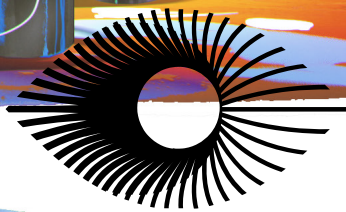


SPECTRUM

Universal Collaborative Storytelling System

Core Rules



spectrum

Credits

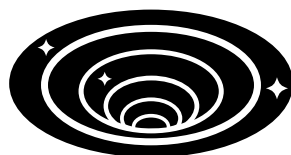
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I. Introduction

The pages of the Spectrum Open Beta Core Rules represent thousands of collective hours amassed by our four-person creative team, as well as the amazingly invaluable contributions of the countless strangers who took the time to test the system and provide us with their feedback to address the system's flaws, contradictions, ambiguities, overcomplications, oversimplifications, typos, omissions, flawed math, and other shortcomings. Spectrum is a project of love and faith, and we will forever work to provide the community with a system optimized for inventive and cooperative storytelling.

As you help to carry us up the slope of our proverbial Mount Doom, please know that providing blunt and honest criticism is the kindest and most valuable gift that you can provide. If you love something about our work, and we are confident that there is plenty here to love, we will be ecstatic to hear about it. But more importantly, we want to know what you find frustrating, clunky, illogical, or otherwise antithetical to fun.

Though we have spread our dreams under your feet, there is no expectation that you tread lightly. Please stomp as if you are pressing grapes into wine. Our desire to create the best possible TTRPG system far outweighs our capacity to be offended by the illumination of its flaws; our feelings are unimportant in this regard.

We appreciate you beyond measure for the gifts of your time and attention. Our sincere hope, and our unshakeable commitment, is that you will one day look back on this experience as your contribution to something great.

What is a Roleplaying Game

A roleplaying game (RPG) is a cooperative storytelling game where players assume the roles of characters in a fictional setting and the choices that players make affect the course of the story. These settings can range from super realistic to fantastical.

One common feature of many RPGs is the role of the "game master," "dungeon master," or "narrator," a participant who has the awesome responsibility of maintaining the narrative flow of the story by presenting the fictional setting and arbitrating the results of character actions within that setting.

Narrator: Sets a scene and introduces a choice

Player A: My character does this

Narrator: Describes how said choices affect the fiction

Player B: Oh, and that makes my character feel like X and they react with this action

Narrator: Describes how said choices affect the fiction, etc.....

What is Spectrum

Spectrum is a cooperative tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG) where you and other players become heroes in shared epic adventures defined by the challenges encountered and choices made throughout the game. Together, you weave dynamic stories where every decision reshapes the narrative.

With Spectrum, all you need to play the game is two ten-sided die, our "always free" rules, and at least one other person. We have minimized the number of items you "need" to play the game because who the hell are we to tell you the best way to play make-believe.

Our only goal is to make incredible games that welcome new and experienced gamers into the fold, bring people joy, and promote the transformative exploration of collaborative storytelling.

Black Coffee Games aims to shift the paradigm of the existing gaming market that is presently centered around the "for profit at the expense of the game" model.

With these goals in mind, Spectrum is designed to be pan-genre, to fit any story you want to tell, and can use all conceptual material from any and every extant system. And the mechanics of this system are designed to add diverse, unique, and infinitely varied paths for character growth and development.

If you enjoy creating lore-rich backstories, experiencing meaningful character growth and immersive story progression, engaging in role play, sinking into the role of your character, and flexing your epic narrative badassery, then welcome to the last system you'll ever need to learn.

All created without investors, starting capital, connections in the industry, or without an army of lawyers or Pinkertons in our pocket. Will we succeed? Probably not. But we've shown up, and we are going to give it our best shot.

Gameplay loop of an RPG is that of improv theater

The key component to playing an RPG is provided by the players themselves, namely communication and inclusivity. Playing an RPG is not a form of passive entertainment, it is not like watching a movie or playing Monopoly; it requires active participation and cooperation.

The Narrator

The Narrator controls all aspects of the game, except for the decisions and actions of the player characters (aka PCs). The role of the Narrator is to:

Shape the world: The Narrator is responsible for creating the game's overarching story by creating a theme or plot, settings, scenes, events, and other story elements the players will interact with.

Define the scene: The Narrator's role is to describe to the players what their characters experience within the environment of the story, as well as the outcomes and effects of their interactions with various story elements.

Tell the story: The Narrator provides a dynamic narrative flow and manages the plot of the story and the general state of the game world to maintain a realistic continuity of events as the story evolves.

Teach the game: The Narrator is responsible for having a thorough understanding of the game rules and being able to teach these rules to players.

Maintain order: The Narrator assumes the role of the referee, resolving player disputes, enforcing game mechanics, and making rulings about game situations and effects based on the decisions made by the players.

Make the call: The Narrator assumes the role of the final arbiter of the rules and how the rules are interpreted. The Narrator ultimately determines the line between a player's creative utilization of resources or an attempt at exploitation of the required ambiguity within the game's rules.

Act dynamically: The Narrator is expected to improvise, modify, remove, or create entirely new rules or resources to fit the rules to the current campaign. And most importantly, to freely ignore the rules when necessary.

Narrator Played Characters

All the other characters of the story that are not controlled by the players are entities commonly referred to as narrator played characters (NPCs).

The range of characters that a narrator might play, or use, in a story are as numerous and varied as all the starring and supporting characters of every book, film, play, fable, legend, radio show, bedtime story, etc.

Sometimes an NPC will be a well-thought-out character for which the Narrator has assigned a full character sheet along with motivations and personality. Other times, NPCs are nameless entities whose presence in a scene serves only to create the appropriate backdrop for the PCs.

Regardless of their depth, all NPCs are part of the story and serve a purpose. Countless games have taken interesting turns when StableBoy#2 is engaged by a party member and the Narrator must, on the spot, turn a placeholder into a well-rounded person with hopes and dreams.

The Players

Players serve as the main characters of the story being told. It is the interaction between the players and the scene that will ultimately determine how the story unfolds. The role of the player is to:

Interact with the world: The player is responsible for responding to the elements within a scene created by the Narrator.

Support each other: The player is responsible for supporting the roles and actions of the other players at the table. A player's goal is never to "win" the story, but to help tell the best story possible.

Drive the energy of the game: The players are the soul of the narrative. It is through their experience in the story that it derives purpose and meaning.

Engage with the story: The player is responsible for engaging with the story through the lens of their character's perspective.

Learn the rules: While the Narrator is ultimately responsible for refereeing the game and being the final arbiter of the "rules as written," the player is responsible for understanding the base rules to facilitate smooth gameplay.

The Player Characters

The players experience and affect the story and its various settings through their characters. The actions, goals, and motivations of a player's character (referred to as a PC) are under the creative control of the player to roleplay.

A player's character can be generated in a number of ways. Sometimes, the players will be expected to create their own characters for a game, while other modules and campaigns will come with pre-generated characters for the players to choose from. It is the players that define the who, what, when, where, and why of their character.

Roleplaying is an interactive activity that involves other people and their characters. It is a personal, but not selfish, cooperative activity. Players must pay attention to the other characters, listen to everyone at the table, and reflect as to how their character would think and react.

Players don't play to tell their character's story; they play to collaboratively discover all the character's stories, and this is outside of any one player's control; even the Narrator does not completely control the story. In any dynamic storytelling session, the PCs will experience events outside of their control.

The game's world, the adventures, and the other PCs will do things and say things that become a part of your character as they are shaped by your choices and by the other players choices, as well as the chaotic whims of an uncontrollable world. With the result being characters who are distinct dynamic entities that you come to understand, care about, and develop a personal relationship with.

II. Game Mechanics

Game mechanics are a set of rules that help resolve actions that can impact the outcome of the story.

These rules provide a balanced game experience while telling the story. The rules provide a common vocabulary and established parameters of cause and effect that help shape and guide a player's actions. However, it's impossible to create rules that fit all eventualities (the more rigid the structure, the more likely it is to break). Enter the Narrator (aka game master, dungeon master, etc.).

While playing an interactive story, there are elements of chance that affect nearly everything. A gun misfiring at the wrong time could make the difference between the bad guy speeding away in the stolen car. A rickety bridge collapsing could spell certain doom for a character if they aren't able to make the jump to the other side. To represent the uncertainty of reality within the story, Spectrum uses dice.

A roll of the dice is usually required whenever an outcome is uncertain.

Goal Points and The Chart

In Spectrum, goal points are used as a measurement for nearly everything. Any scenario conceived by narrators and players, from determining how well a skill is performed, the magnitude of a spell effect, a character's reflexes or memory, hell, even the destructive output of a death laser being fired from a moon sized space station, use goal points.

There will be times when the amount of goal points generated is a static number, such as the torque from your sweet souped-up vintage Camaro, but the vast majority of the time, players and narrators will determine the amount of goal points generated for any given situation by rolling dice and referencing The Chart.

Without geeking out too dramatically, The Chart is the central reference tool for the Spectrum system, which uses the roll of a d100 to determine goal points. The Chart allows for the use of goal points to eliminate the binary success / failure structures rampant in most modern TTRPGs, creating a more nuanced, interactive, and intuitive relationship with the narrative for the players.

Players make rolls using The Chart to generate goal points that will determine the success or failure of their character's actions and goals. Such rolls are used to determine whether a character is successful at performing a skill, resisting damage, noticing hidden details, and a variety of other situations.

Narrators make rolls using The Chart to determine the outcomes of NPC actions, as well as environmental effects, conditions, and anything else that they deem appropriate for the story.

Rolling Dice

Spectrum uses a d100, also known as a percentile die. There are three common ways to generate a d100 roll:

1. Using an actual die with 100 sides. This is the least common of the three options, as a 100-sided die is expensive, unbalanced, hard to read, and is so smooth that it rolls like a golf ball.
2. Using two different colored ten-sided dice with one color representing the 10s place and the other color representing the 1's place. It should be noted that with this method, rolling two 0s represents a 100.
3. Using two ten-sided dice with one die marking the 10s value with double digits: 00, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, and 90 and the other die having ten single digits to represent the 1s value. It should be noted that with this method, rolling a 00 and a 0 represents a 100.

Examples:

1. A 100-sided die is rolled. The roll shows an 72. The value of the roll is 72.
2. A turquoise and blue 10-sided die are rolled, the player determines that the turquoise die represents the 10's value, and the blue die represents the 1s value. The roll shows a turquoise 7 and a blue 1. The value of the roll is 71.
3. Two dice, one displaying the numbers 00, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, and 90, and the other displaying the numbers 0-9 are rolled. The first die shows an 20, the other die shows a 3. The result is 23.



Using The Chart

Determine goal points using the following steps:

- 1. Roll Value:** The far-left column contains a numerical range corresponding to the possible results of a dice roll.
- 2. Column Value:** The top cells of the columns correspond to the ratings of Attributes, Instincts, and Skills that may prompt dice rolls. When a value exists between two columns, the lower value column is used.
- 3. Cell Result:** The cell where the column and row meet determines the goal points generated when using the chart.

Example:

Matt has a rating of 5 in Craft (cooking). He rolls his skill test using the 5 column. He achieves a 69 on the d100 roll, which corresponds to a yellow result and 3 goal points.

	-1	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	
100	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	35	50	100
98-99	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	35	98-99
70-97	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	70-97
53-69	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	53-69
40-52	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	40-52
30-39	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	30-39
20-29	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	20-29
13-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	13-19
7-12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7-12
4-6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4-6
2-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2-3
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

* trunkated version of the chart. The full chart is provided in the appendix.

Adjustments

Adjustments are used to represent an advantage or disadvantage during various situations during gameplay by increasing or decreasing the chance to generate goal points by adding or subtracting from a dice roll result.

By adding or subtracting from the dice roll result, adjustments change the chance that a roll will generate goal points without changing the range of possible goal points possible.

A positive adjustment, (aka bonus adjustment), represented by the "+" symbol, will add to the die roll as determined by the number next to the "+" symbol.

A negative adjustment, (aka penalty adjustment), represented by the "-" symbol, will subtract from the die roll as determined by the number next to the "-" symbol.

Example:

Matt, with his rating of 5 in Craft (cooking), is using his new whizzbang cutlery to prepare dinner for house guests. The blade is shaped and balanced for food prep.

While this specialized tool does not improve Matt's knowledge of or ability to cook, it improves his potential to perform the task to the height of his ability and therefore would provide him a +1 on any dice rolls related to preparing his fancy dinner.

He rolls his skill test using the 5 column. He achieves a 69 on the d100 roll and adds his adjustment of +1, changing the result to a 70, which corresponds to an orange result, yielding 5 goal points.

	-1	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	
100	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	35	50	100
98-99	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	35	98-99
70-97	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	70-97
53-69	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	53-69
40-52	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	40-52
30-39	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	30-39
20-29	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	20-29
13-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	13-19
7-12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7-12
4-6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4-6
2-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2-3
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

* trunkated version of the chart. The full chart is provided in the appendix.

Shifts

Shifts are used to represent advantages or disadvantages in various situations during gameplay. They are most commonly applied by the Narrator when circumstances increase or decrease the amount of goal points possible by changing which column is used to determine goal points.

A shift can be to the left or to the right, which increases or decreases the goal point value of any given roll without changing the chances of getting a particular roll result.

A right shift (aka bonus shift), represented by the □ symbol, moves the column value a set number of columns to the right, determined by the number next to the arrow. A bonus shift is used when the Narrator determines that the situation regarding a chart roll is such that the goal points generated should be greater for any of the goal points colors rolled.

A left shift (aka penalty shift), represented by the ◻ symbol, moves the column value a set number of columns to the left, determined by the number next to the arrow. A penalty shift is used when the Narrator determines that the situation regarding a chart roll is such that the goal points generated should be less for the goal points colors rolled.

Example:

To prepare dinner for guests, Matt has purchased the absolutely finest ingredients for the task at hand. While having high quality ingredients does not improve Matt's technical acumen, it does mean that any successful efforts are more likely to be tasty results.

The Narrator decides that Matt has spent considerable time and resources to procure truly spectacular ingredients and gives him a bonus shift of 2.

Matt achieves a 69 on the d100 roll, which is a yellow result. But, due to his bonus shifts, he uses the yellow result on the 10 column (instead of the 5 column), which yields 7 goal points.

	-1	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	
100	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	35	50	100
98-99	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	35	98-99
70-97	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	70-97
53-69	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	53-69
40-52	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	40-52
30-39	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	30-39
20-29	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	20-29
13-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	13-19
7-12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7-12
4-6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4-6
2-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2-3
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

* truncated version of the chart. The full chart is provided in the appendix.

Shifts and adjustments may seem to function the same....

When deciding which to use, it is worth taking a moment to consider the character's skill level and the number of goal points necessary to achieve their task. At lower levels, a shift could very well make the roll impossible.

When deciding between a shift or an adjustment as the Narrator, ask the following question: Am I attempting to change the value of a cell result, or am I attempting to change the likelihood of achieving a successful result?

Taking a Blue

Any time a player is required to use The Chart, if the column to be rolled on has a blue cell, the player can choose to forgo rolling dice and, instead, simply generate goal points as if they had rolled a blue cell result on the column. This is referred to as “taking a blue.”

The choice to take a blue forgoes the possibility of rolling well to eliminate the risk of rolling poorly. The efforts of a character who decides to take a blue can commonly be described as uninspired, half-assed, or phoned-in, but ultimately reliable.

Example:

A player is using The Chart to roll on the 17 value column. Instead of risking generating no goal points or, even worse, generating a Grey or Black result, the player opts to take a blue. The player refers to The Chart and, from the 17 column, sees that the number of goal points generated on a Blue result is 5. He opts to take a blue and generates five goal points without the need to roll any dice.

	-1	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	
100	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	35	50	100
98-99	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	35	98-99
70-97	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	28	70-97
53-69	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	22	53-69
40-52	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	17	40-52
30-39	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	13	30-39
20-29	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	10	20-29
13-19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7	13-19
7-12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	5	7-12
4-6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4-6
2-3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2-3
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

* truncated version of the chart. The full chart is provided in the appendix.

“Taking a blue” allows a character to earn goal points without risking failure while foregoing the possibility of performing extremely well.

State Changes

Spectrum uses the term “state change” to describe when a variable or a combination of variables has reached “critical mass,” resulting in a transition of situation, environment, perspective, context, physicality, etc., such that perspectives, efforts, knowledge, and motivations must be readdressed.

State changes are the fulcrum on which the collaborative story is moved forward and reflect a significant enough change of context that the scene has shifted and should be treated as such. They are integral to any good story and often create those moments in the games that friends talk about for a long time after. Sometimes these shifts are overt and drastic, other times they are incredibly subtle.

A personal favorite state change is the one that occurs so imperceptibly that the players don’t realize it until the ripples of that state change are experienced later in the story.

In our experience, a state change happens when it happens. Players and narrators should be prepared for these transitions to occur in any part of the story.

Examples:

- The party rounds a corner in the labyrinth and comes face to face with a snarling Minotaur. Roll for initiative.
- You’re sitting in the cafeteria during lunch when the power goes out.
- Maria is sitting under her favorite tree, rereading a well worn novel, when out of nowhere, the hairs on the back of her neck stand on end.

III. The Character

What is a Character

Characters are the dramatis personae that players use to navigate, explore, and shape collaborative stories. They are persons or other beings within a narrative. Characters can be based on real people, imaginary people, both, or neither. Spectrum is designed to allow you to create a character from nearly any genre of story. The only limiting factors in creating a character in Spectrum are your imagination and the Narrator's discretion.

The process of creating a character begins with generating a character concept. This concept provides the foundation upon which the rest of the character is built. Concepts may develop from discussing the setting and genre of the story with the rest of the group, or it may be a pre-existing idea that you've been looking forward to exploring, such as a specific character archetype or a specific character from a related genre.

For example, in a medieval fantasy setting, a character concept could be based off a loose archetype, such as an archer. The concept might be further fleshed out by basing it off a historical reference point, such as England between the 12th and 13th century. Or, the player may simply decide that they want to play their own version of Robin Hood.

Characters have several descriptive elements that help to define their capabilities. These Aspects are the elements intrinsic to every character that govern their physical and mental faculties, and are divided into four distinct categories: Attributes, Instincts, Vitalities, and Movement.

Want to play a pair of codependent demon-hunting brothers with daddy issues?

We have you covered.

Perhaps you would like to play a young wizard from a prestigious school of magic.

We can do that too.

Maybe your entire group wants to play a group of plucky, meddling teenagers who travel around solving mysteries in a van with a Great Dane who has an extreme case of the munchies.

Go for it!

Character Attributes

Attributes represent a character's basic physical and mental characteristics.

Agility (AGI) represents the character's bodily coordination and the ability to navigate physical space.

Endurance (END) represents the character's ability to resist physical and environmental stressors and gives a measure of overall stamina and hardiness.

Finesse (FIN) represents a character's fine motor control, minute spatial acuity, and manual dexterity.

Intuition (INT) represents the character's ability to unconsciously correlate data points and navigate the emotional landscape within an environment.

Martial (MAR) represents a character's capacity for fighting and other conflicts.

Perception (PER) represents the character's ability to process and unconsciously interpret data received by their physical senses.

Reason (REA) represents the character's declarative memory, ability to apply logic, and overall learning.

Strength (STR) represents the character's physical power and vigor.

Metaphysical Power

In stories that include metaphysics, the reality defying aspects that are commonly included in most systems, Power represents maximum metaphysical output.

Spectrum does not assume that every game will include metaphysics, nor do we assume that every player wants their character to wield metaphysical abilities. To reflect this, during character creation, power is determined separately from the other character aspects.

Instincts

Instincts represent a character's innate biological reactions to stimuli.

Aegis: A character's innate resistance to metaphysical effects. Aegis is the average of a character's END and REA attribute scores.

Awareness: The ability to process data from the physical senses. Awareness is the average of a character's INT and PER attribute scores.

Reflex: The ability to physically react to unexpected situations. Reflex is the average of a character's AGI and FIN attribute scores.

Resolve: The ability to withstand adverse mental conditions. Resolve is the average of a character's MAR and REA attribute scores.

Toughness: The ability to withstand and recover from physical harm. Toughness is the average of a character's END and STR attribute scores.

Vitalities

Vitalities represent the character's physical capacity for survival and continuation of existence.

The value of Vitalities is essential when determining the effects of damage on the health and consciousness of a character.

Life: The amount of Lethal damage a character can take before dying. It is derived from a character's Toughness and Reflex scores.

Will: The amount of Stun damage a character can take before falling unconsciousness. It is derived from a character's Resolve and Awareness.

Movement

There are any number of ways for a person to move their body from point A to B, such that there are any number of ways a character can cavort, caper, perambulate, slither, slide, and ultimately relocate themselves.

For that reason, Spectrum uses the above increments of movement as they are the most readily identifiable. Values for these forms of movement are expressed in meters.

Run: The number of meters a character can move at a full run.

Jog: The number of meters a character can move at a brisk jog.

Walk: The number of meters a character can move in a short walk.

Jump, Horizontal: The number of meters a character can jump horizontally.

Jump, Vertical: The number of meters a character can jump vertically.

Resources

Throughout the course of the story, your character will need to rely on more than just their physical and mental capabilities in order to prevail against the narrative. Gear or specialized training, or even "knowing a guy", are all references to external resources a character can leverage throughout the story. In Spectrum, anything that goes beyond Character Aspects is considered a Resource. All resources fall into one of the following groups: Assets, Associations, Metaphysics, Skills, Traits and Conditions, Experience Points, and Kismet. These various resources for Spectrum are provided in separate living documents, available on the Spectrum website.

Assets represent the things that a character can possess, own, or acquire, such as gear, vehicles, money, services, real estate, or tools.

Associations represent a character's influence and reputation (good or bad) with individuals, contacts, and institutions. Relationships and involvement with various associations throughout the story will determine the institution or contacts' disposition towards the character, as well as the benefits and obligations they receive based on this disposition.

Metaphysics represent forces and abilities that work beyond the mundane. It is the ability of a character to wield extraordinary powers, called manifestations. Manifestations may be rooted in sources such as magic, psionics, contact with eldritch beings, esoteric energy fields, mutations, superpowers, or something that defies even these classic conventions.

Skills are the resource that represent a character's ability to do and know things. It reflects the overall proficiency with a particular task, knowledge, or type of equipment. Every skill has an associated attribute.

Traits and Conditions are physical, mental, or environmental elements that affect a character's performance or capabilities.

Experience Points (XP) are the abstraction used to represent a character's development through the course of story. XP are awarded by the Narrator at various points throughout the game. XP can be spent to improve attributes, metaphysical power, learn new manifestations, or increase association ratings.

XP Cost for Character Advancement:

- Skills: 2 pts/per
- Contacts: 3 pts/per
- Metaphysics: 5 pts/per
- Attributes: 7 pts/per
- Power: 10 pts/per

Kismet represents a player's ability to assert their character's destiny to influence the forces of Fate. A character's Kismet pool is equal to their current XP. It can be used to invoke powerful metaphysics, and is one of the few ways a character can perform post-roll adjustments. When a player uses Kismet, the player subtracts the amount of Kismet used from their Kismet pool. This decrease is temporary, and characters replenish their Kismet pool after resting.

Uses for Kismet:

- 1 Kismet: Add 2 to the roll before the dice are rolled
- 1 Kismet: Add 1 to a roll after the roll is performed
- 1 Kismet: Add 1 point to your initiative for one round
- 2 Kismet: Add 2 to another's die roll before the die is rolled
- 2 Kismet: Add 1 to another's die roll after the die is rolled
- 5 Kismet: Re-roll your die result
- 10 Kismet: Force someone else to re-roll their die result

What Does Average Look Like?

In reference to attributes and instincts, Spectrum uses 10 to represent the middle-of-the-bell-curve human average. Why 10? Fingers and toes aside, most people just enjoy even numbers.

IV. Skills

What are Skills

Skills represent a character's ability to do things. They represent the experience and training that form a character's capabilities. Throughout the course of a story, there will be times when a character will attempt to make use of their skills in a situation that is rife with questionable success.

During these moments of tension, the Narrator will often require the player to make a dice roll using The Chart, called a skill test, to generate goal points representing how well the character performs their skill.

When to Perform a Skill Test

Spectrum is about roleplaying, not roll-playing. Therefore, one of the most crucial roles of the Narrator is to require skill tests frequently enough that the players feel their skill choices matter but sparingly enough to prevent collaborative storytelling from becoming a soulless game of chance.

Requiring players to roll for things that are well within their wheelhouse, especially during moments of low tension, can break the flow of the narrative as well as add an unnecessary level of frustration for players by adding a risk of failure to easy mundane tasks. A car chase should require a Driving test, driving to the supermarket should not. Replacing the firing pin of a handgun should require a Repair test, cleaning the handgun should not.

How to Perform a Skill Test

A skill test is performed using the following steps:

1. Determine the skill being used. Sometimes more than one skill may be appropriate to use, and sometimes the skill the character chooses to use is inappropriate but "close enough" to make an attempt.
2. Narrator states what type of skill test it is: instant, extended, or contested.
3. State how much time it will take to perform the skill. If a test requires more than one roll, how much time does each roll represent?
4. The Narrator assigns a target number of goal points (difficulty rating) to arbitrate between success or failure.
5. The Narrator and players observe any mitigating circumstances to the task at hand in order to apply bonus/penalty shifts or bonus/penalty adjustments.
6. The player uses the skill value, with any shifts, to determine which column in The Chart they will reference with their roll. Using the result of their dice roll, applying any adjustments, they reference The Chart to determine how many goal points were generated by the skill test.
7. The Narrator compares the number of goal points generated vs. the number required and qualifies the success or failure to the players.

Choosing the Right Skill

There will be times during which the required skill for a situation is obvious, but none of the characters have any ranks in that skill. This need not result in a standstill where the character's goal is inherently doomed to fail. In such instances, it is appropriate for the Narrator to allow players to make a case as to why a different skill could be used in its place.

In such a case, when one skill is not a perfect substitute for another, but when there is a logical reason why an alternative skill might be a close enough fit for the task at hand, narrators have the option to allow the alternate skill and apply penalty shifts as necessary (unless the player can make a very convincing argument).

Example:

The players are trying to tail a messenger through the forest without revealing their presence. The trees are fairly dense in this part of the forest, so they decide to climb the trees and scramble through the canopy to keep pace with the messenger.

The Narrator calls for an Acrobatics check to hop from branch to branch. All but one of the players has the Acrobatics skill. The remaining player asks if they can substitute their climbing skill.

As the aspects of the acrobatics skill used for this task parallel the climbing skills that would be used, the Narrator agrees to the request and allows the player to use their climbing skill with $\leftarrow 1$ to perform the task.

Time Intervals

A skill test represents an amount of time that passes while the character is attempting to accomplish their goal. For example, picking a lock might require 30 seconds per roll, where carving a sculpture from a block of granite could take 1 hour per roll. Note, a higher goal point requirement does not always translate to a longer period of time per roll.

Suggested standard time increments are: 3 seconds, 30 seconds, 1 minute, 10 minutes, 1 hour, 10 hours, 1 day, 1 week and 1 month.

It is important to observe that winning a contest by generating more goal points than one's opponent does not necessarily mean the task was accomplished successfully or well. It just means that one character did it better than the other.

Types of Skill Tests

Instant Skill Test

A character makes an instant skill test when the success or failure of the goal is determined by a single dice roll. Instant refers to the fact that a character's success or failure is determined the "instant" the dice are rolled. That is not to suggest that these types of skill checks happen instantaneously in terms of how much time passes in the game to accomplish the success or failure. When an instant skill test does not yield enough goal points to produce a success, the attempt has failed. The goal points earned from instant skill tests are not cumulative.

Example:

A character is attempting to cross a narrow footbridge that begins to creak and shudder as they anxiously tiptoe across. The Narrator calls for an instant Acrobatics test to see if the player can scamper to the other side before the bridge gives way.

Extended Skill Test

A character makes an extended skill test when the success or failure of the goal is determined by multiple dice rolls, representing a sustained effort over time. With an extended skill test, the goal point results of each individual die roll are cumulative, and the time intervals represented by each roll are cumulative.

Example:

The player encounters a locked door in the otherwise unlocked mansion. Intrigued by what is behind it, they ask the Narrator if they can make a lockpicking check. The Narrator agrees, saying that each roll will represent about 30 seconds, and they need a total of 30 goal points to open the door. It takes the player a total of three rolls to accomplish the task. Since each roll represents an interval of 30 seconds, it takes a total of 90 seconds to successfully pick the lock.

Contested Skill Test

Contested skill tests occur when two or more individuals are trying to outperform each other. A contested skill test can either be an instant or extended test.

A contested skill test occurs when:

1. One character is actively trying to succeed at a skill before a competing character. This is represented by achieving the target number of goal points in fewer rolls (and therefore a lesser amount of time) than their opponent.
2. One character is trying to outperform other characters by performing the skill better than their opponent by achieving more goal points after a set number of rolls.

Example:

Jason achieves 3 goal points on his Music test during a night of karaoke, while Rob achieves only 2 goal points. This outcome reflects that Jason outperformed Rob. But this does not mean Jason succeeded in singing a song that anyone wanted to hear.

Skill Ratings

All skills start at a negative value to represent the time and effort required to learn a new skill. Sheer physical or mental prowess can, to some degree, compensate for a lack of skill. To represent this, each skill has an associated attribute that will offset at least some of the negative base.

The negative base for various skills will vary based on the complexity and time required to learn. Learning to swim is a relatively straightforward process. Learning astrophysics on the other hand...not so much. Skills with higher learning costs, such as applied sciences, require a considerably higher amount of investment before a character can be considered viable in that skill.

To determine a character's overall aptitude for any skill, the player adds the associated attribute value and the skill point to the negative starting base. The resulting number represents the character's overall ability in that skill and is called a skill rating.

Example:

Hazim the Silent has a 10 in FIN and put 10 points into his Stealth skill. The starting skill deficit for Stealth is -13. His skill rating is 7.

$$10 + 10 - 13 = 7$$

Greg the Mad Scientist has a 13 in REA and puts 25 points into his Engineering skill with a focus in Biochemistry. The starting skill deficit for Engineering is -17. Greg's skill rating is 21.*

$$13 + 25 - 17 = 21$$

Rachel the Exchange student is struggling to learn Persian. She has a 5 in INT and puts 5 skill points into the Languages skill with a specialty in Persian. The starting skill deficit is -7. Rachel's skill rating is 3.*

$$5 + 5 - 7 = 3$$



Determining Difficulty

Defining the difficulty of a skill test is the Narrator's responsibility. Success or failure on any given skill test is determined by whether the character achieves the target number of goal points. Target numbers are largely subjective and left to the Narrator's discretion.

To assist the Narrator from the arbitrary assigning of difficulties, Spectrum has created a quick reference difficulty chart. This chart is intended to assist narrators in setting consistent goal point requirements across all difficulties throughout the story without disrupting the flow of the game.

The difficulty chart contains the following ratings: Easy, Standard, Moderate, Difficult, Improbable, and Inconceivable. While each rating has a set value, certain circumstances require a necessary degree of gradation. For example, a brand new padlock might have a Moderate difficulty (10). However, if that same padlock was well used, it might be a little more forgiving, and instead have a difficulty of 7, given the wear and tear from use. While a point value is applied to each difficulty rating, there is room for interpretation, both more and less difficult, for each.

With every skill check, the Narrator will decide if any shifts or adjustments apply to the character's skill roll based on the context of the current situation.

Instant Test Difficulty

Task Difficulty	Goal Points
Simple	1
Very Easy	2
Easy	3
Moderate	5-7
Challenging	10-13
Difficult	17-22
Very Difficult	28-35
Unlikely	50-70
Improbable	100-150
Inconceivable	250+

Extended Test Difficulty

Task Difficulty	Goal Points
Simple	5
Very Easy	7
Easy	10
Moderate	13-17
Challenging	22-28
Difficult	35-50
Very Difficult	70-100
Unlikely	150-250
Improbable	375-600
Inconceivable	1,000+

Common Mechanics vs. Dramatic Moments

Throughout most stories, the players will find their characters in mundane situations requiring a skill's common mechanics test. In most cases, these tests represent the small discrete steps of building story tension by representing minor "risk of loss" scenarios.

By being part of the general gestalt ebb and flow of the narrative, these tests are rarely epic or pivotal narrative moments. For example, swimming across a small calm river to pick up a trail on the other side is a fairly mundane situation that the Narrator may require a series of Swimming tests to determine how much time it takes for the party to cross. This potential loss of in-story time adds some small meaningful definition to the story but would likely be resolved with a few skill test rolls.

Sometimes the narrative reaches a point where focusing on a skill test with a more powerful lens adds to the suspense and impact of the story. These dramatic moments are for when seconds count, the stakes are higher, or maybe the characters are trying to salvage a truly foolish decision. During these dramatic moments, the common mechanics become optional, and all bets are off.

Example:

The Narrator may impose time limits to the roll, forcing certain decisions to be made quickly. Alternatively, the players may suggest a certain goal point limit in order to allow them to achieve something truly epic, albeit outlandish in the context of physics and reality. Dramatic moments go beyond the simple, "How do you want to do this?" by making the mechanics themselves add to the very tension of the moment.

During dramatic moments, both players and narrators are encouraged to flex their narrative skills in proportion to the magnitude of the moment.

Static Difficulty

When assigning a difficulty rating to a skill check, it's important to note that the difficulty of a task does not change depending on which character is attempting the skill check. For example, scaling a cliff wall in the rain represents the same level of difficulty whether a character is a novice climber or an Olympic-level free climber. A character's level of skill, preparedness, and other mitigating factors are the only variables that can and should change.

There are times in the story when a character's actions can certainly lend themselves to creating a more dramatic moment. When a player's description of their action is nothing short of badass, it is often worth giving their roll a little nudge towards success, as it can help inspire more such moments in the future.

Success and Failure

After all shifts and adjustments are applied, the skill test is rolled on The Chart. Once the skill test has been rolled, the Narrator will quantify the success (or failure). Not all skill tests are simple binary pass/fail or go/no-go. Success will vary depending on the type of skill test being rolled, the target number of goal points required, and the context of the scene.

For example, on an extended Climbing skill test, any number of goal points might represent progress towards reaching the summit, with more points meaning a larger distance being covered. Or a character might score enough goal points to technically accomplish their goal, but not without some unforeseen complication.

A character may choose to default to a blue result on any skill test. A blue result represents the character performing below their average potential or baseline expectation.

Failure occurs when the skill test fails to produce adequate goal points. Not generating goal points is usually bad and can have some unintended consequences regarding the progress of your skill check.

White, Grey, and Black fails to generate goal points.

- **WHITE:** the character generates no goal points.
- **GREY:** the character generates no goal points and suffers one penalty shift on their next roll.
- **BLACK:** the character generates no goal points and suffers two penalty shifts on their next roll.

Example:

Betsy and her friends are bouldering at the local gym. Betsy is feeling particularly spry and decides to try her hand at a V6.

Betsy makes her first climbing check and scores 3 goal points. A slow start, but she's making progress.

Betsy reaches a transition and attempts a smear for a better foothold. She makes her second climbing check and scores a Grey, her foot slips, and she's left dangling for a moment. Due to the Grey, her next roll is made at a □ 1 shift.

Betsy scrambles as she attempts to recover. She makes a third climbing check with a penalty shift and nets an astounding 10 goal points. Not only does she recover, but she starts making some good progress.

Bolstered by her success, Betsy reaches the next transition and attempts to grab hold of a jug. She makes a fourth climbing check and generates a White color result. While she doesn't generate any goal points, the Narrator decides that nothing bad happens.

Unperturbed by the lack of progress, Betsy decides to go for broke and attempts a dyno, a bold leap from one face of the bolder to the next.

Unfortunately, her luck has run out and she generates a Black color result. Not only does she miss the catch, but comes down hard on her crash pad, earning her 3 points of stun damage for her trouble.

Partial Success, Also Known as Partial Failure

Narrators, sometimes it's ok to throw the players a bone and let their damn-near enough number of goal points represent a "partial success".

This is especially true when rewarding "close enough" promotes the collaborative process by adding unforeseen elements to the situation. And players, if your Narrator states that a skill has failed, take it in the teeth graciously. There is no great epic without a healthy dose of failure.



When One Skill Just Isn't Enough

The following rules are for those times when a quick reference to a single skill doesn't match what the player is seeing in their mind's eye. While the Narrator and players are welcome to say "Fuck it, just use skill X, it's close enough," we believe there are times when this answer is boring, lackluster, and often deprives players their moments of gut-wrenching epic badassery. Furthermore, we believe that overtly providing players with tools to support their creativity will almost always result in more fun and a better story.

Using a Skill to Augment a Subsequent Skill

Under the right circumstances, a character can perform an action to potentially improve the outcome of their next action. This could represent a pilot reviewing the weather report prior to take off, a marksman calculating range and wind-speed before taking the shot, or a chemist adjusting the calibration on their equipment prior to an experiment. In all cases, the first skill test is meant to improve the outcome of the second action, but is not required.

Perform an Augmenting skill check by:

1. Declaring action #1 to be performed with the goal of improving action #2
2. Roll skill test for action #1
3. Assuming the character does not experience a state change prior to their next action, use the goal points from action #1 as a positive adjustment to the skill roll for action #2, along with any other appropriate shifts and/or adjustments

Example:

It's early afternoon when William sees the herd of deer breaking the hilltop and making their way to the small patches of tall grass sticking out from the snow. Three days since his rations depleted, William had bet big on the discovery of this yet unscavenged area. Having positioned himself 25 meters from the deers' winter feast, all William has to do is wait until the deer get within easy bow range.

The herd comes down the hill, and as a group they occasionally pause to scan the landscape. William feels the gentle wind shift against his back. Still at least 80 meters away, the entire herd stops and raises their heads in unison. A new smell in the air, the smell of man.

"Well fuck me," he thinks loudly. William prepares for a shot that his makeshift bow was not designed for.

William declares that he will use his navigation skill of 10 to calculate distance, wind, and elevation differences in order to improve his subsequent bow shot, skill 10

He rolls a navigation skill test and gets a 51, yielding 7 goal points

The deer still haven't decided to move yet. William rolls his bow skill, gets a 48 and adds 7 to that result $48+7=55$, which yields 7 goal points

"Slow is smooth, smooth is fast," William lets the arrow fly.....

Combining Skills

Sometimes a player wants their character to perform an action that requires combining skills into one action. Combining skills requires the player to make a skill test with both skills and both skills must generate goal points for the combined skill to be considered "pulled off".

Combining skills is intended to represent the reality that complicated actions that require integrating multiple skills takes serious aptitude and dedication. The main benefits of combining skills is to do something outlandish, improve action economy, or gain some kind of secondary benefits from the action.

Combining skills uses the following steps:

1. Player declares their action in detail and states which two skills they are using to pull it off
2. Both skills are rolled with 2 left shifts
3. Generated goal points are added together
4. Determine action outcome (any subsequent rolls made by the player related to the combined skill, most commonly damage or disruption rolls, are also shifted left by 2

Example:

Tabitha needs a section of that bridge to go down fast and definitively, before Big Corp shows up with their hella tech and makes things "complicated".

Standing underneath the bridge looking at its support beams, Tabitha takes in the fact that bridges are big and she has a limited supply of C4, det cord, and blasting caps. Taking a quick stock of her supplies, she estimates that she can probably only take down two of the bridge trusses, which means that she is proper fucked.

"Well, I've been fucked before...." and Tabitha gets to work.

Having an explosive rating of 17 means that she can usually make any kind of explosion she wants, big and showing, tightly controlled, look like an accident etc.... But in order to take down a bridge with limited gear, Tabitha combines her engineering (architecture) skill with her explosives skill to determine where the C4 needs to go and how the blast can be shaped for maximum instability. Can someone say Hail Mary.

Tabitha declares that she is using a skill combination of explosives 17 and Engineering (architecture) 10 to pull off some jank shit.

Tabitha rolls her Engineering skill first, 10 shifted to 5, she rolls a 62, which generates 3 goal points. Next she rolls her explosive skill, 17 shifted to 10, and gets a 70, generating 10 goal points (hot damn!).

$3+10=13$. The Combined skill test generates 13 goal points. Maybe that project on lenticular truss bridges back in senior year at Bard was more useful than she initially thought.

Tabitha activates the detonator, "Tabby makes things go boom".....

Using Skill Synergy

Skill synergy represents the special situation when a character's chance of success using a skill can be improved by having a complimentary skill appropriate to the situation. Whether or not skills have synergy is completely contextual to the when, where, how, what, and why of the skill test. Sometimes players will figure out a cool little loophole, maybe it will be the result of a happy accident, and other times, players may be able to brilliantly engineer a situation in order to maximize their chances.

The steps to utilizing skill synergy are as follows:

1. Player believes they have, given the situation, a secondary skill that should improve their chance of success
2. Player explains their rationale to the Narrator
3. Narrator says yay or nay
4. If approved, the player adds the Blue value of the supporting skill as an adjustment to their skill test roll

A friendly reminder: synergy represents the moments when a player is able to intentionally and directly leverage a secondary skill to improve the outcome of a primary skill. It is not expected that players will always get to take advantage of two skills just because they think that they should, nor should the Narrator deny the use of synergy just because the request wasn't expected. But if players start trying to hump the synergy rules too hard and/or too often, instead of simply saying no, we have a fun suggestion. Attempting to synergize two skills can actually hurt the chance to succeed if the context of the skill test has been misinterpreted, or if players lack accurate data, or both. So remember that it is entirely appropriate to start imposing the secondary skill Blue value as a penalty to a skill test to represent synergizing with the wrong secondary skill.

Example:

The scouting party is at the end of day 17 of exploring the Shadow Woods and it has been a long and arduous journey so far. Most of the supplies were lost in the first week, as long as "lost" is synonymous with found and eaten by a dire bear. Everyone is tired and tensions are running high. So of course, it is Billy's turn to cook.

Billy is a fantastic cleric and not a bad storyteller, but he is not particularly known for his culinary skills. Coupled with the fact that dinner will need to be comprised of foraged ramps, hardtack, and peas, things don't look good for the nutritional or morale status of these adventurers.

"What the hell am I going to do?," Billy mutters to himself. "Hey Billy," one of his captains shouts while walking into camp, "We found a bunch of stinging nettles while filling the water-skins. I know you like it for your poultices."

Distracted, Billy doesn't even look up from his dilemma, "Thanks Cap, I'll get to boiling them tomorrow...oh holy shit!"

Billy is inspired to try something janky

He starts cooking down the nettles, adds some dried melde, and the peas. Next, he uses a small amount of jojoba oil from his tincture kit and uses it to saute the ramps. He uses hyssop for its minty characteristics, adding just a little bit of lanolin to offset the tannin. Some salt and pepper (dire bears don't seem to care for condiments) and finally some burdock powder to thicken the concoction.

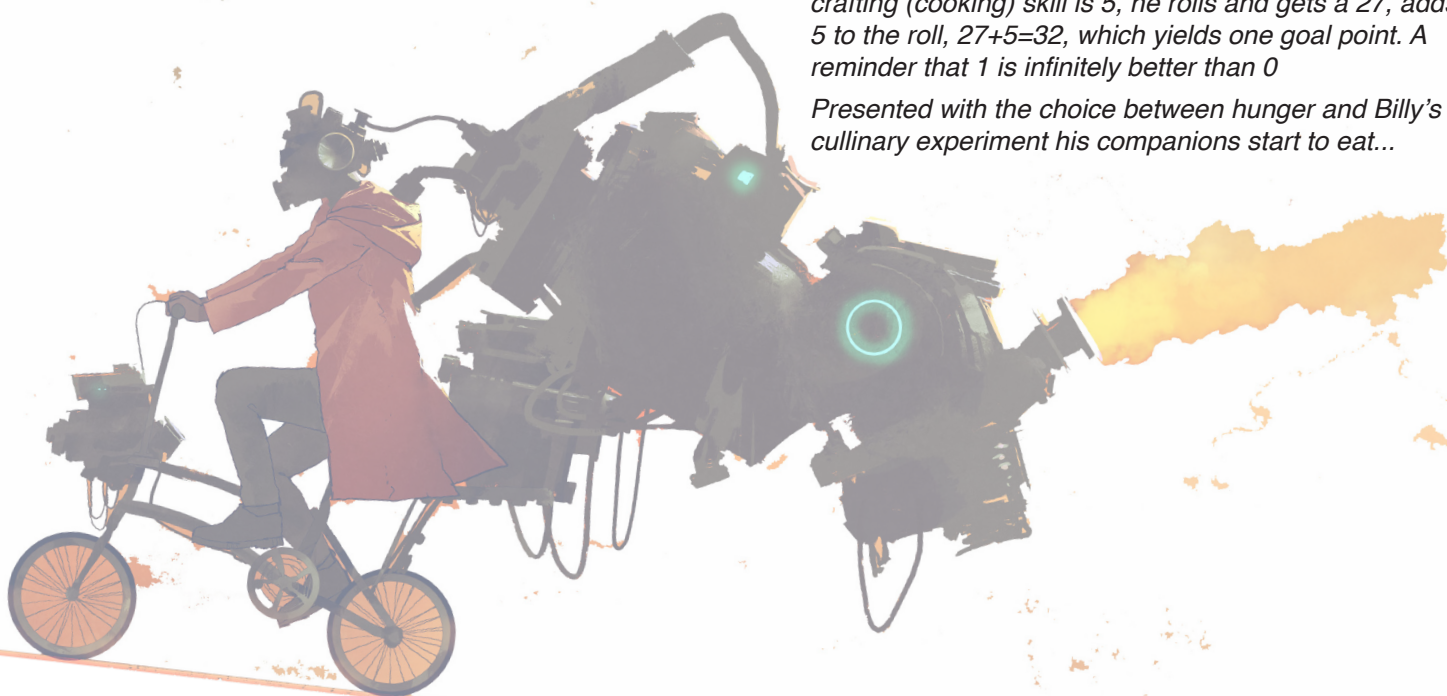
Billy announces that he wants to leverage his medicine skill of 17 to use his various medicinal herbs, tinctures, and essential oils, and make a better meal

Narrator giggles and approves

Billy spoons the recipe into bowls over hardtack.

Billy's medicine skill is 17, with a Blue value of 5. His crafting (cooking) skill is 5, he rolls and gets a 27, adds 5 to the roll, $27+5=32$, which yields one goal point. A reminder that 1 is infinitely better than 0

Presented with the choice between hunger and Billy's culinary experiment his companions start to eat...



Assistance

Assisting occurs when one character (the Primary) is responsible for producing the outcome while other involved character(s) (Assistants) are attempting to improve the Primary's chance of success by "helping" to perform ancillary tasks.

To assist a skill test, all assistants must be involved throughout the majority of the process. Each assistant chooses an appropriate skill they have that could help improve the process (the skill choices must be approved by the Narrator).

Each character rolls the approved assisting skill check, and the goal points generated are added directly to the skill rating used by the Primary.

The Primary's skill rating cannot be more than doubled. In the case that the Primary character has a zero (or less), the result from assistants cannot increase the primary's skill rating past 1.

If an assistant obtains a Grey or Black roll result, this translates to their actions making the task more difficult for the Primary actor. When this happens, a Grey result from an assistant will decrease the Primary's skill rating by 1, and in the case of a Black result, the skill rating will decrease by 2.

Assistance Steps:

1. Assisting character(s) determine if their chosen skill is appropriate to the task at hand.
2. Assisting character(s) roll their appropriate skill.
3. Any resultant skill points are added to the skill value of the Primary, while GREY results cause a cumulative left shift to the Primary's skill column to be rolled.
4. The Primary rolls a skill test on the appropriate column.

Example:

The Chef (Primary), who must cook a meal for a hungry ghost, has a skill rating of 10 in Craft (Cooking). The first assistant will use their search skill to look for ingredients appropriate to the phantasmal meal.

The second will use their language skill to translate the battered copy of Soul Food: Cooking for the Dearly Departed. The two assistants manage to generate 7 goal points between them.

Adding the assistant's 7 goal points directly to the Primary's skill rating in Craft (Cooking) boosts his rating from 10 to 17. He now rolls on the 17 column as the result.

Collaboration

A collaborative effort occurs when all members of the group are equally working on the same task. To participate in a collaborative skill test, all collaborators should have a positive (greater than 0) rating in the same appropriate skill. If the Narrator allows a collaborator to use an adjacent skill, any resulting penalty shifts are applied to all participants.

When making a collaborative skill test roll, each participant suffers a $\leftarrow$ equal to the total number of collaborators (in addition to any other relevant shifts and/or adjustments the Narrator deems necessary). Each character makes a skill test roll and any resulting goal points are added together.

Collaboration Steps:

1. The Narrator determines the appropriate skill / adjacent skills to be used for the collaboration.
2. When making the skill test(s), every collaborator suffers a number of penalty shifts equal to the number of collaborators participating in the skill test.
3. After applying all applicable shifts and adjustments, all collaborators make their skill test roll. All goal points generated are cumulative between the collaborators.

Example:

An archaeology team of 3 finds themselves in an ancient library searching for references to an ancient artifact.

They decide to collaborate in the search. Because there are 3 members collaborating, each member suffers $\leftarrow 3$ to their skill check.

The Narrator declares that they need to generate a total of 50 goal points. Player 1 generates 5 goal points; Player 2, 10 goal points; and Player 3, 0 goal points.

Added together, the first round of collaborative searching generates 15 (5+10+0) goal points. The search continues until the team accumulates enough goal points.

When a character wants to perform an action that falls beyond the described scope of a skill

We suggest to consider the following:

- If it looks awkward, it is awkward. If your initial response to the description of an intended action is "Uh...what..?", chances are good that it's awkward and should be treated as such.
- Physics determines the effectiveness of the action. Are there some exceptions to this rule? Of course. As a rule, however, the laws (guidelines?) of physics should be bent, but not broken; that's what metaphysics is for.
- Be mindful of the action economy. There is such a thing as trying to do too much. While combat is, by necessity, an abstraction, there's really only so much one can hope to accomplish in a single round.

Choosing Skills

Skills are chosen à la carte to suit the needs of the character and the story. For example, a character's background or history might require knowledge in certain skills, such as a hacker having knowledge in computer software and hardware. However, that same hacker might also play the ukelele in their spare time. That is to say, what a character has chosen to spend their time learning is telling and is much broader in scope than a standard inflexible set of "class" skills.

The skills list in Spectrum is designed to satisfy the "rule of 85," as we expect these common mechanics to easily cover 85% of skill usage in any given story or game, with the ancillary goals of reducing granularity and preventing skills from becoming a resource sink.

Please note that just because we've listed mechanics for a skill does not mean that characters should be expected to roll every time they want to do something related to their skills, as this makes for slow game play and stuttered storytelling.

If you find yourself at a loss as to how a skill mechanic should be represented for a specific situation, here are the quick steps that we suggest:

1. **Don't panic.**
2. Take a quick pause in the game.
3. The player/Narrator explains what they are trying to do.
4. Have a discussion and settle on something.
5. FAFO (Fuck Around and Find Out).
6. Email Black Coffee Games and tell us about it.

The Reason for Specification Requirements is Two-fold

Firstly, we believe that it starts to get rather silly for a character to access the full breadth of "SCIENCE!" by putting skill points into a single category. But equally, it would be ludicrous for us to try and list every possible specialization for every broad skill.

Secondly, the practice of requiring specializations is aimed at limiting knowledge and skill loopholes which too often can cause unwanted player/narrator conflict.

Skill Descriptions

Name

The title of the skill. As skills are a very broad category and this is a very finite game, Spectrum takes some liberties to combine skill genres. This is for simplicity of play as well as an attempt to keep the total number of skills vaguely manageable.

Any Skill with a * at the end of the name requires the player to declare a specialization within that skill set. Nothing prevents a character from having multiple independent ratings in the same skill. For example, a Scientist might have 3 different ratings in Science to represent their studies of Chemistry, Physics, and Botany.

Associated Attribute

Each skill has an associated attribute. In reality no skill has a direct 1:1 relationship with an attribute, as with anything in the TTRPG space, it is close enough for our purposes.

Skill Deficit

Most beings are born bereft of skills or knowledge. To represent this, each skill rating begins at a deficit. Larger deficits represent the difficulty or required time and effort involved to develop the skill. For example, learning to swim is decidedly easier than learning to drive a fire truck.

Description

The basic explanation of how a skill can be used. These descriptions have been intentionally left broad, allowing for flexibility and interpretation from both the players and narrators, with the goal that this will facilitate more dynamic and fun gameplay.

Applications

The applications section for skills provides examples of common uses for which we expect players to use said skill. When common applications have an explanation of scope without any codified rules, this represents that the skill uses the standard mechanic of rolling a skill test vs. a difficulty as explained in the core rules.

Certain skills, such as Craft and Repair, have dedicated mechanics that will need to be applied when using the skill.

More Guidelines Than Actual Rules

Neither players nor narrators should feel limited by what is listed in the "applications" section. Any skill can be as useful as a player or narrator can imagine (or successfully argue) it to be.

Skills List

Name	Attribute	Deficit
Academics	Reason	-7
Acrobatics*	Agility	-10
Animal	Intuition	-10
Appraisal	Reason	-10
Athletics	Strength	-10
Bow	Agility	-13
Climbing	Agility	-5
Craft	Finesse	-17
Dodge*	Agility	-3
Engineering	Reason	-17
Environmental Gear	Reason	-10
Etiquette*	Perception	-7
Explosives	Reason	-13
Focus	Perception	-7
Handgun	Finesse	-13
Intimidation	Martial	-5
Investigation	Reason	-10
Language*	Intuition	-10
Legerdemain	Finesse	-10
Long Gun	Agility	-13
Medicine	Reason	-17
Melee, 1-hand	Martial	-10
Melee, 2-hand	Martial	-10
Melee, unarmed	Martial	-7
Navigation	Perception	-10
Performance*	Finesse	-7
Persuasion	Intuition	-5
Read-Nonverbal	Perception	-3
Repair	Intuition	-13
Search	Perception	-5
Security*	Perception	-13
Stealth	Finesse	-10
Survival	Intuition	-17
Throwing	Finesse	-7
Vehicle*	Finesse	-10

Academics*

Attribute: Reason

Initial Deficit: -7

Description: Represents formal or self-taught knowledge of a specified, non-scientific discipline, such as history, law, literature, occultism, philosophy, or religion.

- **Research:** A character gains information related to other reason-based skills. Researching is an extended skill test in which each roll represents one hour. At the end of the skill test, the character receives an adjustment bonus to skill tests related to the Research Reason skill. This benefit is temporary and decreases after a rest period.
- **Recall:** The immediate recollection or recognition of a fact or reference to the character's chosen discipline. This is performed as an instant skill check, with the required goal points being related to how esoteric or unrelated the information.
- **Extrapolation:** A prolonged academic effort, such as authoring a paper, piecing together philosophical principles of a manifesto, or unlocking the individual pieces of a syncretic occult ritual. This is resolved as an extended skill test. Each roll represents a period of time between one hour and one week.

Acrobatics

Attribute: Agility

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Contorting the body and defying one's center of gravity. It includes actions like parkour, flips, difficult jumps, and using a slack line.

- **Balance:** The practiced ability to maintain equilibrium in various situations and conditions. When a character experiences an event that could cause them to become unbalanced or fall, they may first make an Acrobatics skill test, subtracting the goal points generated from the unbalancing effect.
- **Tumble:** When the character lands, as from a fall or a jump, the character makes an Acrobatics test and mitigates one point of fall damage per goal point.
- **Maneuver:** Mitigates movement-restricting conditions. The target number for this test is variable depending...

Animal Handling

Attribute: Intuition

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Represents the character's ability to safely interact with, control, or train an animal. Note that riding an animal is covered by the Riding skill.

- **Interact:** Animal Handling tests can be instant or extended skill tests. The target number is determined by the animal's aggression and/or aversion towards the character. On a successful test, the goal points generated in excess of the target number are treated as temporary contact points and the animal may allow the character to approach and interact with it.
- **Manage:** The knowledge and ability to care for an animal. Normally this will not require a skill roll, but under certain circumstances, such as limited resources or severe environments, a roll may be required to determine if the character's skill can surmount the negative elements.
- **Train:** When the character shares a bond with an animal, they can attempt to train the animal to follow commands. These commands may consist of words, sounds, gestures, or some combination.

The amount of time it takes to train an animal involves many variables, such as intelligence, demeanor, proclivity, relationship, etc. Simple commands, such as "sit" or "backup" may take as little as one or two weeks, while more involved behaviors can take many months.

As a general rule, training an animal is an extended skill test with each roll representing a week of regularly working with the animal. And training an animal to perform tasks with in-game mechanics should, in general, cost the character an experience point per skill point they wish the animal to have to perform the trained skill.

Appraisal

Attribute: Reason

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Represents the ability of a character to gauge the relative value of specific items within specific markets. Additionally, allows the character to arrive at this conclusion by evaluating the item's authenticity, provenance, and relative quality.

- **Identify:** This can be an instant or extended skill test, depending on the character's familiarity with the subject matter. The difficulty is determined by the Narrator, related to the context of the test and the item, as well as the esoteric nature of the item to be identified.
- **Provenance:** Related to determining the chronology of the ownership, custody, or location of a historical object. This is almost always an extended skill test with the time represented by each roll being highly variable, depending on such factors as the character's access to research materials and the size of the market in question, and could range from minutes to days.
- **Value:** For purposes of this skill, characters are assumed to possess some degree of knowledge about the market for items associated with skills in which they have at least one skill point.

Athletics

Attribute: Strength

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Reflects the character's abilities to perform strength-based activities.

- **Jumping:** The character's trained skill at leaping and jumping.
- **Running:** The character's trained ability to sprint.
- **Lifting:** The character's trained ability to lift and move weight.

Bow

Attribute: Agility

Initial Deficit: -13

Description: Represents the ability to use devices that incorporate a mechanical advantage to propel arrows or bolts to damage a target.

- **Reactive:** Represents the quick acquisition and firing in order to hit a target, prioritizing speed over accuracy. This type of attack can be performed as a simple action.
- **Precision:** Represents the character taking the time they need to make a shot with the ranged weapon, prioritizing accuracy over speed. This type of attack can be performed as a complex action and provides 1 → to the skill column used for the attack.
- **Trick Shot:** Represents the various janky shots that, when combined with other skills, can be used with this weapon.

Climbing

Attribute: Agility

Initial Deficit: -5

Description: Ascending steep, vertical surfaces using handholds, muscle coordination, and balance.

- **Scale:** ascending or descending a non-horizontal surface from a starting point to a stopping point. The "stopping point" does not necessarily imply the full height of a surface, it can also represent a ledge, an anchor point for a rope, or even just an area where the character chooses to stop and catch their breath.
- **Anchor:** securing a rope and/or system to a stationary object capable of supporting the load attached to it. Anchors can be natural elements, such as trees or rocks, artificial elements, such as beam clamps or removable swivel bolts, or they can be man-made, such as structural beams and apparatus.

In most cases, scaling a surface will require multiple instant skill tests to represent the climber traversing the various sections of a surface.

Each step of the test, a character must generate goal points equal to or greater than the climb difficulty rating.

- Goal points are equal to or greater than the difficulty, climb on.
- If the generated goal points are greater than half the difficulty, this represents the character making no forward progress.
- If the goal points are less than half the difficulty, this represents the character experiencing problems and they make an immediate reflex check. Add the reflex goal points to the climbing check. If the new number is still less than half the difficulty, then the character has lost their grip and falls.

Craft*

Attribute: Finesse

Initial Deficit: -17

Description: Represents the character's ability to create a finished product from individual parts or components as well as create said individual parts and components. This includes the creation of functional items, such as armor, as well as purely aesthetic ones, such as paintings.

Crafting an item requires access to all the individual components, necessary tools, a suitable space in which to perform the work, and time, time, time.

Craft is almost always an extended skill test. The default amount of time assumed for each roll ranges from minutes to days.

The infinite number of items that can be potentially crafted constitutes an infinite number of potential requirements. The task of delineation falls to the Narrator and players. There are no set mechanics that define what an item's constituent components cost, acquiring the individual parts simply costs what it costs.

Craft tests suffer $\leftarrow 1$ to $\leftarrow 3$ if the character does not have access to the full range of tools that would normally be required to craft the item, such as when trying to craft a horseshoe without access to a proper smithy.

Another 1 to 3 penalty shifts should be added when the skill test takes place in an environment that is not conducive to crafting; origami is especially difficult while under mortar fire. These penalties are cumulative and should increase when the character's access to tools or environments is more severely limited.

When determining the number of goal points needed to craft an item, consider the size and complexity of the item. A small marble bust vs. a 3-meter-tall statue will require a significantly different amount of goal points to create, despite using the same tools, materials, and techniques.

A character may substitute a Craft test for a Repair test whenever they attempt to repair an item that they are also capable of crafting. This test still requires appropriate tools and conditions.

- **Assemble/Disassemble:** Represents the character's ability to create an object by accurately assembling its prefabricated constituent components. The goal points required to assemble an object are dependent on the size of the object and its inherent complexity and is often performed as an extended action with the time represented by each roll, left to the Narrator's discretion. Failure to generate goal points on an assembly roll does not require the character to start from scratch but simply to disassemble and reassemble that particular component.
- **Fabrication:** This represents the character's ability to create a product from raw materials. Simple items will require a single Craft skill roll to create, while complex items will require multiple rolls. A failure to produce the required number of goal points or LIGHT GREY, DARK GREY, or BLACK color result means the crafting attempt has failed. Depending on the item being crafted, the materials used may be lost or destroyed.

Dodge

Attribute: Agility

Initial Deficit: -3

Description: Represents the character's ability to purposefully move their body out of an attack's path.

- **Evade:** The character rolls their skill, and the resultant goal points are subtracted from an attack roll.
- **Combine:** Represents the various fancy, movie derived, dodge combos that, when combined with other skills, can be used to perform an action while evading.

Engineering*

Attribute: Reason

Initial Deficit: -17

Description: The use of natural science, mathematics, and engineering design process to solve problems and improve systems.

- **Analyze:** Uses the character's skill to determine the workings of a system related to their field of study. This can be used to predict outcomes, determine strengths or weaknesses of the system, or to possibly recreate the system. In order to analyze an existing system, analyzing is usually an extended skill check, with each roll reflecting minutes to hours.
- **Design:** The planning and drafting of an object or system that communicates the concepts required to have said object or system built. Designing is usually an extended skill check, with each roll reflecting hours to days. Once the character has completed the design, they are then able to, if they have the appropriate skills, build the object or system or draft the design in such a way that someone else with the appropriate skills can build it for them.
- **Modify:** Represents the character's ability to, with enough data, plan positive or negative changes to a system. Modifying is usually an extended skill check with each roll reflecting hours to days. Once the character has completed the design, they are then able to, if they have the appropriate skills, modify the system or draft the design in such a way that someone else with the appropriate skills can modify it for them.

Environmental Gear

Attribute: Reason

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Skills used to perform activities that require the use of equipment that allows for the ability to function in an otherwise hostile environment, such as underwater or outerspace.

- **Scuba:** Use of breathing equipment that is completely independent of a surface breathing gas supply, and therefore has a limited but variable endurance.
- **ADS:** Use of an atmospheric diving suit, a small one-person articulated submersible which resembles a suit of armor, with elaborate pressure joints to allow articulation while maintaining an internal pressure of one atmosphere.
- **Space Suit:** Used for protection from vacuum, temperature extremes, radiation and micrometeoroids.

Etiquette*

Attribute: Perception

Initial Deficit: -5

Description: The ability to recognize and act in accordance with the social expectations of a group or culture. The character should only be required to perform a skill check when they are in situations where the dynamics of their interaction may be surpassing their skill in etiquette.

- **Vernacular:** The character is able to communicate using the appropriate verbiage pertaining to a specific group or culture.
- **Behavior:** The character understands and is able to perform the appropriate actions pertaining to a specific group or culture.
- **Customs:** This reflects the character's knowledge regarding the customs and rituals pertaining to a specific group or culture.

Explosives

Attribute: Reason

Initial Deficit: -13

Description: Reflects the character's ability to utilize explosive systems in order to maximize damage to a target. Examples include grenades, Claymore mines, shaped charges, bombs, etc. Skill checks are usually extended, with each roll representing seconds to minutes and the difficulty rating reflecting the intricacies of the task at hand.

- **Attack/Set:** Using an explosive device to cause damage to a target. This can represent lobbing a grenade, setting up a Claymore mine, or the careful application of charges to demolish a building.
- **Improvise:** Represents the assembly and use of an explosive device using unconventional resources.
- **Disarm:** Represents the ability and action to render an explosive device unusable or inactive.

Focus

Attribute: Perception

Initial Deficit: -7

Description: The ability to still one's mind and calm emotions through focused and deliberate mindfulness. The character must establish personal, consistent parameters for their meditation: sitting in silence, chanting to themselves that fear is the mind-killer, or taking a cigarette break are all equally valid methods, as is any other recurring ritual that brings the character peace.

- **Calm:** As a complex action, the character may negate a number of fear points equal to the number of goal points achieved.
- **Recover:** A character may use meditation to recover Will once in between rest periods and must spend 1 minute of interrupted meditating. Upon completion of the meditation, the character regains an amount of Will equal to the number of goal points achieved.
- **Focus:** As a complex action, the character may ignore a number of distraction points equal to the goal points generated.

Handgun

Attribute: Finesse

Initial Deficit: -13

Description: Covers the use of guns designed to be used one-handed, such as revolvers, flintlock pistols, magazine pistols, etc., to fire bullets that inflict ballistic damage.

- **Reactive:** Represents the quick acquisition and firing in order to hit a target, prioritizing speed over accuracy.
- **Precision:** Represents the character taking the time they need to make a shot with the ranged weapon, prioritizing accuracy over speed.
- **Trick Shot:** Represents the various janky shots that, when combined with other skills, can be used with this weapon.

Intimidation

Attribute: Martial

Initial Deficit: -5

Description: The ability to manipulate others' behavior through the use of duress, coercion, and fear.

- **Insult:** The use of disrespectful, scornful, or abusive remarks or actions in order to frighten or overawe a person in order to make them do what one wants.
- **Posture:** The use of body language to frighten a person in order to make them do what one wants.
- **Threaten:** The ability to overtly state one's intention to perform hostile actions against someone in retribution for something done or not done.

Investigation

Attribute: Intuition

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: The ability to discover and piece together information about a person or event. This skill is used to search for physical clues, track down the names and contact information of persons of interest, and draw conclusions about the "bigger picture" of a mystery.

- **Forensics:** Analyzing the scene of a crime or other mystery using scientific methods or tools is an extended skill test, the target number of which depends on the size of the scene and the obscurity of its clues.
- **Interrogate:** The act of interacting with a person or persons to acquire data, which could include visiting job sites, chatting with known associates, or questioning a suspect in a small room with a light shining in their eyes. In the latter example, the Narrator may require that the character make an Allure, Intimidation, or Persuasion test to encourage cooperation.
- **Analyze:** The practice of active observation to discover details about a target or scenario. This is usually an extended skill test with the target number determined by the availability of data, or the effort made to hide it.

Languages*

Attribute: Intuition

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Reflects the character's fluency in a chosen language other than their native tongue. A character should only be required to perform a skill check when they are in situations where the concepts being communicated surpass their skill in the language.

- **Articulate:** Represents fluency when communicating, using verbal or gestures, in a specific language.
- **Read:** Represents fluency in a specific written language.
- **Translate:** The ability to communicate in one language and transform the concept accurately in a different language. When translating, the character defaults to the lower skill level of the two languages.

Legerdemain

Attribute: Finesse

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Represents the character's ability to perform dexterous fine motor movements, usually with the intent to hide or deceive.

- **Sleight of Hand:** The use of fine motor skills to entertain or manipulate.
- **Obfuscation:** The act of hiding one's actions or focus.
- **Pickpocket:** Involves procuring an object off of a person without their notice.

Using legerdemain against the unawares is usually a contested skill test vs. the observer(s), or victim(s) awareness. If the goal point result of the skill test exceeds that of the opponent's Awareness test, the opponent does not notice the character's actions.

The Narrator may determine that the use of legerdemain is best represented using initiative order.

When using legerdemain against an aware observer, the contested skill test is against the observer's Awareness or Search skill.

Long Gun

Attribute: Agility

Initial Deficit: -13

Description: Covers the use of guns that are designed to be held by both hands and braced against the shoulder, such as rifles and shotguns.

- **Reactive:** Represents the quick acquisition and firing in order to hit a target, prioritizing speed over accuracy.
- **Precision:** Represents the character taking the time they need to make a shot with the ranged weapon, prioritizing accuracy over speed.
- **Trick Shot:** Represents the various janky shots that, when combined with other skills, can be used with this weapon.

Medicine

Attribute: Reason

Initial Deficit: -17

Description: Diagnose and treat illness and injury, often requiring specialized equipment, medications, or other overlapping skills.

- **Diagnose:** Rolled as an extended skill test to determine the nature of an illness or injury, the less obvious the condition, the higher the difficulty. Success allows the character to determine information about the condition, such as current Life points, diseases, or trauma.
- **Stabilize:** An extended skill test used in initiative order to stop a dying character from losing additional Life points on their turn. A patient is stabilized when the skill test achieves a number of goal points equal to the patient's current negative Life. Remember, the patient continues to lose one point of Life at the beginning of each of their turns until they are stabilized.
- **Treatment:** Treat medical problems that do not require surgical intervention, such as addressing wounds, setting broken bones, and administering medication. During a rest period, a character may forgo their own revitalization to perform a medicine test with any goal points earned added to the other characters' recovery of Life or Will.
- **Resuscitate:** Used to transition a freshly dead character to simply dying (hey, something is better than nothing).

Melee, One-Handed

Attribute: Martial

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Represents the character's ability to effectively utilize weapons, swords, clubs, axes, daggers, etc., that are designed to be used one-handed.

- **Strike:** To hit forcibly and deliberately with the intent to cause damage to the target.
- **Block:** The action of interfering with an attack through interposing an object between the attack and the target.
- **Combine:** Represents the various fancy, movie derived, block/strike combos that can be used to improve action economy or cause special conditions.

Melee, Two-Handed

Attribute: Martial

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Represents the character's ability to utilize weapons, great swords, great clubs, polearms, etc. that are designed to be used with both hands.

- **Strike:** To hit forcibly and deliberately with the intent to cause damage to the target.
- **Block:** The action of interfering with an attack through interposing an object between the attack and the target.
- **Combine:** Represents the various fancy, movie derived, block/strike combos that can be used to improve action economy or cause special conditions.

Melee, Unarmed

Attribute: Martial

Initial Deficit: -7

Description: Focuses on close-quarters striking that incorporates using fists, kicks, elbow strikes, knee strikes, headbutts, and any other parts of the striker's body that may inflict damage.

- **Strike:** To hit forcibly and deliberately with the intent to cause damage to the target.
- **Block:** The action of interfering with an attack through interposing an object between the attack and target.
- **Combine:** Represents the various fancy, movie derived, block/strike combos that can be used to improve action economy or cause special conditions.

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- **Strike:** To hit forcibly and deliberately with the intent to cause damage to the target.
- **Block:** The action of interfering with an attack through interposing an object between the attack and target.
- **Combine:** Represents the various fancy, movie derived, block/strike combos that can be used to improve action economy or cause special conditions.

Navigation

Attribute: Perception

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: The ability to use maps, compasses, landmarks, celestial bodies, coordinates, and/or electronic devices to discern answers to the following questions: Where am I? How did I get here? Where can I go from here? How do I get there? Additionally, it allows the character to create usable maps based on the answers to these questions.

- **Position:** The character's ability to determine the location of a target in relation to their position or to determine either position in relation to a target.
- **Course:** The ability to determine the route by which to travel to a desired location using a map
- **Map:** The skill used to create an accurate representation of a geographical location, usually on a flat surface of an area.

Performance*

Attribute: Finesse

Initial Deficit: -7

Description: Represents the character's ability to entertain a crowd, such as through use of either a musical instrument or the character's voice to sing, interpretive dancing, reciting a soliloquy, etc.

- **Composing:** Create a set of work to be performed by the character or others, such as music, song, or speech.
- **Emoting:** Used to convey feelings and depth using nonverbal cues.
- **Execution:** The act of using the medium. May be an instant or extended skill test depending on length and complexity of the performance.

Persuasion

Attribute: Intuition

Initial Deficit: -7

Description: Ability to bring others to believe the truth of something, irrespective of its actual truth or falsehood.

- **Allure:** Ability to be charming, beguiling, and seductive in social interactions.
- **Deceive:** Character's ability to hide or misrepresent their thoughts, goals, or motivations.
- **Motivate:** Ability to elicit a specific feeling, action, or behavior from a person.

Read Nonverbal

Attribute: Perception

Initial Deficit: -3

Description: The ability to observe and discern nonverbal cues, such as body language and tone of voice, as a means of gauging a speaker's disposition or truthfulness.

- **Empathize:** Discern the substance or context of a target's feelings through their actions.
Intonation: Interpret attitudes and emotions, through the pitch, focused expression, or flow of discourse.
- **Body Language:** Used to detect the substance or context of feelings through behaviors and actions, such as facial expressions, posture, gestures, eye movement, touch, and the use of space.

Performance*

Attribute: Finesse

Initial Deficit: -7

Description: Represents the character's ability to entertain a crowd, such as through use of either a musical instrument or the character's voice to create rhythmic, pleasing sounds, interpretive dancing, reciting a soliloquy, etc.

- **Composing:** Create a set of work to be performed by the character or others, such as music, song, or speech.
- **Emoting:** Used to convey feelings and depth using nonverbal cues.
- **Execution:** The act of using the medium. May be an instant or extended skill test depending on length and complexity of the performance.

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Intonation: Interpret attitudes and emotions, through the pitch, focused expression, or flow of discourse.

- **Body Language:** Used to detect the substance or context of feelings through behaviors and actions, such as facial expressions, posture, gestures, eye movement, touch, and the use of space.

Repair

Attribute: Intuition

Initial Deficit: -13

Description: The ability to restore functionality to a damaged system. A character applies the Repair skill to systems associated with any skill that they have invested skill points.

If a character uses the Repair skill on a system that they have not assigned skill points, the difficulty is increased and any negative skill points act as negative adjustments to the test.

Repair tests suffer one penalty shift if the character:

- Lacks access to the full range of tools required to repair the object, such as performing a tracheotomy with a ballpoint pen.
- Attempts repair in sub-optimal conditions
- Attempts to repair something that is actively being damaged.

These penalties are cumulative, and may, depending on the Narrator's discretion, increase when the character's access to tools or environments is more severely limited.

- **Triage:** Ability to recognize the severity of target's condition and what part of the target requires repair.
- **Mend:** Using the Repair skill to improve the working order of the target system. This may be represented by restoring integrity to an item or mending the tissue of an organic target.
- **Temporize:** Use of the skill to apply a stopgap treatment to temporarily restore the target to a working condition, like wrapping duct tape around a broken ax handle. Temporizing is an Extended action in which the character rolls their skill test until the goal points generated meet

Search

Attribute: Perception

Initial Deficit: -5

Description: Ability to perceive things that are hidden, obscured, or otherwise unlikely to be casually noticed. Unlike Investigation, Search does not involve the character's ability to draw conclusions or correlate data; rather, it involves the character's ability to detect persons, creatures, or objects within the range of their senses.

- **Spot:** Detect a target that is obscured or hidden. In the case of a target actively sneaking, hiding, or obfuscating, such as with Legerdemain, using the skill is a contested test, and the person who achieves the most goal points is victorious.
- **Find:** When a character attempts to search an area for something that is not actively hiding, such as a hidden switch or a secret door.

Security*

Attribute: Perception

Initial Deficit: -13

Description: Represents the character's knowledge related to measures that are designed to detect or deny unauthorized access to resources and to protect said resources from detection, tampering, damage, or harm.

- **Intrusion:** Represents the character's ability to access places that are designed to be off-limits by recognizing and bypassing security measures.
- **Disarm:** Use of the skill to disable security measures. When attempting to disable a security measure, the difficulty rating is determined by the rating of the mechanism that acts as a barrier to entry. When the test involves multiple steps, such as cracking the combination of a safe, each roll represents a step in the process.
- **Access:** The character uses the skill to manipulate a security device or system. This could represent hacking into a camera system or adjusting a triggering mechanism.



Stealth

Attribute: Finesse

Initial Deficit: -13

Description: Represents the character's ability to sneak or go unnoticed by others. Hiding, moving silently, and other efforts to avoid detection are the purview of this skill.

A character who wants to avoid being noticed may roll Stealth as an instant contested skill test. The target number for Stealth tests is set entirely by the Search or Awareness result of the entity (person, camera, animal, etc) the character is attempting to avoid.

If the entity is not actively looking for the sneaking character, the entity rolls its Awareness. If the entity generates less goal points than what the character's sneak roll generates, the character remains hidden. If the entity actively seeks the sneaking character, they roll their Search skill instead.

A single Stealth test remains in effect until the sneaking character encounters a state change. Environmental factors and/or gear factor into the application of bonus and penalty shifts. These shifts may be applied to either the Stealth test or the opponent's Search/Awareness test, depending on the circumstances, as decided by the Narrator.

- **Hide:** Represents the character's ability to keep out of sight or conceal themselves from view or notice.
- **Sneak:** Represents the character's ability to maneuver while avoiding the notice.
- **Disguise:** Represents the character's ability to change their appearance or identity so as to not be recognized. This is usually an instant skill test with the roll representing minutes to hours. Goal points generated represent the difficulty to detect the character's identity.

Survival

Attribute: Intuition

Initial Deficit: -17

Description: Represents the ability to locate and gather the necessary food, water, and shelter to stay alive in environments that are inhospitable to the character's life. It also allows characters to track animals and perform basic orienteering.

A character with any points in survival is capable of discerning the cardinal directions by observing the stars in the night sky and the location of sunrise/sunset. Additionally, they are capable of making basic judgements about the lay of the land based on its geographical features.

- **Forage:** Find and obtain food, water, and other vital resources from a specified environment. Foraging is an extended skill test, each roll usually representing 1 hour.
- **Hunt:** Represents the character's ability to track, trap, and predict game in the wild.
- **Shelter:** Represents the ability to construct resources that assist the character in mitigating negative environmental factors. This could represent creating a hut to keep out the rain, fabricating primitive clothing from local resources, building a fire for heat, etc.

Throwing

Attribute: Finesse

Initial Deficit: -5

Description: Represents the character's ability to propel an object, javelin, dart, rock, sling bolt, etc., through the air with force and intent by the forceful movement of the arm and hand in order to cause damage to the target.

- **Strike:** To throw an object forcibly and deliberately with the intent to cause damage to the target.
- **Lob:** Represents a character attempting to throw an object a long distance to a designated location (outfielder throwing to home plate).
- **Trick Shot:** Represents the various janky shots that, when combined with other skills, can be performed.

Vehicles*

Attribute: Finesse

Initial Deficit: -10

Description: Represents the character's ability to pilot a specific type of vehicle beyond its typical or ideal operating conditions. For example, a character who wants to drive their car down to the corner store would not need an appreciable skill in driving. Now, if a character is involved in a high-speed pursuit and is trying to lose their tail, that would be a call for a Vehicle skill.

- **High-Speed Maneuver:** Represents the character's ability to quickly maneuver their vehicle in response to changing environmental conditions, such as skidding on ice, or dodging a pedestrian that walked blindly into traffic.
- **Evade and Pursue:** Represents the ability to quickly pilot a vehicle in an effort to chase down or escape from a similarly fast moving target.
- **Ram:** Intentionally ramming into another vehicle or object with the intent to cause the most amount of damage to the target while minimizing damage to the character's vehicle and/or person.

V. Metaphysics

What is Metaphysics

Metaphysics is the process by which supernatural forces are manipulated to affect reality in ways that defy conventional explanations, allowing characters to reshape the very fabric of reality. Metaphysical abilities may be rooted in any conceivable source, and may involve such themes as arcane knowledge, divine intervention, eldritch horrors, radioactive mutations, the existence of caped superheroes, as well as other equally esoteric concepts.

As Spectrum is designed to work with all genres, worlds, and paradigms, the mechanics governing metaphysics are designed to be consistent irrespective of the source from which these extraordinary powers emerge. To this end, the rules for metaphysics use a source-neutral vocabulary for metaphysical abilities and their use. In Spectrum, a metaphysical practitioner is referred to as a "wielder," while the specific metaphysical effects are referred to as "manifestations."

Wielding Metaphysics

Wielding metaphysics consists of Channeling and Invocation.

Channeling

Channeling is the action of preparing a manifestation. This preparation can take on many different forms, such as; uttering a complex incantation, powering on your psionic enhancer, waving your hands in a frantic somatic gesture, or screaming really loudly for three episodes.

When channeling a metaphysical ability:

1. The wielder declares the manifestation they intend to invoke.
2. A manifestation may stay prepared for any amount of time.
3. Unless otherwise specified, a wielder may only have one manifestation channeled at a time.

Invoking

Invoking is the act of releasing a channeled manifestation.

The steps to invoking are:

1. The wielder declares the amount of power they will invoke the manifestation with, up to their total power limit.
2. Depending on the type of metaphysics involved, the wielder spends the points of the appropriate resource (Kismet, blood, life, battery etc.) equal to the power of the manifestation.
3. The manifestation is resolved with the amount of power the wielder channeled.

If a character is already maintaining a manifestation, the power of that manifestation is subtracted from their power limit.

How "Magical" Is Your Paradigm?

So why not just call it magic? While the term might apply in a good number of cases, it doesn't work for every case. Calling it magic and spells tends to invoke a swords and sorcery kind of vibe. Which is great, unless you're playing a Dark-Tech Cyberpunk where all of the metaphysical comes from psionics or gene mods. A manifestation is the realization of a character's metaphysical ability.

Depending on the paradigm, a manifestation might be an arcane secret or incantation gleaned from an ancient tome, a biotic implant allowing the wielder to generate electricity, or even an innate quality gained from being born on a planet with a red sun.

Example:

Bob wants to cast a fireball. His power limit is 10 but because he is currently maintaining a protective barrier with 5 points of power, the power limit of his fireball is 5. Of course Bob could just drop the barrier and to cast a more powerful fireball.....

Manifestations

A manifestation is the expression of a character's metaphysical ability and takes several different forms, from hurling a ball of fire, summoning a tornado, reading the minds of others, or taking flight. Manifestations and their effects are grouped by category within a separate Metaphysics resource guide.

The use of metaphysical abilities is categorized into the following:

- Instant manifestations
- Maintained manifestations

Why the Hell Have You Sequestered Metaphysics into a Separate Document

Because there is too much possibility for us to feel good about assigning a source for the unexplainable. The universe is a big beautiful ball of everything and the only way we might be able to do that justice is to start the ungodly long list of metaphysical possibilities in a separate guide.

Instant Manifestations

An instant manifestation is an immediate, singular metaphysical effect that begins and ends the moment it is invoked. The term "instant" is used to reflect the concept that, upon invocation, the metaphysical energies are immediately realized and no longer under the wielder's direct control.

Example:

Firebolt is a manifestation from the Fire Metaphysics Tree. It has a range of 2x the power used to channel it in meters and, when invoked, deals lethal damage equal to the total power used when channeled as a simple action. As it is an instant manifestation, when the Firebolt is invoked, the manifestation hits the chosen target and deals damage and the manifestation is resolved.

Maintained Manifestations

A maintained manifestation is an immediate but potentially ongoing metaphysical effect. A maintained manifestation begins when invoked and can remain persistent for as long as the wielder chooses to continue to dedicate power into the effect.

After a maintainable manifestation has been invoked, the wielder does not have to take any other actions to continue the effect at its current power level. The effect of a maintained manifestation will persist until the wielder chooses to dismiss it.

A character may declare that they are increasing or decreasing the power of an actively maintained manifestation. Changing the power of a maintained manifestation does not require rechanneling the metaphysical effect. But it does require the character to expend more points of resources equal to the increase in power.

A wielder can maintain multiple manifestations. The total cumulative power of maintained manifestations cannot exceed the wielder's maximum power limit. Likewise if a character invokes an instant manifestation while maintaining the cumulative power of the two manifestations can not exceed the total power limit of the character.

Example:

Alter Gravity is a manifestation that has a range of 5x the power used to channel it (in meters), and when invoked, adjusts the weight of an object by 10% per point of power used. As it is a maintained manifestation, when Alter Gravity is invoked, the manifestation affects the weight of the object, making it heavier or lighter as desired by the wielder, and the effect continues until the wielder decides to drop the manifestation.

VI. Assets

What are Assets

Assets represent a character's possessions, wealth, access to goods, services, and other external resources throughout the story. Even the average murderous hobo has access to some level of equipment and maybe even a few coins to rub together in hopes of a hot meal and a soft bed. In Spectrum, assets are divided into three categories: gear, services, and means.

Services

In Spectrum, the term "services" is used to represent a variety of work done by others, especially for pay, that the character may rent, subscribe to, or hire during the course of the story. This could include using a tour guide, a quick ride-share, a night spent at an Inn, the help of a hireling, or a subscription for cell service.

Access to and cost of services is dependent on character contacts, associations, and/or other story elements.

Gear

The term "gear" is used to reference equipment, property, or any other physical resources a character might need or want within the narrative, such as weapons, real estate, camping equipment, vehicles, food, illicit drugs, material kits, armor, tools, etc. Some gear is required to use a skill or perform a task while some gear exists to facilitate stylizing the character or assisting with elements of the narrative.

Initial starting gear is understood to be purchased, inherited, or otherwise procured. After character creation, new gear can be acquired organically throughout the story, such as purchased at shops, crafted, looted, rewarded, etc.

Gear cost is represented using a relative value color guide, as, depending on the genre or story, price of items is context and/or circumstance dependent; just go ask anyone who has ever been to an auction, yard sale, or flea market.

Depending on the paradigm of your story, certain gear and service options may not be available.

Much in the same way that certain skills are not applicable to every narrative setting, i.e., computer programming in a Tolkien-based Fantasy setting, certain item categories in the Asset Compendium will also not apply to every narrative. Before beginning the story, the Narrator and the players should work together to determine what gear would be appropriate to the story, with the Narrator being the final arbiter of what is or is not allowed.

Means

Given the limitless settings and themes that your story can take place, Spectrum does not attempt to quantify or qualify make-believe currencies and their conversion to other subsequent make-believe currencies. Instead, Spectrum system uses Means.

Means is a relative value system that uses the colors from The Chart to represent the range of costs and access to resources. This allows for a story-forward game and simplifies the bookkeeping associated with the laborious task of creating currencies, translating monetary conversions, and tracking character resources.

Black Coffee Games recognizes that this abstraction may run counter to the modern consumerist mindset and may feel strange or jarring. During the character creation process, before the story begins, players and the Narrator should decide if they want to use the means system.

We offer the following options:

- **Option 1:** Use the means system throughout the game. Some may find the relative value system preferable to attempting to track currency on their character sheets.
- **Option 2:** Use the means system for character creation only. Once the player is finished determining their character's starting gear, they will likely still have some amount of means remaining. If this is the case, then the Narrator, using the character's color of means, assigns the amount of currency appropriate to the genre/story being played.
- **Option 3:** Fuck means, don't use it at all. There are some who simply will not like this system, and that's perfectly okay. Use the means system to translate approximate currency values and go from there.

Means Value to Contemporary Currency

IR	Billions-of-dollars
Red	Hundreds-of-millions of dollars
Orange	Tens-of-millions of dollars
Yellow	Millions-of-dollars
Green	Hundreds-of-thousands of dollars
Cyan	Tens-of-thousands of dollars
Blue	Thousands-of-dollars
Purple	Hundreds-of-dollars
Ultraviolet	Tens-of-dollars
White	Dollars
Grey	Cents
Black	Debt

Using Means to Purchase Goods and Services

A character's means represents the absolute most that they can afford to purchase, while being able to afford various items of lesser color. When purchasing goods and services, a character can procure such assets according to their means as follows:

Asset @ Color of Means = One, lose 4 color of means

Asset @ Color of Means = One, lose 2 color of means

Asset @ Color of Means = One

Asset ↓1 Color of Means = Couple / Few (2-3)

Asset ↓2 Color of Means = Some (4-9)

Asset ↓3 Color of Means = Several (10-15)

Asset ↓4 Color of Means = Many (16-20+)

Asset ↓5 Color of Means = Inconsequential*

**Inconsequential does not mean infinite, but it does mean an awful lot.*

The overall number of purchases that can be made at a specific color are subject to the Narrator's discretion due to the relative value of the item/service within the story or genre. From a contemporary perspective, a pair of boots and a table-saw are in the same relative value category (BLUE) but, in most cases, buying several table-saws will eat up funds faster than an equal number of boots.

Don't worry, Spectrum provides plenty of opportunities for a starting character to spend themselves poor. If a character wishes to procure services or gear beyond their means, they are welcome to. If/when such an event occurs, the character decreases their means by 2 colors for every color step beyond their means. This should usually be treated as a noteworthy event as it represents the character liquidating large amounts of their assets.

Example:

Bobby really wants that sexy custom Ma Deuce machine gun. Unfortunately for Bobby, their starting means, blue, is too low for such a purchase. But they reeeeeeeaaally want it. So Bobby decides to sacrifice two color steps to purchase the Ma Deuce. This drops their means to ultraviolet.

Increasing Means

While it might seem to go without needing said, we will anyway. Improving one's means should happen when the player and Narrator agree that the character's accumulation of resources has surpassed some agreed upon threshold. Some narrators may require the player to spend Experience Points for such things, while more generous narrators will simply allow increasing means after some number of gaming sessions.

Debt (How We Define Grey vs. Black)

Means allows for a character to spend themselves into debt. Ultimately, the Narrator will decide what this looks like in their game. Perhaps the character has taken out a loan at a ruinous interest rate in order to afford that last set of cybernetic foot mods and is being hounded by a debt collector. Perhaps the character has borrowed money from a loan shark who decides it would be better to collect in a more direct and immediate fashion.

Example:

James has access to a respectable trust fund with a means of green. He decides to use his resources to fund a freedom flotilla.

Each session, James can purchase gear, materials, services, etc. and does so frequently to fabricate new equipment for the group. So long as James doesn't spend beyond his means, he will start with a means of GREEN once again.

A situation arises in the story where James needs access to some highly specialized and terribly expensive equipment (ORANGE). James has two options:

Option 1: James can buy the equipment now, zeroing out his accounts, dropping his means from green to ultraviolet, leaving him broke for the foreseeable future.

Option 2: James can take out a loan, put the rest of his projects on hold and live off instant ramen for a while, while the residual income from his trust fund is used to pay off the loan.

Comparing Cheeseburgers to Power Drills

At the risk of sounding defensive, please forgive us for one more explanation as to why we think using means is so fucking cool. At first glance, the level of abstraction using "relative values" might feel like a bridge too far. However, using relative value allows for a more meaningful use of the concept of purchasing power beyond the coarse and rather boring reference to pure liquid assets.

Using our relative value system, lunch at a fast food franchise has an equal relative value (cost) to a standard power drill. It's true there's a noticeable difference in the overall price points between the two items, with lunch running about \$15 vs. a modest drill typically going for \$80-\$90 (at least at the time of this writing). It's a 1:6 comparison and it might seem odd to have the ability to procure both in the same means category.

Using the previous example: a means of purple quickly communicates that going out for a quick lunch or picking up a new drill wouldn't have any appreciable effect on the character's means. It's something they can do with a quick reference, without the player having to track anything on their character sheet.

And, at the same time, should the same character wish to obtain a vehicle, or something else outside of their means, it is quickly and easily understood that this lies above their day to day access to resources, and requires either some planning and/or some fun roleplay.

Furthermore, this relative value system allows for a seamless transition when the character decides to purchase said vehicle, spending outside of their means, and potentially making the choice to go out for lunch worth much more consideration.

VII. Associations

What are Associations

Associations represent the relationships between the characters and various individuals, groups, and organizations that might exist within the story. Associations are a resource that can be allocated during character creation, as well as gained during roleplaying.

Associations allow players influence over the shape of the story, and help anchor player characters to the story as it develops. Associations also provide context for the Narrator to incorporate elements into the story. They also allow players to incorporate plot-relevant NPCs, such as a powerful mentor or an evil twin.

Contacts

Contacts represent the individuals the character knows and, perhaps more importantly, how well they know them. Contacts are assigned ratings which reflect how much an NPC likes or dislikes the character and how strongly that emotion will influence the NPC's actions.

An NPC who genuinely likes the character is more likely to help out and will typically be more friendly during interactions. Conversely, if the character is regularly an asshole, it's just as likely that NPCs will go out of their way to inconvenience the character or act to obstruct their goals (or the goals of their associates). If they absolutely despise your character, they might be willing to hurt themselves just to hurt you.

Who are Your Contacts

A contact can be as generic or as specific as you'd like, pending the Narrator's approval. Maybe your contact is the generic bartender at the local watering hole who likes your character enough to make sure you always have access to a table in exchange for keeping the bar room free of those looking to brawl. Your contact could be someone incredibly specific; your character might be the favored nephew of Rear Admiral Fa'Huan Dantis, a celebrated war hero and leader of the human resistance trying to stop the Martian invasion of the New Sol system.

How to Gain Contacts:

During character creation, players are given the option to choose if they are starting with contacts, who their contacts are, and the depth of the relationship with those contacts. When determining contacts, the player and the Narrator will work together to decide what types of contacts will fit best within the story.

Once the story begins, characters will develop contacts organically as the plot progresses and characters interact with NPCs. These interactions might result in friendship, a working relationship, dislike, and sometimes overt animosity.

At what point does an acquaintance become a friend? At what point will someone lend you money? How close does a friendship need to be to help you bury a body? More importantly, how close is your relationship for someone to borrow from your vintage TTRPG collection?

What are Contact Points

Contact points represent a character's connection with an NPC. There is usually a correlation between the number of contact points spent and the depth of the relationship with the NPC.

Contact points affect a character's influence with a specific NPC through the process of interactions, favors, or both. There is no exact translation between the number of contact points a character has with an NPC and what that NPC would be willing to do for that character.

A contact with a high rating is a friend or confidant who wouldn't expect your character to act or behave in a certain way outside of not being abusive or hostile. Socially speaking, a high contact rating grants a good bit more leeway.

Contact ratings are neither one-sided nor static. Just because a player spent contact points on a specific NPC doesn't mean they'll keep those points if their character behaves poorly or refuses to help the NPC when they should, especially if the NPC often assists the character. And a character that is actively good to their NPC contacts and is willing to help out will often see the relationship continue to grow.

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Favors

In any positive working relationship, someone will ask for help from their acquaintance/friend. This can be as simple as asking for an opinion or as complicated as asking someone to put their life on the line. Favors, when called in, have the potential to impact the relationship between a character and an NPC. Favors can go both ways, whether it's a player character asking an NPC for help, or the NPC requesting assistance from a player character.

A higher contact rating also means a greater impact in regards to a character's choices, specifically when the NPC calls in a favor. Ignoring or neglecting a friend in their hour of need is a quick way to spurn a relationship.

Examples:

The party is looking for information on a corporate sales rep who has recently gone missing.

A character is in trouble with a local gang of toughs and needs a place to lay low for a little while.

A character rushes in from the street, covered in blood. Sirens begin to wail in the distance.

Contact Points

Contact Rating	Relationship Quick Reference
-250+	The target loathes the character and will abandon reason in an effort to destroy the character.
-100 to -249	The target is the character's enemy and is willing to hurt themselves in order to hurt the character.
-99 to -35	The target will try to sabotage the character.
-34 to -17	The target will actively seek to not interact with the character.
-16 to -7	The target dislikes the character.
-6 to -2	The target finds the character tedious to deal with.
-1 to 1	The target is neither overtly positively nor negatively influenced.
2	The target has a minor interest in the character.
3-4	The target enjoys interacting with the character.
5-6	The target genuinely likes the character.
7-12	The target is the character's friend.
13-21	The target trusts the character and is happy to do favors that are "reasonable" and convenient.
22-49	Actively invested in the character and will help even if this represents some amount of risk to themselves.
50-99	Actively invested in the character and will help them even if it represents a significant risk to themselves.
100-249	Actively invested in the character and will help them in any endeavor despite the risk involved.
250+	The character is effectively the center of the target's universe.

Institutions

Institutions are any form of organized group with established structures and rules, such as a guild, branch of the military, gangs, schools, religious sects, etc. These groups typically have defined hierarchies with each level having its own set of responsibilities. A character's rating with an institution determines their position, responsibility, and access to institutional resources.

Specific institutions presented within a paradigm are largely left to the narrator's discretion. Of course, players are encouraged to make suggestions and work with the Narrator to develop the structure of institutions. In most cases, a character is not restricted to joining a single institution. With the Narrator's approval, the character can join several different institutions.

Institution ranks are gained by spending association points during character creation or through roleplaying and story progression.

- During character creation, players have the ability to determine their rank within an institution by spending association points. The player and the Narrator will work to decide what kind of institutions will fit into the paradigm, with the Narrator being the final arbiter of what is appropriate for the story. Once the story begins, characters may rise or fall through the ranks of an institution as they make choices within the story.

During the story, characters may seek out or be afforded the opportunity to join an institution. This could include joining a guild, being recruited into a secretive cabal, or getting indoctrinated into a cult, and all the entry requirements, ritual hazing, or membership dues that might entail.

Example institutions:

- *Military:* A branch of the military, such as the Army, Air Force, or the local militia.
- *Intelligence:* An organization established to gather information, such as the CIA or NSA. Can be clandestine or not.
- *Guilds:* An organization or union that controls access to the labor of its members, such as a Jeweler's Guild or even a Thieves' Guild.
- *Education:* A facet of the education system, such as a public school, college, or other intellectual organization.
- *Corporation:* A business organization, ranging in size from small business entities to large multinational conglomerates.
- *Government:* The infrastructure of the current ruling faction, ranging from a local town council to a nationwide government.
- *Religion:* A faction committed to a particular set of beliefs, ideals, and rules. Includes churches as well as cults.
- *Clubs:* A group of people with a similar interest or background.
- *Metaphysical:* A group established to teach or uncover arcane secrets.
- *Criminal:* An organized gang or criminal underground, such as La Cosa Nostra or the black market.

Institutional Resources

All institutions have some access to resources; this varies from organization to organization. An institution's resources are divided into the following categories:

- **Gear:** Equipment that is specific to the institution.
- **Money:** Liquidity of financial assets that can be spent.
- **Knowledge:** Data into various categories, such as world events, politics, protected knowledge, such as recipes and formulations, and strategies.
- **Personnel:** The workforce that the institution has at its disposal.

The Narrator will rate an institution's access to resources on a scale of 0 to 5.

- 0: Has no access to this particular resource.
- 1: Has very limited access to this particular resource.
- 2: Has some access to this resource.
- 3: Has full access to this resource.
- 4: Has great access to this resource.
- 5: Has unlimited access to this resource.

There is no limitation in how these resources are prioritized. An institution might have a 3 in Personnel but a 0 in Gear, Knowledge, and Money, indicating a fairly large number of individuals with a common cause but little else going for it. A Corporation, for example, might have greater access to funding and information than they would weapons. While a small militia might have more guns and bullets than they have access to information and personnel.

Example:

The Joy Pharmaceutical Company is a worldwide conglomeration with a wide range of products. While some of these products are fairly benign, there are some with much darker insinuations and even darker side effects.

The Narrator assigns The Joy Pharmaceutical Company the following resource ratings:

Gear = 1. Outside of lab equipment, the company doesn't have much in the way of physical resources.

Money = 5. Fingers in many pies and a veritable army of lawyers and investors, the Joy Pharmaceutical Company has a virtually endless stream of wealth at its disposal.

Knowledge = 4. A corporation of this scale has just as many industry spies as they do corporate offices.

Personnel = 3. The overall working mass of the Joy Pharmaceutical Company is fairly substantial. Larger if you count the test subjects...

Institutional Ranks

Rank	Responsibilities	Resources	Examples
0-1	Acquiring knowledge of etiquette and expectations and learning technical processes of the institution.	None	Recruit Initiate Private
2	Basic understanding of institutional etiquette and expectations. Executes apprentice-level tasks.	None	Intern Apprentice Acolyte
3-4	Fully adjusted to the institution's etiquette and expectations. Executes early journeyman-level processes and basic assignments with direct oversight.	None	Jr Associate Craftsman Sergeant
5-6	Conducts themselves according to established standards and acts as a role model. Executes journeyman-level processes with little direct oversight.	None	Associate Craftsman Staff Sgt
7-12	Exemplifies institutional values. Executes advanced journeyman-level processes. Responsible for the tasks assigned to subordinates.	Access to basic issued property.	Journeyman Adept
13-21	Exemplifies institutional values in larger sphere of influence. Executes complex and technical duties. Responsible for subordinate development and training.	Range of tools, support for tasks, and responsibilities of the institution.	Manager Senior Adept Master Sgt
22-49	Exemplifies institutional values. Interacts with all levels of the institution. Plans and executes institutional tasks. Manages multiple tiers of subordinates.	Broad access to high value resources. Access to sensitive institutional data.	Senior Manager Priestess First Sgt
50-99	Sets the standard for institutional values. Interacts with all levels of the institution. Responsible for the oversight and success (or failure) of subordinates.	Broader access to resources and access and distributes sensitive institutional data.	Director Guild Leader Sgt Major
100-249	Loyalty to the institution is unquestioned. Responsible for developing processes and serves as senior-level manager of the institution.	Access to all resources. Manages institutional data and some access to other institutional data.	VP Grandmaster Guildmaster
250+	The final arbiter of the organization's perspectives. Determines all levels of responsibilities.	Complete control over the organization. Extensive access to sensitive data of other institutions.	Owner CEO Archon

VIII. Conflict

What is Conflict

Conflict is the state of incompatibility between individuals, groups, or forces, derived from opposing needs, drives, demands, or perspectives that give rise to dramatic action when those involved are unable or unwilling to come to terms. Conflict encompasses a great deal more than mere physical violence. The Spectrum system is designed to explore the full gamut of possibilities in respect to the human capacity to generate conflict, which, for better or worse, seems to be nearly infinite.

Conflict can take many forms, depending on the context of the story and the nature of the conflict. During conflict, timing is crucial, as the order in which things happen can impact the overall outcome of the scene, especially where one action can prevent another subsequent action. Any event that results in a state change is a potential conflict.

Examples:

- *Locking the door just before the killer turns the knob.*
- *Slipping through the blast doors before they slam closed.*
- *Landing a truth bomb at just the perfect moment in a conversation.*
- *Shooting the bounty hunter across the table milliseconds before they shoot you.*
- *Drinking antidote before the poison kills you.*
- *The king's "advisor" telling the King that the party is comprised of traitors before they start to tell their story.*

A state change is a moment in the story in which the prevailing circumstances, as they are understood, change. It can be a sudden surge of reinforcements kicking open the back door, the hidden rogue ambushing a target from stealth, or the princess revealing that she is actually an ogre. Any time in which the phrase "the situation has changed," "the tables have turned," or "I don't think we are in Kansas anymore" is uttered, a state change would apply as well as the need to redetermine initiative order.

Initiative (When Timing Matters)

Initiative is the order in which the characters perform their actions until the conflict is resolved, or until a state change requires the determination of a new initiative order. Spectrum uses initiative rounds as an abstraction to avoid the chaos of players yelling their intentions at the same time.

Initiative order does not necessarily remain consistent from round to round, as there are innumerable happenings that might change a character's position in initiative order.

Rounds

The initiative round represents a three second time period during a conflict where everyone gets a turn based on their initiative points.

Turns

When it is your turn to perform an action in a round. Sometimes characters will get multiple turns in a round. Sometimes characters will get no turns in a round.

Initiative Score

The characters' starting initiative for each round. This number is determined prior to the first round during the "declare initiative" phase by performing an Awareness Check adjusted by the character's Reflex instinct value (add the Reflex value to the Awareness check roll). Sometimes during conflict a character's initiative score will change.

Initiative Points

The characters' current initiative value during the round. This number can be modified during the round using kismet (at any time, a character may spend 1 Kismet to gain 1 point of initiative for one round) and by other factors as determined by the Narrator.

Ties in initiative use a secondary value to determine who goes first. This is commonly the characters' Reflex score, but Narrators may use different variable depending on the situation.

Rounds are an abstraction to avoid the chaos of players yelling their intentions at the same time, the reality is that every action within a round overlaps with every other action over the same three seconds.

Around the gaming table, a round has no real-world time limit; it keeps going until everyone has taken a turn, then repeats until the Narrator announces that the event has ended or until a significant state change occurs, at which time the Narrator may decide to have the initiative order rerolled. Initiative order does not necessarily remain consistent round to round, as there are innumerable happenings that might change a character's position in initiative order.

Phase 1

Declare Initiative (aka “roll for initiative”)

Prior to the beginning of the first round, every character involved in the conflict performs an Awareness Check adjusted by the character's Reflex instinct value (by adding character's Reflex value to the Awareness check roll) to determine their recurring initiative score. At the end of a round, a character's initiative points are reset to their initiative score.

Phase 2

Action Phase

This is the “meat and potatoes” portion of the conflict where characters perform their actions in initiative order.

Order of Operations for a Round:

1. Determine character with the highest initiative points.
2. The character with the most initiative points takes their turn to perform an action.
3. After performing their action, the character loses 10 initiative points.
4. If there are still characters with initiative points of zero or more, go to step #1. If there are no remaining characters with initiative points of zero or more, go to step #5.
5. Reset everyone's initiative points to their initiative score.
6. Begin the next round.

Phase 3

The involved characters are presented with either the end of the conflict or the occurrence of a state change.

End of Conflict

The conflict is resolved (to good or ill) and therefore, character actions are no longer required to follow initiative order.

State Change

A new variable or significant change of context is introduced and, as such, characters involved in the conflict re-roll a new initiative score and the conflict continues.

Escaping a Bad Initiative

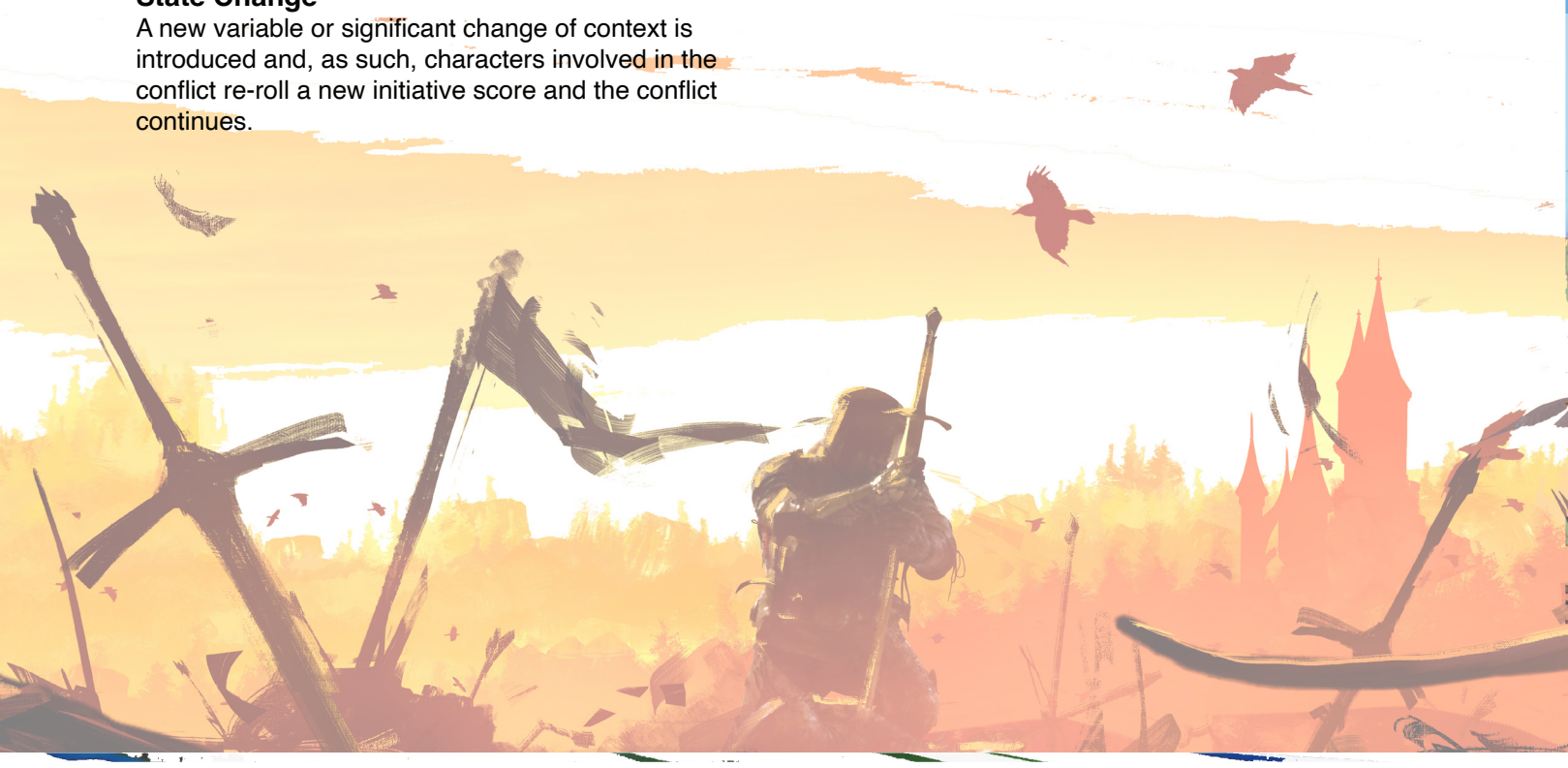
It is disappointing when we roll poorly, and disappointment can easily turn to frustration when your character going last or getting less actions in a round.

Players

When you are starting to get frustrated with your shite initiative. Fret not, there are innumerable ways to create a state change. You have kismet points for reasons, initiative being a very important one. But please remember that surmounting challenges, like a poor initiative score, is part and parcel of a meaningful and exciting story.

Narrators

The battlefield, whether physical, emotional, intellectual, or metaphysical is not static. As an encounter becomes protracted, it is your responsibility to recognize when things have changed enough that the characters should establish a new initiative order. You have the awesome responsibility to facilitate the having-of-fun. So if you find your conflict entering the 57th round without establishing a new initiative order, you have probably done something wrong. And that's ok, you also happen to have the awesome power to fix it!



Actions in Conflict

An action is the process of doing something during a character's turn. The actions a character takes are categorized into the following:

- Standard Actions
- Readied Actions
- Concurrent Actions

Standard Actions

A standard action is an action that requires dedicated intent and concentration from the character. During their turn a character can perform one standard action.

Examples of Standard Actions:

- *Aim with a ranged or melee weapon*
- *Make a single melee attack*
- *Retrieve a small item from a pocket*
- *Jump from a standing position*
- *Channel or invoke a manifestation*
- *Nock an arrow*
- *Change the power of a maintained manifestation*
- *Stand up from a prone position*
- *Reload some weapons*

Readied Actions

A readied action is a delayed action that a character prepares to take in the event of a specified trigger event. During their turn, the character declares that they are going to ready a specific action and defines the trigger condition. When the trigger event occurs, the action is performed, even if the action would occur outside of the character's turn during initiative order.

Example:

A character could decide to prepare a block with their shield, in the event that they are attacked. Readying losing an arrow at the first target to pop up over the cover wall. "I sprint as far and as fast as I can if I see police lights." Readying a simple action is a simple action; readying a complex action is a complex action.

Concurrent Actions

A concurrent action is an action for which the time and effort required to perform the action is minimal, such as walking and talking at the same time. As such, they can be performed "concurrently" with other actions.

When a character takes any concurrent action in combination with another action that requires a roll, the roll is made with a -1 adjustment. Actions that do not require a roll are unaffected, unless otherwise specified.

When using a concurrent action, the player must clearly declare their intent to use a concurrent action combined with another action. Declaring a concurrent action involves phrasing such as, "I open the door and walk through it" or "I work the lever on my rifle concurrently with shooting." The player decides the order in which the actions occur.

A concurrent action may be combined with another concurrent action with the result that one of the actions is treated as a simple action. It is not possible to combine a movement concurrent action with any other movement action.

Examples of Concurrent Actions:

- *Flash a hand signal*
- *Drop to a prone position*
- *Block or dodge an incoming attack*
- *Drop a maintained manifestation*
- *Drawing a sheathed weapon*
- *Hand off or toss an item*
- *Movement: Run, Jog, Walk, or Jump with a penalty*

Movement in Conflict

As part of their round, a character may choose to traverse from one point to another, whether to close the distance with an opponent, move closer to an objective, or keep pace with the caravan as it travels.

Within a single combat round, a character may use a complex action to run or perform a running jump. Similarly, a character may use a simple action to jog, walk, or perform a standing jump.

Additionally, a character may perform any of these forms of movement as a concurrent action. However, the penalty to the simple or complex action performed concurrently with movement is subject to additional penalties that are in addition to the standard -1 adjustment usually imposed for performing concurrent actions.

Walk: -2 adjustment
Jog: -3 adjustment
Run: -5 adjustment
Jump: -7 adjustment

Examples:

- *Walking while shooting: -2 to the roll / ← 1 to the skill*
- *Jogging while shooting -3 to the roll / ← 1 to the skill*
- *Running while shooting: -5 to the roll / ← 1 to the skill*
- *Jumping while shooting: -7 to the roll / ← 1 to the skill*

Danny: "Have you ever fired two guns whilst jumping through the air?"

Nick: "No."

Social Conflict

Social conflict is conflict that takes place in the story between one or more characters where the primary motivation is to communicate, manipulate, or influence the other party.

In Spectrum, social conflict is predominately done through roleplaying. Players are encouraged to give voice to their characters in order to give weight to their arguments, pleas, and conversations. Skill tests may be used in determining the overall success of the attempt; however, dice rolls are not intended to replace the roleplaying aspect of social conflict. Since social conflicts can be more subtle than overt, it is not uncommon for a person to not know that they are engaged in a social conflict.

Social conflict may or may not require characters to perform their actions in initiative order, such as during a legal procession, or negotiating a contract.

Examples:

- *"Discussing" strategy at a shareholder meeting*
- *Ending a relationship with a lover*
- *Interrupting your friend at the bar before she embarrasses you, herself, or both*

Social conflict involves determining the disposition of participants in the social conflict. Disposition can be governed by deep-seated social conventions, including first impressions, sociological or cultural standards, political or economic backgrounds, or various affiliations.

Dispositions can also be governed by superficial factors, such as, "I think you're an asshole." Contact ratings can also affect disposition. Disposition is not a static variable and will change, for good or ill, during the course of the story.

Social conflict commonly involves the use of the following skills:

- **Intimidation:** Attempting to coerce cooperation through fear or awe.
- **Persuasion:** Attempting to gain cooperation through convincing arguments, charm, temptations, lies, or bribes.
- **Read Nonverbal:** Attempting to gain information from a target's nonverbal communications.
- **Etiquette:** Understanding and following expected social conventions, particularly within specific professions or groups.

Note, this is not the extent of skills that can be used to engage in social conflict, nor is all social conflict engaged through a verbal discourse. There's a lot to be said for the brooding bodyguard glowering at a paparazzi who gets too close or the obsequious smile of a merchant who just realized he's got a client over a barrel.

Spectrum's core philosophy is that players have agency over their characters' actions and beliefs, therefore social conflict works differently depending on whether the target is a PC or NPC.

Roleplaying does not come naturally to every player. Most players are not highly experienced professional actors. Between social anxiety and the nerves that come from being "put on the spot", it's to be expected that players are going to panic, flub lines, or completely blank out. Narrators: if you want to see good roleplaying at your table, it is your responsibility to encourage your players and provide the necessary leeway and incentive to try their hand at something they might find absolutely terrifying.

Social Conflict with Contacts

Whenever a character engages in social conflict with an existing contact, they have the option of doing so without a dice roll. The character may, in lieu of rolling the dice, automatically achieve a number of goal points equal to their contact rating with the contact.

If a character chooses to make a roll in social conflict involving a contact, they add their current contact rating as an adjustment to the roll, including negative contact ratings. You may choose to roll and add the obtained goal points to the contact rating. Grey results may permanently lower the contact rating by 1, Black by 2.

Example:

A character who wishes to use Persuasion against a contact with whom they have a contact rating of 10 may simply resolve the Persuasion test by achieving 10 goal points without a roll.

Or

The character may choose to take a +10 adjustment to their roll when dealing with their contact.

"Failed" Interactions

There will be times when a character inadvertently puts their foot in their mouth, which might represent a social gaffe, an unintentional insult, a misunderstanding, or the NPC taking something personally.

To add dynamic variables to a failed social interaction, the Narrator may choose to lower the contact rating when the character fails on a social interaction roll.

WHITE: No harm, no foul.

LIGHT GREY: The other party is upset, but no loss in contact rating as long as you promptly fix the mistake.

DARK GREY: You have offended the other party to the point that it results in a -1 contact rating.

BLACK: You have made an egregious error that results in a -2 contact rating and the other party may not be willing to interact for a while.

Players Influencing NPCs

During the course of the story, there will likely be times when player characters will need to attempt to influence NPCs. This can be from something as simple as trying to get a better deal on some new gear to interrogating the criminal mastermind for the shutdown codes before the nuclear doomsday device detonates.

When a character attempts to influence an NPC, they will take the following steps.

1. Determine if participants should enter initiative.
2. The player chooses which social skill to use and roleplays the attempt.
3. The Narrator determines the required goal points.
4. Determine bonuses or penalties from the efforts of the player's roleplay. Apply any adjustments to the roll based on context of the situation, the NPC's disposition toward the character, and the character's conformity to any applicable rules of etiquette.
5. The player rolls the chosen social skill test and determines the total number of goal points generated.

Example:

The Narrator and player decide that interaction does not need to be performed in initiative order.

The player chooses to use Persuasion to convince the NPC to aid them. The player roleplays the interaction, attempting to craft their most persuasive argument.

The Narrator decides that the stakes are fairly low-key and the player only needs to generate 13 goal points.

The Narrator decides to reward the player with a +2 to the roll for the following:

+1: The PC has observed the rules of basic etiquette and the request is a minor inconvenience.

+1: The PC made an earnest attempt at roleplaying the interaction, resulting in a good scene.

The player makes an instant skill test using their persuasion skill rating and adds a +2 bonus to the roll.

The Narrator is encouraged to allow PC(s) or NPC(s), directly or indirectly involved, to perform Assisted or Contested social skill checks. Any goal points generated are subtracted from the player's roll.

Gauging Sincerity

While other PCs and NPCs cannot directly influence the beliefs of a player, they are still quite capable of lying.

When a character wants to gauge the sincerity of a situation, that character must initiate a contested social roll, using their Read Nonverbal skill (or other appropriate skill given the context of the encounter) against the relevant social skill of the target they wish to gauge.

If the initiating character succeeds, their level of success will determine what they can glean from the interaction. If the target wins the contest, the NPC or PC who initiated the contest is unable to determine whether the words and actions of the target are genuine.

Example:

A player wants to gauge the sincerity of an overly-eager merchant regarding the quality of some alchemical reagents.

The player makes a contested skill test roll using their Read Nonverbal against the Merchant's Persuasion skill.

The player only generates 3 goal points while the Merchant scores 5 goal points.

The player is unable to gauge the sincerity of the Merchant, and upon returning home, has the sneaking suspicion they just paid top dollar for junk reagents.



Favors for NPCs

Because the Narrator cannot directly influence a player's thoughts or feelings about a situation, there are steps that are followed when an NPC requests a favor from a PC.

1. The NPC asks a favor of a character and the Narrator secretly assigns a number of contact points to the favor, up to the total contact rating. The greater the number of contact points, the more important the favor is to the NPC.
2. The player may attempt to determine how important the favor is to the NPC (though not the exact number of points) by attempting a Read Nonverbal roll or by successful roleplaying.
3. If the character refuses to grant the favor, their contact rating with the NPC who made the request is reduced by that amount.

Example:

Darrell (NPC) has been a regular at Trevon's brewery for many years now and the two have developed a relationship that is more than acquaintances, but not quite a real friendship, therefore Trevon has a contact rating of 7 with Darrell.

Darrell (NPC) approaches Trevon (PC) with a concerned look on his face. He explains that a few days ago, his sister stopped answering her text messages and Darrell is getting worried. To complicate matters, Darrell's sister lives in his old neighborhood where Darrell still has some people that are impressively unhappy with him. He asks if Trevon would be willing to go and check in on his sister to make sure that everything is ok.

As this is a family matter that is important to Darrell, the Narrator assigns 5 out of the possible 7 contact points to the request and communicates to the player that it is obvious to Trevon that this favor is very important to Darrell.

Trevon agrees to check in on Darrell's sister. It's a minor request and Trevon doesn't want to risk hurting his status with Darrell. Besides, what's the worst that could happen.

Missions

Just like favors for a contact, the Narrator will secretly assign a number of points to a mission. Unlike a favor, a character may or may not be able to gauge the importance of the mission. For example, if the mission has come down through the chain of command, the original context may be lost.

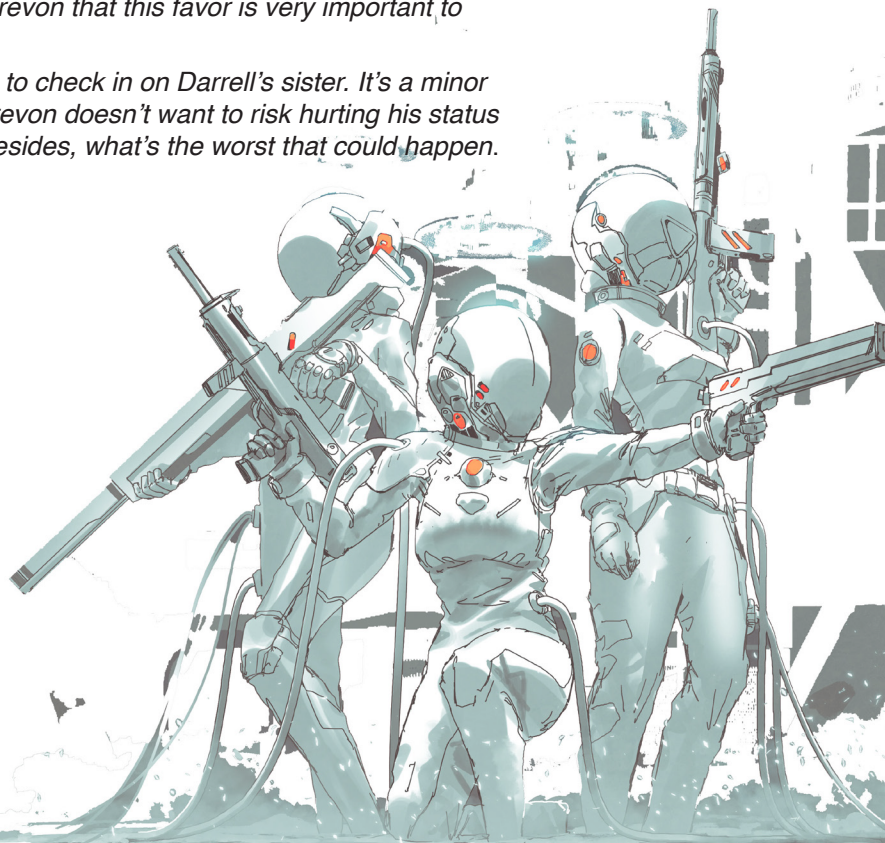
The NPC assigns the character to a mission and the Narrator secretly assigns a number of contact points to the mission, up to the total institution rating. The greater the number of contact points, the more important the mission.

The Narrator decides if the player can attempt to determine how important the favor is to the NPC (though not the exact number of points) by attempting a Read Nonverbal roll or by successful roleplaying.

If the character refuses the mission, their contact rating with the institution who made the request is reduced by that amount and they may be subjected to further disciplinary actions.

Examples:

- A Blacksmith sending his apprentice out to purchase more coal for the forge. Success 0, Failure -1, Refusal -2
- The Chief of Police dispatching officers to check out a "strange" event downtown. Success +1, Failure -2, Refusal -3
- The Megacorp CEO sending a group of "interns" to a rival company to commit corporate espionage. Success +2, Failure -2, Refusal -4
- A cult leader sending out acolytes to retrieve an ancient ritual text locked in a secret vault within the Vatican. Success +5, Failure -2, Refusal -10



Stealth in Conflict

The stealth mechanic is used any time a character attempts to perform an action in such a way as to make their actions and/or themselves undetectable. Trying to hide the intentions of another skill is a concurrent action and trying to avoid detection (hiding) is a complex action.

Stealth is made possible by the proper use of concealment and distraction. One of these two factors must be present before a character can attempt a Stealth test. Using Stealth mechanics asks three questions:

1. Is it reasonable that the character and/or their actions could avoid attention? (Is concealment possible?)
2. Where is the focus of those whose attention the character wants to avoid? (Are they distracted?)
3. Can the character use both concealment and distraction? If so, they receive a 2 → on their Stealth test.

Concealment

A character who makes use of concealment makes a Stealth test to avoid notice. The card sharp slips a hidden ace from their boot under the table, a prowler hides behind a stack of crates or lingers in the shadows.

Factors to be considered for concealment are:

- How much of the character's body is concealed?
- How brightly lit is the environment?
- How noticeable is clothing and/or equipment?
- What is the position of observers relative to the concealment?
- Who noticed before they entered concealment?

Distraction

A character relies on distraction to avoid being detected by observers who are distracted by other happenings. The sun is in the gunslinger's eyes or a screeching jungle cat covers the sound of a twig snapping underfoot.

Distraction comes in many shapes and magnitudes; therefore, the Narrator may assign additional bonus shifts or adjustments based on the extent of the distraction.

A Stealth Test vs. an Unaware Target

When a character attempts a stealth test vs. a target that is not actively looking for some form of deception, the target is considered unaware. For example, attempting to pick the pocket of a random stranger in a crowd. A stealth test against an unaware target follows these steps:

1. Character declares they are doing something stealthily.
2. The Narrator determines if the target is unaware of a potential deception.
3. The Narrator determines the difficulty of the action and applies any shifts and/or adjustments.
4. The character makes a stealth test roll. If the character achieves a number of goal points, they or their action go unnoticed.
5. If the character fails their stealth test, the opponent may make an Awareness test to possibly detect the failed stealth attempt. The attempt is noticed if the target generates more goal points on their Awareness test than the character generated on their test.

A Stealth Test vs. an Aware Target

When a character attempts a stealth test vs. a target that is actively looking for some form of deception, the target is considered aware. For example, there is a standoff between two members of rival gangs and one is trying to reach the gun tucked in the waistband of their shorts. A stealth test against an aware target follows these steps:

1. Character declares they are doing something stealthily.
2. If the target is aware, the Narrator determines if stealth is even possible in the current scenario.
3. If Stealth is possible (there is concealment and/or distraction), the character makes a contested skill test roll against the target's Awareness or Search skill.
4. The Narrator determines if any shifts and/or adjustments are applicable for either the character and/or the target.
5. If the character fails to generate more goal points than the target, the attempt is noticed. Otherwise, the character performs the action undetected.

Example of Stealth Check vs. Aware Target:

Jamie has gotten a tip that the missing sales rep has been spotted frequenting the La Rouge night club, a veritable fortress of decadence and excess for the city's more well-to-do.

With the guest list a mile long, Jamie decides their best chance is the direct approach: sneak past the bouncer and right in through the front door.

Jamie declares that they will attempt to sneak past the bouncer.

The bouncer, a 6'2" bruiser with a lantern jaw, is currently in the middle of an argument with a middle-management corporate exec who insists that he's "friends with the owner." The Narrator decides that stealth is possible because the bouncer is currently distracted.

Jamie seizes the opportunity and makes a contested stealth roll against the distracted bouncer.

The Narrator determines the bouncer is distracted, but the argument is very quickly winding to a close as cracking his knuckles creates a convincing argument for the exec that he and his overpriced escort should try their luck elsewhere. The Bouncer will be making his Awareness roll with a □1 penalty due to the distraction. However, Jamie is trying to sneak past a bouncer in plain view of a line of people waiting to get in. Jamie will be making their stealth roll at a -3 penalty.

Jamie makes an contested stealth test roll and only scores 5 goal points. Unlucky for Jamie, the bouncer scores 7 goal points. Jamie feels their feet leaving the ground as they are flung back out on to the street to the roaring approval of the waiting crowd.

What is Combat

In Spectrum, combat is the narrative of a purposeful violent conflict. During combat, characters and others involved will take action in initiative order. While engaged in combat, characters may attack, defend, or use other skills by making instant, extended, or contested skill tests.

Due to the chaotic and unpredictable nature of combat, a character may not take a Blue on attack rolls or damage rolls.

Attacks

Attacks are actions that attempt to damage a target by making a skill test using the appropriate ability.

Example:

A character wielding a short sword would roll an instant skill test using their One-Handed Melee skill rating. A successful skill test (one that generates goal points) results in potential damage being dealt to the target.

Melee Attacks

Melee attacks are made against opponents using a handheld weapon or part of the attacker's body. A melee weapon must be readied before it can be used; this includes drawing it from a sheath, picking it up from the table, pulling it from a pocket, etc. In most instances, readying a melee weapon from an easily accessible location is a simple action. A melee attack must be performed within the required range of the weapon and/or attack.

A melee attack is made in two parts:

1. The hit roll determines if you succeed in striking the target and how well the attack lands.
2. The damage roll determines the amount of damage the attack deals to the target on a successful hit roll.

Hit Roll

1. The player declares they are making a melee attack.
2. Using the appropriate melee skill, the player finds the appropriate column for their skill rating.
3. The Narrator and player determine any appropriate shifts and/or adjustments to the hit roll.
4. The player makes the appropriate attack skill roll. If goal points are generated, the attack has landed, and the goal points are added as an adjustment to the subsequent damage roll. Generating no goal points means the attack has failed to strike the target.

Damage Roll

1. The player finds the column on The Chart that corresponds to the damage rating of the attack.
2. Goal points generated by attack rolls are counted as bonus adjustments to the damage roll. The Narrator and player determine any other appropriate shifts and/or adjustments to be added to the damage roll.
3. Player rolls on the appropriate column. Any goal points generated is the amount of damage dealt to the target.

Example of a Melee Attack Hit Roll:

Og, the Orc barbarian, is debating the finer points of forced entry with a member of the night's watch. Og believes he should be let in, while the guard vehemently disagrees. Og decides a more physical example is warranted and swings his club at the guard's head.

Og's one-handed melee skill is 12, so he makes his hit roll on the 10 column.

The Narrator decides that there is no bonus to the hit roll, given the nature of the discourse between Og and the guard.

Og rolls on the 10 column and scores 5 goal points and the attack successfully hits the guard.

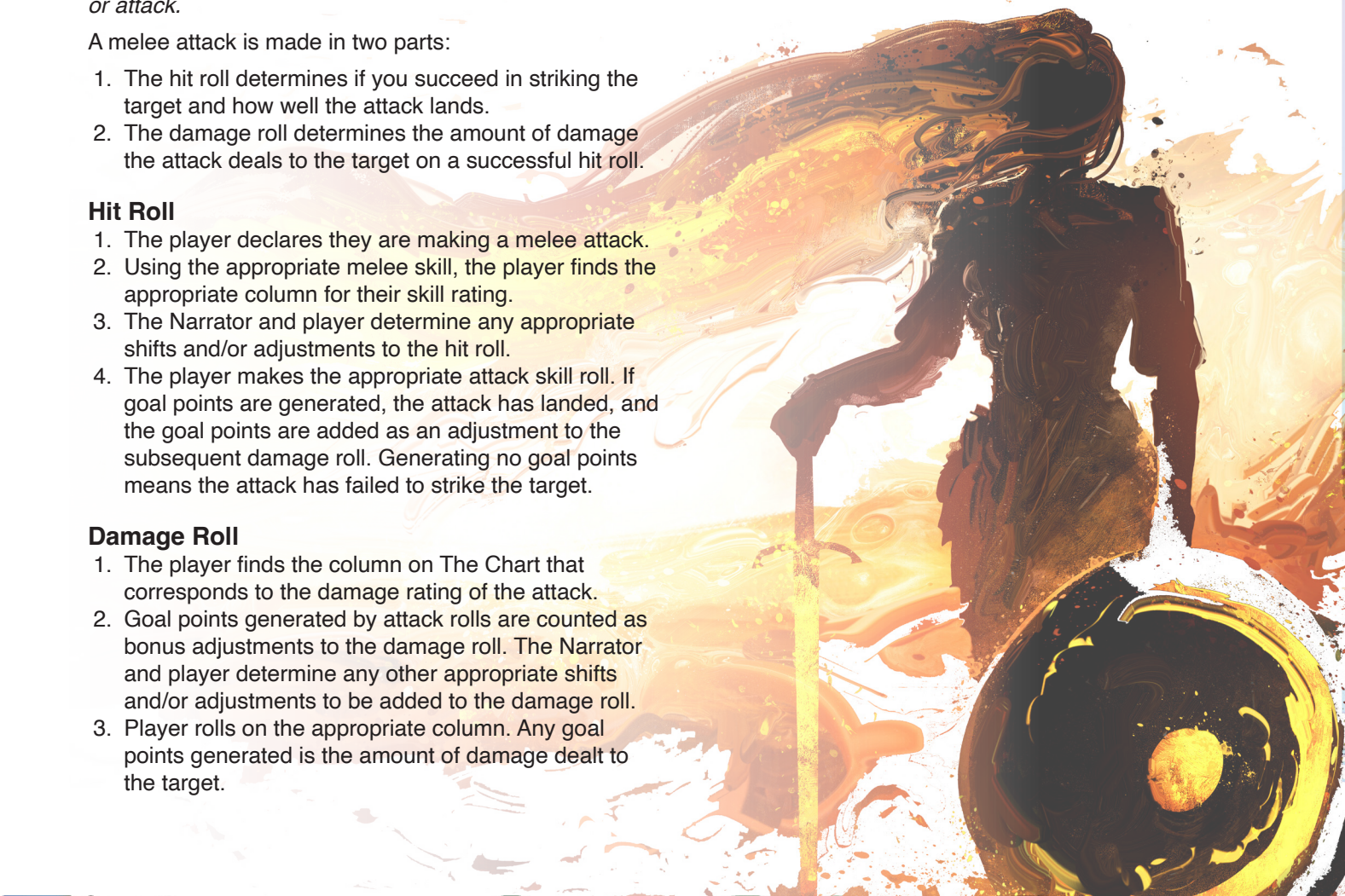
Example of a Melee Attack Damage Roll:

Because Og's hit roll scored goal points, Og now determines how much damage the attack will do. A one-handed blunt weapon deals damage at STR □1

Because Og has 17 STR, he shifts over 1 column and rolls the 13 column.

Og makes his damage roll and adds the 5 goal points generated by the hit roll to the result. The Narrator and player both determine that there is nothing else that would augment the roll.

Og rolls on the 13 column and scores 5 goal points, dealing 5 points of both lethal and stun damage to the guard. Og smiles as he waits for the guard's counter argument.



Ranged Attacks

Ranged attacks involve propelling projectiles, such as bullets, arrows, bolts, or thrown weapons.

Ranged weapons must be readied and munitions loaded before it can be used for a ranged attack; bows require arrows to be nocked, rifles must have a round in the chamber, a stone must be loaded into the sling, catapults have a stone in the basket, the empty beer bottle must be in hand, etc. In most instances, readying a ranged weapon from an easily accessible location is a simple action and loading a readied ranged weapon is a separate simple action. In other instances, loading a weapon may require an extended action, such as drawing a crossbow or loading a muzzle loader or cannon.

Ranged weapons will have various minimum, optimum, and maximum ranges that define the extent to which they can be effectively used.

A ranged attack is made in two parts:

1. The hit roll determines if you succeed in striking the target and how well the attack lands.
2. The damage roll determines the amount of damage the attack deals to the target on a successful hit roll.

Hit Roll

1. The player declares they are making a ranged attack.
2. Using the appropriate ranged skill, the player finds the appropriate column for their skill rating.
3. The Narrator and player determine any appropriate shifts and/or adjustments to the hit roll.
4. The player makes the appropriate attack skill roll. If goal points are generated, the attack has landed, and the goal points are added as an adjustment to the subsequent damage roll. Generating no goal points means the attack has failed to strike the target.

Damage Roll

1. The player finds the column on The Chart that corresponds to the damage rating of the attack.
2. Goal points generated by the attack roll are counted as bonus adjustments to the damage roll. The Narrator and player determine if there are any other appropriate shifts and/or adjustments to be added to the damage roll.
3. Player rolls on the appropriate column. The goal points generated is the amount of damage dealt to the target.

Example of a Ranged Attack:

Daniels points his shotgun at the zombie moving his way. He has Long Gun skill of 10 and rolls on the 10 column.

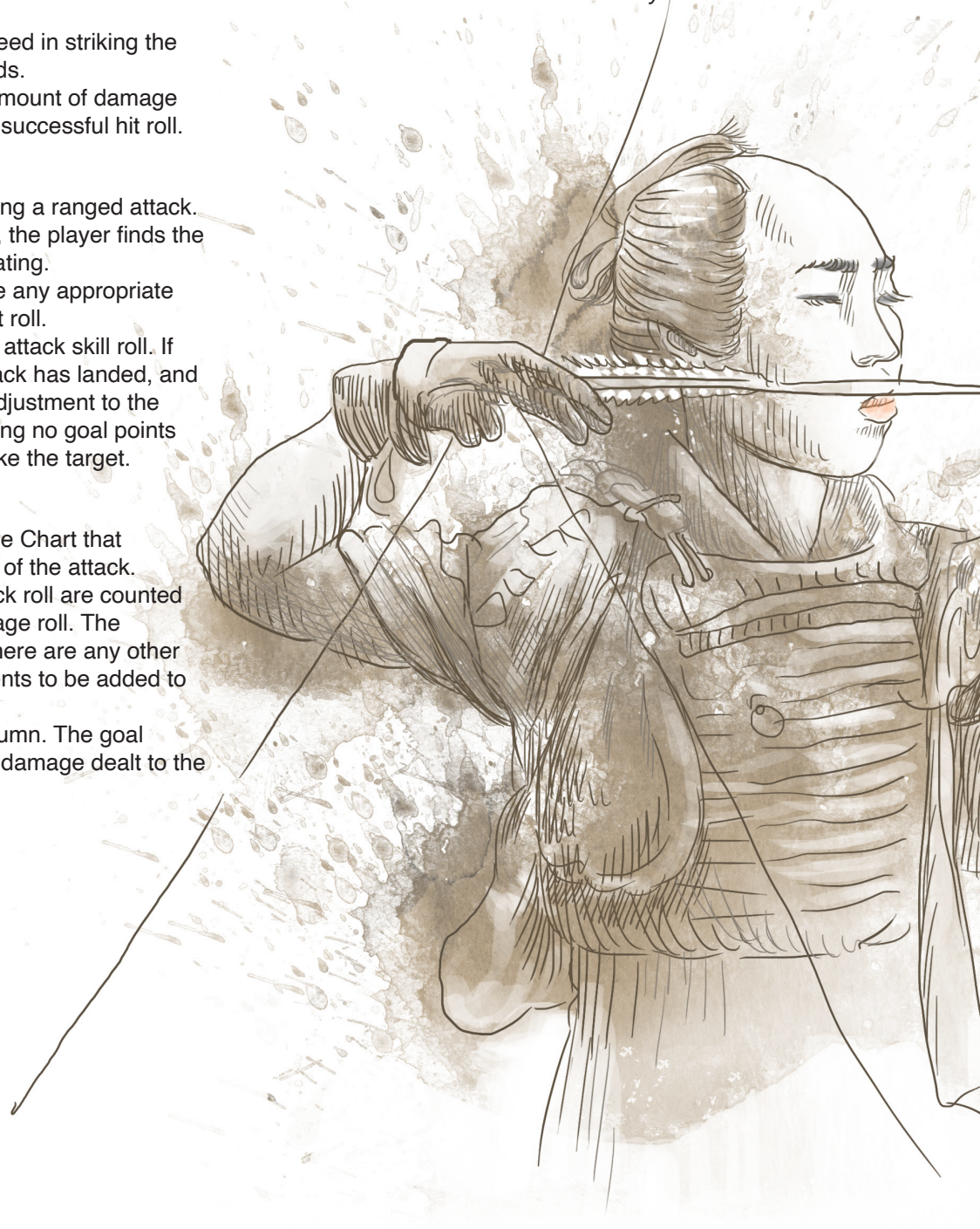
The Narrator and player agree that nothing would affect the shot, so Daniels rolls without any modifiers.

Daniels performs an instant skill test and generates 3 goal points. The shot hits the Zombie.

Daniels is using his trusty double barrel 12 gauge. The damage column for 12 gauge shotgun ammunition is 17.

Daniels makes his damage roll, and gets a 98. He adds the 3 goal points generated on the hit roll for a whopping total of 101. The damage is 3→ due to the infrared color result, which shifts the damage done from 17 to 35 damage.

Daniels watches as the zombie's head explodes into pink mist. Unfortunately for Daniels, the sound of the gunshot has attracted the attention of a nearby horde....



Ranged Attacks into Melee

Shooting into melee occurs when a ranged attack is used against a target engaged in melee combat. In most cases, making a ranged attack against a target involved in a melee always represents an inherent risk of missing the intended target. Any character within 2 meters of the target is considered to be part of the melee.

When making a ranged attack against a target in melee, the ranged attack is resolved using the following steps:

1. The character declares the target of the ranged attack, adding 1 for each other character within 2 meters of the target.
2. The character applies all relevant shifts and adjustments.
3. The character makes their attack roll using the appropriate ranged skill.
4. If the attack hits the intended target, determine damage per usual.

If the attack misses the intended target, all other characters or creatures involved in the melee perform an instant Kismet test.

If all characters or creatures generate some number of goal points on the Kismet test, the attack simply hits the ground.

Otherwise, the character or creature that fails to generate any goal points is hit by the attack. In the event of a tie, the Narrator decides who, if anyone, is hit by the attack.

Example:

Daniels is now beset by a horde of biting zombies. He is doing his best to fend them off by battering them away with his long gun, but he is being overwhelmed. Fortunately, his farmhand Sadie heard the commotion and came running. Sadie assesses the situation and decides to take the risk of firing into the horde to attempt to save Farmer Daniels.

Sadie declares that she's targeting a zombie that is trying to drag Daniels to the ground. She counts off the combatants. There are 4 other zombies, plus Daniels, meaning she shifts left 5 columns.

The Narrator declares that nothing else will modify the roll.

Sadie is a competent marksman and has a Handgun skill of 13. Unfortunately, due to the number of moving targets, her aim is less than sure. She $\leftarrow$ 5 down to the 1 column, a shot she would make if things weren't so desperate.

She makes her roll and scores a White color result, a miss.

The Narrator and player make an instant Kismet test.

Unfortunately, Daniels has already burned his luck up for the day in another fight for survival and rolls on the 0 column. All of the Zombies have 1 Kismet each and each roll on the 1 column. The result of the instant Kismet test is as follows:

Zombie 1 = 1 goal point

Zombie 2 = 2 goal point

Zombie 3 = 5 goal point

Zombie 4 = 1 goal point

Zombie 5 = 0 goal points

Daniels = 0 goal points and rolls a Grey

Both Daniels and Zombie 5 generate 0 goal points. The Narrator decides that because Daniels has spent all of his Kismet and generated a Grey color result, luck is not on his side that day and he is hit by Sadie's shot.

Sadie rolls damage for the shot and prays she didn't just kill her employer.

Yeah, we made a rule for friendly fire. Why? Well primarily because it just makes sense. But a close second is because we find that the story is much more engaging when every single player isn't mother fucking William Tell when it comes to lobbing an arrow or rifle round into the absolute pure chaos of melee.

You're welcome.

Damage

Damage is the potential harm caused as the result of being struck by an attack. Damage is represented in two distinct categories: damage dealt and damage sustained. Damage dealt is the total amount of damage imparted on the target before any mitigating variables, such as armor, are applied. Damage sustained is the damage that the target accrues after any mitigating factors.

Sources of Damage

The type of damage a character sustains depends on the source of the damage. The various damage types can have a different impact on a character's Vitalities.

- **Sharp Damage:** Damage caused by cutting, piercing, and rending tissues that causes significant disruption to a character's physical integrity. It subtracts from a target's Life points.
- **Blunt Damage:** Damage caused by crushing forces. This type of damage subtracts from both Life and Will points.
- **Ballistic Damage:** Damage caused by large amounts of kinetic energy dispersed across small areas that ignores regular armor; subtracts from both Life and Will points.
- **Stun Damage:** Damage that affects a character but without causing physical disruption to their body. This type of damage decreases the character's Will points without affecting their Life points.

There are other types of damage caused by environmental, elemental, metaphysical, and other sources. These types of damage are further explained in their appropriate resource guides.

Why We Didn't Try to Pigeon Hole Ourselves With Damage Types

These types of damage do not represent all the ways that characters can become harmed. The list provided describes the basis of damage used to qualify how characters can take damage, not the source of the damage.

Dodging

A dodge is the intentional attempt to move out of the way of an incoming attack. A successful dodge reduces the number of goal points the attacker generates on the attacker's hit roll. A dodge is declared as a readied action and can be either a simple or complex action.

As a readied simple action, the character can attempt to dodge the next attack that targets them before the start of their next turn. As a readied complex action, the character can attempt to dodge the next three attacks that target them before the start of their next turn.

A dodge action is performed as follows:

1. During their turn, the player declares a Simple or a Complex Dodge as a readied action, as well as the trigger condition for the readied action.
2. After an attacker has declared their attack against the character, but before the attacker rolls, the character rolls an instant skill test using their Dodge skill, applying any relevant shifts or adjustments.
3. Any goal points generated by the dodge are subtracted from the attacker's hit roll. Dodging can reduce an attack's result to Grey or Black.

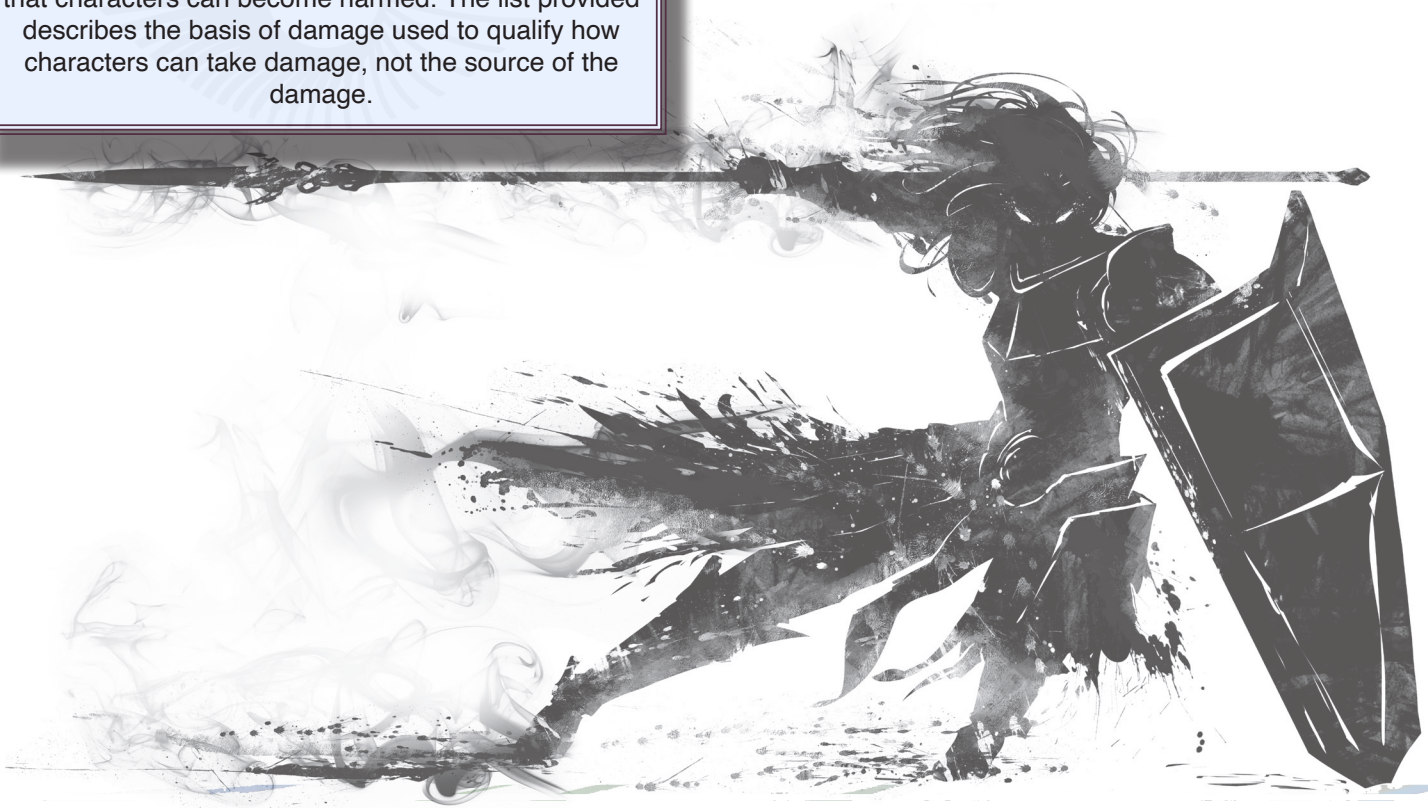
Example:

During their turn, the player readies a simple dodge action. The player's character is attacked.

The player has a Dodge skill of 10. With no applicable shifts or adjustments, the character rolls on the 10 column and generates 5 goal points.

The attacker, using their One-Handed Melee skill of 17, and rolls a 32. The 5 goal points generated by the target's Dodge roll are subtracted from the hit roll, changing the roll result to a 27 (32-5=27).

The attacker now scores the roll result, generating 7 goal points on their hit roll instead of 10.



Blocking

A block is a character's attempt to interpose an object between themselves and an incoming attack to decrease the number of goal points the attacker generates on their damage roll. A Block is declared as a readied action and can be either a simple or complex action.

As a readied simple action, the character can attempt to block the next attack that targets them before the start of their next turn. As a readied complex action, the character can attempt to block the next three attacks that target them before the start of their next turn.

When blocking with a melee weapon, the character rolls the appropriate melee skill. When using a shield, the block roll is made using either the One-Handed Melee or Two-Handed Melee skill, as appropriate.

A block action is performed as follows:

1. During their turn, the player declares a simple or complex block as a readied action as well as the trigger condition for the readied action.
2. After an attacker has made their hit against the character, but before they roll for damage, the character rolls their relevant skill. Any goal points generated by the block are subtracted from the attacker's damage roll. Blocking can reduce the damage result to Grey or Black.

Example:

During their turn, a player readies a simple block action. The character is attacked by an orc wielding a battle axe. The orc generates 10 goal points on their attack roll.

Player attempts to block the attack with their shield using their One-Handed Melee skill with a skill rating of 13. The player rolls an 87 and generates a total of 13 goal points.

The orc makes a damage roll and gets a 25 then subtracts the 13 goal points generated by the character's attempt to block the attack, reducing the roll results to 12.

With a STR of 13, the orc's initial roll would have dealt 3 points of damage, instead it is reduced to 0.

Stealth Damage

A character using Stealth in a combat scenario follows the same process for using Stealth in conflict. A hidden character gains the ability to ignore a target's declared Dodge or Block action.

Example:

Sief has already performed a contested stealth skill test against the Bandits and has managed to remain hidden. He leans out from behind a tree and decides to take a shot with his bow against the closest target.

The target, which has prepped a complex dodge action, is completely unaware of Sief's presence and therefore does not get to make a dodge roll against Sief's attack.

Armor

Armor is protective covering that reduces damage dealt, such as protective garments, natural hides, scales, chitin, other biological features, or metaphysical effects.

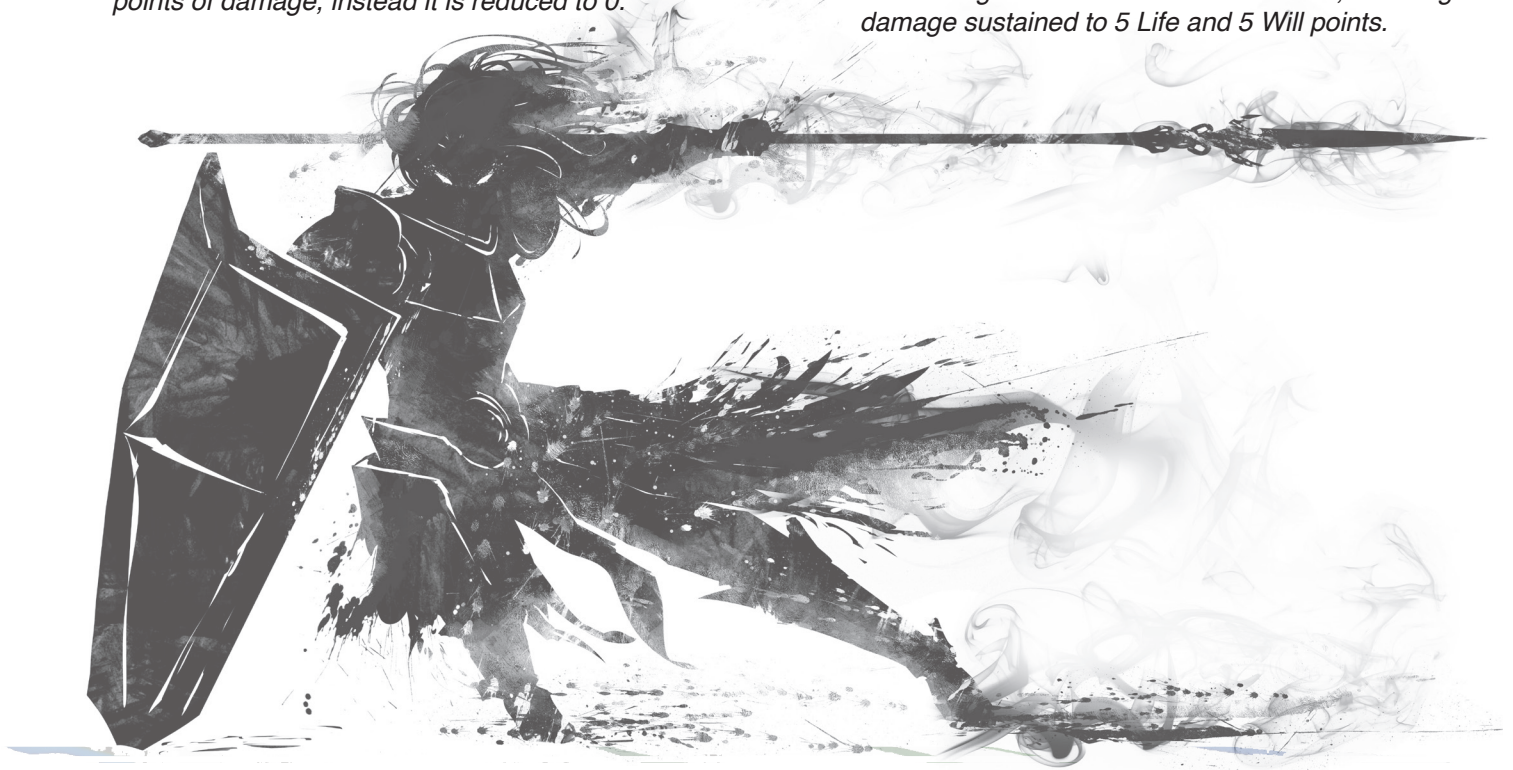
When damage is dealt to a character with an Armor Rating:

1. The character wearing armor is attacked. The attack lands and the damage roll yields damage dealt.
2. The character being damaged rolls their Armor Rating.
3. Any goal points generated from this roll reduces the amount of damage the character would sustain. If the attack would deal multiple types of damage, the goal points generated from the roll reduce each type of damage.

Example:

Character is struck with a war hammer for 10 damage. Because war hammers deal blunt damage, 10 damage is dealt to both the character's Life and Will.

The character has an Armor Rating of 10 and rolls on the 10 column, generating 5 goal points. 5 goal points are subtracted from both the 10 Life damage and the 10 Will damage the character would sustain, reducing the damage sustained to 5 Life and 5 Will points.



Loss of Consciousness

A character risks a Loss of Consciousness (LoC) whenever their Will points drop to 0 or they are subjected to a loss of consciousness effect.

Will points can never be reduced to less than 0; any damage that would bring a character below 0 Will points is instead subtracted from the character's Life points.

The first time in a scenario that a character is brought to 0 Will points, they may attempt to stave off unconsciousness by making an instant Resolve test (aka Rally) with any resultant goal points being added to the character's willpower.

Every subsequent time in the scenario that the character is brought to 0 Will points, they may spend 1 kismet to attempt a Rally again. If a character fails to rally, chooses not to, or cannot, they experience loss of consciousness.

While unconscious, a character cannot move, protect themselves, respond, or perform any other action. During conflict, at the end of the round, an unconscious character has their Initiative lowered to 0.

After a character has lost consciousness, unless otherwise specified, they must attempt to recover on their next turn, even in cases where it might be disadvantageous. During the character's turn, they perform an extended Toughness check with a cumulative goal of 10 goal points. Once the 10 goal points have been obtained, the character will gain consciousness on their following turn with Will points equal to their toughness rating.

Example of Loss of Consciousness:

With teeth gritted, the boxer attempts to shake off yet another hit. The world begins to swim as the beating begins to take its toll. An uppercut connects solidly with the bottom of the boxer's jaw, dealing 10 points of Will damage, which reduces the boxer's Will point total to -7, a potential knock out.

The Narrator determines the boxer needs to make a Toughness check to stay on his feet. The player rolls a 7 (White). The world fades to black as he falls to the ground.

The Narrator announces they've begun the countdown, the boxer has one chance to get back on his feet.

The boxer has a toughness of 17. After splashing some Kismet for good measure, the boxer scores 13 goal points, more than the required 10.

Down, but not out, the boxer gets back to his feet with 17 Will points and an urge to settle the score.

Incapacitated, Death, and Dying

Incapacitated

When a character's Life point total reaches 0, they are incapacitated. An incapacitated character is unable to move or interact with the world around them.

Dying

A character is dying when their Life points reach less than 0. When a character is dying, their Will immediately becomes 0 and they will lose 1 Life point on their initiative turn. On their turn, a player may opt to spend 1 Kismet to prevent the loss of a Life point from dying.

Reversal of the dying condition requires some sort of external medical intervention, usually through use of specialized equipment and/or the medical skill, with the goal points generated from the intervention being added to the character's negative life value.

A character is no longer dying when their Life points reach or exceed 0. A character restored to 0 Life points is still incapacitated while a character restored to > 0 Life points still suffers from having a Will of 0 and must recover from loss of consciousness as normal.

Dead (mostly)

A character is dead (mostly) when their negative Life point total surpasses their negative Endurance attribute rating. While dead (mostly), the character will continue to lose 1 Life point on their initiative turn.

But don't worry, a dead character can, with the proper equipment and personnel, be resuscitated back to the condition of only dying. Resuscitation attempts that successfully generate goal points have those points added to the character's negative life value until it is no longer less than their negative Endurance rating. At this point, the character's status is upgraded to merely dying.

Memento Mori Memento Vivere

In a TTRPG, the death of a character can be quite an emotional experience, especially when that character has played an integral role in the story. A reminder to players and narrators both: depending on the style of narrative, death may be an inevitable consequence of living. How you choose to handle it, whether by creating a new character or mounting a quest to venture beyond the pale to bring them back, is up to you. It is suggested that if a character dies during a campaign and the player is going to roll a new character, to allow them to start with all of the experience their previous character generated. This optional rule can help alleviate some of the sting of dying without completely eliminating the significance and consequence of dying.

Dead (completely)

Once a dead character's Life points go beyond thrice their negative Endurance rating, they are considered Dead (completely) and have gone beyond the point of being saved through mundane medical intervention.

Example:

Stanley attempts some jank driving in his restored 1957 Mustang. Unfortunately, Stanley is not as good as he thinks he is, takes a turn too fast, runs off the road, and crashes into a tree. The force of the crash, combined with a distinct lack of airbags, causes damage to Stanley that, through some divine intervention, reduces his Life points to 0. Stanley is now incapacitated.

Witnesses to the crash call 911 and rush down to help. Worried about the distinct smell of gasoline, they pull Stanley from the vehicle. Unfortunately in doing so, they also pull out the four inches of glass lodged in Stanley's leg, causing 4 points of Life damage. Stanley now has -4 Life points and is dying.

Stanley has an Endurance rating of 13, which means that once he passes -13 Life points, he will be mostly dead. Since he is at -4 Life points, he has 9 rounds (~27 seconds) before he dies. Realizing that it will probably take EMS longer than half a minute to arrive, Stanley spends 1 Kismet every round to prevent his life from deteriorating further.

As he has 52 Kismet, Stanley is able to buy himself another 2.6 minutes before he starts to lose life. Time passes and Stanley finds his Kismet spent and his life at -12 when he hears the sirens wail. Two more rounds pass (~6 seconds) and Stanley is now at -14 Life points. He is now dead, well mostly dead, as the ambulance pulls to the side of the road.

EMS takes a solid minute (~20 rounds) to get their gear out of the ambulance and down to Stanley. After 20 rounds, Stanley is at -34 Life points; remember that at -39 Life points ($13 \times 3 = 39$), he will be completely dead.

EMS finds Stanley with no pulse, and, like a well oiled machine, they start chest compressions, insert a sternal IO, and administer epinephrine, followed by a rapid infusion of NS. This allows the team to make their Medicine skill check using the collaboration rules and generates a commendable 7 goal points, bringing Stanley to -27 Life points (still mostly dead).

The next round of Stanley's initiative, he loses 1 Life point, now -28, while EMS is able to generate another 5 goal points. Stanley is now at -23.

The round continues until eventually EMS wins the battle and Stanley finds himself at -10 Life points (dying).

"I have a pulse" paramedic #1 says.

"Then lets move him out" paramedic #2 says.

The EMS team continues to treat and transport Stanley, and to prevent his Life points from dropping further, loads him into the ambulance, and makes haste to the nearest hospital.

Rest and Revitalization

Throughout the story, there will be times when a character needs time to rest and recover from various factors, such as extreme physical or mental duress, extensive traveling, disease, combat, or other story elements.

Rest is defined as an uninterrupted period of at least 6 hours during which all of the following occur:

1. The character receives high-quality sleep for at least 4 consecutive hours.
2. The character undertakes no activity more strenuous than light chores.
3. The character receives an adequate amount of food and water.
4. The character has adequate shelter from weather and other stressful environmental conditions.

When a character successfully rests, they are revitalized. Revitalization is the recovery of Life, Will, and Kismet and results as follows:

1. Life is restored by an amount equal to 1/2 of the character's current Life points with a minimum of 1.
2. Will is restored by an amount equal to 1/2 of the character's max Will points with a minimum of 1.
3. Kismet is restored by 1/2 of the deficit with a minimum of 1.
4. The Medicine skill and certain manifestations can augment revitalization.

Example:

A grueling push into the dungeon has left a character in rough shape.

- Life points = 13 / 40
- Will points = 9 / 52
- Kismet = 0 / 20

Fortunately, she is well provisioned and finds an empty room with a stout door that should keep her safe while she rests. She manages to sleep a solid 5 hours and has a filling, if not entirely satisfying, breakfast of trail rations and water.

She spends another 2 hours rearranging her pack and sharpening her sword for the next push.

The Narrator declares she's had adequate rest to receive the benefit of revitalization.

- She recovers 1 Life point ($13 \div 2 = 6.5$, round down = 6)
- She recovers 5 Will points ($52 \div 2 = 26$)
- She recovers 10 Kismet ($20 \div 2 = 10$)

Now rested her revitalized stats are

- Life = 19/40
- Will = 35/52
- Kismet = 10/20

Still a little roughed up but significantly more survivable. Hopefully

IX. Character Creation

How to Create a Character

Now that you've had a chance to explore Spectrum's approach to character concepts, aspects, and resources, you're ready to create a character using the following steps:

1. Create Character Concept
2. Distribute 90 Attribute Points
3. Choose Priorities
4. Assign Metaphysical Power
5. Distribute Trait Points
6. Calculate Instincts, Vitalities, and Movement
7. Distribute Skill Points
8. Assign Association Points
9. Purchase Assets
10. Assign Experience Points

A character sheet, a form used to conveniently and efficiently make a record of all the important aspects and resources of your character, has been provided in the appendix.

Create a Character Concept

Will you play the wandering exile, looking for a place to call home? Maybe a hardened soldier who wants nothing more than to open a bakery? Maybe a merchant with a taste for the finer things in life who has gotten herself in over her head? Creating a compelling character that both fits into the story and is interesting to play requires defining what the character is capable of and where their limits are. A character concept can be as deep or shallow as you want.

Example:

Christina decides that she wants to play a much more interesting and accessible version of her favorite character from a somewhat popular series of novels about a special magic school for nascent wizards set in the hills of Nova Scotia. This character is bright, studious, brave, and geeky.

Distribute Attribute Points

All characters begin with 90 Attribute Points to distribute as they wish among the 8 core capabilities. The attribute values will later determine a character's Instincts, Vitalities, and Movement. At character creation, a player may not assign more than 20 points to an attribute.

The eight Attributes are as follows:

1. Agility (AGI)
2. Endurance (END)
3. Finesse (FIN)
4. Intuition (INT)
5. Martial (MAR)
6. Perception (PER)
7. Reason (REA)
8. Strength (STR)

Example:

Christina spends 90 Attribute points as follows:

- *Agility: 10 – Not a natural athlete but not a klutz.*
- *Endurance: 13 – The character was on the cross country team and walks everywhere. To represent this, Christina has chosen a slightly above average Endurance.*
- *Finesse: 13 – Her character is fairly nimble, paints tabletop models, practices close-up coin tricks.*
- *Intuition: 7 – Her character grew up spending most of her time reading books and pursuing various solitary extracurricular activities. To represent this, Christina has chosen a below-average Intuition.*
- *Martial: 11 – While not an overtly violent person, the character comes from a rough family and a rougher neighborhood. She has learned how to keep cool even when taking a hit. Christina feels that her character does not like conflict or violence, and this is reflected in her Martial score.*
- *Perception: 13 – Christina places her character's Perception above average to reflect that the character has spent some time trying to become more observant.*
- *Reason: 17 – This is where the character shines. Christina wants a high reason to reflect the character's superior memory and aptitude.*
- *Strength: 6 – While the character can run a 5k fairly easily, she is small, and the heaviest thing she regularly picks up is one of her many potted plants.*

Choose Priorities

Based on your character concept, you will rank six priorities to represent the prevalence and importance of each aspect of your character's identity. Assign each of these aspects a priority from 1 to 6, with 1 being the highest priority and 6 being the lowest. Each number may only be associated with one aspect.

The priorities are as follows:

1. Associations
2. Experience
3. Means
4. Metaphysical Power
5. Skills
6. Traits

Priority	Associations	XP	Means	Power	Skills	Traits
1	45	70	Yellow	13	150	17
2	30	45	Green	10	100	13
3	20	30	Cyan	7	70	10
4	10	20	Blue	3	50	5
5	5	10	Purple	0	35	3
6	0	5	Ultraviolet	Mundane	22	0

Example:

Taking into consideration her character being a trained magic user with considerable skill in the arcane arts, very few friends, and even less money, Christina ranks her priorities as follows:

- #1 Metaphysical Power (13)
- #2 Experience (45)
- #3 Skills (70)
- #4 Associations (10)
- #5 Means (Purple)
- #6 Traits (0)

The Narrator points out to Christina that she could easily decrease the character's Martial by one and increase the Strength by one, which would put the character's Strength to the next column on The Chart without changing the column of the character's Martial attribute.

Christina thanks the Narrator but explains that, while the math works out better, she does not think the character would be as well represented if the attributes were optimized for rolling. Instead, she explains that she is looking forward to playing the character and figuring out which direction the character should go in.

In times when a genre or story does not use one of the six priorities, we suggest that the players assign the inappropriate priority to #6. Of course, some players will choose to ignore this request in order to better describe their character, which is their prerogative.

Assign Metaphysical Power

Record the character's Power based on the priority you chose. Yes, this step is, in fact, that easy.

Example:

Christina chose Metaphysical Power as priority #1 to reflect that she is a wizarding powerhouse, well at least for a newbie. Therefore, her character will start with 13 Power.

Distribute Trait Points

Trait points can be used to assign various traits that range from mundane, such as increasing attributes and assets, to the extraordinary, such as the ability to breathe underwater or have a prehensile tail. Any unspent points will be banked as starting experience points.

Example:

Christina chose to make traits her lowest priority. This works just fine for the character concept Christina has chosen.

Calculate Instincts, Vitalities, and Movement

Instincts, vitalities, and movement are calculated from the character's 8 primary attributes.

Instincts

- Aegis = (Endurance + Reason) ÷ 2
- Awareness = (Intuition + Perception) ÷ 2
- Reflex = (Agility + Finesse) ÷ 2
- Resolve = (Martial + Reason) ÷ 2
- Toughness = (Endurance + Strength) ÷ 2

Vitalities

- Life = (Toughness + Reflex) × 2
- Will = (Resolve + Awareness) × 2

Movement

- Run = (Strength + Agility) ÷ 3
- Jog = 3 (default for starting characters)
- Walk = 2 (default for starting characters)

Example:

Christina's Instincts, Vitalities, and Movement are calculated as follows (taking into account that decimals are always rounded down):

- Aegis = (Endurance 13 + Reason 17) ÷ 2 = 15
- Awareness = (Intuition 7 + Perception 13) ÷ 2 = 10
- Reflex = (Agility 10 + Finesse 13) ÷ 2 = 11
- Resolve = (Martial 11 + Reason 17) ÷ 2 = 14
- Toughness = (Endurance 13 + Strength 6) ÷ 2 = 9
- Life = (Toughness 9 + Reflex 11) × 2 = 40
- Will = (Resolve 14 + Awareness 10) × 2 = 48
- Run = (STR 6 + AGI 10) ÷ 3 = 5
- Jog = 3
- Walk = 2

Distribute Skill Points

Based on the priority of skills, assign the number allotted of skill points to increase the character's rating in each chosen skill, representing how much the character knows or how well they know how to do it.

To determine the character's skill rating, the player adds the associated attribute value to the number of assigned skill points minus the skill's starting deficit (Attribute + skill point - deficit). Any unspent skill points will be converted to starting Experience Points.

Example:

Christina is going to try to make the character's skill list fit the profile of a studious middle schooler. She has 70 points to distribute. She chooses the following skills:

- Academics (Library Science) = 10
- Academics (History) = 7
- Academics (Herbology) = 7
- Academics (Botany) = 10
- One-Handed Melee = 3
- Stealth = 13
- Dodge = 10
- Craft (Baking) = 10

Assign Association Points

Association points are assigned based on the priority that associations were placed. The character may use these points to establish contact ratings with individuals or ranks within an organization. Any unspent Association points will be converted to starting Experience Points.

Example:

Christina decides to give the character a pen pal from Portland, to whom she is genuinely fond of and has written hundreds of letters back and forth with over the years. She assigns her character the following Contact: [Amanda Whitman: Contact Rating 10].

Purchase Assets

During character creation, a character's starting assets is determined by how the player prioritizes their means. In most settings, means refers to a character's starting purchasing power and financial access. During character creation, a player may use their means to purchase material goods, pay for services, or any other external assets the character may need or want, assuming that the character would have access to such things. A player can spend up to their total means or, per narrator approval, spend their way into debt.

After character creation, record your remaining means, if any, on your character sheet. The Narrator may decide at the start of the story to translate the character's means to the story's prevailing currency.

Determining Means During Character Creation

During character creation, the character's initial means is determined by the level of priority attached. Additionally, the player can use various traits to affect the character's starting means.

Means Value to Contemporary Currency	
IR	Billions-of-dollars
Red	Hundreds-of-millions of dollars
Orange	Tens-of-millions of dollars
Yellow	Millions-of-dollars
Green	Hundreds-of-thousands of dollars
Cyan	Tens-of-thousands of dollars
Blue	Thousands-of-dollars
Purple	Hundreds-of-dollars
Ultraviolet	Tens-of-dollars
White	Dollars
Grey	Cents
Black	Debt

Using Means to Acquire Gear

A character's color of means represents the absolute most they can afford to purchase, while being able to afford various items of lesser color.

The number of items that a character can start with, is represented by the following general rule:

Asset @ Color of Means = One, lose 4 color of means
Asset @ Color of Means = One, lose 2 color of means
Asset @ Color of Means = One
Asset ↓1 Color of Means = Couple / Few (2-3)
Asset ↓2 Color of Means = Some (4-9)
Asset ↓3 Color of Means = Several (10-15)
Asset ↓4 Color of Means = Many (16-20+)
Asset ↓5 Color of Means = Inconsequential*

**Inconsequential does not mean infinite, but it does mean an awful lot.*

Don't worry, Spectrum provides plenty of opportunities for a starting character to spend themselves poor. If the character wishes to start the game with an item that their means does not afford them, they are welcome to, prior to purchasing anything else, obtain an item of one higher cost, simultaneously dropping their means color by 2.

Example:

Christina chose her means priority at #5 to reflect her character's meager financial background. She references the Assets resource document to figure out what items her character can reasonably start with. Her means is purple, so she can start with:

- One item of Purple value
- A couple of Ultraviolet items
- Several White items
- and several Grey items

Of course, Christina has the option to acquire a single item of Blue value, but as this would decrease her means to White, she chooses to forgo anything opulent.

Her character starts with some sets of basic clothing (White), a few hard to find books on herbology and the occult (Ultraviolet), and a decent wand (Purple) as she doesn't want to embarrass herself on her first day of class.

Assign Starting XP

Characters start with varying amounts of Experience Points depending on what priority level they choose for experience. To determine the character's starting experience, add the experience gained from their priority assignment plus any unused trait, skill, or association points.

Starting Experience Points may be immediately used to acquire metaphysical abilities, increase skills or attributes, or a character can bank their experience to take advantage of a respectable amount of Kismet (better to be lucky than good).

Example:

Christina places experience as her #2 priority to reflect her character having learned a not unimpressive amount of metaphysical abilities prior to starting her wizarding school. She starts with 45 experience and references the Metaphysics resource guide to pick her starting metaphysical abilities, which in this genre, reflect magical spells. Christina spends her experience to start with the following metaphysical abilities:

- Detect Mana (2)
- Mana Shield (3)
- Mana Beacon (5)
- Increase Resistance (5)
- Minor Telekinesis (2)
- Telekinetic Slam (3)
- Alter Gravity (3)
- Force Push (5)

*For a total of 28 Experience Points spent:
45-28=17*

She has 17 Experience Points left that she chooses to bank in order to start with 17 Kismet.

