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The ExperienceImperial Film Corps
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System DL



System DL Rules (Freeware Edition)

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I: Welcome aboard!

Welcome to System DL, a new direction in role-playing! System DL is completely diceless. Put away those polyhedrons, they're no good here. Trust me, you won't miss them, except maybe as something to rattle around, build teetering towers in the middle of the playing area with and accidentally drop into the nachos. After all, if, as Einstein once said, God doesn't play dice with the Universe, then why should you?

This page contains information gamers and GMs will need to know to play System DL in a fantasy milieu: how the rules work, how to create characters, and how to do stuff. Many rules have been "dumbed down" or completely ignored from the commercially available version, but this version should still be quite playable.

In this file, **bold text** introduces important concepts or procedures, terminology unique to System DL, and precedes examples or important notes.

II: The stats

In System DL, **all characters have four characteristics**, or "stats," which make up their basic physical, mental, and metaphysical attributes. Each stat is rated on a simple 1-to-5 scale, as follows:

- 1--Very Low
- 2--Low
- 3--Average
- 4--High
- 5--Very High

These four stats are:

BODY--Both a measure of raw strength and general physical fitness. People with high BODY scores can carry larger burdens, run longer distances, and take more punishment than those with low BODY scores.

MOVE--A combination of agility and dexterity. People with high MOVE scores can run faster, jump higher,

and dodge blows better than those with low MOVE scores.

MIND--Intelligence and cleverness. People with high MIND scores can spot clues better, haggle more effectively, and persuade attackers to stop hitting them better than those with low MIND scores.

LUCK--The LUCK score is less a stat than a point pool, representing in a general way the reserves the character can draw upon to exceed his or her normal capacity. Unlike the other stats, the LUCK score rises and falls during a game session, though it can never rise above its initial score or fall below 0. People with high LUCK scores tend to succeed more at dangerous actions than those with low LUCK scores; however, when they do fail, it can be spectacular.

To generate a character's base stats, divide 12 points up between them, remembering the bottom limit of 1 and top limit of 5 in each stat.

III: Skills

Beginning characters get 12 points to divide up as skills, the special fields of expertise in which a person has bettered him/herself. Skill levels are ranked as follows:

- 1--Basic training
- 2--Professional competency
- 3--Exceptional skill
- 4--World famed
- 5--Undisputed master

Starting characters normally can't take any skill above level 2. The skills list is given in [Appendix A](#).

This game treats a skill as an "add" to one of the stats whenever the character attempts to use the skill. For instance, a person with MOVE 3 and the MOVE skill Swordplay 2 would have a **Skill Total (ST)** of 5 whenever she uses a sword. Unlike stats, which remain unchanged without radical GM intervention, skills can increase as the character gains experience.

IV: Secondary stats

Besides the base stats and skills, characters have two other point scores to keep track of: **Damage Points (DPs)** and **Stun Points (SPs)**. DPs are a numerical approximation of how much physical damage someone can take before dying; SPs equal the amount of stun damage a character can take before falling unconscious.

DPs are calculated by adding BODY and MOVE scores together, plus the character's Resist Damage skill if the character has points in the skill. SPs are calculated by adding BODY and MIND scores together, plus the character's Resist Damage skill as above.

V: Background Points and finishing touches

Background Points help simulate those experiences the character has had before beginning a life of adventure. Beginning characters start with 4 BPs, and can gain extra BPs by taking background flaws. The background list is given in [Appendix B](#) below.

All characters begin the game with 100 Crowns to buy equipment, which may be increased according to background options taken. Now is also a good time to crystallize specifics: sex, height, weight, age, eye/hair

color, and any quirks of attitude or appearance.

VI: Rollover points

As characters progress in a game, they naturally get better at their skills (practice makes perfect, after all). System DL reflects this experience in the number of Rollover points (so named because the total *rolls over* from adventure to adventure) gained after completing an adventure. Players can trade in RPs to raise Skill Levels, buy new skills, or spent on last-minute "saves" to temporarily increase a Skill Total when needed. Beginning characters normally have no RPs to start.

Once the players complete an adventure, the GM gives all surviving characters a RP reward between 1 and 5 points, depending on the scope of the quest, whether it was completed successfully, good roleplaying on the player's part, and the like.

To raise a skill one level, or to purchase a new skill at SN 1, the player must spend (current SN 2) + 3 Rollover points. Skills cannot go up more than one level per adventure.

VII: How to do stuff

System DL uses a simple point-comparison system to determine an action's success or failure. If a character's Skill Total (or, if the character has no applicable skill, the base stat) is higher than the **Difficulty Level (DL)**, the character succeeds. If the ST is less than or equal to the Difficulty, the action fails. The GM will not come right out and tell the players the DL; they should, however, be able to infer it from the GM's description. As a rule of thumb, a DN of 6 is an Average task, DN 1 is Very Easy, and DN 12+ would be Nearly Impossible.

Once characters attempt an action, the GM judges the results based upon the difference between the Skill Total and the Difficulty Level. The exact results depend upon the situation and dramatic license on the GM's part. Positive results give more beneficial results, the higher the better. Negative results result in failure, with the exception of LUCK and Rollover point use, as explained in the next section. Exactly equal results are equivocal, giving half success if possible, or a simple failure if not.

VIII: Spending LUCK and Rollover points

Sometimes a person needs a little boost, an extra point or two to complete an action. This is where Rollover points come in. **Characters who spend LUCK or Rollover points on an action automatically succeed**, within certain limits. If the total of the Skill Total and the number of LUCK points is less than or equal to the Difficulty, the success comes with a price, usually an attendant annoyance. If the ST + RP + LUCK total is higher than the DL, the success is without complications, and often garners extra benefits.

Rollover points spent this way are lost forever. However, LUCK points can be replenished during play. **To regain LUCK points, players must bid failures on significant actions.** "Significant actions" include any action which would further the plot, would particularly benefit the group as a whole, or would create an interesting (or amusing) complication if failed. The player bids the severity of the failure as well, from a minimum of 1 point to a maximum of the character's original LUCK score. Immediately after declaring a failure, the character receives that many LUCK points to be spent on any further actions that turn. **Characters cannot have LUCK point totals higher than their original scores.**

IX: Initiative and taking turns

In System DL, a *turn* is a nebulous amount of time (approximately 5 to 15 seconds) in which each character can do something of relatively equal complexity. **Characters declare actions in descending order of MOVE scores.** The GM resolves each action before the next player declares his or her action. Characters with equal MOVE scores are assumed to perform their actions simultaneously; that is, the results of their actions are not applied until everyone with the same MOVE score have completed their turn. **EXCEPTION:** PCs take their actions before NPCs with equal MOVE scores. The turn ends when all characters have attempted one action.

During a turn, a character may take two actions, provided at least one of them is an automatic action. An **automatic action** is any action which is so basic, it doesn't need a skill check for success. Movement, ducking for cover, and drawing or loading a weapon are all examples of automatic actions. For instance, a person could move and attack, cover and reload a weapon, or move twice (the equivalent of running) in one turn, but could not make two separate attacks or hit someone and pick a lock in the same turn, since neither of those actions is automatic.

X: Resisted actions

In System DL, a **resisted action** is any action taken by any character against any other character (PC or NPC). Attacking a goblin with a sword, bribing a guard, or selling a horse to a skeptical patron are all resisted actions. Since both participants can spend LUCK and Rollover points, resolving such actions becomes a little more complex:

- **If one character spends more LUCK points than the other, the higher LUCK total wins.**
- **If neither character spends LUCK points, or both characters spend the same number of LUCK points, the character with the higher (Skill Total + Rollover points spent) wins.**
- **If ST + RP totals are equal, the character with the higher base ST wins.**
- **If both characters have equal base STs, a Standoff develops (see below).**

Declaring resisted actions is a three-part process:

1. **The player (or GM) says what he or she wants the character to do and decides whether the character is going to spend LUCK or Rollover points, but doesn't declare LUCK or Rollover point bids yet.**
2. **The GM (or opposing player) decides whether the character spends LUCK or Rollover points in reply.**
3. **The player (or GM) then declares LUCK or Rollover point bids, as decided in step 1.**

XI: Range and movement

The basic System DL unit of distance is the "Range," which is used to approximate the distance between objects or characters. The actual length of a Range varies, according to the terrain, local conditions and the like, but averages about 10 feet. Using this distance as a guide, two people standing within 10 feet of each other are 0 Ranges apart, 10 to 19 feet from each other are 1 Range apart, 20 to 29 feet from each other are 2 Ranges apart, and so on.

A normal human's "move" is equal to his or her MOVE (Running ST) in Ranges. A character may move up to this distance in one turn as an automatic action. A character may also take two "moves" in one turn,

traveling twice this distance but also being unable to take any other action.

A person who does nothing else can also sprint, taking three "moves" in one turn. For each turn a character sprints, Difficulty goes up 1 versus BODY (Endurance ST). For instance, a continually sprinting man pits his BODY or Endurance skill against a Difficulty Number of 1 on the first turn, DN 2 on the second turn, DN 3 the third, etc. This cumulative DN goes down 1 point per turn in which the sprinter either makes only one "move" or doesn't move at all.

Some weapons can be used at a distance. In System DL, ranged weapons have a Range Number, which suggests how accurate the weapon is. **The Gamemaster divides the distance between the attacker and the target in Ranges by the weapon's Range Number, rounds the result down, and subtracts the result from the attacker's Skill Total.**

XII. Combat basics

Combat in System DL is normally run as a series of opposed actions between characters, in descending order of MOVE scores using the initiative rules above. The attacker, when it's his or her turn, declares which target is being attacked, and decides, but doesn't declare, whether to spend LUCK or Rollover Points. The target then decides whether to spend LUCK or Rollover Points to resist the attack. Everyone declares their bids and the success or failure of the attack is decided normally.

If the attack succeeds, the target takes damage. **All weapons have a set amount of damage they do; this base number is modified by the difference between the attacker's weapon (or Brawling) ST and the opponent's Dodge (or Brawling) ST.** In cases in which the attacker wins by a deficit (by spending LUCK points), the difference reduces the damage, but never to less than 1 point. Weapons and their damage scores can be found in [Appendix C](#).

Normally, damage by normal weapons is taken directly from the Physical Damage score. However, a player can deflect or even negate this damage as follows:

- **A character can take Stun Damage instead of Physical Damage. The player can convert one or more points of Physical Damage to Stun Damage on a 1-to-2 basis; for example, 1 PD becomes 2 SD, 2 PD becomes 4 SD, and so on.**
- **A character can reduce damage by spending LUCK or Rollover Points, on a one-to-one basis.**
- **The damage can be reduced or negated due to armor or shield use (see below).**

Weapons that do Stun Damage instead of Physical Damage use the same rules as above, except that targets cannot take Stun Damage as Physical Damage.

A character reduced to 0 Stun Damage points is immediately knocked unconscious, and will only awaken after he or she has regained SD points through rest or healing (see Healing, below). If the SD score drops below 0, the character will have to regenerate more points before awakening; for example, a person reduced to -3 SD will have to regenerate 4 SD points (usually taking about four hours) before regaining consciousness.

A character reduced to 0 Physical Damage points falls unconscious (comatose), and will remain so until he or she has regained PD points through healing (see Healing, below). **If a character's PD score is reduced below 0, he or she is in immediate danger of dying.** The character must immediately spend as many LUCK or Rollover Points as he or she has negative PD points (for example, someone reduced to -2 PD must spend 2 LUCK or RP's), or begin slipping toward death at a rate of 1 additional PD point per turn. When a character reaches -8 PD, he or she dies.

This downward slide can be halted if the wounded receives immediate medical attention from any character with the Medicine skill. If a medic is tending to the injured person, he or she temporarily halts the slide, but will begin again if the tending doctor takes any other action. If the tending doctor pits his or her Medicine ST versus a Difficulty of *twice* the wounded's negative PD score (for example, Difficulty 6 for a character with -3 PD) and wins, the doctor can halt the slide completely. **If the doctor's Skill Total is higher than this Difficulty, the patient will instantly regain as many PD points as the difference.** If this bonus raises the patient's PD score above 0, the patient will awaken (unless his or her Stun Damage score is also 0 or below) and be able to act normally.

XIII. Healing

Normal human characters naturally regenerate 1 Stun Damage point per game hour until they reach their maximum SD scores. Proper application of stimulants (drugs, smelling salts, and the like) will immediately add SD points to their totals, the number depending upon the method used. However, these artificially generated SD points will dissipate at an equal rate of 1 per hour, effectively halting natural regeneration for as many hours as points regained.

Characters also regenerate Physical Damage points, but at a slower rate: 1 point per game day, up to the character's maximum PD score. If the wounded character is resting under the constant medical care of a physician who passes a daily test of Medicine skill, the patient may regenerate 2 PD points per day.

XIV. Armor and shields

There are hundreds of different types of armor, and even two armors of similar make won't protect in exactly the same way. Consequently, there are only three different armor types in System DL Freeware: light (1), medium (2), and heavy (3). It's up to the player to decide what type of armor it is for descriptive, repair or replacement purposes. The GM can veto a player's description of armor; light armor is rarely field plate, and heavy armor is rarely soft leather.

Shields in System DL Freeware are equally simple, coming in only two basic sizes: small (1) and large (2). Just add the shield value to your character's armor value to find the total armor score.

XV. Modes of magic

In this fantasy milieu, System DL Freeware divides magic into three disciplines: spellcasting, alchemy, and astrology (augury). All three disciplines require a special "sight" to be used effectively: spellcasters can "see" the patterns of magic in living beings, alchemists can "see" these patterns in inanimate objects, and astrologers can "see" the patterns of fate woven in the stars themselves. The use of these skills usually follows these steps:

1. **The spellcaster picks the spell to be cast (reagent to be concocted, question to be answered) and the target(s) (if appropriate).**
2. **The caster gathers the necessary magical energy, using the Concentration skill. This may take several turns, hours or days, depending on the spell.**
3. **The spell is released on the same turn the mage receives enough magical energy. The caster pits his or her Alchemy, Astrology or Magic skill against the Difficulty or the resisting stat or skill of the target, depending on the effect. From this point on, casting the spell becomes a standard action, possibly opposed if cast upon or at a living being, and the GM determines effects**

normally.

Spellcasters are more constrained than their other magical brethren in that their discipline requires they work out their spells in advance and memorize them before they can be cast. Hence, beginning mages only know three magical effects (spells) which they can cast, though they can research other spells or learn them from other mages during the game. Alchemists are limited only by the materials and equipment available to them; however, reagents usually take much longer to mix and are limited by the constraints of matter (dust must be thrown, liquids poured, poisons injected, and so forth). Astrologers may ask any question about the past, the present, or the possible future, but their magic is also slow in coming and requires an unobstructed view of a cloudless night sky.

Normally, magisters must build the power to cast a spell (or mix a reagent, or ask a question) up through use of tests against the caster's MIND (Concentration ST) score until a threshold is reached. The Difficulty of this gathering test depends on the spell/reagent/question and the surroundings (high mana areas would have lower DNs). The magister will gather as many points as his or her skill exceeds the Difficulty Number.

Enemies can interrupt or distract a spellcaster, causing them to lose half the magical energy gathered before the spell is released. The Difficulty of resisting this distraction is equal to the Skill Total of the skill being used by one character to distract another, as appropriate.

XVI. Spell damage

Combat-oriented spells will usually have a damage number, type, and possibly Range number or bonuses similar to weapon statistics. Some spells may have a Range number given as "LOS," which stands for "line of sight"; if the mage can see the target clearly, he or she can hit it.

Incidental damage from spells that do not directly damage characters is decided on a case-by-case basis by the GM, depending on the creativity of spell use, the success of the spellcaster, and similar factors.

XVII. Astrology expanded

How the Astrology skill works:

The astrologer frames the question and begins to examine the night sky for the answer. The "mana" of the location is not dependent on the magical potential of the surroundings, but instead on the amount of pure night sky the character can see unaided. Every "gathering" takes an hour, and a character can only "gather" for 8 hours per night. When the sun rises, all points gathered will be lost. The more points an astrologer gathers to answer a question, the clearer and more detailed the answer will be. The GM is under no compulsion to reveal the target number for a divining, although clues like "Hmm, this could be tricky" or "Whoa, pretty hard" might be appropriate, at the GM's discretion. Some suggested DN's for Astrology are as follows:

- Crystal clear, moonless night sky: 2
- Clear sky, moon up: 3
- Thin high clouds: 5
- Partly cloudy: 7
- Mostly cloudy: 9
- Overcast: Impossible
- From inside a town: +1

- From a forest floor: +2
- Within an hour of dusk or dawn: +1
- Half the sky blocked by object(s): +2
- 3/4 of sky blocked by object(s): +4
- Only a tiny bit of sky visible: +8

The target number of points to be gathered depends on the question being asked.

- Question about present: 2
- Question about the past or (potential) future:
 - within a week: 3
 - within a month: 4
 - within a year: 5
 - within 10 years: 6
 - within 100 years: 7
 - for every additional 100 years: +2
- Question about happenings within current location: +0
- Question about happenings up to:
 - half a mile away: +1
 - two miles away: +2
 - 10 miles away: +3
 - 100 miles away: +4
 - 1000 miles away: +5
 - for every additional 1000 miles: +1
- Question involves a large number of people: +1 per *power of 10* people involved
- Question is a simple "Yes-No" type of binary question: -1
- Question has more than one answer: +1 per extra answer
- "Future hazy, ask again later": up to +5
- Question might significantly short-circuit the GM's plot: +1 to +3

XVIII. Alchemy expanded

An alchemist "gathers" for his magical potions by working uninterrupted in a laboratory. The "local mana" refers to the size, stock and equipment in this lab. To determine the local mana of an area for alchemical purposes, begin with a DN of 20 (!) and reduce it as follows:

- Area belongs to an alchemist and is specifically set aside as an alchemical laboratory: -2
- Crowns spent on equipment:
 - - 500+: -2
 - - 2000+: -4
 - - 5000+: -6
 - - 10,000+ :-8
- Crowns spent on reagents:

- - 1000+: -1
- - 5000+: -2
- - 15,000+: -4
- - 50,000+: -6
- Crowns spent on monthly maintenance:
 - - Nothing: All reagents and equipment lose 10% of their initial value and must be replaced
 - - Up to 100: +1
 - - 100 - 499: +0
 - - 500+ : -1
- Per laboratory assistant, up to 5: -1
- Time spent by an alchemist in the laboratory:
 - - Less than a month: +3
 - - Less than a year: +1
 - - 1-5 years: +0
 - - Over 5 years: -1 (local mana -1 permanently)
 - - Over 20 years: -3 (local mana -2 permanently)
- Laboratory is "geared" toward a specific type of spell: -1 for that spell type, +2 for all others
- Local spellcasting mana is:
 - - Very good (0-3): -7
 - - Good (4-6): -4
 - - Average (7-10): +0
 - - Poor (11-14): +3
 - - Very Poor (15+): +6
- Per dose of potion completed in the laboratory within the past 30 days: +1

(Note that building a laboratory on an unspoiled mana site is "developing upon a pristine area," which will automatically worsen the local mana by one step. Converting an existing dwelling into a laboratory does not affect local mana.)

Alchemical equipment and reagents are fragile and easy to spoil. Treat the alchemist's laboratory as having 10 PD points. For every PD the laboratory takes from any source, all reagents and equipment lose 10% of their initial value, with resultant drop in efficacy. Repairing these points can only be done by spending a like number of Crowns.

The hourly toil of an alchemist can be converted into "Crowns" for a one-to-ST basis; that is, one hour of work in a laboratory equals their Alchemy ST in Crowns of upkeep, reagents, and/or equipment (player's choice). An alchemist can only "work for money" for a maximum of 10 hours a day. Time spent actually creating potions can NOT count as "work for money".

There's a danger with overpowered alchemical laboratories. If the local mana drops below 3 for alchemy purposes, the owner or tender of the laboratory must spend 1 LUCK point per month to prevent a catastrophe which will destroy 50% of the reagents and equipment in the lab. If the local mana drops to 0, the owner must pony up 1 LUCK point per day. Lowering the local mana below 0 results in a magical explosion which destroys the laboratory (5E damage to everyone within) and worsens the local mana by 1 step permanently.

Each "gathering" of magical energy is equal to one day of uninterrupted study (at least 8 full hours) in the laboratory. Missing even one day of alchemical study counts as an interruption unless the character gives up one LUCK point (only; RP's cannot be spent on this) per day missed. This LUCK expenditure will not regenerate until the character returns to the laboratory.

The target number for an alchemical concoction depends on its form and effect. The following are very general rules for creating potions, which can change if the GM believes the resulting material is over- or underpowered.

- Physical form of alchemical construct:
 - - Gaseous: 7
 - - Solid, hard: 6
 - - Solid, soft: 5
 - - Liquid, thin: 4
 - - Liquid, viscous: 3
 - - Dust, fine: 3
 - - Dust, coarse: 2
- Per use/victim: +1
- Length of effect:
 - - One turn: -1
 - - One minute: +1
 - - Five minutes: +2
 - - Half an hour: +5
 - - Two hours: +8
 - - One day: +10
 - - One week: +12
 - - One month: +15
 - - One year: +20
 - - Permanent effect: +30
- Item mimics another object: +3
- Object larger than:
 - - Softball: +3
 - - Bread box: +6
 - - Table: +9
 - - Horse: +15
 - - Room: +25
 - - Small house: +40
- Time between beginning and end of effect:
 - Instantaneous: +5
 - Less than a minute: +3
 - Less than an hour: +0
 - Less than a day: -1

- Less than a month: -2
- More than a month: -3
- Effect is noticeable:
 - - By everyone in area: -2
 - - By casual observers and victim: -1
 - - By close observer and victim: +1
 - - By close observer only: +3
 - - By victim only: +3
 - - Undetectable: +6
- Effect causes:
 - - Minor changes: +4
 - - Major changes: +10
 - - Damage: +1 per DP
 - - Special effect damage: +5 per special effect
 - - Damage to one type of creature/object only: -1
 - - Other effect (stat alterations, hallucinations, teleportations, etc.): +1 per point of effect
- Time delay before effect begins:
 - - Instantaneous: +0
 - - Less than one minute: +1
 - - Less than an hour: +2
 - - Less than a day: +3
 - - Less than a week: +4
 - - Less than a month: +5
 - - Less than a year: +6
 - - Only upon contingent condition: +10
 - - Can be deactivated before delay expires: +5 more
 - - Can be reactivated if deactivated: +5 more

Appendix A: Skills

This list of skills is hardly exhaustive. Even with Professional skills, this short list cannot possibly cover every skill possessable by humans. If a player wants a character to have a skill not covered here, he or she should go ahead and ask for it. The worst that can happen is that the GM will say no.

I. BODY skills

Brawling--The skill of hand-to-hand combat, using fists, small blunt weapons, and, occasionally, teeth and knees to knock an opponent out. The attacker compares his or her Brawling ST against the opponent's Brawling ST or raw BODY score to determine damage done; this makes Brawling one of the few combat skills not opposed by the Dodge skill.

Climbing--A character's ability to climb items (like trees) or surfaces (like mountainsides). A character with Climbing skill also knows how to use and maintain mountaineering gear. The Difficulty Number for a climb is based upon the GM's decision.

Endurance--A measure of a character's hardiness and ability to ignore pain. Use a character's Endurance ST instead of his or her base BODY score when the character is resisting exhaustion, heat prostration, poisoning, freezing temperatures, and similar hardships.

Resist Damage--The Resist Damage Skill Number is added to both the character's Physical Damage and Stun Damage score, making the character more difficult to knock out or kill.

II. MOVE skills

Acrobatics--The skill of balance and grace, Acrobatics is used whenever a character needs to keep balanced (as on a tightrope) or keep from stumbling (as a character who swings from a chandelier to the floor below). The GM may allow other uses for this skill as appropriate.

Archery--The ability to use bow weapons, from shortbows to crossbows.

Dodge--The general combat-resistance skill. A character can use his or her Dodge ST instead of the raw MOVE score when trying not to be hit in most types of combat (Brawling excluded). Note that the character needs to be aware of the attack to use the Dodge skill.

Jumping--The character has developed his or her leg muscles, increasing the ability to make prodigious leaps. Use the Jumping ST instead of the character's MOVE score to determine success in long or high jumps.

Lockpicking--The skill to unlock mechanical locks, using the proper tools. A character trying to pick a lock without the proper tools will suffer a skill penalty (usually -2 ST) based upon the complexity of the lock and the inappropriateness of the tools. Trying to pick a lock with a twig is not recommended.

Polearms--The ability to fight effectively with long-hafted weapons, such as spears, staves, or lances. This skill does not include using these (properly balanced) weapons at a distance; that's covered by the Throwing skill below.

Riding--The ability to keep a large animal under control. The riding skill can also be used to "break" a riding animal, acclimatizing it to being ridden.

Running--This skill adds to a character's base MOVE score when figuring how far the character can move in a single turn, or in competition with another character to see if he or she can catch or flee from an opponent.

Sleight-of-Hand--A skill for the nimble of fingers, Sleight-of-Hand allows a character to perform small parlor tricks, play the "shell game" effectively, or, more darkly, steal small personal items like wallets and money pouches from unsuspecting victims (Sleight-of-Hand versus the MIND or Awareness ST of the victim).

Stealth--Basic "sneaking-around" skill, as used by thieves and spies. A character trying to hide from pursuers would pit Stealth skill against the follower's Tracking ST or MIND score; a character trying to hide from someone who doesn't know the character is there uses Stealth versus Awareness or MIND. This skill can also be used to move silently, with a Difficulty dependent on the situation.

Swordplay--The ability to fight effectively with long-bladed weapons, from short swords to epees, katanas to scimitars.

Throwing--A measure of a character's eye-hand coordination as it applies to flinging items like darts, throwing knives, spears, rocks, sling stones, horseshoes and the like.

III. MIND skills

Alchemy--As much a body of knowledge as a skill, Alchemy allows a character to perform experiments or mix up chemical concoctions, with a difficulty based on the complexity of the reagent and the equipment available to the character. Alchemists must spend at least one Background Point for Magical Ability to use this skill properly.

Astrology--Knowledge of the movement of the planets, stars and moons, plus an understanding of the portents they may bring. Astrologers must spend at least one Background Point for Magical Ability to use this skill properly.

Awareness--The knack of knowing one's surroundings, the Awareness skill comes in handy when trying to find hidden items, discover clues, note whether someone is carrying concealed items, keep from being ambushed, and similar situations. This skill does not allow one character to follow another by spoor; the Tracking skill covers this below.

Charm--The skill of ingratiating yourself with others in a way that earns their acceptance or trust. This skill may be used differently according to the situation; for instance, proper use of Charm at a fancy dinner party would be rather different from proper use of Charm at a rough tavern. People usually accept those characters with high Charm almost anywhere, despite appearance or background, simply due to their winning ways (q.v. Will Rogers).

Concentration--The mental equivalent of the Endurance skill, Concentration skill helps keep a character from becoming mentally fatigued or distracted by an incidental event. Concentration skill is especially useful for mages, but can come in handy for anyone who is set on a single short-term purpose and don't want to be distracted; this skill could be used instead of Willpower to resist Charm or Persuasion in certain situations, at the GM's option.

Interrogation--The art of questioning. Characters may use their Interrogation ST instead of base MIND score when trying to extract information from someone, with the difficulty set higher or lower according to how much the interrogatee has to lose and/or successful use of Charm skill beforehand.

Magic--Magic is a force which can be shaped through the minds and actions of living beings, and so this skill is used to determine a character's ability to use magic. Characters must also spend Background Points to be able to use magic (see below). Note that while this skill determines a character's raw ability to cast spells, he or she must still know the spell to be cast.

Mechanics--Knowledge of how machines work and how to construct, maintain and repair them, from water clocks to mechanical locks. Note that characters may design and construct locks with this skill, but opening them without benefit of keys requires use of the Lockpicking skill instead.

Medicine--The art of healing. A character with Medicine skill can speed another character's healing and/or keep someone from dying when otherwise all hope is lost.

Navigation--The ability to find one's way, using landmarks, maps, and/or stars. The difficulty depends upon existing conditions and the equipment available to the character.

Persuasion--Persuasion is the skill of convincing people to do something or allow the character to do something, on a character's word alone. The base difficulty is the opposing character's MIND (Willpower

ST) score, modified as the GM considers appropriate according to what the character wants and how the opponent may feel about it.

Tracking--The ability to read the trail left by an animal or human and follow it to its end. Tracking skill also allows a character to keep track of a target as it moves; for example, keeping up with a single person walking through a crowded square, or knowing roughly where an animal is in thick underbrush. (Following such a target so it is unaware of the character's presence requires the Stealth skill.)

IV. Professional skills

Unlike the skills mentioned above, **professional skills** are conglomerates of many minor skills which a person might learn through day-to-day experience with a particular job. For instance, the Scribe professional skill may include such skills as filing, calligraphy, text translation (a limited type of Language skill), and all the other things a scribe might do during a regular working day. This doesn't mean someone presently employs the character as a scribe, just that he or she possesses these skills.

There are as many professional skills as there are professions, so a comprehensive list is impossible. The GM is final arbiter of what a person with a professional skill can and cannot do with the skill, based upon the character's description of the action attempted and how well it would logically fit into the profession itself.

Unlike other skills, professional skills are not "attached" to any one stat, but may be added to any stat appropriate to the action.

Important Note: Professional skills can *never* completely replace the "larger" skills listed above or allowed by the GM in his or her campaign, although they may overlap those skills in very specific ways. A character with the professional skill of "Thief," for instance, would not automatically know Lockpicking or Stealth skills; however, she may know the location of the best local fence, the names of the movers and shakers of the underworld, or may be able to haggle on the selling price of stolen goods (which is a limited version of the Persuasion skill, not usable outside this situation).

Appendix B: Background options

Background Points are a convenient way to create a character which is more than a conglomeration of numbers on a page. BPs are spent to simulate the "history" of a character: his or her family life, schooling, people known, trades picked up, and so forth. BPs also cover those "random" abilities that some people just *have*: good looks, a fine singing voice, a sense of direction, the ability to use magic or psychic abilities (in game venues that allow such things), etc.

Players are not obligated to spend all the Background Points they are given, and any BPs not spent are lost. Since characters cannot receive or spend BPs except during the creation process, it is usually to the players' advantage to spend them all while they're there to be spent.

Players can accrue more Background Points for their characters by purchasing background flaws, which are the "dark side" of a character's past or abilities: a family enemy, old crimes (either committed or only accused of), a terrible singing voice, grotesque looks, lack of schooling, poor eyesight, and so on. Different flaws will give the character different numbers of Background Points, depending upon how incapacitating (physically or socially) the flaw is.

I. General BP list

The list below contains some common background options and their normal costs, plus some suggestions how they may be used to build a character's past life. The sampling given here is meant to be more representative than exhaustive. *All background options are subject to the approval of the GM.*

Direction Sense--The character has a "bump" of direction, an instinctive knowledge of current orientation and distance traveled. If lost, the character can make a MIND (Tracking ST) test against a Difficulty set by the GM; if this test succeeds, the character then knows where he or she is (and how to get back to the point of origin) with reasonable accuracy. **BP Cost: 1.**

Looks--The character is considered attractive to other members of his or her species. If the character so wishes and is presently visible and "attractive" (for instance, not covered in raw sewage), he or she may gain a +1 ST benefit to Persuasion, Charm, or certain professional skills (Actor, Salesman, and the like) used against the opposite sex. **BP Cost: 1.**

Magical Ability--The character may use one magical skill, either Magic, Astrology, or Alchemy. The character may take other skills by spending more BPs. Note that the character must also "buy" the skill with Skill Points as usual. **BP Cost: 1 per skill.**

Mastery--Normally, when a character is created, he or she is limited to a maximum Skill Number of 2 in any one skill. By taking the Mastery option, the character can increase this limit to 4 *for one skill only*. The character must still spend from his or her initial allotment of Skill Points to increase this skill above 2. **BP Cost: 1.**

Purchasing Power--The character starts out with additional money to purchase equipment with. Each BP spent on this option doubles the initial number of Crowns the character has to start. **BP Cost: 1 per double.**

Voice--The character has a pleasant speaking voice and/or an exceptional talent at singing. The benefits of this option are entirely up to the GM, but may include a bonus to Persuasion where appropriate. **BP Cost: 1.**

II. General flaw list

Like the list above, this list is not meant to be universal or complete, but a representative sampling only. Please note that taking flaws which directly conflict with background options (for instance, taking both the BP option "Looks" and the flaw "Ugly") is prohibited. *All background flaws are subject to the approval of the GM.*

Enemy--The character has an old nemesis, who is at least apathetic and possibly violently turned against him or her. The BP bonus of this flaw depends on the power of the enemy; one family with five members may give the character 1 BP, while having the whole Thieves Guild against you might be worth 3 BP. The enemy must be personal, not professional; police officers can't take this flaw to indicate all criminals, soldiers can't take it to cover all enemy soldiers, etc. **BP Bonus: 1 to 3.**

Hunted--The character is wanted for a crime, being stalked by a madman, or is otherwise being followed. The BP bonus for this flaw depends on the power level of the hunter; one homicidal maniac might give the character 1 BP, while being wanted by the law for murder might give the character 2 or 3 BP. Characters can't take both the "Hunted" flaw and the "Enemy" flaw for the same person or group. **BP Bonus: 1 to 3.**

Oppressed--The character's rights are oppressed in some way, such as being a slave or a serf in a society that accepts these things openly. The character has no civil rights, and may even be put to death for questioning

the orders of others. **BP Bonus: 2.**

Phobia--The character has an unreasoning fear of a fairly common item, material, animal, occurrence, etc. When confronted by the object of this fear, the character takes a -1 penalty to all skill use until the object is removed. **BP Bonus: 1.**

Sickly--The character loses 1 point each from his or her initial PD and SD scores. The character also may not take the Resist Damage skill as one of his or her initial skills, though the skill can be learned during play. **BP Bonus: 1.**

Ugly--The character is generally unattractive, taking a -1 penalty to Charm or Persuasion skill use when visible. **BP Bonus: 1.**

Appendix C: Stuff and how to use it

Generally, equipment has only a few "game statistics" based on its use and physical characteristics. **Personal items don't have regular PD or SD scores, instead having Hits**, the amount of Physical Damage an item can take *in one strike* before becoming inoperative. Doing double this amount of damage *in one strike* will destroy the item completely. Items are not normally subject to Stun Damage.

I. The basic equipment list

Armor--Light armor of any type costs 30 Crowns; medium armor, 150 Crowns; heavy armor, 500 Crowns.

Compass--An alchemical construct. When combined with an appropriate map of the surroundings, a compass gives a +1 bonus to a character's MIND (Navigation ST) score for navigational purposes. Hits 1. Cost: 35 Crowns.

First aid kit--Gives a +1 bonus to a character's MIND (Medicine ST) when used to stabilize or heal another character (see Chapter Four). Usually contains a 2 SD stimulant (like smelling salts) as well. Hits 1. Cost: 7 Crowns.

Flint and Steel--Lighting a fire with these tools requires a MIND or skill test (usually a professional skill, like Ranger, Woodsman, Caveman, etc.), with a Difficulty depending on the dryness of the wood and presence of kindling, etc. Hits 2. Cost: 4 Crowns.

Horse--A horse can run up to 40 Ranges per turn and bear weights of up to 500 lb. MOVE 3, MIND 3 (animal), LUCK 2, PD 12, SD 10. Cost: 120 Crowns.

Lantern--Illuminates in a 2-Range radius. A bull's-eye lantern can illuminate in a straight line for 8 Ranges. Burns for 24 hours on one fill of oil (1 pint, which costs 1 Crown). Hits 2. Cost: 2 Crowns for hurricane, 6 Crowns for bull's-eye.

Lockpicks--Standard thieves' tools, usually illegal to own without a voucher from the smith's guild. Hits 2. Cost: 5 Crowns. A good voucher forgery costs around 50 Crowns.

Rations--One day's nutrition. Hits 2. Cost: 1-5 Crowns, depending on quality.

Rope--Rope has Hits 5 (2 vs. edged weapons). This rope can bear up to 500 lb. Cost: 1 Crown per 10 yards.

Shield--There are two types of shield in this venue. Light shield: Hits 4 (when targeted only). Cost: 8 Crowns. Heavy shield: Hits 5 (when targeted only). Cost: 40 Crowns.

Torch--When set aflame, a torch illuminates the area all around to a distance of 2 Ranges. Can also be used as a very poor club (see Weapons below). Burns for an hour. Hits 2. Cost: 1 Crown.

Waterskin--Holds 2 days' water for one person. Hits 2. Cost: 2 Crowns.

II. The basic weapons list

Battle Axe--Usually wielded two-handed. Damage 3, Hits 3. Cost: 5 Crowns.

Bow, Long--For Robin Hood types. Damage 4, Range 6, Hits 1. Cost: 20 Crowns. Arrows have Hits 1/2 (broken beyond repair with a single hit). Cost: 2 Crowns per 10.

Broadsword--Bladed weapon 2 - 4 feet long. Damage 3, Hits 3. Cost: 50 Crowns.

Claymore--A major sword, 5 - 6 feet long or more. Damage 4, Hits 4. Cost: 80 Crowns.

Club--A large heavy weight swung to whack someone. Damage 2-3, Hits 3. Cost: 1-3 Crowns (large sticks free).

Crossbow--Easier to fire than a regular bow. Damage 4, Range 5, Hits 2. Cost: 15 Crowns. Quarrels have Hits 1/2 (broken on any hit). Cost: 2 Crowns per dozen.

Dagger--Small bladed weapon, balanced for thrusting. Damage 1, Range 1 (2 if balanced to throw), Hits 1. Cost: 2 Crowns.

Fists--The original weapon. Fighting bare-handed uses BODY (Brawling ST). Damage 1 Stun.

Hammer--A warhammer or the like. Damage 3, Hits 4. Cost: 10 Crowns.

Knife--Short-bladed weapon, edged on one or both sides. Damage 1, Range 1, Hits 2. Cost: 4 Crowns.

Rock--Weapon of last resort. Damage 1, Range 1/2, Hits 3. Cost: free.

Short Sword--Bladed weapon around 18 inches long. Damage 2, Hits 3. Cost: 40 Crowns.

Spear--Also lance, polearm, etc. Damage 2, Range 0 (1 if balanced to throw), Hits 3. Cost: 4 Crowns, 10 Crowns if especially long (capable of hitting targets 1 Range away).

Torch (lit)--When nothing else is handy. Damage 1 Stun (2 on a called shot), Hits 2. Cost: 1 Crown.

Whip--Normally 10 - 15 feet long. Can entangle a target up to 1 Range away upon successful skill use. Damage 1 (2 Stun), Hits 5 (2 vs. edged weapons). Cost: 10 Crowns.