are trying to hide or withhold from the player character.

## **Relationships Are Characters**

Relationships are characters similar to the ones the players control. They possess their own goals and Beliefs, their own back stories, their own skills, Circles, Resources and tech. Relationships may share the technology and knowledge they possess. If they are asked for something they are unlikely to possess or know, the GM may make Circles, skill and Resources tests for them.

## **Relationships, Subordinates and Help**

Relationships may help player characters at the GM's discretion. They are not meant to be a font of free dice. The GM gets to decide what's appropriate. Subordinates always help their superior if they are in the same scene. If a subordinates is in a scene without his superior, he may help a character of the controlling player's choosing.

## **Player Characters Are Not Relationships**

Other player characters are never considered "relationships." All player characters know and are, in some way, tied to each other at the outset of the game.

# *Circles*

Circles is an attribute and mechanic that allows players to abstract the process of discovering who their characters know in the game world.

Circles is rolled as part of a building scene when a player wants his character to find another non-player character from whom he can get information, services or favors. This character need not exist at all in the game before a player asks for a roll to find him: No endless list of minor NPCs is needed. Just roll the dice to see whom you can track

down: Reveal spies in your ranks, tap informers, discover traitors in your enemies' household, uncover officials who harbor hidden secrets, find the character who knows what you need to know!

The information in question still needs to be extracted from these NPCs via roleplay and possibly even a Duel of Wits, but the character's existence and the player's knowledge of him is determined by a Circles test.

### Circles Ratings

Each character has one core Circles attribute. It represents his professional, casual, familial and informal spheres of influence. The Circles attribute begins the game at half Will rounded down. Affiliations and reputation add bonus dice to Circles tests but are treated separately. They cannot be advanced with the attribute or used when helping another player's Circles test. See the Character Burner for more on starting your Circles rating.

### Scope of the Circles

A character's lifepaths define the basic skeleton of his Circles. Essentially, each lifepath is like a mini-affiliation. Lords-Pilot know other Lords-Pilot. Cotar know other clergy. Artisans are familiar with other artisans. If the player can narrate a contact into the story of his lifepaths, he may test his Circles ability to see if he can track him down. Even character types indirectly tied to the lifepath—perhaps other lifepaths in the same setting—can be rolled for.

*Danny wants to bring his brother into play. Danny's character, Darrin Suss is a Circle of 10,000 warrior. He describes his brother as a member of the Circle of 10,000—he has risen in rank and power in the years since they have seen one another. Danny uses his character's Circles to bring him into play.*

*Later, Danny needs a surgeon. His character was an Agent in the Merchant League. He can make a Circles test to bring a Physician into play.*



A freeman laborer might know a trader, and even his local lord, but he can't and won't know the Anvil Lord, Hammer Lord or Metropolitan. These characters are beyond the reach of a Circles test for a player whose character has all Freeman setting lifepaths.

*Andy's crime lord is trying to uncover a nest of cultists in his territory. He uses his Criminal lifepath to leverage a Circles test: "One of my kobun handles safe houses for me. I think the cultists might have hired his services. I call a meeting and question them all in an open and friendly manner." An excellent use of his prodigious Circles.*



The player's narration creates the circumstance for a Circles test. A successful Circles test indicates the character has found someone who fits his description.

### **Reaching**



The scope of Circles is deliberately left open and loose in definition. Filling in gaps in the story is more important than arguing who knows whom and how. If a player and GM are at odds over whom a character may or may not know, look at the player character's lifepaths. If the character in question has lifepaths in the same *settings* as the player character, Circles can be tested to try to bring him into play. However, if the GM feels the player is reaching, he may veto a Circles test and have the player restate the intent of the test.

## *Testing Circles*

When a player is ready to test his Circles attribute to locate a prospective contact, he must state his intent and how he's undertaking the task. As part of the intent and task, he must describe who he is looking for and where, and how specific or broad his desires are.

### **Reputations and Affiliations**

Add the dice from appropriate reputations and affiliations to the base Circles exponent for the purposes of the test. Reputation dice can only be used in the realm for which they are defined. A local reputation can't be used when traveling abroad, or anywhere beyond the next city over, really. Affiliation bonus dice can only be applied within the affiliated organization or functions directly related to it.



## Help, Linked Tests, Artha and Circles

Other players may help with a Circles test but do so with their base Circles, not reputations or affiliations. Help may only come from other Circles—and only if they have a lifepath in the setting the player is trying to tap. No skill or stat help is permissible.



Tests from Resources, wises and skills like Finance, Administration, Estate Management and Bureaucracy may be linked to Circles tests.

Artha may be spent on Circles as on any other attribute. If spending a deeds point, only double the base Circles.

## Circles Obstacles

Circles tests are base Ob 1. An Ob 1 test will produce a person typical and common to your Circles in every way: His occupation is common to your own rank, he's ambivalent to your position, doesn't know much one way or the other, has exponent 3 abilities, and is available in this building scene. Add the following modifiers according to how the criteria for your proposed contact vary or gel with the fabric of your Circles:

Occupation	
Broad/common occupation	—
Uncommon occupation	+ 2 Ob
Specific/rare/unique occupation	+ 3 Ob
Station	
Same station/rank	—
Higher or lower rank by one iteration	+ 1 Ob
Lowest station/rank	+ 2 Ob
Highest station/rank	+ 3 Ob
Attitude	
Neutral to the player character	—
Predisposed or opposed to his position	+ 1 Ob
Outright proponent, loyal or possessing a specific outlook	+ 3 Ob
Knowledge	
Character knowledge unimportant	—
Possesses general knowledge of certain subject	+ 1 Ob
Possesses specific knowledge of certain subject	+ 2 Ob
Skill	
Typical (exponent 3)	—
Competent (exponent 4)	+ 1 Ob
Expert (exponent 5)	+ 2 Ob
Master (exponent 6)	+ 3 Ob
Place/Time	
In a building scene	—
Opening to a conflict scene	+ 1 Ob
In the midst of a conflict	+ 3 Ob



*A sergeant looking for another sergeant has no obstacle penalty—same rank. A sergeant looking for a captain has a +1 Ob penalty—higher rank. That same sergeant looking for someone among the camp followers and prostitutes has a +2 Ob penalty to his Circles test—lowest rank.*

*If you're part of a cell of insurrectionists, it's going to be easy for you to find people who want to assassinate the Civil Governor. If you're a minister charged with investigating rebels, you're at a +1 Ob to find rebels with your Circles—opposed to your position. Looking for rebels specifically bent on assassination would be +3 Ob—outright opponents.*



**Circles**

### **Add 'Em Up!**

Total the obstacle modifiers, add them to the base Ob 1 and test Circles plus reputations and affiliations. If successful, you've found whom you're looking for.

*My character is the Governor of a Commune on a tech-poor sub index world. He's looking for someone to run a factory for him. Ob 1, +3 Ob for rare occupation, +1 Ob for someone beneath my station, +1 Ob for him to be predisposed to the Commune and +1 Ob to make him competent with an exponent 4 Manufacturing skill. An Ob 7 Circles test!*



Not all of the modifiers are applicable all the time. Use only the penalties appropriate to the situation.

### **Searching for a Reputation**

If a character who has a reputation is being sought, the seeking player may use the other character's reputation as *advantage dice* for his Circles tests. Reputations can make it a lot easier to be found.

## **Naming The Unknown**

If the player meets the obstacle of his Circles test, he's found whom he's looking for, but the contact is just another face in the crowd. It's a minor supporting character. If he exceeds his obstacle, he may grant his new contact a name. If the name is legitimate and appropriate to the world, the character gets a +1D advantage to tracking down that

contact with Circles in the future. *The name must be written down by the player for the bonus to be earned.* The obstacle to find this contact again is the same as the original obstacle.

### CONTACTS and Technology

Contacts generated via Circles come with the technology appropriate to their station and index. The GM assigns the technology as he sees fit. Contacts will not freely give their tech to player characters.



### Enmity Clause

If the Circles test is failed, the GM has two options. He can declare the player has not found the contact he was looking for and move on or he may call on the *enmity clause*. The enmity clause indicates that rather than finding someone who is favorably disposed to the character, the player finds he's got an enemy out there: someone who feels insulted, mocked, intimidated, cheated or scorned by the character.



Such characters are obviously unwilling to freely give information and favors to someone they perceive as their enemy! In a Duel of Wits, enemies gain +4 points to their body of argument.

*Thor: "I want to have a meeting with the Cotar Fomas. I want him to acquire some weapons for me. I'll use my reputation as a court dandy."*

*GM-Luke: "Do you have any Theocracy lifepaths?"*

*Thor: "Yep. Theocracy Student. So I can use my Circles plus my reputation."*

*GM-Luke: "Ok, that's going to be an Ob 5 test. Ya failed? Oh, he sees you alright, but he's instantly disgusted with your wigged, preening performance. Enmity Clause, baby."*

*Thor: "Fuck yeah."*



Inimical characters do not have to be outright enemies. They can pretend to work with the players and help them. Of course, the information that they feed can be full of lies and half-





truths. They can even attempt extortion and blackmail. That's half the fun of having an enemy!

### **Enemies to Friends, Friends to Enemies**

The disposition of a contact can change. If, through play, a player manages to convince his enemy that they are on the same side, that's cool.

Changing an enemy to a friend or a friend to an enemy can be part of the statement of purpose or compromise for a Duel of Wits.

## *Infamous and Hostile Reputations*

If a character has an infamous or hostile reputation to a certain circle or faction—if he's a deserter from the hammer, or an apostate from the Church—then he gains +1 Ob per die of his reputation to Circles tests made within that circle or faction. However, an infamous reputation can open up new circles. As the saying goes, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." A hostile/infamous reputation may be applied without penalty to factions and circles opposed or inimical to the circle/faction in which the player is infamous.

## *Detecting Movement in The Circles*

Using his influence, a character can listen in and see if anyone's been asking around—if anyone has been testing his Circles ability to get information about him or his friends.

The obstacle is 10 minus his opponent's Circles test obstacle to make the initial contact.

*If his opponent made an Ob 4 test to get information, the inquiring player must make an Ob 6 Circles test to find out that someone has been asking about him.*

Success indicates the searcher finds the person whom his opponent was pumping for information. Failure indicates the character who was initially searching hears back through the circles that the searcher was looking around.

### *The Reputation Advantage Disadvantage*

The player may use his opponent's *reputation dice* as an advantage to a Circles test made to detect movement in the circles if the reputation was used in the first Circles test.



### Moving Quietly among the Sheep

In order to stay hush-hush, and keep away from known untrustworthy informants, a player may willingly raise his obstacle for a Circles test before rolling the dice. It makes it harder for him to find whom he is looking for, but it also counts as a penalty for anyone trying to track his movements with a Circles test.

*If Thor, playing Lord Omei, tacks on a +3 Ob Moving Quietly penalty to his search for information about Inquisitor Weller's retinue, Luke, playing Weller, has a +3 Ob penalty when he tries to detect Lord Omei's movement in the circles.*

For the purposes of being detected himself, the amount by which he raised his own obstacle is not considered as part of his Circles obstacle: It doesn't make it easier for someone to hear about him.

### Moving Inconspicuously

Alternately, a player may use Inconspicuous skill to set his opponent's obstacle for detecting his movements. Test Inconspicuous against the Circles obstacle. Margin of success is added to the obstacle of Detecting Movement rolls against this Circles test. Margin of failure is added as advantage dice to any Detecting Movement rolls against this Circles test.

## Circles and Advancement

Circles advances like a skill. Make sure to include the bonus dice from names, affiliations and reputations when counting the total dice versus the obstacle for advancement.

*A character with a B2 Circles, a local reputation (1D) and a minor affiliation with the army (1D) makes an Ob 3 Circles test to track down some mercenaries willing to help out with a side job. Four dice versus Ob 3 is a difficult test. If the player had opted not to use his reputation and affiliation, it would have been two dice versus Ob 3 (a challenging test).*



## Reputations

A character's reputation is not a static thing. It may grow, shrink and change over the course of play.

### Fallen Stars: Reputation and Circles

Reputations may be lost, damaged or changed through play. If a player uses his reputation dice in a Circles test that gets him into a very bad situation—loses a Duel of Wits, loses a battle, bankrupts a Resources test, etc.—he loses a die from the appropriate reputation.

Circles

### Infamy



Rather than be forced into obscurity, a player may opt to have his character live in infamy. When threatened with losing a die to his reputation, the player may instead escalate the situation: He may end the scene with a flurry of insults, curses and threats; he may challenge his accusers to a duel; or he may have his opponents coldly murdered in the night. Any flagrant, socially unacceptable transgression will do. Undertaking this escalation changes the nature of his reputation and the circles it influences. The player must rewrite his reputation including this new complication:

*An Anvil Lord has lost a Duel of Wits with his uncle, the Forged Lord. He's been denounced as a criminal and blight to the family. The player character's Reputation is under threat. Rather than lose a die, the player calls out the guard and has his Uncle murdered.*

*His former reputation is now reduced by one die, but that die is placed in an appropriate infamous reputation.*

*The player rewrites his Reputation: from "2D: Rules his house with a stern hand," to "1D Infamous: Ambitious, cold-hearted killer. 1D: Rules his house with a stern hand."*



Every time a player reduces his former reputation and exults in his infamy, he may increase this infamous reputation. The GM may also opt to have a relationship or named contact turn into an enemy.

### A Change of Identity

A player may also choose to change his identity and leave his reputation behind. All benefits of his former life are lost while under his new guise. Should he take up his old mantle, his former reputation is regained at one less die than its previous exponent.



### New Reputations

At the end of a phase, players and GM may nominate characters for new reputations. This process is exactly the same as nominating and voting for a new trait for a character. Players nominate the character based on how they think he was played—how the controlling player's roleplaying came across at the table.

The breadth of the reputation is dependent on the events that spawned it. A massive battle that saves the crown? 3D. A brilliant day at court? 2D. Settling a dispute between two feuding families? 1D.

### Advancing in Reputation

In addition to earning new reputations, existing ones may be enhanced by a player's performance in game. At the end of the phase, existing reputations can be nominated for an increase. They may only increase +1D. Advancement is handled exactly like a trait vote—nominate, lobby, vote. Unanimous decision gets it.

## Affiliations



### Exiled and Stripped of Rank: Affiliations and Circles

If a player uses his Circles plus his affiliation dice to track down a powerful contact and engage in a Duel of Wits with him, the GM may include in his statement of purpose that the character will be stripped of rank. If the GM wins without compromise, he can kick the player character out of the affiliation. Compromises involve the loss of one or two dice.



Alternately, a player may opt to cut his ties with an

affiliation at any time. The player may reduce the amount of dice as he sees fit to reflect his new status.

Lost affiliation dice can be regained if the character makes good on his failures or word, or rejoins his former crew. This must be accompanied by a successful Duel of Wits in which the statement of purpose is to regain status.



## Buying into New Affiliations

During the course of the game, a situation may arise where a character has the opportunity to affiliate himself with a new organization—a mercenary might get ennobled as a Lord-Pilot, a noble might join the clergy or a psychologist might join a foundation.

Contacts from a faction may invite the character to join. If such an invitation is extended, purchasing an affiliation costs Ob 2 plus the value of the faction in the disposition for this phase for the first die, +2 Ob for each additional die.

*Invited to join the Commune, John decides to have his character buy in to get an affiliation. This is the infiltration phase; the disposition value of the Commune is zero. John's character is a famous historian, and he wants a 2D affiliation. Therefore, his Resources obstacle is base 2, +2 for the second die: Ob 4. If it were the usurpation or invasion, the obstacle would be 7. Commune is worth three points in those phases!*

All affiliations, no matter how lowly, require this Resources test in order for the player to be able to write the new dice on the character sheet. There are parties to throw, clothes to purchase, bribes to pay, gifts to give, dues to account for and other various and sundry expenses; this is all reflected in the Resources obstacles.



It is worth noting that an affiliation cannot be simply bought like bread. An in-game situation must arise in which the character is invited to join.

## Advancing in Rank

Advancing an affiliation from 1D to 2D follows the mechanics for buying into a new affiliation. If the character bought in or started at 1D, +1D can be purchased with a Resources test. The obstacle is two greater than what the character bought in at.

## Building Relationships from Circles

This is an optional rule, but we recommend it. If a player would like to build one of his contacts into a relationship, he can test his Circles repeatedly to keep this character in play. Add up the total dice the player uses to contact this character—Circles, affiliation and reputation—and subtract that from 10. That's how many Circles tests the player must make before the character may be added as a relationship. Once a contact becomes a relationship, the player no longer needs to test Circles to get in touch with him.

If the character has an infamous reputation in regard to this contact—even if it's not used to contact him—add the infamous reputation's dice to the number of tests required to build the relationship.

### *GM's Circles Reserve*

During character burning, the GM may set aside some of his circles points from his figures of note—he does not have to spend them on relationships, reputations or affiliations. These points may be spent during the game in a building, color or interstitial scene to bypass a Circles test and generate a new relationship for the figure of note on the spot. It costs two points for a standard, allied relationship. It costs one point for an inimical character or a relationship who's working for the opposition. The GM can determine competence, attitude and knowledge as he sees fit.

### *Circles in Brief*

- Relationships are contacts the character has reasonably free access to and strong ties to. Players do not need to roll to contact them.
- Circles are peripheral characters, professional acquaintances, social friendships and familial relations available as contacts. The range of Circles is determined by the lifepaths of the character.
- Test the Circles attribute (plus appropriate affiliations and reputations) to locate a person from whom you want information or services. The more obscure the contact, or the higher or lower the station of the contact, the higher the obstacle.
- If the player rolls more successes than the obstacle, he may name his contact. Doing so gives him a +1D advantage to his Circles test when trying to locate the contact again. The name must be written down and remembered by the player for the bonus to be earned.
- If a Circles test is failed, the GM may invoke the Enmity Clause.
- If trying to find out if someone is looking for you: Test Circles. The obstacle is 10 minus the obstacle of the character who was looking for you. Success means you hear some disturbing rumors....







# RESOURCES

Resources is an attribute similar to Circles. It is used to acquire technology, pay for services, offer bribes and extend loans to other characters.

Every character possesses this measure of material wealth, influence and status within his society. This has nothing to do with intelligence or physical ability—wealth can be inherited, earned, striven for or be absent. It depends on the background of the character and how resource points were allocated in character burning.

## Counting Credits



This system is *not* designed to simulate the simple exchange of money for goods. The Resources ability represents the character's profession, overall material wealth and potential influence and also his ability to borrow, barter, trade and lend. It is very much an abstraction of all of the factors involved. Interpreting the process by counting credits is actively working against the mechanic.

### Basis of Resources

Resources represent what material goods, monies and services the character has on hand, can call on or purchase. When the Resources attribute is tested, it can represent the character spending a little currency, moving financial assets, calling on his friends and family for loans or references or simply checking his accounts.

#### Starting Resources

During character burning, the player decided what gear and technology he wanted on his character's person immediately at the start of the game and how many dice he wanted to invest in Resources for future purchases.



Take careful note: The items purchased in character burning exist in the game as fully fleshed out technology or property from the very first scene. Everything else is color and must be brought into the game via a Resources test.

### Testing Resources



Test Resources against the obstacle as if it were any other skill or stat. Helping, artha and advancement rules apply. Wounds do not reduce Resources dice.

If the player meets or exceeds the obstacle, he has acquired what he stated he was after. If he fails the test, his Resources are *taxed*, and he either can't find or can't afford what he was looking for. See the Failed Resources Tests heading in this chapter.



## Build on Your Resources

Resources are used in building scenes in order to make purchases, hire services and bring technology into the game. If you want something, you're going to have to schedule in a building scene to get it.

## FoRKs

Players may *not* FoRK their skills into Resources.

## Linked Tests and Resources

Players may make linked tests using appropriate skills like Wises or Accounting in order to get a bonus die to a Resources test. See the Scoring a Deal section of this chapter.

## Helping

Characters may *help* one another with Resources as if it were a skill. If the testing player is taxed, *everyone else involved in the test is taxed*.

By the way, both characters do not have to be part of the same scene when Resources helping dice are used.

## Home and Away

Resources, while broad in application, are not universal. They reflect the power of the character on his home turf. If a character is off-world or at the mercy of a foreign faction, he suffers a +1 Ob disadvantage to Resources tests.

## Buying in Bulk



If characters want to buy in bulk and have the proper venue—a wholesaler or business willing to sell in bulk—raise the obstacle by one or two and multiply the material numbers by 10 or even 100. It's an abstract system, after all.



### *Sample Resources Obstacles*

The following is a list of basic obstacles for property and services. Technology and devices are described in the next chapter, the Technology Burner.

#### **Services and Property**

- Ob 1— Guest lodging. Personal supplies and accoutrements.
- Ob 2— Rent for a small flat. A lease for a private groundcar. Pilot's wages. Passage for an intercontinental or orbital flight. A small bribe. Upkeep for your Mukhadish bodyguard.
- Ob 3— Rent for a house. Lease for a grav sled. Pay for household staff or a single professional assistant. Commercial passage to a moon or other far satellite.
- Ob 4— Jewelry, exotic fabrics, rare antiques and books. Wages for a lord-pilot. A hefty bribe. Wages for a technician—Signals, Security, Fabrication, etc.—working off the books.
- Ob 5— A navigator's, lord's or captain's wages. Passage on an interstellar voyage. A surgeon's fees.
- Ob 6— A grav sled. Wages for a commune executive. Wages for a technical specialist: Propagandist, Torturer, Security Rigger, etc.
- Ob 7— Fee for admission into the nobility as a lord pilot. Corporate offices. Wages for a treasurer or chamberlain.
- Ob 8— Industrial equipment: a printing press, a factory. Commercial atmospheric sled. A usurious fee designed to tax a character's finances.
- Ob 9— A temple. Wages for a metropolitan.
- Ob 10— A fortress. Wages for a merchant league executive. Passage for an intragalactic flight—from the core to the outworlds, for example. Extortion. A massive bribe. A small factory.
- Ob 11— A palace. A fortress temple.
- Ob 12— A small space station.
- Ob 13— Wages for an Anvil Lord.
- Ob 14— Wages for a Lord Steward.
- Ob 15— A large space station. Wages for a Hammer Lord.
- Ob 16— Upkeep for an anvil battalion.
- Ob 17— Upkeep for an iron company.
- Ob 18— Upkeep for a hammer wing.
- Ob 20— Wages for a Forged Lord.

### *Gee, Those Resources Obstacles Are Mighty High*



Yes, they are. In order to make most high end purchases, even the wealthy will need to secure loans or procure gifts from their dependents. See the Cash, Funds, Loans and Payments heading in this chapter.

## **Failed Resources Tests: Tax**

A failed Resources test *taxes* the character's attribute exponent—it is temporarily reduced. The tax represents a loss of fluidity in the character's assets. Perhaps some cash was expended, but more likely is that favors were called on or resources tapped that simply can't be called on again for a while. A failed Resources test is an interesting animal. There are two directions in which a failed Resources test can go either the player does not achieve his intent (just like a normal failed test) and his Resources is temporarily reduced by a small margin or the player gets what he was after and his Resources is temporarily reduced by a larger margin.

### **Taxed Dice**

On a failed routine test, the character loses one die. On a failed difficult test, he loses two dice. If it was a failed challenging test, the character's Resources is reduced by the margin of failure.

*Dro wants to build a new factory. It's an Ob 10 Resources test. His character's Resources is 9. It's a challenging test and he fails by three.*



On a failed Resources test, the GM has a lot of power. He can enforce the failure: The player's Resources is taxed a little and he doesn't get what he's after. Or the GM can offer the Gift of Kindness—the player gets what he was after and he's taxed by more.

### **The Gift of Kindness**

On a failed roll, the GM may choose to grant the player whatever it was he was after on his Resources test. If this option is chosen, the character's Resources is still taxed, *but the player achieves the intent of his roll*. The Gift of Kindness may be considered by the GM on a case-by-case basis. It is often the best choice to grant the Gift of Kindness, but the judgment is reserved for the GM, so he may mitigate outlandish purchases.

*I offer Dro the Gift of Kindness for his factory. He can have it, but he's got to take that 3D tax. His Resources would be 6 for the remainder of the phase—unless he gets some downtime.*

### *Technology and the Gift of Kindness*

When a player fails a test for acquiring technology, the GM may grant him the Gift of Kindness—he gets the tech, but he's taxed by the full amount. If the player accepts, the GM may add traits of his choosing to the piece of technology. The margin of failure becomes the total Resources cost of the traits the GM may add. Thus, if the player failed by two, the GM may add an Ob 2 trait to the technology. In addition, the GM may always add technological color to the item in question when the Gift of Kindness is granted. See the Technology Burner for details.

### *The GM and the Gift of Kindness*

The GM must make Resources tests for his figures of note to acquire technology and services. If he fails a Resources test, the GM may always take the Gift of Kindness if he so desires. It's one of the perks of the job.

If a *Technological Resources* test is failed by the GM, and he takes the Gift of Kindness, the *players* may assign the technology a limitation. The obstacle/cost of the limitation cannot exceed the margin of failure for the Resources test. See the Limitations heading in the Technology Burner.

## **Declining the Gift of Kindness: Cut Your Losses**

If a player fails a Resources test and the GM offers him the Gift of Kindness option, the player can decline the offer and opt to *cut his losses*. If he does so, he does *not* find what he was looking for, but his character's Resources are taxed by only 1D regardless of difficulty.

*Dro opts to cut his losses. "No, dude, I'm not going to take this. I'm going to use some building scenes to do it differently. I'll get linked dice and some help. I'll be back!"*

## **Depleting Resources**



If a character's Resources ever drop to exponent 0 due to tax, his Resources are *permanently* reduced by 1D. Unlike regular *taxed* dice, depleted Resources may only be recouped through advancement/practice. Once you're at the bottom, it's hard to climb back up. You need friends who will support you with help.

## *Human Resources*

All Resources tests to acquire services must be preceded by a successful Circles test—the player must be able to make contact within his Circles before he can proffer money for the services. Any of the pay, stipends or



retainers for contacts merely indicate the basic cost of services for these character types. The obstacle may be raised or lowered as deemed appropriate by the GM and the situation at hand.

## Scoring a Deal: Wises

Wises can be used to aid Resources in the game. When a player wishes to track down an item or service not commonly available, test an appropriate wise to see if the character finds it in a timely manner or finds a good deal.



Set the obstacle for the test: Ob 1 tests are for commonly known information in the wise's area; Ob 3 for uncommon or hard to find details; Ob 5 for something only an insider would know; Ob 6 and up for obscure stuff.

This test abides by the standard mechanics for linked tests: failing incurs an obstacle penalty, success grants +1D.

*Dro goes back to the drawing board. He discusses how his character, Marcus Frost, is using his Technology-wise skill to find out about the latest in manufacturing technology. That's an Ob 3 test. He makes the test and earns a linked die toward his next Resources test to acquire that factory.*

## Resources and Technology

In addition to making purchases for services and property, Resources allows your character to call on technology appropriate to his lifepaths and affiliations and bring it into the game. Using the basic Resources rules and the next chapter, the Technology Burner, the player may create appropriate technology for his character how and when he sees fit. The Burning Hard Technology heading describes the obstacles for this process.

## Primary Export

All planets have a primary export: a product or service that the planet specializes in selling to the rest of the system/sector. Attempting to acquire a primary export while on the planet of origin confers a +1D advantage to the Resources test.

*If Dro's planet, Morelia, had Industrial Capital as its primary export, Dro would earn +1D to Resources tests to acquire that factory. As it happens, Morelia's primary export is agriculture in the form of anteater-like desert cattle.*

### Quarantine

Most spaceports also quarantine livestock, tourists, pets and fresh foods in order to prevent the spread of foreign disease on the planet. Any item or service that must undergo an import quarantine is +1 Ob to acquire.

*Resources tests to acquire imported food on Morelia suffer a +1 Ob: Foodstuffs are quarantined.*

### Regulation

Most planets have some form of economic regulation imposed. The more regulated the economy, the harder it is to acquire certain services, commodities or technologies. Resources obstacles increase accordingly.

There are four levels of regulation: unregulated, loosely regulated, moderately regulated and tightly regulated.

#### Regulation Priority Codes

In order to make the economic system of regulation clear, each regulated service/technology is tagged with a priority code: 0, 1, 2 or 3.

#### Unregulated: Priority 0 Regulation

Anything goes. An unregulated economy does not affect Resources obstacles for any service, commodity or technology.

#### Loosely Regulated: Priority 1 Regulation

Loosely regulated economies typically regulate or restrict the use of a few dangerous commodities while allowing unfettered traffic elsewhere. Psychology, slavery, immigrant labor and military manufacture are the most common targets of loose regulation. They fall under priority 1 and are +2 Ob to acquire. Players determine regulated items and services when burning their world.

#### Moderately Regulated: Priority 2 Regulation

Moderate regulation picks up where loose regulation lets off and extends government control to the power infrastructure, medical practices, pharmaceuticals, recreational drugs, livestock and the sex trade—as determined by the players in the World Burner. These are priority 2 regulations. They are +2 Ob to acquire via Resources. Priority 1 regulations are +3 Ob to acquire in a moderately regulated economy.

## Tightly Regulated: Priority 3 Regulation

Tightly regulated economies control the flow of goods and services via a vast bureaucracy and strictly enforced laws. In addition to all of the regulations described above, tight regulation imposes a fee on waste disposal, food preparation, marriage and public performance—as determined by the players when they burned their world. These are priority 3 services and are +1 Ob to acquire. Priority 2 regulations are +2 Ob and priority 1 are +3 Ob.

*Agra is tightly regulated. Resources obstacle penalties on Agra are as follows: military manufacture, psychology and slavery, +3 Ob. Power/energy, hospitals, medical and livestock, +2 Ob. General foodstuffs and marriage permits, +1 Ob.*

## Bypassing Regulation

There are three ways to get around regulation obstacle penalties: have an affiliation with the regulatory body—the faction that controls regulation on this planet—or have a relationship with someone connected to the regulatory body. The third way is to break the law and buy on the black market.



If the player uses any of these methods, the regulation obstacles are not applied. However, if you're buying on the black market, a whole host of other problems can be introduced.

## Black Market

Unless it is unregulated and without quarantine, a planet has a black market. Black markets can only be accessed via appropriate Circles or relationships. Characters break the law by buying and selling regulated or quarantined goods on the black market.

The size and activity of the black market fluctuates depending on the state of the planet.



## Agra

**Export/Industry:** Military Capital

**Quarantine:** Advanced

**Regulation:** Tight—Church controls military manufacture, hospitals and power infrastructure; noble fiefdom controls psychology, slavery, livestock, food and marriage.





### **At Peace**

If the planet is at peace, the black market can bypass the regulation of one of the regulated commodities/services, so that buying that item from the black market negates the regulation penalty. Other regulated items can be found on the black market with their Ob penalty reduced by one.

### **Infiltration**


During the infiltration phase of the Vaylen infection, the planet appears to be at peace, so no modifiers to regulation are necessary.

### **Usurpation**

If facets of the government or black market have been usurped by the Vaylen, and during play the Vaylen player decides to put the squeeze on certain regulated goods and services via a Take Action, Pin or Inundate, then regulation obstacles are increased by +1 Ob. This in turn creates a flood of demand on the black market—allowing profiteers to raise their prices. Otherwise, the obstacles are the same as for At Peace.

### **Circles, War and The Black Market**

Once the full-blown war is on, the black market gets into full swing. The standard regulation obstacles and black market goods still apply, but in addition, *all* Resources tests must be preceded by a Circles test. The character must have Circles relating to the item or goods he seeks. You can't just go out and buy food; you've got to know who's selling it and when. Then you show up with the cash or trade goods and make



your purchases. If a player can't bring an appropriate Circle to bear, he can't make the purchase. The Circles test counts as a linked test toward the Resources test.

### *Life During Wartime*

Once the Vaylen land and the invasion begins in earnest, the price of goods skyrockets. The standard distribution chain breaks down, and most goods can only be found on the black market.

Foodstuffs and basic commodities triple in price—food and clothing are Ob 3 purchases. Heavy military gear, like an assault sled, is + 2 Ob due to scarcity. Everything else is + 1 Ob. Weapons and explosives are -1 Ob (at least). Cheap housing is -1 Ob, while luxury accommodations are + 1 Ob.

## **Breaking the Law**

When dealing with the black market, the risks for getting caught are high. If the *enmity clause* is invoked for a Circles test involving the black market, it involves one of two probable outcomes. Either the character has run afoul of the extortionate or murderous elements of the underworld—who'd rather rob and kill him than conduct business—or he's been picked up by Johnny Law and is now known to the law enforcement agency as being involved in the black market.

Legal penalties for purchasing from the black market are always less severe than those for selling to the underworld. If caught purchasing priority 3 goods, the character will be fined. If caught purchasing priority 2 goods/services, he'll be imprisoned. For purchasing priority 1 items, he'll be executed—or imprisoned for a long time.

Selling priority 3 goods imposes a prison sentence or a large fine, while selling priority 2 goods and services is an extended prison term or execution. Selling priority 1 goods/services on the black market is grounds for life imprisonment or summary execution.

In peacetime, the penalties are more lenient, whereas during wartime, the penalties are universally more strict.

## *Regulation Enforcement*

During the usurpation and invasion phases, the side that controls the primary government or the faction who dictates economic regulation may use Take Action, Pin or Inundate to tighten up regulation enforcement (see the Infection mechanics for details on those maneuvers). Doing so requires stating it as the intent of the maneuver. If successful on

that action, all Resources obstacles for regulated goods are increased by +1 Ob for the rest of the phase, and demand increases on the black market.

### Bargaining

Bargaining is the norm in many cultures. Therefore, players are free to haggle over Resources obstacles. There are two ways to bargain: either a versus test in a building scene or a Duel of Wits in a conflict scene.

For the versus test, use Bargaining versus Bargaining, FoRK as appropriate. If the buyer wins, drop the Resources obstacle by one. If the seller wins, he doesn't budge—his price stands, take it or leave it.

In place of the simplified Bargaining rules, the players can also use a Duel of Wits. The Bargaining skill is the prime social skill in this case. Often, the Not a Big Deal rules are useful for these types of conflicts. The statement of purpose for both sides should be the price they are willing to pay—be sure to agree to the terms of this Duel of Wits! The more the buyer is forced to compromise, the more he must raise his offer. The more the seller has to compromise, the more he has to drop his price. A tie at zero indicates the seller agrees to rock bottom prices, but the buyer has to marry his daughter.

### Haggled Price

A Resources test follows the Bargaining test. However, if the price is too high, the character can still walk away before the dice are rolled. If the player decides to buy at that haggled price, he pays full Tax if he fails the test.

### Recovering Resources

Resources don't recover on their own. They must be actively replenished during downtime.



To rejuvenate his depleted reserves, a character must do some work. The player describes how he is going about earning cash, closing deals and refunding his accounts. Such behavior must be tied into one (or more) of the character's skills.

*In order to replenish his reserves, a poor lord-pilot has got to take a few paying jobs escorting mercenaries. Pay's good, but the work is boring.*



## Get a Job!

Establish what job/occupation the character is undertaking. Pick a skill to represent this. Test the skill; appropriate FoRKs are allowed. The obstacle is 1 plus the number of dice lost. Meeting this obstacle recovers 1D. Multiple dice are recovered from extra successes over the obstacle. This test counts toward the advancement of the “working” skill.



Getting a job and replenishing Resources can only be done during *downtime*. Players are allowed to make a single test to recover Resources each time there's downtime. Doesn't matter how much downtime is generated by the maneuver, only test once. Working your job can be done in addition to practice. The job eats up practice time, though. Count the job test's level for advancement—routine, difficult or challenging—as if the character were practicing during the downtime.

*On Agra, the players successfully used a Conserve maneuver and decided to create three months of downtime. Chris wants his character, Mal Nenox, to recover taxed Resources. He lost two dice during play. He describes that Nenox is taking time to get his fabrication shop in order. He keeps a low profile and does legit, paying work. He tests his Fabrication skill. His obstacle is 3—base Ob 1 plus the number of dice taxed, 2. Chris meets his obstacle of 3. He recovers 1D of Resources. If he had exceeded his obstacle by one, he would have recovered both taxed dice. The test was routine, therefore it costs him one hour a day for three months of downtime.*

## Advancing Resources



As the cliché goes: You must spend money to make money. Resources advances like a skill—the more you push yourself and test your Resources, the more you stand to gain. However (there's always a “however,” isn't there?), *only successful Resources tests count toward advancement.*

Tax only *temporarily* reduces the Resources exponent. Make sure to use the current actual Resources exponent to determine the tests required for advancement.

### Resources 0 and Advancement

One successful Resources test will push a character from exponent 0 to exponent 1 Resources.

## Cash, Funds, Loans and Payments



### Cash on Hand

If ever a player character is given a substantial amount of cash—either as a reward or payment—then he gains bonus dice to his Resources. Cash is the most liquid of Resources but it dries up as quickly as water.

Dice from cash on hand (or its equivalent) may only be used for one test. After the test, the cash is considered spent, and the character's Resources returns to normal. Multi-die bonuses may be spent, one or two at a time, across multiple rolls.

*While he was rigging the Archcotare's private quarters, Nenox lifted the old man's watch. He then sold it on the black market. The GM awarded him 1D of cash. Nenox uses the cash later on down the line: He's got to buy materials to fabricate some tech—an Ob 3 test. Nenox has a 4 Resources. Chris throws in the cash die and rolls five dice for the test. Pass or fail, the cash die is gone after the test. If he's taxed, the first taxed die gets eaten up by the cash. Any additional tax reduces his Resources exponent.*

### Funds

Occasionally, a character will come into a substantial infusion of wealth: a large sum of cash, property, valuable antiques or even bulk quantities of salable goods. We call these *funds*. A fund provides one to ten bonus dice to Resources—the GM sets the bonus when the boon is granted—and the dice persist across multiple Resources tests.



If a character is taxed due to a failed Resources test, dice must be removed from a fund first and are lost permanently. They cannot be regained via the Get a Job! process described above.

### Loans and Payments

Characters may give each other loans or pay each other for services. Loans and payments are represented by the number of Resources dice they grant to the recipient.

To give another character *cash*, the loaning player must make a Resources test; the obstacle is double the number of dice being granted to the other player. These dice may be used as cash as described above.

To set up a *fund*—dice that persist across multiple Resources tests—the obstacle is double the number of dice granted, plus one.

*1D of cash loaned to a friend is an Ob 2 Resources test. 2D of funds set up for a friend is an Ob 5 test—two dice in loans is Ob 4, +1 Ob for being able to use the dice more than once.*



If the test is failed, the loaning/funding player can opt to abort the loan and cut his losses or suck up the tax and dole out the dice to be loaned.

### **Help versus Funds and Loans**

The difference between loans and helping dice is: Should his friend make a bad deal and be taxed, the loaning character is unaffected. The loaned dice are now considered to be part of his friend's pool and no longer attached to him.

## **GM's Resources Reserve**

Rather than make a Resources test for a figure of note, the GM may simply reduce the character's Resources exponent and bring the item or service in question into play.

The cost of technology is the same as if the GM had bought the item in character burning: one point if it's appropriate to his lifepaths and station, two points if it's nice, potent, expensive, beyond his means, etc. Or tech-trait-point-equivalent for his tech index.

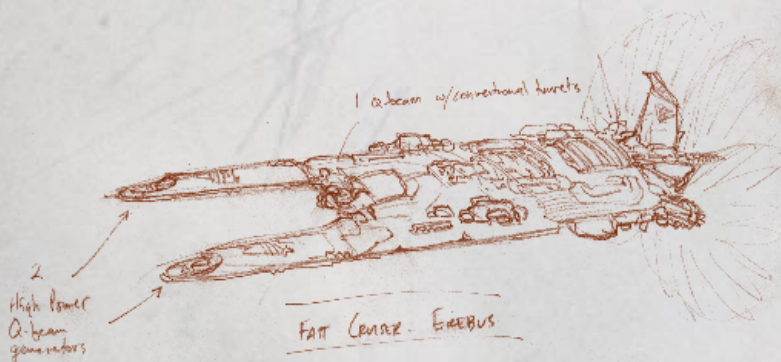
*My Vaylen sleeper needs an operating theater so she can start hulling people. I describe her setting up the surgery as part of one of her building scenes and then reduce her Resources exponent by one. No test is necessary. That one point cannot be recovered with the Get a Job! rules.*



Points removed from Resources in this manner are not considered tax; they cannot be recovered with the Get a Job! mechanics. However, the NPC's Resources may advance as normal from his new exponent.

### Resources in Brief

- The GM sets the price—Resources obstacle—based on the listed examples.
- If applicable, players may bargain over the price or use a Duel of Wits to set and/or modify a price.
- Test Resources. No FoRKs, but linked tests and helping dice are OK.
- Success means you got what you were after. Failure indicates you were taxed and temporarily lose Resources dice.
- If taxed, you must Get a Job! to recover Resources. Test working skill: Ob 1 + number of dice lost. Success means one die is recovered. Extra successes recover additional dice. Any dice not recovered are still considered taxed.
- Only successful Resources tests count toward advancement.
- Loans: Test Resources to give dice to other players. For cash, the obstacle is double the number of dice being loaned. For funds, add +1 Ob to the cash loan obstacle. Loaned dice are not helping dice and therefore the loaning character is *not* taxed every time his deadbeat friend fails a Resources test.





## TECHNOLOGY BURNER

In one form or another, technology is vital to science fiction. It either provides the color necessary to bring the world to life, or it enhances the capabilities of the characters in that world so they may accomplish what the reader cannot. Technology acts as an extension of character and thereby an extension of the themes of the story.

*In the story "Faith Conquers," the main character, Faith, has a remarkable suit of iron. While it is incredibly cool tech, it also acts as a metaphor for his demeanor and his rigid, violent emotional state. Conversely, the heroine in "Sheva's War" has no such rigidity, violence or protection. She is battered, heedless of the technology that encases her and is thereby forced to rely on her mind in order to overcome.*

In the game, a piece of technology is represented by its own traits, separate from the character. These traits either act as color and mise-en-scène, add dice to a stat or skill, grant a new ability or act as a weapon, armor or vehicle.

The Technology Burner provides rules so that players may create their own technology on the fly during play. If you need an uplink to your milstar, describe it, name it and bring it into the game. If everyone thinks it's cool, it's part of the world. If someone disagrees, you've got to make a Tech Resources test. It's that simple.



### Tech Index

All technological items in the Iron Empires are rated by their index, a measure of the technological knowledge and facilities required to build them. The Federation Technological Index (usually referred to as “tech index” or simply “index”) was instituted during the heyday Federated Empire as a yardstick for measuring the relative technological advancement of its member worlds. A world’s index is determined by what the world itself can manufacture and how that product interacts with the galactic society.

The index is still used, but suffers from some significant drawbacks. The most important of these arises from the fact that the index was established during a period of high technological development. At the height of the Federation, the majority of its member planets rated between index 0 and index 10. Among the Iron Empires, only the most advanced worlds in the Karsan League retains ratings as high as 8, and a significant portion of human worlds have fallen completely off the chart (these worlds are termed “sub index”).

A second flaw in the index system is that it is only updated every decade or so, and even then, the updates are not complete. Many worlds have missed re-evaluation since the fall of the Hanrilke Empire, and the official index is now an inaccurate measurement.

While the worlds of the Iron Empires possess a vast range of technological capabilities, from primitive worlds without electrical power to wondrous planets suffused with the most fantastic tech imaginable, the extremes are rare. Most worlds are, by necessity, spacefaring ones—part of a galactic culture and exchange of ideas that





stretches back for millennia. This interchange has maintained a mean technological range which is far below the heights possible, but still fantastic in its own right.

## Primitive

Primitive worlds are societies who have not yet harnessed electricity. Materials are constructed from naturally occurring substances and only marginally refined—wool, leather, wood, steel. Plastics are not available, as oil refining techniques have not been developed.

These worlds are not included in the World Burner because there's little they can do to resist the Vaylen.

## Sub Index

Technology of sub index worlds consists of electricity, fossil fuels, internal combustion, plastics, radio, telephone, steel and medicine. If the world does not have the power to project its aims into space, it is a sub index world. It may be home to many disparate peoples and cultures, but if it cannot *produce* spacecraft and other higher index capital, then the world falls off the scale—it's sub index.

There are two types of sub index worlds: densely inhabited worlds trying crawl out of the mire of planet-bound life and sparsely populated backwaters with no industry to speak of.

*Taramai is a sub index world. Even though interstellar ships occasionally arrive on the planet, the world is too poor and backward to manufacture its own.*

## Zero Index

Zero index worlds are capable of producing jet engines, personal/micro computers, personal wireless communication, cryonics, fission technology, robotics and rudimentary spacecraft, in addition to the products of a sub index world.

Zero index worlds are interplanetary-travel capable but are restricted to chemical thrust. They have a small space-based economy, limited to satellite technology, small orbiting stations or perhaps a moonbase.



### Low Index

Low index worlds have access to iron, hammer, grav/pressor technology, fusion power, psychology, electrical superconductors, distortion drives, nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, human cloning and genetic engineering.

Superconductivity, fusion power and grav/pressor drives knit low index systems into a cohesive, accessible whole. Nanotechnology, fusion power and distortion drives allow the denizens of a low index world to conduct interstellar commerce and to maintain a space-based navy. These are the basic requirements for being a viable political power; most of the worlds of the Iron Empires fall into this category. It's common for these worlds to have a large space station that acts as a quarantine, customs and immigration point.

### High Index

In truth, high index societies no longer exist. The human realms have been so battered by upheaval and war that the glorious past is but a memory and its remnants are artifacts. The technology still exists and is even used, but the nature of its manufacture is lost to the ages.

Only a handful of worlds among the eight remaining empires can be said to be high index. They possess wondrous and powerful technology like force fields, transhuman biomodification, the ansible, matter converters, micro-blackhole reactors and devices capable of enhancing or restricting psychological power.

A high index world is a very potent political and military entity.

The economies of high index worlds are most often based on services and information, traded on an interstellar level. These worlds usually attracts to it myriad travelers, traders and supplicants in search of its wonders.

It is worth noting that the majority of high index worlds did not disappear or fade. They were lost during the initial wars with the Vaylen. Some were destroyed, some were captured and some were cut off from the rest of civilization.

*In "Sheva's War," Philippe Artois makes a bargain with the Vaylen to gain access to the Hammideh Archives. This is no mere library. The Hammideh Archives are a trove of high index technology. Possessing and controlling such technology would render Philippe one of the most powerful nobles in the Karsan League.*



## Technology in The Game

Technology serves two purposes in Burning Empires: It either exists to flesh out the setting and create a more immersive environment for the players to engage with or it provides a mechanical benefit—or opposition—to a character in the game.

When thinking about technology, ask yourself these questions: Is this really going to impact play, or am I just trying to make my character look good? Is this just a cool description? If it's just descriptive, you're dealing with *technological color*. See the Technological Color heading for how that works.

*If you need this technology to affect play, what stat, skill or attribute is benefiting from or being hindered by this tech? This type of tech is called **hard technology**. It's important to imagine the fictional technological device, but focus on what bonus/effect you need from it right now, in the game, in this scene. See the Burning Hard Technology section for the steps on creating tech with bite.*



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Burner

### Technology in Steps

Technology in Burning Empires is generated on the fly through play. The process takes a few steps. First, the player or GM establishes the technological color—he just takes a moment to describe it.

After the color has been established, if the player needs a mechanical effect, he turns the color into what we call *hard technology*. Then he determines what effect he wants the technology to have in the game mechanics. The effect (or effects) he chooses determine the obstacle for a Resources test. Finally, he names his device and then tests to see if he can bring it into play.

We explore this process in the following sections: Technological Color, From Color to Hard Technology, Burning Hard Technology, GM Tech Cost Modifiers, Limitations, Name Your Heart's Desire and the Tech Resources Tests.



4KE goggles



## Character Burning Technology

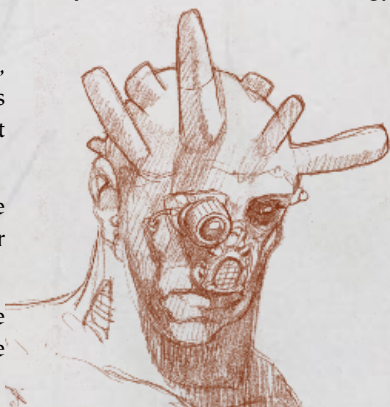
Resource points in character burning may be used to establish hard tech at the beginning of the game. These resource points are very valuable. For one point, a player may buy any weapon, form of protection or vehicle listed in this book that is *appropriate to his character's station*

and index. Choose the weapon, armor or vehicle from the list of items provided in the relevant chapters. Those pieces come with extra traits for free!

Property comes bundled with free technology traits. Each resource point spent on property gives the player one resource point equivalent of tech for his index. This tech must be spent on security systems, defenses, hidey-holes, medical suites and other goodies that are part of the property.

Lastly a player may build (or buy) novel devices for his character in character burning. The devices may be added onto existing gear, like a scope for a weapon or an AI for a ship, or be pieces unto themselves, like an energy scanner.

- On sub index worlds, one resource point counts as two technology trait points.
- On zero index worlds, one resource point counts as three technology trait points.
- On low index worlds, one resource point counts as four technology trait points.
- On high index worlds, one resource point counts as five technology trait points.



Multiple points may be spent to purchase more costly traits.



## Technological Color

During the game, if a player feels his character would have access to a piece of technology as part of his profession, circles or station, he can bring the tech into the scene on the fly. All he has to do is describe it and how it relates to the scene. Color provides the details that allow the group to imagine the world and how it works.

Items like a pocket terminal, shade-shifting clothing, a chronometer, a communications uplink, a grav sled or even a starship can all be invoked as color—details to flesh out a scene—and brought into the game. Use color liberally and often!

Color technology helps us infuse the setting with details. It can be brought into the world so long as it is appropriate to the index and has *no mechanical value in the game*.

When creating color tech follow these guidelines:

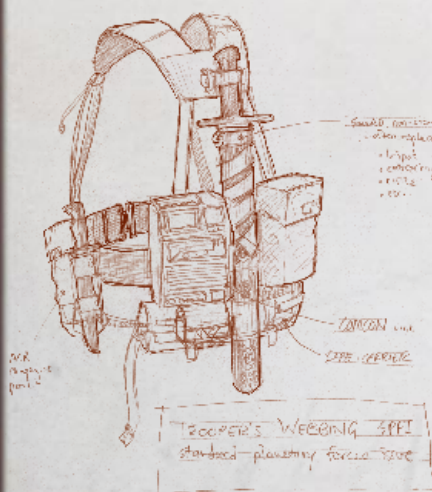
- Color tech must fall within the prevailing tech index of the setting. Color always comes from what is most prominently available—what's the easiest to manufacture. It also helps solidify the setting.
- Color has no mechanical impact on the game. It cannot be used to gain advantage dice, as armor, as a weapon or as tools. Color has no numbers to back it up. It's merely window dressing. What's more, color may be countered with color. If a player describes a cool piece of gear solely as color, another player may build on it in his own scenes. Color may be interfered with, damaged or changed. You can create a color weapon, but it cannot be used to do damage. Color armor provides no protection.

*For example, in one scene Mayuran describes a beautiful sleek sidearm for his character, but he doesn't pay for it. Later, I confront him with an assassin—a conflict scene. Mayuran frantically describes his character pulling his weapon. I coldly describe the assassin smacking the gun away. The color gun is trumped with color.*

- Technological color may be introduced in a color or interstitial scene. It must exist in its first scene solely as color before it can be built into the game as hard tech. It may also be introduced by a player during character burning.
- A player may only add one piece of color tech per scene, but that piece may have multiple traits.

- Color may be challenged by the other players or the GM. If the group as a whole feels the color is inappropriate to the world, they may ask the player to withdraw the tech or redescribe it. If a piece of technology is offensive or inappropriate to the group, they may veto it outright. If the group vetoes the color, it never existed!
- Color technology is always trumped by hard technology—tech with bought and paid for traits attached.

# From Color to Hard Technology



Technology established as color is the foundation for building technology with game mechanical effects. Once color has been established, it can be elevated to hard technology. *Hard technology* describes a piece of tech that has a game mechanical effect on the world.

*Mayuran's character is a shipping magnate. In the first scene of the game, he describes his shipping fleet. Has he paid for a fleet? No. It's color—it's*

part of his affiliation. In the next scene, he rescues some stranded tourists with one of his spaceliners. No roll was required in that scene, so the ships remain color.

After color technology has been properly introduced, it may be built upon to create hard tech in a subsequent scene.

*Later, Mayuran wants to use his ship's interstellar tight beam to send a message to a nearby planet. It's vital that this message get through—as the GM, I'm rolling my Signals dice to block it. Since I'm opposing his color with an actual roll, Mayuran must now pay to outfit his ship with an interstellar comm.*

Hard technology is brought into play via a Resources test. The obstacle of the test is determined by the type of effect the player wants his piece of technology to have.





- Unless created in character burning, technology must always be introduced into the game as color before it can be fashioned into hard technology. See the Technological Color rules above.
- Tech Resources tests in building scenes gain a +1D advantage. Tech Resources tests in conflict scenes suffer a +1 Ob penalty.
- It is possible and permissible for bits and pieces of larger color elements, like ships, fortresses and factories, to be brought into play piece by piece, according to what's important in the scene.

*Does Mayuran need to buy the entire ship just to bring its signals rig into the scene? No, if no tests are to be made against the ship itself, the ship can remain as color while individual traits are fleshed out.*

- The effects of hard technology are broken down and described in chunks called *technology traits*. See the next section of this chapter.

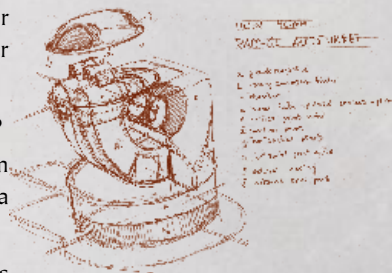
## BURNING HARD TECHNOLOGY

After color technology has been established, and a player wishes to bring hard tech into the game via his Resources, he has to burn up the tech: He has to give it a series of traits that represent what it does in the game. Technology traits are listed as “Tt” rather than Dt, Char or C-O. This section walks the player through creating the mechanics for a piece of technology.

### What Kind of Tech Is It?

Is your technology a *weapon*, a form of *protection*, a *vehicle*, a *device* or a *security system*?

Weapons, protection, vehicles and security systems have specific rules described in their individual sections in this book. Prices and traits are provided in this chapter, but be sure to refer to the relevant chapters for additional details. Devices are the mainstay of hard technology. They can act as tools for a skill, add advantage dice, create an obstacle to overcome, serve as a discrete stat or skill themselves (so they can make tests without a character) or enhance a stat, so it can be used in a way it otherwise could not. They are discussed in great detail in the following section.



## Technology Trait Points = Tech Resources Obstacle

Technology trait costs are listed in points. The final point total for your device/weapon/armor/vehicle trait is the *Resources obstacle to acquire the piece*. The trait point cost is not the resource point cost from character burning. They are two separate types of points.



Following the Burning Hard Technology section, there is a list of conditions, modifiers and limitations that may be added to technology in order to reduce its cost.

## Weapon

Weapons are listed in general categories because when a weapon is generated with the Tech Burner, the player receives a weapon of the appropriate type for the index. See the Weapons Chart in the Firefight chapter for the stats for these weapons:

- Improvised weapon, 1 pt. Close combat weapon, 2 pts. Assault weapon, 3 pts. Squad support weapon, 4 pts. Vehicular/anti-vehicular, 6 pts. Artillery, 8 pts. Explosives, choose damage from this list. Pay that cost. Buy the *Enhancement trait* for the device.

### Barrel Extension

It 5 pts

The barrel extension increases the range of assault weapons to that of squad support.

**Technology Traits:** Weapon Category Tweak

### Weapon Tweaks

Basic weapons may be tweaked in four ways: Their range category may be increased or decreased, their ammo category may be increased or decreased, they may be given additional device traits or they may be jacked.

- Ammo capacity tweaks: Single shot, 1 pt. Cylinder, 2 pts. Magazine, 3 pts. Capacitor, 4 pts. Case, 5 pts. Power pack, 6 pts. Engine, 10 pts.
- Range category tweaks: Close Combat, 1 pt. Assault, 2 pts. Squad Support, 5 pts. Vehicular, 8 pts. Artillery, 9 pts.
- Jacked: 3 pts. "Jacking" a weapon shortens the stock and barrel in order to make it more suitable to close quarters fighting. The Jacked trait reduces the Close Combat Weapons Fire penalty for the weapon by one. It also reduces Mark and Superb damage by two steps and Incidental damage by one.
- Additional devices like targeters, improved grips, silencers and whatnot are built using the Device rules described below. If buying



them together, build the device and add its obstacle to the weapon's obstacle for the Resources test. If buying a device to attach to a weapon later in the game, use the Device rules and prices.

### Exotic Weapons

- Effectors can neutralize a technology trait, a position or cover. Designate the target of this trait when building it: battlespace positions, battlefield cover or a specific technological trait. The exotic weapon negates or neutralizes—for one scene—the effects of its target. It costs 3 pts for each point/die to be affected.

#### Wave

Tr. 5 pts

This weapon disperses a wave of energy across the battle space. No matter what its rating, cover counts as level 1 against a wave weapon.

**Technological Traits:** Exotic Weapon: Effector, Categorical Limitation

- Inhibitor: This powerful trait allows a weapon to directly inhibit a target's stat or skills—automated or natural. The cost for the effect is 3 pts multiplied by the number of dice or trait points to be targeted.

### Exotic Weapons' Die of Fate/IMS

Exotic weapons must use a Die of Fate to determine their ultimate effect. Take the number of dice you wish to affect; this is the Mark result of the weapon. Add half of the Mark result to itself. That's the Superb result. Subtract half of the Mark from itself; that's the Incidental. If the result is less than one, the penalty is + 1 Ob rather than minus dice. The DoF generates the number of dice subtracted from the targeted stat, skill or trait for the duration of the scene.



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## Protection

This category stands for personal body protection from weapons fire. Protection temporarily raises the character's physical tolerances.

- AT 1 (ballistic helmet or vest), 3 pts. AT 2 (ballistic suit), 4 pts. AT 3 (anvil, zero index or higher), 8 pts. AT 4 (iron, low index or higher), 12 pts. This cost does not include anything but the ATs for the armor. Additional Device traits may be added to taste. The costs are also for roughly human-sized units. Kern and Mukhadish pay a + 1 and + 2 pt penalty respectively.



### Vehicle

The following obstacles describe the costs for the vehicles described in the Vehicles chapter. These units come as described and started in that chapter. Speed and Ordnance may be added using the guidelines described below. Additional devices like nanofiber wheels, improved drive trains or fuzzy dice may be added using the device rules.

- Civilian surface, 4 pts. Civilian atmospheric, 6 pts. Civilian intrasystem, 8 pts. Civilian interstellar, 10 pts. Civilian intergalactic, 12 pts. Commercial surface, 5 pts. Commercial atmospheric, 8 pts. Commercial intrasystem, 11 pts. Commercial interstellar, 13 pts. Commercial intergalactic, 16 pts. Military surface, 5-8 pts. Military atmospheric, 8-10 pts. Military intrasystem, 13 pts. Military interstellar, 16 pts. Military intergalactic, 20 pts.
- Vehicular Speed may be increased or decreased; there are three grades: Ground Speed, Atmospheric Speed and Space Speed. Increasing Speed one category step costs + 3 pts. Decreasing Speed one category step costs -2 pts.
- Adding the Ordnance trait to a vehicle allows it to carry vehicular weaponry or artillery. Vehicular weaponry mounts cost + 2 pts and require a minimum Integrity of 6. Artillery mounts cost + 3 pts and require a minimum Integrity of 7.

Individual systems like signals and sensors are *devices* added to the vehicle, either as advantage or automation.

### Device: What Purpose Does It Serve?



Devices are individual bits of technology that can be added on to the above templates for vehicles, weapons and armor or be used on their own. Unlike weapons, armor and vehicles, devices do not have a basic set of templates to choose from. In order to design a device, think about

what effect you want it to have in the game. Peruse the following questions and suggestions and see which applies:

- Does your device act as a tool set for a technical skill? Consult the Tools, Workshops and Factories heading below.



- Does your device give a bonus die or two when it is used with a stat, skill or attribute? Stealth suits that disperse heat, a high-powered processor, an ergonomic stock for your rifle, nanofiber wheels for your ground car? Consult the Advantage heading below.
- Does your device impede another character or force him to make a test, like police restraints, a motion detector, a DNA resistant surface or an ultrasonic Mukhadish repellent? Consult the Obstacle heading.
- Does this device have a skill of its own? Is this device an automation or smart device? Is it natively intelligent or machine intelligent? Is it programmed to play out a function? If so, check out the Technological Skill and Technological Stat sections.
- Does your device allow the human body to operate under adverse conditions? Does it allow a human to do things he would not and could not otherwise do? If so, check out the Enhancement heading.

## Devices: Tools, Workshops and Factories

Tools are required for certain technical skills to function without penalty in the game. Each skill is listed with a technology requirement. If “tools,” “workshops” or “factories” are listed with the skill, you suffer a double obstacle penalty to tests with that skill unless you have the right tech. Tools can be bought during character burning or created as hard tech during the game.

When burning up a set of tools, choose one skill that the tools primarily benefit. They may be built to be used with additional skills, but that raises their cost.

Tools do not add bonus dice or provide any other benefit aside from negating the double obstacle penalty for not having them! Also, they are always created at the prevailing tech index: Tools of lower index are useless, and tools of higher index are priceless artifacts.

### **Field Kit.**

**It. 2 pts**

Zero or sub index field kits count as tools for Field Dressing.

**Technological Traits:** Tools

- Tools for skills like Field Dressing or Repair are 2 pts. Tools for Craft or Counterfeiting are 3 pts. Tools for skills like Signals, Security Rigger or Cartography are 4 pts. Tools for skills like Nav or Surgery

are 5 pts. Tools for skills like Cryonics or Eugenics are 6 pts. Tools for Shipwrights and Manufacturers are 8 pts. Tools for Psychohistorians or Iron Artificers are 10 pts. Without these tools, tests for the skill are at a double obstacle.

- If you'd like one set of tools to count for multiple skills: Determine which skill has the most costly tools. This is your base price. To add additional skills to the tools' capabilities, add half the of the cost of each additional skill's tools to that base.

### Device: Advantage

What skill or stat does this technology benefit? What is the device, and how does it provide benefit? Advantages add +1-3D to a stat, skill or attribute. Advantages are improvements on or devices added to existing tech. They do not count as tools. They may be added to other devices.

- Steel advantage costs 2 pts for the first die, + 1 pt for each additional die.
- Skill advantage costs 3 pts for the first die, + 2 pts for each additional die.
- Stat advantage costs 4 pts for the first die, + 2 pts for each additional die.
- Circles advantage costs 5 pts for the first die, + 2 pts for each additional die.

Sub and zero index devices like cleverly made or well-crafted instruments/technology may only add +1D.

Low index advantages add +1-2D. These can come in the form of well-crafted instruments or cybernetic implants.

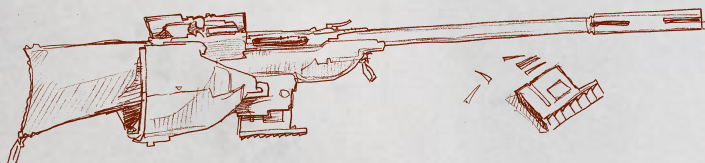
High index advantages add +1-3D. These advantages are implants, nanotechnological swarms and machine intelligences.

#### Intuitive

It. 2 pts

Once per Firefight, a character wielding an intuitive weapon may take a +1D advantage to a shot opportunity or Close Combat action.

*Technology Trait:* Advantage, Obscure Conditions







## Device: Obstacle

Use this category for technology that forces a character to make a test to overcome or bypass it, and for technology that would hinder or otherwise increase the obstacle of another test. Poison, smoke, barbed wire, dangerous conveyor belts, locked doors, flashbangers and handcuffs fall into this category. What skill or stat does this obstacle force a test from? What form does this take?

- Base cost is 1 pt, plus one per obstacle of the test.

*A snare device that causes an Ob 4 Speed test requires an Ob 5 Resources test to purchase.*

- An obstacle device may test more than one ability. Each skill or stat after the initial one is + 1 pt. Adding an attribute is + 2 pts.

For sanity's sake, sub and zero index tech can provide up to +2 Ob, low index up to +3 Ob, high index up to +4 Ob.

## Device: Technological Skill

Skills can be built into technology in the form of dedicated processors, smart systems, semi-sentient machines, artificial intelligences and drones.

In sub and zero index cultures, only Advanced Mathematics, Science or Navigation may be built into a piece of technology. In low and high index cultures, any skill can be built into technology, but the technological skill must have required tools to perform the operations of the skill.



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What's more, these machines may perform the function of their skill and little else. They may operate independently, help another character or be helped themselves. They may not advance or use fields of related knowledge.

- Automation: Base cost is 2 pts, + 1 pt per exponent die in the skill.

*For example, an avatar with Signals 6 is an Ob 8 Resources test; a nav computer with a Navigation of 4 would be Ob 6.*

- Inhuman skill: All 6s for one Technological Skill count as open-ended, just like for Steel. 2 pts, + 1 pt per skill exponent.

## Device: Technological Stat

The technological stat category represents constructs built to operate as mechanical limbs, brains or even full bodies. Constructs may be imbued with one, two, all or none of the six stats.

- Perception costs 5 pts for 1D, + 2 pts per additional die. This gives the machine the capacity to reason, perceive and memorize. It may advance Perception rooted-skills. Low or high index.
- Will costs 10 pts for 1D, + 2 pts per additional die. This gives the machine the ability to emote and to interrelate memory. It may advance Will-rooted skills. Low or high index.
- Agility costs 3 pts for 1D, + 2 pts per additional die. This gives the machine the ability to catch, grab and otherwise manipulate objects. It may advance Agility-rooted skills. Zero index or higher.
- Human Speed costs 4 pts for 1D, + 2 pts per additional die. This gives the machine legs so it may stomp around. It may also advance Speed-rooted skills. Zero index or higher.
- Surface Speed costs 5 pts for 1D, + 2 pts per additional die. Wheels and an engine! It may not advance Speed-rooted skills. Sub index.
- Atmospheric Speed costs 6 pts for 1D, + 2 pts per additional die. Either jets and wings for sub and zero index or grav plates for low index keep this machine on the move. It may not advance Speed-rooted skills.
- Space Speed costs 10 pts for 1D, + 2 pts per additional die. This machine has a torch propulsion unit in addition to a distortion drive. It may travel in space. It may not advance Speed-rooted skills. Low index or higher.
- Power costs 1 pt for 1D, + 1 pt per additional die. This device has arms, lifters or grapples. It can move objects by brute force. Sub index or higher.

### Tripod Mounts

Tt. 4 pts

Heavy weapons may be mounted on tripods. Tripods have a Power exponent of 8 for the purposes of firing weapons with the Heavy trait. It requires one volley to set up a tripod-mounted weapon. During this volley, the character may not use Close Combat, Advance, Flank, Withdraw, Direct or Suppressive Fire. He may Rally, Observe and Take Cover. In order to carry the rig from position to position, the carrying characters must have a total Power exponent equal to the Heavy weapon rating.

**Technological Traits:** Technological Stat, Categorical Limitations, Obscure Circumstances



- Forte costs 6 pts for 1D, + 2 pts per additional die. This device has a biomechanical set of organs and internal functions. It may recover from Injury. High index required.

## Device: Enhancement

Certain devices give their user access to a realm of possibility previously unavailable. Including the ability to breathe under water, to fly, to survive in vacuum, to enhance the scope of psychology via technology or even to transport oneself from location to location without moving.

An enhancement device allows a character to test a stat where no test would have been otherwise possible. Enhancements must be appropriate to your index.

- These pieces have a base cost of 8 pts.

Enhancements can also be used to cause the device to affect multiple characters at once.

- One additional character is + 2 pts. Two additional, + 4 pts. Everyone on a side, + 6 pts. Everyone in the scene, + 8 pts.

Enhancements can be used to repeat over time the effects of the technology.

- This enhancement costs the same as the trait whose effect it is repeating. If it's a 3 pt trait, this enhancement costs 3 pts.

Enhancements can be used to extend the amount of time the effects of a technology trait last—not the trait itself, but what it's done to its target. Most affecting traits have an instantaneous effect.



Technology  
Burner

### Fusion Pack

8 pts

Iron contains an onboard fusion power plant. It provides ample power for the suit's own operations and allows the wearer to plug any power pack-fueled weapon into his suit (or any electrically powered device, really).

*Technological Traits:* Enhancement



- Effects lasting one exchange are 3 pts. One conflict/scene, 4 pts. One maneuver, 6 pts. One session, 8 pts. Multiple sessions, 10 pts. (Weapons do not need this enhancement to dish out injuries.)

Enhancements can be used to make one piece of technology equivalent to another, to substitute for another required piece or change an independent action to a versus one (or vice versa).



Power pack

- Power packs are standard, with custom needle interfaces. Components they include:
- power units of varying weights/output
  - communications equipment
  - computer
  - storage
  - sensors
  - propulsion system (for zero-g)

- Equivalent/substitution enhancements are 8 pts.

*The Indirect trait makes a weapon's Suppressing Fire action versus the Observe action.*

## Security System

Security systems are specialized technological devices that combine a number of features from the device category. They act as tools for Security, as an obstacle for Forgery and either grant advantage or automation for Security. See the Security Systems, Signals and Sensors chapter for details.

- **Manned Stations:** These systems count as *tools* and grant the abilities described in the Security, Signals and Sensors chapter. They must be manned by a character in order to be useful. If unmanned, they don't get to test to detect intruders! Cost: 4 pts. They don't grant advantage.
- **Advanced Intrusion Countermeasures (AIC):** AIC systems add advantage dice to manned security stations. It costs 4 pts for the first advantage die, + 2 pts for each additional die.
- **Automated Systems:** Rather than act as tools and advantage, security systems may be automated and use their own skill exponents. Automated systems are ever vigilant and may test against any and all intruders. They cost 8 pts for Security 1, + 1 pt per exponent point.





The above obstacles and costs refer to the detection power of security systems. To create locked doors and sealed barriers use the Obstacle technology heading described earlier.

### **Calvaria Integrity Scanner**      Tr.      8 pts

This device is a hand-held gun-shaped scanner that allows security agents to detect if a person has undergone a field hull. The CIS must be passed across the skull of the target; if he has been hulled, a warning indicator appears on the screen at the butt of the CIS. The CIS also provides +1D to the Security skill. As a security system, it cannot provide a barrier to entry, and it is designed only to detect field hulls.

**Technological Traits:** Manned Station, Advanced Intrusion Countermeasures, 2x Categorical Limits

## **GM Tech Cost Modifiers**

After the base cost of a piece of technology has been established, the GM may modify the obstacle for the Tech Resources test:

### **Obscure Circumstances, -1-3 points**

If a piece of technology has limited use or is a complete long shot, the GM may reduce the obstacle for the Resources test from one to three points. Obscure tech may only be used once or twice per phase.

### **More Powerful, +1 point and up**

If the GM feels a piece of technology is extraordinarily powerful, he may increase the Resources cost before the player makes the roll.

### **Pain in the Ass Penalty (PITAP), +1-3 points**

If your GM finds a technological trait obnoxious, then he can up the point cost by one to three points.

### **Cool Beans, -1 points**

If the GM particularly likes a piece of technology, he may reduce the cost by one.

### **Regulation, Quarantine and the Black Market**

Regulated and quarantined technology is more costly than that which is freely available. How regulation, quarantine and the black market affect price is discussed in the previous chapter, Resources.



## Limitations

Technology is often flawed and quirky. Sometimes it's just plain broken. Limitations such as these are developed when you're burning up the tech. A player or GM may add built-in limitations to reduce the cost of the Tech Resources roll, or the GM may apply limitations to tech via a failed Tech Resources roll.

There are four types of limitations: Categorical Limitations, Obstacles, Trait Limitations and Flawed Design.

### Categorical Limitations

Categorical limits are applied when the description/function of your device contains limits on its functionality. It can do *this*, but can't do *that*.

Examples include but are not limited to: -1 to the DoF. Shift one category down or worse: one weapon category, one tolerance scale. Restrict a Firefight or Duel of Wits maneuver. Restrict a type of skill.

Each categorical limitation reduces the cost by -1 pt.

### Trait Limitations

A trait limitation indicates that one trait in the device requires another external trait in order for the main trait to work properly—ammunition, a power supply, a special key. A trait limitation reduces the cost of the technology by three points.

*A weapon with the Mounted trait limitation must be mounted on a vehicle with the Ordnance trait in order to be fired.*





## Obstacle Limitations

Obstacle limitations interfere with or hinder the ease of use of a device, weapon, vehicle or security system. They manifest in an obstacle penalty applied to the use of the device. Use the obstacle category from the device technology list to represent these limitations. Apply the obstacle to the operation of the device.

The GM may add an obstacle limitation due to a failed Resources test. The margin of failure on the roll indicates the maximum cost of the limitation. Failed by three? Apply a 3 pt trait.

*If I failed my Resources test to acquire a rifle by three, the GM could impose a trait that increased the obstacle to use the rifle by 2—+2 Ob is a 3 pt trait. In this case, perhaps it's a trait like Warped Frame.*

## Broken Tech

In addition to applying obstacle limitations to a piece of technology, the GM may apply a trait to the tech on the fly in order to reduce its effectiveness. The margin of failure of a Tech Resources tests *equals the number of exponent dice the GM may subtract from any advantage or automation traits* the player incorporated into the device. The GM can call this trait all sorts of fun stuff like: Borkened, Cheap Knockoff or Hit It Harder and It'll Work Right.

## Limits of Limitations

You may not reduce a device below half its cost with limitations.

## Example Limitations

### Massive

-14 pts

Iron is utterly unconcealable in social circumstances. No trench coat can hide this stuff. It's +8 Ob to Inconspicuous and +4 Ob to Infiltration tests made in conditions requiring quiet or a low profile. This penalty doesn't necessarily apply in battle, just to being quiet.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

### Complex

-3 pts

Characters without the Iron Trained trait may not operate iron at all—even if they have a crucis.

**Technological Traits:** Trait Limitation

### Clumsy

-5 pts

Iron-clad characters suffer a +1 Ob to all Speed and Speed-rooted tests, like Zero G or Physical Training.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

## THE BURNING WHEEL

### Constrained View -2 pts

All iron helmets cause a +1 Ob penalty to Perception tests. Characters may remove their helmets or raise their visors to negate this penalty. Reduce ATs by one while the helmet is off or the visor raised.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

### Unreliable -1 pt

This trait gives opposing teams the Superior Weapon bonus in Firefight.

**Technological Traits:** Categorical Limitation

### Recoil -2 pts

This weapon is plagued by recoil problems. If a Direct Fire shot opportunity or Suppressive Fire unit action is taken, in the following volley any Direct Fire unit actions and individual actions suffer a +1 Ob penalty.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

### Unwieldy or Inaccurate -3 pts

+1 Ob to the skill test for a Direct Fire shot opportunity or Close Combat Weapons Fire action.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

### Mounted -3 pts

This weapon must be mounted on a vehicle with the *Ordnance* technology trait in order to be fired.

**Technological Traits:** Trait Limitation

### Hand to Hand -1 pt

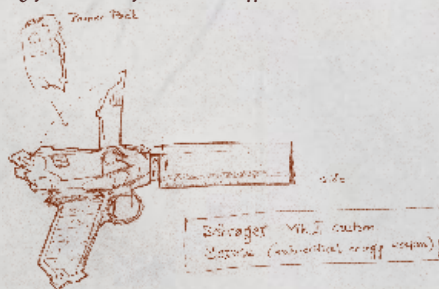
This weapon may only be used for Close Combat hand-to-hand attacks.

**Technological Traits:** Categorical Limitation

## Name Your Heart's Desire

You can earn a +1D to your Resources test to acquire technology if you give the piece a name, manufacturer, model number and place of manufacture.

*This is a Schrager Mk. 1 SCrEW, designed by Schrager LIC in the Karsan League. It's ugly, it's heavy and it's difficult to use.*





## Tech Resources Tests

When introducing hard technology to the game, the player must establish the effect of the trait using the trait burning mechanics described in the Burning Hard Technology section above.

The total point cost of the tech traits is the obstacle for a Resources test to acquire the item in question. The player isn't necessarily buying anything when this roll is made—though he can be, it simply depends on the situation in the game. The test is actually to determine how much such a piece of tech will tax the character's Resources, if at all. If the Tech Resources test is successful, the player gets what he wished for. If failed, the character is taxed and the GM has a few options.

### Tax, Kindness and Tech Resources

If the Tech Resources roll is failed, the character still gets what he asked for, under the following conditions. The Gift of Kindness is standard and obligatory: The player can take what he tested for, but he must suffer the tax. The player may opt not to accept the Gift of Kindness and cut his losses instead. His Resources is then taxed by 1D and his technology remains as color.

If the Gift of Kindness is accepted by the player, the GM may add traits or limitations of his choosing to the technology. Margin of failure equals the total obstacle he may add.

### Parts of the Whole

When creating a device, focus on building one trait at a time. Buying a dozen traits for your sentient hammer battlecruiser is probably going to break even the wealthiest of characters.

Start with a stock device or a cheap burn that you've made. Additional traits may be added to the device as it's used in play—so long as they are developed as color prior to a conflict in which the technology is involved, and so long as the traits make sense for the device.

## Fabricating Technology

The Fabrication skill allows a character to build technology rather than buy it. Design the technology traits desired as described above. Determine your obstacle. The fabricating player may then divide that obstacle between his Fabrication skill and his Resources as he sees fit. At least one point must be left in the Resources side. You still have to buy materials, rent time at the labs, pay for power, get licenses, etc.





*A device that costs 6 tech trait points could be spread between an Ob 3 Fabrication test and an Ob 3 Resources test or an Ob 2 Fabrication test and an Ob 4 Resources test or an Ob 5 Fabrication test and an Ob 1 Resources test.*

Any item fabricated is of the prevailing tech index.

*Chris' character, Mal Nenox, wants to build a device to shield him from psychologists: +1 Ob to be "read." It costs three tech trait points.*

*Well, Mal's only got a Resources of 2. So Chris decides to take two points of the Resources obstacle and make an Ob 2 Fabrication test. One point of Resources obstacle remains that Mal Nenox will still have to test to pay for.*

Fabrication counts as a building scene. A character may make up to an Ob 4 Fabrication test per building scene. Alternately, the group may use one of their conflict scenes as an extended conflict for Fabrication. Fabricator hits his workshop full time and may make up to an Ob 6 skill test.

## EXTANT Technology

The following is a short list of devices that can be found in the Iron Empires. These devices are left unnamed so players can earn the +1D bonus for naming them if they want to bring them into play. If you find this list short or inadequate, please feel free to use the rules to create your own technology.

### Grav Pack

Tt. 4 pts

A grav pack is a U-shaped device that is attached to power plant housing of iron. It generates a light anti-grav buoyancy for the armor, allowing it to descend from a grav-mobile fighting vehicle rapidly without the vehicle having to descend or slow. Descent from a moving vehicle with a grav pack requires an Ob 2 Speed test in order to land safely. Failure causes an injury equal to the Improvised Weapons stats—without benefit of armor.

**Technology Traits:** Enhancement, Obstacle Limitation, Categorical Limitation (down, not up)

### Hallucinogenic Coating

Tt. 6 pts

This chemical coating can be applied to the surface of any item. If unprotected flesh comes into contact with the hallucinogen, the character must pass an Ob 5 Forte test. If he fails, the margin of failure is applied as an obstacle penalty for



the rest of the maneuver—the character experiences out-of-body sensations, hysteria and nausea.

**Technology Traits:** Obstacle

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### HEAT Suit Tt. 6 pts

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The HEAT (Hyper-Endothermic Assimilation Technology) suit provides excellent heat masking and moderate visual cloaking to its wearer. It adds +1D to Infiltration versus Observation and +2D to Infiltration vs Security.

**Technology Traits:** Advantage x3, Categorical Limitation

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### Holographic Communications Tt. 4 pts

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This desktop device presents a three-dimensional holographic display of incoming and outgoing signals information. It displays the various technical data, scopes and monitors in addition to processed communication images. This counts as tools for Signals. It is a low index device.

**Technology Traits:** Tools (Signals)

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### Invulsion Ram Tt. 5 pts

---

These sleek bracelets use grav/pressor technology to turn the user's hands into a close combat weapon. They do damage as a handgun. They can only be used for the Close Combat Hand-to-Hand action. Detecting the gauntlets requires an Ob 2 Security or Observation test.

**Technology Traits:** Weapon, Obstacle, Categorical Limitation

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### Recon Lenses Tt. 3 pts

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Recon Lenses contain image enhancing and various metric routines that help scouts better assess terrain features. +1D to Recon.

**Technology Traits:** Advantage

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### Robotic Centipede Tt. 12 pts

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The robotic centipede is a small robot chassis. In its basic configuration, it can haul small loads quickly over short distances. It is exceedingly dumb and must be given careful instructions by its user. It has a Power 4 and a Surface Speed 3.

**Technology Traits:** Technological Stat

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### Surveillance Midge Tt. 15 pts

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A surveillance midge is a micro-drone designed for security operations. The drone can be dropped onto a target or remotely piloted by an operator to the target site. It has a 3 Observation, a 2 Security and a 1 Atmospheric Speed.

**Technology Traits:** Technological Skill x2, Technological Stat. Low index.

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### Tin Foil Hat 4 pts

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The Tin Foil Hat protects its wearer from Psychological attack. Any Psychology tests against the wearer suffer a +1 Ob. The wearer also suffers a +2 Ob to any Inconspicuous or Etiquette tests.

**Technology Traits:** Obstacle, two Obstacle Limitations, More Powerful, PITAP

## Extended Technology Example

*Chris' other character, Victor Brasi, was an advocate for the Pansophy Merchant League. Pansophy controlled the low index world of Ogun. During character burning, Chris described Victor with a "piece of paper" that acted as his personal computer and communications device. At the start of the game, it served no purpose other than to embellish the character. It was color.*

*As the game progressed, Chris worried about certain entities in the company gaining access to his files. Chris framed a building scene: "I want to install security software on the paper. I call Lorenzo, my contact in Sec Ops and see what he can give me." He then described what he wanted: something to stop anyone from gaining access to his files. He and the GM agreed that sounded like an obstacle. Chris wanted an Ob 2 (3 pts) test for anyone attempting to access his paper with Administration, Bureaucracy (+1 pt) and Security Rigging (+1 pt). He tested his Resources against Ob 5 and passed.*

*Later, Chris needed to do a little snooping himself: "I want to download a Security intelligence to the paper so I can access the network and begin surveillance." Chris' character, Victor, didn't have the Security skill, so he decided to add a Technological Skill/Automation to his paper: Security 4. This required an Ob 6 Resources test. Chris failed the roll by two. He suffered tax. The GM decided to apply a trait. "The Security intelligence comes from the Director of Operations' office. It has its own snoop installed. The snoop is a Security automation, exponent 1 (3 pts). Its sole purpose is to monitor your activity while using the paper and report back to the Director (Categorical Limitation, -1 pt)."*









## VAYLEN INFECTION

The galaxy is at war. Its fate will be decided—world by world, nation by nation, city by city, person by person. The Vaylen come, and their need for living human bodies is insatiable. Like an infection, they infiltrate, usurp control and then launch an all-out attack on their host. Their infection takes whole *worlds* with it, rather than a single body.



This war is played on two levels: There is the play that happens “on the ground.” This is where players make decisions about their characters and spin out the consequences of their actions—where we challenge Beliefs and test abilities.

Encompassing the ground-level action is a strategic umbrella comprised of the World Burner and the Infection. In the Infection mechanics, we determine the overall fate of the world: Will it fall to the Vaylen? Or will humanity manage to stave off this blow? This part of the struggle is played out in epic sweeps that make the individual lives of the characters seem small and insignificant by comparison. This is the “big picture,” the elements of the story





beyond the characters' immediate control. These mechanics also provide adventure and scenario hooks, a ton of background color and a pacing mechanic for the whole game.

The Infection mechanics break play down into four levels: the campaign, the phase, the session and maneuvers. A campaign in *Burning Empires* covers the fate of a world from the moment the Vaylen slip onto the world until the final battle is fought. A campaign lasts about 18 to 36 sessions of play. A campaign is divided into three smaller segments called phases. In a phase, the group plays out one aspect of the infection—the infiltration of the Vaylen, the usurpation of key figures or the outright invasion. A phase lasts six to twelve sessions. A session is a night's worth of play—four to six hours depending on your group. A session contains one or two “maneuvers.” Ninety percent of gameplay is contained within the maneuvers—that's where characters are tested—but maneuvers are also an element of the strategic gameplay.

## Phases

A *phase* of play is an arc that contains one overarching conflict and concept. In a phase, the players try to change one aspect of their world. They can do this while they attempt to stave off the Vaylen or while they undermine humanity's defenses. A phase lasts about six sessions. There are three phases to a full campaign in *Burning Empires*.



Players chose their starting phase in the World Burner section. Described below are what the phases mean in relation to the Infection mechanics.

### Infiltration

The infiltration phase involves smuggling, criminal behavior, surreptitious acts, bad business and midnight dealings. The Vaylen are trying to get a toehold on your world during this phase.



If the Vaylen win the infiltration phase, they manage to infect the planet and set up a method of bringing more of their kind onto the world. If the human side wins, they manage to thwart the Vaylen infiltration and prevent them from establishing a foothold on this world. This phase is a very crucial stage for the human side! If the Vaylen lose, they may opt to prematurely invade, or they may abandon their designs on the planet altogether.



### Usurpation

The usurpation phase is a shadow war: Spies and agents abound, people are kidnapped, figureheads are overthrown and the powers that be are undermined. The balance of power is in jeopardy during this phase.



If the Vaylen win the usurpation phase, they manage to gain control of a number of the power structures on the planet by infecting hosts with Naiven and turning them into Vaylen. That's the key. The usurpation phase involves the Vaylen capturing and infecting individuals. The further down they drive the enemy disposition, the higher up the food chain they move. If the human side wins, they uncover the Vaylen plot and manage to liquidate or scatter the new Vaylen before they can gain an advantage in the next phase.



### Invasion

This phase is all out war. It can be a space-based naval battle, a bombardment or a brushfire war waged planetside. The winner of the engagement decides the ultimate fate of this world. If the Vaylen win, they gain control of the planet and begin culling it for human hosts. If the human side wins, they hold off the Vaylen forces and either destroy or rout them. The planet is safe—for now.

### Scope

In the World Burner, the players chose figures of note for the planet. These characters determine the scope of the game. It's tempting to use generals and spies to play out sweeping wars and social upheaval, but the game could just as easily form around a tense family drama—the actions of the family members serving as a metaphor for the big picture.



The Vaylen Infection mechanics are that big picture. They are the catch-all net for everything that can't be handled with the other resolution systems in the game—the uprisings, the meteors flung from space, political races, big military actions, etc. But they are also the representation for the characters' individual actions and how they affect the big picture.

The players need to decide before play begins if they want to be commanding those armies and involved in those politics, or merely swept up in the tide of events beyond their control. Either way is acceptable, but the choice affects the color of the game and what actions are appropriate for the player characters.

## Pacing

The Burning Empires phases have a particular pace at which they are played. A phase is broken down into six to twelve sessions. A session consists of one or two maneuvers. Maneuvers are further broken into scenes and conflicts.

### Two-Maneuver Sessions

A two-maneuver session lasts between four and five hours. Each player gets one or two scenes per maneuver in which his character is the primary focus. The GM, in addition to responding to the players, gets to initiate a scene or two of his own. Using this pace, the players can play out a whole Infection phase in about six sessions.

### Single-Maneuver Sessions

With larger groups or a more expansively paced game, the players can conduct just a single maneuver per session. Each player gets two or three scenes with his character. Each side gets to initiate two big conflicts. Single-maneuver sessions last three to five hours depending on the size of the group and the nature of the conflicts.

Phases using one maneuver per session last eight to twelve sessions.

## Disposition

If you haven't already, total the points for your world during your chosen phase. This is your base disposition.

It is your goal to reduce your opponent's disposition to zero by using a series of attacks and defenses called *maneuvers*. Successes from certain maneuvers reduce the disposition. Once one side is reduced to zero, the phase is over.

### Building Toward the End

Disposition acts as a meter for the narrative arc of your game. If dispositions are in the thirties, you know you've got time to build up consensus and maneuver for a better position in play—maybe by activating factions and eliminating troublesome characters.

But once one side's disposition is down into single digits, you know the end is coming. It's time to pull out all the stops, tie up loose ends and plow for the finish line.

## Figures of Note

In the World Burner and Character Burner, the players built important characters on their world called *figures of note*. A figure of note is like a protagonist in a piece of fiction. There are many other important characters around him, but he bears a special weight for this part of the story.



### Featured Figure of Note

One figure of note from each side is *featured* in each phase. At the start of the phase, the featured figures of note test one of their skills and add their successes to their side's disposition. No help is possible. No technology may be used. Appropriate FoRKs are acceptable.

The player or GM may test any of his figure of note's skills from the following list:

#### *Infiltration Phase*

Accounting, Administration, Bureaucracy, Command, Counterfeiting, Cryonics, Cryptography, Doctrine, Estate Management, Eugenics, Extortion, Falsehood, Food Services, Forgery, Investigative Logic, Journalism, Law, Manufacture, Observation, Oratory, Persuasion, Philosophy, Physics, Psychology, Research, Security, Security

Rigging, Ship Management, Signals, Smuggling, Streetwise, Suasion, Tactics, Ugly Truth

#### *Usurpation Phase*

Accounting, Bureaucracy, Cryptography, Doctrine, Engineering, Extortion, Finance, Instruction, Investigative Logic, Journalism,



Law, Manufacture,  
Philosophy,  
Propaganda,  
Psychohistory,  
Psychology, Recon,  
Security, Seduction,  
Signals, Smuggling,  
Surgery, Tactics

### ***Invasion Phase***

Cryptography, Finance, Fortifications, Fusion Dynamics, Journalism, Logistics, Manufacture, Propaganda, Psychohistory, Shipwright, Signals, Strategy, Tactics

*Thor's character, Lord Omei, is the figure of note for Agra in the Usurpation phase. He tests Omei's Finance skill, adding a FoRK for Bureaucracy and Back Room Deals-wise. He gets five successes.*

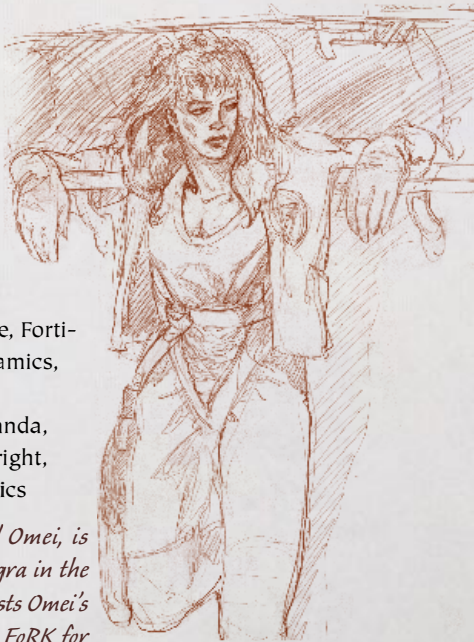
*The disposition for Agra in the Usurpation phase is Human 21, Vaylen 34. Thor increases his side's starting total to 26.*

*The High Inquisitor Sigismund Weller is the Vaylen figure of note for this phase. I test his Psychology with a FoRK for Investigative Logic and Temple-wise. I get three successes, making the Vaylen disposition for Usurpation 37.*

## **Prequel**

When rolling his skill to add to the disposition of his world, the player may describe how his character's influence, power and position benefit his side in the phase. This description is called a *prequel*. What does he do that is so special? Is he a key political figure? The backbone of the military? The chosen one? Or simply representative of his world's doughty spirit?

*Thor describes Omei: To almost everyone that knows him or knows of him, Lord Omei is nothing but a soft, effeminate dandy—a fool with a taste for the lavish. But a very select few know that beneath his effete façade there is a cunning, ruthless tactician who uses all the bureaucratic and financial weapons at his disposal in pursuit of the advancement of his friends and himself. With his close friend Archcotare Davide in*



**Infection**

*the hands of the pitiless Inquisition and Agra itself in the hands of a Forged Lord unwilling to heed his advice, Omei begins activating his agents and moving government funds to free his friend and destroy the upstart Forged Lord.*

*I describe Weller: He's obviously an intelligent man, and driven. He despises the Vaylen and would never willingly work with them. However, he is set on tearing the Theocracy apart and rebuilding it as he sees fit. The Theocracy controls the military manufacture on Agra. So like it or not, Weller is unwittingly helping the Vaylen with this turmoil and upheaval. But he will not be deterred from his purpose!*

### Spotlight

A figure of note who is featured in this phase should very much be the center of attention. He should be the focus of conflict, the center of the web and subject to all manner of stress and duress.

Obviously, this is the time for a player to shine. Being the figure of note in a phase means you are hero or villain. Revel in it.



Figures of note may not switch sides *during* their featured phase. They are too tied to their side for it to be that easy.



If a figure of note has not yet been featured in a phase they may be coerced, cajoled and convinced to switch sides if you make turning him your phase objective. If you turn him before his phase, he's no longer considered a Figure of Note.

### Figure of Note, But Not Featured This Phase

Figures of note who are *not* featured are the supporting cast for the phase. They are not directly in the spotlight, but they are still very important. If their featured phase is yet to come, build toward them—foreshadow, highlight and hint. If their phase already passed, let them settle into the background as strong supporting cast.

All figures of note participate in the game, featured this phase or not. Future or past figures of note have a lot of latitude. They don't necessarily act for their own side! They can mistakenly (or willingly) help the other side. Or they can take a reactive stance, rather than a proactive one—waiting to see what comes, knowing that eventually they'll be in the thick of it.

*Playing a great general during the infiltration—who will be featured in invasion—allows the player to establish his reputation, to begin building his forces and gathering allies. He's in the game, he's just not the star yet.*



Playing a turncoat or spy who's not featured is great fun. During the other phases he can play the field as he likes—even helping the other side—but he's building up the motivations for his inevitable and eventual betrayal. Get it out in the open from the beginning. It allows the character's actions to take on great significance, doubly so if that eventual turncoat is building sincere friendships with the other characters—friendships that he will soon use for his own ends!

### Playing for the Other Side

If a player figure of note gets turned during the game, keep the betrayal in the open among the group. The *characters* do not necessarily need to know.



A player character on jumps sides during the conflict, the he can confer and coordinate with the GM. His characters may be used to make maneuver rolls when he has an appropriate skill.



## Player Characters in The Infection

Even if a player character is not a figure of note, he is still central to the story. His fate is still caught up in that of his world. Players of non-figure of note characters may make Infection maneuver rolls and participate in all aspects of play as usual. The only restriction is that they may not roll their skill into their side's initial disposition.



Non-figure of note characters may switch sides at their leisure, rolling for or helping one side or the other as it suits them.

## Phase Objective

Each phase has an implicit objective dictated by its premise: In the infiltration, the Vaylen are trying to get worms onto the planet, the humans are trying prevent them. In usurpation, the Vaylen are trying to position themselves to take over key institutions and personnel. The humans are trying to prevent them. In the invasion, the Vaylen are



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trying to conquer/secure the planet. The humans are counterstriking and/or defending. The goals and win conditions of these premises are part of every phase. They need not be part of your objective—they're already in there behind the scenes. In addition, each side may set a more specific goal they want to accomplish in play. Setting your phase objective is the same as determining your intent in a versus test, but with much higher stakes! Write down your objective for the phase. The most common type of intent involves changing an element from the World Burner:

### Modify Planetary Attitude

One side of the conflict may decide their intent for the phase is to change the attitude of the planet.

The Planetary Attitude may shift up to two steps in the direction indicated on this scale per phase.



### Change Predominant Military

One side may attempt to bring a military power into play via their phase objective. In order to do so, there must be an opposition power on the world with a viable military. The opposition power can be a faction or the dominant government. Winning the phase objective allows the player to change the Predominant Military to a level of his choosing. This doesn't change the government or factions, or even wipe out the other military. It just makes this one dominant.

### Change Dominant Government

The players may choose to elevate one of the *factions* to the primary form of government as their intent for the phase. The faction does not have to be in play this phase or controlled by the player with this intent. However, it must be one of the factions chosen for the planet during world burning.

### Change Level of Quarantine

One side may choose to raise or lower the level of quarantine as their phase objective. Quarantine may only be raised or lowered by up to two steps per phase: from strict down to standard or none up to advanced.



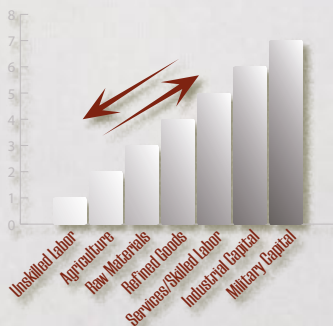
## Change Level of Regulation

Changing the level of regulation is a common tactic for both the Vaylen and those who wish to fend them off. Regulation may be raised or lowered by up to two steps as part of a phase objective: from tight down to loose or from none up to moderate.

## Change Primary Export

Via sweeping economic reform, changes in the markets, brutal competition, discovery of new resources or even industrial sabotage, a planet's primary export/industry may be changed.

Industry/export may shift one increment up or down on this scale per phase.



## Force a Faction Out of Play

One side may attempt to force a faction out of play as part of their goal for the phase. If successful, that faction may not be activated in subsequent phases.

## Force a Figure of Note Out of Play

By shifting the power balance and leveling plenty of propaganda, players may attempt to neuter a figure of note. If successful, this intent indicates the figure of note does not affect the disposition of his favored side during his featured phase. This tactic doesn't work if the figure of note is currently featured, so it's best to plot against him early.

## Reinstate a Figure of Note or Faction

Players who lost a figure of note or a faction in the first phase may attempt to reinstate them as their usurpation phase objective if that element is going to benefit them in the invasion phase.

## Color the Threat to Your World

Listed above are possible overarching stakes for each phase. However, merely rattling off one of those categories as your intent is not enough. Using the details generated in the World Burner, the players must state how that intent is applied to the world.

*If playing out an infiltration on a backwater, partially-habitable agrarian world, the Vaylen intent might be as follows: I want to scout out and discover a remote valley in which I can set up genetic laboratories so I can breed my army of freakish Vaylen Shudren warriors. But I also want to set up for the usurpation phase. I want to give myself an advantage, so while I smuggle and infiltrate, I'm going to try to put the world's junta*

*in power. If I win, I set up my labs and the primary government becomes a Military Dictatorship for the usurpation phase. In this situation, the human intent might be as follows: If we win, we discover the lab and destroy the material, and we become suspicious of errant ships in atmosphere, allowing us to push through an increased quarantine.*

### **The Balancing Act**

Setting the objective is an interesting balance. On one hand, you want to use this opportunity to stick it to your opponent and get what you want. On the other, you can't state your objective as, "And I win, and discover everything, and there's nothing you can do. You're destroyed utterly!" That's too broad and bland. Nor can you set your objective as, "I win and I uncover a spy!" Those are too narrow. You've got to find the middle ground using the details you've generated in the World Burner.

*On Agra, during the usurpation, the player's phase objective is, "To drive the Forged Lord, Aziz, out of power." Aziz is the figure of note for the next phase, invasion. By taking out the enemy figure of note for the next phase, the players give themselves a substantial advantage. I won't be able to have my figure of note roll to contribute to my disposition.*

*My objective is to loosen the regulation of military manufacture. I want to drop the regulation level down to standard. Therefore, I'm going to attack the Theocracy faction in play. They control that aspect of the world.*

## Maneuvering in The Infection

Maneuvers are macro actions that connect the conflicts among the players to the big picture. There are eight maneuvers: Assess, Conserve, Flak, Gambit, Go to Ground, Inundate, Pin and Take Cover. Each maneuver represents a different method by which your actions in the scenes affect the big picture.

### **Intent of Maneuver**



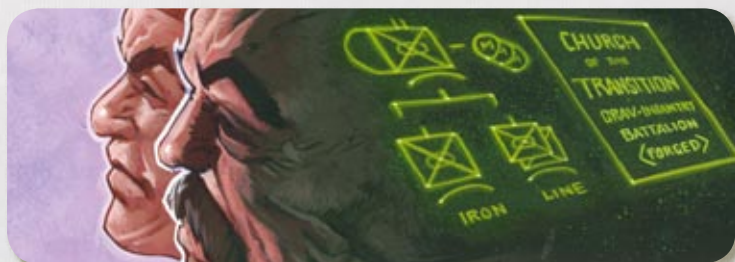
Before getting down to the nitty gritty of play, you determine in which direction you want to take the story. Discuss what you want to accomplish in the next few hours of play. What conflicts do you want to push for? Some will be accomplished, some won't, but the nature of the goals determines how you want to affect the big picture. Do you want to go on the attack and destroy the enemy fleet's



flagship? Then you'll choose Gambit, Inundate or Take Action. Do you need to take a defensive posture and find safe houses so as to disappear from public view? Then look into Go to Ground or Conserve.



Those goals you noted down are your *intent*. The maneuver is your *task*.



## Picking Maneuvers

After deciding on an intent for this segment of play, the GM privately picks a maneuver and notes it. The players then do the same as a group. The GM *always* chooses his maneuver first. After the GM has chosen his Infection maneuver and written down his choice, the players discuss their options openly at the table. Once a decision is made, the GM notes the players' choice and we dive right into play.

*We're in the thick of it on Agra. Our fourth session. Alexander's character, the Lady Kate, is about to deliver a speech renouncing her status as a Hammer Lord and denouncing the Inquisition. The Inquisition is watching her very closely. They know she's up to something. They want to stop her shenanigans but also hit back hard. I choose a Flak maneuver for the first half of this session—I want to counter their propaganda and cripple their nascent coup attempt.*

A maneuver is discussed and decided upon either at the beginning of the session or at the end of the previous maneuver. A maneuver may never be chosen at the end of a session.

Among the players, maneuvers are chosen by consensus. If no consensus can be reached for a maneuver, a majority vote will decide the maneuver. The GM may not vote. If a majority vote cannot be reached, compromise. One side chooses the maneuver for this part of the session; the other side chooses the next maneuver.

*Thor, Mayuran, Chris and Alexander are all working together closely to bring down the Inquisition. They want to use this opportunity to strike out at them and show the people of Agra that the Inquisition has gone*



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*mad with power. They are prepared to fight if necessary! After some discussion, they choose the Take Action maneuver to represent this intent for the first half of the session. I write both maneuvers (mine and theirs) in my notebook, tell them the current disposition and ask who wants to start. We're ready to play!*

### What Happens within a Maneuver?

Once both sides have picked a maneuver, we play the game. We dive into the situation; we get right into roleplay and conflict. We challenge Beliefs and threaten relationships. We try to accomplish the goals we set out for our side when we chose this maneuver.

*Alexander begins the maneuver with a building scene. Without preamble he launches into his confession and denunciation. "People of Agra, with a heavy heart I accept the charges against me..." He tests his Oratory to deliver his speech and gives a linked die to Thor's character, Lord Omei, to further discredit Weller. Mayuran then announces that he's using his propaganda networks to broadcast Lady Kate's speech across the planet. This time, it's a color scene. Mayuran doesn't want to test yet because he's gunning for a conflict later in the maneuver. Thor and Chris chime in with additional color: Chris is using his Signals skill to ensure the broadcast is clean. Thor describes how Lord Omei has made sure all the channels are clear; Mayuran has the authorization he needs for the broadcast.*

*Weller and his Inquisition sodality are on site at the temple. They hear the speech broadcast live. Without delay, as soon as the players have finished describing the propaganda, I shout, "Enough! The Inquisition sodalis push through the crowd, level their weapons and open fire. I want a Firefight right now!"*

*As a result of the Firefight, Weller is captured. Bastards! Mayuran wants him brought to the Guiding Council of the Foundation to stand trial. Alexander flies him there in his hammer. En route, two things happen. One, the Forged Lord calls Thor's character, Lord Omei, screaming bloody murder: "What the hell just happened? Where the hell is Weller?" An interstitial scene. Thor roleplays the cover-up. Second, I ask Alexander if he lets Weller get close enough to him to speak. Alexander considers it and then says, "Hell yeah!" I engage him in a conflict, a psychic duel. Weller loses the duel! But through the compromise, Weller and Kate are now allied.*

*They land at the Guiding Council's hangar and emerge from Kate's ship together. Weller goes before the council and is tried under their*

own strange laws. Mayuran has Faisal engage Weller in a Duel of Wits and wins (a conflict scene)! I'm getting creamed. As a result of the Duel, the Guiding Council of the Foundation exiles Weller. Doh! Chris announces slyly that he's using all the ruckus as cover to take over the Theocracy's security network. It's a building scene. He tests his Security Rigging versus the Church Security ops. Finally, Thor asks to see the Archcotare Davide. He demands the Archcotare purge all of Weller's staff and flunkies from the church. The Archcotare wants nothing of the sort. A Duel of Wits is engaged (another conflict)! I lose and the maneuver ends as Thor describes Omei rounding up Weller's followers and putting them against the wall.

*Then I announce that I had a Flak to their Take Action and we roll for the maneuver.*



After the scenes have been played out, play is stopped for a moment. Right now, it doesn't matter if you were successful in your aims or not—it only matters that you strove for the goal. The maneuvers are revealed and compared. Appropriate tests are made on both sides and we get to measure how the actions in the scenes affected the big picture.



Players are invited to use their gut instincts when they feel the action is coming to a pause. They know what maneuver they chose and what their goals were. The moment they feel they've addressed those goals (successful or not) stop the action and roll the dice. Don't cut any conflicts short, but do not drag this process out! The



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roll determines the ultimate effect of the maneuver. Be sure to read the Scenes in Play section in this chapter to get a sense of how the internal structure of a maneuver works.

## Sequels

A *sequel* is a result or consequence. After you test for the maneuvers, take a moment to discuss the consequences of what just happened in the big picture. The loser states what he was trying to accomplish. The winner takes that and describes what really happened. How did things go wrong? What unexpected elements cropped up? Where was the loser simply out maneuvered? This is big picture stuff. The changes don't necessarily have to stem directly from the characters' actions, though indirect causation is good. Take a minute or two to describe the situation with a little color and love.

*I inform the players, "The Inquisition was trying to use the Hammer Lord as a scapegoat in order to cow the errant nobility who were beginning to think they might stand up to Weller."*

*But the human side won. Thor describes the results of the Take Action: "The gun battle on the steps of the Mundus Humanitas proved too much. It was clear the Inquisition instigated the fight—and did so when Lady Kate was defenseless! The people of Agra are incensed. Lady Kate is a hero. The nobility, no friend to either side, distance themselves from the conflict and turn a blind eye to the purge that follows in the Church."*

## LIST of Maneuvers

The following section describes the maneuvers available to the players in the Infection. As described under the Maneuvering in the Infection heading, each side privately chooses one of the following actions to play against his opponent: Assess, Conserve, Flak, Gambit, Go to Ground, Inundate, Pin or Take Action.

### Appropriate Skills

Each maneuver is listed with a series of skills that can be applied to it. The skills are phase-specific; what's appropriate in the infiltration is not useful in the invasion.

Choose the skill from the maneuver's options based on the action that transpired in play. What was the main conflict about? What was involved in the building scenes? Was it about tightening security? Was

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it a big firefight? Was it a debate about the legality of regulations? Were ships built or factories opened? This action, more than anything else, dictates which skill it is acceptable to roll for the maneuver.

### *Skills Appropriate for Helping in the Maneuver*

Helping dice may only come from skills in the list for your maneuver in this phase and from wises that are appropriate to the situation.

## Independent and Versus Maneuvers

When played, Infection maneuvers will either be *independent* of each other or *versus* the other side's choice. Independent maneuvers do not interfere with each other. They can both be successful, both fail or simply go untested. Versus maneuvers indicate that a versus test is made between the two sides using the skills appropriate to the respective maneuver. There can only be one winner in a versus maneuver. There is a table that follows the maneuver descriptions that shows independent and versus actions.

## Assess

### *Infiltration Phase*

Research, Cryptography, Accounting, Streetwise, Observation, Signals, Investigative Logic

### *Usurpation Phase*

Security, Signals, Surgery, Recon, Accounting, Investigative Logic, Psychohistory, Research

### *Invasion Phase*

Logistics, Signals, Finance, Journalism







### Effect/Description

Using the Assess maneuver, your side devotes its assets to casing the enemy and looking for signs of weakness and places where they are open to attack. If you win the versus test, you spot the enemy's operations before they can get them off the ground. If played against an independent maneuver, an Assess is an Ob 2 test.



When declaring your intent for your Assess, you have two targets, either the opposition or the factions. If you assess the opposition, you may use the Take Action maneuver to remove disposition, but not to activate factions. If you assess the factions, you may use the Take Action maneuver to activate factions, but not to reduce the enemy disposition. In order to do both, your side must successfully play two Assess maneuvers. See the Take Action maneuver and Activating Factions section for more details.

A successful Assess against the enemy disposition is required before Take Action, Gambit, Inundate or Pin can be scripted in a subsequent maneuver. If the factions are assessed, only Take Action may be used to activate them. An Assess does not have to come directly before these actions. It can happen any time during the phase prior to the Take Action, Gambit, Inundate or Pin.

*Assess is a vital maneuver. I can't stress how important it is. However, it can be blocked by a Flak, Go to Ground or another Assess, so it's rather hard to pull off in the early game. In this case, I choose an Assess for my second maneuver. It's the infiltration phase so I'm going to base my maneuver on watching the enemy's movements and use my 4 Observation. I can get help or FoRKs from Research, Cryptography, Accounting, Streetwise, Observation, Signals or Investigative Logic.*

*If my opponent chooses an Assess as well, the maneuvers are opposed. This means we make a versus test. Whoever generates more successes wins the test and gets the Assess off.*

*If my opponent chooses a maneuver like Take Action, which is independent of Assess, the obstacle for Assess is 2. It's possible for both of us to be successful—I check him out while he whacks me.*



## Conserve

### *Special Opposition Conditions*

Conserve is a strictly defensive maneuver. It may only be rolled against a *versus* action. Do not roll for a Conserve against an independent action: Assess, Flak, Go to Ground or another Conserve.

### *Infiltration Phase*

Administration, Ship Management, Estate Management, Psychology, Physics, Security

### *Usurpation Phase*

Instruction, Tactics, Finance, Manufacture, Engineering, Eugenics, Cryptography, Administration

### *Invasion Phase*

Logistics, Manufacture, Shipwright, Fusion Dynamics

### *Effect/Description*

The Conserve maneuver allows you to use your enemy's own energy and activity to buy time to retrench and reorganize your forces. Successes from a Conserve subtract from *versus* actions. If the successes from a Conserve reduce an opposing action to zero, the action is stopped. Extra successes from Conserve are added into your disposition. Disposition may not be raised above its starting level. Extra successes from Conserve can also be used to generate downtime. See the Downtime section in this chapter.

*In the usurpation phase, I'm manufacturing Vaylen-detecting devices. I'm going to use Manufacture as my skill for my Conserve maneuver. If my opponent uses a Take Action, Gambit or Inundate maneuver, my skill roll will oppose his—a versus test. If I win, I can recycle my extra successes into my disposition to show how my manufacturing has strengthened and rejuvenated our side. Against any other maneuver, I don't even get to roll my skill. It is a risky maneuver.*

*Conserve is an excellent mid- or late-game maneuver. Not so great in the early game, though.*



## Flak

### *Infiltration Phase Skills*

Rhetoric, Persuasion, Ugly Truth, Oratory, Falsehood, Doctrine, Philosophy

### *Usurpation Phase Skills*

Psychology, Journalism, Doctrine, Extortion, Law

### *Invasion Phase Skills*

Strategy, Propaganda

### *Effect/Description*

The Flak maneuver uses an aggressive defense. When using a Flak, you divide your dice between defending your disposition and attacking the enemy. If opposed by a Take Action or Inundate, roll the *defense* dice against your opponent's maneuver. Your successes reduce his and then his net successes are subtracted from your disposition. Then roll your *attacking* dice and subtract the successes from his disposition. If used against to a Go to Ground or Conserve, simply roll the dice allocated to *attack* against your opponent's action. Go to Ground successes counter your Flak. Conserve may not test. If used against a Pin or Assess, use the *defense* dice to oppose your opponent's action. Use your attack dice to damage his disposition. Flak versus Flak: defense dice counter your opponent's attack dice, etc. Flak may not be tested at all against a Gambit.

### *Special Requirements*

If you choose the Flak action, you must divide your Flak roll fractionally *before the scenes are played out*: half to defense, half to offense; one quarter to offense, three quarters to defense, etc. All dice used in the roll are divided according to the fraction—skill, help, FoRKs and artha. There must be at least 3D in each pool.

*Flak is an excellent all-purpose maneuver. It's conservative because you can defend yourself, but aggressive because it attacks your opponent's disposition. In the interest of fairness, you will have to decide how you will divide your Flak dice when you choose the maneuver. It's not fair to divide them after you know what your opponent chose. I decide to lead off with a nice safe 50/50 division. At the end of the maneuver, after all help and FoRKs are determined, I have 8D to roll. Four for attack, four for defense.*

*My opponent chooses a Conserve. Flak is independent of Conserve, so he doesn't even get to defend himself. Ouch! I roll my four attack dice and subtract the successes from his disposition. It's the invasion phase so I*

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*describe how his people swallowed all my propaganda that we wanted to sue for peace, but meanwhile we sent out special forces to blow up his factories.*

*If my opponent had chosen a Take Action, I'd roll my four defense dice against his action. My successes subtract from his. If he has successes left after my defense, they are subtracted from my disposition. But then I get to roll my attack dice and whittle away at his disposition, too!*

### Gambit

#### Special Requirements

In order to make a Gambit, your side must have successfully Assessed opposition's disposition in a previous maneuver during this phase.

#### Infiltration Phase

Psychology, Tactics, Smuggling, Food Services

#### Usurpation Phase

Seduction, Psychology, Bureaucracy, Finance, Propaganda

#### Invasion Phase

Psychohistory, Strategy, Cryptography, Logistics



#### Effect/Description

A Gambit is a special attack in which your side risks some of its disposition in order to gain an advantage. That's right, you burn your own disposition with this maneuver: A Gambit costs three points of disposition to use. Subtract that cost when the action is announced at the end of the maneuver. After paying the premium, test the appropriate Gambit skill. Successes from the Gambit remove points from

the enemy disposition. Gambit's true power comes from the fact that it is independent of Go to Ground and Flak. It cannot be defended against by those two maneuvers. (Whereas a Conserve will work.)

When using this maneuver, describe it in two facets. One facet represents the disposition dice that have been risked on this maneuver. What do they stand for? What's being sacrificed? What's being used



to distract the enemy? The other facet represents the thrust of the attack—how is the risk being exploited for gain?

*Gambit is a dangerous maneuver. Ostensibly, it's very powerful, because you are almost assured of getting your attack off. But remember, whenever you use a Gambit, you are burning your own resources and increasing the amount of compromise you'll have to agree to at the end of the phase. Also when you're playing a Gambit, you yourself are vulnerable to attack.*

*My Psychologist can use his Psychology skill to make this maneuver. He can use his skills and powers to both confuse the enemy and drive his allies to take risks they would not otherwise have taken. I test my Psychology of 5 plus help, FoRKs and artha. In this case, I play it against a Flak and get five successes. My opponent loses five points from his disposition—he cannot test for his defense. Gambit is independent of Flak.*

*If I were playing that Gambit against a versus maneuver like Conserve, I would have still have to pay the three point premium, but my opponent would get a chance to oppose me. His Conserve successes would subtract from my Gambit successes.*

## **Go to Ground**

### ***Infiltration Phase***

Persuasion, Bureaucracy, Security  
Rigging

### ***Usurpation Phase***

Administration, Estate  
Management, Journalism,  
Propaganda, Streetwise

### ***Invasion Phase***

Strategy, Tactics, Fortifications

### ***Effect/Description***

Using the Go to Ground maneuver, you attempt to protect your assets. Your side hides, goes underground or stays quietly behind the scenes until things cool down. Test the appropriate skill for the phase. The successes of a Go to Ground maneuver are subtracted from the successes of versus maneuvers. If



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this reduces the successes to zero, the opposing maneuver is stopped and has no effect. Go to Ground can be used to generate downtime. See the Downtime section in this chapter.

*Duck and cover! Go to Ground is an excellent early game defense against the merciless Flak maneuver or even an Assess. In the usurpation phase I have my Kerrn Ghetto Sheef test his Streetwise in the neighborhood to arrange things so nothing untoward appears to be happening on the surface—even though a cell of anarchists is hiding out in various basements waiting for the heat to pass over.*

*Against Assess, Take Action, Inundate or Flak, Go to Ground reduces the opposing maneuver's successes. Reduce the opposing side to zero successes and you've gotten away cleanly. Against another Go to Ground or a Conserve, this maneuver is wasted.*

### Inundate

#### *Special Requirement*

In order to Inundate, your side must have successfully Assessed the opposition's disposition in a previous maneuver during this phase.

#### *Infiltration Phase*

Counterfeiting, Smuggling, Tactics, Manufacture, Eugenics

#### *Usurpation Phase*

Tactics, Propaganda, Psychology, Journalism, Demonology, Extortion

#### *Invasion Phase*

Strategy

#### *Effect/Description*

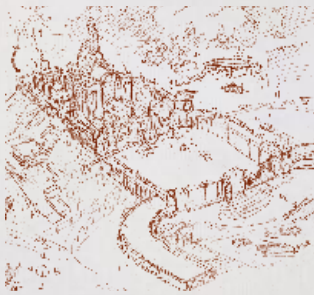
Inundate is an all-out attack using every available resource to overwhelm your opponent. Inundate grants +3D to the appropriate skill for the test. Successes are deducted from your opponent's disposition. If you choose Inundate, you *lose your next action* as your forces regather themselves and prepare for the next push. While hesitating, your side may participate in scenes and conflicts, but you may not choose a maneuver or defend yourselves in any way. It is best to save Inundate for your coup de grâce. Though it can also be useful if you're about to lose and need to force a compromise.







*Raids, smear campaigns, lengthy investigations, counterfeiting rings, flooding the market with cheap goods or even using clones to infiltrate and overwhelm all fall under the province of an Inundate. Inundate is an attacking maneuver like Take Action or Gambit. Successes subtract points from your opponent's disposition. With a +3D advantage, Inundate seems like a safe bet. But be careful: Go to Ground, Conserve and Flak can foul up an Inundate. Any maneuver that defends against an Inundate can cause you to lose your next action in the Infection, because if you don't win the phase with Inundate, you hesitate!*



*If I were trying to flood the economy with fake money during the infiltration phase, I'd use my 4 Counterfeiting skill. The Inundate adds +3D, plus I get to use help and FoRKs. It's pretty easy to get 10D to roll for this maneuver.*

## **Pin**

### **Special Requirement**

In order to Pin, you must have successfully Assessed opposition's disposition in a previous maneuver during this phase.

### **Infiltration Phase**

Command, Administration, Estate Management, Ship Management, Law, Extortion

### **Usurpation Phase**

Propaganda, Finance, Doctrine, Bureaucracy, Extortion, Philosophy, Law

### **Invasion Phase**

Strategy, Propaganda, Logistics, Tactics

### **Effect/Description**

A Pin is a tactical maneuver in which you try to temporarily immobilize, incapacitate or tie down your opponent's ability to act. Against an independent maneuver, test the Pin with an obstacle equal to the opponent's skill exponent plus the number of FoRKs (not help or linked dice) being used for this action.

If played against a versus maneuver, make a versus test between the two skills being tested in this volley (against Flak, the defense dice are rolled to resist the Pin.) Add FoRKs and help as applicable.

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If the Pin maneuver is successful, the margin of success equals the number of dice subtracted from the opposing side's next maneuver. If, at the end of the following maneuver, the opposing side doesn't have a skill with an exponent higher than the number of pinned dice, they may not roll for their maneuver (do not include help or FoRKs). In addition, when you have successfully Pinned an opponent, you get one increment of downtime. See the Downtime section in this chapter.

*Pin is possibly the quirkiest maneuver of the bunch. With this maneuver, you want your opponent to play a versus action against you. You want a Flak, Conserve or another Pin. The versus test is actually easier to win than the independent test for the Pin.*



*Using Logistics during the invasion phase, I play a Pin maneuver to represent agents tying up enemy assets—clogging up railheads, blowing up bridges and jamming the airwaves with garbage. Meanwhile, I'm preparing my forces to attack. If my opponent played a Flak, I'd test my 5 Logistics plus help and FoRKs versus the defense half of the Flak. If I win by two successes, the opposing side suffers a -2D penalty to their next action. If I can win by five or six successes, I can pretty much guarantee they won't be able to act in the next maneuver—and then I can safely launch my attack.*



## Take Action

### *Special Requirements*

In order to Take Action, you must have first successfully Assessed opposition's disposition or the factions in a previous maneuver during this phase.

### *Infiltration Phase Skills*

Rhetoric, Suasion, Smuggling, Investigative Logic, Journalism, Counterfeiting, Forgery

### *Usurpation Phase Skills*

Oratory, Psychology, Finance, Smuggling, Extortion, Command, Tactics, Law

### *Invasion Phase Skills*

Strategy, Propaganda

### *Effect/Description*

Take Action is a direct and forceful attack. It can be used in two ways: to attack your opponent's disposition or to attack or activate a faction. Test the appropriate skill for the phase plus FoRKs plus help.

If you've assessed the opposing disposition on a previous maneuver you may attack his disposition. Whether independent or versus, net Take Action successes are subtracted from your opponent's disposition.

If you have Assessed the factions in a previous maneuver, Take Action may be used to attack or co-opt factions. The obstacle to activate a faction is equal to its disposition value for the current phase. If successful, the faction then comes into play on your side. See the Activating Faction rules below.

When you use this maneuver, it is imperative to make your intent explicit, "I'm taking action against the Vaylen cell—we're raiding it," or, "I'm taking action against the military governor—I'm going to kidnap him."

*Take Action is the basic attack maneuver in the Infection. It does not give the benefits of a Gambit or Inundate, but neither does it carry the risks inherent to those maneuvers. It can be used to activate factions or attack the enemy disposition. It's solid and reliable!*

*In the usurpation phase, I run a series of kidnappings—nabbing the offspring of planetary potentates. Let the blackmail begin! I use a Take Action for my maneuver and test my Extortion skill of 4 plus help and FoRKs. Against a Gambit, Assess, Pin, Inundate or another Take Action, this maneuver will most assuredly do some damage to the other side. It*

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is independent of those maneuvers so all of the Take Action successes are subtracted from the opposing disposition. Whereas Flak, Go to Ground and Conserve provide defense against it and can lessen its effect. Margin of success, if any, in the versus test is subtracted from the enemy disposition. If I get three successes and he gets two, he loses one from his total.





# Independent and Versus Maneuver Matrix

Use the following matrix to determine if a maneuver is versus or independent:

	Take Action <sup>^</sup>	Flak	Gambit <sup>^</sup>	Go to Ground	Assess	Conserve	Pin <sup>^</sup>	Inundate <sup>^</sup>
Take Action <sup>^</sup>	I	V	I	V	I	V	I	I
Flak	V		I	V	V	I	V	V
Gambit <sup>^</sup>	I	I		I	I	V	I	I
Go to Ground	V	V	I	I	V	I	I	V
Assess	I	V	I	V		I	I	I
Conserve	V	I	V	I	I		V	V
Pin <sup>^</sup>	I	V	I	I	I	V		I
Inundate <sup>^</sup>	I	V	I	V	I	V	I	I

I = Independent action. V = Versus.

<sup>^</sup>Requires a successful Assess before the action can be used in the phase.

## Forces Beyond Our Control

The maneuvers represent how the big picture is affected by the characters' actions, but they are not directly related. The connection between the scenes and the maneuvers is deliberately flexible and loose. Describe the effect as you go along—fill in details appropriate to the situation in your game. The players' action are, of course, important to the fate of the world, but they do not represent the entirety of the situation. There are forces beyond their control at work.



If you failed in your goal, but succeeded in your maneuver, obviously something odd was transpiring in the big picture, and your actions had unintended effects. If you succeeded in your goal, but failed in the maneuver, something else was going on, something out of your control—something that's probably going to come back and haunt you later.

Infection

That there are external forces at work does not imply that the players' actions in the scenes and conflicts are pointless or fruitless. Far from it. The maneuvers can't happen without the players creating the action in the scenes. But precisely what goes on in those scenes and how they interact with the forces beyond our control is up to *you*.

### *Scenes in Play*

Within the maneuvers, the players use conflict, building, interstitial and color scenes to achieve their goals and tell their story.

#### **Player Conflict Scenes**

Each maneuver consists of two to four conflicts. The players' side is guaranteed one conflict scene per maneuver. The players may take an optional second conflict if it is necessary for the flow of the story.

Conflict scenes may involve one or more of the characters, but that depends on what's going on in the story. The players may decide who among them will initiate the conflict scene. Sometimes this happens organically through play. Other times it's part of the plan you decided on when you chose the maneuver. Conflict scenes are a limited commodity, and they are the moments when the you drive home the intent of your maneuver, so use them wisely!

#### **Building Scenes**

Any player who is not in the spotlight for a conflict scene gets a building scene for his character for the maneuver. The building scene is for the player, regardless of the character he uses. Whether he uses a subordinate, a character he brought into the game via Circles or his main character, it still counts as his building scene.

#### **Color and Interstitials**

All of the players also have access to one color and one interstitial scene each per maneuver.

#### **The GM's Scenes**

The GM is guaranteed one conflict scene per maneuver. He can initiate it with any character in his stable, figure of note or otherwise. If time and circumstance allow, and it's appropriate or necessary, the GM may initiate a second conflict for the maneuver.

Any figures of note who did not initiate a conflict may take one building scene each per maneuver. The GM also may take one color scene or interstitial per figure of note, per maneuver. Building, color and interstitials are optional for the GM.





## The Scene Squeeze



Scenes are a commodity. It is a deliberate part of the design of this game. If you feel squeezed by the scene constraints, you're playing the game correctly. When you feel squeezed, stop and think a moment. What's the most important thing happening at the table? Which conflict must be played out in order for the action to move forward or drive toward the goals expressed in your character's Beliefs? Focus on that conflict! If you have other ideas, secondary to that conflict, save them. If you have other ideas that would help or support that conflict, negotiate with the other players. Do you need a conflict scene? Can it wait? Can you use a building scene now to prepare for it?

*At the beginning of the maneuver, Mayuran had two options. He could have made a Propaganda test to broadcast Lady Kate's speech or he could have held onto his opportunity and waited to have a bigger conflict later.*

*He chose to describe his broadcast of the speech as color. He knew that a Duel of Wits with Weller was coming and that it would be important to get to it this maneuver. So he held back in the beginning, used his color scene and helped the other players in the GM-initiated conflict. When the opportunity arose, he initiated a conflict with the GM.*



If you know the conflict you want for this maneuver, but you have all this other stuff to do, you're in a good position! Play out the pressing conflict now and save the additional stuff for the next maneuver. You've got your goals for the next one all lined up and ready to run.

## Scenes Appropriate to Maneuvers

Certain scenes are more appropriate to certain maneuvers. Assess, Conserve, Go to Ground and Pin require building scenes to accomplish.

### SCENES PER MANEUVER: PLAYER INITIATES CONFLICT



1x Color



1x Interstitial



1x Conflict

### SCENES PER MANEUVER: PLAYER SUPPORTS CONFLICT



1x Color



1x Interstitial



1x Building

### SCENES PER MANEUVER: GM CHARACTERS



1x Color per Figure of Note



1x Interstitial per Figure of Note



1x Building per Figure of Note who did not initiate a conflict



1x Conflict

Infection

Initiating a conflict is optional for the side who played these maneuvers. If your side chooses a Flak, Gambit, Inundate or Take Action maneuver, you must initiate a conflict during the course of play.

### Who Rolls for the Maneuver?

Once each side has played out their desired scenes, test for the maneuver. The player whose character played the most prominent role in the preceding scenes rolls for the maneuver. Typically, this indicates the player initiated a conflict, but not necessarily. It is up to the group to decide which player's scene best embodied the intent of this particular maneuver.

*Mayuran initiated the Duel of Wits with Weller in the last maneuver. Therefore he's going to roll for the Take Action for the players. The other characters featured prominently in the scenes, but Mayuran pushed the group's agenda more than anyone with his conflict to exile Weller.*

The GM tests for the figure of note whose presence or machinations factored most heavily into these scenes. The figure of note need not have engaged in conflict, but he must have participated in a building, color or interstitial scene to show the players what he was up to!

*Weller was the featured antagonist for that maneuver. He'll test.*

### Help in Maneuvers



A player may only *help* another player in the test for the maneuver if he has given that player a helping die, a linked test die or a connection during the preceding scenes of the maneuver. If no dice have been passed during the scenes for this maneuver, no help can be given for the Infection maneuver test.



In addition to help on the maneuver roll, the helping player must have one of the skills listed for the maneuver in this phase or an appropriate wise. If he doesn't have an applicable skill or wise, he can't help for the roll—even if he met the condition for offering help.

*Only players who helped Prince Faisal during the scenes that make up the maneuver can help Mayuran make the test for the Take Action. In this case, both Thor's and Alexander's characters were present for the Duel of Wits against Weller and helped him during that scene. If they have one of the skills for Take Action in the Usurpation phase, or an appropriate wise, they can give helping dice.*



### **GM Helps Himself**

A GM does not have to hand dice back and forth between his figures of note and their relationships. So long as a figure of note or other character was featured in the maneuver at all—even if he was just in a color or interstitial—the GM may have that character help or be helped for the maneuver roll.

*The Forged Lord called Lord Omei in a rage demanding an explanation for the firefight at the temple. That's an interstitial and that means he can offer help to Weller for this maneuver.*

### **Connection Dice as Help**

Connection dice from Psychologists count as help during the maneuver in which they are given. After that, they still count as a connection in play, but not as help for the maneuvers. See the Psychology chapter for how connections work in play.

## **Fields of Related Knowledge in Maneuvers**

ForKs may be used in maneuvers, *but only if they come from the listed skills for the maneuver this phase or if they are wises approved by the GM.*

## **Technology in Maneuvers**

Technology may not be used to aid maneuver rolls.

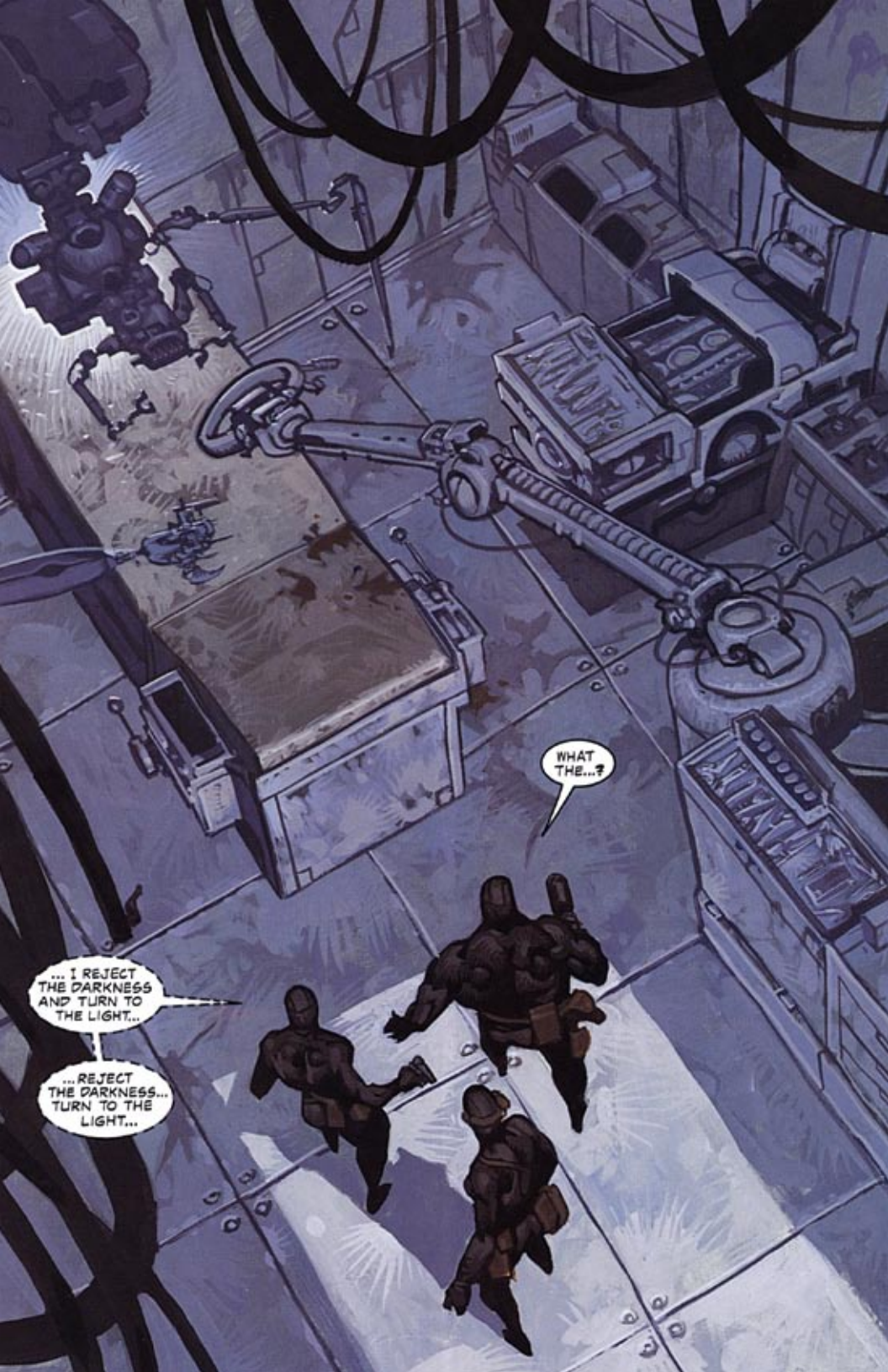
# *Activating and Destroying Factions in Play*

Players build factions, divisions and concentration of power on their world. While their mere presence can render the planet vulnerable to the Vaylen, it's quite possible for the factions to reinforce the planet and provide considerable benefit. In order for that to come to pass, the faction must be galvanized and activated in play.

Either side can activate a faction in any of the three phases. In order to be able to activate factions, the side must have pulled off a successful Assess in a previous maneuver with the intent to “assess the playing field” or to “scope out the factions.” That Assess can have come at any time before the faction was activated; it does not have to have been immediately prior to the Take Action.

Once Assessed, factions may be activated by a Take Action maneuver. The players must declare which faction they wish to activate in their intent for the Take Action. The obstacle is equal to the faction's disposition contribution for this phase.





... I REJECT  
THE DARKNESS  
AND TURN TO  
THE LIGHT...

...REJECT  
THE DARKNESS...  
TURN TO THE  
LIGHT...

WHAT  
THE...?



*Civilian Commune adds three to disposition in the usurpation phase if activated. Therefore it's +3 Ob to activate it. In the case of a versus test, the Take Action must win by three.*

If the faction is successfully activated, its disposition value is added to the activating side for this phase. It may not be activated by the other side in this phase. The faction is now under the activator's control. The activating side may use the faction's assets to aid them, or they may destroy it and drive it out of the phase. The disposition bonus represents either path, but the players should describe their decision and its effects!

## Downtime

In the story created by the structure of Burning Empires, maneuvers are slammed together, one right on top of the other. There's no time to think, stop or even breathe. Whatever the events of the story, it's a desperate fight for survival with both parties locked in a death grip.

The only way to get breathing room is to generate *downtime* via the Conserve, Go to Ground and Pin maneuvers. Success in these defensive actions allows the winning side to buy time to regroup, replenish their resources and polish their skills.

Downtime is completely optional. The winner of the Conserve, Go to Ground and Pin maneuvers chooses whether or not he wants it. If he does, each extra success generated by a Go to Ground represents three months of available downtime for the winner of that test. The loser gets one month of downtime per extra success. The same stands for Conserve, except the player must choose how many successes get allocated to downtime and how many go into replenishing his disposition. If a Pin maneuver meets the criteria for creating downtime, the Pinning player gets three months of downtime. The loser gets a single month's worth.

*If I win a Go to Ground by three successes, I get nine months of downtime. My opponent gets three months. If I win a Conserve by three successes, and I recycle two into my disposition, the remaining success counts as three months of downtime for me. My opponent gets a single month's worth.*



Why does the loser get less time than the winner? It's not that time passes differently for the loser, but that they are slower to catch on to the new pace and flow of events, and thus they use the downtime less efficiently than their opponent.



### Resources Recovery

Downtime may be used to get a job and recover taxed Resources. That process is described in the Resources chapter.

### Practice Time

Downtime is the only time skills and stats may be *practiced* in the game. If a test for advancement is needed, it can be beneficial to choose a Conserve or Go to Ground to generate downtime so that a character can practice and advance. The hitch is that you give your opponent time to do the same.

*Chris needs one more difficult test to advance Mal Nenox's Close Combat skill. He convinces the group to use a Conserve maneuver so that they can buy some downtime. During the downtime, Chris has Nenox practice Close Combat for four hours a day for a month. He earns the difficult test and his skill advances.*

All characters in play may practice during downtime so long as they are not recovering from an injury. Look at the practice cycle for the character's skills and see what he can fit into the allotted time.

### Downtime Between Phases

There is usually downtime between phases as well. The winner may choose any reasonable amount of downtime between phases. The loser gets half that amount. Downtime may be negotiated into compromises at the end of the phase.

## Ending a Phase

### Winning

The side that reduces his opponent's disposition to zero first wins the phase. The winning side accomplishes their intent—they get what they were after. However, it's unlikely that they have done so unscathed. See Compromise below.

#### *Carrying Over Victory*

The winning side may take half of their remaining points (round up) from their disposition and roll them over into their disposition total for the next phase.

#### *The Steamroller Effect*

Every so often one side will obliterate the other in a phase and carry over a colossal amount of points to the next phase. The players should discuss if they want to play out a hopeless fight or if they want to skip that phase altogether and either move to the invasion or to a





new world. Personally, I think you should play it out. You never know what could happen.

## Losing

The side reduced to zero disposition has lost the conflict. They do not accomplish their objective. However, it's rare that a side loses in such a way that their opponent is unaffected by their efforts. See Compromise below.

## Compromise

A compromise happens when the winning side also lost points from their disposition in the phase. The level of compromise depends on how many dice were lost from the winning disposition. There are four grades of compromise:

### **No Compromise: Lost a Few Dice**

In this case, the winners of the phase only lost a few dice from their disposition. The losers may add some color in the details of the winners' victory, but the fact remains: The winner steamrolled the loser.

### **Minor Compromise: Lost a Quarter or a Third**

If the losers knocked down their enemy's disposition by a quarter to a third, the winners must effect a minor compromise with the losers. So while the losers do not accomplish their objective, they may get a small part of it.

### **Compromise: Lost Half or More**

If the winners come out of the conflict with only half of their disposition, they owe the losers a concession. The losers don't get their intent of course, but imagine they got halfway there.

It's also possible to compromise so that the losers get nothing, but the winners only get about half of what they wanted.

*The players on the human side won the usurpation phase for Agra, but their own disposition was reduced by half. The Forged Lord is forced out of power as per their objective. The Vaylen won't have a figure of note testing for their prequel in the invasion phase. However, the compromise that I ask for is that Lady Kate's fortunes be tied to the Forged Lord's. When he goes, the nobility ousts her, too.*

*The players agree on the condition that they bodily possess the Forged Lord Aziz. I see no reason to deny them, but I shudder to think what they will do with him.*

## THE BURNING WHEEL

### *Major Compromise: Lost All but a Few*

If the winners are reduced to one, two or three successes in their disposition (about a tenth or less of their starting total), they have escaped with a very narrow victory indeed. The winner must grant a major compromise in regard to either the winning objective or the losers. The winners only narrowly achieved their intent. Imagine the losers *nearly* accomplished their goals, but were only thwarted at the end.



If there is a compromise result, the players discuss what they think the appropriate middle ground is. Don't worry about being in character for this part. Make sure you state what you, the player, thinks is right for the compromise. This may be different than what your character would want.



Compromise must be an agreement between all of the players at the table. It involves discussing what was at stake for both sides of the phase, plus all of the color and events that sprung up in play.

### **Tie**

If both sides are reduced to zero disposition in the same maneuver, the phase is a tie. Zero to zero is the only tie possible in Infection. The players may choose one of two options here: First, neither side gets what it wants. Neither objective is accomplished, but both sides get a major compromise as described under the *Lost All but a Few* heading. What would the end result be if both sides fought hard but couldn't gain an advantage and eventually had to retire and lick their wounds? How would the details of the objectives be affected, damaged or destroyed?



The second tie result is only for particularly wicked players—and is subject to a unanimous consent. In this case, *both* sides get what they want as stated in their intent, and they each owe each other a major compromise. This is the result of major carnage and double cross. Not for the faint of heart.

## *The Epilogue*

At some point, the phase is going to come spinning, crashing and screeching to a halt—one side's disposition is going to hit zero, probably when you aren't expecting it. At that point, the major conflict for the phase is over: There's a winner and a loser.

Once one side has hit zero and a compromise has been made (if appropriate), the group plays out the epilogue to their story. The winning players may use color and interstitial scenes to flesh out their win. They describe what happened, put the puzzle pieces together and resolve any hanging questions/conflicts between each other. At the end of the first or second phase, don't use the epilogue to go beyond your objective. Use it to set up the conflicts of the next phase; give the opposition something to work with.



The losers listen with heads hung in shame. They may describe the terms and effects of their compromise, but mostly they get to hear the winners describe how their plans and forces smashed the loser.

These are moments of pure roleplay, inspired by the intense conflict the players have built throughout the story.



If there is conflict lingering among the players, talk about it and use it for fuel to set up for the next phase. In this case, resolve the conflicts of the phase, but use them to start new ones!

There may be some unresolved threads between the players and the GM. The winner of the phase gets to describe how these threads are resolved, mitigated by the loser's compromises.

*During the epilogue for the usurpation phase for Agra, Alexander describes Lady Kate tying up her affairs before she and her brother undertake a long space voyage. Alexander wants her to search for the Makara homeworld! Everyone discusses the fate of Mayuran's character, Prince Faisal. With the Forged Lord gone, Prince Faisal is the only person on Agra with the clout and rank to assume the throne. After much wrangling, Mayuran agrees to accept the mantle. Meanwhile, Chris and Thor form a coalition. Thor's Court Lord returns to the shadows and Chris becomes his new chief spy—to replace Prince Faisal. They immediately begin intriguing against Prince Faisal!*



## STARTING THE NEXT PHASE

If you just finished the infiltration or usurpation phases, more gripping drama awaits! After the players have had a week or so to cool off, discuss the next phase. The world is already built, but a few considerations need to be made.



Be sure to apply the winner's intent to the world. This may change the disposition for one or both sides. Bring the featured figure of note for this phase to the front of the action. Discuss him. Gossip about him. Talk about why he is in the limelight now, and make his roll to add to his side's disposition. Lastly, some players may wish to change characters. Let them. Have them burn up new characters, entangle them with relationships and Beliefs and toss them on the fire. Due to the competitive balance of the World Burner, I recommend that new characters not enter the game as figures of note. If new characters are brought in, note the group's lifepath total in regards to the GM's starting artha. If the total changes, the GM receives the difference between the old artha level and the new to distribute among his characters.

## INFECTION PROCEDURE

### Campaign Level

1. Gather your group together and burn up a world: Answer the questions in the World Burner, decide your Infection phase and choose your figures of note.

### Phase Level

2. The featured figures of note for this phase each test their appropriate ability and add their successes to their side's disposition.
3. Prequel: The featured figure of note players—GM and PC—describe their influence on the world.
4. Each side determines their phase objective.





## Session Level

5. Before play begins, both sides, Vaylen and Human, privately determine an Infection maneuver. The GM chooses first, then the players.
6. Play the scenes contained within the maneuver. Each side gets a conflict and a number of building, color and interstitial scenes.
7. Once the scenes are played out, both sides reveal their maneuvers. Test the appropriate ability for the maneuvers. Apply results as described in the maneuvers.
8. Sequel: The group discusses the effects of the maneuvers on the world at large.
9. If both sides have disposition remaining, play steps 5-8 until one side is reduced to zero disposition.
10. Once one side is reduced to zero, this phase of the Infection is over. Determine the level of concessions necessary from the victor based on the final disposition totals.
11. Epilogue: The winner describes the final outcome of this phase's struggle.

## Session Structure Diagrams

The following two diagrams visually describe two possible sessions of play in *Burning Empires*.

### One-Maneuver Session

The structure of a session that focuses on just one maneuver looks like this:



Infection

## Two-Maneuver Session

A session that focuses on two maneuvers is more demanding. The players break in the middle of the session, roll for the maneuver, describe the sequel, take their artha awards and then choose a second maneuver and begin the process again:

### Two-Maneuver Session







HUME

INDEPENDENT





## DUEL OF WITS

Wits, acumen and elocution are to the world of politics, business and religion what guns, fire and agility are to the world of war. In high stakes political negotiations, a character might find himself caught so his only possible escape is to cut his way free with his tongue!

The Duel of Wits is an extended conflict mechanic used to resolve debate and argument in the game (and at the table). Characters use verbal attacks and maneuvers to overpower and destroy their opponents' arguments and make themselves appear, to all witnesses, correct.

The purpose in such a duel is not to reveal the truth but to put forth your argument in the best light while dismantling your opponent's position—and to convince the audience that you have struck on the truth while your opponent is mired in half-formed thoughts and naive delusions.

### *Argument, Not Mind Control*

The Duel of Wits is designed to simulate debate and argument: A speaker convinces an audience of the merits of his point. It is not designed to change a single character's or player's *opinion*. While this is possible, of course, it is not the goal.

Think of it as something similar to a performance mechanic. Two performers hit the stage, competing for the audience's attention. One might be more skilled than the other, but lack presence or even fail to appeal to the audience's taste. At the end of the performance,





the audience is applauding the crass nightclub act, while the virtuoso violinist is sulking in the corner. Neither of the performing characters' opinions has been changed by the event, but the audience thinks that crooner is the cat's meow—because, for them, his performance was better. And the violinist is walked off the stage. He can't perform any more at this venue, unless he makes his case heard in another way.

Although the Duel of Wits cannot make a character like something or change a Belief about anything, *it can force him to agree to something*—even if only for the time being. At its core, it's a conflict resolution mechanic that operates between players. You engage in a Duel of Wits because you want something from another character. These mechanics give you the steps for getting what you want.

## Duel of Wits as Conflict

The Duel of Wits is one of two extended conflict mechanics in Burning Empires. It is by far the most often used system in the game. When there is disagreement at the table, when a player wants to push a character in a particular direction or when a player wants his character simply to prove that he's right, we call on the Duel of Wits mechanics.

They are fast to use, involve a lot of roleplaying and bring tangible results into the game. A Duel of Wits usually takes between fifteen minutes to a half hour of play. It can involve two players or everyone at the table. And it counts as a conflict scene for the side who initiated it—not for the victim/target/opposition.

## The Heart of the Argument

To begin a Duel of Wits, there must be at least two characters willing to defend their disparate positions. Each side clearly and succinctly states his case.

### State Your Case

When creating a body of argument, each player must describe his point and why he is right in brief to the other players. This is called making a *statement of purpose*. It is the same as creating intent for a versus test or an Infection maneuver. State what you want your opponent to agree with as a result of your point. You can ask your opponent to perform a service for you, become an ally, or even change his mind about another character.

*If I win, you'll bring the Lady Kate before the Forged Lord.*

Duel of  
Wits



## THE BURNING WHEEL

*If I win, you're convinced that I have no power over the Lady Kate and can't be used against her.*

*The Archcotare will purge the Church of Weller's influence.*

*The Inquisition is a legal entity and will be allowed to handle its own affairs.*

*Weller has no power over my family; in fact, he'll help me become Forged Lord.*

*The Lady Kate will fall in with Weller; she will be his tool.*

*You will color this article to inflame the sensibilities of the junta.*

*You will work with me and follow my orders.*

*The junta is a threat to freedom.*

*Wayne and Marist are statist. The anarchists will turn against them.*

*You've seen your friends die and you're here digging a ditch. This is what the junta gives you. Come back down and be with your family.*

*Dad, the junta is the only group with answers and the strength to back them up. I'm staying.*



Both sides must agree to the terms of this debate before continuing. This is a meta-game condition. "If I win, you'll do X. If you win, I'll do Y." The players state these terms and agree to abide by them. Keep the demands reasonable and achievable. Break world-saving issues up into smaller arguments and span them across multiple duels. A war isn't won in a single clash of arms. The point is to get the argument into the mechanics, so it can be resolved fairly. There's nothing worse than two hours of pointless player against player argument. Bring arguments to the table, set the terms, roll the dice and move on.



If you can't agree, either change the terms of the argument, walk away or escalate to violence.

*In one scene on a planet called Morelia, a Vaylen creature affectionately called Bat Kraken confronted Mayuran with a Duel of Wits. I wanted to force Mayuran to bring Dro's character back to Bat Kraken. Mayuran balked: "No way, Bat Kraken. I'm not doing it." He walked away.*

*However, after a moment, Mayuran reconsidered. "Fine, I'll engage, but my stakes are, 'I convince Bat Kraken to flee Morelia—it's not safe for him here!'" Now it was my turn to balk. I couldn't risk losing a major character for the rest of the phase. So I decided to walk away: "I can't accept those stakes, man. I withdraw."*

*Mayuran once again reconsidered. "Fine, how about this: 'If I win Bat Kraken will help me bring evidence of a Vaylen infiltration before the Governor of the Commune.'"*

## Body of Argument

Once the cases have been stated, each player tests Persuasion, Rhetoric, Oratory, Interrogation or a special Duel of Wits skill (see Elements of Elocution for special skills). Add any successes from the skill test to the character's Will exponent. This total is the body of argument for this duel.

*When presenting his argument, a diplomat with a 5 Oratory rolls three successes and adds that to his Will of 4. His body of argument is 7 for this duel.*

The purpose of the Duel of Wits is to reduce your opponent's body of argument to zero through use of clever strategy and rhetorical attack.

## Big Deal

If the GM judges the debate to be very important and deserving of some lengthy discussion, he may invoke the Big Deal. Instead of rolling, add the Will exponent plus the skill exponent. The result is the body of argument for the character.

## Not a Big Deal

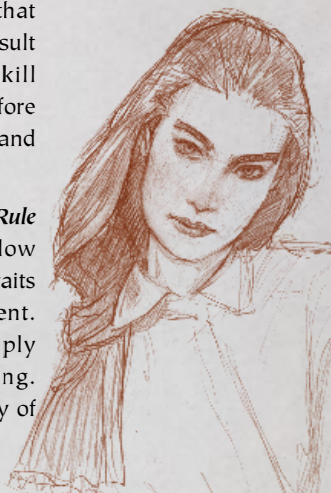
If two players are debating a minor point and desire quick resolution, use only the Will exponent as the body of argument.

## Traits and Conditions

There are many traits and conditions that affect the Duel of Wits. Be sure to consult any relevant trait descriptions, skill descriptions and the Enmity Clause before the duel begins. Add bonuses where and when applicable.

### *The Body of Character Traits Optional Rule*

If the GM so desires, he may allow players to add applicable character traits as points to their body of argument. Stubborn, for example, might apply to certain kinds of verbal sparring. Each trait added increases the body of argument by +1s.



Duel of  
Wits

## Walking Away

A player can never be forced to engage in a duel of wits. If he wishes, he may always walk away from a challenge—refusing to debate the point.



Refusal is a valid method of preserving the sanctity of one's pride and one's argument. However, if a player chooses to walk away, he may not continue to debate the point in roleplay. It's over. Move on. If a player continues to argue, the GM has the right to force the Duel of Wits.

*Dro hates John's character's son. He's got a Belief about it! John wants to engage Dro in a Duel of Wits to convince him otherwise. Dro says, "No, dude! I'm not doing it. I hate him. I walk away."*

*On the flip side, Mayuran wants his character, Faisal, to confront the Forged Lord in a Duel of Wits. As the GM I say, "No, he's not getting into it with you. You're going to trash him. In fact, he arrests you for this impertinent outburst."*

## The Verbal Duel

In a Duel of Wits, players plan their strategies a few moves in advance—they build a "hand" of attack and defense in order to outwit and overpower their opponent's weakling arguments.

### Verbal Exchange

In a Duel of Wits, each player privately chooses a sequence of three actions. Each action and the opponent's reaction is contained in a smaller time segment called a *volley*. Players take one verbal action per volley. Their actions are then played against one another. All three volleys are called an *exchange*. After both players have played all three volleys, if both sides still have points in their body of argument, a new exchange is planned out and the process is repeated.

*If I have "Volley 1: Point, Volley 2: Rebuttal, Volley 3: Dismiss" chosen for my verbal exchange and my opponent has "Volley 1: Incite, Volley 2: Point, Volley 3: Obfuscate," my Point and his Incite consist of the first volley. My Rebuttal versus his Point is the second. My Dismiss will be opposed to his Obfuscate in the third volley.*





Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
Duel of Wits Actions	Duel of Wits Actions	Duel of Wits Actions
<input type="radio"/> Avoid the Topic	<input type="radio"/> Avoid the Topic	<input type="radio"/> Avoid the Topic
<input type="radio"/> Dismiss	<input type="radio"/> Dismiss	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Dismiss
<input type="radio"/> Feint	<input type="radio"/> Feint	<input type="radio"/> Feint
<input type="radio"/> Incite	<input type="radio"/> Incite	<input type="radio"/> Incite
<input type="radio"/> Obfuscate	<input type="radio"/> Obfuscate	<input type="radio"/> Obfuscate
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Point	<input type="radio"/> Point	<input type="radio"/> Point
<input type="radio"/> Rebuttal	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Rebuttal	<input type="radio"/> Rebuttal

Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
Duel of Wits Actions	Duel of Wits Actions	Duel of Wits Actions
<input type="radio"/> Avoid the Topic	<input type="radio"/> Avoid the Topic	<input type="radio"/> Avoid the Topic
<input type="radio"/> Dismiss	<input type="radio"/> Dismiss	<input type="radio"/> Dismiss
<input type="radio"/> Feint	<input type="radio"/> Feint	<input type="radio"/> Feint
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Incite	<input type="radio"/> Incite	<input type="radio"/> Incite
<input type="radio"/> Obfuscate	<input type="radio"/> Obfuscate	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Obfuscate
<input type="radio"/> Point	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Point	<input type="radio"/> Point
<input type="radio"/> Rebuttal	<input type="radio"/> Rebuttal	<input type="radio"/> Rebuttal

## Volley to Volley

Once the actions for the exchange are chosen by each player, the GM calls for each volley of actions to be revealed, one at a time. "First volley!" he says. Each action is spoken and resolved before moving on: All actions for Volley 1 are resolved before moving to Volley 2; Volley 2 is resolved and then Volley 3 is revealed.

## Say It and Play It

When the GM calls for the actions, each player announces their verbal maneuver—the action he has noted. Then, using the Action to Action descriptions noted below, the players determine who speaks first. After that, each player must roleplay out his maneuver. It can be as simple as the description of a glance or a sharp remark or as elaborate as a fist-pounding rant. It does not have to be high theater, but it must be roleplayed. The GM has the right to assign disadvantage to a maneuver that is merely announced, "Point," and not played or described at all.



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Keep it simple and sharp—just a few short sentences will do. You don't have to argue your whole point in one go. Say what you need to in order to roll the dice. A multipoint statement should be broken down into multiple actions across the exchange.

### **Action to Action**

Points and Dismissals are spoken before a Rebuttal. Maneuvers like Feint and Obfuscate are used to literally interrupt the opponent's flow. If two players are simultaneously throwing Points, Dismissals or Incitements at each other, either let traits decide who speaks first or allow the elder character to proceed. The order doesn't really matter. The results of the tests are tallied after both characters have spoken.

## *Elements of Elocution*

There are seven actions a speaker can take in a Duel of Wits: Avoid the Topic, Dismiss, Feint, Incite, Obfuscate, Point and Rebuttal.

### **Duel of Wits Skills**

The "Tests" heading indicates what skills can be used to make this verbal maneuver.

### **FoRKs and Help**

In addition to the listed skills, Etiquette, Falsehood, Ugly Truth, Seduction, Soothing Platitudes, Conspicuous and Intimidation may always be used as FoRKs and help so long as they are roleplayed into the action.

Wises and knowledge skills may also be used as FoRKs and help if the player can quote pertinent information from the skill.

### **Special Dueling Skills**

Bargaining, Demonology, Divination, Extortion, Law and Torture are all skills that can be used in a Duel of Wits under special circumstances. Their individual skill descriptions give the details.

### **Independent and Versus Actions**

When played, verbal maneuver will either be independent of or call for a versus test against the other side's choice. Independent maneuvers do not interfere with each other. They can both be successful, both fail or simply go untested. Versus maneuvers indicate that a versus test is made between the two sides using the skill appropriate to the maneuver. There can only be one winner in a versus test.





### Avoid the Topic

*Tests: Will*

#### Effects

The speaking player must veer off topic, even to the point of sounding desperate or ridiculous. If opposed to a maneuver, test the character's Will; successes are subtracted from your opponent's skill roll. If played against an independent action, you may roleplay, but do not test for the Avoid. *Avoid does not affect independent maneuvers.*

*Suspecting my opponent is going to come out of the gate blaring away with a Point, I script my first action as an Avoid. Successes from my Will test are subtracted from his Point successes.*

### Dismiss

*Tests: Oratory, Rhetoric, Intimidation, Interrogation*

#### Special Requirements


This maneuver is used for the cataclysmic and undeniable conclusion of an argument. If a character fails to win the duel via his Dismiss action, he must hesitate for his next volley. Either cross off the next action, or if the Dismiss was the last action of an exchange, allow the opposing player a free Point or Dismiss before writing another script of three actions.

#### Effects

A Dismiss adds +2D to the character's dueling skill as he loudly declares that his opponent knows absolutely nothing about the topic at hand and, furthermore, he's a fool and a dullard and shouldn't be listened to! If scripted against an independent action, the Dismiss carries through unopposed. Independent actions do not interfere with a Dismiss. They may be independently successful. Obfuscate and Rebuttal are opposed to Dismiss; see their individual descriptions for how they interfere.

*I know I've got him cornered. He's only got six points left in his body of argument. I'm going to gamble and throw a Dismiss into my script. +2D*





*to my 5 Oratory, plus FoRKs for Intimidation and Scheme-wise, gives me a shot at knocking him out of the game. However, if I don't get six successes, then I hesitate for my next action!*

## Feint

**Tests:** Interrogation, Seduction, Oratory, Rhetoric, Suasion, Persuasion  
**Effects**

Using a Feint, the speaker leads his opponent into a trap. He lures him into thinking he is discussing one point, until his hidden barb is revealed. Against opposed actions, test the Feinting character's skill. Margin of success is subtracted from the opponent's successes for his action.

A Feint is a risky maneuver, but when it works it's beautiful. Against independent actions, the Feinting player may not test *his* skill at all; he's defenseless. There is one exception: Feints automatically counter Rebuttals—no defense is allowed, nor is the riposte, for the player who scripted the Rebuttal. No roll is necessary. This is an automatic effect of the Feint. The Feinting character is then allowed to make a free Point against the defender. Test the appropriate skill.

*My opponent's been playing pretty conservatively. I'll bet he thinks I'm going to come on strong in the first volley. Rather than script a Point, I'll put in a Feint to blast by his predictable Rebuttal. If I'm right and he scripts that Rebuttal, my Feint will ignore it and I'll get a free attack against his body of argument. If not, and he scripts a Point or Dismiss, I'll be in trouble. But I'm prepared to gamble.*

## Incite

**Tests:** Interrogation, Seduction, Ugly Truth, Intimidation, Falsehood, Command  
**Effects**

With an acid tongue and biting wit, a character may attempt to distract or dismay his opponent; the speaking player must pronounce an outright insult or threat to his opponent. Test the skill versus an obstacle equal to the victim's Will. Success causes the victim to make a Steel test. If the victim hesitates, he misses his next action.

Opposed actions subtract their successes from the Incite action. If the net successes for the Incite equal the target's Will, then he must make a Steel test as described above.

*"You wigged fool!" I scream and spit at him." I'm testing my character's 5 Intimidation plus a FoRK for Mummery. My obstacle is his Will. If I'm successful, he's going to have to pass a Steel test. A very useful maneuver*

*against green characters, but it's risky. I'm vulnerable to Point and Dismiss myself while I insult him.*

### Obfuscate

**Tests:** Seduction, Begging, Soothing Platitudes, Oratory, Rhetoric, Falsehood, Ugly Truth

#### Effects

The player attempting to Obfuscate must present some non sequitur or bizarre, unrelated point in an attempt to confuse or distract his opponent. Obfuscate is used to interrupt your opponent. It is versus everything, even itself. Test the Obfuscator's skill plus FoRKs and help against the opponent's roll for this action (including FoRKs and help). If the Obfuscator ties, the victim's current action is stopped and has no further effect. If the Obfuscator exceeds his obstacle, his opponent is + 1 Ob to his next action.

Obfuscate is the best defense against a Dismiss. They can't dismiss you if they don't know what the hell you're talking about. Therefore, Obfuscate earns a + 2D advantage when opposing Dismiss.

*"While my opponent is correct on many particulars, there are areas he's not considering. His viewpoints are shaky, his position weak. Have you considered this? Have you considered the consequences of even considering such a consideration? Personally, this is something I wouldn't consider. And I would advise you not to as well. I hereby warn my opponent to cease considering such a dangerous course!"*

### Point

**Tests:** Interrogation, Oratory, Rhetoric, Suasion, Begging, and Persuasion

#### Effects

This is the main attack of the verbal duelist. Use Points to reinforce your statement of purpose. Point successes are subtracted from the opponent's body of argument. This is the way to win debates! Successes from versus actions reduce Point successes. Against independent actions, all Point successes are subtracted from the opposing body of argument.

### Rebuttal

**Tests:** Interrogation, Seduction, Oratory, Rhetoric, Suasion and Persuasion

#### Effects

When playing a Rebuttal against a versus action, the player lets his opponent make a Point or Dismiss first. He then refutes the arguments made while making a fresh attack. Rebuttal is not tested against independent actions.





Before any dice are rolled, choose how many dice of skill will be used to defend and how many will be used to riposte. The player must put at least one die in each pool. Successes on the defense roll are subtracted from the opponent's Point or Dismiss successes. Against an Obfuscate, successes from the defense act as the Obfuscate obstacle. If the Obfuscate meets the obstacle, the attack half of the Rebuttal is stopped. Successes on the attacking half of a Rebuttal act as a Point.

*The Court Lord is making a Point; I'm making a Rebuttal. Before he rolls, I divide my 5 Oratory plus my Etiquette FoRK into two pools. In this case, I choose two dice to defend with and four to riposte. The Court Lord gets three successes. I test the 2D defense of my Rebuttal and get two successes. His Point is reduced to one success. I then roll my riposte and get three successes. These are subtracted from the Court Lord's body of argument. "Come now my good friend, you're being rash and not thinking clearly. No matter what happens here today, you'll earn all the glory. It's your heirloom, after all. But don't risk your life on such a foolish gambit!"*

## Duel of Wits Independent and Versus Action Matrix

	Avoid	Dismiss	Feint	Incite	Obfuscate	Point	Rebuttal
Avoid	I	I	I	V	V	V	I
Dismiss	I	I	I	I	V	I	V
Feint	I	I	V	I	V	I	I
Incite	V	I	I	V	V	I	I
Obfuscate	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Point	V	I	I	I	V	I	V
Rebuttal	I	V	I	I	V	V	I

I = Independent action. V = Versus.

## Resolving The Argument

When one side's body of argument is reduced to zero, the duel is over. The side so reduced may finish his action for this volley, but no further volleys are played out.

### Winning a Duel of Wits

If you have points left in your body of argument, and your opponent does not, you've won. The terms of the winning statement of purpose

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must now be abided by and acted on by all parties involved. The winning character has won this test, and like any other test in Burning Empires, his intent is made manifest.

### Losing

The loser must abide by the results of the argument: He's lost and he's agreed to go along with whatever it was his opponent proposed at the outset of the duel—for the time being, of course.

Remember that these rules don't dictate reality or emotional reactions. They only dictate public performance and acknowledgment of the "truth."

*A diplomat may have his proposals denounced in front of the Forged Lord, but he still believes in them and may even present them again at another time. A governor may be convinced to bring a cult priest into the commune, but he can still hate and resent the bastard!*

If a player is particularly open-minded, he can, of course, have his character change his mind when and as he chooses. Being convinced of the merit of an argument is an acceptable result of these mechanics, but it is not the hard and fast rule. The rule is only that you must agree and abide to the terms you set.

### Compromise

It is very rare when an argument is won without some concessions. Sometimes a point is ceded or validated, but usually an actual compromise is reached.

The level of compromise depends on how many dice were lost from the winning body of argument. There are four grades of compromise:

#### **No Compromise: Lost a Few Dice**

If the winner only lost a tenth or less of his body of argument, there is no compromise. The winner steamrollered the loser.

#### **Minor Compromise: Lost a Quarter or a Third**

If the losers knocked down their enemy's disposition by a quarter or a third, the winners must effect a minor compromise with the losers. So while the losers do not accomplish their statement of purpose, they may get a small part of it or something related to it. Minor compromises can be used leverage a follow up conflict: a Duel of Wits from the loser, a psychic duel or a Firefight.



### **Compromise: Lost Half or More**

If the winners come out of the conflict with only half of their body of argument, they owe the losers one major concession. The losers don't get their intent of course, but imagine they got halfway there.

It's also possible to compromise so that the losers get nothing, but the winners only get about half of what they wanted.

*Mayuran's Psychologist wants to interrogate the brother of Alexander's Hammer Lord. Alexander wants no such thing! Mayuran, in fact, wants the Hammer Lord to hand over her brother personally. Alexander flatly refuses. A Duel of Wits ensues and Alexander loses with a minor concession in his favor. Lady Kate turns over her brother, but on the condition that she gets all of the information from the interrogation, too. Mayuran gladly agrees to let the Hammer Lord witness the interrogation!*

### **Major Compromise: Lost All but a Few**

If the winners are reduced to one, two or three successes in their disposition (about a tenth or less of their starting total), they have escaped with a very narrow victory indeed. The winner must grant a major compromise in regard to either the winning objective or the losers. The winners only narrowly achieved their intent. Imagine the losers nearly accomplished their goals, but were only thwarted at the end.

A compromise is something that is discussed and negotiated out of character at the table. The losing player asks for his concession and, so long as it is within the scope of the loss and the spirit of the Duel of Wits, the winner is obligated to agree. If the compromise is too much or inappropriate, or if the loser is just stuck, the winner and the other players may offer suggestions. Do not start another argument at the table, but negotiate the terms until everyone is satisfied.

*The GM, playing the Forged Lord, engages Thor in a Duel of Wits. It seems that everyone is after Alexander's Hammer Lord. The GM wants Thor's*



*Court Lord to bring the Hammer Lord to him personally. Thor wants to convince the Forged Lord that he has no hold over the Hammer Lord and is too politically weak to do such a thing. It comes out in the Duel of Wits that the Forged Lord is asking for the Hammer Lord on behalf of the Inquisition. Thor wins the Duel of Wits and manages to weasel out of his obligation, but he owes the GM a major compromise. The GM is stuck on this one, so he fields the compromise to the table. After a bit of discussion, they agree that the Court Lord has deflected the request, but he's got to go to the High Inquisitor himself and explain the Hammer Lord's recent behavior. The GM thinks this rocks.*

### Tied at Zero

If both sides are reduced to zero disposition in the same maneuver, the phase is a tie. Zero to zero is the only tie possible in Infection. The players may choose one of two options here: First, neither side gets what they want. Neither objective is accomplished, but both sides get a major compromise as described under the Lost All but a Few heading. What would the end result be if both sides fought hard but couldn't gain an advantage and eventually had to retire and lick their wounds? How would the details of the objectives be affected, damaged or destroyed?



The second tie result is only for particularly wicked players—and is subject to a unanimous consent. In this case, *both* sides get what they want as stated in their intent, and they each owe each other a major compromise. This is the result of major carnage and double cross. Not for the faint of heart.

### Violence

A character who has lost a Duel of Wits but believes he has been slighted, defamed, baited or merely outmaneuvered is free to escalate the matter. There are no prohibitions in the rules about decking someone after he's humiliated you. However, decking him doesn't make you right. You still lost, you've still got to abide by the terms of the duel. If you didn't like the terms, then you shouldn't have engaged in the duel.

Escalating to violence before negotiating a compromise also hands more power to the winner. He's won and will get what he wanted. If you don't agree to a compromise, then he's not obligated to give you one. Often, restraint is the better part of valor.

The player who initiated the Duel of Wits may escalate to violence as part of the current conflict. If the player who did not initiate the conflict wants to escalate to violence, it counts as a conflict scene for

his side if it's a major firefight, or a building scene if it's just a fist fight. See the Firefight and I Corner Him and Stab Him in the Face! rules for more on that.

*The Cotar Fomas lost a Duel of Wits with John's anarchist, Christopher. Christopher has convinced the Cotar Fomas that he must train any and all recruits for the sodalities—*



*whether or not they are Devoted to Fire. Playing the Cotar Fomas, I'm absolutely incensed over the outcome. The Cotar Fomas would hate this! He's bound by the rules to do it, but he's not bound to like it. Well, I won a minor compromise in the Duel of Wits, but it's not worth it. I toss the compromise aside and I escalate to violence. "You bastards! All of you!" I scream, "The Cotar Fomas leaps on Christopher and starts slugging away. You can keep your compromise, I want to break his jaw."*

## Baiting Beliefs



Use your opponent's Beliefs, Instincts and traits against him during the exchange. Lead him on so you can predict his moves. Simply baiting an opponent to Dismiss prematurely can cause the fatal error one needs to pull off a coup!

Even better, by plucking the strings of your opponent's Beliefs you are rewarding him. If he reacts and plays on his Beliefs (or even against them), he'll be awarded artha. How cool is that?!

## The Audience

Rarely is the loser convinced of the merits of the argument, but all those around him now see the advantages of the winning argument over the loser's fallacious assumptions.

*The diplomat wins his argument against the Lord Steward. Even so, the Lord Steward is still against joining his alliance. However, now the Forged Lord has heard both sides. He sees merit in the Diplomat's plans. The Forged Lord, as the audience, agrees to the winning proposal—in fact, he must.*

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### Compromise as Future Conflict

The results of a Duel of Wits are as binding as any other roll in the game—they can be as deadly and final as a gunshot! A player is obligated to adhere to the results. However, they are not immutable. In fact, agreements and compromises made in the Duel of Wits are meant to push players toward further conflicts. Were you convinced to dismantle a faction that you actually favor? Convinced your lover's a Vaylen when she's really not? Well, those are conflicts waiting to happen. You've got to act on them: You've got to try to dismantle the faction; you've got to try to off your lover while she's asleep. Can anything stop you from such dastardly deeds? Of course! Another Duel of Wits or even a well-timed Firefight can be used. Whatever happens is OK, so long as the story twists and turns from conflict to conflict.

### Steel Tests in the Duel of Wits

If an Incite maneuver is successfully used, the target character must pass a Steel test. Test the Steel attribute minus any injured dice if applicable. The obstacle is the character's hesitation—10 minus his Will plus the margin of success for the Incite action. If the obstacle is met or exceeded, the character remains in the fight unaffected by the madness.

#### I Hesitate

If a character fails his Steel test, he may not act or help in the *next volley*. He is stunned or cowering. He may not use his scripted action—he may not participate in the Duel of Wits in a coherent manner. He recovers and may act in the volley following the hesitation.

### Group Duels

#### Helping in the Duel

The simplest way to run a Duel of Wits for three or more players is to let two players act as the primary speakers for their sides. They generate the statement of purpose and the body of argument. They will ultimately choose the maneuvers, though the other members of their side may aid them.

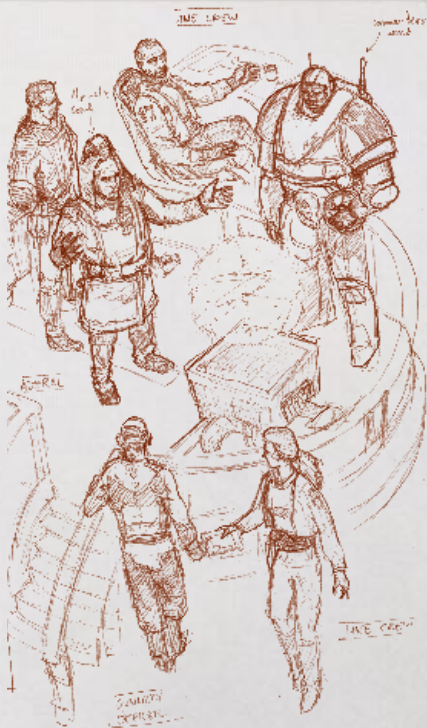
During the maneuvers, the additional participants are invited to roleplay in their barbs, support and asides. When a non-primary player roleplays into the maneuver, he may add helping dice to the side of his choice for this maneuver. Failure to speak up or act means those dice may



not be used on that particular roll. Supporting players may switch sides from action to action. Players may have their character help the opposing side through disparaging remarks, bad arguments or just plain treachery! Whatever they choose to do, they still must abide by the guidelines and intent of the particular verbal maneuver they are supporting.

After everyone has had his say, the primary collects all of his help and rolls the dice. It's the same as a regular Duel of Wits, but with helping dice.

I recommend using the Big Deal rules for duels involving more than three characters on a side.



## Multiple Bodies of Argument

It is possible to have three-way and four-way Duels of Wits. They are dangerous affairs, fraught with verbal pitfalls, betrayal and clever stratagems. If at all possible, I recommend resolving disagreements as head to head arguments, with the helping rules described above for multiple opponents. But if that's not possible, follow the guidelines below.

Each player makes a statement of purpose and generates his body of argument. Opponents may not help one another generate the body of argument. Each player chooses his actions privately.

Avoid the Topic and Obfuscate defend against all attacks coming at the player for that volley. Roll for these defensive maneuvers once per volley. This essentially sets the obstacle for any Points or Dismisses—if you can't match the successes of the Avoid or Obfuscate, your action has no effect.

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Rebuttal can be used so long as there is a Point or Dismiss to rebut. The attack half may only target the body of argument of the side with the Point or Dismiss being Rebutted. If two or more opponents are helping with a Point or Dismiss, the attack half may only target the opponent who made the roll.

Point, Dismiss, Feint and Incite work against one target per volley. You must choose your target when you announce your action.

Similar actions count as helping. If two players each make a Point against a third, do not roll for two Points. Roll one Point and add helping dice from the supporting player.

*If two players hit a third with a Point and Dismiss, and the third player has an Avoid, his Avoid successes deflect the Point but not the Dismiss (because it's independent of Avoid). If the two attackers each had a Point scripted, then they would have to help one another on the attack. The Avoid successes would stand against the combined Point.*

As players get knocked out of multisided duels, note the level of their opponent's disposition at the time they were knocked out. That counts as their level for compromise, not the final total (which could be substantially reduced if one side goes out early against two others).

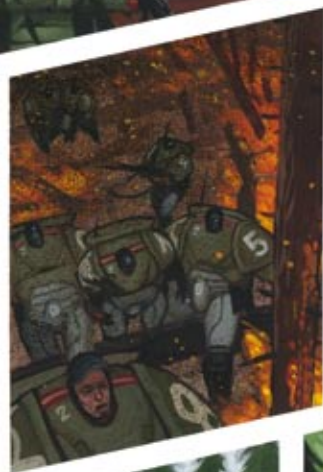


## Duel of Wits in Brief

- Players choose to initiate a conflict via a Duel of Wits when players (or a player and the GM) come to a significant disagreement in the game. The GM stops play and asks if the players wish to resolve it with a Duel of Wits. Players can agree to this, walk away from the argument in disgust, or start shooting and head to the Firefight section.
- Each side makes a statement of purpose: What do they want from this conflict? Keep it short.
- Once the case is stated, roll for the body of argument—test Oratory, Rhetoric, Persuasion, Interrogation, Extortion or Bargaining. Add these successes to the Will exponent. This is how many points your opponent must knock off in order to win the duel.
- After the body of argument has been established, agree to the terms: Each player states what conditions he wants if he wins, and what he'll do if he loses.
- Each player then scripts his first exchange—three actions from the list: Avoid, Dismiss, Feint, Incite, Obfuscate, Point, Rebuttal. The actions are played out in order, one at a time. Your first action is compared to your opponent's first action. Parts are spoken, dice are rolled. Your second action is compared to your opponent's second action. Parts are spoken, dice are rolled. After the third volley, if neither of the players has been reduced to zero dice, script another exchange and do this step again.
- The first player reduced to zero dice in his body of argument loses. Remember, actions in the same volley happen at the same time, so it's possible for two players to go out simultaneously.
- If the winner lost any dice from his body of argument, he must compromise on his terms.









## FIREFIGHT

Bolts of fusor fire, swarms of streaking missiles and clouds of hypervelocity projectiles; iron-clad soldiers and space vessels rightly dubbed *hammer*; a clash of arms; war: Whether on the ground, in the atmosphere or in space, firefights in the Iron Empires are brutal and destructive. This fact perforce necessitates that they be tactical affairs—engagements of maneuver and position rather than of sheer brute force that would only ensure mutual destruction.

The Firefight mechanics allow the players to break down their forces into units of officers and soldiers, command vessels and attack sleds, and maneuver them through the battle space—manipulating command, control, communications and the application of force—in an effort to engage and destroy the enemy.

These rules are used whenever the players wish to undertake a military-style action, whether it's a raid, an ambush or a line of battle in the gravity well of your planet's moon. The resolution of these actions requires a bit more subtlety than a simple test, therefore we use an extended mechanic similar to the Duel of Wits to resolve the conflict. In the Duel of Wits, you're trying to defeat your opponent's argument. In the Firefight, you're trying to undermine their position, neutralize and destroy them.

In a Firefight, each unit has an objective and a disposition. The objective is the team's goal or intent for this fight. What do they want to accomplish? The disposition represents their own initial

tactical strength on the battlefield. In order to accomplish their objective, they must attack and reduce their enemy's disposition by making a series of coordinated maneuvers.

### Firefight as Conflict

As discussed in the Scenes and Conflicts chapter, a Firefight is a conflict scene. When heading into a Firefight, be sure to use color scenes, interstitials and builders to gather your forces and tech and to set up the conflict to your satisfaction.

Once in the scene, a few Recon or Infiltration rolls to set things up are acceptable, but don't dwell on that stuff. Try to get to the Firefight as quickly as possible.

#### Small Fights



Small altercations—a fist fight between two characters—can be resolved using the I Corner Him and Stab Him in the Face! rules in this chapter. Those situations can be resolved as a building or conflict scene, depending on how far the players want to push it.

### Anatomy of a Firefight

There are twelve steps to a Firefight: 1. Break down into units. 2. Describe the battle space and draw a map. 3. Set objectives. 4. Make contact. 5. Set dispositions. 6. Add positions and cover to the battle space map. 7. Privately choose three unit actions in the order you want them played. 8. Test for the unit action for the first volley. 9. If applicable, a successful unit action may generate individual actions. 10. If disposition of either side is reduced to zero due to unit or individual actions, the Firefight ends. If all of the characters on either side are removed from action, the firefight ends. 11. If both sides still have disposition and standing members, repeat steps 8–10 for second and third volleys. After the third volley, make an Ammo Check. 12. After playing three volleys, repeat steps 7–12 until one side's disposition is reduced to zero.

### Units in a Firefight

Each side of a Firefight is represented by one or more “units.” A unit has an officer/leader character and an *objective*. These units can be as small as a single soldier or as large as an attack wing of a dozen hammer cruisers. The actual size of your units in play is dependent on the situation in your particular game.





## Units, Sides and Objectives

The simplest and fastest battles involve just two units with opposing objectives. It is possible to add additional units per side; each unit would have its own objective and act independently. This adds depth and subtlety to a Firefight, but also requires a bit more processing power on the part of the players.



It's best to start small and work your way up: Start with two sides, each with one unit and one objective. The units should contain all of the characters in the Firefight. Even if you want to play a pitched battle with hundreds of soldiers and vehicles per side, keep it to one unit per side. A unit can be anything and stretch over any space—so long as it's appropriate to the situation, the characters and the setting—even hundreds of soldiers and vehicles. A team of just three characters can cover a lot of ground: one character hangs back and issues commands and relays data, one character acts as the shooter while the other character is out in the field flanking and maneuvering around the enemy.



Even if two groups aren't geographically (or ideologically) coherent, but they have the same objective—to get the crowd to safety, for example—they *should be part of the same unit for the purposes of these mechanics*.

## The Player Characters in Units

Units can be as small as a single character or as large as an army. What does that mean to the players at the table? If the group has built a cohort of combat monkeys and support specialists, it's possible that they can operate as a single team and kick much ass. It's also possible for them to break down into smaller teams so that they can accomplish different objectives during the Firefight. However, if the group has one officer/leader character, that is a clear indication that there should be one unit for the characters.

### Typical Iron Empires Units

A typical small anvil unit consists of an officer/leader, a signals specialist, a medic, a squad support weapons specialist and a couple of assault weapons specialists—five characters for four or five players. The officer gives orders during the Firefight, the specialist will spot the enemy and jam their comm, the other three characters will lay down fire when called to.

A typical anvil cavalry or single-ship hammer consists of a captain or commander, a pilot or helmsman, a sensors or signals specialist, a damage control specialist and a couple of gunners/artillerists. The captain gives orders and takes the big risks, while everyone else does their job either spotting the enemy, keeping the ship running or laying down fire as needed.

In both of these circumstances, it is possible that a group at the table can fill all of these roles and participate in the Firefight as a single unit. Even if they can only fill some of the roles, others can be filled by NPCs while the group makes up the rest of the team.

It is also possible for individual characters to lead units of non-player soldiers, sleds or ships. In this case, each officer-player has his own unit and participates in the Firefight to accomplish his own objectives. All the basic mechanics are the same as for a Firefight involving just a handful of characters, but there are some additional considerations. This circumstance is discussed in detail in the Soldiers under My Command section of this chapter.

### Breaking down into Units

Keep the number of units on both sides of the conflict even. If one side has two, the other should try to break down into two teams. If one side can only break down into one team—they only have one officer—the other side should oppose them with their ships/soldiers in a single team.



Once you become comfortable with setting objectives and using the Firefight maneuvers, you can break down into multiple or an odd number of units per side for the conflict. Until then, keep it simple.

*For our example Firefight, Lady Kate, Lord Omei, Prince Faisal and Mal Nenox are on one side. They're supported by a unit of sodalis and Thor's White Lynx bodyguards—four Lords-Pilot Anvil in iron. That's all one unit for this Firefight.*



On the other side is High Inquisitor Weller, an Adjutant Inquisitor and a Sodalis-Brother lead the unit. They are supported by a unit of sodalis and a unit of iron.

## Describe The Battle Space

The battle space is the area in which the Firefight will be fought. It can be as small as a single room or as vast as the naked space between two star systems. The GM describes the battle space based on the situation that led to the Firefight. He lays out, in broad terms, the arrangement and distances of various features. No need to get too specific—just add enough detail to get the general idea across. We'll build on that description in the Contact and Position and Cover sections.

### Draw a Map

Draw a rough map of the battle space. This map is not empirical. It is a sketch to help everyone get the salient points straight in their heads: the ridge line, the barricades, the streets, the gun emplacement, the launch pad, the limits of the ionosphere, the moon, the space station, the asteroid belt, etc. Do not make the map pretty. Draw on it. Scribble on it and cross things out.



*This map shows the set-up for the Firefight on the steps of the Mundus Humanitas temple. The player characters are clustered in the top third:*

*Lady Kate, Lord Omei, Prince Faisal and Mal Neno. Kate and Omei are on the steps with the Archcotare as she delivers her speech. Faisal and Neno are in Faisal's shuttle, running the propaganda networks. The opposition is at the bottom: Weller, his sodalis and sodalis-brethren.*

### Unit Markers



Light Infantry



Anvil Infantry



Iron Infantry



Grav Armor



Wheeled/Tracked Armor



Grav IFV



Light Armed Vehicle



Hammer Asset



Hammer Transport



## What Is Your Unit's Objective?



Before the Firefight may begin, each of the teams involved must declare its *objective*. An objective is intent as described in the Scenes and Conflict chapter but applied to a military endeavor.

Assumed in every objective is the option to engage and destroy the enemy. It is unnecessary to state this; it's already in there. *State what your unit's objective is in addition to neutralization and destruction.*

Objectives may be: I want to occupy the temple grounds. I want to drive them out of

the house. I want to maneuver around him and get to his rear. I want to gain the wall. I want a lightning raid to bring back survivors. I want to blow apart the space elevator. I want to seize the bridge of the space station. I want to beat the gunships to the starport, drop my cargo and be gone before they arrive. I want to knock down the tower. I want to tag and identify your ship. I want to defend the granary and get the refugees to safety. I want to hot drop a company of iron into the prison and crack it wide open.

Keep the goals small and manageable. Don't try to win the war in a single battle. Capture bunkers, destroy railheads and sap communication lines one at a time. Use your objective to build a narrative appropriate to the scale and scope of your game. Ensure that each victory or loss leads to another conflict, another test. If, when you devise your objective, you can't conceive of a follow up conflict, revise it.

*I started this Firefight by announcing that Weller's soldiers opened fire on Lady Kate, so I'll set my objective first: "Weller dispatches his iron to capture the Lady Kate. Dead or alive."*

*Alexander, Thor, Chris and Mayuran discuss their objective. They decide that they want a capture objective, too: Lady Kate and Lord*



*Omei's objective is to capture Weller! They have plans for the scheming old man.*

## **I Just Want to Kill Him!**



An intent that states, "If I win, your unit is destroyed," is unacceptable. Why? First, death is implicit in every Firefight. It is part and parcel for the medium! All Firefights contain the possibility for death and destruction. However, the only way to kill a person or destroy a vehicle is to use the Direct Fire, Suppressive Fire, Close Combat actions or Demolitions specialist action. You cannot kill something merely by reducing its disposition to zero. You're going to have to get in there and pull the trigger. This rule says, "Don't waste your time with the small stuff." You can always kill the opposition. What else do you want to do? Be creative!

## **I Want to Destroy the Space Elevator**

Material or structural destruction as an objective is acceptable. In fact, any time your unit is trying to capture or destroy terrain, a building or other geographical feature, make that your objective.

# *Make CONTACT*

A Firefight begins by making contact. This roll represents the initial maneuvering, positioning and sighting that transpires as the opposing units prepare to engage. Contact is not lining up a shot, it's discovering where the enemy is disposed. Even if the team thinks they know where the enemy is, even if the opposing teams are seemingly squared off, you test for contact.

Make an Observation, Signals or Sensors versus test. Signals and Sensors require the proper technology in addition to the skill. Sensors may only be used against iron and vehicles, not infantry. Add appropriate advantage dice or help from technology. Other players may help if they have the appropriate skill for the test or a wise suitable for this situation.

*Chris announces that he'll make the contact test for his unit. He's using Faisal's shuttle as his rig. It counts as "tools" for Signals. Mayuran offers to help Chris with Signals Tech-wise. Chris accepts the die. He also throws in 1D for a Sensors FoRK. He rolls 6D total and gets four successes.*

*I assign Weller a Signals tech with an exponent 4 skill on the fly. Weller helps with Observation. I roll and get three successes. Chris wins contact*

**Firefight**

*for his side. He says, "That iron is powering up their weapon systems. They've just been given the order to move out. Here they come!"*

### Winning Contact



The winner gains the initiative in this engagement. He may take the contact advantage when the players set the disposition of forces. Or he may choose to occupy a *position* at the start of the Firefight. A tie

indicates no advantage for either side. See Positions and Cover in the Battle Space for the definition of a position.

*Chris opts to take the straight contact advantage.*

The winner of contact may also make a case for range superiority. See the Range section after the Distance in the Battle Space section.

## Set Disposition of Forces

A unit's *disposition* is the same type of point pool as the Infection disposition and the body of argument in the Duel of Wits: a pool of points that is reduced as the opponents play maneuvers against one another during the conflict. The more his disposition pool is depleted, the more the player must compromise on his objective.

### Officer's Roll

The leader of each unit tests *Tactics* or *Command*. His successes translate directly into points for his team's disposition. If he rolls three successes, his team starts with a disposition of three.



There's only one leader per unit. Decide who he is before rolling. The Command skill may only be tested if the team has subordinate soldiers. Tactics may be tested if he is alone or with other soldiers—player's choice. Command and Tactics may act as FoRKs, as can appropriate wises. No other FoRKs are allowed.





One character with Tactics or Command may help the commander. Again, Command may only be used to help if there are subordinates to be ordered about. Command can't be used to yell at your superior officer, but it can be used to help him control the troops.

*Alexander takes command of the unit with Lady Kate. "As soon as the sodalis and the iron begin to move, Lady Kate begins calmly barking orders to the guards around her. 'Omei, left flank! You, with me. Now!'" Alexander tests his 6 Command skill. He adds a FoRK from Tactics. Thor gives a helping die from Lord Omei's Tactics. Alexander rolls 8D altogether. He gets four successes.*

*Weller hands command of the unit over to his Adjutant Inquisitor who is also secretly a Sodalís-Captain. I test for the Captain's Tactics 4, plus 2D for Command and Anvil-wise FoRKs. The Sodalís-Brother helps with Tactics. I roll a total of 7D and get four successes.*

### **Unskilled Commanders**

If no one in the fireteam has Tactics or Command, test Perception in place of Tactics or Will in place of Command. Count half the successes rolled, rounding down. That's the team's starting disposition. If one or no successes are rolled and no bonuses from the following list apply to the team, then the team starts the firefight with a disposition of 1.

## **Disposition Bonuses**

After you roll, add the following bonuses to your disposition if they apply to your unit:

Contact	+ 2s
Superior Position	+ 2s
Outnumber opponent	+ 1s
Outnumber by vast margin	+ 2s
Psychological Advantage	+ 1s
Superior Communications	+ 1s
Superior Training	+ 1s
Superior Weaponry	+ 1s
Superior Infiltration	+ 1s
Right Tools for the Job	+ 1s
Iron Superiority	+ 1s

### **Special Vehicle-Only Bonuses**

Heavier Chassis	+ 1s
Greater Mobility	+ 2s

**Firefight**

### Disposition Modifiers Explained

#### **Contact, +2s**

Contact is shorthand for the player who won the contact roll.

*Nenox won the contact roll for the players: +2 disposition*

#### **Superior Position, +2s**

In an engagement, sometimes one side will have an obvious advantage due to their position—artillery on an escarpment, a well entrenched gun pit or even a fortress tower. If the situation—or the character's property—grants some advantage, apply this bonus to the team's disposition. The GM gets to distribute this bonus as he sees fit.

*Neither side can make a case for Superior Position. If Weller had the foresight to put snipers on the roof of adjoining buildings, or if Lady Kate had brought her hammer cruiser into low orbit over the battle space, that would be worth the bonus.*

#### **Outnumber, +1 or +2s**

The side that has more boots and rifles, hammer and sleds per fireteam gets the Outnumber Opponent bonus. If a side outweighs their opponent by a staggering amount, they gain the Outnumber by Vast Margin bonus to their disposition instead.

*Weller's men outnumber the player's unit. He's got a unit of 10 Sodalis to their unit of 6 Sodalis. +1 to the GM's disposition.*

#### **Psychological Advantage, +1s**

If one side has a psychologist who is connected to soldiers in the battle and the other does not, that side gets a +1s bonus. If both sides have connected psychologists, there is no bonus.



*Both Faisal and Weller are psychologists and both are connected to their commanders. No advantage for either side.*

#### **Superior Communications, +1s**

The Superior Communications bonus is granted to the side with higher index communications. If both sides have the same index tech, the bonus goes to the side with more advantage or automation dice in their signals tech. Otherwise, neither side gets it. See Signals Warfare for more on gaining and losing this bonus in play.



### **Superior Training, + 1s**

Iron-Trained troops are superior to Anvil-Trained troops. Anvil Trained troops are superior to troops without either of these traits.

*The White Lynxes and the Sodalis-Brethren have Iron Trained. No bonus.*

### **Superior Weaponry, + 1s**

The Superior Weaponry is not for the side with the bigger guns. It's for the side with either the higher index guns or the guns more appropriate to the conflict. If it's desert warfare, the side with the longer ranged weapons gets this bonus. If it's close-in work on a space station, the side with the smaller, more compact weaponry gets the bonus. The GM decides, or appropriate technology traits may be applied.

*Both sides are armed with assault guns and assault lasers, but Thor gives his side the Superior Weaponry bonus. Lord Omei's carrying a fusor—a squad support weapon perfect for sweeping open ground.*

### **Superior Infiltration, + 1s**

The team better at Infiltration has better control of the battle space. Total up the Infiltration exponent for all characters in the fireteam. Subtract 1 for each piece of iron or vehicle in the team. The unit with highest total gains the Superior Infiltration bonus.

### **Right Tools for the Job, + 1s**

Sometimes one side has a piece of technology that is clearly to their advantage. It could be a weapon or technological device. Either way they have the Right Tools for the Job.

*In this firefight, neither side has this advantage. But if one side had an infrasonic disruptor or even a tracking device—something that would help them capture their quarry—I'd give them the bonus.*



### **Iron Superiority, + 1s**

If one side has lords-pilot in iron and the other does not, they get the Iron Superiority bonus.

*Both sides are equally armored in this conflict. As a side note, both commanders/leaders are also unarmored. Kate and Weller are dressed in the formal robes of their respective offices!*



### **Vehicles: Heavier Chassis, +1s**

The side with the vehicle with the higher Destroyed tolerance gets the Heavier Chassis bonus. If one side has vehicles and the other does not, the vehicle-having side gets this bonus.

### **Vehicles: Greater Mobility, +2s**

The side with the more mobile vehicles gets a bonus to their disposition. Space Speed is the highest mobility. Atmospheric Speed is more mobile than Ground Speed and Ground Speed more than regular Human Speed. If opposing vehicles are of the same class, the bonus goes to the higher Speed exponent. If one side has vehicles and the other does not, the vehicle-having side gets this bonus.

*The bonuses for the firefight in progress are as follows: Players: Contact, +2, Superior Weaponry, +1. GM: Outnumber, +1.*

*The totals are: Lady Kate: four successes on the officer's roll, +3 bonus—7 disposition. Weller's unit: four successes on the officer's roll +1 bonus—5 disposition.*

## POSITIONS and Cover in The Battle Space

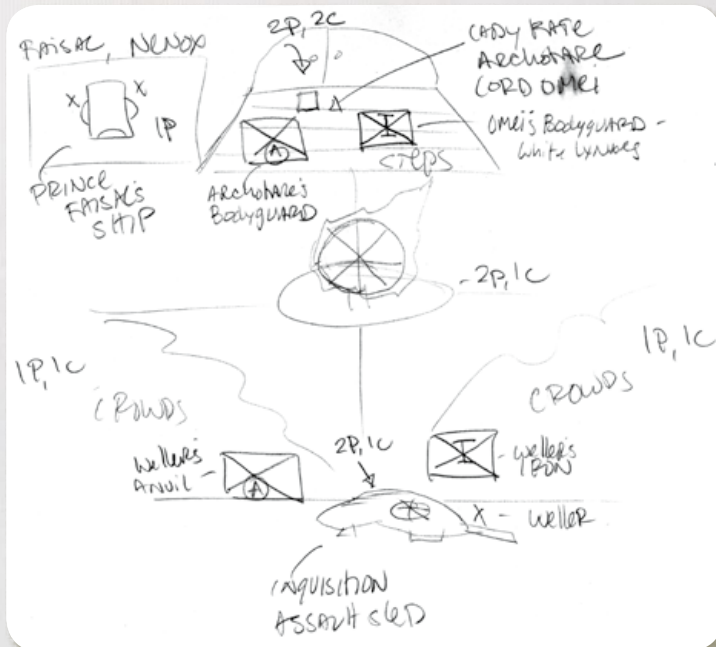
The battle space is littered with various positions that can offer units tactical advantages during the engagement. They are salient features of the environment that can be used to gain an edge over the enemy: high ground, bunkers, gun pits, cloud cover, massifs, asteroids, ravines, shell holes, gravity wells, bridges, walls, etc.

Positions are rated from one to five. The more advantageous they are in this particular engagement, the higher they are rated. A position's value determines how hard it is to occupy in play. Positions are not necessarily cover.

### **Mark Positions on Your Map**

The GM marks up the map, noting positions in the battle space. Anything that could give an advantage or be an obstacle is noted with a "P." All initial positions marked by the GM are given a value of 1.

*I mark the following positions on the map: the vestibule of the Mundus Humanitas temple, the Mundus Humanitas landing pad (with Faisal's shuttle), the giant burning wheel in the middle of the courtyard and Weller's ship.*



The winner of the contact test may add up to two IP positions to the battle space, or he may increase two existing positions from IP to 2P or one position from IP to 3P. The winner of the contact test may then choose to begin the firefight occupying any of the positions he's modified. If he does choose to occupy a position to start, he does not gain the +2s contact bonus. Instead he gets the position value temporarily added to his disposition.

*Thor consults with Chris and Alexander about adding a new position. They decide to make the crowds a position. Thor wants to use them as cover. They also decide to add to the burning wheel.*

The loser of the contact test may add a IP position to the battle space, increase a IP position to 2P or increase an existing position by one.

After the players have taken their turn modifying the map, the GM may then modify any one position on the map. He may raise the value of a position to a maximum of 5P. He may do this to occupied positions or to a neutral, unoccupied position.

*As the loser, I decide to add 1P to Weller's ship. As the GM, I add 1P to the vestibule. I could add more, but I figure that's enough for this fight.*

Firefight



### Positions versus Objectives

If there is a location on the map that also serves as an objective for one of the fireteams, do *not* make it a position in the battle space. Why? Because the only way to achieve an objective is to reduce your opponent's disposition to zero. Positions can be achieved (and lost) much more easily.

### Mark Cover

After the positions have been marked, the GM determines which battle space features act as cover. Cover is any feature that might interfere with a fireteam being shot. All cover is a position, but not all positions provide cover. Cover positions include shell holes, trenches, berms, rocky terrain, woodlands, smoke, machinery and fortifications.

#### Cover Ratings

Cover is rated from 1 to 3. Cover raises the obstacle for a shot opportunity by its rating. A unit may move into covered areas via a successful Advance action. The Take Cover action can be used whether in a covered position or not. If used while behind cover, it enhances the value of the cover. Take Cover is described in the Firefight Actions section of the chapter.

Note which positions provide cover. List the cover rating with a "c" on the positions on the map.

*I add one level of cover to the ships, the burning wheel and the crowds. The vestibule, with its massive iron doors, offers better cover, so I give it two levels. These are marked on the map.*





### ***Close Combat and Cover***

When engaged in Close Combat in a position, either both sides benefit from the position's cover for the purposes of Weapons Fire actions or neither side does. The players may agree to which they prefer, or the GM may impose a condition based on the situation. Cover has no effect on other Close Combat actions.

### ***Restricted and Impacted Fighting Space***

If the battle space is crowded, cramped or full of debris and junk, the GM may set a base cover level for the entire field. This cover level is applied to every shot opportunity, whether or not the team is positioned to take cover.

## **Occupying a Position**

Occupying a position requires a successful Advance maneuver as described in the Maneuvers section. If a position is successfully occupied, its P value is temporarily added to the team's disposition.

The temporary position value is lost if the team uses an Advance, Flank or Withdraw maneuver. It is also lost if the unit's disposition is reduced by the position's value.

## **Close Quarters: Occupying an Occupied Position**

In order to use the Close Combat action, a fireteam must either occupy the same position as their target or be defending a position from an advancing unit.

## **No Man's Land**

If a unit Withdraws, Flanks or fails to complete an Advance from its current position, it cannot occupy a new position on this action. It is considered to be "in no man's land": The team may be engaged with the Close Combat action by another team, so long as there are no intervening positions. They also do not benefit from any cover unless the GM has put the Restricted and Impacted Fighting Space rules into effect.

## **Hoofing It**

If a position is very far off—a ridge line, for example—the GM may set a high P value for it to represent how difficult it will be to achieve in this engagement. However, positions may be attained incrementally. So long as the team does not use the Flank or Withdraw actions, all successes from Advance maneuvers count toward achieving the position. A Flank or Withdraw wipes out all incremental Advances toward a position. While attempting to occupy a position incrementally, a team is in no man's land until the position is achieved.

*For example, if I'm trying to take a SP ridge, I need to roll five net successes on my Advance. If I get one on my first Advance, two on my second and two more on my third, I gain the position on my third Advance.*

## Distance in the Battle Space

The battle space is incredibly fluid. For the purposes of these mechanics, exact distances and precise locations are not necessary. The disposition pool abstracts many of these factors into a neat package.

In order to traverse the battle space, a fireteam must move from position to position. A unit cannot simply hop from one end of the field to the other. If there is an intervening position between their current one and their goal, it must be occupied before the other, more distant one, can be gained.

## Range

Range isn't much of a concern in Firefight. The range of modern weapons is such that fireteams are almost always within range of one another.



Exact ranges are not important, but here are some examples to help you flesh out your engagement: "Close combat" range is considered to be about 20 meters or less. Most anvil and iron Firefights engage at 200 to 1000 meters. Vehicular-scale Firefights happen between distances of one to 50 kilometers. Space-based Firefights happen across thousands of kilometers.

## Range Superiority

Weaponry is divided into five categories that correlate with range, longest to shortest: Artillery, Vehicular Weapons, Squad Support Weapons, Assault Weapons and Close Combat Weapons.

If the unit that won the contact test possesses weaponry in a longer range category than the loser, the player may declare he has Range Superiority. Range Superiority gives the team a +1D advantage to Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire Unit Actions for each rank of Range Superiority.

*In our current engagement, our units are outfitted with assault and squad support weapons, so there is no range superiority to be had. If, however, Artillery was used against a unit with assault weapons gains a +3D advantage to the artillery unit's Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire unit actions.*



## Defeating Range Superiority

A unit may negate the opposition's Range Superiority with a successful Advance or Flank maneuver. See the Unit Action descriptions for details.

## Choosing Actions

After objectives, dispositions, positions, cover and distances have been set, the unit commander for each fireteam must privately choose Firefight actions in order, one per volley, three for the whole exchange. It is the same process as described in the Duel of Wits. The other members of his fireteam may advise him.

Actions are then revealed and resolved one by one against the opposing fireteam's actions. If at the end of the three volleys, both sides still have disposition, another exchange is planned and played out.

## Time Optional Rule

Before the players choose their actions, the GM may announce that time is crucial to victory: The side that finishes choosing and noting their actions for this exchange first gains a + 1D advantage to their first volley unit action.

Do not use this rule to punish inexperienced players. If one side of the conflict is still getting up to speed on the rules, then this optional rule may not be invoked.



Firefight



## Advice from a Veteran Commander



The Firefight mechanics allow for a fair bit of strategy, and quite a bit can hinge on a single volley of action. However, it's important not to bite off more than you can chew. Commanders should endeavor to accomplish one small goal per *exchange*: to spot the enemy, to unleash a burst of heavy fire, to maneuver into a position. Couch your strategem in two other actions that will protect you or gain a little ground if you should fail to achieve your main goal this exchange. One thing at a time—until you get the hang of it and can start gambling on bigger risks.

Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
Firefight Actions	Firefight Actions	Firefight Actions
<input type="radio"/> Observe	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Observe	<input type="radio"/> Observe
<input type="radio"/> Direct Fire	<input type="radio"/> Direct Fire	<input type="radio"/> Direct Fire
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Suppressive Fire	<input type="radio"/> Suppressive Fire	<input type="radio"/> Suppressive Fire
<input type="radio"/> Take Cover	<input type="radio"/> Take Cover	<input type="radio"/> Take Cover
<input type="radio"/> Rally and Regroup	<input type="radio"/> Rally and Regroup	<input type="radio"/> Rally and Regroup
<input type="radio"/> Flank	<input type="radio"/> Flank	<input type="radio"/> Flank
<input type="radio"/> Advance	<input type="radio"/> Advance	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="radio"/> Withdraw	<input type="radio"/> Withdraw	<input type="radio"/> Withdraw
<input type="radio"/> Close Combat	<input type="radio"/> Close Combat	<input type="radio"/> Close Combat

*I choose Suppressive Fire, Observe and Advance for my first exchange.*

Volley 1	Volley 2	Volley 3
Firefight Actions	Firefight Actions	Firefight Actions
<input type="radio"/> Observe	<input type="radio"/> Observe	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Observe
<input type="radio"/> Direct Fire	<input type="radio"/> Direct Fire	<input type="radio"/> Direct Fire
<input type="radio"/> Suppressive Fire	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Suppressive Fire	<input type="radio"/> Suppressive Fire
<input type="radio"/> Take Cover	<input type="radio"/> Take Cover	<input type="radio"/> Take Cover
<input type="radio"/> Rally and Regroup	<input type="radio"/> Rally and Regroup	<input type="radio"/> Rally and Regroup
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Flank	<input type="radio"/> Flank	<input type="radio"/> Flank
<input type="radio"/> Advance	<input type="radio"/> Advance	<input type="radio"/> Advance
<input type="radio"/> Withdraw	<input type="radio"/> Withdraw	<input type="radio"/> Withdraw
<input type="radio"/> Close Combat	<input type="radio"/> Close Combat	<input type="radio"/> Close Combat

*Alexander, as the commander of the player's unit, chooses Flank, Suppressive Fire and Observe for their first exchange. The effects of—and reasons for choosing—these actions are described in the Firefight Actions heading on the following page.*

## Anatomy of a Firefight Action

Firefight uses actions in the same manner as Infection and Duel of Wits. At their heart, the actions are very similar. But the skills used and their applications are necessarily different from the other two extended conflict mechanics.

Firefight actions are described in the following terms: Special Requirements, Effect/Description, Unit Action, Success Allocation and Individual Action.

Certain actions have restrictions as to how and when they can be used. They're listed with a *Special Requirements* heading. The *Unit Action* describes how/what the officer tests in order to get his unit into action for this maneuver. *Success Allocation* demonstrates what to do with extra successes from the versus or independent tests. Some actions don't use Success Allocation, while some do. *Individual Action* illustrates what individual skill tests can be made if the unit action is successful. Some actions don't have Individual Actions.

### Unit Action

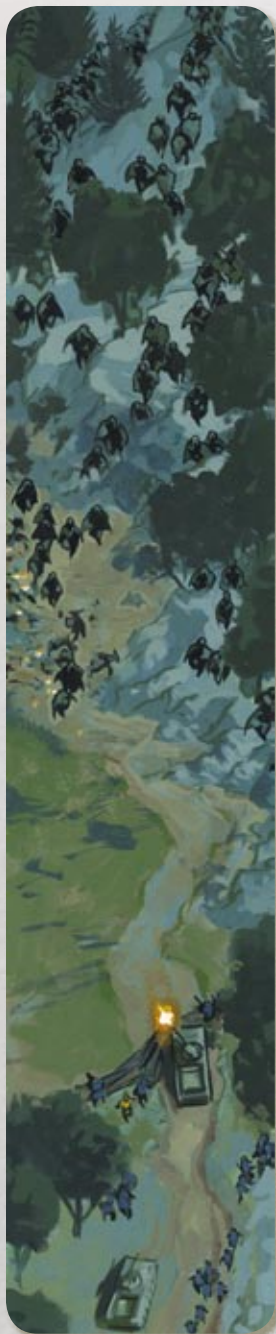
At the top of each volley, each commander reveals his action, then decides who will make the test as described in the *Unit Action* heading for the action.

#### *Help for Unit Actions*

Help for Unit Actions can only come from other members of the unit, either with the same skill being tested, a skill listed in the action description or with a very relevant wise skill.



Firefight



## **Fields of Related Knowledge for Unit Actions**

Players may use FoRKs from the skill list for the action. Directly related wises are also fair game, but anything that smells of reaching should be discarded.

## **Individual Action**

If the unit action test was successful, and there is an Individual Action heading for the maneuver, additional tests are required. Individual actions involve a player making an applicable skill or stat test for his character. There are many skill options available for individual actions, use only the one appropriate to your situation. Obstacles are determined by the action being undertaken. Individual actions in Firefight can consist of discharging a weapon, electronic countermeasures, communication, psychology and more.

## **Firefight Actions**

### **Advance**

#### **Effect/Description**

Advance is used to close ground with the enemy or to take up a new position on the battlefield (even one that is behind you). When setting up the Firefight and the battle space, the players and the GM outlined positions in the battle space. This action allows teams to achieve those positions. Cover and disposition advantages provided by a position are lost if a unit scripts an Advance. They leave their current position behind and head for a new one, making them momentarily vulnerable.

#### **Unit Action Phase: Command**

If the commander is maneuvering a vehicle, the Helm/Pilot/Driver may *help*.





Against versus actions, the commander must win by the value of the position which he is trying to occupy. Against independent actions the obstacle is 1 plus the value of the position you are trying to advance to. A 1P position is an Ob 2 test, a 2P position is Ob 3, etc. Advancing into the same position as another unit puts you in the same position and in range for close combat!

*The Sodalis-Captain orders his men to take up position around the burning wheel. I chose an Advance. Alexander chose an Observe for this volley: Lady Kate has ordered Nenox to get a lock on my position! Checking the table at the end of the Firefight Actions section, I see that Advance and Observe are versus actions. I test my Captain's Command plus help and FoRKs versus Nenox's Signals plus help and FoRKs. If I want to take that position, I have to win this test by two successes.*

#### **Success Allocation**

After occupying a position, extra successes may also be spent to degrade enemy disposition at a two-for-one ratio. You may not take specialist actions on an Advance.

#### **Individual Action: Infiltration, Zero G, Physical Training, Helm, Pilot or Drive**

If the unit action is a tie, an individual character may make a tie-breaker test for his unit. Test an appropriate skill from the list above versus the root stat for the skill used in the opposing unit's action or the individual action skills for opposing maneuvers. Use root stats for the tie-breaker if unskilled. Victory in individual action counts as if the player had won the unit action test by the margin of success.

## **Close Combat**

#### **Special Requirement**

The unit must either get into the same position as the enemy, have the enemy attempt an Advance into the unit's current position or be caught out in no man's land. If the Close Combat action is played and either of these conditions are not met, the unit hesitates for the volley.

#### **Effect/Description**

Pistols, grenades, claws, fists, swords and rifle butts come into action in Close Combat. The two units clash in a whirl of confused fighting. Close Combat is deadly and short.

#### **Unit Action Phase: Tactics or Command**

Test Tactics or Command to get your boys into Close Combat. Against independent actions, the Close Combat obstacle is 2.

### **Success Allocation**

Generally, both sides lose disposition in a Close Combat action. Divide the margin of success from the unit action. If unequal (or 1), the greater amount is assigned to the loser of the unit action, and the lesser amount to the winner. If the successes divide evenly, then both sides suffer equally. After dividing, those successes are removed from the applicable disposition.

*My unit dives into the enemy trench. We turn on them with knives, pistols and grenades. Testing my commander's Tactics 4, I get two successes. My opponent tests his Command 5 and gets three successes. His margin of success is 1. I lose one point from my disposition. If I rolled one success, his margin of success would have been two. We both would have lost a point in that case.*

### **Individual Action: Close Combat skill**

If the Close Combat unit action is successful or tied, all characters in both engaged units privately choose a Close Combat action. See the Close Combat Individual Actions heading in this chapter for details on the options in Close Combat.

## **Direct Fire**

### **Special Requirement**

In order to use this action, the firing unit must have successfully performed the Observe action against its target unit in a previous volley. If Direct Fire is played before the unit has successfully Observed their target, the team hesitates for the volley rather than firing.

### **Effect/Description**

Direct Fire allows unit members to fire on enemy targets. This action is the one you use when you want to destroy or kill the opposition in a Firefight.

### **Unit Action Phase: Tactics or Command**

In order to Direct Fire, the unit commander must organize and order his team and give them a target. Test Tactics or Command (if there are at least two members of the fireteam), or Perception if unskilled. If listed as "versus," make a versus test against the opposing commander's unit action. If independent, Direct Fire is Ob 2.





*I successfully Observed the enemy in the last exchange. For my first action this exchange, I'm using Direct Fire. My opponent saw it coming and chose a Take Cover action. I test my Tactics plus help and FoRKs versus his Infiltration plus help and FoRKs. I win the test with two extra successes.*

#### **Success Allocation**

In versus tests, if you win, one shot opportunity or specialist action may be bought per extra success. In independent tests, *meeting* the obstacle earns a shot opportunity. Extra successes can be spent on additional shot opportunities or specialist actions.

Advantage dice for the shot opportunities may be bought at a cost of + 1D per success. *Each member of the fireteam must be given a shot opportunity before any advantage dice may be allocated.* Also, the officer who made the unit action test may not fire unless everyone else in his unit has a shot opportunity on this volley.

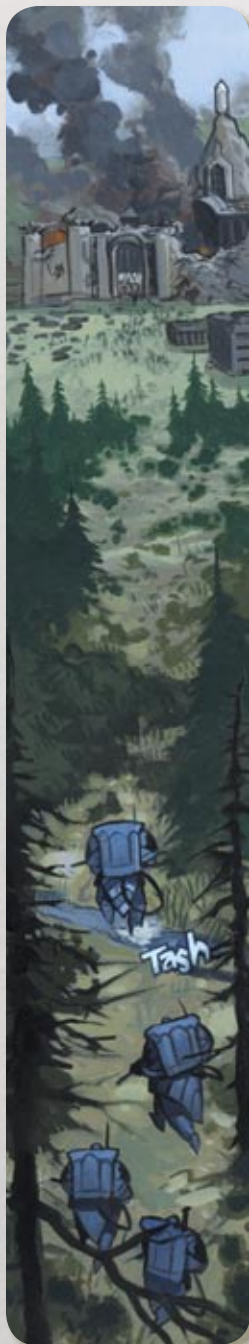
*I have five soldiers in my unit, but I only got two successes. That's two shot opportunities. I decide to give one to my squad support specialist with the PAC—it's an energy weapon that rips soft targets to shreds. The other one goes to a regular soldier in the unit. Alternately, I could use it to buy a specialist action.*

The team *targeted* by Direct Fire may choose which characters in the unit are hit.

#### **Individual Action: Appropriate Weapon Skill or Specialist Skill**

If a player is given a shot opportunity, he may have his character fire at the target unit or perform a specialist action. The obstacle to hit with weapons fire is 2, plus the value of the target's cover. If the





shooter meets his obstacle, he does damage as described in the Weapons section of this chapter. See Specialist Actions heading in this chapter for details about specialist actions.

*My squad support specialist tests his 4 Squad Support Weapons skill against obstacle 3: base obstacle 2, plus 1 due to cover provided by the enemy position. If he hits, we go to the weapon damage mechanics later in this chapter.*

Incapacitation of a team member from Direct Fire degrades that unit's disposition by 1. If the target was the source of a disposition bonus— Superior Comm, Superior Weaponry, etc. you lose that, too. See the Soldiers under My Command heading for how Direct Fire works in large engagements.

## Flank

### Effect/Description

When conducting a Flank, the commander attempts to swing a portion of his unit around to the side of the enemy's unit so as to encircle them and threaten their position. Flanking fireteams lose any cover and disposition advantages provided by the position they are leaving. In addition, as soon as a Flank is played the unit now occupies no man's land until it Advances into a new position.

### Unit Action Phase: Tactics

Test Tactics to outflank your opponent. If the commander is maneuvering a vehicle, the Helm/Pilot/Driver may help.

Against independent actions, the obstacles for Flank are: Take Cover, Ob 1. Direct Fire, Ob 2. Rally, Ob 3.

*Alexander scripts a Flank to my Suppressive Fire. He describes his units fanning out around the courtyard, trying to encircle me. I describe my sodalis kicking the crowd aside and laying down a hail of fire to keep Lady Kate's unit*



*pinned down. My Sodalis-Captain is screaming targeting directives over the comm. Alexander describes Lady Kate unphased by the incoming fire. She calmly watches her soldiers take up their positions.*

### **Success Allocation**

Margin of success is subtracted from your opponent's disposition. Alternately, the Flanking player may spend up to three successes to gain an advantage for a Direct Fire or Suppressive Fire action. Each success grants +1D to the unit action portion of a Direct Fire or Suppressive Fire action that immediately follows the Flank. Flank successes may also be used to buy Specialist Actions.

*Our maneuvers are opposed. Alexander tests Lady Kate's Tactics plus help and FoRKs and gets five successes. I test my Captain's Tactics plus help and FoRKs and get three successes. Alexander wins the test by two. I lose two points from my disposition! I've been encircled!*

*If I had chosen a Direct Fire against Alexander's Flank, our tests would have been independent of one another. I would have shot his unit down as he swept in to encircle. He would have lost men from my shot opportunities, but I would have lost the full value of his Flank from my disposition—five successes! That would have been enough to knock me out of the fight, so Suppressive Fire was a good choice after all.*

### **Individual Action: Infiltration, Zero G, Physical Training, Helm, Pilot or Drive**

If the unit action is a tie, an individual character may make a tie-breaker test for his unit. Test an appropriate skill from the list above versus the root stat for the skill used in the opposing unit's action or the individual action skills for opposing maneuvers. Use root stats for the tie-breaker if unskilled. Victory in individual action counts as if the player had won the unit action test by the margin of success.

*If the Flank versus Suppressive Fire was tied, we'd make a second roll. This time, one of Lady Kate's subordinates must make the roll. Thor's character, Lord Omei, is on the field so he opts to make the test. He tests his Speed against my commander's Perception (the root for Tactics).*

## **Observe**

### **Effect/Description**

Using Observe, the unit spots maneuvering units before they get into position and locates firing units as they fire.

### **Unit Action: Observation, Psychology, Signals, Sensors, Hunting**

If Observe wins against opposed actions, the opposing maneuver is spotted and countered before it can be completed. If scripted against

## THE BURNING WHEEL

an independent action, make an Ob 2 test: Observation, Psychology (Bright Mark/Mule trait required as well), Signals (if you have a signals rig), Sensors (if searching for vehicles) or Perception if unskilled. Test Hunting if tracking, signs and woodcraft are of paramount importance in this conflict. If successful—either versus or independent—the unit has spotted its target and may now use Direct Fire actions. There is no individual action or success allocation in this action.

*Alexander is hungry to lay down Direct Fire on Weller's men, so he throws an Observe into his first exchange. The opposing sodalis are Advancing. These maneuvers are opposed to one another. Alexander has Chris make the roll for Observe with his character Mal Nenox. Nenox has Signals. If Chris wins the test against the Advance, he spots the maneuver coming before the enemy team can complete it. The other team is caught out. We jump to the next volley to see how Lady Kate's forces can exploit their success.*

### Rally and Regroup

#### Effect/Description

Rally and Regroup brings a character who failed his Steel test by a large margin back into the fight.

#### Unit Action Phase: Command, Psychology

Test Command or Psychology. Ob 2 if the character failed his Steel test due to Suppressive Fire. Ob 3 if the character failed due to an Injury. Ob 4 if he failed because he was Maimed. The officer must rally troops individually. He may attempt to rally as many troops as he likes, but each cowering soldier may only be rallied once per firefight.

*My squad support specialist took some Suppressive Fire and failed his Steel test. He's huddled, clutching his gun, rocking back and forth. My*







*character jumps down into the shell hole and tries to rally him. I test his Command against Ob 2.*

If successful, this action restores any disposition dice lost due to hesitating characters. Rallied characters may participate in the following volley. If the Rally attempt is failed, the character is out of the fight.

## **Suppressive Fire**

### **Effect/Description**

The unit pours volleys of fire downrange in order to keep the enemy pinned down, effectively preventing them from acting coherently during this volley.

### **Unit Action Phase: Tactics**

If listed as “versus,” make a versus test against the enemy commander’s unit action. Suppressive Fire successes are subtracted from the opposing action. If Suppressive Fire generates as many successes as the opposing action, the volume of fire prevents the other unit from acting. They are forced to keep their heads down. Their action is not played out. If the Suppressive Fire action generates extra successes, spend them as indicated below in Success Allocation.

*If my opponent is Withdrawing and I’m using Suppressive Fire, my successes subtract from his. If I can generate successes equal to his, I can force him to keep his head down. He doesn’t get to move at all!*

If independent, make an Ob 1 Tactics test and count the extra successes (and spend them as described below). In either case, if the suppressing side has squad support, vehicular or artillery weapons in their unit, they get a + 1D advantage to their Suppressive Fire Tactics test.

Grenades may be thrown in the Suppressive Fire action if appropriate to the situation: If the unit is suppressing a target in the same position, an adjacent position or nearby in no man’s land. Using grenades and other bombs like this grants + 1D to the Suppressive Fire Tactics test. If a shot opportunity is gained, the characters may test Explosives or Close Combat.

### **Success Allocation**

*Keep your head down:* Extra success can be spent to cause Steel tests on the other side; each Steel test costs one success. The suppressing unit chooses which character in the target unit makes the Steel test. *More metal downrange:* Two successes may be spent to degrade the enemy disposition by one point. *Collateral damage:* Two successes can be spent to reduce the effectiveness of enemy cover by one step.



This may only be used by a unit with a squad support weapon, vehicular weapon or artillery piece. *Rampant destruction and chaos*: Two successes can be spent to increase the obstacle of the enemy unit's next action by +1. *Tagged him*: A shot opportunity may be bought for three extra successes. Use the same mechanics as the Direct Fire individual action. Advantage dice may not be bought via Suppressive Fire. *Get on it*: specialist actions may be bought at a cost of one action per success.

*Alexander chose a Suppressive Fire action for volley 2. I chose Observe. These two actions are independent. He tests his 4 Tactics plus help and FoRKs against an Ob 1. He gets four extra successes. He decides to spend two successes on "more metal downrange" and reduce my disposition by one. He spends another success to force my Sodalis-Captain to keep his head down and make a Steel test. With his last success he buys a specialist action.*

### **Individual Action: Appropriate Weapon or Specialist Skill**

If a specialist action or shot opportunity is bought with Suppressive Fire successes, test the appropriate weapon or specialist skill. Tests are the same as under Direct Fire or Specialist Actions.

*With four extra successes on a Suppressive Fire, Alexander could have bought a shot opportunity for one of the members of his unit. If he did, the mechanics are the same as described under Direct Fire: it's an Ob 2 weapons skill test to hit one of my men.*



## Take Cover

### Effect/Description

Using the Take Cover action, the unit focuses on getting out of harm's way. They hunker down behind anything that's available, sometimes just falling prone to minimize incoming fire. Take Cover reduces the effect of incoming Observe, Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire actions.

### Unit Action Phase: Command, Infiltration, Helm, Pilot, Driving

If in a group, test Command. If alone and on foot, test Infiltration. If operating a vehicle, use whichever is appropriate: Driving, Pilot or Helm. Against versus maneuvers, Take Cover successes reduce opposing unit action successes on a one for one basis. If Take Cover successes are equal to or greater than the opposing action, the defending units find such adequate cover the incoming fire is neutralized—there's no effect this volley. If played against an independent maneuver, Take Cover is an Ob 1 test. See success allocation.

*My Take Cover successes reduce the successes of an incoming Suppressive Fire, Observe or Direct Fire action. If I equal their successes, my men hunker down as the incoming fire slams into the tarmac: I am protected from their fire (or they fail to spot me). Against independent actions, Take Cover is a dangerously bad choice, by the way. It just gets you outmaneuvered or assaulted.*

### Success Allocation

If the Take Cover action generates more successes than needed, the unit may “dig in.” Digging in costs one extra success and adds 1 to the value of the unit's current cover level—from 0 to 1, 1 to 2, etc. This bonus cover lasts until the unit performs a Flank, Withdraw or Advance. “Dug in” cover may be destroyed by Suppressive Fire collateral damage. Extra Take Cover successes may also be spent to purchase specialist actions.



Firefight



## THE BURNING WHEEL

*If I get four Take Cover successes to Alexander's three Direct Fire successes, I can spend that extra success in two ways. I can "dig in" and increase the value of my current cover—from 1 to 2 in this case—or I can take a specialist action. If I use the Advance, Flank or Withdraw actions after digging in—if I move from my current position—I lose the cover bonus.*



### Withdraw

#### *Effect/Description*

Withdraw is a risky maneuver. It can be very beneficial, but it also makes the unit vulnerable; it is an attack on your opponent's disposition, but it also damages yours.

Using Withdraw, a commander attempts to maneuver his unit rearward to escape the firing arcs of his opponent and hopefully draw him out of his position. A Withdraw can be used against any maneuver, but it is most effective when the enemy is sitting tight, hunkered down.

If the unit was previously Observed by the enemy, the Withdraw causes the enemy to lose sight of them. They must use another Observe action if they wish to use Direct Fire.

If your enemy has longer-ranged weapons, Withdraw grants them Range Superiority. If you have longer-ranged weapons, and you lost contact, a successful Withdraw will grant range superiority.

If a Withdraw is successful, it takes the unit out of its current position and puts it in no man's land. In *no man's land*, your unit loses any disposition and cover from its last position. Quick, get back under cover!



### **Unit Action Phase: Tactics, Command**

Either Tactics or Command may be used to Withdraw. If the commander is maneuvering a vehicle, the Helm, Pilot or Driver may *help*.

Against independent actions, Withdraw obstacles are as follows: Withdraw, Ob 1. Take Cover, Ob 2. Rally, Ob 3. Direct Fire, Ob 4.

### **Success Allocation**

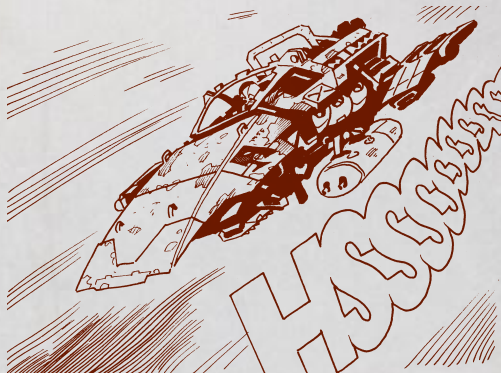
Against a versus maneuver, margin of success from a Withdraw reduces the enemy disposition. However, those same successes are also subtracted from the Withdrawing unit's disposition. If your opponent loses three, you lose three.

Against independent actions, a Withdraw, whether successful or not, subtracts two successes from your disposition. Your margin of success is subtracted from the enemy disposition.

*The Forged Lord's anvil squad with the heavy laser has Observed the White Lynx's position, therefore Thor has Lord Omei order his men back. He chooses a Withdraw for his first action. I choose a Direct Fire. The actions are independent, so Thor marks off two successes from his disposition. Against Direct Fire, Thor's got to make an Ob 4 Tactics test. He gets five successes. He's successful—he knocks off one from my disposition, but he also Withdraws from his Observed position. I can not use Direct Fire against him until I Observe again.*

### **Individual Action: Infiltration, Zero G, Physical Training, Helm, Pilot or Drive**

If the unit action is a tie, an individual character may make a tie-breaker test for his unit. Test an appropriate skill from the list above versus the root stat for the skill used in the opposing unit's action or the individual action skills for opposing maneuvers. Use root stats for the tie-breaker if unskilled. Victory in individual action counts as if the player had won the unit action test by the margin of success.



**Firefight**

## Unit Action Matrix

Use this matrix to determine how the unit actions interact in the

	Observe	Direct Fire	Suppressive Fire	Take Cover	Rally and Regroup	Flank	Advance	Withdraw	Close Combat
Observe	I	I	I	V	I	V	V	V	I
Direct Fire	I	I	V	V	I	I	I	I	I
Suppressive Fire	I	V	I	V	V	V	V	V	V
Take Cover	V	V	V	I	I	I	I	I	I
Rally and Regroup	I	I	V	I	I	I	I	I	I
Flank	V	I	V	I	I	V	V	V	V
Advance	V	I	V	I	I	V	I	V	I
Withdraw	V	I	V	I	I	V	V	I	V
Close Combat	I	I	V	I	I	V	I	V	V

I = Independent action. V = Versus.

exchange. If the interaction is listed as *versus* (V), during the unit action phase the opposing commanders make a versus test with the appropriate abilities for their chosen actions. The side with the higher net successes wins the test. Margin of success is then applied to the unit action results as described under the action's Success Allocation header.

If two actions are listed as *independent* (I) of each other, it indicates that both are rolled for separately, and their successes do not interfere with one another.

*Take Cover is a versus test against Observe, Direct Fire or Suppressive Fire. It's an independent test against Take Cover, Rally and Regroup, Flank, Advance, Withdraw and Close Combat.*





## Close Combat Individual Actions

To use the Close Combat action, you must either be in the same position as your target or be in a position to assault an enemy in no man's land. Once the unit action is tested for and the damage to disposition has been distributed, the real chaos begins.

Each participant must choose an intent for his character during the individual action phase. There are four basic intents: engage in hand-to-hand, use close quarters weapons fire (pistols, jacked weapons, chemical projectors), toss a grenade or attempt to overbear (disarm and/or immobilize) your opponent.

Choose your intent privately. Once all players are ready, announce your action and test your *Close Combat* skill.

### Hand-to-Hand

When using Hand-to-Hand against versus actions, make a versus test between both sides' Close Combat skill. Independent action Hand-to-Hand is Ob 3.

If the Hand-to-Hand attacker meets his obstacle or wins the versus test, he does damage. Roll the Die of Fate as described in the Weapons section. If you manage to incapacitate or kill your opponent, reduce the opposing side's disposition by one. Hand-to-Hand does not stop Weapons Fire, it happens at the same time.

### Weapons Fire

Rather than messing around with punches and kicks, the character plants his feet and blasts away. Test your Close Combat skill.

Independent action Weapons Fire is Ob 2. Make a versus test for versus actions.

Non-Close Combat weapons suffer the following obstacle penalties to both independent and versus Weapons Fire actions: Assault, +2 Ob. Squad Support, +3 Ob. Vehicular Weapons, + 4 Ob. The Jacked technology trait reduces this penalty by one.

If the Weapons Fire action obstacle is met or wins the versus test, it counts as if the player had hit his target with a Direct Fire shot opportunity. See the Weapons section for applying damage. If the Weapons Fire incapacitates or kills the target, reduce the opposing side's disposition by one.

*If I use Weapons Fire against a Hand-to-Hand or Overbearing action, I'm going to shoot my target as he tries to bring me down. The actions are independent of one another. I'll make an Ob 2 Close Combat test and apply damage as described in the IMS section of this chapter.*

*Against Weapons Fire or Grenades, I've got to win a versus test if I want to get a shot off at my opponent.*

### Grenades and Bombs

Toss a grenade into the enemy's foxhole and watch him dance. If the grenade-tosser wins the versus test for a versus action, he hits his targets before they get off their shot or close into hand-to-hand with him. Consult the damage rules in the Weapons section.

In grenade versus grenade situations, it's an Ob 3 Close Combat test to chuck that grenade from cover into the other guy's position. Success indicates that the explosive hits and detonates. Use the Weapons mechanics to generate damage. If the attacker manages to incapacitate or kill his opponent, reduce the opposing disposition by one.

### Overbear

When Overbearing you try to knock your target down and take his weapon away while doing minimal harm. For versus actions, make a versus test. If the Overbearing player wins, he stops his target and knocks him to the ground. Ties may be resolved with a versus Power test. Margin of success is applied as an obstacle penalty for the losing character's next Close Combat test. If the Overbearing player adds an obstacle penalty equal to the target's Speed or Power—whichever is lower—he's pinned and captured his opponent. The attacker may apply the Overbearing penalty across multiple actions so long as he consecutively uses the Overbear action.



*My target's Speed is 3. If I win an Overbearing test by three, I can pin him and take him out of the fight. Or if I win three Overbearing tests in a row, I can pin him.*

In an independent test, the obstacle for Overbearing is equal to the target's Close Combat skill exponent. Extra successes can be spent as described above. If the attacker manages to incapacitate his opponent, reduce the opposing side's disposition by one.

	Hand-to-Hand	Weapons Fire	Grenades	Overbear
Hand-to-Hand	V	I	V	V
Weapons Fire	I	V	V	I
Grenades	V	V	I	V
Overbear	V	I	I	V

## No Defense



There is no "defense" action in Close Combat. If you want to protect yourself, you've got to pick a maneuver that's going to get you a versus test against your opponent's action.

## Close Combat: I Corner Him and Stab Him in The Face!

On occasion, a situation will arise in which two characters confront each other personally—nose to nose with knives drawn, pistols pulled and teeth bared. In this case, a full blown Firefight isn't appropriate. Something smaller and deadlier (!) is in order.

## Single Roll Combat

The fastest way to resolve this type of conflict is to run a single Close Combat action. Both players privately choose an action—Hand-to-Hand, Weapons Fire, Overbearing or Grenades—and make the appropriate tests. Their action is their intent. When they declare, they should be specific about what they want from the conflict. Calculate the results of the tests. If one character is killed or injured and the other is not, the fight's over and there's a clear winner: the character left standing. If the Overbearing action is used, and it is successful/wins the opposed test, the fight is over. Even if the Overbearing character didn't completely immobilize his opponent according to the Overbearing action rules, he's got his opponent pinned.

If you didn't get what you wanted out of the single roll, tough luck. Scene's over. Your quarry escaped. Move on.

Firefight



The single roll I Corner Him and Stab Him in the Face rules can be used as a building scene. The scene should involve at least one lead-in roll like Security Rigging, Infiltration or a failed Circles test in which you corner your quarry.

### Close Quarters Mini-Firefight

If the fight needs more than a gamble on a single roll, make it a mini-



Firefight. This option counts as a conflict for the maneuver. Set an objective, draw a map and set some positions and cover. No contact roll is made—you're nose to nose. Make the officer's roll using Tactics or Close Combat, not Command. Apply disposition bonuses. Players may only choose one of three unit actions: Advance, Withdraw or Close Combat. Choose a sequence of three unit actions and fight it out like a standard Firefight.

*Mayuran's character, Prince Faisal, is being escorted to a cell in the Forged Lord's prison. Mayuran won't go quietly, "I grab this guy's gun and beat him with it. Then I shoot his buddy."*

*Sounds like a mini-Firefight. "What's your objective?" I ask.*

*"To escape!"*

*"Excellent, my objective is to get you into your cell. Choose your actions."*

*I sketch a quick map of the prison corridor. We roll for our dispositions: Prince Faisal's Tactics against the Close Combat skill of my guards (who are helping one another). 3s to 3s. I choose Close Combat, Close Combat, Close Combat. Mayuran chooses Close Combat, Close Combat, Withdraw. First volley, we reveal our Close Combat maneuvers and roll for the unit action. I win, three to two. Mayuran loses a point of disposition. Then we choose our Close Combat individual actions. I choose Hand-to-Hand. Mayuran chooses Overbearing. This calls for another versus test between our Close Combat skills. Mayuran wins by one: Prince Faisal knocks one of the soldiers back and grabs his gun. I've got +1 Ob to my next Close Combat test.*

*That's the first volley. We play this out until one of us is reduced to zero disposition or until Prince Faisal or the soldiers are dead.*



## Close Combat After a Duel of Wits

Either form of I Corner Him and Stab Him in the Face! can be used following a Duel of Wits. The loser of the duel may choose to forgo his compromise and escalate to violence. If the loser hasn't used his conflict scene, he may use either the short or long version of these mechanics. If the loser doesn't have a conflict scene left for this maneuver, he's stuck with using the single roll conflict. Spend that artha!



Lastly, the close combat rules may be part of a Firefight compromise. If your side can get at least a full (not minor) concession out of the other side, you may demand that they let you get close enough to take a shot at a character of your choosing. If you initiated the Firefight and lost, you can use the single roll option. If you didn't initiate the Firefight and have a conflict scene left, you can use the mini-Firefight.

## Specialist Actions

When a Firefight action indicates that specialist actions are available, the unit commander may spend extra successes to open up these options for the specialists in his unit. The character taking a specialist action may not do anything else that volley, including making the unit action test, firing his weapon, reloading, helping another character with an individual action or taking a second specialist action.

If multiple extra successes are generated, multiple specialist actions may be purchased for this volley. Only one of each type may be used per volley.

*Alexander generated four extra successes on his Suppressive Fire action. He spent two to knock off a point of enemy disposition, one to cause a Steel test and one to buy a specialist action. One character in his unit can make a test using one of the following choices.*

### Medic!

Characters with Surgery or Field Dressing skills may attempt to patch up their fallen companions. See the Anatomy of Injury chapter for details.

### Signals Warfare—Gaining Superior Comm

In order to initiate signals warfare, the unit must have a member with the Signals skill and signals tech or Signals automation capable of jamming and scanning. For example, a simple radio will not do, but iron Avatars will.

Firefight



Make a versus test against the enemy Signals operator/automation. If there is no Signals op, the obstacle for the test is 2

If the initiator of the signals warfare wins the test by one success, the Superior Comm bonus to the disposition is neutralized—neither side gets the +1s. If he wins by two, his side gains the Superior Comm bonus and the other side loses it. If he wins by three, he jams enemy communications altogether in addition to gaining the Superior Comm bonus. If jammed, helping dice may not be given to, by or within this unit unless the helpers are in the same unit and physically right next to each other. If the initiator of Signals Warfare ties or loses the test, the Superior Comm bonus remains where it is.

Superior Comm can be won and lost multiple times per Firefight.

If one team has higher index signals tech, grant them +1D to their Signals roll per level higher. Low index is two indices higher than sub index, for example.

## Demolitions

Characters with the Explosives skill may destroy battle space positions. The obstacle to destroy a position is twice its disposition value. If destroyed, it has no further value in this firefight. The explosives specialist must occupy the position on the action he sets his charge to demolish it. The position is destroyed in the next volley.

Explosives specialists may also mine a position if they have the proper explosives tech (for example, mines, jury-rigged grenades or intelligent explosives). Mining during battle is an Ob 3 task. Extra successes increase the obstacle to Advance into and occupy the position. If the





Advance fails, the Advancing unit is hit with a blast of explosives—generate the damage as per the Weapons mechanics described in this chapter. The target unit may choose which character is hit.



### Sensor Sweep

If the sensors op wants to run a sweep for enemy vehicles and iron, make a versus test. The sensors op tests Sensors, plus sensors tech dice/help, *plus the profile dice of the target vehicle* (iron has a profile of zero). The opposing side tests Signals plus any signals tech dice, help, etc. If trying to scramble or take evasive action, test Helm/Pilot/Drive or Infiltration (if on foot) plus control dice or Infiltration advantage.

If the sensors op wins, his fireteam gets a linked test (+1D) to their next Observe, Suppressive Fire or Direct Fire unit action. Locked on, Captain!

### Psychology

Psychologists may use their Boost power, offer a connection and Lock a connection as a specialist action. They may not engage in a psychic duel. See the Psychology section for the details of a psychologist's powers.

### Security Warfare

When fighting in installations or vehicles with Security systems, a successful Ob 3 Security test allows the Security skill to be used as Observation for the remainder of the Firefight. Alternately, a specialist action can be spent to disrupt the security network. Test Security Rigging. The obstacle is equal to the security system advantage dice or exponent (or Ob 1 if it doesn't have any dice). This prevents the system from being used to Observe.

### Damage Report

During a Firefight, the commander of a vehicle may order his crew to put out fires and conduct impromptu repairs to damaged vehicles and ships. The Fire Control and Jury-Rigging skills may be used for this. Repair may be used after a Firefight during a building scene.

### Firefight Play Process

1. Break down into units.
2. Set battle space. Draw a map.
3. Set objectives.
4. Make contact.
5. Set dispositions.
6. Add positions and cover to the battle space map.
7. Privately choose three fireteam actions in the order you want them played.
8. Test for the unit action for the first volley.
9. If applicable, a successful unit action may generate individual actions.
10. If the disposition of either side is reduced to zero due to unit or individual actions, the firefight ends. If all of the characters on either side are removed from action, the firefight ends.
11. If both sides still have disposition and standing members, repeat steps 8-10 for second and third volleys. After the third volley, make an Ammo Check.
12. After playing three volleys, repeat steps 7-12 until one side's disposition is reduced to zero.

### Steel Tests in Firefight!

There are two instances in which a character may be called on to pass a Steel test in Firefight: due to the Suppressive Fire action or due to suffering an Injured or Maimed result.

Test the Steel attribute (minus any injured dice if applicable). The obstacle is the character's hesitation—10 minus his Will. If the obstacle is met or exceeded, the character remains in the fight unaffected by the madness.

#### I Hesitate

If a character fails his Steel test by a margin equal to or less than half his hesitation, he hesitates. Round in the player's favor: If his hesitation is 5, he may fail by up to three. If he hesitates, he may not act or help in the *next volley*. He cowers or bolts. In addition, the character's contribution to the disposition pool is temporarily removed for one volley—if the character is wearing iron and is the source of his team's Iron Superiority, they lose that bonus while he's out, for example. If this reduces the disposition to zero, that unit is out of the fight!



## **My Morale is Broken, Rally Me**

If a character fails his Steel test by more than half his hesitation (round down), he may not act again in the firefight until he is rallied using the Rally and Regroup action. In addition, the character's contribution to the disposition pool is removed until he is rallied. If this loss reduces the disposition to zero, that unit is out of the fight. If there is a second in command in that unit, he can take command. If he chooses, he may script the Rally and Regroup action to bring his commander back into the fight. If no second-in-command, the soldiers have to get by with what they have: elect a new officer from their number and test his skills or roots, if unskilled.

# *Winning and Losing*

## **Winning**

The goal of a Firefight is to overwhelm or destroy your enemy's disposition. If your opponent's disposition is reduced to zero while you still have disposition, you've gained your objective. You get what you were after; your opponent does not.

## **Losing**

If a unit's disposition is reduced to zero, it does not accomplish its objective. This unit is out of the fight. Either the unit's been driven from the battle, run out of ammunition, been scattered beyond coherency, been pinned down or was unable to accomplish its mission before the enemy accomplished theirs. Discuss what's appropriate to the situation.

## **Compromise: Marginal Victory**

A compromise happens when the winning side also lost points from their disposition in the phase. The level of compromise depends on how many dice were lost from the winning disposition. There are four grades of compromise:

### *No Compromise: Lost a Few Dice*

In this case, the winners of the phase only lost a few dice from their disposition (a tenth or less of their starting total). The losers may add some color in the details of the winners' victory, but the fact remains: The winner steamrolled the loser.

### *Minor Compromise: Lost a Quarter or a Third*

If the losers knocked down their enemy's disposition by a quarter or a third, the winners must effect a minor compromise with the losers. So while the losers do not accomplish their objective, they may get a small part of it or some unintended or adjunct side effect.





### ***Compromise: Lost Half or More***

If the winners come out of the conflict with only half of their disposition, they owe the losers a compromise. The losers don't achieve their objective of course, but imagine they got halfway there. It's also possible to compromise so that the losers get nothing, but the winners only get about half of what they wanted.

### ***Major Compromise: Lost All but a Few***

If the winners are reduced to one, two or three successes in their disposition (about a tenth or less of their starting total), they have escaped with a very narrow victory indeed. The winner must grant a major compromise in regard to either their objective or the losers: The winners only narrowly achieved their intent. Imagine the losers *nearly* accomplished their goals, but were only thwarted at the end.



If there is a compromise result, the players discuss what they think the appropriate middle ground is. Don't worry about being in character for this part. Compromise must be an agreement between all of the players at the table. It involves discussing what was at stake for both sides of the phase, plus all of the color and events that sprung up in play. Make sure you state what you think is right for the compromise. This result may be different than what your character would want.

### **Mutual Destruction: A Tie**

If both players are reduced to zero disposition on the same volley, the firefight is a tie. The players may choose one of two options in this circumstance.

First, neither of them get what they want—neither objective is accomplished—but they are both owed a major compromise. What would the end result be if both sides fought hard but couldn't gain an advantage and eventually had to retire and lick their wounds? How would the details of the objective be affected, damaged or destroyed?



The second tie result is only for particularly wicked players—and is subject to a GM approval. In this case, *both* sides get what they want as stated in their objective, but they also owe each other *two* major concessions. How would it look if the fighting units swapped trenches? This is the result of major carnage and double-cross. Not for the faint of heart.

## Positions, Disposition and Compromise

If a unit is occupying a position at the end of a Firefight, that position's value counts toward the unit's disposition total when determining the level of compromise for the conflict.

## Target Selection

The targeted unit determines which of its members are hit by incoming shot opportunities. If multiple shots hit in one volley, they must be divided among the unit. Each team member must be targeted to be hit once before a team member can be the target of a second shot. Determine target selection *before* the enemy rolls for damage.

## Surrender

A unit may surrender to the enemy during a Firefight. Surrender may be taken in between any volley, before actions are announced or when a Steel test is failed. If actions are announced, play them out and then offer the chance to surrender.

When a unit surrenders they are out of the fight. If there are no other opposing units in play, the fight is over. If the fight's still going, note the disposition total of the surviving unit at the time of surrender. Use that for compromise after the scene is over.



A surrendered team can conduct no perfidy while the Firefight is still happening. If they wish to use surrender to get into enemy lines and cause havoc, they must wait until the Firefight scene is over.



If the winning team wishes to execute its captives, so be it. Roll one die for each victim. On a 1, unbeknownst to his executioners, the victim is Maimed but otherwise alive.

### Cut and Run

A player cannot be forced into a Firefight. If a conflict scene is negotiated and the player does not wish to participate, he can cut and run. He either fails to show up at the appointed time, or he literally takes flight and a chase ensues: Either the conflict scene doesn't happen, or it devolves into a building scene for the chase. If the pursuer wins the chase, the player who cut and run is forced to engage in the Firefight.

If a player is defending some objective, but doesn't want to engage in a Firefight, he must cede whatever it is he's defending to the enemy.

Once objectives are declared and the officer's roll made, cutting and running counts as surrender, as described above.

### Ambush and Surprise

Setting up an ambush is a precursor to a Firefight. The goal of an ambush is to give your side such an advantage that the ensuing fight is a slaughter.

In a building scene prior to the Firefight, make an Infiltration versus Observation or Signals test (Perception if unskilled). Use help and FoRKs from skills and wises that grant knowledge of or intimacy with the ambush location. If the ambusher wins this test, he gains the *Superior Position* bonus to his disposition.

After making the Infiltration versus Observation test, roll for contact. The winner of the Infiltration test gains a linked die to contact.

If the ambushers win the Infiltration test *and* the contact test, they count as having Observed the target unit and may script Direct Fire immediately. If this is not the case, the ambushing unit must use the Observe action as usual.

### Soldiers under My Command

Often players undertake the role of commanders and leaders with companies of soldiers and squadrons of ships under their direction. And using these rules, it's possible to have Firefights involving hundreds or even thousands of individuals, but there are a few considerations that need to be addressed.





### The Commander Is Key

In situations where a single player is leading a company of soldiers or commanding a ship, he is the focal point of the action. He makes the unit action tests, the Steel tests and ammo checks for his unit. If he stumbles or fails, his unit stumbles and fails with him.

He does *not* need to make the individual action tests or the specialist action tests. These may be made using the stats and skills for soldiers under his command.

If there are other players in his unit under his command, they may make the individual and specialist actions where appropriate.

### The Soldier and the Wingman

When dealing with hordes of soldiers, its best to simplify some of the processes of getting shot at. In moderately-sized battles, if a soldier suffers an *Injury*, he's out of the fight. He's hit, bleeding and down. Subtract one from the target unit's disposition.

In truly massive battles, if a soldier is merely hit with a Direct Fire shot opportunity that could feasibly hurt him, he's out. Don't worry about damage or Steel tests or anything else. He's hit and down. Subtract one from the target unit's disposition.



Player characters *never* use these simplified rules for being knocked out of the fight. They are only for NPC soldiers.

### Roll, Soldier, Roll

Soldiers and specialists will occasionally be called on to make individual action tests. Players who are not involved in this Firefight scene make the tests for the commander's soldiers.

### Shot Opportunity Scale

The Direct Fire shot opportunity scale counts for units of about five bodies/guns/ships. For teams of about ten, each shot opportunity counts for two shots. For teams of 15-20, shot opportunities count as three or four shots. Scale upwards so that each shot opportunity won from Direct or Suppressive Fire counts as about twenty percent of the unit firing.



When shooting at units of approximately the same size, *this scale is just for color*. A shot opportunity drops more soldiers, but it still only knocks one point off disposition. If your team has the Outnumbers bonus over your opponent, successful shot opportunities knock off two points of disposition each. If your team has the Outnumbers by a Vast Margin bonus, shot opportunities knock three points off each.





## The Fog of War



Firefights are never clean and simple. Under the best circumstances, they are complex, chaotic and wild affairs. These rules are designed to represent that chaos—you never know exactly where you are or what your enemy is doing. You can't "just shoot him." Contact must be made, targets observed, and then fire can be laid down. There's a process, but only because such steps are necessary to cut through the fog of war. Without these steps, it's just unmitigated chaos.

These rules are also designed to force the commanding player to make difficult decisions about his forces based on imperfect knowledge. *There is no such thing as perfect knowledge in war.* Perfect knowledge is for the historians. Quick thinking, tactics and luck are the province of anvil commanders and hammer captains.



This may seem strange, but if you, as a player, are uncertain, a little confused or nervous, you're on the right track. The rules themselves are logical and methodical, and not too complex, but the circumstances in which they are used are chaotic and confusing affairs. If you're uncertain about how a rule or maneuver works, by all means, look it up. It's important to know the rules of the game. If you're uncertain about a decision you must make, go with your gut, don't worry and don't look back. If you're uncertain about what just happened in a volley of fire, don't sweat it. Move on and then sort it out after you've achieved your objective.

Sorting through the fog of war after a Firefight takes imagination and involvement from the players. The rules are designed this way—they give you a winner, but you decide exactly what the hell just happened.

## Chaos

These rules provide the mechanism to orchestrate the madness of battle and cut through the fog of war. It's the players who bring the chaos.



In fact, these rules *need* chaos strewn on top of them. They need orders shouted across the table, desperate cries for reinforcements, stunning descriptions of explosions, the roar of heavy assault gun fire, shrieks and pleas from the wounded and frantic supplications of "Who the hell is in charge here?!"

Firefight





These rules need to be played up. They need the chaos of performance: Make machine gun noises, quote scenes from *Apocalypse Now*, cup your hands over your mouth to imitate the

comm static. Describe the movement of your men on the flank, paint a picture of the arrow formation of your fleet on the advance, tell us about the fear in your heart as you make a risky withdrawal. What does it feel like when you slam the grav pressor into reverse and beat a hasty retreat? What does the artillery sound like as it screams down from orbit? Can you hear your orders over the cries of the wounded?

The reward for this kind of play is pure joy and fun.

## MORE THAN TWO UNITS: SUPPORTING ACTIONS

If your Firefight has more than two units, some considerations need to be adopted to keep play moving smoothly.

All teams reveal their actions for the volley at the same time. Negotiate your targets and intent. In other words, you can decide who you want to Suppress or Flank after actions are announced.



If two teams are both using versus actions against an enemy team's action, *those two teams do not roll individually*. One team must *help* the other with its action. The players can choose which action will have an effect and which will act as help.

*If Alexander is playing an Advance and Thor's playing a Suppressive Fire to my unit's Flank, Thor and Alexander can choose if they want the Advance or Suppressive Fire to have an effect. In this case, they choose the Advance. Thor's unit covers Alexander's, laying down a hail of suppressive fire as Alexander's men make a dash for the gun pit. We then make a versus test: my Flank versus Alexander's Advance. Thor gives Alexander helping dice.*

If two allied teams have a versus action against one team and independent action against another, they may act separately in that volley. One team may oppose the enemy, while the other may act independently.



If two teams are using the same independent action against the same team, one team must help the other with its action. The players can choose which action will have an effect and which will act as help. Otherwise, independent actions are resolved individually, team to team, action to action.

*If Thor chooses Observe, Alexander chooses Direct Fire and I choose Direct Fire, we all roll for the success of our actions independently of one another. Thor can spot me as Alexander fires into me, and my unit can fire on Thor regardless of the success of their actions.*

## Weapons

Can't have a firefight without weapons, right? In Burning Empires, we define a weapon as a piece of technology used to injure, damage, destroy or incapacitate a target. In this game, such devices are described by a series of technological traits. First and foremost, they are *weapons*. The *Weapon* trait grants them the ability to inflict injury or damage on a target.

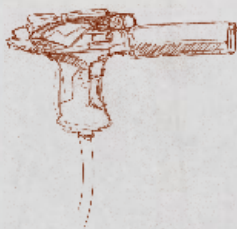
Subordinate to that, a weapon has a classification and an ammunition type. Additional technological traits modify the weapon's functionality. The range of a weapon is a function of its class. The effect of range is discussed in the Range Superiority section earlier in this chapter.

## Weapon Classifications

There are six general categories of weapons in Iron Empires: close combat weapons, assault weapons, squad support weapons, vehicular weapons, artillery and explosives. The categories correspond to the six combat skills available to characters. Each skill allows the character to use any weapon of the appropriate category.

### Close Combat Weapons

Pistols, chemical projectors, knives, boarding axes and sturdy pipes all fall into the close combat weapons category. Weapons listed as Close Combat may only be used in the Close Combat action in the Firefight mechanics or I Corner Him and Stab Him in the Face.



*The CEBW (pronounced "cheb-u" or "seb-u") is a Coherent Energy Beam Weapon—a small laser. It is used as a sidearm in low index societies.*

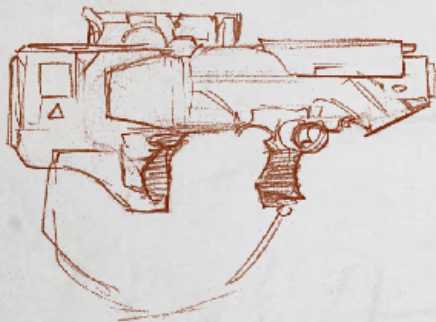
### Assault Weapons

Assault weapons are the most common class of weapon used in the military forces of the Iron Empires. Depending on the wealth of the anvil lord and the tech index of the planet, assault weapons can range



from assault guns—rapid-fire projectile weapons—to assault lasers, which are bulky, cumbersome and require a power pack, but also reliable and powerful.

*The assault gun is a dependable, easy to produce projectile weapon. Variants of the assault gun see service in anvil forces all across the Iron Empires.*



### Squad Support Weapons

In military operations, one member of the fireteam carries what is euphemistically known as a “squad support” weapon. These support weapons are tremendously powerful. They have potent anti-vehicular capabilities and

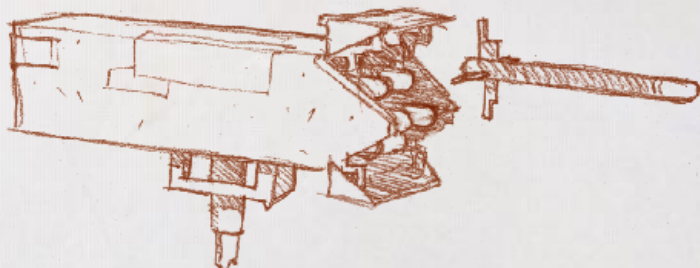
are capable of inflicting tremendous casualties on enemy infantry. Anvil and iron companies utilize energy projectors like fusors and particle accelerator weapons as squad support weapons. Less affluent forces use larger versions of assault guns, which fire a higher volume of projectiles with greater force.

*The particle accelerator weapon—PAc, for short—is an energy projector capable of dispersing troop concentrations and light vehicles but is ineffective against shielded targets.*

### Vehicular Weapons

The vehicular weapons classification describes vehicular-mounted weapon systems that are heavier than squad support weapons but fall short of the really big guns. Fusion cannons, anti-vehicular missile systems and point defense guns all fall into this class. Vehicular weapons must be mounted on a chassis in order to be properly operated.

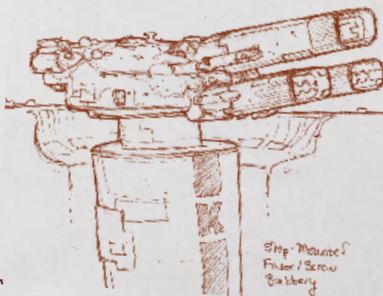




*SCrEM Launchers—Sub-Critical Energy Missile Launchers—are mounted on most low index assault sleds throughout the Iron Empires.*

## Artillery

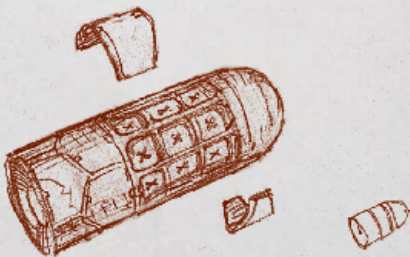
The artillery classification is reserved for the big guns—batteries of anti-ship lasers, self-propelled howitzers and cruise missiles. These weapons can crack a ship open or level a building with a single shot.



*The most common type of artillery is a giant energy battery fitted to hammer cruisers. This monstrous weapon uses the ship's onboard fusion reactor to project a devastating superheated plasma blast or a coherent energy stream at its target.*

## Explosives

Explosives is a broad ranging classification. It includes demolitions and antipersonnel bombs. Demolitions are used to destroy positions in the battle space. Doing so uses the specialist action rules described earlier in the chapter. Grenades and bombs are used as either Suppressive Fire or in the Close Combat action. The Close Combat skill is used in this case.



*A/P GRENADE*

*HEAP—High Explosive Armor Penetrating—charges to help them destroy enemy troop concentrations and light vehicles.*

*Anvil troopers across the Iron Empires are outfitted with*

## Impact with Target

If a character meets his obstacle (or wins a versus test) for a shot opportunity from Direct Fire, Suppressive Fire, Close Combat Weapons Fire, Hand-to-Hand or Grenades and Bombs actions, he has hit his target.

### I Nailed Him!

After a character has hit his target with a weapon, the shooting player rolls a single die to see how much damage is inflicted. This die is called the Die of Fate. The Die of Fate roll, modified by the results of the skill test to hit, determine whether an Incidental, Mark or Superb hit was delivered to the target.

## Incidental, Mark, Superb

A weapon's damage potential is divided into three steps called Incidental, Mark and Superb hits (IMS). Incidental hits are glancing shots from the weapon. Mark result hits are solid, on-target hits. Superb shots indicate that the weapon has inflicted an extraordinary amount of damage for its type. Each weapon is listed with a set of IMS coordinates.

### Scale of Damage: Coordinates Not Points

The letter and number damage level of a weapon hit are coordinates on a damage scale. There are three scales: human, vehicular and superstructural. Human scale damage refers to weapons designed to kill people and small vehicles. The vehicular scale of damage is for destroying vehicles and small structures. Superstructural scale damage can destroy large vehicles and buildings.

#### Human Scale

Wound Effects: 2x Superficial - 10, 1x Injury - 10, 1x Maimed - 20, 1x Mortal - 30

W01	W02	W03	W04	W05	W06	W07	W08	W09	W10	W11	W12	W13	W14	W15	W16
000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000
A01	A02	A03	A04	A05	A06	A07	A08	A09	A10	A11	A12	A13	A14	A15	A16

#### Vehicular Scale

Damage Effects: 2x Surface - 10, 1x Breach - 10, 1x Damaged - 20, 1x Destroyed - 30

V01	V02	V03	V04	V05	V06	V07	V08	V09	V10	V11	V12	V13	V14	V15	V16
000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000

#### Superstructural Scale

Damage Effects: 2x Surface - 10, 1x Breach - 10, 1x Damaged - 20, 1x Destroyed - 30

S01	S02	S03	S04	S05	S06	S07	S08	S09	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000

The *letter* in the damage code indicates the section of the scale in which to place the damage. The *number* describes exactly where in that scale the damage goes. The scales are divided into 16 segments and lay end-to-end. The human scale is the leftmost, vehicular lies in the middle and the superstructural scale is the rightmost.



*An assault gun has an IMS of H4, H8, H11. It does damage in the human scale at 4, 8 and 11. A particle accelerator weapon has an IMS of V4, V7, V10. It does damage in the vehicular scale at points 4, 7 and 10.*



Weapon damage indicates how the impact of the weapon affects the target character or vehicle. The physical tolerances of a character or vehicle are coordinates on this scale. They indicate how the shot affects the character. This section discusses dishing out the punishment. Anatomy of Injury discusses its effects.

## Die of Fate

When trying to injure, damage or kill a target in Burning Empires, the player tests one of his character's skills—Assault Weapons, Squad Support Weapons, Vehicular Weapons, Artillery, Close Combat and occasionally Explosives—against an obstacle. If the obstacle is met, the player rolls the Die of Fate (DoF) to determine damage. Successes over the obstacle modify the Die of Fate roll—the more accurate the shot, the more likely you are to inflict serious harm.

### Three Types of Die of Fate

There are three types of Die of Fate: a general one that we use for most guns and explosives, one for close combat weapons like pistols, and one for muscle-powered hand-to-hand weapons like knives.

### Die of Fate Generates IMS

Once you've scored a hit on a shot opportunity or Close Combat action, roll the appropriate Die of Fate to see which level of damage the weapon delivers—Incidental, Mark or Superb. Consult the weapon's stats to determine its damage coordinates.

#### General DoF

1-2 Incidental  
3-4 Mark  
5-6 Superb

#### Close Combat DoF

1-3 Incidental  
4-5 Mark  
6 Superb

#### Hand to Hand DoF

1-4 Incidental  
5 Mark  
6 Superb

Firefight

*If I hit with my handgun (I: H4, M: H7, S: H10) in close combat and roll a 3 on the DoF, I do an Incidental hit: an H4. If I roll a 4 or 5, I do a Mark hit: an H7. If I roll a 6, I do a Superb hit: H10.*



## Extra Successes: Bonus to the Die of Fate

Successes over the obstacle on a shot opportunity or Close Combat individual action give a bonus to the DoF roll:

- One extra success gets a + 1 to the DoF
- Doubling the obstacle gives + 2 to the DoF
- Tripling the obstacle is + 3

*Dro's character has a jack gun and gets a shot opportunity at a target with no cover—Ob 2. He rolls four successes: double his obstacle. When he rolls the DoF, he adds 2 to his result. He rolls a 1. Normally, that'd be an Incidental result for an assault weapon. However, Dro adds two to his result because he doubled his obstacle. He gets 3 total on the DoF—a Mark result. In this case, that's an H7.*


## Weapons Chart

Weapon	I	M	S	Ammo	Traits	Index
	Die of Fate					
Close Combat Weapons						
 Knife	H3	H6	H9	—	Hand-to-Hand, Short, Concealable, Quick	Sub
	1-4	5	6			
 Improvised Weapon	H3	H6	H9	—	Hand-to-Hand, Clumsy, Unreliable	Sub
	1-4	5	6			
 Sword/Axe	H4	H7	H10	—	Hand-to-Hand	Sub
	1-4	5	6			
 Handgun	H4	H7	H10	Magazine	Concealable	Sub
	1-3	4-5	6			
 Chemical Projector	H3	H6	H9	Single Shot	Blast, It Burns!	Zero
	1-3	4-5	6			
 Stet Gun	H2	H4	H7	Magazine	Intuitive, Neurotoxin Needles	Zero
	1-3	4-5	6			
 SCrEW	H6	H9	H13	Capacitor	Unwieldy	Low
	1-3	4-5	6			
 CEBW	H4	H7	H10	Power Pack	Superior	Low
	1-3	4-5	6			
 Security Baton	H3	H5	H8	Capacitor	Hand-to-Hand, Quick, Disrupter	Low
	1-4	5	6			
 Kerrn Sword	H5	H10	H15	Capacitor	Hand-to-Hand, Heavy (6)	Low
	1-4	5	6			



Weapon	I	M	S	Ammo	Traits	Index
	Die of Fate					
Assault Weapons						
 Jack Gun	H4	H7	H10	Cylinder	Intuitive, Jacked, Quick	Sub
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Assault Gun	H4	H8	H11	Magazine	Intuitive	Sub
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Rifle	H5	H8	H13	Magazine	Long Range	Sub
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Infrasonic Disrupter	H2	H3	H6	Capacitor	Disrupter, Wave	Zero
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Jack Laser	H4	H8	H12	Power Pack	Heater, Jacked	Low
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Assault Laser	H5	H10	H14	Power Pack	Heater, Heavy (5)	Low
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
Squad Support Weapons						
 Heavy Assault Gun	H4	H8	H12	Case	Intuitive, Heavy (4)	Sub
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Mortar	H5	H7	H11	Single Shot	Heavy (7), Indirect	Sub
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 MPIML	V4	V8	V12	Single Shot	Blast, Intelligent	Zero
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 PAC	V4	V7	V10	Capacitor	Heavy (4), Blast, Heater	Low
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Heavy Laser	V5	V10	V14	Power Pack	Heavy (8), Heater, Long Range, Wave	Low
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Fusor	V5	V10	V14	Power Pack	Heavy (6), Heater, Blast, Devastator	Low
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Effector	H1	H2	H3	Power Pack	Effector, Wave	High
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
Vehicular Weapons						
 Cannon	V4	V7	V11	Case	Mounted, Blast, Recoil	Sub
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Fusion Gun	V6	V10	V15	Engine	Mounted, Blast, Heater, Devastator	Low
	1-2	3-4	5-6			

Firefight

Weapon	I	M	S	Ammo	Traits	Index
	Die of Fate					
 SCrEM Launcher	V4	V8	V12	Cylinder	Mounted, Blast, Indirect, Intelligent	Low
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Nail Launcher	V3	V6	V9	Cylinder	Mounted, Distortion Disrupter	Low
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
Artillery						
 Howitzer	V5	V10	V15	Case	Mounted, Blast, Indirect	Sub
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Missile	S4	S7	S10	Single Shot	Mounted, Intelligent, Megablast, Indirect	Zero
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
 Battery	S4	S8	S12	Engine	Mounted, Blast, Wave	Low
	1-2	3-4	5-6			
Explosives						
 HE	H5	H7	H11	Single Shot	Blast, Inaccurate	Sub
	1-3	4-5	6			
 HEAP	H6	H9	H13	Single Shot	Blast, Inaccurate, Intelligent, Devastator	Zero
	1-3	4-5	6			
 SCArE	V4	V7	V10	Single Shot	Blast, Inaccurate	Low
	1-3	4-5	6			

## Weapon Acronyms

SCrEW: Sub-Critical Energy Weapon. CEBW (“chebu”): Coherent-Energy Beam Weapon. MPIML (“empel”): Man-Portable Intelligent Missile Launcher. PAC: Particle Accelerator. SCrEM: Sub-Critical Energy Missile. HE: High-Explosive. HEAP: High-Explosive, Armor Penetrating. SCArE: Sub-Critical Area Explosive.

## Weapon Technology Traits

Weapons have technology traits that affect their operation.

*A heavy assault gun has the Heavy (5) trait. This trait means that a character must have a Power of 5 in order to use this weapon in combat.*



When acquiring a weapon in character burning or via a Resources test, the weapon always comes standard with the listed traits. If a player doesn't like the stock traits, he can design his own weapons using the Technology Burner. The weapon technology traits and their definitions are listed below:





## **Blast** Tt. 1 pt.

Blast allows the weapon to do damage to multiple members of the target unit. On a successful Direct Hit shot opportunity, one character takes full damage as determined by the Die of Fate. Another character takes a hit at one less on the Die of Fate and one scale down if vehicular or superstructural scale damage: Vehicular scale blast weapons do human scale damage to the additional target. Superstructural scale weapons do vehicular scale damage to the additional target.

**Technological Traits:** Enhancement (multiple characters), Categorical Limitations: -1 DoF, Reduce one Tolerance category

## **Concealable** Tt. 2 pts

A device with this trait may be worn on the body and easily concealed under clothing. Requires an Ob 2 Observation or Security test or Ob 4 Perception test to spot.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

## **Devastator** Tt. 3 pts

This weapon rips apart armor. An Injury result reduces the target's ATs by 1.

**Technological Traits:** Exotic Weapon

## **Distortion Disrupter** Tt. 5 pts

The distortion disrupter is an anti-vehicular device used to disable a vehicle's distortion drives. A hit on the vehicle's engines, regardless of damage, knocks the distortion drive offline until an Ob 4 Repair test is made.

**Technology Traits:** Obstacle

## **Disrupter** Tt. 6 pts

This weapon is equipped with a biomechanical disrupter. It interferes with the target's motor control. If a Mark result is scored, the victim must pass an Ob 5 Forte test. Margin of failure is applied as obstacle penalty for the remainder of the Firefight/Close Combat/scene.

**Technology Traits:** Obstacle

## **Effector** Tt. 12 pts

The effector locks down and neutralizes technological systems. An incidental hit subtracts 1D from any dice the device offers, a Mark result subtracts 2D, a Superb hit subtracts 3D. When discharging an effector, note which device is being targeted. If the device doesn't have any "dice" per se, like an assault laser, each die of "damage" nullifies two trait points: Incidental takes two, Mark takes four, Superb takes six. The effector damage accumulates with each hit. A technology trait or device knocked out of action requires an Ob 5 Repair (or Armorer if a weapon) test to get the thing functioning again.

**Technology Traits:** Effector, Obstacle

## **Hand-to-Hand** Tt. -1 pt.

This weapon may only be used for Close Combat hand-to-hand attacks.

**Technological Traits:** Categorical Limitations

## THE BURNING WHEEL

### Heater

Tt. -1 pt.

This device tends to overheat. When an *ammo check* is failed, the weapon overheats. He may fire again as per the ammo check rules. The character holding the weapon suffers an H5 injury from the heat.

**Technology Traits:** Close Combat Weapon Damage, Categorical Limitation (no DoF)

### Heavy

Tt. -3 pts

Heavy weapons require a certain Power exponent (listed parenthetically with each weapon) to fire accurately. If the firing character doesn't have the needed Power (including iron bonuses), he suffers a +2 Ob to Close Combat, Suppressive Fire and Direct Fire individual actions per Power point under the requirement.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

### It Burns!

Tt. 2 pts

If hit by a device with this trait, a character suffers damage at one stage less than what was rolled on the DoF once per exchange for three exchanges. The burning may be put out by a chemical retardant or by a character with the Fire Control skill via specialist action in the Firefight.

**Technology Traits:** Close Combat Weapon Enhancement (repeater) x2, Categorical Limitations x2

### Inaccurate

Tt. -2 pts

+1 Ob to shot opportunities earned via Suppressive Fire.

**Technology Traits:** Obstacle

### Indirect

Tt. 8 pts

Weapons with the Indirect trait count Suppressive Fire as *versus* (V) to Observation.

**Technology Traits:** Enhancement

### Intelligent

Tt. 5 pts

Not only can you play games and have conversations with intelligent weapons, they come with their own integral skill. Intelligent weapons have an exponent 4 skill for their class—Vehicular Weapons or Artillery. The weapon can fire using its skill, help its user or be helped itself.

**Technology Trait:** Automation, Trait Limitation

### Intuitive

Tt. 2 pts

Once per Firefight, a character wielding an intuitive weapon may take a +1D advantage to a shot opportunity or Close Combat action.

**Technology Trait:** Advantage, Obscure Conditions

### Jacked

Tt. 5 pts

"Jacking" a weapon shortens the stock and barrel in order to make it more suitable to close quarters fighting. The Jacked trait reduces the Close Combat Weapons Fire penalty for the weapon by one. It also reduces Mark and Superb damage by one step.

**Technology Traits:** Weapon Tweak



## Long Range

Tt. 5 or 8 pts

For purposes of determining range superiority, this weapon counts as the next higher category.

**Technological Traits:** Weapon Tweak

## Megablast

Tt. 6 pts

Megablast is a more powerful iteration of the Blast trait. On a successful hit from a shot opportunity, one character or vehicle takes the damage rolled on the Die of Fate. All other members of the fireteam take the next level of damage down in the same scale. If a Superb is done, they take the Mark result; if a Mark is done, they take an Incidental. If Incidental, no additional damage is done via the Megablast.

**Technological Traits:** Enhancement, Categorical Limitation

## Mounted

Tt. -3 pts

This weapon must be mounted on a vehicle with the *Ordnance* technology trait in order to be fired.

**Technological Traits:** Trait Limitation

## Neurotoxin Needles

Tt. 12 pts

The stet gun fires poison-tipped flechettes. They easily penetrate armor (AT 3 armor and lower doesn't count) and, if a Mark result is scored, they deliver a dose of toxin to the target. The poison causes the target to immediately make a Steel test at +5 Ob.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle, Enhancement, Categorical Limitation x2

## Quick

Tt. 2 pts

Quick weapons gain a +1D advantage against other non-quick weapons in Close Combat.

**Technological Traits:** Advantage, Obscure Conditions

## Recoil

Tt. -2 pts

This weapon is plagued by recoil problems. If a Direct Fire shot opportunity or Suppressive Fire unit action is taken, any Direct Fire *unit actions and individual actions* in the following volley suffer a +1 Ob penalty.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

## Short

Tt. -2 pts

*Other close combat weapons* get a +1D advantage against short weapons when the Hand-to-Hand or Weapons Fire action is chosen in Close Combat.

**Technological Traits:** Broken Limitation, Categorical Limitation

## Superior

Tt. 4 pts

The Superior trait grants the Superior Weaponry bonus in a Firefight against weapons of the same class.

**Technological Traits:** Weapon Tweak

## Tripod Mounts

Tt. 4 pts

Heavy weapons may be mounted on tripods. Tripods have a Power exponent of 8 for the purposes of firing weapons with the Heavy trait. It requires one volley



## THE BURNING WHEEL

to set up a tripod-mounted weapon. During this volley, the character may not use Close Combat, Advance, Flank, Withdraw, Direct or Suppressive Fire. He may Rally, Observe and Take Cover. In order to carry the rig from position to position, the carrying characters must have a total Power exponent equal to the Heavy weapon rating.

**Technological Traits:** Technological Stat, Categorical Limitations, Obscure Circumstances

### Unreliable

Tt. -1 pts

Unreliable weapons grant the opposing unit the Superior Weaponry bonus in Firefight.

**Technological Traits:** Categorical Limitation

### Unwieldy

Tt. -2 pts

+1 Ob to the weapon skill test for individual or Close Combat actions.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

### Wave

Tt. 6 pts

This weapon disperses a wave of energy through the battle space. No matter what its rating—1, 2, 3, or 4—cover counts as level 1 against a wave weapon.

**Technological Traits:** Effector

## Ammunition Capacity

There are seven types of ammunition capacity: single shot, capacitor, cylinder, magazine, case, power pack and engine.

*Single shot* indicates that the weapon may fire once before needing to be reloaded. This designation is typically used for archaic or disposable weapons. *Capacitor* weapons fire from an energy charge that must regenerate between discharges. *Cylinder* weapons use a rotating carrier to hold and load ammunition; jack guns and vehicular-mounted, anti-tank missile launchers use cylinders to carry ammo. *Magazines* are the most common ammunition carrier for ballistic projectile weapons like firearms. They hold a large amount of ammunition and are fast to reload. *Case* carriers are essentially large magazines used for high-caliber assault weapons. *Power packs* fuel the lasers and fusors common to the Iron Empires worlds. The technology is reliable and efficient. Often, rather than running out of ammunition, the danger for power pack-fed weapons is that they overheat. Lastly, weapons with the *engine* designation draw so much power that they must be plugged into the vehicle's power plant.



At the end of an exchange in Firefight, all participating units have to make a weapons skill test to see how well they conserved ammunition during the previous volleys. The ammo capacities of the various weapons are used to determine the bonus for



that ammo check test. The exact number of rounds a soldier fires isn't important in this game. If tracked at all, ammunition is counted in whole magazines or cylinders.

## Ammo Check

After an exchange of Firefight, each player whose team used a Direct Fire, Suppressive Fire or Close Combat Weapons Fire or Grenades action makes a skill test appropriate to his weapon: Close Combat, Assault Weapons, Squad Support Weapons, etc. The more skilled a character is, the more likely he is to have conserved ammunition.

Test the skill at the end of each exchange at Ob 1 and apply the following obstacle penalties:

- +1 Ob for each Direct Fire action his unit performed, even if he didn't get a shot opportunity—he still fired!
- +1 Ob for each Close Combat Weapons Fire (or Grenades if appropriate) action.
- +2 Ob for each Suppressive Fire action his fireteam performed, even if he didn't get a shot opportunity.
- +1 Ob per shot opportunity for individual characters.

*I scripted Suppressive Fire, Observe and Direct Fire. The ammo check for the characters in my unit obstacle is 4: Base 1, +1 for Direct Fire, +2 for Suppressive Fire. For characters who got a shot opportunity during the exchange, the obstacle is increased by another 1.*

## Ammo Capacity Hierarchy

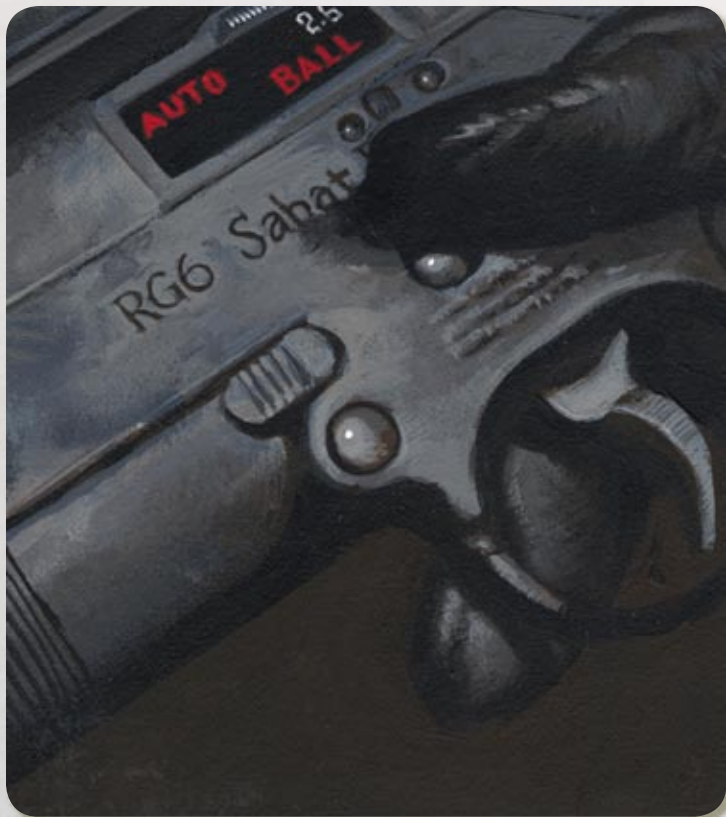
The ammo capacity gives a bonus to the ammo check test so long as the weapon's capacity is relatively larger than your opponent's.

Ammo capacities, greatest to least, are as follows: engine, power pack, case, magazine, capacitor, cylinder, single shot.

- +1D for each ammo capacity increment larger than your opponent's.

*Before I make my ammo check, I compare my weapon to the weapons in the opposing unit. In this case, they don't have anything larger than a magazine. I've got a power pack. That's two steps bigger. I get +2D to my skill test for the ammo check. I roll my 4 Assault Weapons skill plus +2D.*

Firefight



### Failed Ammo Check: Out of Ammo

A failed ammo check indicates the character may not use that weapon for a Direct Fire, Close Combat Weapons Fire or Suppressive Fire action on the *next* volley to be played. If the character is not participating in a Direct Fire, Suppressive Fire or Close Combat action, he may reload his weapon without further penalty. He's just assumed to do it as he's performing his other action.

*I get three successes on six dice. I fail the test. My power pack is overdrawn. Gotta let it cool down. For the first volley of the next exchange, I can't participate in Direct Fire, Suppressive Fire or Close Combat Weapons Fire actions. I can't take a shot opportunity or help. I describe how my guy hunkers down behind a piece of rubble and nervously watches the meter on his power pack, "Come on, come on. Piece of junk!"*





If the situation is really desperate, and there's no time to reload, a character may grab a secondary weapon and keep firing. His other weapon remains depleted until his fireteam stops using the Direct Fire, Suppressive Fire and Close Combat actions.

## Loads

A failed ammo check means you've burned a magazine, case of ammunition or whatever's appropriate. If you're keeping track of an ammunition supply, mark off a cylinder, magazine or case. Single shot weapons burn a round every time they are fired, regardless of ammo checks. The point of the ammo check for them is to determine if you can keep the weapon continuously firing. For power packs, capacitors and engines, the device just momentarily runs out of juice. There's no reloading to be done. You've just got to wait a beat for your the power to come back on line.

If a weapon that is the source of a team's Superior Weaponry bonus completely runs out of ammo, the team loses 1s from their disposition immediately.

### Voluntary Reload

A specialist action success, not including Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire, allows for a weapon reload and for the ammo check obstacle to be reset during the second or third volley. No test is made.

## Successful Ammo Check

If you pass the ammo check, you may participate in Direct Fire, Suppressive Fire and Close Combat actions without interruption or penalty for the next exchange. Note that *the obstacle does not reset on a successful test*. It carries over to the next exchange. Additional penalties accrued are added to the subsequent test.

## Compounding Ammo Loss

The above modifiers compound until an ammo check is failed. If you pass your test this exchange, you must test again next exchange against your previous obstacle plus any new modifiers. Once the character reloads, the obstacle is reset to 1.

*The good thing about passing an ammo check is that I can keep firing. The bad thing is my ammo check obstacle from last exchange rolls over into the next. If my obstacle was 4 in the last exchange and I passed, and I do another Suppressive Fire action this exchange (an Ob 3 ammo check), I've got to pass an Ob 7 Assault Weapons check at the end of the second exchange. Ah well, at least I'll get a challenging test for advancement!*

### Overheating and Pushing It

In general, power packs and capacitors are not depleted by consumption. A failed ammo check doesn't actually knock out a power pack, but it does invoke any traits associated with the power supply. Lasers, for example, have the Heater trait. If they fail an ammo check, they don't run out of ammo: They get too hot to fire and they have to cool down. This counts, for all intents and purposes, as running out of ammo and having to reload.

#### *Pushing It—Firing an Overheated Weapon*

On occasion, a character will need all the firepower he can get his hands on, regardless of risk. In this case, a character may disable safeties and fail-safes and push his weapon beyond its prescribed tolerances. He may fire as normal, but if he fails his next ammo check, he suffers an H7 wound, his weapon fuses into an unusable mass and his power pack shorts—it's junk, throw it away. Note that the character counts as "firing" whenever his team uses the Direct Fire, Suppressive Fire or Close Combat Weapons Fire actions—regardless of whether or not he gets a shot off personally.

### You're Out, Buddy!

After a particularly intense volley—in which both sides have discharged their weapons—either player may spend a fate point to call for an ammo check right then and there in the middle of the exchange. Both players test their skill against their current ammo check obstacle. If either fails, he is subject to the Out of Ammo rules above.

### Who Makes the Ammo Test?

The ammo check is designed to let individuals in the fireteam manage their ammunition. If individual characters fail, they may not participate in Direct Fire or Suppressive Fire actions in the next volley—not even to help. In small teams of individuals, ammo checks are made by each character. Otherwise, the officer makes the test.

For squad support weapons, vehicular weapons and artillery systems, if two characters helped one another with the unit action/individual action, they may help one another with the ammo test. Otherwise, you make your ammo check alone.





## Hand-to-Hand Weapons and Power

In addition to small short-ranged projectile and chemical projection weapons, close combat weapons include fists, swords and other muscle-powered weapons. Muscle-powered close combat weapons have a fixed IMS like other weapons, but they also benefit substantially from a high Power exponent.

- Power 3 gives a -1 penalty to the Die of Fate for hand-to-hand attacks.
- Power 4 or 5 gives no bonus or penalty.
- Power 6 or 7 grants +1 to the Die of Fate for hand-to-hand attacks.
- Power 8 or higher grants +2 to the DoF for hand-to-hand attacks.

### Throwing a Punch

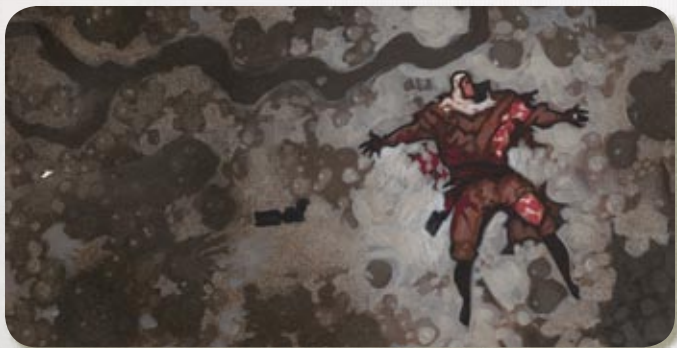
If a character is forced to throw a bare-fisted punch in hand-to-hand, his IMS in the human scale is as follows: Incidental is half his Power exponent rounded up. Mark is equal to his Power exponent. Superb is 1.5 times his Power exponent, rounded down. Armored fists use the Improvised Weapon stats. Yes, this means that a Mukhadish with a Power 8 is better off just belting someone than he is using an axe or a rock.

## Weapons Procedure

1. Take a shot opportunity via Direct Fire, Suppressive Fire or Close Combat Weapons Fire, Hand-to-Hand or Grenades action.
2. If the obstacle to hit is met, roll one die and consult the Die of Fate chart for the appropriate weapon type. If the obstacle is exceeded, add +1 to the die roll. If the obstacle is doubled, add +2. If it's tripled, add +3.
3. Each Die of Fate result for the weapon—Incidental, Mark or Superb—has a damage code attached to it—H4, V7, S12, etc. Take that code and consult the target's physical tolerances. Note the hit at the proper coordinate.
4. After an exchange in which you fired, be sure to make an ammo check for your weapon.







# ANATOMY OF INJURY

## *Injury, Treatment and Recovery*

Characters are forever getting shot, stabbed, burned by fusor fire and showered with shrapnel. All of these recreational activities take their toll. They grind the characters down until they are forced to give up the ghost. The Anatomy of Injury mechanics describe just how long characters can go before they've got to quit.

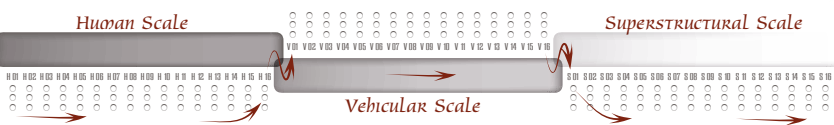
Being injured is a two to three step process. You get shot or stabbed and suffer an injury. After that, you either get treatment for the injury or don't. After treatment (or not), the player makes a Forte test for his character to see how he recovers from the injury.

## *Physical Tolerances*

The physical well-being of a character is represented by his Physical Tolerances Scale (PTS). When a character is injured, hurt or debilitated, the degree of the effect is determined by where it falls on his PTS.

### **Scale of Damage**

There are three scales for physical tolerances: human, vehicular and superstructural. Each scale is divided into 16 parts, and each lies end-to-end against the next higher scale. The scales are denoted by their initial before the incremental numbers: H, V, S.




## Taking the Hit

Every time a character is hit with a weapon, plot the IMS (Incidental/Mark/Superb) damage on the character's physical tolerances scale. If the injury falls on a tolerance—that's what the character feels. If the mark falls between two, then the player notes the effect for the leftmost or lesser wound.

*To mark an H5 wound: "H" tells you that the wound falls in the human section of the PTS and "5" tells you to mark the circle beneath the number 5.*



 Each new wound is considered to be a separate entity and is not “added” to existing injuries. The *effects* of wounds are compiled as an overall penalty for the character.

*If a character is injured twice and suffers an H5 and an H8 wound, each is marked separately on the PTS. Their effects are added together and to any wound modifiers he has already taken.*

Once the wound is noted, consult the Anatomy of Injury chart in the center of the physical tolerances scale to determine the effects.

## Human Scale

**Wound Effects:** 2x Superficial = -10, 1x Injury = -10, 1x Maimed = -30, 1x Mortal = Out

H 01	H 02	H 03	H 04	H 05	H 06	H 07	H 08	H 09	H 10	H 11	H 12	H 13	H 14	H 15	H 16
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<i>Sup</i>				<i>Inj</i>		<i>Mai</i>		<i>MW</i>							

## Effects of Wounds

Wounds impose penalties on the character. These penalties can last for a single scene or a whole phase. If the character fails his recovery test, then the penalties can be permanent!

**Superficial Wounds, See Description**

Superficial Wounds are small injuries that cause sudden, sharp and eye-watering amounts of pain. However, the shock from these wounds quickly fades. One Superficial Wound imposes no penalty. Suffering another Superficial Wound counts as an Injury, -1D. Every two additional Superficials count as an additional -1D.

Superficial Wounds that haven't been compounded into an Injury disappear at the end of the scene in which they are taken.





## **Injured, -1D**

Injuries are bad burns, fractures and cracking knocks; broken toes, a broken nose, a missing ear or even the pain from an extremely hard gut punch; broken arms, ribs and legs; yanked muscles, twisted ligaments, missing digits and massive cuts. Non-fatal injuries that cause pain and debilitation subtract -1D from the character's abilities. See Wounded Dice below.

## **Maimed, -3D**

Being Maimed means the character has suffered shattered bones, horrible burns, torn limbs and internal bleeding, missing limbs, shattered ribs, third-degree burns and disembowelment. A character who is Maimed subtracts -3D from all of his abilities. See Wounded Dice below.

## **Mortal Wounds, Dying**

Mortal Wounds instantly knock a character flat they come in a variety of flavors, from decapitation, to a shot in the heart, to a good knock on the skull. There is no die penalty—the character is down.

## **Left of Superficial**

Wounds that fall to the left of the Superficial marker on the physical tolerances scale are considered bruises, scrapes and cuts that do not affect the performance of the character. They will heal on their own without any trouble.

## **Right of Mortal**

Any damage that registers on or to the right of the character's Mortal Wound tolerance is considered a fatal blow. If a character has a Mortal Wound tolerance of H10 and he takes a Superb hit from a rifle, a H13, he is killed. In fact, even a Superb hit from a handgun—H10—would lay him low. See the sections Mortal Wounds and Recovery for more on surviving this.



If a character with human scale tolerances is struck by a vehicular scale weapon, the wound counts as *Mortal*. Same for superstructural scale weapons. This is a violent universe full of incredibly destructive weapons.

Wound penalty dice are subtracted from stats, skills and Steel. The penalties from various wounds are cumulative. Mortal Wound, Circles and Resources are not affected. Do not refactor Mortal Wound or skill roots due to wounded stats. Forte is not affected for the purposes of recovery.

**Wound Effects:** 2x Superficial = -10, 1x Injury = -10, 1x Maimed = -30, 1x Mortal= Out!

H 01	H 02	H 03	H 04	H 05	H 06	H 07	H 08	H 09	H 10	H 11	H 12	H 13	H 14	H 15	H 16
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<i>Sup</i>				<i>Inj</i>		<i>Mai</i>		<i>MW</i>							

A skill that is reduced to zero dice from wound penalties cannot be used by the player—it can't be tested, used to help or used as a FoRK.

A character who absorbs enough wounded dice to reduce one of his stats to zero is considered *incapacitated*. The pain and trauma overwhelms him and he collapses.

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If a physical stat—Power, Forte, Agility or Speed—falls to zero, the character is rolling around drooling in pain. He may still observe and even think. Maybe he can watch his enemy put the gun to his head!

If the character is incapacitated by Perception or Will being reduced to zero, he is considered unconscious.

### ***Incapacitation Is Not Death***

Incapacitation is not a Mortal Wound or death. However, Injury and Maimed results will bleed, causing further damage to the character. See Bleeding Out on the next page.

## ***Steel and Pain***

Any time a character suffers a -1D or greater injury, he must make a Steel test. The severity of the wound is subtracted from Steel before the test is made. This includes the second Superficial Wound (equaling -1D).



Hesitation caused from pain takes effect immediately, interrupting anything the character was doing. If a character hesitates in a Firefight, he either loses his next action in the following volley or he's out of the fight. See Steel in Firefight.

## ***Mortal Wounds***

When a character suffers an injury that meets or exceeds his Mortal Wound tolerance, he's in trouble. The wound instantly drops him—stops him dead in his tracks and sends him tumbling.



At this stage, he is considered to be dying, but we'll give him the benefit of the doubt. The hitch is that he needs help. Without immediate help, he passes on. Help starts from within.

### **Will to Live**

If a player character is felled by a Mortal Wound, he has the option of declaring that his character cannot be saved—by any means, ever—and allowing him to pass on. The player simply states, “He doesn't have the will to live.”



If a player wishes his character to continue on he must do two things: first, state “He has the will to live,” and then spend a persona point of artha. If a player doesn't have a persona point, the character passes on regardless of his wishes. Cruel fate has taken its toll. If the persona point is spent on the Will to Live, then the



character may receive treatment and hopefully recover. See the Artha Wheel chapter for how to earn persona points, and see below for Treatment.

### Bleeding Out

If not tended quickly, wounds in Burning Empires will bleed out. This can cause further debilitation and die penalties, and can also result in the character's death.

**Injury**— If a character suffers three Injuries, he bleeds as if he were Maimed. See below. Otherwise, Injuries don't bleed out.

**Maimed**— If a character who is Maimed is not treated in the next building scene, his wound progresses to Mortal. If a wound bleeds from Maimed to Mortal, the character is considered to have taken a Mortal Wound. See below.

**Mortal**— A Mortally Wounded character must be treated in the scene in which he was injured—usually via a Medic! specialist action.

### Treatment

Treatment allows a character to better recover from his wounds. In order to treat a wounded character, the attending character (or drone) must have the Field Dressing or Surgery skill.

#### Field Dressing

Field Dressing is a down and dirty medical skill meant to patch up wounded characters and get them back on their feet.

##### *Field Dressing Treatment Obstacles*

Injury, Ob 3. Maimed, Ob 6. Mortal, Ob 10.

#### Surgery

The Surgery skill is used to put a character back together again after he's been pulled apart, punctured or chewed up.

##### *Surgery Treatment Obstacles*

Injury, Ob 2. Maimed, Ob 4. Mortal, Ob 6.

#### Treatment Time

Treating an Injury can be performed within a Firefight using the Medic! specialist action. Otherwise, all treatment requires a building scene.



## Treatment Stops Bleeding

Treatment stops the character from bleeding out.

## Treatment Aids Recovery

Extra successes from a treatment test are added as advantage dice to the character's Forte test for recovery. If the treatment test fails, the character must make his Forte test unaided.

*Dro's Kerrn, General Leaf, is Maimed during a Firefight. Pete quickly frames a building scene in which Leaf is hurried off to a medical facility where his doctor awaits. Pete tests his surgeon's 5 Surgery skill plus help and FoRKs against Ob 4. He gets five successes. General Leaf is saved from bleeding to death and gets +1D to his Recovery test. "Excellent," crows Pete. He announces to the GM that he will now hull General Leaf and pop a worm into his froggy head.*

*"I'm not a frog!" protests Dro.*

## Staunching the Flow

If a player believes he isn't competent enough to tend his injured comrade, he may use his skills to stop the bleeding and stabilize him until better treatment can be had. The obstacle for staunching the flow is one less than the obstacle to treat the wound. Success indicates the injured character will survive an additional scene. If he does not get full treatment for his injury after that scene, he bleeds out as per the standard rules.

*Rich's Cotar Fomas is Maimed during a Firefight. Rich's stentor has a 4 Field Dressing. There's no way the stentor can patch him back up, so Rich has his stentor test his Field Dressing to staunch the flow. Treating a Maimed result with Field Dressing is an Ob 6. However, stopping him from bleeding to death drops the obstacle by one to an Ob 5 test. With his field kit, some FoRKs and artha, he just might make it.*

## Recovery

After treatment has been applied, test the character's Forte stat to determine how well he recovers. If he passes the test, he'll gain his wounded dice back. If he fails, he'll gain a trait and keep some of the injury penalty. Forte is not affected by the wound for the purposes of this test.

### Recovering from Superficial Wounds

Superficial Wounds that have not been compounded into an Injury do not require a Recovery test. Recovery is considered automatic.

### Recovering from Injury—Ob 2

Recovering from an Injury requires an Ob 2 Forte test. If the character sustained two Injuries, it's Ob 3. If the character sustained three, use the rules for recovering from a Maimed result.



This recovery test is made at the end of the maneuver or after the character has been treated, whichever comes first. If successful, the wounded die is restored. If failed, the character earns a new *trait* that either permanently reduces a skill by 1D, increases hesitation by 1 or increases future recovery obstacles by one. The GM may decide what is appropriate. If the GM determines a skill must be reduced, the player may choose the skill (no wises). In addition, the player may name and describe his new trait, like: Old War Wound, Knotty Scar, Missing Finger, Jumpy or Gun Shy.

### Recovering from Being Maimed—Ob 4

Recovering from a Maimed result requires an Ob 4 Forte test. The recovery test is made at the end of the maneuver or after the character has been treated, whichever comes first.



If the recovery test is failed, the character earns the Maimed *trait*: subtract a total of three dice from his character. 1D must come from a stat, the other two dice are subtracted from skills (not wises) of the player's choosing. The damaged stat's maximum rating is also reduced by one.

#### *Recovery Time from Being Maimed*

A Maimed result requires either two maneuvers or downtime to heal completely. The character is down 3D for the first maneuver. For the second maneuver he's down 1D. After that, the character operates as normal. If downtime is generated while the character recovering, the -3D fades before the next maneuver begins.





If the recovery test is failed, he suffers the effects of the Maimed injury and the Maimed trait for two maneuvers. After the second maneuver, the effects of the Maimed injury fade, but the Maimed trait remains.

*Leaf was Maimed in a previous scene. He received treatment and now makes his test to recover. Dro tests his 7 Forte, +1D from the extra success during treatment—8D total. His obstacle is 4. He fails. He earns the Maimed trait. Dro opts to lose 1D from his Forte and to reduce Leaf's Close Combat and Intimidation skills. He took that injury hard! In addition to the Maimed trait, he'll be at -3D to all of his stats, skills and Steel for two maneuvers!*



## Recovering from a Mortal Wound—Ob 6

In order to recover from a Mortal Wound, a character must first be treated with Surgery and spend a persona point for the Will to Live.

After that, it is an Ob 6 Forte test to recover from a Mortal Wound.

### *Treatment and Recovery Successful*

If both the treatment and recovery tests are successful for a Mortal Wound, treat the wound like a Maimed result for purposes of recovery time.

### *Treatment Successful, Recovery Failed*

If recovery is failed, the character is out for the remainder of the phase. He earns the “Nearly Died on/in...” trait: “Nearly Died on Omac” or “Nearly Died in the Battle of Agra.” In addition, the margin of failure for the recovery test is subtracted from his stats. The player may choose which stats are affected and by how much. The maximums of the stats affected are reduced by a like amount.

### *Treatment Failed, Recovery Successful*

If treatment fails, but recovery is successful, the character earns the “They Never Put Me Back Together Right” trait. This trait forces the player to permanently subtract a total of three dice from his character. 1D must come from a stat, while the other two dice are subtracted from skills of the player's choosing. The damaged stat's maximum



rating is also reduced by one. In addition, his Mortal Wound tolerance is reduced by one. The character may come back into play after two maneuvers or downtime.

## *Treatment Failed, Recovery Failed*

If both treatment and recovery fail, the character dies and is out of the game.

## Medical Technology

### Field Kits

Tt. 2pts or 8 pts

Zero or sub index field kits count as tools for Field Dressing. Low index or high index field kits count as tools and have a 4 Field Dressing skill. Placed on the character's body, they can perform the treatment themselves. Alternately, they may help or be helped by another character.

*Technological Traits:* Tools and Advantage or Automation

### Labs/Clinics

Tt. 4 pts or 9 pts

Sub or zero index labs/clinics count as workshops for Surgery, Field Dressing and Eugenics skill tests. Choose one. Low or high index labs/clinics count as workshops and have exponent 5 skills in their chosen specialization. They may make tests themselves, help or be helped.

*Technological Traits:* Tools and Advantage or Automation

### Medical Evacuation Vehicles

Tt. 7 pts or 12 pts

Zero or sub index medical evacuation vehicles (MEVs) count as tools and add +2D to Field Dressing skill tests to treat an injury. Low or high index MEVs count as workshops and have a 6 Field Dressing or Surgery skill. If a character is placed within the vehicle, the MEV may perform the treatment itself, help or be helped by another character.

*Technological Traits:* Tools and Advantage or Automation

### Operating Theaters

Tt. 10 pts or 14 pts

Sub and zero index operating theaters count as workshops and provide +2D to Surgery. Unless the hospital is understaffed, besieged or overwhelmed, there are usually at least two other staff members with exponent 4 skills ready to help. Low and high index operating theaters have an 8 Surgery skill. They may perform the treatment test themselves, help or be helped.

*Technological Traits:* Tools and Advantage or Automation

### Nanotechnological Surgery

Tt. 28 pts

Nanotechnological Surgery is limited to low or high index worlds only. It's more commonly known as "foam." Foam has a 12 Surgery skill and the tools to use it. It also has the Inhuman Skill trait and thus its 6s are open-ended. It may *not* be helped or help another character. This is not the same as the Foam Reservoir trait in Iron. See the Iron Traits heading in Armor and Iron.

*Technological Traits:* Tools, Automation, Categorical Limitation

## Effector-Field Medical Drone Tt. 44pts

Effector-field medical drones (EFMDs) are products of the old Federated Empire—the glory days. About as big as a small dog and shaped like an old suitcase, they're equipped with grav/pressors and finely tuned force field generators. They are sent with troops into battle. During the fighting, EFMDs use minutely controlled quantum energy fields and sub-atomic waveform patterns to stitch their charges back together—very efficient and neat, never a risk of infection. EFMDs are restricted to high index worlds. They have a 20 Surgery skill and the Inhuman Skill trait (6s are always open-ended). They may divide their dice and work on multiple characters at the same time.

**Technological Traits:** Tools, Automation, Inhuman Skill

### Anatomy of Injury in Brief

- The damage code of a weapon is a coordinate on the target character's physical tolerances scale (PTS).
- Mark the coordinate listed under the IMS damage result generated for the weapon.
- The coordinate will fall on or to the left of one of the tolerances: Superficial, Injured, Maimed and Mortal Wound. Apply the effect of that wound to the character's stats and skills
- One Superficial has no effect. A second Superficial counts as an Injury. Every second Superficial counts as an Injury.
- An Injury subtracts -1D from stats, skills and Steel. A Maimed results subtracts -3D from stats, skills and Steel.
- A Mortal Wound knocks the character out.
- Wounds bleed: Three Injuries bleed as a Maimed result. A Maimed result bleeds to a Mortal Wound if not treated in a building scene.
- After being wounded, the character may be treated with either the Field Dressing or Surgery skill. Single Superficial wounds require no treatment. Field Dressing obstacles: Injury, Ob 3. Maimed, Ob 6. Mortal, Ob 10. Surgery obstacles: Injury, Ob 2. Maimed, Ob 4. Mortal, Ob 6.
- Extra successes from treatment count as advantage dice for recovery.
- After being treated, or if no treatment is forthcoming (and the character hasn't bled to death), make a Forte test to recover from the wound. Recovery obstacles: Injury, Ob 2. Maimed, Ob 4. Mortal Wound, Ob 6.







## ARMOR AND IRON



Personal protection—armor—comes in two main forms in the Iron Empires: either iron or non-iron. Iron refers to a reinforced, armored exoskeleton that renders its wearer nearly as powerful as a tank. Non-iron armor, while occasionally possessing powered subsystems, amounts to heavy, protective clothing in comparison.

In the game, armor modifies how a character is affected by weapons. It raises a character's physical tolerances. So what might kill him when unarmored would only injure him while armored.

### Armored Tolerances

Armor is rated by how much it increases the physical tolerances of its wearer. This rating is called *armored tolerances* (AT). It raises the physical tolerances of a character by the listed value.

Ballistic helmet and vest	AT 1
Ballistic body armor	AT 2
Anvil	AT 3
Iron	AT 4

*If a character with a Superficial wound tolerance of H3 dons a ballistic helmet and vest (AT 1), his Superficial increases to H4. All other wound tolerances are likewise increased.*

*If that character then takes an H3 wound, he is unaffected—it is below his Superficial tolerance. If his Mortal Wound is H10, the armor raises it to H11. An H10 wound would then be a Maimed result, rather than Mortal.*



## Armor Locations

Armor is not location specific. Since it raises the character's physical tolerances, it's assumed to protect the vitals. The location on the body of incoming fire is determined by the severity of the damage of the hit. The more damage caused to the target, the more vital the area that was hit.

## Filling Out Your ATs

The human physical tolerances scale on the character sheet has two tracks. One is for the raw physical tolerances. The other is for the adjusted armored tolerances.

### Human Scale

Wound Effects: 2x Superficial = -10. 1x Injury = -10. 1x Maimed = -30. 1x Mortal= Out!

H01	H02	H03	H04	H05	H06	H07	H08	H09	H10	H11	H12	H13	H14	H15	H16
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<i>Sup</i>				<i>Inj</i>				<i>Mai</i>				<i>MW</i>			
A01	A02	A03	A04	A05	A06	A07	A08	A09	A10	A11	A12	A13	A14	A15	A16
<i>Index 5 Iron (AT 4): Sup</i>				<i>Inj</i>				<i>Mai</i>				<i>MW</i>			

## Non-Iron Armor

### Ballistic Body Armor

Ballistic body armor typically comes in the form of helmets and vests made of high-tensile synthetic cloth woven over plastic and ceramic plating. These materials are capable of withstanding low-velocity ballistic missiles—chemically discharged ballistic hand guns, for example. They cannot adequately protect from the high-intensity energy weapons of the modern battlefield. As such, ballistic body armor is seen primarily among backwater planetary armed forces, planetary law enforcement and civilian military enthusiasts. For example, the Landwehr forces of the Karsan League are outfitted with full suits of ballistic body armor.





## Anvil Armor

Anvil armor—anvil, for short—is heavy body armor used by military and poor nobility on low index worlds. It is the *de facto* protection for the majority of soldiers in the Iron Empires. In fact, it gets its name from the Anvil Lord's troops, for whom it is standard gear. In the battle against the Vaylen on Taramai, commanders Sheva and Vienne both wore customized anvil in the style of their house, Sheva. It consists of high-test ceramics and

plastics, integrated into a basic environmental system and user feedback interface. Anvil is generally EVA-capable, and has survival supplies, light amplification, comm and other features that aid the wearer.



Anvil armor is not available on sub index worlds, only on zero, low and high index.

## Anvil Traits

### EVA

8 pts

Anvil armor is sealed and pressurized, and therefore capable of extra-vehicular activity (EVA). It can protect its wearer from hard vacuum for one Infection maneuver's worth of time in the game. If still in vacuum after the maneuver's end, the character suffers an Injury. He suffers an additional Injury for each scene he remains in vacuum.

**Technological Traits:** Enhancement

### WISE

3 pts

Anvil armor often includes vision enhancement technology (WISE) like low-light amplification and thermographic imaging. WISE grants +1D to Observation rolls for detecting Infiltration and during contact.

**Technological Traits:** Advantage

### Comm

8 pts

Individual anvil troopers are connected to the battle command network via their comm. Comm allows instantaneous communication of mission status, location, supply and vital signs.

**Technological Traits:** Enhancement







## Anvil Limitations

### Cumbersome

-2 pts

Characters without the Anvil Trained trait suffer +1 Ob to all actions while in anvil. The Anvil Trained trait negates this penalty.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle, Trait Limitation

### Constrained View

-2 pts

All helmets cause a +1 Ob penalty to Perception, Recon and Observation (except against Infiltration and during contact). Characters may remove their helmets to negate this penalty. Reduce ATs by one while the helmet is off.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

## Iron

In ages past, it was a warrior's sword or his steed that marked him as a member of the elite class. In the Hanrilke era, this mark of distinction comes in the form of a mechanized, articulated, armored, fusion-powered, neurologically-controlled exoskeleton. In the vernacular of the age, it is simply called *iron*.



Iron is a powerful tool of war. With it, individual soldiers wield the destructive power of a squad of lesser-equipped soldiers: They can withstand all but the most devastating attacks, survive crippling injury, carry heavy weapons and deploy with great rapidity and violence. However, utilizing such a tool is complicated and requires years of training and practice, and maintaining iron is prohibitively expensive. Therefore, its use is confined strictly to the upper echelons of the warrior caste in the Iron Empires, the so-called Lords-Pilot.

In order to properly operate and function in iron, the soldier must be rigorously trained and have the neural interface called a crucis. In game terms, you must have both the *Iron Trained* and *Corvus and Crucis* traits. Iron is available on low or high index worlds.





Iron provides its pilot with a number of benefits other armor does not: sensors, comm, signals warfare routines, automated medical units, built-in power for outboard weapons systems, power-assisted force feedback articulation and a dual layer of protection that primarily renders the iron highly resistant to small arms fire and secondarily able to withstand anti-vehicular fire.

## Index 4 Iron

AT 4. Technology Traits: Massive, Cumbersome, Constrained View, Clumsy, EVA, Hardened and

Shielded, Targeter, Avatar 3, Shielded Comm, Foam Reservoir, Fusion Pack, Power Assist.

## Index 5 Iron

AT 4. Technology Traits: Massive, Cumbersome, Constrained View, Clumsy, EVA, Hardened and Shielded, Integral Targeter, Avatar 4, Shielded Comm, Foam Reservoir, Fusion Pack, Power Assist.

# Iron Traits

## Avatar

Tt. 12 or 14 pts

Avatar refers to the detection and electronic warfare suite built into iron. Avatar acts as an exponent 3 (index 4) or 4 (index 5) skill for both Signals and Sensors. The avatar may act on its own, help or be helped by its wearer.

*Technological Traits:* Automation, Signals and Sensors Tools

## EVA

Tt. 8 pts

Iron armor is sealed and pressurized, and therefore capable of extra-vehicular activity (EVA). It can protect its wearer from hard vacuum for one Infection maneuver's worth of time in the game. If still in vacuum after the maneuver's over, the character suffers an Injury. He suffers an additional Injury for each scene he remains in vacuum.

*Technological Traits:* Enhancement

## Foam Reservoir

Tt. 27 pts

The Foam Reservoir is an inbuilt nanotechnological surgery unit. It has a 12 Surgery skill, 6s are open-ended. It may not be helped or help another character. As soon as the character is injured, the foam floods the interior of the iron



and begins treatment. The Reservoir has 6 obstacle points capacity. Tending a wound drains the Reservoir by points equal to the treatment obstacle: Injuries subtract two points, a Maimed result subtracts four points and a Mortal Wound six. The reservoir regenerates one point per maneuver. If drained completely (due to treating a Mortal Wound or another combination of obstacles), the foam cannot regenerate or treat wounds. Therefore to restore his foam, the lord-pilot must ask a peer to grant him a boon of foam so that his may replicate. The lord-pilot now has one point of foam from which his Reservoir can replenish itself. The donor temporarily loses one point of foam.

**Technological Traits:** Automation, Inhuman Skill, Categorical Limitations

### Fusion Pack

11 8 pts

Iron contains an inbuilt fusion power plant. It provides ample power for the suit's own operations and allows the wearer to plug any power pack-run weapon into his suit. If the weapon overheats, be sure to use the armored tolerances of the character to determine any damage effects. If the player has his character "push it" and burns out his power pack, he'll burn out his suit's power systems as well. A burned-out suit of iron is a coffin—none of the iron traits function.

**Technological Traits:** Enhancement

### Hardened and Shielded

14 pts

Iron is hardened and internally shielded by a process closely guard by most senior artificers in the Iron Empires. The shielding protects its wearer in a tremendous capacity: Any *vehicular-scale* damage that strikes the iron is reduced to *human scale*. Thus, a V10 hit from a fusor would count as an H10 against iron. Instead of being annihilated, the wearer would merely be injured. No other technology in the galaxy possesses this quality!

**Technological Traits:** Enhancement, PITAP, More Powerful

### Integral Targeter

9 pts

The integral targeting system grants +1D to Tactics for the Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire unit actions, in addition to +1D to the Assault Weapons and Squad Support Weapons skills when taking a shot opportunity.

**Technological Traits:** Advantage x3

### Power Assist

8 pts

Iron adds +1D to Power and Speed. Do not change the character's Mortal Wound tolerance.

**Technological Traits:** Advantage x2

### Shielded Comm

3 pts

Enemy units trying to gain Superior Comm over a unit with Shielded Comm in a Firefight suffer +1 Ob penalty to their Signals test.

**Technological Traits:** Obstacle

### Targeter

6 pts

The basic iron targeting system adds +1D to the Assault Weapons and Squad Support Weapons skills when taking a shot opportunity.

**Technological Traits:** Advantage x2



## Iron Limitations

### Massive

Tt. -14 pts

Iron is utterly unconcealable in social circumstances. No trench coat can hide this stuff. It's +8 Ob to Inconspicuous and +4 Ob to Infiltration tests made in conditions requiring quiet or a low profile. This penalty doesn't necessarily apply in battle, just to being quiet.

*Technological Traits:* Limitation: Obstacle

### Complex

Tt. -8 pts

Characters without the Iron Trained trait may not operate iron at all—even if they have a crucis.

*Technological Traits:* Trait Limitation

### Clumsy

Tt. -2 pts

Iron-clad characters suffer a +1 Ob to all Speed and Speed-rooted tests, like Zero G or Physical Training. Infiltration is penalized under the Massive trait.

*Technological Traits:* Limitation: Obstacle

### Constrained View

Tt. -2 pts

All iron helmets cause a +1 Ob penalty to Perception, Observation and Recon tests. Characters may remove their helmets to negate this penalty. Reduce ATs by one while the helmet is off.

*Technological Traits:* Limitation: Obstacle

## Armor Damage



Armor can be damaged by an attack from a weapon with armor-destroying qualities, like the Devastator trait. If it is damaged, reduce its armored tolerance level by one.





# VEHICLES

## *Vehicles as Technology*

In science fiction roleplaying games, vehicles exist as one of three things: as color, as agents of another technology or as discrete technology in and of themselves.

### **Vehicles as Color**

More often than not, a vehicle is just part of the description of the scene. It's how you arrive or exit, or it's the backdrop for the scene and nothing more.

If there's no conflict surrounding the vehicle, there's no need for vehicle stats or rolls for piloting or anything else concerning the vehicle. Even if a vehicle is used to describe how the players overcome or bypass some environmental hazard—getting across the ocean, getting up to the space station—there's often no need to roll for anything. It's just part of the description of the scene.

### **Vehicles as Agents of Technology**

The next most common use of a vehicle is as a carrier or agent for another piece of technology: weapons, cargo, sensors, troops or even other vehicles. In this case, it's the technology the vehicle is carrying that is important. Any die rolls, either to generate technology or to use it, are made for the piece in question. The rest of the vehicle remains in the background as color.

### **Vehicles as Technology**

Vehicles may also be discrete items of technology. In roleplaying games, vehicles as technology are used in three circumstances: to overcome some massive environmental impediment important to

## THE BURNING WHEEL

the situation, to pursue another vehicle or character or to engage in mechanized combat. The stats and rules provided in this chapter discuss the use of vehicles in each of these three capacities.



### Journey or Ride?

There are two other facets of using vehicles in this game, the journey and the ride. Is the travel or the material qualities of the vehicle itself the focus of the situation?

#### The Journey

In a journey, the vehicle is a required bit of color to make the story go, but beyond that it serves no purpose. The journey is always reliant on the pilot's skill.

*In order to cross an arctic expanse of mountains, the players decide they need an atmospheric aircraft. They are trying to beat another team to the frozen research base on the far side of the mountains. The aircraft acts as necessary color, but it is the pilot's skill that will determine who arrives first.*

In circumstances like this, where the group is undertaking a vital journey, a character makes a skill test to get the group where it needs to go.

#### The Ride

The ride relies on the vehicle. In fact, acquiring the right kind of vehicle for the ride is the crucial aspect of the conflict. Once that's done, the





vehicle does all of the work while the characters sit back and enjoy the show.

In this case, a technology Resources test to acquire the vehicle, a Circles test to find a pilot or a wise test to find just the right kind of vessel is what's needed. If that test is successfully made, the trip itself can be comprised of a few lines of description. Best to just cut to the action!



It's important to make a distinction here between narration and actual conflict. Suiting up, jumping into the grav sled and heading out to a local crash site is narration and although critical, it requires no roll. Heading into a highly irradiated zone to retrieve the black box recorder of a downed Vaylen finger requires the right kind of ride and a roll to back it up because there's a conflict there: Without the right kind of technology, the recorder can't be recovered. Recovering it will change the direction of the story.

## Vehicles

# Vehicle Specifications

Vehicles have 13 stats, some of them are color, most are mechanical. They are as follows: Type, Tech Index, Capacity, Tech Resources, Profile, Integrity, Control, Signals, Sensors, Ordnance, Vehicular Speed, Security and Structural Tolerances.

## Vehicle Type

The Vehicle Type describes what kind of machine it is, so we know what skills to use for operating the machine, which penalties to apply and which situations the vehicle is appropriate for. In general, surface vehicles use Driving, atmospheric/aeronautic vehicles use Pilot and spacecraft use Helm.

## Tech Resources and Tech Index

Vehicles are listed with a Tech Resources obstacle and a Tech Index. The obstacle indicates the difficulty of the Tech Resources test to acquire the vehicle.



The index is used as a guideline for acquiring the vehicle in play and during character burning. If a vehicle is appropriate to your index, it may be acquired. If not, it may only be acquired under special circumstances.

## Capacity

Capacity is a description of what and who the vehicle can carry. It is for descriptive purposes and has no mechanical impact on the game.

### Profile

This stat describes the overall bulk of the ship and its energy output. The Profile is the number of advantage dice given to the Sensors of an opposing character trying to detect the vehicle. See the Sensors section of the Security, Signals and Sensors chapter.

### Integrity

Integrity describes how tough and durable the overall structure of the vehicle is. It is the equivalent of the Forte stat. Dice lost from damage are subtracted from this stat. If Integrity reaches zero, the vehicle breaks down—it's incapacitated.

### Control

Each vehicle has a rating describing how difficult or how easy it is to control when piloting or driving it. If the Control stat is listed as +1 Ob or +2 Ob, apply the penalty to Helm, Pilot or Driving tests. The vehicle drives like a boat in molasses. If the Control stat is a plain number, add that as advantage to Helm/Pilot/Driving tests. If the Control stat is a —, there is no bonus or penalty.

### Ordnance

Ordnance describes what type of weaponry, if any, a vehicle can carry. If a vehicle lists Ordnance as “none,” it may not mount vehicular weapons or artillery. If listed with a weapon type, the vehicle carries weapon systems of that type appropriate to the planetary index. Vehicular and Artillery systems also mount secondary systems of the next lower weapon classification—squad support or vehicular weapons. The number that accompanies the Ordnance trait indicates how many Direct Fire shot opportunities may be assigned to this vehicle's main weapons systems in one Direct Fire volley.

*Artillery (2) means the vehicle has two weapons that may fire—one die allocated buys a shot opportunity, a second die may be allocated to get another shot opportunity for this vehicle.*

### Vehicular Speed

Vehicular Speed represents how fast a vehicle can travel. It is a stat like Speed and is rolled in versus tests involving chase and pursuit. There are three hierarchical grades of Vehicular Speed: Surface Speed, Atmospheric Speed and Space Speed. (Human or animal Speed is what characters have. It's at the bottom of the scale). *Vehicular Speed always counts as a skill when tested against a Speed of lesser rank.* Thus the lower-graded Speed stats suffer a double obstacle penalty when



competing against a higher-graded Speed. If one of the Speed stats is two grades higher than the other, the higher Speed wins any versus test automatically—there's no contest.

*A character with a 6 Speed racing against a ground car with a 6 Speed suffers a double obstacle penalty to his Speed dice. Vehicular Surface Speed is higher on the Speed scale than Human Speed. That same ground car (Speed 6) racing against an atmospheric grav sled with a Speed 5 would suffer a double obstacle penalty because Surface Speed is lower in the Speed hierarchy than Atmospheric Speed.*

Vehicles

## Signals, Sensors and Security

Signals are the communications and electronic warfare capabilities of the vehicle. Sensors are the vehicle's instrumentation and detection apparatus. Security indicates whether or not the vehicle has intrusion-prevention devices and internal security for the crew.

Tools or Manned indicates the system acts as tools for the skill in question. It may not act independently of a user. Advantage or Manned AIC indicates the system acts as tools and grants a bonus to the user's skill. Automation indicates the system has the appropriate skill at the listed exponent and tools to use it. Automated systems may act on their own, help or be helped. The mechanics for signals, sensors and security are described in the Security Systems, Signals and Sensors chapter.

## Structural Tolerances (ST)

Structural Tolerances are the vehicle equivalent of the PTS. Vehicles have four tolerances: Surface (Sur) damage, Breached (Br), Damaged (Dam) and Destroyed (Des). Surface damage is the equivalent of Superficial wounds—two Surface hits equal a Breach. Breaches are the Injured equivalent for vehicles, -1D. Damaged is the equivalent of a Maimed result, -3D. Destroyed is the vehicle's Mortal Wound. The dice lost due to Surface, Breach and Damage are subtracted from the Integrity and Speed stats (described below). If destroyed, none of the traits attached to the vehicle are operational any longer.

# Vehicle Templates

The Technology Burner gives Resources obstacles for buying the vehicle templates listed below. Players may add additional technological traits to their vehicle when it is purchased—like sensors or signals. Add the additional trait costs into the total technology Resources obstacle. However, it's usually best to wait until you see what you'll need in play and make a test for it then.





## Ground Car

Capacity: 1 driver, 4 passengers

Tech Resources	Ob 4
Profile	0
Integrity	5
Control	—
Signals	none
Sensors	none
Ordnance	none
Vehicular Speed	Surface 6
Security	none

Type: Surface Vehicle (Driving)

Tech Index: Sub index and higher



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H5. Breach, H8. Damaged, H11. Destroyed, H13.

## Light Hauler

Capacity: 1 driver, 2 passengers, cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 5
Profile	1
Integrity	6
Control	—
Signals	none
Sensors	none
Ordnance	none
Vehicular Speed	Surface 5
Security	none

Type: Surface Vehicle (Driving)

Tech Index: Sub index and higher



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H6. Breach, H9. Damaged, H13. Destroyed, H15.

## Anvil Ground Car

Capacity: 1 driver, 3 passengers, cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 6
Profile	1
Integrity	5
Control	—
Signals	Tools
Sensors	none
Ordnance	Squad Support (1)
Vehicular Speed	Surface 5
Security	none

Type: Surface Vehicle (Driving)

Tech Index: Sub index and higher



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H5. Breach, H10. Damaged, H12. Destroyed, H14.



## Grav Sled

Capacity: 1 pilot, 3 passengers

Type: Atmospheric Vehicle (Pilot)

Tech Index: Low index and higher

Tech Resources	Ob 6
Profile	0
Integrity	4
Control	1D
Signals	none
Sensors	Tools
Ordnance	none
Vehicular Speed	Atmospheric 7
Security	none



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H5. Breach, H8. Damaged, H11. Destroyed, H13.

## Air Bus

Capacity: 1 pilot, 150 passengers, cargo

Type: Atmospheric Vehicle (Pilot)

Tech Index: Sub index and higher

Tech Resources	Ob 8
Profile	1
Integrity	7
Control	—
Signals	Tools
Sensors	Tools
Ordnance	None
Vehicular Speed	Atmospheric 8
Security	Automation 2



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H7. Breach, H14. Damaged, V5. Destroyed, V11.

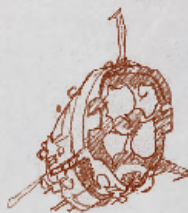
## Shuttle

Capacity: 1 pilot, 5 passengers or cargo

Type: Intrasystem Vehicle (Pilot or Helm)

Tech Index: Zero Index and higher

Tech Resources	Ob 8
Profile	1
Integrity	7
Control	+1 Ob
Signals	Tools
Sensors	Advantage 1
Ordnance	None
Vehicular Speed	Space 7
Security	Manned



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H6. Breach, H12. Damaged, V7. Destroyed, V12.



## Civilian Interstellar Hammer

Capacity: 1 pilot, 3 passengers or cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 10
Profile	2
Integrity	6
Control	—
Signals	Automation 3
Sensors	Automation 3
Ordnance	None
Vehicular Speed	Space 8
Security	Manned

Structural Tolerances: Surface, H6. Breach, H12. Damaged, V6. Destroyed, V12.

Type: Interstellar Vehicle (Helm)

Tech Index: Low index and higher



## Civilian Intergalactic Hammer

Capacity: 1 pilot, 5 passengers or cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 12
Profile	3
Integrity	7
Control	ID
Signals	Automation 4
Sensors	Automation 4
Ordnance	None
Vehicular Speed	Space 9
Security	Manned AIC 1

Structural Tolerances: Surface, H7. Breach, H14. Damaged, V5. Destroyed, V11.

Type: Intergalactic Vehicle (Helm)

Tech Index: High index



## Cargo Shuttle

Capacity: 4 crew, 4 passengers, cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 11
Profile	2
Integrity	7
Control	+1 Ob
Signals	Tools
Sensors	Tools
Ordnance	None
Vehicular Speed	Space 5
Security	Manned

Structural Tolerances: Surface, H7. Breach, H14. Damaged, V7. Destroyed, V16.

Type: Intrasystem Vehicle (Pilot or Helm)

Tech Index: Zero index and higher







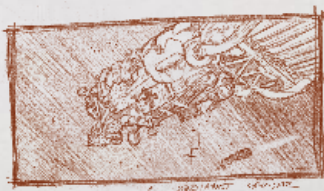
## Mercator

Capacity: 4 crew, 72 passengers, cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 13
Profile	4
Integrity	7
Control	+1 Ob
Signals	Automation 3
Sensors	Tools
Ordnance	None
Vehicular Speed	Space 6
Security	Manned

Type: Interstellar Vehicle (Helm)

Tech Index: Low index and higher



Structural Tolerances: Surface, V7. Breach, V13. Damaged, S5. Destroyed, S10.

## Intergalactic Mercator

Capacity: 4 crew, 4 passengers, cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 16
Profile	4
Integrity	7
Control	+1 Ob
Signals	Automation 4
Sensors	Automation 4
Ordnance	None
Vehicular Speed	Space 8
Security	Manned AIC 1

Type: Intergalactic Vehicle (Helm)

Tech Index: High index



Structural Tolerances: Surface, V7. Breach, V14. Damaged, S6. Destroyed, S12.

## Anvil Attack Sled

Capacity: 1 pilot

Tech Resources	Ob 9
Profile	1
Integrity	5
Control	1D
Signals	Automation 3
Sensors	Automation 3
Ordnance	Vehicular
Vehicular Speed	Atmospheric 9
Security	none

Type: Atmospheric Vehicle (Pilot)

Tech Index: Zero index and higher



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H5. Breach, H10. Damaged, V5. Destroyed, V11.



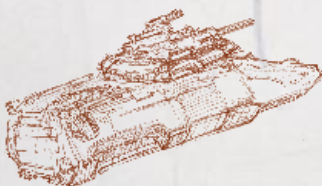
## Anvil Assault Sled

Capacity: 2 crew, 8 passengers, cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 13
Profile	2
Integrity	6
Control	—
Signals	Automation 3
Sensors	Automation 3
Ordnance	Vehicular (2)
Vehicular Speed	Atmospheric 6
Security	none

Type: Atmospheric Vehicle (Pilot)

Tech Index: Low index and higher



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H8. Breach, V1. Damaged, V7. Destroyed, V14.

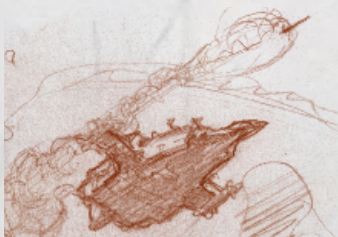
## Hammer Assault Shuttle

Capacity: 2 crew, 10 passengers, cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 13
Profile	3
Integrity	7
Control	+1 Ob
Signals	Automation 3
Sensors	Automation 4
Ordnance	Vehicular (2)
Vehicular Speed	Space 5
Security	none

Type: Intrasystem Vehicle (Pilot or Helm)

Tech Index: Low index and higher



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H8. Breach, V1. Damaged, V6. Destroyed, V13.

## Hammer Patrol Craft

Capacity: 8 crew, passengers, cargo

Tech Resources	Ob 16
Profile	3
Integrity	8
Control	+1 Ob
Signals	Automation 4
Sensors	Automation 5
Ordnance	Artillery (1)
Vehicular Speed	Space 8
Security	Manned

Type: Interstellar Vehicle (Helm)

Tech Index: Low index and higher



Structural Tolerances: Surface, H14. Breach, V5. Damaged, S10. Destroyed, S12.



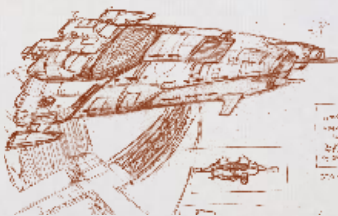
## Hammer Cruiser

Capacity: 16 crew, passengers, cargo

Type: Intergalactic Vehicle (Helm)

Tech Index: High Index

Tech Resources	Ob 20
Profile	2
Integrity	9
Control	+2 Ob
Signals	Automation 5
Sensors	Automation 4
Ordnance	Artillery (4)
Vehicular Speed	Space 9
Security	Automation 4



Structural Tolerances: Surface, V3. Breach, V8. Damaged, S12. Destroyed, S15.

Vehicles

## Chases and Pursuit

Pursuit is a prime conflict for vehicles. The goal of pursuit is either to overtake your quarry and force him to a stop or to chase him to his destination. There are two ways to resolve such chases: with a single versus test between the operators of the vehicles, or as a Firefight with objectives.

### Racing

When racing to a known destination in vehicles with the same Speed class, the opposing players test the Helm/Pilot/Driving skills of their characters. Whoever wins the versus test arrives first. If racing against a vehicle of a different Speed category, test Speed as described under Vehicular Speed.

### Escape and Pursuit

The fleeing vehicle may use its pilot's skill for this test or its Vehicular Speed. The pursuing vehicle may use its pilot's skill or its Vehicular Speed if in a flat out, not-bothering-to-even-steer chase. Sensors versus Signals may act as a linked test to the pursuit/escape.



If Vehicular Speed is used, remember that a double obstacle penalty is applied to Speeds from a lesser hierarchy (surface versus atmospheric, for example). Do not apply the double obstacle to skills versus Vehicular Speed.

The GM may grant advantages or disadvantages based on terrain, the size of the vehicles in question and environmental conditions.

If the fleeing vehicle wins, the pilot has lost his pursuer and may proceed to his destination undetected and unimpeded. If the pursuing vehicle wins, the pilot of the fleeing vehicle cannot break contact before he arrives at his destination. He's lost the test—he's been followed to



his destination or caught before he arrives. The pursuer may choose to chase his quarry to the final destination—if that was his intent in the pursuit test—or he may choose to engage his quarry in a Firefight. See below for more on that.

*Alexander has Lady Kate journey out to the Agran System's asteroid belt to do some snooping around. The GM calls for a Sensors test, and Lady Kate notices another ship snooping around out here, too. "I've got a lock on them? I want to chase them down!" crows the ever-exuberant Alexander. "The ship flees," I respond, and the chase is on: Lady Kate's Helm of 4 plus help, Control and FoRKs versus the opposing pilot's Helm plus help, Control and FoRKs. If the pursued vehicle wins, he escapes and arrives at his destination in secret. If Lady Kate wins, she manages to chase him until she's sure of where he's going. Maybe not to the doorstep, but close enough to be certain.*

## Vehicles in Firefight

Vehicular combat uses the Firefight rules with a some minor additions. Firefight is versatile enough to encompass tank battles, orbital bombardments and ship-to-ship engagements in the gravity well of the moon.



In order to bring these conflicts to life, the players need only frame their objectives in the terms and scope of the vehicles they are piloting. Hammer cruiser battles can range across the system. Tank battles can range across cities and countryside. Orbital bombardments can range from the bombarding hammer to the defending space-based weapons platform. Objectives can include getting somewhere first or destroying bunkers, command centers or other important buildings and more. Cover can be Oort clouds, asteroids, sargasso seas, precipitation and ridge lines. Forward and rearward positions can be fortresses, carrier ships, space stations, moons, secret landing bases or mine fields.

Establish each side's disposition as per the standard rules. Be sure to assign the Heavier Chassis and Greater Mobility bonuses.

### Skills and Actions

Vehicular combat relies heavily on Tactics and Command just like any other form of combat. Helm/Pilot/Driving and Speed are used for Take Cover and to resolve ties in the Advance, Flank and Withdraw



## Vehicles

maneuvers. Sensors and Signals may be used for Contact. Direct Fire and Suppressive Fire individual actions require Vehicular Weapons or Artillery.

If you're engaging in a Firefight in a vehicle, be sure that you have one character who has those skills. Try to fill in unrepresented skills with automated systems, contacts or subordinates before the conflict gets rolling.

### Strategy

If engaged in a set-piece battle in space involving wings of hammer cruisers, players may use Strategy in place of Tactics in Firefight. But only under that specific condition!

## Close Vehicular Combat

The Close Combat action for vehicles is somewhat different than it is for characters. It can represent ramming, close-in weapons fire, torching the other vehicle with your drive/engine or getting "under the guns." Use the following Close Vehicular Combat matrix:

	Ramming	Weapons Fire	Under the Guns	Torch
Ramming	Versus	Independent	Versus	Independent
Weapons Fire	Independent	Independent	Versus	Independent
Under the Guns	Versus	Versus	Versus	Versus
Torch	Independent	Independent	Versus	Versus

### Ramming

A pilot may attempt to ram another vehicle to damage or disable it. Ramming is not a safe maneuver. Test Helm/Pilot/Driving. Damage for a ram is 5/9/13; die of fate as Artillery. The scale for the damage is

## THE BURNING WHEEL

the same as the ramming vehicle's Destroyed tolerance. Both vehicles take damage. The rammed vehicle takes the result from the Die of Fate. The ramming vehicle takes the next step down—if a Superb was rolled, the ramming vehicle takes a Mark hit. Extra successes may be spent to hit vehicular systems as described under Vehicular Scale Damage.

Against Weapons Fire, Ramming is an Ob 3 test. Ob 2 against Torch.

Only one Ramming action may be attempted per Close Combat per unit. If a second attempt is needed/wanted, one vehicle must Withdraw and then another Close Combat action must be scripted to build up ramming speed!

### *Weapons Fire*

In close quarters fighting, the vehicle must rely on its secondary weapon systems. If the vehicle's main Ordnance is Artillery, it may use Vehicular Weapons. If the vehicle's main Ordnance is Vehicular Weapons, use Squad Support Weapons, etc. If the vehicle doesn't have secondary weapon systems, it may not use this action. All military vehicles have appropriate secondary weapon systems.

Against Ramming and Torch, Weapons Fire is Ob 1. Against another Weapons Fire action, it's an Ob 2 test.

### *Under the Guns*

The Under the Guns action is designed to take the vehicle out of the firing arc of its opponent. Test Helm/Pilot/Drive. Compare the vehicle's Integrity exponents. If the vehicle trying to get Under the Guns has a higher Integrity, apply the difference as an obstacle penalty to this action.

If successful or tied with a versus action, the Under the Guns action takes the vehicle out of harm's way for the moment. It is not shot, rammed or torched.

### *Torch*

Using the Torch action, the pilot angles his ship into the path of the enemy ship and fires his engines/drives in order to burn up and damage the ship. The Torch action may only be used by intrasystem, interstellar and intergalactic ships. The drive/engines for surface or atmospheric vehicles are not appropriate to this action.

Against independent actions, test Helm/Pilot/Driving against Ob 4 plus the difference in Speed exponents if the target ship is faster.





A successful Torch action does damage equal to the Torching vehicle's Destroyed result to one Vehicular system of the target's choice. See Damaged How and Where for details on damaging vehicular systems. It's a devastating attack, but risky. If failed, margin of failure gives an obstacle penalty for the Torching vehicle/crew's next Firefight action.

### **Specialist Action: Launch!**

If the vehicle contains a subsidiary vehicle, like a shuttle, ship's boat or drop pod, a specialist action may be spent in Firefight to launch the vehicle. It does not add to disposition, but may participate in individual actions.

### **Boarding Actions**

If one side wishes to board another, make the boarding action their objective for the Firefight. If need be, the actual action can then be played out via a separate Firefight.

## **Vehicular Scale Damage**

Vehicles have higher "mortal wounds" than characters. Their tolerances lay at either the far right of the human scale or in two separate scales—vehicular and superstructural.

However, the Surface damage tolerance is—with the exception of the largest vehicles—in the Human scale. This allows for little bits of damage to disable a vehicle eventually, but not in one blow.

*You can tear apart a grav sled with your crowbar with a few dozen whacks, but a single shot with a fusion cannon is going to do the job much more quickly.*

### **Human (H) Scale Damage**

Small vehicles—ground cars, trucks and grav sleds—have their physical tolerances in the human scale.

### **Vehicular Structure (V) Scale Damage**

Larger vehicles—shuttlecraft, air buses—have their Destroyed tolerance in the vehicular range. However, their Surface tolerance lies in the human scale. They're easier to scratch up and dent, but hard to destroy.

### **Superstructural (S) Scale Damage**

Spacecraft of a certain size, or of a high enough index, have their Destroyed tolerance in the superstructural scale. Their Surface damage tolerance is in the vehicular range. They are very hard to damage in the first place and require high-tech artillery to destroy outright.

The three scales are three parts of one whole. Damage is plotted on the track from left to right, from human to vehicular to superstructural. Each scale is divided into 16 increments. H1 is the start of the scale on the left. H16 abuts V1, V16 abuts S1 and S16 is the last number on the scale. The highest Destroyed tolerance possible is S16.

An anvil attack sled has the following tolerances: Surface, H5. Breach, H10. Damaged, V5. Destroyed, V11. It can suffer a Surface or Breach result from a heavy assault gun—H4, H8, H12. Whereas a hit from a cannon—V4, V7, V11—will either cause a Breach (at V4), Damage it (at V7) or Destroy it (at V11).

[illegible]

When a player hits a vehicle with a shot opportunity or Weapons Fire from Close Combat, he may use his extra successes to increase his chances of doing a Superb or Mark hit on the Die of Fate as described in the Die of Fate section of the Firefight chapter, or he may use the extra successes to target a specific location on the vehicle. If enough extra successes are generated, he may do both—he may target a location and give himself a bonus to the Die of Fate.

*I have a shot opportunity on an attack sled. It's an Ob 2 Vehicular Weapons test. I get four successes. The examples below detail how I can spend those two extra successes.*

If a player meets his obstacle to hit—does not generate any additional successes—he hits the hull of the vehicle. Breach or Damage dice are subtracted from *Integrity* on a hull or chassis hit. Note that a player may *choose* to fire on the chassis and simply use his extra successes to increase his chance to do damage, rather than aim at all.

*With two extra successes, I can opt to have my shot hit the hull of the vehicle. The extra successes would then be applied to the Die of Fate. I doubled my obstacle, so I add +2 to the DoF. I do a Mark result with my cannon, a V7. That's a Damaged result for the sled. It loses 3D from*



## Vehicles

its Integrity, from 5 to 2. If I can reduce its Integrity to zero, it'll be wrecked.

### Control System

It costs two additional successes to target the control systems of a vehicle. Each die of damage done in a Control hit subtracts from any Control bonus dice. If Control is currently zero, “—” or an obstacle penalty, each damage die counts as +1 Ob to Helm/Drive/Pilot tests.

*With two extra successes, I can hit the attack sled's Control systems. In order for Control shots to work, I need to cause at least a Breach and knock off one die. I'm guaranteed to cause at least a Breach with my cannon (V4 Incidental versus H10 Breach tolerance). Cool! I go for it! I spent my two extra successes on targeting, so I don't get a bonus to the DoF. If I roll a 1-2, I cause a Breach and knock off the sled's 1D of Control. If I get a Mark, I Damage it (-3D) and cause it to lose the die and suffer a +2 Ob penalty for the remainder of the Firefight.*

### Crew

It costs three additional successes to target the pilot, crew or passengers in a vehicle. In order to penetrate the crew compartment, the incoming hit must cause at least a Breach result to the target vehicle. The crew is hit with a damage result of one rank lower than the initial hit on the vehicle on the Die of Fate: either a Mark or Incidental hit or no damage at all (if an Incidental result was originally rolled). If a Damaged result penetrates the crew compartment, up to three characters are hit.



### Engine

It costs one additional success to target the engine. If a Breach or Damaged result is generated, the dice are subtracted from the vehicle's Speed rather than its Integrity. If the vehicle's Speed is reduced to zero, then it can no longer move. It may not participate in a chase, and it may not use the Advance, Flank or Withdraw actions in Firefight.

*With two extra successes, I can target the vehicle's engines for one success and take a +1 to the DoF with the other.*

### Signals

With three successes over his obstacle, the shooter can hit the signals rig on the target vehicle. Reduce the Signals rating of the vehicle by the amount of damage/dice done from the incoming shot.

### Sensors

It costs three additional successes to target Sensors. If the Sensors system suffers a -1D or greater hit, it is knocked offline. It must be repaired. See the Repair or Jury-Rigging skill.

### Weapons Systems

It costs two additional successes to target a weapon system. A Breach result knocks out a fixed, pintle mount or tripod mounted weapon—anything not using the Mounted trait/limitation. Mounted weapons can sustain two dice of damage. Weapons that are knocked out like this no longer contribute to disposition in the Firefight and can no longer be used.

### The Gamble

Damaging a subsystem is often a gamble. You must declare your target, spend your successes and roll the Die of Fate. In order to have an effect, the incoming fire must knock off dice. An Incidental hit often isn't enough to do that kind of damage. Those extra successes spent aiming for a subsystem might have been better spent gunning for the hull with extra successes spent to modify the Die of Fate.

### Destroyed Result on Subsystem Hits

If a hit to a subsystem does damage equal to the vehicle's Destroyed tolerance, the subsystem is destroyed outright—all dice and functionality are lost for that system. The vehicle itself is not destroyed.

### Engines Blown

A pilot in atmosphere whose engines are knocked out while in motion must pass an Ob 5 Piloting test or crash. If passed, the vehicle churns up the turf but is still marginally operable—any system not knocked



out may still be used, (like guns and sensors). If the test is failed, see Wrecked below.

If the engines are knocked out in space, the vehicle travels in a straight line until it either collides with an object, gets pulled into a gravity well or, more likely, passes out of range. Drifting vehicles may continue to participate in the current engagement, but they may not use the Flank, Advance, Withdraw or Close Combat maneuvers. After the engagement, they need to be towed home or scrapped.



## Wrecked

Once a vehicle loses all of its Integrity dice or is hit with a Destroyed result, it's knocked out of commission. If the vehicle was in motion on the surface or in atmosphere when it was shot up or rammed, an Ob 6 Driving, Helm or Piloting test will prevent the vehicle from crashing. If this test is failed, the vehicle plows into the turf and breaks up. I recommend rolling a Die of Fate for each character on board. On a 1, they survive miraculously unharmed. On a 2-5 they're Maimed. On a 6, they receive a Mortal Wound.

If the vehicle was in space when it lost its Integrity dice, it decompresses and opens to the void. Any character who is not EVA-capable at the moment the last Integrity die is lost—anyone not wearing his space suit—is exposed to vacuum. He suffers an H16 wound.

## Control Shot: We're Going Down!

If the vehicle's control systems are damaged and the pilot fails a Helm, Pilot or Driving test, the vehicle crashes or spins out of control. On the surface or in atmosphere, the vehicle crashes—impacting with another solid object or the surface. The pilot must make a second control test using the Engines Blown rules above.

If in space, the pilot loses control of his vehicle and must hesitate for his next action/volley as he fights to regain control.

# Travel in The Empires

### Municipal

Travel within a city in the Iron Empires uses private and public grav sleds, ground cars and light haulers. During play, moving about a city happens from scene to scene. It's not often that the players need to concern themselves with this level of travel. It is easy enough to bring in color technology that describes public transportation or a slick private grav sled.

### Regional

Regional transportation on a planet is very accessible. Private individuals hop from city to city in their grav sleds. Public and commercial transportation is available in the form of air buses. Occasionally, for very fast transportation, intrasystem shuttles will perform orbital ballistic runs from one continent to another.



These are all commonplace methods of transportation. Scene to scene, characters can jump from region to region, city to city. Hopping from city to city should not prove a problem on anything but the most backwater sub index worlds, or perhaps the most paranoid, quarantined and regulated outworlds.

### Continental

On sub or zero index worlds, intercontinental travel can be slow. Air buses, while efficient and relatively fast, still require hours or days to traverse these long jaunts. Intercontinental travel on these worlds is best done on a maneuver-to-maneuver basis. Part of the goal of a maneuver must be moving to said location and getting work done. It does not have to be the main goal, but including it in the color of the scenes helps flesh out the size and technological limitations of the world.



On low and high index worlds, intercontinental travel is as fast and easy as regional travel. Orbital ballistic shuttle flights cover the distance in the matter of a few hours!

### Orbital

Many worlds in the Iron Empires have orbitals—space stations in orbit. These units are under the control of one of the factions, the military or the primary government. Traveling to and from them requires a shuttle and permission from that faction.





On high-quarantine worlds, travelers and guests must pass through the orbitals before they can head planetside. On some paranoid or hysterically fearful worlds, travelers and guests may not come planetside and must reside in the orbital.

Even so, travel to and from orbitals is usually no more difficult than traveling to another city.

## Distortion

Traveling between planets and stars is accomplished through distortion drive technology. Boiled down to its essentials, a distortion drive operates by creating a field of temporal distortion in its immediate vicinity: the distortion field. Within the field, the value of time ( $t$ ) in our universe is reduced. Starships in the Iron Empires use this effect to generate enormous speeds relative to the outside world. Those on board the ship feel like they are moving “normally” when in fact they are rocketing through the universe at breakneck speed.

There are two modes a distortion drive can be configured for: sublight expansion and hyper-expansion (HEX). Both have advantages and disadvantages.

### *Sublight Expansion*

As the name implies, this level of temporal distortion achieves sublight speeds. It is most often used to travel between planets in the same star system. Sublight expansion, also referred to as Factor 3 expansion is stable and easily controlled.

Starships traveling in this mode can reach the equivalent of one “Sublumina Hora (SH)” per distortion cell. Greater relative speeds can be attained by the addition of distortion cells.

Planet hopping within a system takes a maneuver. It is more time intensive and laborious than planetside intercontinental travel. It is best described as a part of a Go to Ground, Conserve, Gambit or even Take Action maneuver.

### *Hyper-Expansion (HEX)*

Hyper-expansion, also referred to as Factor 4 distortion, is the configuration used for interstellar travel. It is less stable and harder to control than the sublight expansion.

To break into HEX, a ship has to be traveling at a rate of at least 50,000 kph relative to the nearest gravity well. Once engaged, the ship travels at about 2 light years per week. This rate is referred to as the *distortis vicis* (DV) or “distortion week” by navigators. A DV is the basic unit of interstellar measurement.

Coming out of HEX is physically stressful. The sudden shift to and from real time wreaks havoc, particularly with autonomous functions like heartbeat. A special harness for all passengers is built into the ship. The harness kneads and compresses the body, assisting breathing, blood flow and cardiovascular functioning. Not wearing the harness during the transition to and from hyper-expansion can be fatal. Most people black out during the transition even when they wear their harness.

For long voyages, passengers may be cryonically frozen. Crew members typically rotate through one week duty shifts, waking their relief and slipping into storage themselves afterward. A skeleton crew is all any ship needs to navigate through HEX since most of the work is done prior to making the jump. Routine maintenance and someone to guard against emergency is all that's needed.



It is possible for a maneuver to take the players off planet. However, a jump using distortion drives—no matter how fast—takes a significant amount of time. Space is vast, and the gulfs between systems are barely imaginable. Therefore, distortion jumps may only be made using maneuvers that generate downtime: Conserve or Go to Ground (not Pin in this case). The distortion jump must be the intent of the maneuver. To be successful and arrive before your homeworld is devoured by the Vaylen infection, you must generate downtime.





# SECURITY SYSTEMS, SIGNALS AND SENSORS

Security systems, signals rigs and sensor arrays feature prominently in Burning Empires. Security systems prevent Vaylen incursions into key installations. Signals rigs aid in detecting transmissions and other electronic intelligence. And sensor arrays are used in ship-to-ship actions, both in atmosphere and in space.

## *Security Systems*

Security systems represent electronic arrays designed to detect and bar entry from buildings, compounds and ships. In order to use the Security skill, the character must have a piece of security technology (tools) with which to operate—either to use for detection, to manipulate or to bypass.

### **Security Systems by Index**

Sub index Security systems can detect characters using the Infiltration skill and provide a barrier to entry.

Zero index tech can detect the use of Infiltration. Falsehood may be detected while the target is under direct, restrained scrutiny.

Low index tech can detect and record the use of Signals, Falsehood, Sleight of Hand and Infiltration.

High index tech can detect and record the use of Psychology, Signals, Security, Falsehood, Inconspicuous, Infiltration and Sleight of Hand.





### Passing through Security

When a character wishes to slip through a security checkpoint, he must test one of the applicable skills listed above versus the security system—either against the operator plus help/advantage dice or against the skill dice of the system itself if it is automated.

### Detection

If the security system wins the test, the character is detected as having used that skill.

#### *Detecting Technology*

Security systems can also detect concealed weaponry and explosives (and other technology) if designed to do so. It's Ob 2 to detect a concealed contraband item of the same tech index and + 1 Ob for each level of index lower. Primitive items like box cutters count as a step below sub index.

Security systems trying to detect higher index contraband suffer a + 2 Ob penalty for each index level higher.

### Barrier to Entry

A security system can have the Obstacle trait attached to it to represent locked doors, barriers and vaults. The obstacle to breach or open said barriers is equal to their rating, as per the standard mechanics in the technology burner. Security, Security Rigging and Explosives may be used to bypass barriers. A failed test indicates that the system is alerted and reports an unauthorized entry.

### Forged Identification

The Forgery skill may be used to create false identification in order to fool a security system. Make a versus test between Forgery and the security operator's skill or the system's own technological skill. If Forgery wins, the false identification clears security. If there's a tie, no alarms go off, but there is some complication with the identification—they can't pass through. If Security wins, the fakes are detected.



## Playback

Most security systems record information about their operation, either simple data like the hours of operation and the use of passkeys and identification numbers or more complex data like live recordings of the secure zones. Security playback data like this serves two purposes: as color for the players and GM and as a linked test in an investigation.

### *Playback Obstacle*

The obstacle to get useful data from playback is 6 minus the advantage dice or exponent of the security technology.

## Cracking the System

If a player would like to hack into a security system—to retrieve data, shut down part of it or plant false information—make a versus test between the security system and the character attempting the breach. The system tests its Security skill or its operator's Security skill. The hacking character tests his Security Rigging skill.

If the system is unmanned, the obstacle is 2 plus any advantage dice attached to the system.

## Detecting Vaylen

Detecting Vaylen on the fly, without subjecting the suspect to medical procedures and tests, requires low index security level plus systems specifically designed for detecting body modification.

### *Low and High Index Security Obstacles for Detecting Vaylen*

Field Hull	Ob 3
Spinal Hull	Ob 6
Optic Nerve Hull	Ob 7

### *Medical Procedures for Detecting Vaylen*

Any sub index brain scan will show the presence of a Naiven in the skull of the host creature. No roll or test is needed. Getting a Vaylen to submit to such a test is another matter entirely.

*Calvaria Integrity Scanner (CIS): The CIS is a hand-held gun-shaped device that allows security agents to detect if a person has undergone a field hull. The CIS must be passed across the skull of the target. If he or she has been hulled, a warning indicator appears on the screen at the butt of the CIS. The CIS is a "manned station" security system (Ob 4) with one level of AIC (+1D, Ob 4). It has three categorical limitations: It cannot provide barrier to entry (it's a hand-held device) and it does not detect spinal hulls or optic nerve hulls (-3 Ob.) To acquire a CIS in play would require an Ob 5 Tech Resources test. To use the CIS in play, the player would test his character's Security skill +1D against Ob 3.*

## Signals

Signals technology refers to broadcast and detection equipment that can transmit and read radio waves, light and other forms of radiation. Signals can be used to monitor radio traffic, jam communications, get satellite imagery of a specific area or even detect the location of a ship in space from its comm traffic.

### Signals Technology

Signals technology comes in three main forms: tools, advantage dice and technological skill.



Tools can represent a basic scanner or an air traffic control station (Tech Resources: Ob 4 or Ob 8). Advantage dice are represented by ultra-sensitive detection gear, filters and buffers or improved software (Tech Resources: Ob 3, Ob 5 or Ob 7 depending on the number of advantage dice provided). Signals as a technological skill can be anything from an early warning system—exponent 3 (Tech Resources: Ob 4 for Signals tools plus Ob 5 for the skill)—to a Skynet-style massive artificial intelligence—exponent 8 (Tech Resources: Ob 4 plus Ob 10).

### Dumb Emissions and Noise

Monitoring open comm traffic and other communications is an Ob 2 test for “dumb” transmitters, *i.e.* tech that act as tools or otherwise don’t have the Signals skill. The GM may increase the obstacle by one or two for distance or interference.

### Smart Signals

Signals operators may try to use their skill to send their transmissions in bursts. Other Signals ops may, of course, try to detect the transmissions: Make a versus test between the Signals operators. Test Signals plus help, FoRKs and advantage dice.

### Signals Index

When scanning for emissions and noise, if the detecting Signals tech is higher index than the signal being broadcast, add +1D advantage for each level of difference. If the detecting signals tech is lower index than the signal being produced, add +1 Ob for each level of difference.

In a Signals versus test, the higher index Signals tech gets +1D per tech index level higher than the opposition.





## Signals Warfare

Signals warfare can be used in firefights or building scenes to neutralize enemy communication and detection gear. In order to initiate signals warfare, the unit must have a member with the Signals skill and signals tech capable of jamming and scanning—a simple radio will not do.

### *Specialist Action within a Firefight*

Make a versus test against the enemy Signals operator/automation. If there is no Signals op, the obstacle for the test is 2 plus the value of any advantage dice from signals tech on the other side.

If the initiator of the signals warfare wins the test by one success, the Superior Comm bonus to the disposition is neutralized—neither side gets the + 1s. If he wins by two, his side gains the Superior Comm bonus. One point is added to his disposition pool for as long as he can maintain Superior Comm. If he wins by three, he jams enemy communications altogether in addition to gaining the Superior Comm bonus. Jamming the enemy means that no helping dice may be given unless the helpers are in the same unit and physically right next to each other. If the initiator of Signals Warfare ties or loses the test, the Superior Comm bonus remains where it is.

If one team has higher index signals tech, grant them + 1D to their Signals roll per tech index level higher. Low index is one indices higher than zero index, for example.

### *Signals in a Building Scene*

Signals may jam or interfere with opposing broadcast devices. Pick your target and declare your intent: “I want to jam his tower transmissions” or something along those lines. Make a versus test: Signals plus help, FoRKs and advantage dice. If you win, you stop the enemy transmission.

### *Interference*



Signals ops may opt to flood the airwaves with noise. Basic, “dumb” signals equipment—radios, cell phones—will cease to work. All other Signals gear (tools and technological skills) operates at an increased obstacle. To create interference, make a versus test: Signals plus help, FoRKs and advantage dice. Margin of success indicates the obstacle penalty for all Signals tests, including yours, for the rest of the scene or the next scene if appropriate.



## Sensors

Vehicle-mounted detection gear is designed to detect heat, radioactivity, electromagnetic emissions, atmospheric displacement and distortions in spacetime. Sensors are used in Firefight to make contact with vehicles and for the Sensor Sweep specialist action.

### Sensors Tech

Sensor arrays on sub or zero index worlds are large, elaborate affairs. They can only be mounted on vehicles or stationed at installations. Even then, they act as tools for the skill (Ob 4 to Ob 8 Tech Resources). Low and high index worlds have sensor arrays that can be mounted in iron or anvil armor, and also have handheld devices.



Handheld rigs generally act as tools for Sensors. Vehicular mounts may act as tools and automation. Satellites also function as Sensors automation. Drones, receptors, midges, sensor webs and nets act as advantage dice.

### Making Sensor Sweeps

When making a Sensors skill test to locate a vehicle add advantage dice equal to the target vehicle's *profile*.

Make a versus test: Sensors skill, plus help, FoRKs, technology and target profile versus the target vehicle's Helm/Pilot/Driving skill plus help, FoRKs and technology if they are avoiding detection via evasive action. Use Signals plus help, FoRKs and technology if the target is using electronic countermeasures to jam or fool the sensors.

If the Sensors test fails, the vehicle has escaped without being detected. If successful, the sensors lock on to the target vehicle.

### Cover Reduces Profile

Cover in Firefight reduces a vehicle's profile dice by one less than the rating of the cover. Cover 1 does nothing for vehicles. Cover 2 reduces a profile by 1D. Cover 3 reduces a profile by 2D.

### Sensors as Signals and Security

Sensors are calibrated to detect vehicle-scale emissions and are poor substitutes for Signals and Security. However, sensors may attempt to do double duty as Security or Signals, but always at a double obstacle penalty.





# PSYCHOLOGY

A psychologist is one who can read, influence and even control the thoughts of others. The ability is born from the mental energies of the psychologist and sharpened by intense training.



The art and science of Psychology is the province of a gifted few. Most are those born with the Bright Mark and trained to use their inborn talents. Rarer are mutants who exhibit no physical manifestation of the Mark, yet have the talents of the Psychologist.

## **The Bright Mark and the Mule**

There are two traits which grant access to Psychology-based power: Bright Mark and Mule. With either of these traits, the character has access to all of the potential uses of the power. Without one of those traits, the Psychology skill can be learned, but only the rules under *Psychology as a Skill* are available for use.

The Bright Mark and Mule traits may never be granted by vote during play. They must be purchased in character burning.



## Psychology as a Skill

First and foremost, Psychology is a skill that's drilled into the heads of talented individuals. The skill teaches how to read, predict and manipulate human behavior, both en masse and individually. It is a rigorous academic discipline.

### Psychology

Per



Psychologists can decipher gossamer veils of emotion, deception, clarity and purpose. Psychology is a field of related knowledge for Oratory, Persuasion, Command, Falsehood, Seduction, Suasion, Rhetoric, Intimidation, Interrogation, Etiquette, Ugly Truth and Soothing Platitudes. It may be used to help the same skills for another character. It may be tested in a Duel of Wits for the Incite action and is the primary dueling skill in the Psychic Duel mechanics. It is also used extensively in the Infection maneuvers. Psychology may also be used to read another character's emotional state and to discern his traits. Obstacles: Determining whether a subject is alive or dead, Ob 1. Reading hidden mood, Ob 2. Seeing a character trait, Ob 3. Reading a past lifepath, Ob 3.

Detecting Naiven within, Ob 3. Seeing a die or call-on trait, Ob 4. Sensing a person's intent (to deceive, for example), Ob 4. Detecting the presence of a connection, Ob 5. Reading a reputation, the obstacle is 6 minus the reputation dice. Reading an affiliation, obstacle is 7 minus the affiliation dice. Reading a Belief is Ob 7.

You must declare your intent and set the obstacle for this action before rolling the dice. The psychologist player may choose which trait his character is trying to discover.

If the psychologist character possesses the Bright Mark or the Mule trait, the Psychology skill presents him with more powerful options. See the Psychologist's Powers section.

**Practice Cycle:** 6 ms. Hrs/day: 3r/6d/12c

**Technology:** No.

## A Psychologist's Powers

A psychologist with the Bright Mark or Mule trait has access to the following abilities: *Connections*, *Transference*, *Hindrance*, *Locks*, *Barriers*, *Psychological Force* and *Psychological Chemistry*. Using these abilities he may read a character's innermost thoughts against the character's will and make alterations to the character's Beliefs and traits.

## Connections

A psychologist who wishes to tap into his higher-level abilities must forge a psychic connection with the character whom he wants to affect. A *connection* is the primary vehicle through which a psychologist can read the thoughts and manipulate the actions of another.

### Forging a Connection

When a player wants his psychologist to get into the mind of another player, he must perform a little ritual. Pick up a single die and *turn and ask the target player (or the GM)*, "Do you wish to forge a connection with me?" If yes, then the psychologist player hands the other player a die from his connection pool. If no, then no connection is made.



This ritual is between the players, and it has nothing to do with the characters. The subtext for the ritual is, "If you take this die, you *will* benefit, but you also open yourself to possible attack and manipulation. Are you willing to accept the risk and possibly pay the price?"

What's happening in the game between the characters is a mere glance from the psychologist as he extends his abilities toward the other character, searching for vulnerabilities. If the player accepts, then the psychologist has found an easy way in. If he declines, then the psychologist will have to use other, less subtle methods.

A connection may only be offered when the two characters are physically in the same scene together. It requires no overt action from the psychologist.

*Prince Faisal and Lord Omei are discussing their plans to unseat Prince Aziz. Mayuran turns to Thor, "Will you accept a connection?"*

*Thor responds, "Hell, yes!"*

### The Connection Die

If the connection is accepted, the target player may use it as an advantage die for Oratory, Persuasion, Command, Falsehood, Seduction, Suasion, Rhetoric, Intimidation, Interrogation, Etiquette, Ugly Truth and



Psychology

Soothing Platitudes tests. His own latent psychic powers are temporarily enhanced via the connection. He may also broadcast his thoughts to the psychologist and in turn accept the transmitted thoughts of the psychologist via telepathy—from any distance. He may not read the psychologist's thoughts.

*Mayuran hands Thor a die from his pool. Thor may keep it until Mayuran asks for it back. The connection die acts as a special advantage die for a whole bunch of skills. It doesn't count as a FoRK or a wise or help.*



For reasons described in Breaking the Connection, it's best if connection dice are distinguishable in some way—a particular color or size. It makes them easier to keep track of.

### The Pool

The psychologist's Will acts as a pool with which he can protect himself, build connections and help or hinder those connections. A psychologist's connection pool is equal to his current Will exponent. However, each connection temporarily reduces his pool by one (not his Will exponent). The dice in the pool are also used to grant bonuses and cause penalties, so it is important to manage connections carefully.

*Prince Faisal has a Will of 6. He has given out four connections. That means his current pool is 2. He can give out two more connections if he desires, or he can save those dice and keep them as his Barrier or use them for Transference or Hindrance.*

### We Are Connected

When a psychologist has a connection with another character, he is in constant communication with him, no matter the distance. He may speak “head-to-head” with the character as if they were present together. He can hear the words the other character is speaking, even if they are directed at someone else. He can also *read* the connected character's surface thoughts.

*Lord Omei is speaking privately with Mal Nenox, but all the while, Mayuran is listening. Since Faisal and Omei are connected, Mayuran can use anything in that conversation as if he were present in the scene.*



Surface thoughts are not terribly informative. They typically serve to give the psychologist a jumbled sense of place and physical presence for the connected character. Beyond that, the psychologist can conjure images from the surface thoughts if the connected character is concentrating. For more information, the psychologist must use his skill and read the character.





### ***Reading a Connection***

A psychologist may read a character he's connected to at any time, so long as he isn't otherwise engaged in a conflict or test of his own. He may do so no matter the distance. He gains a + 1D advantage in reading a connected character. Otherwise, use the obstacles described in the Psychology as a Skill.

### ***Psychologist to Psychologist Connections***

Psychologists must form bonds and trade dice like any other character in order to communicate telepathically or transfer skills and memory. However, since they already gain the FoRK die from their own Psychology skill, they do not gain an advantage die from their connections. All other benefits and risks stand as stated above.

Psychologist-to-psychologist connections are more of a two way connection than other connections. The targeted psychologist may initiate communications and read the surface thoughts of the character who made the connection. He may also read the character, no matter their distance.

### ***Reading a Connected Psychologist***

A psychologist player may wish to read another psychologist to whom he's connected. This is done via the standard reading mechanics, but the *target's current barrier adds to the obstacle*. The reading psychologist does gain the + 1D advantage die.

### ***Dual Connections***

It's possible for a character to have connections from more than one psychologist at a time. He only gains + 1D for connections no matter how many ghosts are in his head. However, once he's accepted two connections, the psychologists may attempt to dislodge one another. Make a Psychology test, the obstacle to dislodge another connected psychologist is equal to the target's current barrier.

## **Breaking the Connection**

Letting go of a connection is tricky. The psychologist player must *ask* for the connection die back. The target player may willingly return it to the psychologist's pool, or he may keep it and say, "I think there have been some unforeseen complications and a strange bond has formed between us." The connection die is then considered to be "in jeopardy." The player may keep the die and use it as he has been—as an advantage for his social skills. If he uses the die in tests in conjunction with or in relation to the psychologist, the die remains his. If he uses the die in a

test that has nothing to do with the psychologist, the connection closes if the psychological advantage die comes up a 1. The psychologist then regains the die in his pool.

*Prince Faisal is about to go head to head with his uncle, Inquisitor Weller. Faisal needs to raise his barrier. Mayuran turns to Thor and asks, "Can I have my connection back?"*

*Thor responds, smiling evilly, "I think there have been some unforeseen complications..." Thor opts to screw Mayuran over and keep the die. He may continue to use it for tests with Lord Omei. When it comes up a 1, it returns to Mayuran.*

If a psychologist wishes to terminate a connection with another psychologist, the target psychologist may opt to refuse and keep the die. In this case, the target psychologist's own Psychology FoRK die stands in for the connection die. If used in tests relating to the connected psychologist, the connection remains. If used in other tests, and the die comes up a 1, the connection is lost.

### **Minor Relationships and Connections**

If a psychologist wishes to terminate a connection with a minor relationship—a GM-controlled character who will never have dice rolled for him—the GM must give him back his connection die. It's a perk of being a psychologist.



Connections may only be broken at the beginning or end of scenes, not during.

### **Social Contract of Connections**

Making a connection is a player-to-player thing. The decision has very little to do with the characters. At the table, the player is essentially asking permission for power over another player's character. In the game, the psychologist is simply probing his intended target and looking for a way in. Some targets will open up easily. Some can only be swayed by force. That distinction is determined by whether or not the players agree on making a connection. It's often quite beneficial to let a psychologist in, so it's worth the risk of the prying eyes. Other times, a player will be justifiably nervous having a potent psychic riding behind his consciousness.



It is acceptable for the players to make out-of-character deals at the table that affect the workings of the game. Accepting a connection and then setting terms for relinquishing the die is the preferred method of blackmail.



## The Barrier

Any dice from the pool not allocated to connections, skill transference or hindrance are considered to be a defensive *barrier* around the psychologist's mind. The less he extends himself, the better defended he is. The barrier creates an obstacle penalty against all attempts to use Psychology on the character, including locks and readings to discover traits. It adds to the body of argument in the Psychic Duel rules described below.

*With a Will of 6 and four connections out, Faisal's Barrier is a 2. It adds +2 Ob to anyone trying to read him and gives him +2s to his body of argument in a psychic duel.*

## Transference

A psychologist may transmit temporary knowledge and skill to a connected character.

### Transferring a Skill

To enact transference, the psychologist player decides which skill he will transfer. He gives a connected character that skill at an exponent equal to the his own exponent in the skill or the number of dice remaining in his connection pool, whichever is lower. Transference lasts for one scene.

*Prince Faisal has a connection with Lady Kate. She has gotten herself into a psychic duel with Weller. Mayuran declares that for this scene, he'll transfer Psychology to Lady Kate. Now she may combat him on more even footing. Faisal's current pool is 2, so although Mayuran has Psychology 6, can only give Alexander a 2 Psychology, but it's better than nothing.*

The psychologist must have the skill in question. If a social skill is transferred, the connection die may *not* be used.

If the target has the skill, the player may opt to use the psychologist's transference dice or his own skill. Generally, the higher pool is the one to go with!

### Momentary Control

During transference, the psychologist momentarily takes over the other character. The psychologist's player may determine the actions and/or speech of his connection. The target player rolls the dice and decides whether or not to use help, fields of related knowledge or artha.



The target tests for the ability as if he had the appropriate skill, but he also earns a test toward his aptitude for learning the skill. If he already has the skill, the test counts as if he had rolled the total dice against the obstacle as normal. The transferring character does not earn a test.

Transference may be done in the psychologist's or the other player's scenes.

### Transference Is Not Punishment

Transference is an invasive process, but it cannot be used as punishment. A psychologist player may not transfer only one die and force his target to use it in lieu of using his higher exponent in a more appropriate skill. Transference is for aiding another character when he does not have the necessary ability in a particular area. When using Transference, a psychologist must transfer his full skill or pool in dice, whichever is lower. If a psychologist wants to trip up a connection, he may use *hindrance*.

## Hindrance


The psychologist may harm or hinder those he's connected to. Instead of giving bonus dice in the form of a skill, he may apply an obstacle penalty to any one of the connected character's skills.

Each +1 Ob penalty costs 2D from the psychologist's pool. It is applied to a specific skill. This penalty must be applied before the target player states any intent and task. The psychologist player is not allowed to react to an announced intent by blocking it with an obstacle penalty. He must determine beforehand how he wants to influence his target's behavior. In extended conflicts like the Duel of Wits or Firefight, the psychologist must choose the skill he will hinder before the statement of purpose/objective is laid out. He must keep the hindrance at the same level on the same skill for the whole conflict.



Hindrance makes the psychologist vulnerable. Any compromise created by a Firefight or Duel of Wits can be used to initiate a follow on conflict with the psychologist before he can recover his barrier.

Hindrance may be performed as part of the psychologist's conflict scene for a maneuver. If used during another character's conflict scene, or one in which the psychologist is not present, it counts as a building scene for the psychologist player.



*On Morelia, Thor's Mule, Garrett Crow, has a connection with Chris' Sodalís-Captain. Chris has entered into a Duel of Wits in order to denounce Crow. Thor states, "For the duration of the duel, I'm hindering your Oratory by +2 Ob." Ouch! Crow's Will is 6, and he has two connections out, so his current pool is 4. The hindrance drops his pool to zero—+2 Ob costs 4D. During this scene, Crow is rather vulnerable to other psychologists.*

## The Lock

Rather than attempting to apply a penalty to subtly influence a character, the psychologist may attempt to make an outright attack on a connected character's mind. Test Psychology, +1D for the connection, against an obstacle equal to the victim's current Will.



Command and Intimidation are viable FoRKs. If successful, the target must pass a Steel test; base hesitation is increased by the psychologist's margin of success.

Failure by any margin indicates the character is *locked*—standing and drooling—by the psychologist's force of will for the rest of the scene or until released by the psychologist whichever comes sooner. Holding a lock in a scene costs one die from the pool.

If the psychologist and his connection are in the same building or conflict scene, the psychologist can attempt the lock anytime he pleases. He may only do so once—Let it Ride applies.

### Locking Remotely During Another Player's Scene

A lock may be applied to a character even if the psychologist isn't in the same scene. A connection spans any distance and allows a psychologist to monitor surface thoughts. He can tell when you're up to no good—and he can feed you a blast of psychic feedback that freezes you in your tracks.



If a player is locked out of a scene he initiated, it does not count toward his or the side's limits for the scene: If he's locked out of his building scene, he gets another building scene. The building scene cannot be for the same tests or intent. Like

Let It Ride, the nature of the conflict must change. If the player is locked out of a conflict he initiated, his side may take another conflict scene for this maneuver if they so desire.

*Once again, Chris' Sodalis-Captain is opposing Thor's Mule. This time he's leading a force of soldiers against the junta—which Crow secretly controls. Chris initiates a conflict scene, a firefight. Thor announces that he's attempting to lock the captain. He rolls his Psychology. His obstacle is 5, equal to the captain's Will. Spending mucho artha, Thor comes up with seven successes. Chris must pass a Steel test. His character's hesitation is 5 plus 2 from Thor's extra successes—Ob 7! He fails and is locked, paralyzed, for the remainder of the scene. He watches his men get routed from the field.*

*Chris immediately frames a follow-on conflict. He describes his character storming in on Crow demanding an explanation....*

### **Social Contract of Lock**



This power is incredibly potent and potentially abusive. Locking a character can deprive a player of screen time and possibly even get his character killed. It should therefore be used with care and discretion. Don't ruin anyone else's fun for the sake of the tired old canard, "That's what my character would do."

## **Psychologist Versus Psychologist Locks**

Using this against another psychologist is difficult. The target's barrier adds to his Will for the Psychology test obstacle.

## *Psychological Force*

Connections, Transference, Hindrance and the Lock detail the conditions surrounding a willing (albeit unwitting) character. What if the target player refuses the psychologist's connection? What if the psychologist wants to rewire parts of the target's personality? In these circumstances, he must use psychological force in the form of a *psychic duel*.

### **Psychic Duel**

The rules for using force on another's mind function under the same mechanics as the Duel of Wits. This duel is not one of words, though. It is completely silent, transpiring in the mental space between the two characters. Instead of convincing one another of an argument, they are vying for control of the mind. No words are spoken between the characters. Each player describes his character's state of mind and thoughtscape and how these abstract concepts affect the other player.



Under these circumstances, the psychologist's statement of purpose, in addition to the standard Duel of Wits stakes, can include the addition of a character trait or the modification of one of the target character's Beliefs or Instincts. The target player may set his statement of purpose as he would in a Duel of Wits. He may pervert the psychologist's statement of purpose or he may demand a connection or the cessation of a connection as part of his goals. He may not add traits or modify Beliefs of the attacking psychologist unless he himself is one.

*For example, if a psychologist wants to instill loyalty to himself in one of his subordinates, he could state, "If I win, you gain the Loyal to the First Citizen character trait." And the opposing player could state that instead, this Psychic Duel will bring forth an Undying Hatred of the First Citizen. If the psychologist wins, but is forced to give a concession, the opposing player could state that Loyal to the First Citizen implies the office and not the actual man.*



Psychic Duels do not require a connection die to initiate. A psychologist can initiate a duel with any character in his presence so long as the psychologist player can engage in a conflict according to the scene/maneuver structure rules.

If a psychologist has a connection with a character, he does not have to be in the same location in order to initiate a duel. He may initiate the duel anywhere or any time, so long as it does not interfere with the scene/maneuver structure.



### Skills in the Psychic Duel

The Psychic Duel uses Psychology as the dueling skill for all actions. Intimidation and Ugly Truth may also be used for Incite. Characters without these skills test Will with a double obstacle penalty for the Psychic Duel.

### Generating the Body of Argument in a Psychic Duel

A psychologist rolls his Psychology skill and adds the successes to his Will exponent, as per the standard rules. An unskilled victim counts this test as a *big deal*. He does not roll for his body of argument. Instead, just double his Will and count it as the body.

### Barrier and Psychic Duels

Any Barrier dice possessed at the start of the Duel are added to the psychologist's body of argument.

*I want Weller to change one of Lady Kate's Beliefs. I initiate a psychic duel. Weller's Will is 6, his current Barrier is 3 and I roll 3 successes on his Psychology—12 all together. Lady Kate's Will is 5. Alexander simply doubles that for his body of argument—10 for him.*

### Get Out of My Head

The first heading in the Duel of Wits chapter is Argument, Not Mind Control. The Duel of Wits is designed to resolve conflict and create consensus and compromise at the table. At its core, it cannot be used for "mind control" because one side can always walk away from the argument. Well, the *Psychic Duel mechanics are mind control*. We use the same mechanical structure, but a character cannot walk away and cannot refuse the duel—a player cannot extricate himself from the conflict. There's a psychologist in his head, and he's determined to have a conflict. It can be very ugly.



What recourse do non-psychologist characters have against such invasion? The statement of purpose. Use the statement of purpose to set stakes that will protect you from invasion: "You will never tamper with me or my family again." Or, "You are never to enter my presence again, on pain of death!"

In a psychic duel, if the target player is connected to the psychologist and manages to negotiate a minor compromise, he may break the connection and give the psychologist his die back. In a standard Duel of Wits, a connected player may make his statement of purpose, "Get out of my head!" If he wins, the psychologist must break the connection.



Furthermore, a psychologist may not use a psychic duel to force a connection with a character. However, the victim may demand a connection as part of a compromise.

### **Timing of Psychological Force**

Psychological Force may not be used during a Firefight. However, if a character corners a psychologist with the I Corner Him and Stab Him in the Face rules, the psychologist may engage his opponent in a psychic duel so long as he wins the Tactics/Close Combat test or he has an Instinct, "When assaulted, fry their brains." If he wins the test, factor the Close Combat tests and then, regardless of injury, incapacitation or death, engage in the psychic duel. It happens in the space of a thought! If he has an Instinct, skip the Close Combat and go straight to the psychic duel.

## *Sensing*

A psychologist may sense the presence of other minds. In this regard, the Psychology skill counts as Observation for detecting Infiltration attempts and Inconspicuous characters and for penetrating Sleight of Hand.

### **Broadcasting**

If a psychologist is broadcasting his presence via multiple connections or a conspicuous show of force, other psychologists in the area can detect his presence. Make a Psychology versus Psychology test. If tied, the broadcasting psychologist has been detected. If successful, the detecting psychologist may link this test to a Psychology test against the broadcasting psychologist in the future.

## *The Psychologist's Touch*

A psychologist may feed his own senses and memories directly into another individual. It is done by placing his hand along the individual's spinal column. During the contact, the psychologist may share and show his memories directly with the other character. The two characters may communicate with each other, thought to thought. The contact requires a connection between the two characters and a Psychology versus Perception test. If the Psychologist wins, the subject has no memory of the details of the contact. If the subject wins, each extra success allows him to recall one detail of what was shown to him.

Success on either side may be used as a linked test in a follow up Duel of Wits.



## Psychological Chemistry

### Boost

Psychology is rooted in body chemistry. Using his skill, a psychologist can modify his own or a connected character's body's internal workings—overcharging some of his glands, dulling pain sensations and overriding other natural fail safes. It allows him to add dice to Perception, Agility, Speed, Power or Forte. Doing so requires a Psychology test, the obstacle is equal to the current level of the stat in question. The margin of success is added to the ability in dice. However, the boost only lasts for one test, after which the target stat is then reduced by the same number of dice by which it was increased. This result represents the horrible fatigue from overtaxing the body in such a way. Make a Forte test with an obstacle equal to the number of dice granted. If successful, the stat remains taxed for the following *scene*, after which the boosted character recovers. If failed, the stat remains taxed for the rest of the *maneuver*.

### Psychological Toxicology



By drastically manipulating his body chemistry, a psychologist can render his blood and cerebral fluids toxic to parasites, namely Naiven. It is a desperate and risky process—the poisons act on the worm *and* the psychologist. It is possible to kill oneself with this gambit.

Test Psychology against Ob 4. In this case, Psychology becomes the weapon. The psychologist's own brain becomes the target. The damage is H4, H7, H10 with an Assault Weapon Die of Fate. Margin of *failure* counts as a bonus to the Die of Fate as if the player had exceeded his obstacle with a weapon. Roll the die to determine damage whether you succeed or fail. The damage

result is applied to both the Naiven worm and the psychologist.

A Naiven has a Mortal Wound of H7. A Mark result from Psychological toxicology will kill it. An Incidental result will not stop it from overtaking the psychologist's mind. A Superb result (H10) will kill the worm, but will probably Maim the psychologist if it doesn't kill him.

Not a process for the faint of heart.







## ALIEN LIFE-FORM BURNER

While there are myriad life-forms indigenous to various worlds across the Iron Empires, throughout the Void and in Vaylen space, there are no other sentient and sapient creatures aside from humanity and what the Vaylen have created. It is a lonely galaxy.



Indigenous life-forms are all nonsentient and/or nonsapient animals—unable to suffer and unable to use reason. These animals are part of the ecosystems of their world and can be used for labor, cattle, companionship or industry.

The Vaylen Vaishyen caste are scientists bent on manipulating genetic code in order to produce suitable hosts for the trillions of Naiven which make up the bulk of the Vaylen clans. The Kernn and Mukhadish are products of this experimentation. The host bodies of the Ksatriyen, Vaishyen and Shudren caste Vaylen are also products of experimentation and manipulation. These creatures rarely have human-level sapience and sentience but often have other traits the Vaylen find useful.

This chapter describes the process for designing alien creatures for use in the game. It is a simple matter of assigning numbers based on your criteria for the creature. No point buy, no balancing acts.



There are guidelines for assigning stats, skills and traits. There are also guidelines for designing traits, much like the rules for designing technology traits.

The Alien Life-Form Burner mechanics are aimed primarily at the GM. He'll use them to design indigenous life-forms and hideous Vaylen creations. However, if the players are on the Vaylen side, they use them to design a few traits to represent the alien nature of their bodies.



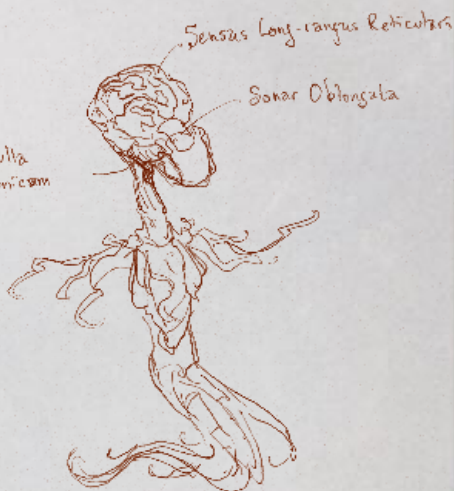
Throughout this section the GM is on his own recognizance. There is no watchdog, no monster police. It's up to the GM to honestly and fairly build the creature described in his concept. If you want to build foul, grungy vermin, go for it. If you want to build space kraken, be my guest.

## Indigenous Life-Forms

In the World Burner, the players may add alien life-forms to their planet via the Indigenous Life-Form faction. This faction represents a life-form that could be useful to the Vaylen in overthrowing the planet: dangerous wildlife, vital cattle or ubiquitous pets, for example.

### Life-Form Concept

What purpose does your life-form serve in the planetary ecology? Is it at the top of its food chain? Is it a hunter? What animals or flora sustain it? Is it a peaceful species of megafauna? What is its behavior like? Is it mid-tier on the food chain? If so, what animals feed on it? Does it serve some other alien purpose on the planet: a heat reflector, a radiation absorptive or an oxygen manufacturer? How does this life-form survive in the planetary atmosphere? How is the life-form adapted to the planetary hydrological conditions? What climate sustains it? Describe how the topography of the creature's native climate has shaped it. How has it adapted to survive? What are its most prominent adaptations?



Jot down your ideas. They'll help you answer the following questions and determine your creature's stats, skills and traits.

*I'm going to design a Vaylen Shudra—the ganasch from Sheva's War.*

## STATTING THE BEAST

Take your description of the life-form you've just conceived and compare it to the various stat exponents. Mark down the numbers you think are appropriate to your concept. It's that simple.

This section lists examples of stat exponents and the character types/stocks they are identified with. In addition, I've added some questions or comments that I associate with particular exponents. Choose the numbers you think are most appropriate, based on the descriptors.

### Will

**Exponent 1**— Naiven; socially handicapped  
*Is the creature non-sentient?*

**Exponent 4**— Human  
*Reasonably adept and socially able*

**Exponent 2**— Mukhadish, dogs; antisocial or gullible; Pole  
*Is the creature semi-sentient?*

**Exponent 5**— Trained psychologist  
*Hard to deceive or manipulate*

**Exponent 3**— Kernn, Ksatriya; intelligent social animals  
*A little gullible, like most of us*

**Exponent 6**— A charismatic leader  
*Strong-willed and naturally adept*

*Vaylen genetic creations may not have a Will higher than 6.*

### Perception

**Exponent 1**— Fungi  
*Almost unaware of its surroundings*

**Exponent 4**— Human, Kernn  
*Eventually he will have his moment of glory. Just a matter of time.*

**Exponent 2**— Sick cow  
*Does it notice things when prodded?*

**Exponent 5**— Vaishya, highly educated human, naturally adept or keen in the mind

**Exponent 3**— Mukhadish  
*Plain, straightforward, nothin' special*

**Exponent 6**— Very sharp, rarely misses a trick

*Vaylen creations and Indigenous Life-Forms may not have a Perception higher than exponent 6.*



## Agility

### Exponent 1— Fly larva

*Does it even have hands?*

### Exponent 2— A klutz

*Incredibly clumsy, has trouble clapping*

### Exponent 3— Mukhadish

*Big hands, fat fingers and a little clumsy*

### Exponent 4— Human

*We can get the job done*

### Exponent 5— Makara technicians

*Practiced hands/tentacles*

### Exponent 6— Kerrn close combat expert

*A born natural, oozing talent—never misses a catch or a throw*

### Exponent 7— Vaishyen master sculptor

*Near perfect hand- (claw-) eye coordination*

### Exponent 8—Super Ninja!

*He can run in a circle while juggling glasses, pouring wine and catching knives hurled at him.*

## Speed

### Exponent 1— Slug-like

*Does not rely on natural prowess to catch prey; it can't keep up.*

### Exponent 2— Turtle

*Does it move like a reptile on a cold, cold day?*

### Exponent 3— Old man

*A little pokey, but can keep up if need be*

### Exponent 4— Human, Mukhadish

*Does he move with the crowd, not slip and fall too often?*

### Exponent 5— Kerrn, Ganasch

*Is he graceful, coordinated or just quick on his feet?*

### Exponent 6— Trained sprinter

*Is he an athlete in peak physical form?*

### Exponent 7— Horse

*Is he among the nimblest? The quickest on his feet?*

### Exponent 8— Cheetah

*Without a doubt, no man is so fast and fluid*

### Exponent 9— Eerie grace and movement

*Like wind on a brisk day, rushing past*

### Exponent 10— Godlike speed

*Flawless poise, motion and follow-through*



## Power

### Exponent 1— Infant

*Can the creature barely carry its own weight? Is it small enough that a child could overpower it?*

### Exponent 2— Elderly human

*Is the creature feeble?*

### Exponent 3— Is the life-form simply a little weak?

*Doesn't exercise or even get out much; game designer Power*

### Exponent 4— Human

*Is the monster as strong as a physically fit human?*

### Exponent 5— Ksatriyen warrior caste

*Is he a practiced athlete or just a bad-ass?*

### Exponent 6— Shudren Hunter

*If he had hands, could he toss a table across the room?*

### Exponent 7— Kerrn

*Forceful*

### Exponent 8— Mukhadish

*Muscle-bound and freakishly strong*

### Exponent 9— Giant genetic mutant freak

*Superhumanly strong*

### Exponent 10—Space Kraken

*Is the monster as physically potent as they come?*

## Forte

### Exponent 1—Infant

*Is the creature vulnerable and frail?*

### Exponent 2—Elderly human

*Does a climb up the stairs leave him winded?*

### Exponent 3—Game designer, angry store owner from movies

*Can't run without stopping for breath*

### Exponent 4—Human

*Not the toughest, but not noticeably frail or weak, either*

### Exponent 5— Ksatriyen bodies

*Tough*

### Exponent 6— Shudren Hunter

*Brutish, solid*

### Exponent 7—Kerrn

*Relentless*

### Exponent 8—Mukhadish

*Incredibly durable*

### Exponent 9— Giant genetic mutant freak, Pole

*Unimaginably potent, nigh unstoppable*

### Exponent 10— Space Kraken

*Shrugs off death*



## Big as a House

All indigenous life-forms have a human scale Mortal Wound and human-scale Speed by default. It's possible, however, to design creatures with more fantastic abilities.

### **Vehicular and Superstructural Scale Mortal Wound**

If the creature is larger and/or tougher than a Mukhadish—built like a tank, tall as a house, generally gigantic—give it the Mammoth trait and a vehicular scale Mortal Wound.

If the creature is truly massive and/or built like a battleship, give it the Leviathan trait and a superstructural scale Mortal Wound.

In either case, the Mortal Wound tolerance exponent is equal to 6 plus the average of the creature's Power and Forte, rounded down. Take that number and place it in the appropriate scale, vehicular or superstructural.

#### *The Other Tolerances*

The Superficial tolerance for these creatures is equal to their Forte exponent. Place that in the next scale down from their Mortal Wound. If the Mortal Wound is in superstructural, the Superficial tolerance goes in the vehicular scale.

For the Injured result, add the Forte exponent to the Superficial tolerance. If the total is greater than 16, keep counting up, but place the tolerance in the next scale. Counting up, H17 would be V1, H18 would be V2, H19 would be V3, etc.

For the Maimed result, subtract the Forte exponent from the Mortal Wound tolerance.

### *Faster Than a Speeding Bullet*

#### **Ground, Atmospheric and Space Speed**

If the creature can travel along the ground at about 20 mph/15 kph or faster for great distances—hundreds of miles/kilometers—give it Ground Speed rather than regular human-scale Speed.

If your creature can fly—not glide—for long distances, give it Atmospheric Speed.

If your creature can propel itself through space/vacuum—possibly even making distortion jumps—grant it Space Speed.

See the Vehicles chapter for the mechanics on how those work.

### *Skill Burner*

In this section we look at the creature's occupation. I don't mean job, but simply the general role that it fills in his ecosystem.

#### **Occupations**

What does your creature do? Based on the world you have created and its role in that world, what skills does it need to survive?

Barring the myriad options of civilized society, there are a few occupations for alien life-forms: Ravager of the countryside, hunter/predator, scavenger, forager, parasite/symbiote or slave/domesticated beast. Within each category are, of course, a number of distinctions. What kind of society does the creature keep? Is it a solitary hunter? A pack hunter? As a scavenger, is it simply an hyena-like creature feeding on carrion? Or is the creature like a mean old tyrannosaurus rex, scaring away other predators and stealing their kills?

#### **Suggested Skills by Occupation**

A life-form's occupation determines what skills are available to it. These lists are by no means definitive; use them as guidelines only. The following skill blocks assume "uncivilized," mostly non-tool-using possibilities:





#### ***Hunter/Predator***

Husbandry, Close Combat, Physical Training, Conspicuous, Recon, Hunting, Intimidation, Observation, Infiltration, Survival, Forest-wise, Tree-wise, Animal-wise plus additional wises as appropriate.

#### ***Scavengers and Foragers***

Scavenging, Inconspicuous, Infiltration, Survival, Physical Training, Intimidation and wises.

#### ***Parasite/Symbiote***

Observation, Host-wise, Host Anatomy, and Infiltration.

#### ***Slave/Domesticated Beast***

Back-Breaking Labor, Begging and Inconspicuous.

#### ***Functionary/Tool***

This category describes life-forms dedicated to a certain purpose—born to kill, created to be part of a machine, etc. Typically, such creatures have very few skills, though they might be very good at them (5s at least). Focus skill choice on what is absolutely necessary to describe what this creature does. Trim anything that looks like fat.

#### ***Ravager of the Countryside***

Infiltration, Conspicuous, Close Combat, Intimidation and/or other appropriate martial skills. Also, include wises of the local area or other stuff that's appropriate to the concept.

### **How It Should Be Versus What It Is**

When determining your creature's skill set, take care not to dream too much and end up writing a laundry list of cool skills that it must have. Try to keep it simple. Focus. Be honest with yourself. What does he absolutely need to be who he is?

*A ganasch designed to capture humans for later hulling can be distilled down to two necessary skills: Close Combat and Infiltration. He really doesn't need too much else to be the hunting, capturing creature he was made to be.*

## Skill Point Totals = Experience

### Neophyte Versus Veteran

It is very difficult to make a blanket statement about how many skill points a veteran character has as opposed to a beginner. Due to the way skills are rooted in stats, their rankings can vary widely. A single skill point to a character with an exponent 7 or 8 stat is going to buy a lot more than it would for a character with an exponent 3 or 4 stat. Also many monsters have a small range of skills, but are reasonably skilled in those areas. Does this fact mean that they should get a veteran 35 skill points? No, take only what the monster needs and check the skill points against the recommended number of skills:

*A ganasch with an Agility of B4 has a Close Combat root of 2. One point opens the skill at that rank. Two more points advances that to 4, a level of proficiency. Another point, 4 points total, and he's an expert brawler (5).*

Here's a cheat sheet for a creature with a root of 2 (stat exponent of 4 or 5):

- 1 skill point opens skills at an exponent 2. "Just enough to get you in trouble."
- 2 skill points gives an exponent 3 skill.
- 3 skill points opens a skill at a level of proficiency (4).
- 4 points dedicated to a skill with a root of 2 gets a 5 exponent.

### Skill Point Total Summary

- 10 or fewer skill points is not a lot.

*10 skill points gets a creature with stats of 4 or 5: one skill at 5 (4 pts, costly!), one skill at 4 (3 pts), one skill at 3 (2 pts), and one skill at 2 (1 pt)—only four skills.*

- 11 to 15 skill points usually gets a nice range of moderately rated skills.

*13 skill points gets a creature with 4s and 5s: one skill at 5 (4 pts), one skill at 4 (3 pts), two skills at 3 (4 pts), and two skills at 2 (2 pt)—six skills.*

- 16 to 20 skill points is a lot.

*17 skill points gets a creature with 4s and 5s: one skill at 5 (4 pts), two skills at 4 (6 pts), three skills at 3 (6 pts), and one skill at 2 (1 pt)—seven skills.*

- 21 to 30 skill points makes an experienced veteran.

*25 skill points gets a creature with 4s and 5s: one skill at 6 (5 pts), one skill at 5 (4 pts), two skills at 4 (6 pts), four skills at 3 (8 pts), and two skills at 2 (2 pts)—ten skills.*

- More than 30 skill points usually gets you 15 skills at an average exponent 4.

## Alien Traits

Traits describe how a creature is *not* human. These traits are what makes him alien, so this section is pretty important.

### Cosmetic and Character Traits

Describe the creature's stature, form, head, arms, legs, personality and cosmetic look. If an element is similar to the human form, skip it. There is no need to describe what's similar—focus only on what's different.



Does he have pointy ears, fanged teeth, googly eyes, brightly colored flesh or shiny fur? These traits don't give bonuses or penalties, but they serve to set your creature apart from the rest of the cruel world.

### Body Concepts

Feel free to describe your creature in terms of familiar terrestrial fauna: Animals, fish, birds and insects often provide inspiration for creating alien creatures. The following is a list of possible body types: arachnid, decapoda, avian, chiropteran, canine, elephantine, floatie, frog-like, insect, porpoise, rabbit, reptilian, rodent, serpent, simian, slugs and snails, tortoise, ursine, ungulate and worm.

Mix and match body concepts. This stuff is all conceptual to start, but it helps develop firmer concepts for the inhuman traits.

*My creature is a mix between a chiropteran, a slug and a biped. It can't fly, but it retains vestigial wings. No fur, though—its skin is like a slug's.*

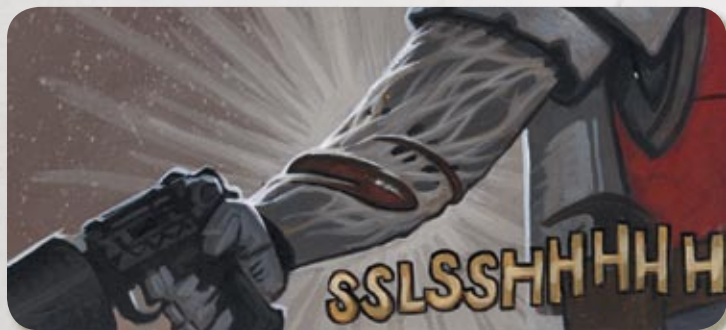


### Die Traits

Describe the most prominent aspects of your creature that will affect its use in gameplay: claws, teeth, camouflage, armored skin, poisonous blood, frail, slow, susceptible, blind, lack of thumbs, etc.

Use the Trait Burner section to design the mechanical effects of these traits.

## Trait Burner



Using the Trait Burner, you assign mechanical value to the description of your creature. The traits and adaptations you described when designing it can have beneficial or detrimental effects in play.

In order to create a sense of scale and value, the traits and their effects all have trait point costs attached. When creating indigenous life-forms, there is no limit for the point costs. Create what you need to describe the creature. Keep track of the trait points, so you are aware of just how potent the creature is. Most traits in the Trait List cost three to five points, so if your creature has a dozen 10 pt traits, you might want to review and revise him.

Trait points are also used in the Vaylen Eugenics section in this chapter.

### Designing a Trait

When designing a trait, don't worry about describing every aspect of how it would be were it real. Focus on what effect you want the trait to have in the game. What skill does it aid? What does it impede? What protection does it offer? Is it a weapon? Does it reduce a penalty for the creature? Does the trait create special circumstances for it to test an ability when it wouldn't otherwise be able to?



## Inhuman Ability

Can the creature fly? Breathe underwater? Survive in a vacuum? Inhuman Ability allows the creature to test a stat in a situation where he would not otherwise be able to test. If he can climb a wall, he can test his Speed to hoof it up a 90° angle. If he is hypersensitive, he can test his Perception to detect psychological activity. Without an appropriate trait, he wouldn't be able to test for either of these things.

Alternately, Inhuman Ability traits can allow a creature to forgo a test that other characters must make. If he can breathe underwater, he doesn't have to test his Forte to stay submerged, for example.

- Inhuman Ability that allows a test costs 3 pts.

*My creature can hear into the ultrasonic spectrum. He can test his Perception to hear sound above the range of human hearing. 3 pts.*

- Inhuman Ability that bypasses a test costs 5 pts.

*He's a Brute, too. He doesn't have to test his Steel when he suffers an Injury. 5 pts.*

## Superhuman Speed and Stature

- Surface Speed costs 6 pts. Atmospheric Speed (Flight) costs 10 pts. Space Speed (Flight) costs 20 pts.
- The Mammoth trait (vehicular Mortal Wound) costs 10 pts. Leviathan (superstructural Mortal Wound) costs 20 pts.

## Natural Advantage

Natural Advantage traits enhance skill exponents. Describe the creature's natural advantages. What skills do they aid and under what conditions do they function.

- Advantage dice cost 3 pts for the first die, + 2 pts for each additional die. This bonus only applies to a specific skill. Multiple traits may be bought to affect multiple skills.

*And of course, my creature is a supreme ninja. +1D to Close Combat and Infiltration (that's two traits: Supreme and Ninja).*

## Natural Obstacle

A Natural Obstacle trait is something the creature does that causes other characters to make a skill or stat test under certain conditions. It can represent the ability to spin webs or hide with camouflage or that the beast is covered in a gluey hide or surrounded by a toxic cloud.

Describe the trait, how it functions and the stat or skill you wish it to affect. When the conditions are met, the opposing character must make an appropriate test. The margin of failure for tests against a natural obstacle is applied to the victim's subsequent tests use of the targeted ability for the rest of the scene.

- An Ob 1 test costs 3 pts. + 1 pt per additional obstacle.

*Mm, tentacles. Under the folds of his vestigial wings—that hang about him like a cloak—is a mass of tentacles! The tentacles extrude a sedative to keep his victims subdued. The tentacles themselves are an obstacle—it takes an Ob 4 Power test to escape. The sedative is also an obstacle. Before you can escape, you must pass an Ob 4 Forte test, otherwise you are too sleepy to struggle. Sleep, my pet. Soon you will be Vaylen.*

### Natural Disadvantage

A creature might have deficient senses, be maimed or simply weak in a certain area. Describe the nature of the creature's natural disadvantage and what stat or skill it affects.

- It costs 3 pts for a + 1 Ob penalty to a stat or skill, and + 1 pt per additional obstacle.
- Permanent penalty dice from a skill cost 4 pts for the first die, + 1 pt per additional subtracted die.

*Let's see, my creature has no social skills, so giving him a penalty to social skills is lame. Same goes for technical or academic skills. Oh, I know! He's susceptible to Psychology. The creature suffers a +1 Ob when trying to resist a psychic duel or a lock.*

### Natural Armor

Natural armor can be leathery skin, chitinous plates, blubber or a myriad of other natural advantages that make the creature hard to kill. The real mechanical effect here is just to beef up the physical tolerances of the creature.

Natural Armor may only be taken by creatures with human-scale Mortal Wounds. The natural armor for Mammoth and Leviathan creatures is already factored into their physical tolerances.

- AT 1, 3 pts. AT 2, 5 pts. AT 3, 8 pts. AT 4, 10 pts. The costs are also for roughly human-sized monsters. Massive- and Gigantic-Statured creatures pay a + 1 and + 2 pt penalty respectively.
- Natural Armor Disadvantage: The level of ATs, one to four, increases Infiltration obstacles by the same amount.



*I dearly want Natural Armor for my ninja of death, but I don't want to have to take that Infiltration penalty. So I'll skip it. Who's going to see me coming anyway?*

## Natural Weapons

Some creatures possess natural weaponry. It can be as simple as claws, horns or bone spurs, or as complex as chemical sprays and spine throwers.

The simplest way to create these natural weapons is to choose a device from the weapons list, rename it and call it natural weaponry. For example, claws are equivalent to knives, sharpened bone spurs are swords, death dealing bioengineered body blades are kernn swords. Fiery breath can either be a chemical projector or a massive, plasma-blasting fusor equivalent. Whereas neuro-electric shocks are security batons with the Disrupter trait, and a spine thrower would be equivalent to a stet gun or maybe even an assault gun.

The weapon class, IMS, ammo and weapon traits all remain tied to the natural weapon. Consider how they translate into bio-organic structures and processes.

Mammoth creatures may support *vehicular weapons* requiring the Mounted trait, so long as their Power and Forte are both exponent 6 or higher. Leviathan creatures may support artillery, so long as their Power and Forte exponents are 6 or higher.

- Close Combat weapon equivalents: Knife, 2 pts. Sword/Axe, 3 pts. Security Baton, 4 pts. Kerrn Sword, 6 pts. Handgun, 3 pts. CEBW, 4 pts. SCrEW, 6 pts. Chemical Projector, 4 pts. Stet Gun, 4 pts.

*I want my creation to be able to spray chemicals from his mouth orifice. Chemical Projector, 4 pts. Awesome. Or how about deadly bone blades? Sword, 3 pts. Or how about monomolecular hair? Hm, Kerrn Sword, 6 pts.*

- Assault Weapon equivalents: Assault Gun, 5 pts. Assault Laser, 7 pts. Jack Laser, 6 pts. Infrasonic Disrupter, 10 pts.

*Or how about he can shoot spines? Assault Gun, 5 pts.*

- Squad Support Weapon equivalents: Heavy Assault Gun, 8 pts. Heavy Laser, 10 pts. Particle Accelerator Weapon, 15 pts. Fusor, 17 pts. Rifle, 7 pts. Mortar, 7 pts. MPIML, 10 pts. Effector, 15 pts.

*Spew a tongue of plasma? Particle Accelerator, 15 pts or Fusor, 17 pts.*

- Vehicular Weapons: Cannon, 18 pts. Fusion Gun, 20 pts.
- Artillery: Howitzer, 25 pts. Battery, 35 pts.

### Inhuman Skill

If a creature is born and bred to perform a certain skill, so much so that it possesses preternatural ability, grant it the Inhuman Skill trait. This trait causes one skill of the player's choosing to become open-ended for all rolls. 6s are rerolled as if for a Steel test or as if spending fate artha. This trait must be attached to a single, specific skill. It applies to all rolls for that skill.

- Inhuman Skill: costs 1 pt base, plus 1 pt per exponent of the skill.

*For example, to give the Inhuman Skill trait to an exponent 6 Close Combat skill costs seven trait points.*

### Reduce Hesitation

- 2 pts for the first point. + 2 pts per additional point.

### Tweak

Minor traits may be added to a creature to tweak how its roots or Mortal Wound is averaged or aptitude is factored. Alternately, the Tweak trait may be bought to add or change a condition under which a skill may be used: for example, using Close Combat to take Direct Fire actions in Firefight.

- Tweak traits that involve rounding or tweaking cost 2 pts.

*I want my creature to be tough. I'll buy a Tweak to round up when averaging his Power and Forte to determine his Mortal Wound. Also, I like the idea that my creature is susceptible to Psychology. I'll add another tweak: These creatures must accept a connection if offered one.*

- Tweak traits that modify a mechanical condition cost 6 pts each.

*Hm, this is a cheating category. I want my creature's Hunting skill to count as Tactics in Firefight. They're bred for death! So cheating. Costs 6 pts.*

## Finishing The Life-Form

After describing the life-form and designing its stats, skills and traits, you need to take care of a few minor things to finish it off.

Factor Steel as described in Step 11 of the Character Burner. Factor Mortal Wound as described in Step 12 of the Character Burner for creatures with human scale tolerances. For creatures with vehicular or superstructural scale tolerances, use the guidelines under Big as a House in this chapter.

In general, non-sentient/sapient life-forms don't use Resources and Circles, so don't worry about them. If your creature has a reputation and might use it to leverage its standing among the other indigenous life-forms, feel free to give it a few dice to play with. You never know.

Creatures also shouldn't have any technology to speak of. So don't worry about that either. Creatures, if need be, may take one free relationship as described in the Character Burner.

*Here are the traits and points for my bipedal-bat-slug hunter of doom, aka the ganasch (do not try this at home): Ultrasonic hearing, 3 pts. Brute—doesn't have to test his Steel when he suffers an Injury, 5 pts. Supreme ninja. +1D to Close Combat and Infiltration, 6 pts. Mass of Tentacles—Ob 4 Power test to escape, 6 pts. Sedative—you must pass an Ob 4 Forte test or fall asleep, 6 pts. Susceptible to Psychology—+1 Ob when trying to resist a psychic duel or a Lock, 3 pts. Spray chemicals from his mouth orifice, 4 pts. Deadly bone blades, 3 pts. Inhuman Close Combat Skill, 7 pts. Tough—round up when averaging his Power and Forte to determine his Mortal Wound, 2 pts. Supernatural Hunter—Hunting skill to count as Tactics in Firefight, 6 pts. Psychic Need—creatures must accept a connection if offered one, 6 pts. 57 trait points. Not bad!*

## Total the Trait Points

After designing the traits for your creature, total up the points spent and compare them to the basic totals for the Human, Vaylen, Kerrn and Mukhadish.

*Mukhadish common trait point totals: Gigantic Stature (tweak, 6 pts), Naiven Tube (tweak, 6 pts), Pug (character, 1 pt), Rending Claws (tweak 6 pts), Tough (tweak 2 pts): 21 pts.*

*Bred for Slavery is a special trait that is used for setting stat maximums for playable character stocks. These rules do not address its cost, since they don't discuss how to make playable character stocks.*

*Humans have a single common trait: Human. Like Bred for Slavery, it determines stat maximums and its cost is not within the purview of these rules. So, for all intents and purposes, humans have no common traits to speak of.*

*Naiven common trait points: The Worm trait serves two purposes. It is the same as Bred for Slavery and Human, but it also allows Naiven to slip into tight places, therefore: Worm (Inhuman Ability, 5 pts), Psycho-Endoparasitic (Inhuman Ability, 7 pts), Encoder (Inhuman Ability, 7 pts), Alien Control (Inhuman Ability, 3 pts): 22 pts for the worms.*



*Kerrn common trait points: Bioengineered Organism (Inhuman Ability, 5 pts), Kerrn Accent (character, 1 pt), Not Easy Being Green (character, 1 pt), Supermutated IgE (Inhuman Ability, 3 pts; Natural Advantage 7 pts): 17 pts for the green ones!*

*Massive Stature is a trait like Bred for Slavery, Human and Worm. Its cost is beyond the scope of these rules.*

## Vaylen Eugenics

Throughout their history, Vaylen have constructed myriad life-forms to suit their needs and hungers. This section describes how to bring these life-forms into the game.

There are two ways to bring them in: The Vaylen construct may be created prior to play as a host, or it may be grown during play as part of a maneuver involving eugenics.

### Vaylen Eugenics in Character Burning

When designing a Vaylen character, a player who chooses a Shudren, Vaishyen or Ksatriyen body is given trait points to spend in the Trait Burner so as to customize his particular Vaylen creation. These traits represent the host body's unique abilities—either stolen from an enslaved species or bred into the genes via the Vaishyen. The rest of the host body is represented in the stat maximums provided with each body type.


- Ksatriyen bodies may choose 5 pts of traits from the Natural Disadvantage, Natural Weapons, Natural Armor, Reduce Hesitation and Inhuman Ability categories.

*For my Ksatriyen warrior, I choose Natural Armor AT 1 and 1 pt in Reduce Hesitation.*

- Shudren may take 8 pts of traits from any trait category except Natural Advantage.

*For my Shudren slave, I choose Natural Weapons (knives) for 2 pts, Tough (round up for Power and Forte on Mortal Wound) for 2 pts and Waterbreather for 3 pts. I can add other trait points from my lifepaths, so I save that last point to buy another Alien Life-Form trait.*

- Vaishyen may embellish their bodies with 6 pts of traits from the Alien Life-Form chapter. Players may choose from the Natural Disadvantage, Inhuman Skill, Inhuman Ability, Natural Advantage and Tweak categories.



*For my Vaishyen, I choose Inhuman Skill (open-ended 6s) for his 5 Eugenics skill. That costs 6 pts. His body is built to manipulate the tech necessary to process genetic materials. He's a custom-designed organism.*

All Vaylen may supplement their body trait points with excess trait points from their lifepaths.

If the GM would like to provide *his* Vaylen with a different host body than what is provided, follow the guidelines below.

## **Creating New Hosts Prior to Play**

If the GM wants to create something unusual for his Vaylen, he must undertake two steps. First, he must burn up his Vaylen using the Vaylen lifepaths. Build up his stat pools, skill points and traits as per the standard rules.

Then use this chapter and create a new body for the Vaylen. Follow the guidelines for creating an Indigenous Life-Form. Give the creature a set of stats, a few innate skills and a suite of traits.

### ***Sentient and Sapien***

Determine if this creature is Sentient and Sapien. These are two special traits unavailable to typical indigenous life-forms. Is the creature capable of emotion, imagination and reason? These conditions are very rare! Only Makara, Vaishya, Ksatriya, Kernn, Shudra, Mukhadish and Human are sentient and sapient. If this creature is, simply pop the worm in! All of the character's skills, Resources and Circles may be translated to the new body.

If the creature is not Sentient and Sapien, the Naiven loses access to all social skills except Begging and Intimidation. He loses access to all academic type skills and all tool-using skills. He may keep the skills and wises appropriate to the creature's *occupation*. Naiven take on the intelligence of their hosts—if the host is sentient, then the Naiven becomes sentient. If the host is an animal, the Naiven becomes an animal. He regains his skills when he returns to a sentient host. He may of course switch bodies in play as described in the Vaylen chapter.

## **Building a Body in a Maneuver**

A Vaylen eugenicist may wish to create a host in play during a maneuver. Building new hosts may only be done in maneuvers that use the Eugenics skill in the Infection mechanics: Conserve and Inundate. The eugenicist does not have to win the maneuver, but the Eugenics skill must be used to make the test.

If this condition is met, the Vaylen may use his skill to great effect. He may create host creatures for his Naiven! Doing so uses a combination of the Tech Burner and Eugenics rules, much like Fabrication.

### Eugenics Obstacles

Design your host creature's stats, skills and traits using the following guidelines.

#### Eugenic Stats

Choose the creature's highest stat exponent: 1 to 6 for Perception, 1 to 4 for Will, 1 to 6 for Agility and Speed, 1 to 10 for Power and Forte. The highest exponent stat is the obstacle for the creature's stats.

The other stats do not count toward the obstacle, but they must obey the above maximums and these rules: The creature has one stat that is one exponent less than his highest. He has two stats that are two less than his highest, and two that are three less than his highest. If Power or Forte is the highest stat, count the "highest stat" as 6 when factoring the two less and three less stats.

*Bat Kraken has a Forte of 10. It's Ob 10 to create his stats. His other stats end up being Power 9 (one less than highest), Perception 4 (two less than 6, because highest is greater than 6), Speed 4 (two less than 6), Agility 3 and Will 3 (three less than 6).*

#### Eugenic Skills

Implanting skill and expertise is difficult even for a Vaylen eugenicist. The obstacle for a skill is equal to its exponent. Each skill is added to the overall exponent separately. It's much cheaper and easier to implant Naiven who have a little Shudren experience than it is to force-grow skills into a creature.

*If a eugenicist wants to force Close Combat 4 and Tactics 4 into his creature, that's Ob 8 added to his overall cost.*

#### Eugenic Traits

The obstacle to breed Alien Traits into a creature is equal to the point cost of the trait as described in the Trait Burner.

*If a Vaishyen Sculptor wants to grant his creation Inhuman Skill for his 4 Close Combat skill, it adds Ob 5 to the overall cost.*

*Therefore, Bat Kraken with Perception 4, Will 3, Agility 3, Speed 4, Power 9 and Forte 10 with Close Combat 4, Tactics 4 and the Inhuman Close Combat Skill will be an Ob 23 Eugenics test. Ouch.*



### Naiven Tube

All Eugenics projects get the Naiven Tube trait for free. It's just good etiquette to make these creatures easy to hull. The eugenecist may remove the trait from his creature at no cost if he wishes.

## Using Resources to Buy Body Parts

The Vaylen Eugenecist may transfer up to half of the Eugenics skill obstacle into a Technology Resources test. The remaining obstacle points are the obstacle for the Eugenics test.

*If the obstacle for the creation is 24, the player may take half of it—12 pts—as a Technology Resources test. The 12 remaining points are the obstacle for his Eugenics test.*

In order to undertake this process, the character must have the Eugenics skill. A player *cannot* make a Technology Resources test to generate genetic freaks without it! Manufacturing a host requires a building scene for the maneuver.



Grenda have a vertical mouth which secures from the triangular dark patches above the eyes (the Grenda's 'nose'; according to smelt) to about halfway down the develop. Half of the mouth has a bony jaw (the top half) lined with sharp teeth. The lower half of the mouth is lined with flat layers of muscle only. It allows large 'burn bits of meat' to pass into the Grenda's stomach (the Grenda cannot chew, only tear large chunks of meat off of an animal and cook them down outside). The opening in the develop also passes a Grenda's neobionts into the world.



Alien  
Life-Form  
Burner



## PLAYING THE GAME

This chapter puts the game together and talks about integrating world burning, character burning, the Infection and actual play.

### *Sitting Down to Play*

As you may or may not have noticed, Burning Empires can be very competitive. There is opportunity in the structure of the game to stick it hard to the other players. However, it's also a collaborative roleplaying game. You sit down with your friends to create an enjoyable (albeit intense) story. Don't lose sight of that as you play—you are playing with your friends.

We've found that it helps the game immeasurably to get together beforehand and just hang out for a bit—eat, chat, gossip and talk about the session you're about to play.

When you're ready to sit down and play Burning Empires, you should have the following ready: A comfortable place to play. Chairs and table are strongly recommended. Couches, floors and televisions tend to distract from the intensity of the game. Appropriate music is nice. Taste will vary from group to group, but see the Musicography for our recommendations. Snacks and drinks are useful, too. We prefer tea, coffee, wasabi peas, trail mix and bite-sized brownies. Pencils, blank sheets of paper and a few handfuls of six-sided dice are required.

You'll need a copy of the Burning Empires book. And I strongly urge you to visit our website, [burningempires.com](http://burningempires.com) or [burningwheel.com](http://burningwheel.com), to download various play aids—character sheets, world burner sheets, etc.—if you can. If you have the pdf, I recommend printing out extra copies of the lifepaths, skills and trait lists to pass around for the first session. You can also order booklets of the lifepaths, skills and traits from our website.



# Play Overview

## First Session of a New Campaign

The first session of a Burning Empires campaign consists of two parts—world burning and character burning. Set aside an evening of play for this process. Using the World Burner and Character Burner, your group creates your setting, important characters and the main conflict that must be confronted. As soon as you finish world burning, create the characters' concepts, Beliefs and relationships to suit your setting.

If the players don't finish tallying numbers for their characters during the first session due to all the lively discussion, that's OK. Finishing their numbers is homework. Characters and subordinates should be completed and ready for review and play before the next session.

## Between the First and Second Sessions

The GM has some prep work to do between the first and second sessions. It's probably the only prep work he'll have to do for the whole game, so don't get scared.

The GM must burn up the NPC figures of note. It is imperative that these three characters be fully fleshed out and ready to rumble. If the GM skimps on this, he's handing the players a huge advantage. No vague concept he rattles around his head and makes up numbers for is going to have the depth and subtlety necessary to challenge the players in the Infection, Duel of Wits and Firefight mechanics. Trust me. Burn them.

His other duty is to create the planetary web that will guide him in creating situations to challenge the players. To do so, he'll need the characters' Beliefs and a list of their relationships. More on that in a minute.

## Second Session

At the start of the second session, the players and GM should review all of the characters in play, PC or NPC. Look at their Beliefs. Make sure that everyone is tied into the situation. The GM should check that the numbers don't break the exponent limits and that everything is filled out—like Steel and hesitation, the physical tolerances and Resources.

### *Phase Objective*

After the world is burned and the characters are settled, each side must choose what they want to accomplish this phase. The GM sets his objective first. Do they want to destroy a faction? Interfere with the regulations? Oust a figure of note? Or something else? Talk about what



your goals are for the phase and then write them down. Your objective forms the backbone of the overarching conflict of your game.

### *First Situation*

After objectives are set, the GM has the option to fire off the first situation—an overarching conflict into which the characters are drawn. Use the ideas from the Hooks section below if you're stuck, or simply start throwing obstacles in the way of the characters' Beliefs. The initial situation should be a live hand grenade thrown in the players' collective lap.

If the GM is stuck for initial ideas, or if he'd prefer, he may turn the reins over to the players. Where would they like to start? What's the crisis? What's compelling them to act?

### *First Maneuver*

Be careful not to start playing! Once your situation is set, each side needs to decide its first Infection maneuver. The GM decides first. What are his villains trying to accomplish right now? What do they hope to achieve with their first conflict? What maneuver is most applicable to their goals? He privately notes his maneuver.

After the GM has selected his maneuver, the players choose theirs. Since the GM has already decided and written his maneuver, the players may discuss theirs in the open. What goals do they want to accomplish right now? What conflicts do they have to engage in to make the attempt? What maneuver is most appropriate to those goals? Each maneuver should be a step toward fulfilling the phase objective.

### *Play Ball!*

After the maneuvers have been decided, jump into play. Player and GM: Describe where your characters are and what they are doing via color scenes. Pull each other aside with interstitials. Start exploring the situation. What's going on? Who knows what? Where do you stand? Use building scenes to build momentum: gather information, make contacts, bring in technology. Be proactive! Do not wait for the GM to come to you. Start pushing toward the goal of your maneuver. Soon, within a few minutes probably, one character is going to need to convince another character of something, or someone's going to get into a tussle. Bam: Conflict. Set the statement of purpose/objective for your conflict and dive in.

After your conflict is complete, give the other side a chance. Let them have a few building scenes and a conflict. Check to make sure everyone has had their scenes—everyone who did not initiate a conflict gets a



building scene. Use those remaining building scenes to polish off the maneuver. Use them to make sure your goals for the maneuver were at least attempted. Even if you failed the rolls, the attempt counts!

As you finish those last few quick building scenes, you'll start to feel it in your collective gut: the maneuver's over. Stop roleplaying for a minute and come up for air.

### ***Reveal Maneuvers***

After completing the conflicts and building scenes, reveal the maneuvers and announce the current disposition for each side. Determine who will make the roll for the maneuver for each side. Who was featured prominently in the previous set of conflicts? Once this is set, tally up available help. Only characters who gave the prominent character a helping die, linked die or connection die in the maneuver of play may help with the Infection roll. Roll the dice and factor the results into the dispositions.

### ***Sequels***

Take a minute and describe the big picture based on the results of the maneuvers. The losers describe what they were after; the winners then tell them what really happened and how the maneuver affected the world at large. Use sequels to create mood and atmosphere, and to set the stage for the next set of conflicts.

### ***Award Artha, Change Beliefs***

Award artha for playing Beliefs or for playing against Instincts. Do a quick vote for Embodiment, MVP and Workhorse. Grant the GM artha for engagement. Announce any Belief-goals that were accomplished (and take your persona point). Discuss if any Beliefs or Instincts need to be changed. Double check to make sure everyone marked their advancements from the previous round of play. This stuff should take no more than ten minutes.

### ***Choose a Second Maneuver***

After awarding artha and reviewing Beliefs, it's a good time for the players to take a bathroom or snack break. The GM should consult the Beliefs of his figures of note. What do they need to do to accomplish their nefarious aims? What do they need to do to counter the players' plots? Write down a list of three things you want to accomplish *right now*. Choose a maneuver appropriate to those goals and announce that the players may now choose their maneuver.

The players briefly discuss their options and choices based on how the situation has developed in play. Once again, it's helpful to make a



short list of things the group wants to accomplish right now. Choose a maneuver appropriate to those priorities.

### *Play On!*

Play out the scenes and conflicts as described above. After about two hours of play, when everyone has had a building scene or initiated a conflict, the maneuver will start to wind down. Stop the action and

reveal your maneuvers, describe the sequel, discuss artha and Beliefs. After that, stop play.

### *The End of the Session*

Do not choose your next maneuver. Talk about what you want to get done in the next session. The GM should make a list of three conflicts he wants for the next game. The players should kibitz about what happened in play. But do not choose the next maneuver!

## **Third, Fourth, Fifth Sessions**

The third, fourth and fifth sessions are similar to the second, except for their beginnings. Instead of reviewing and checking the characters at the head of these sessions, the GM should review what happened last session. Recap the action with a “last issue...” page. Discuss any Duels of Wits or Firefights. What were the objectives? What were the concessions? Get those grudges and thoughts of revenge fresh in everyone’s minds! Recap the maneuvers used last session and their effects on the dispositions: Who won, who lost?

After the recap, choose the maneuvers as described above and then get to playing! The session otherwise has the same structure as described above.

Repeat this process for two or three sessions—until one side gets down to ten points or so in its disposition.

## **The Last Session**

Once a side hits 10 disposition or less, the blood is in the water. Artha’s going to flow, gambits will be made, stunts will be pulled and this will most likely be the last session of the phase.





Pull out all the stops. Go for broke! If you're losing, drag your enemies down with you. If you're winning, crush them utterly, without mercy! Leave no Belief unresolved—you have nothing to lose.

Once one side is reduced to zero disposition—after the first or second maneuver of the night—the phase is over. There's a winner and a loser. Go through the Epilogue process as described at the end of the Infection mechanics. Talk about how it all ends. Nations down in flames or the underdog victorious? Describe all the cool stuff that comes about due to your victory or defeat.

Talk about whether you want to keep playing this world or move on to another one. Do you want to keep playing your characters or bring in new ones? If you want to keep playing, set up the next phase! There are old scores to be settled, debts to be repaid and new plots to hatch. These are the situations for the next phase.

## Drawing The Planetary Web

The planetary web shows how all of the factions, figures of note, characters, Beliefs and relationships are woven together. You can download this sheet from our website: [www.burningempires.com](http://www.burningempires.com).

This sheet becomes a map of the conflict for this phase. Write in all the applicable elements: figures of note, other characters, relationships, factions, the industry, military and government. If non-figure of note

Planet:                      Phase:

Figure of Note                      Figure of Note

player character/relationship                      player character/relationship

player character/relationship                      player character/relationship

player character/relationship                      player character/relationship

Figure of Note                      Figure of Note

player character/relationship                      player character/relationship

player character/relationship                      player character/relationship

player character/relationship                      player character/relationship

Figure of Note                      Figure of Note

player character/relationship                      player character/relationship

player character/relationship                      player character/relationship

player character/relationship                      player character/relationship

Faction                      Faction                      Faction

Industry/Export                      Government                      Military

Faction                      Faction                      Faction

Ties:                      Relationship:                      Belief:                      ➡

Playing  
the Game

## THE BURNING WHEEL

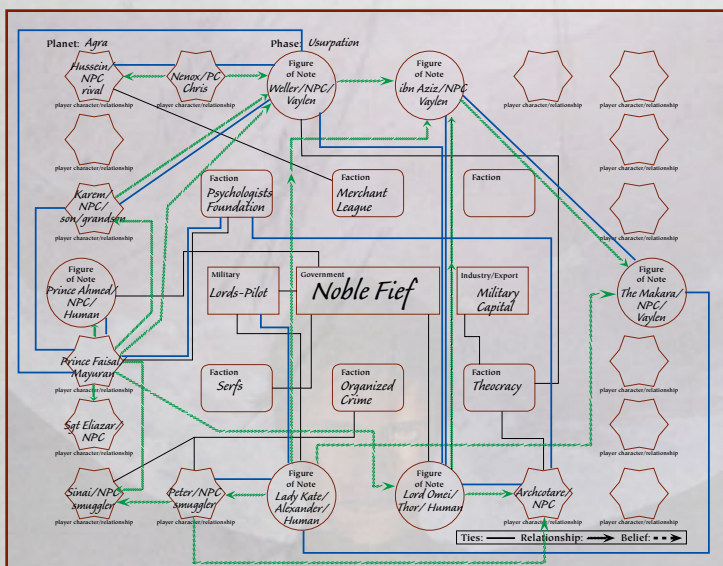
characters lead a faction, the industry, the military or the government, write them into their applicable organization box. Don't put them at the periphery as a character/relationship.

Draw a solid line ( — ) between any of the elements that are tied together by the ideas set down in the world burning process. Does one of the figures of note lead one of the factions? Draw a solid line from that figure to his faction. Does the government control the military? Draw a solid line between them. Does a faction control the industry? Draw a solid line between them.

Draw a hashed line ( // ) between characters and figures of note with relationships. On the line, write what type of relationship it is—employer, father, offspring, best friend, etc.—and note if the relationship is a hostile one or not.

To indicate Beliefs, draw a dashed line ending in an arrow ( - - ➔ ) starting at the character with the Belief and ending on the character or organization to which the Belief points. Sometimes a single Belief will point to multiple objects. "I will wrest my sister from the grasp of the cult," for example, points at both the sister relationship and the cult churches faction. Draw two arrows from the character, one to the sister and one to the faction.

This sheet is a spider's web in which to become enmeshed. All of the players' priorities are laid out on it. Challenging the players is a matter





of recognizing what they hold important and then threatening it in some way. Not just with violence, but with betrayal, abandonment, and the worm. Players designed these priorities, so they'll likely respond well to such pressure!

The job of the GM is to take the elements the players have built into the game and put them in jeopardy. It is not his job to destroy them, but to endanger them in such a way that the players *want* to act.

## Hooks

Hooks are bits of situation—little sparks—to scatter over your players to start the fire. If you're at a loss for ideas for that first session, look at the lists below. Pick a suggestion appropriate to your world and apply it to your figures of note, relationships and factions. Insert their names, faces, details, etc., then play it out! No holds barred!

### How to Hook into the Infiltration

Bribe an official. Infiltrate the black market. Fund or seed the black market. Smuggle regulated/quarantined goods. Smuggle Naiven. Smuggle genetic material for Vaylen hosts. Become a member of an opposing or vulnerable faction/government/military. Establish a base of operations at a remote location. Establish a base of operations right under their noses—like in a hospital, orphanage or church.

### How to Hook into the Usurpation

Kidnap your rival's children. Extort information from corrupt officials. Disappear opposition leaders. Gun your enemies down in the streets. Wage war for turf. Change the leadership in a faction/government/military. Murder a prominent leader/politician/general/noble/psychologist. Convince a person to spy for your side. Sabotage infrastructure—security networks, regulatory bodies, signals relays. Use propaganda to turn the population against once-popular figures. Manufacture, distribute and sell “anti-Vaylen” drugs or “anti-psychologist” tinfoil headgear and then hull everyone in sight.

### How to Hook into the Invasion

Order an attack along the front. Attack your enemy's resources and property. Destroy factional headquarters. Destroy a vital supply depot/space station/railhead/bridge/installation. Destroy government headquarters. Blockade a spaceport. Blast your opposition with propaganda. Assassinate an enemy general. Round up civilians in areas under your control: Protect them from hulling, or if you're Vaylen, round them up and hull them all then send them fleeing into your enemy as



refugees. Assault an enemy troop concentration. Retreat to a mountain fastness and rebuild your battered forces. Bombard something from orbit—just to show you can.

### Build Toward Conflict

To experienced roleplayers, this bit of advice is old news: Always build toward the big conflict. Going for the big payoff, the big fight, right at the get-go usually just complicates more than it solves. People tend to isolate or turn on mavericks and rash actors. So build up momentum and consensus. The whole group has got to be in on those big conflicts. Not only will you need the other players' help, *but you really want to be sure they're not helping the other side.*

Therefore, use your color, interstitial and building scenes to gather resources and allies. The Infection is a game of strategy! The group as a whole must husband its resources—advance skills, gain artha and secure allied characters—before making big moves. Talk to each other. Roleplay it out.

Use the building scenes to reinforce your strategy. The vast majority of building scenes can be used as linked tests toward *something*. Use that to your advantage. Always be handing each other dice. It strengthens your side measurably.

Use smaller conflicts to prep for the big ones. Use the building scenes to isolate your opponents, so you can hit them one by one. If you know your opposition has a big advantage or strong allies, use the Duel of Wits to scare off or subvert his cohorts.

Use Firefights to engage in terrorism and assassination. Don't engage the enemy en masse. Keep to small unit engagements if possible. Pick your battles. But when the GM comes knocking with his own Firefight, make your objective *costly*. Make that compromise hurt.

Finally, at the moment of your choosing, gather your allies and resources and go on the offensive! After the fourth or fifth session, if you've planned your strategy correctly, you will have lots of characters to call on for help and lots of technology to back you up. Engage your enemy in a conflict and bring that help to bear—other player characters and relationships. Hit hard!



## Big Picture

Burning Empires engages the players in two levels of play simultaneously: the personal and the big picture.

All of the action of the game takes place on the personal level. It is defined by and contained in the actions of the player characters. Scenes, conflicts, Firefights, Resources tests, debates, making contacts, piloting vehicles, building technology and cracking security systems all happen on the personal level—they are all driven by the direct action of a player through his character.

There's a level of action and strategy in the game that overarches the personal level. There's a big picture, a "behind the scenes." The big picture is encompassed by the World Burner, the Infection mechanics and particularly by the prequel, sequel and epilogue mechanics.

Anything beyond the scope of individual or personal action is handled by the Infection mechanics: uprisings, trends, wars, cultural movements, disasters, elections, coups, genocide, riots, etc. This stuff is outside of the characters' direct influence. Sure, they may have a hand in it, but there are too many other factors in play for them to have a direct impact. They may be fighting battles of the war directly, but the final outcome is determined by Infection mechanics. When these larger-than-life elements come into play, cut away from the characters. Stop before the big red button is pushed. Use the Infection mechanics to determine how the characters' personal actions ramify upwards and outwards.

One of the most fun aspects of this game is figuring out what just happened in the space between the individual action and the big picture. There's a huge gap there. The prequel, sequel and epilogue mechanics are designed to create space for the players to fill in the details and reasons with imagination and description.

It's vital to do so. Without that kind of player input and investment—without talking about how cool that maneuver was and what it all means now—the game is flat. It needs players to run!

*You had a blazing success on the personal level, but got clobbered in the Infection? Something didn't go as planned. Your personal victory had some blowback. How? Why? What happened? Tell us! Describe what's going on elsewhere the world and how that is affecting your success (or failure). The results of play, big picture and little, are on the table before you. Connect the dots!*

### Setting Color

In this game, setting is provided in the form of the lifepaths, skills and traits in the World Burner, Technology Burner, Vehicles, Security and Firefight chapters. These are the foundations and underpinnings of the fiction from which Burning Empires was born. But they are just the skeleton.

It's imperative that the group build on and embellish that foundation. This is the fun stuff: the cities, styles, fashions, foods, music, art, accents and slang! The choices made in the World Burner will point in a certain direction and give clues to how the setting might exist, but the vital and colorful details are left to the players.

Flesh out the setting as play progresses. Use the color and interstitial scenes to build up the world as play progresses. It's a fun and safe way to build your setting. No one does extra work, and everyone gets a chance to buy in. What's more, the choices made about the setting are meaningful and center on the conflicts at hand.

Set up juxtapositions and irony in your setting. The Vaylen want to be human. Some will be utterly convinced they are human. Perhaps some will even have conflicting Beliefs as they are torn between their new consciousness and their loyalties to their race. If the players are playing inhuman, soulless human characters, juxtapose them with Vaylen who are compassionate, thoughtful and vulnerable. Attach them to one another. Make it hurt when the Vaylen have got to go.

The GM can flesh out the setting—both locales and characters—in order to create reasonable opposition for the players. If he needs a sergeant to make the scene go, he gets one. If an installation should have a security network, it's got one.

### GM's Authority

All of the GM's points, pools, figures of note and characters serve one purpose: to provide opposition, create adversity and foment conflict for the players. The GM, whether playing human or Vaylen, is the foil to the other side. His role is to get in their way and challenge them.

The GM is not the sole arbiter of the rules. He may not disregard rules as he sees fit and may not add others as he chooses. The rules are meant to stand on their own. Both player and GM abide by them—and call





each other on breaking or bending them. Nor is the GM's role to "create the story." The story will emerge on its own as the GM challenges the players and as both sides push toward their respective objectives.

The GM's role in this game is quite fun. Since he doesn't have to worry about playing God, he's freed up to play the game. He gets to make a few characters, strategize his long-term plan and play the game to win.

That's right, win. If the GM doesn't play to win in this game, he's doing the players a disservice. Quite possibly, he's killing their fun. Does it mean he can just drop space rocks on the player characters, kill them and win by fiat? No. Are there any rules for winning by fiat in this game? No. The GM's got to see his plans made fruitful via the conflicts and the Infection. If he wants to bombard the planet with space rocks, that's a Gambit, Inundate or Take Action maneuver. The bombardment's effect is determined by the resolution of the action. But even being successful isn't enough. If he wants to win, he must reduce the players' disposition to zero. Then and only then does he win.

And what does he win? He stops the players from getting their objective, and he gets what he set out as his phase objective. So even then, winning is not total. Anything not covered in the phase objective isn't affected or is open to discussion as per the Epilogue guidelines.

Also, the GM is in a unique position. He can see the big picture—what the players are doing, as well as what the opposition is up to and plans to do. His perspective grants the power to hold off on one action while another player moves forward, so that the two pieces intersect dramatically at the table. More than any other player, the GM controls the flow and pacing of the game. It is, in fact, his job to keep the game moving. The best way to do this is by calling for a test. If the game is dragging, the GM should ask, "Is there a conflict here? What do you want?" He may not prevent a player from getting his scenes in a maneuver, but he can push a waffling player to move on. If there's a conflict or test to be made, he may demand the players roll for it and move on.

Most important, the GM is responsible for introducing complications to the story and consequences to the players' choices. Burning Empires is all about choices—from the minute you start creating a character, you are making hard choices. Once play begins, as players choose their paths, it is the GM's job to inject resonant and meaningful ramifications into play. A character commits a murder. No big deal, right? Well, there's

justice and revenge to consider—that's the obvious stuff—but there's also big picture elements to consider: Whole provinces have risen in revolt due to one errant murder....

### My Favorite Obstacle

Another duty of the GM does is to set the obstacles for tests or determine if a test is a versus or open test. It is his prime tool for challenging the players. And a lot of players cry foul that the GM can seemingly set an arbitrary difficulty for their goals. Well, tough luck, I say to them. Someone has got to make these challenges hard. In this game, the GM does that heavy lifting. His role is to challenge the players—setting obstacles is fundamental to that opposition.

The skill list details a lot of sample obstacles for tests. It's best to look there first when trying to determine the difficulty of a task. If nothing is listed there, and the test is not versus or open, then the GM gets to lay down the obstacle.

My favorite obstacle is 3. It's great. Let me explain why. Ob 2 is easy. Even a character with a skill of 3 is likely to pass an Ob 2 test. On the other hand, Ob 4 or 5 are just darn hard. It takes a character with six or eight dice at his disposal to have a good shot at an Ob 4 or 5. But Ob 3 sits right in the middle there. It's achievable with three, four or five dice, but there's also a risk of failure even when rolling eight or nine dice. It's this nice, comfy statistical zone in the system. When in doubt, set your obstacle at 3!

Of course you need Ob 2 (or even Ob 1) tests to make the world go round. Not every action is difficult, and Routine tests are needed for advancement. So, if an action is perfunctory or dead easy, don't hesitate to hand out an Ob 1 or 2 action.

Obstacle 4 and higher tests are equally vital, but they are dangerous. When setting a high obstacle, you're saying, "Hey, this stuff is important! But you're probably not going to get what you want." See the danger there? You want this, but you can't have it! It's kind of messed up. But these high obstacles are the sharp means by which the GM challenges the players. High obstacles make them sit up and take notice. Be clear about what the player gets if he succeeds. Let him know just how important the test is. That way he can spend artha, use FoRKs and get help according to his priorities.



## The GM's Special Powers: I Am Adversity

The GM's palette with which he can paint challenges consists of the setting, characters and situation established in the world burning and character burning process. He does not have unlimited reach or scope. He cannot just bring in whatever he wants; he can't do whatever strikes his fancy.

He's got to use the World Burner, Character Burner, Infection, Scenes and Conflicts, Duel of Wits and Firefight mechanics in the same fashion as the players.

He has a little leeway in the Infection mechanics: He doesn't have to give himself helping dice in the scenes to get helping dice for the maneuvers. His characters can help each other in the Infection mechanics so long as he features them in the scenes during the maneuver. It can be color or an interstitial; no dice need be rolled. Their presence in the scene is enough to get help for the Infection.

The most powerful special rules for the GM are his special Resources and Circles pools. He can spend Resource points during his scenes to bring hard tech into the game using the same rules for buying tech during character burning. Spend a point, get a gun, a ship or a fortress. Reduce the Resources exponent and carry on. No roll required.

Same goes for Circles. Forgot to bring in a bodyguard for a major villain? No problem. Just knock off two circles points and he's in the scene. The difference between Circles and Resources is that these points need to be set aside during character burning. The GM may not reduce reputations, affiliations or base Circles.

Using his freedom in the color and interstitials plus his ability to bring tech and contacts into the game without testing, the GM has weight in his favor with which he can test the players.

## Group Authority

The play group as a whole has a few responsibilities and areas of authority.

The group is responsible for making sure the physical space of the game is comfortable and conducive to good play (no sleepy couches or TVs). And they are to make sure folks arrive on time, so play can get started promptly.



The group as a whole is responsible for knowing the game mechanics and rules. Burning Empires is not a game in which the GM reads the rules and then spoon feeds them to the rest of the players. It's quite the opposite. Every player has equal say at the table and all are supposed to know how to use the rules to their collective and individual advantage. The group must make sure the mechanics of the game run smoothly, make sense and gel with the story/actual play at hand.

The group has the authority to discuss, veto or reinforce the various intents offered during play—both by the players and the GM. If you think your opponent's intent is weak, don't laugh into your sleeve and savor an easy victory. Tell your opponent that he's not pushing hard enough. Help him come up with better stakes for this conflict.

The group as a whole is responsible for each member's fun. The GM is not there solely to entertain you, neither is a player a monkey performing a song and dance for a jaded audience. Make sure that, whether the game is humorous or dramatic, everyone is involved and enjoys themselves. Participate: Help enhance your friends' scenes and step forward and make the most of your own.

### *Player Authority*

In Burning Empires games, individual players have responsibility and authority to offer hooks to the GM and the other players in the form of Beliefs, Instincts and traits. A player character's Belief is a point that must be addressed in game. Every player has the right to get his points and themes addressed.

Players have the authority to introduce information about their characters, the world, the culture and technology. They have the right and authority to build skeletons of their characters' backgrounds, but not to fill in all the details before play. Let the character develop as play advances—certainly don't write a history in which all the adventure has already happened.

Players in Burning Empires must use their characters to drive the story forward—to resolve conflicts and create new ones. Players are supposed to push and risk their characters, so they grow and change in unforeseen ways.

Introduce color! The color scenes and color tech mechanics are hard and fast rules—not mere suggestions or guidelines. The player has the authority to evoke bits of the setting as he envisions them. On the surface, it may not seem like much, since there are no dice to back them



up, but they are very powerful tools. With them, the player can easily capture the imagination of the other players and the GM and make the story that much cooler.

Use the other mechanics! Players are expected to call for a Duel of Wits or a Circles test or to demand a Firefight when chasing down the Inquisition's gunship. Don't wait for the GM to invoke a rule—invoke the damn thing yourself and get the story moving! Do not shy away from conflict.

If what's happening doesn't interest you, create interesting situations and involve yourself. Be proactive.

Above all, have fun. Listen to the other players, riff off of them. Take their leads and run with them. Expand on their madness, but also rein them in when they get out of hand. Remember that you're playing in a group, and everyone has to have fun.



Playing  
the Game



# CONTACTS AND NPCs

## CONTACTS

When a player or the GM brings a character into play via a Circles roll, that character is considered a contact. Contacts are minor characters, little more than extras who serve some function for player or GM. Contacts all come into the game with an exponent attached to their abilities.

If skill exponent is unimportant, then the contact has a 3 in any skill appropriate to his role. If the contact was brought into play with skill exponents higher than 3s—using the increased obstacles for Circles—he has a primary skill at his exponent, plus an appropriate secondary skill at one exponent lower.

## NPCs

### Crucial Opposition

If there is a character whom the players must confront, and you know about him before the session, burn him up. An Anvil Captain who's going to be leading the opposition in a Firefight, for example. It takes about 20 minutes to put together a rough character. He gets all the perks of traits, Beliefs and Instincts. Having a fleshed out set of skills and traits is vital for those game moments where the whole group will be struggling to topple some monumental opposition. A high stat or skill is nice, but in order for an NPC to stand up to all the wild stunts players will pull, he's got to have the full benefit of FoRKs, wises, traits and technology!

### One-Off NPCs

Occasionally, a GM will need to quickly yank a character into play in order to stand up to the players—a lord-pilot anvil, a security guard, a hit man, a Vaylen sleeper, a Kerrn mehdeek, etc. If this character will be used for help or to make rolls, use the guidelines for contacts. He gets two skills, one higher than the other.





If the character is part of the anvil, hammer or Vaylen clan, be sure to give him the benefit of those trait affiliation's exponents. Otherwise, give the character an exponent 4 primary skill and an exponent 3 wise or secondary skill.

Alternately, if you can find a match for the character in the following section, Burned NPCs, use those instead. Always better to give the players some stiff opposition.

### ***One-Off NPC Stats***

For stats, NPCs start at base 4s. If they are very old (50 + ) or very young ( < 15), then 3s may be assigned to applicable stats. If the character is experienced or particularly able, then certain stats are raised to 5s.

### ***One-Off NPC Physical Tolerances***

Follow these simple guidelines to generate quick physical tolerances:

- If the NPC has 3s for stats: H3 Superficial, H5 Injury, H7 Maimed and H9 Mortal Wound.
- If the NPC has 4s for stats: H3 Superficial, H5 Injury, H8 Maimed and H10 Mortal Wound.
- If the NPC has 5s for stats: H3 Superficial, H6 Injury, H9 Maimed and H11 Mortal Wound.
- If the NPC has 6s for stats: H4 Superficial, H7 Injury, H10 Maimed and H12 Mortal Wound.

### ***One-Off NPC Gear***

NPCs have whatever technology and weapons are appropriate to their station. As a rule, I've found it best to remain conservative when doling out NPC gear. Whatever you give them eventually makes its way into the players' hands.

### ***One-Off NPC Traits***

If the NPCs are important to the scene or story, part of some distinct group or all from a particular lifepath, I will assign them a lifepath trait. Otherwise, I don't worry about it.

*A Lord-Pilot Anvil in iron must have the Corvus and Crucis trait, otherwise he'd not be able to pilot his armor.*

### ***One-Off NPC Beliefs***

One-off NPCs get one simple, single Belief that is relevant to the scene at hand and that I can come up with off the top of my head. The Belief

is meant to be a guide and reminder to the GM to keep the scene focused and moving.

## One-Off NPC Instincts

Keep NPC Instincts ultrasimple. Center them on the character's behavior—details needed to make the character go. If you can't come up with anything on the fly, then the NPC doesn't need an Instinct. Skip it and move on.

*Assassins have the "Sleep with one eye open" Instinct. Guards have the "Shout when surprised" Instinct.*

## Burned NPCs

What follows is a list of characters created using the lifepaths.

### Anvil Captain

**Lifepaths:** Born to Freeman, Service Worker, Parent, Soldier, Scout, Anvil Elite, Lieutenant, Anvil Captain

**Age:** 45

**Stats:** Will 4, Perception 4, Agility 4, Speed 3, Power 4, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 7 (hesitation 5), Circles 2, Resources 5

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3, Injured H5, Maimed H8, Mortal H10

**Traits:** Working Class, Abused, Hater, Raw-Nerved, FUGAZI, Cold, Anvil Trained, Clean Cut, Seen it All, Kilgore

**Skills:** Customer-wise 2, Food Service 2, Child Rearing 2, Child-wise 2, Soldiering 3, Recon 4, Observation 4, Survival 4, Squad Support Weapons 4, Command 4, Intimidation 4, Sergeant-wise 2, Strategy 4, Assault Weapons 3, Anvil-wise 2, Forged Lord-wise 3, Hammer-wise 2, Terrain-wise 3

**Technology:** Anvil Armor, Recon Lenses, Jack Laser and Heavy Assault Gun.

**Affiliations:** Anvil 2D, Anvil Captains 2D

### Anvil Elite

**Lifepaths:** Born to Freeman, Runner, Soldier, Sergeant, Anvil Elite

**Age:** 22

**Stats:** Will 4, Perception 4, Agility 6, Speed 4, Power 5, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 6 (hesitation 5), Circles 2, Resources 1

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3, Injured H5, Maimed H8, Mortal H10

**Traits:** Working Class, Troubled, "Seen Too Much, Too Young," FUGAZI, Oddly Likeable, Booming Voice, Anvil Trained

**Skills:** Anvil-wise 4, Inconspicuous 3, Officer-wise 3, Soldiering 2, Tactics 4, Intimidation 4, Slacker-wise 4, Zero G 3 Squad Support Weapons 5 (or Assault Weapons 5)

**Technology:** MPIML or Rifle or Assault Laser, Anvil Armor

**Affiliations:** Anvil Elite 1D

### Hammer Captain

**Lifepaths:** Born to Rule, Cæptir, Armiger, Lord-Pilot Hammer, Hammer Captain

**Age:** 32

**Stats:** Will 4, Perception 4, Agility 5, Speed 3, Power 4, Forte 5

**Attributes:** Steel 7 (hesitation 5), Circles 2, Resources 4

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3, Injured H5, Maimed H8, Mortal H10

**Traits:** Mark of Privilege, Your Lordship, Anvil Trained, Corvus and Crucis, "Hammer Flies, Anvil Dies," Officer, Stern Demeanor

**Skills:** Close Combat 2, Etiquette 2, Assault Weapons 2, Command 5, Helm 4, Navigation 4, Vehicle Weapons 3, Zero G 2, Strategy 3, Hammer-wise 2, Space Station-wise 2, Spaceport-wise 2, Interdiction-wise 2, Pilot 5

**Technology:** Hammer Cruiser, Assault Shuttle, CEBW

**Affiliations:** Hammer Crew 2D, Hammer 2D



## Ksatriyen Sergeant

**Lifepaths:** Meshhen Naiven, Bhriugu, Ansa, Angiris

**Naiven Age:** 30, Apparent Age: 30

**Stats:** Will 3, Perception 3, Agility 5, Speed 4, Power 4, Forte 5

**Attributes:** Steel 5 (hesitation 7), Circles 1, Resources 2

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3, Injured H5, Maimed H8, Mortal H10

**Traits:** Meshhen Clan, Anvil Trained, Disciplined, Galvanizing Presence, Squinty.

**Skills:** Soldiering 2, Assault Weapons 3, Field Dressing 4, Squad Support Weapons 1, Tactics 4, Command 4, Bhriugu-wise 1

**Technology:** Tactical Uplink Computer (+2D Tactics), Jack Laser

**Affiliations:** Ksatriyen "Anvil" ID

## Kern

**Lifepaths:** Born Kern, Solzjah, Ahnveel, Mürk, Kern

**Age:** 25

**Stats:** Will 3, Perception 3, Agility 6, Speed 4, Power 6, Forte 7

**Attributes:** Steel 7 (hesitation 7), Circles 1, Resources 4

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H4, Injured H7, Maimed H10, Mortal H12

**Traits:** Gentle Giant, Outcast, Empathic, "I, Solzjah," Anvil Trained, No Nonsense, Emperor's Armor Bearer

**Skills:** Human-wise 1, Soldiering 2, Assault Weapons 4, Squad Support Weapons 4, Intimidation 3, Close Combat 4, Conspicuous 1, Command 4, Conflict-wise 1, Imperial Anvil-wise 2

**Technology:** Fusor, Anvil Armor, Kern Sword, SCARÉ grenades

**Affiliations:** Kern Assault Brigade 2D, Kern Mürks ID, Anvil ID, Solzjah ID

## Kern Oprvaeta

**Lifepaths:** Born Kahlakesh, Reegah, Ay-Gāngah, Crao, Verseeay, Trawttuhl

**Age:** 22

**Stats:** Will 3, Perception 4, Agility 4, Speed 4, Power 6, Forte 6

**Attributes:** Steel 6 (hesitation 7), Circles 1, Resources 2

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H4, Injured H7, Maimed H10, Mortal H12

**Traits:** Cryptic, Sentimental, Empathic, Curious, Bad Egg, Tinkerer, Need for Speed, Irradiated

**Skills:** Zero G 4, Close Combat 3, Jury-Rigging 3, Shipwreck-wise 2, Scavenging 3, Crew 2, Airlock-wise 2, Cleaning-wise 2, Repair 5, Tools-wise 2, Pilot 3, Shuttle-wise 2, Tug-wise 2, Fusion Dynamics 4, Radiation-wise 2, Power Pack-wise 2

**Technology:** Shuttle, Fusion Dynamics kit, Repair tools, SCREW

**Affiliations:** Omship Oprvaetas 2D, Omship Tug Pilots 2D

## Lord-Pilot Anvil

**Lifepaths:** Born To Rule, Coeptir, Court Armiger, Stentor, Lord-Pilot Anvil

**Age:** 30

**Stats:** Will 4, Perception 4, Agility 4, Speed 4, Power 5, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 7 (hesitation 6), Circles 2, Resources 3

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3, Injured H5, Maimed H8, Mortal H10

**Traits:** Mark of Privilege, Your Lordship, Anvil Trained, Appreciative of Good Craft, Corvus and Crucis, Iron Trained

**Skills:** Close Combat 4, Etiquette 4, Assault Weapons 4, Intimidation 4, Iron-wise 4, Squad Support Weapons 4, Tactics 4, Iron-wise 3

**Technology:** Index 4 Iron, Assault Laser, CEBW

**Affiliations:** Lords-Pilot 2D, Anvil ID, Nobility ID

## Lord-Pilot Hammer

**Lifepaths:** Born to the League, Student, Yeoman, Hammer Engineer, First Officer, Lord-Pilot Hammer

**Age:** 37

**Stats:** Will 4, Perception 4, Agility 4, Speed 4, Power 4, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 6 (hesitation 5), Circles 2, Resources 2

NPCs



**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3, Injured H5, Maimed H8, Mortal H10

**Traits:** Capitalist at Heart, "I Know This Ship Like My Own Hands," Hazed, Hard Nosed, Corvus and Crucis, Distortion Monkey, "Hammer Flies, Anvil Dies", Brave

**Skills:** Institutional Drudgery-wise 2, Crew 2, Munitions 3, Fabrication 3, Command 4, Pilot 4, Helm 4, Navigation 4, Vehicular Weapons 5, Zero G 3, Ship Management 4, Tactics 3

**Technology:** CEBW, Hammer Patrol Craft, Anvil

**Affiliations:** Hammer Crew 2D, Hammer Fleet 1D

## Mukhadish Leg Breaker

**Lifepaths:** Born in Captivity, Lost, Monstrosity, Pet, Lifter, Leg Breaker

**Age:** 24

**Stats:** Will 3, Perception 3, Agility 4, Speed 4, Power 6, Forte 6

**Attributes:** Steel 6 (hesitation 4), Circles 1, Resources 0.

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H4, Injured H7, Maimed H10, Mortal H12

**Traits:** Abandoned, Enraged, "Yes, Boss", Brute, Tragic, Gentle, Obedient, Fearless

**Skills:** Dark Shattered Underbelly-wise 4, Undercity-wise 2, Physical Training 4, Drain-wise 1, Hunting 4, Conspicuous 1, Trains-wise 2, Master-wise 1, Ugly Truth 2, Back-Breaking Labor 1, Repair 3, Intimidation 1, Close Combat 3, Bone-wise 3

**Technology:** Heavy Assault Gun, Brick

**Affiliations:** Da Boss's Organization 1D, Pretty Girl's Wealthy Family 1D

## Mukhadish Wild Monster

**Lifepaths:** Born Wild, Bogey, Manhunter, Brute, Wild Bull

**Age:** 31

**Stats:** Will 2, Perception 4, Agility 4, Speed 5, Power 8, Forte 8

**Attributes:** Steel 7 (hesitation 5), Circles 1, Resources 3

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H5, Injured H9, Maimed 12, Mortal H14

**Traits:** Brute, Boor, Fearless, Lifting Heavy Things.

**Skills:** Physical Training 4, Infiltration 4, Hunting 4, Man-wise 2, Village-wise 2, Intimidation 4, Close Combat 5, Cow-wise 2, Wasteland-wise 3

**Affiliations:** 3D Wild Mukhadish Herd, 1D Slave Mukhadish

## Soldier

**Lifepaths:** Born Citizen, Student, Soldier

**Age:** 21

**Stats:** Will 3, Perception 4, Agility 5, Speed 4, Power 4, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 6 (hesitation 7), Circles 1, Resources 0

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3, Injured H5, Maimed H8, Mortal H10

**Traits:** Educated, Broken, FUGAZI, Jaded.

**Skills:** History 3, Rhetoric 2, Cop-wise 2, Soldiering 2, Assault Weapons 4, Close Combat 3

**Technology:** Assault Gun, Ballistic Armor, HE Grenades

**Affiliations:** Anvil 1D.

## Vaishyen Sculptor

**Lifepaths:** Yaadasahm Naiven, Technician, Encoder, Sculptor

**Naiven Age:** 34. **Apparent Age:** 34

**Stats:** Will 5, Perception 6, Agility 4, Speed 3, Power 3, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 6 (hesitation 5), Circles 2, Resources 6

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3, Injured H5, Maimed H7, Mortal H9

**Traits:** Makara Clan, Cold, Genius, Steady Hands, Clinical.

**Skills:** Science 5, Physics 3, Cryonics 4, Human Technology-wise 3, Lost Secrets-wise 5, Eugenics 5, Genetics-wise 4, Naiven-wise 3, Surgery 5, Human Biology 4, Alien Biology 4, Human Body-wise 4, Alien Biology-wise 3, Mad Experiment-wise 5

**Technology:** Operating Theater, Cryonic Tanks, Eugenics Vats



## Vaylen Cult Leader

**Lifepaths:** Meshhen Naiven, Bhriгу,  
Ascetic, Cultist, Cultist, Cult Leader

**Naiven Age:** 40. **Apparent Age:** 29

**Stats:** Will 5, Perception 4, Agility 4,  
Speed 4, Power 3, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 6 (hesitation 4),  
Circles 2, Resources 5

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3,  
Injury H5, Maimed H7, Mortal H9

**Traits:** Meshhen Clan, Stoic, Surreptitious,  
Ambitious, Manipulative, Imperious  
Demeanor, Order Before Chaos

**Skills:** Soldiering 2, Survival 4,  
Meditation 5, Philosophy-wise 3,  
Human-wise 4, Obscure History 3,  
Gullible Mark-wise 4, Cult Doctrine 5,  
Falsehood 5, Cult-wise 4, Heretical  
Doctrine 5, Oratory 6, Cultist-wise 4,  
Persuasion 5

**Affiliations:** 3D Cult

**Relationship:** Mukhadish Bodyguard

## Vaylen Human

**Lifepaths:** Vibhuuten Naiven, Child, Eris,  
Syzygy, Princess

**Naiven Age:** 27. **Apparent Age:** 19

**Stats:** Will 6, Perception 4, Agility 4,  
Speed 4, Power 3, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 5 (hesitation 4),  
Circles 3, Resources 6

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3,  
Injury H5, Maimed H7, Mortal H9

**Traits:** Vibhuuten Clan, Bizarre, Innocent,  
Beautiful, Peacemaker, Charming,  
Chimerical, Rule of Three, Diplomatic

**Skills:** Child-wise 2, Ugly Truth 5,  
Falsehood 5, Seduction 5, Disguise 4,  
Inconspicuous 5, Relationship-wise 2,  
Erotic-wise 2, Etiquette 5, Bargaining 4,  
Deal-wise 2, Intrigue-wise 3,  
Persuasion 6, Foreign Languages 2,  
Caste-wise 2

**Technology:** Disguise Kit

**Affiliations:** Vaylen Human 3D, Vaylen  
Sleepers 3D

## Vaylen Sleeper

**Lifepaths:** Meshhen Naiven, Bhriгу,  
Dharakka, Karttikeya, Sakti, Sleeper

**Age:** 42

**Stats:** Will 4, Perception 4, Agility 4,  
Speed 4, Power 4, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 6 (hesitation 3),  
Circles 1, Resources 0

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3, In  
H5, Ma H8, Mortal H10

**Traits:** Meshhen Clan, Unassuming,  
Fearless

**Skills:** Soldiering 2, Assault Weapons 2,  
Fortifications 2, Explosives 5, Terrain-  
wise 2, Detonator-wise 2, Armorer 2,  
Munitions 4, Weapon-wise 2,  
Explosives-wise 3, Ammunition-  
wise 2, Sensors 4, Signals 4, Security 4,  
Profile-wise 2, Inconspicuous 5,  
Security-wise 2, City-wise 2,  
Infrastructure-wise 2, Close Combat 4

**Technology:** SCARe explosives, Brick,  
Explosives/Munitions Workshop, Signals  
Rig (tools), Jack Laser, SCrEW, Bread  
Truck drawn by Christopher Moeller.

**Affiliations:** Vaylen Sleeper Cells 2D,  
Criminal Underworld 1D

## Vaylen Shudra

**Lifepaths:** Aadau Naiven, Seeker, Skanda,  
Skanda

**Naiven Age:** 26. **Apparent Age:** 26

**Stats:** Will 2, Perception 3, Agility 6,  
Speed 6, Power 6, Forte 4

**Attributes:** Steel 6 (hesitation 8),  
Circles 1, Resources 1

**Physical Tolerances:** Superficial H3,  
Injured H5, Maimed H9, Mortal 11

**Traits:** Aadau Clan, Quiet, Eye for Place,  
Cunning, Charging Blindly, Crazy!

**Skills:** Recon 4, Survival 2, Terrain-wise 1,  
Hunting 4, Infiltration 6, Close Combat 4

**Technology:** Implanted Command  
Transmitter, Implanted Signals Scanner  
(Signals 6 automation)



NPCs

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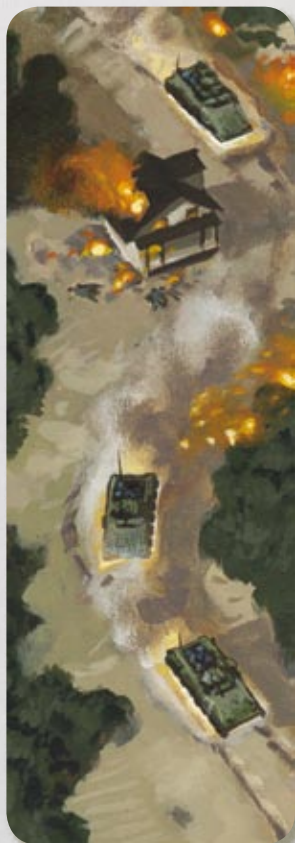
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## Skills

1D	2D	3D	4D	5D	6D	7D	8D	9D	10D
11D	12D	13D	14D	15D	16D	17D	18D	19D	20D
21D	22D	23D	24D	25D	26D	27D	28D	29D	30D
31D	32D	33D	34D	35D	36D	37D	38D	39D	40D
41D	42D	43D	44D	45D	46D	47D	48D	49D	50D
51D	52D	53D	54D	55D	56D	57D	58D	59D	60D
61D	62D	63D	64D	65D	66D	67D	68D	69D	70D
71D	72D	73D	74D	75D	76D	77D	78D	79D	80D
81D	82D	83D	84D	85D	86D	87D	88D	89D	90D
91D	92D	93D	94D	95D	96D	97D	98D	99D	100D

## Skills Being Learned

1D	2D	3D	4D	5D	6D	7D	8D	9D	10D
11D	12D	13D	14D	15D	16D	17D	18D	19D	20D
21D	22D	23D	24D	25D	26D	27D	28D	29D	30D
31D	32D	33D	34D	35D	36D	37D	38D	39D	40D
41D	42D	43D	44D	45D	46D	47D	48D	49D	50D
51D	52D	53D	54D	55D	56D	57D	58D	59D	60D
61D	62D	63D	64D	65D	66D	67D	68D	69D	70D
71D	72D	73D	74D	75D	76D	77D	78D	79D	80D
81D	82D	83D	84D	85D	86D	87D	88D	89D	90D
91D	92D	93D	94D	95D	96D	97D	98D	99D	100D

## Human Scale

*Word Effects: 25 Important, -10, 15 Major, -40, 10 Minor, -50, 10 Neutral, 0*

1D	2D	3D	4D	5D	6D	7D	8D	9D	10D
11D	12D	13D	14D	15D	16D	17D	18D	19D	20D
21D	22D	23D	24D	25D	26D	27D	28D	29D	30D
31D	32D	33D	34D	35D	36D	37D	38D	39D	40D
41D	42D	43D	44D	45D	46D	47D	48D	49D	50D
51D	52D	53D	54D	55D	56D	57D	58D	59D	60D
61D	62D	63D	64D	65D	66D	67D	68D	69D	70D
71D	72D	73D	74D	75D	76D	77D	78D	79D	80D
81D	82D	83D	84D	85D	86D	87D	88D	89D	90D
91D	92D	93D	94D	95D	96D	97D	98D	99D	100D

### Difficulty of Test by Dice Rolled

*Test to Pass    Repeating    Difficult    Challenging*

1D	2D-1	3D-1	4D-1
2D	3D-1	4D-2	5D-1
3D	4D-2	5D-3	6D-1
4D	5D-3	6D-4	7D-1
5D	6D-4	7D-5	8D-1
6D	7D-5	8D-6	9D-1
7D	8D-6	9D-7	10D-1
8D	9D-7	10D-8	11D-1
9D	10D-8	11D-9	12D-1
10D	11D-9	12D-10	13D-1
11D	12D-10	13D-11	14D-1
12D	13D-11	14D-12	15D-1
13D	14D-12	15D-13	16D-1
14D	15D-13	16D-14	17D-1
15D	16D-14	17D-15	18D-1
16D	17D-15	18D-16	19D-1
17D	18D-16	19D-17	20D-1
18D	19D-17	20D-18	21D-1
19D	20D-18	21D-19	22D-1
20D	21D-19	22D-20	23D-1

Obstacle of Test

## Notes

## Pending Linked Tests



## THE BURNING WHEEL



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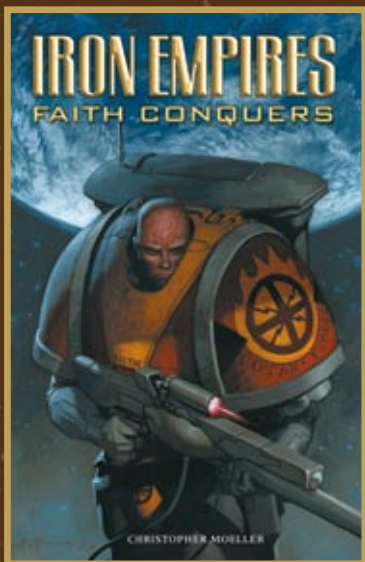
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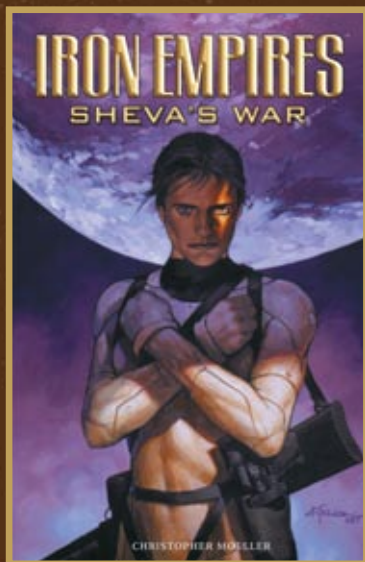
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