Character Creation

STEP 1: BASICS

Find the official character sheet at the back of the book, website, or just snap/tap the QR code! Print lots of copies! Let's see how to fill this out. Use *pencil!*

2.1.1 Character Concept

THE first step in creating a character is determining what the character's basic concept will be. It's always easier to get to your destination if you know where you are going! How does this character fit into the group? What role will they play? Are you the muscle in the group or the sneak? Do you excel at swordplay or sharp words? Talk to your GM about the game world and figure out how that character fits in with the group and the world around them. If you aren't sure, a number of tables are provided to give you some ideas.

Personal Traits

One of the ways you can get started is to determine a personal trait. This is optional. Your personal trait goes under "Personal Data" on your character sheet.

Every PC and many important NPCs can have a personal trait, although not everyone has learned what their trait is yet, so they can be added later. Samples in the SAMPLE GENRE INFO on page 141 are given to get you started, but the GM is encouraged to create additional tables and traits specific to their campaign and story line.

If you have a character concept in mind, the GM will let you choose a personal trait that fits the concept. You can roll randomly, or you can let the GM reveal your trait later. If you roll and don't like the result, you can roll a second time or go with a GM reveal. Campaign settings may come with additional personal trait tables specific to the setting and you may choose which table you use.

GM Reveal You can elect to have your GM reveal your personal trait at some point in the future where your trait would be beneficial to the narrative. You should discuss how long this might take during session 0. Revealing any part of a personal trait during the course of game-play should be done through narrative. Something should happen that leads to that moment of self-discovery.

Darkness

Everyone has a darkness tree which is named next to the dark light bulb on your character sheet under EMO-TIONAL. This works like a skill, where your darkness points act like experience points. Aura is the related attribute, but the Darkness skill starts at 0 XP. At character generation, you can leave this field blank unless some personal trait says otherwise. The appendix lists Darkness styles. You can choose one that fits your character, or you can choose one that fits once your Darkness skill reaches level 1.

All darkness styles begin with the "Darkness" passion at level 0, which simply says that your darkness level is a social condition granting a penalty to all social interaction rolls except intimidation and checks to enter Rage, where it counts as an advantage. You can block the penalty through any means that blocks other social conditions, including resorting to drugs or anger, discussed more in the AFTER THE BATTLE chapter. Blocking social conditions does not change advantages, such as to intimidation, only penalties. Various acts can cause darkness points and these are applied directly and immediately to your darkness style.

Like your personal trait, you need not determine it at character generation since all standard darkness trees begin with the "Darkness" passion, so everyone has it. Some personal traits may dictate a particular darkness style. Otherwise, the darkness style can be chosen when darkness reaches first level, at 6 points of darkness. Additionally, "fast" technologies (magic and psionics) will usually have an additional darkness style.

You gain darkness points as karma runs its course, from emotional armor against emotional wounds, if you kill someone in rage, cause emotional trauma, and possibly other decisions. As your darkness earns levels, you gain a passion from *any* darkness style your character has. Darkness passions represent emotional difficulty, eccentricities, or other character faults.

You can also choose to put your Bonus XP into darkness, but you take karma points when you do, as discussed in the previous chapter under BONUS EXPERIENCE.

Dark Sciences Some sciences manipulate forces in dangerous ways (like fast spell casting) or provide other *shortcuts* to personal power, such as cyberware. These "dark force" powers will have a darkness tree, likely one with beneficial "powers". These may be powers that you could learn in other ways, just faster if you use the dark path. You gain the level 0 power from this style the moment you achieve primary training in the dark science. If you already have the same tree, you don't gain it again, but add 6 points to darkness! Using "dark force" powers earns darkness because you are using your darkness like a skill. If you need a roll, then darkness is capacity 2. As you gain darkness levels, you choose a darkness passion or power from *any* of your darkness styles! The powers of a dark science entice you into accepting the limitations of dark forces, sometimes driving the character mad, power-hungry, or worse.

2.1.2 Attribute Capacity & Heritage

You might also begin with your *ancestry*, sometimes called "race" in some games. This is your genetics, which determine how you look and how others react to you. Your ancestry may not be of a single species, but if it is at least 75% of one species, then use the stats for that species and the other 25% will be flavor text (if any) without enough difference to change game mechanics.

Creature "stat blocks" representing a particular species are divided into physical, mental, and environmental categories. Some creatures may have attributes that are above or below human level and will roll a different number of dice for an attribute check or related skill. The number of dice is your *attribute capacity*. Humans have all primary, human-level attributes [2].

Physical and mental aspects are your *ancestry*, and the environmental aspect is your *heritage*. The GM will provide a list of available species from whatever setting is being used for the game. The chapter on CREATING CAMPAIGN WORLDS has rules for creating new ones, including crossbreeds. There are fantasy races in the SAMPLE GENRE INFO section of the appendix to use as a starting point.

The mental section represents the "internal you". Your skills and memories are attached to the mental self. If you change your physical form by magic, genetic alterations, or

radioactive goo, or some new avatar program on your cyberdeck, you only change the *physical* aspects, not the *mental*. Skills don't change. If you change yourself into a dragon, your size, reach, appearance, Damage Capacity (DC), and physical attribute capacities will be of a dragon. The attribute scores don't change. If you were a weak as a human, you'll have the strength of a dragon, just a weak one!

Ancestry may include ancestral skills or "instincts" in the mental section. You gain the skills at primary training and can advance them normally. Such skills may include styles that allow a species to develop special abilities over time.

Perception Modifiers The physical part of your species (if not human) may change the capacity of various perception checks up or down: visual, auditory, olfactory (smell), and tactile (touch). These values may be used as *situational* modifiers to other checks if special senses would help. This might be *Searching* by touch or *Tracking* by scent. So, if you get +1 to olfactory (smell), then a perception check to make out a particular smell is a capacity 3 check with Mind as the related attribute and the same XP as your Mind score. If you were making a Tracking check to track by smell, you get an advantage die on the Tracking roll instead.

> ### A NOTE ABOUT EVIL
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> If you look through history and modern culture, everything like US is GOOD, and everyone else is THEM, and THEY are EVIL. This applies to race, sex, politics, religion, nationalism, whatever! You may percieve a group's actions as evil if you do not have a frame of reference to understand that culture. The dragon isn't evil for eating you. He's just hungry! In this game, there is no "detect evil" or "evil races" because evil is a judgement, and the game mechanics refuse to judge entire groups!

Cultural Heritage

The environmental aspect is Heritage. Heritage refers to your culture and community. Different communal groups of a particular species may have different environmental influences. The Heritage for a species may split and fragment as cultural groups split off and isolate from each other forming different sub-cultures. The Heritage will list all skills and styles that belong to that culture. Your heritage will also list rites of passage, mores, and values.

The environment section will include a *Culture (AUR)* skill specific to your community, social group, or totem. Cultures are such an important topic, that DIVERSE CULTURES is its own section in CREATING CAMPAIGN WORLDS. You get this skill for free, plus the language spoken by your community (listed in your Heritage), both at primary training. Do not add an attribute point for primary training in your native culture or language, but you get the usual bonus for additional training or additional skill lev-

els. This embodies your knowledge of the local customs, exchanges, and ways of social interaction, spoken or otherwise. You automatically have *Home Advantage* to all cultural checks among own heritage.

When two cultures have split and have different culture styles, you can use your own similar culture, but do not . How dissimilar the cultures are, and thus how many disadvantage dice you take, is up to the designer of the setting. Usually a single die disadvantage is common for similar cultures.

Various other skills might be flavored by your heritage. Perhaps your heritage has a unique dance or sport. When a skill holds specific cultural significance, your heritage will list your culture's style for the skill. You get advantage on checks to learn the skill if you choose the style from your heritage. A culture may listen to and appreciate multiple styles, but very few of these (often only 1) will be seen as the heart of that culture and listed in the heritage description. That's the style that gets cultural bonuses. If you learn the skill during character creation, add 2 extra XP into the skill for being immersed in the culture.

You also may learn various additional cultures, various sub-cultures, factions, and political affiliations. These are all culture skills, just with different styles. Your rank in the military, clergy, nobility, or the local guild will all have their own forms of address, customs, values, useful contacts, and other details that are specific to that culture. Your level in these cultures determines your rank within the culture and various passions.

Culture Style   A Culture skill grants a tree of "passions", representing the "style" of your people's culture. You get the base passion from your culture style immediately. PASSION & STYLE has its own chapter starting on on page 91. You start with the base of the tree, but you can learn more about your culture to unlock additional passions.

Learning the styles listed as part of your Heritage is also a cultural experience, granting XP in your culture at the same time the skill would grant XP in the related attribute.

For music, learning the words of a cultural anthem is 1 XP in that Culture, and learning the music will grant another. Players will need to balance their freedom to choose their own styles with the long-term cultural benefits of choosing a style from your culture. Of course, this very much mirrors decisions the character would have faced in real life!

By specifically practicing the rites and rituals of your culture, participating in rites of passage and similar important steps for your culture, you gain practice XP in the culture. Visiting places of cultural significance and learning from a renowned leader of the community are personal goals that can boost your cultural experience (literally). You will use the Bonus XP table, but XP is granted directly to the culture, not as Bonus XP. Visiting the sacred places of your

culture may earn a point of light as well. Major pilgrimages earn 2 points of light.

Other Cultures

You can study other cultures by learning them as skills. Learning the dances and sports of other cultures increases your knowledge of that culture the same way as learning about your own culture.

Factions & Subcultures

The more complex your culture is, the more likely it will splinter into sub-cultures. Complex subcultures within a structured organization (military rank, guilds, political parties, political parties, local nobility and other "factions") will have their own *Culture* skill specific to that faction. Your standing within the organization and your access to contacts or secrets is determined by your skill level. Your religion is defined by a Faith skill that acts as your religious sub-culture with the specific lores, customs, forms of address, and specific knowledge of those who are considered religious authorities (clergy) within the culture.

Ancestral Heritage

Sometimes *physical* aspects will depend upon heritage, a result of naturally occurring selective breeding and environmental conditions within a small community. These physical modifiers are for the given ancestry only. For example, a particular subculture of elf may be more likely to have dark skin due to that community being in the desert for so many generations. Elves of that community get this physical modifier, but if you are adopted into this community, that physical modifier would not apply even though the rest of that heritage does. If you are born of one ancestry and have the heritage of another ancestry, get with your GM to find the heritage of your *parents* and use the physical modifiers of the birth parent's heritage instead of the one you grew up in.

If one parent is from the community, you get the half of any physical modifiers, rounded up. So, if you are a Sylvan Elf raised by Dwarves (Sylvan is an Elven heritage), then you use the physical and mental aspects of Elves, you have the same heritage as the Dwarves that raised you, and *physical* heritage modifiers (such as skin color, eye color, etc) as a Sylvan Elf. If you are an Elf-Dwarf offspring living with dwarves, you get half the skin color modifier of the desert elves and the culture of the dwarves you grew up with. That make sense? Use your judgement and check with the GM for final approval. This isn't something that is going to break the game if someone gets the wrong modifier, especially considering you can just choose this stuff anyway!

You get the skill for the culture you grew up in. You may choose to learn the culture of another parent (if different

from the one you grew up in) if your character cares about your parent's culture and that parent has been alive for most of the character's childhood, or you may use the other parent's culture as a secondary skill. Keep this is mind as you build your character. You only have knowledge listed on your character sheet. You don't get to barter with the GM that you "should" know something from your background if you don't represent it on your character sheet through experience. If its not on your character sheet, you chose not to pay attention to those things because you never earned experience in it.

A Note About Social Issues

Racism and other social issues are not excluded. This is a source of conflict and conflict fuels your story! You are obviously free to exclude such content at your game table, but not talking about it doesn't make it go away! Use session 0 to let everyone get to know what conflicts will be portrayed by a setting before creating characters. Portrayal of racism or other controversial topics does not condone it! Fighting against such evils can be an important part of the story.

Horror Rating

A Horror Rating (HR) means you inspire fear or awe in others. This is a form of intimidation, and the emotional state that it attacks is based on the creature's Appearance capacity, as calculated under COMPUTING HORROR RATING under APPEARANCE (APN) on page 35. Please make sure your GM approves of any ancestry choice, particularly ones with a Horror Rating. Encountering a creature with a Horror Rating requires a Basic Combat Training (BCT) saving throw equal to the HR before any other actions. Emotional target modifiers apply, discussed more in MENTAL & EMOTIONAL COMBAT on page 95. Attempts to influence NPC reactions are also influenced by the Horror Rating, representing a massive change in cultural understanding. Index your Horror Rating on the EXPERIENCE TABLE on page 13 as XP to find the number of disadvantages to apply to the initial NPC Reaction Roll and any other social interactions (ex: 6-9 is 1 die, 10-15 is 2 dice, etc). This is a discrimination modifier that applies to all other species and replaces any lesser discrimination modifiers.

Low Attributes

A character with an attribute capacity of [0] can not choose an occupation that uses a skill related to that attribute unless you already have those skills through some other means, such as from the ancestry description. If you choose an occupation that contains skills for which you have capacity [1], then you start only partially trained. These skills should be given a single underscore, two underscores if your attribute

level is 1 or less. At the start of the game, before play begins, you may make 1 "self-trained" roll for each of these skills to make them primary. On failure, you will need to retry during the course of the game according to the rules for self training. This is covered in GETTING TRAINED starting on page 24.

2.1.3 Character Flaws

Players may optionally roll on (or choose from) the CHARACTER FLAWS table which can grant additional bonuses such as additional XP with which to build your character. Flaws from character creation may recommend a specific darkness style. Some flaws are simply darkness passions that you begin the game with. Flaws not only make the character more realistic and colorful, but also provides additional challenges that help the character grow. Flaws always give you something to compensate, and each flaw has its own benefit listed in the description.

2.1.4 Age

Age of Maturity

Every ancestry has a different age of maturity based on a number of factors. Humans have an age of maturity of 18. For other species, check the creature description in the appendix.

Starting age begins at the age of maturity. To that, add 1d6 for every full 100 XP you start with. Add advantage to the roll for an additional 25 XP, or two advantages for 50 XP (no additional age for 75 XP). There are no critical failures on these rolls. Most fantasy genres are 100 XP; Humans roll 18+1d6. More modern settings starting at 125 XP will roll 18+1d6 with advantage. Future settings with 150 XP, increase to two advantages. For character's starting at 200 XP, it's recommended to add [2] dice; 18 + 2d6.

Record your age and ask the GM about the date in their world so you can get your birth date figured out. Birthdays or "Name Days" are often a rite of passage, so the GM should let the player know when their birthday occurs if this is part of the character's culture.

Your GM may have more specific methods of generating starting age. In most cases, a player that requests to be a certain age should be allowed to do so as long as it won't be problematic for the group (such as playing the only child in the group) or immersion breaking (you'll need to explain how you have 500 XP at age 20). If nobody has any special reason to be a specific age, just roll for your character's age using the formula above.

Youthful Characters

XP by Age: 100 XP for 17-21 yr olds. 125 for 21-25. 150 for 25-29. 200 for 30+. PCs will earn an average of 1 point of XP in their main skills, plus 24 Bonus XP per year (or 1 about every 2-3 weeks). More details are given in 11.

Characters younger than the age of maturity take penalties. The age of each of the growth categories below are estimated based on the age of maturity and the age of puberty. A teen is from the age of puberty to the age of maturity. A pre-teen begins at ¾ of the onset of puberty. A child begins at ½ the pre-teen age. Toddlers are half the child age. A baby is any age below toddler. Psionic teens, pre-teens and children get advantage on psionics! Pre-teens and younger are immune to karmic effects. Plus:

Teens (12–18)   get a disadvantage to all fear effects, initiative, and the above crit modifier. This is due to an inability to control emotions in times of stress and their occupational training being incomplete. Generally, roughly 20 XP will be missing from the character. Additionally, characters will be 1 size lower than typical with all the associated penalties. The GM may allow the teen to roll to finish rolling their occupation after the first Act if they have earned 20 XP (GM may estimate).

Pre-teens (9–11)   are -1 die in training to Body and Speed. Likely, a pre-teen has environmental skills, but at the lower level determined by their lower attributes. They lose another Size level on the creature chart and another disadvantage to fear. They will have only half the starting XP. Psionic pre-teens and children can not power-cast psionics and can only "wild" cast. This can be more or less powerful, but it's random. This is in addition to the advantage to psionics.

Children (4–8)   as above but -2 dice training to Body and Speed and -1 die to Agility. Size is half, rounded down, and may vary. Children do not roll a personal trait making psionics very unlikely (GM can do it anyway). They have no Occupation at all and can not be "well-schooled". AD is 1 less than the parent if they had natural armor.

Toddlers (2–3)   are -3 dice to Body, but -2 dice to Agility and Speed, -1 die to Logic and Mind attributes. Fear is 3 disadvantages. Toddlers are size 1 for creatures of size 4-8, size 0 for creatures size 1-3, and size 2 for creatures of size 9-11. For creatures of size 12+, the toddler is 1/4 the size

level of the adult. Negative size creatures are 1 size under the adult. AD is 2 less than the parent.

Babies   are 1 size less than above, all [0] scores except Appearance, regardless of ancestry. Automatically critically fails any fear checks. Babies have an AD of 1 if the adult is AD 4 or higher, otherwise AD is 0.

Attacking Innocents

Attacking a kid requires a *violence* trauma save, BCT vs the Appearance attribute check of the child. The hit modifier for the child's current size applies as a bonus to the Appearance roll, giving smaller creatures more benefit. If the child is a similar-looking creature (like elf vs human), add a penalty die. If it's the same ancestry, add two penalty dice. Follow the trauma rules in the section on MENTAL & EMOTIONAL COMBAT interactions on page 95. If any trauma is indicated on the table, you are unable to attack the child. You must get a result that does not indicate a trauma response in order to attack.

Once the scene is over, roll the above save again, but this time using Aura rather than BCT. Permanent trauma is possible and you take a karma point for the scene. If the child had a weapon and intended to use it against you or someone else, then you get advantage on the saves, and take a point of darkness instead of taking a karma point. If you have any intimacy listed that would make *any* child or children precious to you, then such intimacies cause a penalty to these saves!

Advanced Age

Most campaigns will retire their characters before they get old, so there is no place for old age conditions on the sheet. Everyone ages differently, so the GM and players should

discuss alterations to the rules below and swap some stuff around if they decide to play a character of advanced age. If you stop practicing Body based skills, such as stopping adventures to run court and engage in politics, then the GM could apply negative BDY points until you become more active.

These rolls are affected by Darkness! You'll live longer if you play nice! Any crit rolled below is a heart attack or other life-threatening event.

Middle Age (30–50)   The player will roll 3 dice, multiply the total by 3, and then add the result of a BDY check (generally once the player is nearing the age of 30 and the GM and players want the effects of aging to be a part of the campaign). This will be the age that the effects of aging begin for humans. For other races, this is the percentage of total lifespan. At the indicated age, add a "Middle Age" disadvantage that affects all Body checks and reflexes.

Drop Endurance by 1 and hit points by 1 now and every age bracket below! Then, roll another 3 dice to determine when the next aging level begins (as a percent of max age). Repeat this roll for each level below.

Over The Hill (45–65)   For females, menopause begins. All characters subtract another endurance point permanently. The player (or GM if this is an NPC) should add an "Over The Hill" disadvantage which will apply to checks of their choice. This is due to some random body condition which the player must define. Do you have a limp? Bad back? Pick something, and every roll that the condition will effect will have a disadvantage. Maybe its just heartburn, but this could lead to poor sleep, poor digestion, disadvantage on various body saves, etc. You can also choose weight gain for your condition; roll [2] dice and multiply the result by your usual weight multiplier for your size.

Senior (60–70)   Add another "Senior" disadvantage that affects all rolls whatsoever. This stacks with the others. Drop Speed capacity by 1 and compute new movement rates.

Old (70–85)   Each category keeps adding disadvantages. The "Old" disadvantage applies to all health saves and mental saves. Eventually some ailment becomes life threatening. Remember that losing loved ones will cause issues in your mental state.

Venerable (85–95)   If you get this old, the GM should put you in the community history. Add the "Venerable" disadvantage to all skill and attribute checks. Drop Speed capacity another die and drop free movement to zero. Sprinting no longer works.

Ancient (95+)   You died in your sleep.

Step 2: Attributes

2.2.1 Rolling Your Scores

You roll your 8 *Attributes* using 2 dice. Brilliant successes *do* count and a roll of 2 is counted as a 12 instead of a 0! Most NPCs would use normal critical failure rules. Virtually Real emphasizes learned skill over attributes, so these scores will not be as important as in other systems. Your skills and occupations will increase your scores for you.

Generally, if you don't have a character concept in mind, roll the scores in order. GMs may allow 2 scores to be swapped before adding skill modifiers. If you have a vision for your character, roll 8 times and distribute those rolls according to how you see the character. If the total of all modifiers is under 7, then start over.

An attribute's *score* (like a skill's *experience*) is a mixture of your genetics (rolled scores) and life experiences (attribute increases from skills). The score is your rating in that attribute, which determines the attribute level according the XP table. Attribute scores are not experience and do not earn experience points. You may *not* place Bonus XP into an attribute score.

2.2.2 Gender

Gender *sometimes* matters. If one gender for a species has a different size category than the other gender, such as humans, then the larger gender will have more hit points due to the extra mass. To offset this, the smaller gender gets a bonus to their Appearance, Aura, and/or Mind attributes; the player distributes this bonus as they like. You may add 4 attribute points for every size level change. If height and weight are different, add 2 points for each size difference in height and 2 more points for each size difference in weight. For example, a human female is 1 size smaller than a male, size 5 vs size 6, so the male gets 1 more hit point, but the female gets 4 points to spread between APN, AUR, and MND!

Some characters will be non-binary, transgender, or something else. If you choose to play a character that is not strictly one gender or the other, you have a few options. First, you can choose any size between the male and female of the species, inclusive. This size does not determine your genitalia (that is always player's choice). It doesn't matter if your race would normally dictate which sex is larger or stronger, nor does it have any influence on sexuality. This character is different and the usual genetic rules don't apply at all!

The above attribute bonus rule applies according to your new size compared to the largest of your species. If your ancestry has different special abilities for each gender, then you may choose which gender's special abilities you want and your GM may allow you to mix and match from both sexes by trading the point costs for each ability, earning points

back for unchosen abilities to buy abilities normally reserved for the opposite sex. On the downside, expect your differences to label you as a *them* rather than an *us,* especially if people find out you have lots of abilities that they do not!

2.2.3 Body (BDY)

Body represents your health, constitution, physical strength, and endurance. It is related to the Earth element. Your full hit point total is found by adding your base HP + Body level. This is also your "Crit" level for physical effects. Base HP is based on your size and damage capacity. This means a human female will have 1 point less than a male. In combat, you power attack and block using your Body modifier. Body is used for saving throws against health effects and for strength checks.

Feats of strength for lifting heavy gates, bending bars, and bashing in doors will add your weight-size to the BDY check! Additionally, how many legs you have changes how much you can carry and pull because of weight distribution.

Various skills will increase your muscle mass. When determining your body weight, add your BDY level and any "Weight Lifting" passions to your total before multiplying. Add the weight multiplier given in your weight formula on the Creature Size Chart to your weight each time your Body level or "Weight Lifting" increases. For human males, this is 5lbs and 3lbs for females.

Your Endurance points are equal to twice your Body capacity, plus your Body level. A creature needs to sleep a number of hours per day equal to 10 - twice the attribute capacity. Thus, a Body of [0] needs 10 hours of sleep, human level Body [2] needs 6 hours, and deities don't need to sleep.

Supernatural & Deific Bodies

Body [4] is considered "supernatural". A supernatural body has *Resistance 1* to all physical attacks except silver, acid, fire, magic, or other energy forms. Any natural weapons of a supernatural creature are X 2. Resistance reduces the X multiplier of attacks. If the X is not listed, it is 1, and an X of 0 is treated as *non-lethal* attack. An X of less than 0 means you take no damage at all. When two supernatural creatures combat each other using natural weapons, they would do normal damage to each other.

Body [5] is "Deific". This increases the above resistance to *Resistance 2* against most forms of attack, including Resistance 1 to those listed above! The natural weapons of deific creatures are X 3, so these creatures do normal damage to each other.

> ### OBJECT HIT POINTS
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> You can find the size of any object by putting its weight in pounds into a calculator and hitting the cube-root key ($\sqrt[3]{x}$). Round the result up, no matter how small the remainder. The result is the weight size of that object. This is then modified by weapon properties to arrive at the final hit points. This is similar to how your Body property affects your hit points.

2.2.4 Agility (AGL)

Agility represents a measure of your grace, dexterity, and coordination. It is related to the Fire Element. Your Agility effects your balance, aim, dodge, and others. Your aim bonus is the maximum number of advantage dice to add to your roll for an aimed shot. Creatures with AGL [0] can not aim.

2.2.5 Appearance (APN)

Appearance is how attractive you are to people of your ancestry. Appearances are tied to Pentacles. Higher scores mean you stand out in some way and are generally more attractive. You should have one outstanding feature for every level in appearance, even if its only your purple hair! List each appearance feature on your character sheet. People will recognize these features first. Your appearance level makes it harder to disguise yourself, but easier to influence others when not disguised.

Initial reactions to your character is an appearance roll, adjusted for any discrimination modifiers. Creatures with [2] Appearance (such as most humanoids) don't have a Horror Rating (HR). A Horror Rating is trauma save against a fear effect that must be made before attacking the creature. The emotional target is listed in parenthesis. The ancestry's horror rating for a creature is based on it's appearance capacity, often based on size. Add your appearance *level* to your ancestry's base HR.

Computing Horror Rating

The capacity gives a basic idea of what sort of creature it is:

[0] is reserved for oozes, molds, and the truly bizarre monsters. The base HR is 16 (Helpless).

[1] is for most natural animals and non-humanoid creatures. There is no HR.

[2] is for normal "humanoid" creatures, no HR.

[3] dice is unusually striking and may project awe or horror in others (depending on the observer). Most monsters and aliens fit here as well as some unusually beautiful creatures such as elves and fey. The HR is equal to your Size (Violence).

[4] dice is supernatural beauty and horror, used by unicorns and fairies, but also lower demons and werewolves. They have an HR equal to Size+2 (Isolation).

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[5] are deities, angels and demons which will frequently appear beautiful to their followers but demonic to everyone else. The HR is equal to 6+Size (Self). The god doesn't change, only the perception of the observer. For example, a culture that raises goats might see a benevolent nature god with goat horns, while another culture would perceive the same god as a horned demon! The appearance doesn't change, only how the observer feels about the symbolism within the deity's appearance, which is amplified by the deity's aura.

2.2.6 Speed (SPD)

Speed determines a couple of things. Your speed capacity determines how long a Run or Sprint action takes:

[1] is 1.5 s; about 2.5 mph
[2] is 1 s; about 8mph
[3] = ¾ s; about 16mph
[4] = ½ s; about 32mph
[5] is ¼ s; about 80mph

If you take the Run action, you run a number of 6' spaces (2 yd) equal to your speed capacity plus any modifier from height-size.

Your number of "Sprint Dice" starts at your Speed capacity + Speed level. The more dice you have the faster you can sprint and the longer you can Sprint without spending more Endurance points.

Running & Sprinting is explained in the previous chapter under Running on page 22.

2.2.7 Mind (MND)

The Mind is your perception, intuition, sixth-sense, wisdom, and right brain creativity. It is connected to the subconscious and the *psyche* and is represented by the fire element, the suit of wands, and the Third Eye chakra. Mind may represent mental durability and takes the place of Body when on the Astral plane. If you have no Mind score, you can not astral travel.

Your starting number of ki points is equal to twice your Mind capacity plus your Mind level. Additional ki can be gained from skills that help you attune your mind with the energies around you. Ki can represent mental endurance and can help deal with social situations. Mind-based skills that create "Effects" powered by ki points, or "mind powers", are restricted based on your mind capacity. You can learn them at character creation at Mind[2] with GM permission. During the course of play, you will need a passion that specifically grants the mind power.

Your Mind dice confer specific bonuses and penalties. With Mind ...

[0] you can not learn mind powers because you can not manipulate ki energy. You may not create anything new, only copy others.

[1] die is low-creativity. Art is generally not much better than stick figures. They can not learn mind powers unless "born special" (see Personal Traits).

[2] is human level. Mind powers are "restricted" - you can learn them at character creation only.

[3] is an elite mind and tend to be natural engineers & mages. You may learn 1 "mind power" without requiring a passion.

[4] is a supernatural mind. This lets you learn 2 mind powers without requiring a passion.

[5] you get all the benefits above, but also do not die when the physical body dies! They can only be killed on the Astral plane. They can learn any mind power without restriction.

2.2.8 Logic (LOG)

Your Logic is your left brain, higher-level reasoning, and intelligence. This is related to the element of Air and the suit of Swords, and the Crown chakra. Simply, this is how "book-smart" you are. Logic may be used to mentally "evade" various mental attacks, such as disbelieving illusions. On the Astral plane, your Logic functions in place of Agility. Psychologically, this is the *ego*.

Your logic also affects how many secondary skills you start with, how many skill aspects, and your native language proficiency! You start with a number of secondary skills equal to twice your logic capacity. Your Logic *level* is the number of skill aspects you start with. Secondary skills are skills represent some amateur experience or interest in that skill. This is often something learned from a parent. Write the skill on your character sheet as capacity [1] and it's starting XP is

Both secondary skills and aspects should be explained in your background.

A Logic of ...

[0] is basically a fish or insect. Ancestral and Instinctive skills and only 2 secondary skills, which must be cultural or ancestral. Communication is often via pheromones and is super-basic.

[1] refers to many mammals and simple humanoids with simple language skills. These creatures may have no formal language and might communicate through a series of emotive sounds, growls, or gestures. They don't form complex societies but may form packs or tribes.

[2] is human level; [3] is super-human; [4] is supernatural; [5] is deific.

2.2.9 Aura (AUR)

Aura is your emotional depth, spirit, strength of will, charisma, charm, and leadership. Aura flows from the solar plexus chakra. Higher scores are not necessarily more loving or friendly, but have a "stronger" personality that are more likely to be leaders than followers, and are usually less

likely to lose control emotionally. People are drawn first to Appearance, but then Aura takes over social interactions. Mind is the creativity behind a story you write, but Aura makes it emotionally relevant.

An aura-based skill that allows you to create effects powered by ki are "aura powers" and these have the same limitations as mind powers, except that they are controlled by your aura.

[0] is spiritless, immune to Social/Stress conditions and Aura saves (don't even write them down), including BCT saves. Societies, if any, will be large hives with every member practically identical to each other. If there are gender differences, they are extreme, such as a queen and drones. Many animated dead such as zombies, vampire thralls, etc, all fall under this category. You have no intimacies.

[1] has some individuality, but conforms easily and is easy to train. Animals often cluster in packs. Entire species tend to use the same styles with little individual variations. Humanoids live in communal "clans" based on extended family. You *will* have a personal "disposition". You get the base intimacies and can not add any of your own.

[2] is more individual living situations, often just immediate family. They trade as individuals but often live in larger communities and form more elaborate cultures and diverse styles. You may have a disposition (or two, inner and outer). You can add as many intimacies as you like.

[3] or higher are emotionally complex and *always* have an inner and outer disposition.

[4] means you can continue consciousness after death. At death, you might possess another body or regrow it; vampires return to their coffins, etc. The creature description will give details on how the creature can do this and any limitations.

[5] you get all the above and can planar travel as a non-combat action by force of will, moving the spirit and its attached body between realms! At the death of the physical body, you automatically return to your home plane (possibly still in pieces), instantly turning all X (damage) conditions into W (Winded) conditions.

2.2.10 Reflex (RFX)

Reflex is the mental side of speed. It's how fast you can react to a new situation, how quickly you can adapt. It is also a metabolic rate. Assume that if you polymorph into a creature with different reflexes, then your brain will drive the new body to the old metabolic rate. In other words, your number of attacks won't change.

While Agility is your dodge, Reflex determines if you have enough *time* to dodge. It will determine your reaction time when caught off-guard, your initiative order in combat, and the basic number of actions you get in combat. If you are going to get toe-to-toe with someone, you should be stronger or faster than they are. If not, you better be smarter!

Your base, non-combat actions per round are equal to twice your Reflex capacity plus your Reflex level, minimum 1. Your combat and weapon actions will add bonuses to this base. You'll convert actions per round into a time in seconds with the Actions per Round table and write both numbers on your sheet, actions first, then time.

STEP 3: OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS

2.3.1 Occupations

Always consult with your GM to determine what Occupations exist in the setting. Some Occupations are given in SAMPLE GENRE INFO on page 141.

Occupations are packages of skills that are learned all at once for a discount. You can buy individual skills with XP,

or get them cheaper by buying whole occupations. You can have as many occupations as you want, providing you have the necessary experience points to pay for it. However, you are not guaranteed to find a trainer in your culture if you have secondary (or lower) attributes used by the occupation. If you have secondary attributes, then skills based on them will have a single underline to denote a +1 critical range from incomplete training. You can make a training roll before play begins and at the end of each chapter to attempt to complete the training. See GETTING TRAINED on page 24.

Once you've selected an occupation, subtract it's the XP cost. Next, add the given skills to your character sheet as primary [2]. Each will start at the same level of experience as the related attribute score, plus any extra skill points that the Occupation grants for that skill. This will be shown as some number added to the attribute in parenthesis within the occupation description. Finally, apply the attribute changes listed in the occupation. The attribute will probably be higher than the skill, which makes the starting XP values higher for your next occupation.

A summary of all attribute changes is given in the occupation description. These represent the additional point in each attribute for increased training in that skill. If you already have primary training in one of the skills, reduce the related attribute bonus since you already earned the point for training. However, you get another 6 XP in that skill! If this pushes the skill to level 3, you get your attribute point.

Some occupations may grant a skill at elite training [3]. When one occupation has a skill at primary training [2] and another has the training at elite [3], then use the higher training and add another 6 XP to the total. Combining two elite skills adds 10 XP to the total.

Basic Combat Training is special. If you have BCT from a previous occupation, the new occupation grants 6 XP in BCT plus gets a new combat style as a new skill that represents just the training in the new style. This new style just gives you more passions and you don't usually roll checks with it. If the occupation lists a specific style for BCT, you must choose that style for your new skill. Otherwise, pick what you want!

If you have enough skill points to buy another occupation, repeat the process above. Apply occupations one at a time in the order your character learned them.

STEP 4: BACKGROUND TABLES

A few tables are given to determine all the background details about your character. If you have something in mind already, discuss it with the GM and they may tell you to skip the tables. Likewise, if a roll isn't quite fitting the vision, ask the GM if you can re-roll. However, if you ask to be a noble, expect disadvantages on some skills as well as various consequences in the game world. Noble kids are the

best to kidnap, or force to answer for their father's misdeeds! If you want to be a member of the elite foot that is on the neck of the poor, you may find the poor don't react well to you!

2.4.1 Environment

What sort of environment were you raised in? Roll 1 die and add any modifiers for personal traits, heritage, or occupations. Modifiers from multiple occupations do not stack. Use the modifier with the greatest overall magnitude. If two occupations have opposite modifiers, one positive and one negative, then both occupations can not be applied to the same character during character creation! The roll result determines what sort of environment you grew up in, according to the ENVIRONMENTS table in Tables.

2.4.2 Social Background

Roll the dice mentioned in your environment plus any modifiers for personal traits, heritage, or occupations. All modifiers are cumulative. Index this number on the BACKGROUNDS chart to find out the general occupation of your primary caregiver and what sort of family background you have. Starting MONEY is listed based on your character's background and can be noted in the MONEY section on the back of the character sheet.

You can roll again for the other parent using the same modifiers, but it won't change social standing or other background information. If you choose to roll for the second parent, roll twice and use the result that is closest to your primary caregiver's background. Of course, if you have a specific character idea in mind, run it by your GM and he may let you skip the tables!

The same goes for background rules. If your primary caregiver was your mother, and your father has a higher social standing, this may indicate a bastard who's social standing could be improved if the father officially recognized him. Run it by your GM. If you are the GM, this is up to you to determine how this character will fit in with the campaign. If you don't have a reason to disallow it, the default should always be to allow the player to build the character they want. Don't worry about game balance!

EXPERIENCED GAMERS

Differences in social background may cause a penalties on social interaction rolls at the GM's discretion, depending on how much classism is part of the setting. If you use such modifiers, the recommended starting point is 1 disadvantage die per 4 points of difference in background.

Languages

Your native tongue is based on who your grew up with, and may actually differ based on your background and heritage. Basically, you speak what was taught around the home. You start with your native language with training and experience equal to your Logic. You don't even have to write down the experience as long as you aren't putting massive amounts of XP into it. You can assume the language you speak every day stays at the same XP as your logic score. For example, if your Logic is [2]16/3, then you have *Native Language: English [2]16/3* as a minimum. You don't gain points in logic for your native language unless you raise it to elite! Add the point for training and then treat the skill as a normal skill from there. Other languages that the character has learned should be justified in the background story if they aren't part of the character's heritage. These are treated like normal skills and do not increase with Logic.

Languages can go to elite only if the culture that created it has enough logical capacity to create it. Languages are at best 1 capacity greater than the Logic capacity of the race that created it. The capacity of a language to communicate complex ideas is determined by the number of dice in the language. A creature with a secondary logical capacity will typically speak in brief guttural gestures and broken phrases. Languages can only record and describe concepts of equal capacity. A primary language skill can describe basic math and mechanics, but you need an elite language to describe engineering or other elite skills.

Note that knowing a language does not make you literate in that language. Literacy was mostly pointless before the invention of the printing press, so being illiterate does not necessarily reflect one's intelligence. It's a cultural difference. Again, *the rules don't judge.*

2.4.3 Siblings

Roll [0] dice for how many children were born to your family (the same as [1] with a disadvantage). The number rolled is the number of children in the immediate family unit. Treat a critical failure as being an only child. If you roll a 2, you have a brother or sister, etc. The character may have had other siblings that died before reaching the age by which they would have been given a name, but these aren't counted in this total. Likewise, the one's rolled may not still be living at this time, but they still have names.

If you have any siblings, roll 2 dice on the BIRTH ORDER chart to determine if you are the youngest, oldest, middle, etc. Record this information in the spaces provided on your character sheet. Ask the GM the name of the city or town you were born in and write it under PLACE OF BIRTH on your character sheet.

2.4.4 Disposition

There are 36 DISPOSITIONS listed on the table. Pick one or roll two dice. The first die is the sub-table to use and the second die picks an entry. If you don't like the result, roll it again until you do. You can even have two dispositions separated by a slash, in which case the first one is your inner nature, only shown in times of fear and heavy stress, while the one (after the slash) is your outward demeanor.

If you want to know what your home-life was like, roll dispositions for each parent and ask yourself why they acted that way and how that affected you growing up!

2.4.5 Secondary Skills

Secondary skills are just things you've picked up along the way. They are things that interested you as you were growing up, or maybe they represent a life-path that was abandoned early, or things your parents taught you. You do not increase your attribute when advancing a secondary skill to a new experience level, nor do secondary skills have styles or passions. Magic and Psionics are allowed with GMs approval, but these powers will be a slow with very large critical ranges (hedge wizardry). Don't expect much from a secondary skill!

Typical humans start with 4 secondary skills that will get a bonus of an additional 10 XP above the related attribute. Other races get a number of secondary skills based on their Logic. You must select skills for which you do not have primary training and are listed in your background, your parent's occupations, or cultural description.

You may exchange a secondary skill to learn a "restricted" skill that your parent knows. You must still pay the full XP cost, but the sacrifice un-restricts the skill. This includes magic and psionics. Similarly, you can exchange a secondary skill to learn the culture of a parent who might comes from a culture other than your own, such as when parents are from different cultures. Since cultures are not a restricted skill, you are exchanging the secondary skill to get the new culture at *primary* training, exactly as if you learned it from an occupation, rather than the 10 XP bonus. You will not get home advantage for the other culture. You may also exchange a secondary skill for knowing an extra effect in a particular type of magic or technology.

Remember that if you don't list it on your character sheet, you don't know it. Your background doesn't give you experience in a skill. It just explains where the experience came from.

2.4.6 Tuning

Still have some XP left over? You can buy extra skills with any XP you have left. Just pay the skill point cost of any un-restricted skills you want and add them to your sheet exactly like having them from an occupation. Once play has started, then additional skills & occupations will have to be learned

during the course of the game, as described in TRAINING in the previous chapter.

A La Carte

You may add more primary skills to your character providing they are not marked *restricted*. Restricted skills can only come from an occupation, usually combat styles and magic or psionics. Pick skills that round out your character idea. As always, think about how you learned this. Was it something extra you picked up from a trainer? Self taught? Why? If a character says they would have been taught magic by a parent, remind them they would have taught them all the other things that go along with magic, and so a suitable occupation should be chosen as your first to represent that! Otherwise, the player may exchange a secondary skill to remove the restriction if a parent had the same training or higher. For magic, this would be sporadic hedge wizardry. See THE EFFECTS SYSTEM for more info.

A La Carte skills should be added when your character learned them. Earlier skills will have less XP because its assumed that those skills have been neglected while learning more recent skills. Your most recently learned skills will have the highest XP totals. If your character did not neglect their earlier skills when learning new ones, just add some XP directly to the skill!

Skill Bonuses

Many skills give you specific bonuses when you reach primary training, or at various levels of advancement. Look up each skill and make sure you get all the bonuses. Any skill with a style grants the style's base passion at level 0. Generally, you never get any bonus at level 1. There should be places on the character sheet for most stuff. Everything else goes in the lines for Passions under Styles.

Effects

The magic and effects system allows you to make your own spells and create technological effects during the game. You will start with 1 effect (up to a DL of 6, so keep it simple) in every creative skill that you have at primary training. This includes music! Ask, what was the first spell I learned of this technology? Singing and musical instruments get 1 song effect *each* as *secondary* skills, often cultural favorites. If you have singing or performance in a musical instrument as *primary* skills, then you start with three songs each. You start with that many songs, but they can be played on whatever instruments you know. You should include the favorite songs of your heritage (earn 1 XP in your culture each), unless you have a reason for not wanting to learn them! The Music section in THE EFFECTS SYSTEM will give more details. Be sure to note which skill each effect belongs to. Higher difficulty effects can be learned once play begins.

Emotional Targets

There are four emotional targets your mind must defend: *violence*, *depression*, *loneliness*, and *guilt*. These can be experienced as damage (wounds) and/or blockages (armor) to each *chakra*: root chakra (fear vs security), sacral chakra (despair vs hope), throat chakra (isolation vs connection), and heart chakra (shame vs self).

You won't be adding anything to your emotional targets before play begins unless a Flaw or Trait says so.

Emotional wound levels give clues on how to role-play your character. Wounds mean you are vulnerable in that area, while armor represents a coldness or hardness to that emotion.

Each time you choose to harden yourself with mental armor, use a dark force power, or when karma runs its course, you earn a point of Darkness. Your Darkness emanates on an ethereal level, so it's *level* is a penalty to all social interaction and appearance rolls. Index darkness points on the XP table to find the level. Your appearance doesn't change, people's reactions to it do! Darkness will be an *advantage* to negative social interactions or attempts to rage. It is a *penalty* if you need to make a roll to control that rage.

You earn light points from *Meditation*, *Faith*, various acts of self-sacrifice and sometimes your *Culture*. These cancel out the darkness points. Darkness can not go below 0. Darkness represents blocking yourself off from others. Light shines on the darkness, exposing that all of us are equally injured and flawed, each in our own way, trying to protect ourselves from pain and hurt.

Mental state and how to role-play it is described in AFTER THE BATTLE, while Darkness is explained at the beginning of this chapter.

STEP 5: COMBAT BONUSES

A combat round is 15 seconds and how often you can act during that round depends on your Reflex attribute and your skill level. Reflex determines *Non-Combat Actions* per round; double the attribute capacity and add the level. Write this number in the middle of the first panel of your character sheet under "Non-Combat" before the slash. This is the base we add more actions to.

Combat Actions are slightly faster. If you have Basic Combat Training as a primary skill, adds an additional action to this value and write it under "Combat Time". This is used for dodges and as the base number for weapon actions.

Weapon Actions add any extra actions you get from proficiency in that weapon. You'll get this information from the 5 starting on page 93. Each weapon has it's own total.

Rather than getting all your attacks at once, each action per round is reduced to a number of seconds per action using the ACTIONS PER ROUND table. You'll always record the actions per round next to the seconds per action as when

these numbers increase, you can look up the new time per action. The time per action is what you'll use in combat.

2.5.1 Non-Combat Actions

Most actions that you would do in combat that do not involve attacking or defending are non-combat actions. This might be setting down a lantern, taking off a backpack, drinking a potion (if its in hand). Your reflex attribute gives a base number of actions per round, usually 3 for human level reflexes. Add your reflex *level* to this number to find your non-combat actions per round. This will be your base for combat actions, which are a bit faster. A human may have RFX [2] 10/2, which would mean 5 actions per round at 3s each. Write the total actions before the slash on your character sheet where it says "Non-Combat Actions" and the number of seconds per action after the slash. This will also be your dodge time if you do not have Basic Combat Training (BCT).

2.5.2 BCT & Combat Styles

Having BCT at primary training grants you an additional attack per round with any melee weapon or psionic, called combat actions. This includes your dodge time, but does not include ranged weapons nor spells, which do *not* gain a bonus from BCT. BCT bonuses don't apply to unusual environments such as low-gravity, underwater, or other environments not native to your character. If you species have a natural movement in that environment, you can use your BCT bonuses.

Your BCT style may be given to you by your Occupation. If blank, you may choose one yourself that would be appropriate for your teacher to know. Remember, you get culture benefits if you choose a style from your heritage. You get the base passion from the style to start. You get the base passion from your personal trait's *light* and *dark* styles. Record your combat styles and passions on the character sheet as well as your dodge time. In the example above, having primary combat training ups us from 5 actions per round to 6 actions per round, which would be recorded as 6 / 2 ½ ŝ. Additional passions are gained as your *Basic Combat Training* advances in level and these should be noted in your list of passions. BCT earns additional attribute bonuses based on the style chosen. See that skill description for complete information.

2.5.3 Wound Levels

You'll find an entry for your ancestry that says, "DC". This is your damage capacity and is based on your weight-size on the CREATURE SIZE Table. Your damage capacity rates the severity of wounds based on the size of the target. For humans, this will be 3. Place "3" under DC on your character sheet under the big set of condition boxes on the first panel. Your "Serious" number is your DC+3; From 1 - 2 points of damage is a minor wound, 3 to "Serious" points of damage is a major wound. Damage that equals your "Serious" number but is less than your "Critical" number is a serious wound.

Your maximum fully healed hit point total is the same as your "Critical" level. Critical is the worst wound level, equal to the creature's maximum hit points! Note that a wound that does double-critical damage is always instant death with no chance of being revived. The body is destroyed, character decapitated, burned to a crisp, or similar. He's dead, Jim!

Note that when making a called shot, the DC drops by 1, but you also take a disadvantage on the strike roll. This causes Serious to drop by 1, and Critical to drop by 2. More difficult called shots, such as head shot, double these adjustments. More information is given in the THE ART OF COMBAT section.

2.5.4 Weapons

Your weapon skills determine how proficient you are with a given weapon. Weapons in different size categories are used at different speeds. Weapon proficiencies rarely have a style associated, but passions gained from a weapon proficiency, or weapon itself, should be listed with the weapon skill on the second line for the weapon, not with the general combat passions.

Typically, put your primary weapon skill on the first weapon line. In parenthesis, put the favorite weapon (if any) and list it's stats. If you have other weapons that use the same skill, list those weapons next without writing in the skill points or skill level. Each weapon will also have strike modifiers, damage modifiers, and perhaps special attacks or features. Add up the modifiers from your weapon proficiency with the modifiers listed for the weapons and write the totals in the given boxes. As you become more skilled in that skill, the skill will grant additional modifiers. If you get a strike bonus at level 5, then increment the [S] boxes of all weapons that use that skill when you reach 37 XP! These are added to skill bonuses and written in the boxes on the weapons line.

The Basic Weapon Proficiency (BWP) skill is used for basic attacks with simple and improvised weapons, and with basic fists, feet, and other natural weapons. Martial Weapon Proficiency (MWP) is used for swords, flails, and other weapons that were engineered for fighting. These weapons require special training for effective use, but you get more benefit. So while an ax can be used as a weapon using Basic

Weapon Proficiency, a war ax would use Martial Weapon Proficiency.

The exact bonuses that a weapon proficiency grants are never exactly the same as a skill check with that weapon. You may get strike and parry bonuses at different levels, so the bonuses may drag behind the raw skill check a bit. You may use a direct skill check for knowledge checks about the weapon or displays of skill. See the SKILL DESCRIPTIONS on page 93 for specific bonuses granted at each level.

> #### FAVORITE WEAPONS
>
> As you gain experience in a weapon, you may earn aspects exclusive to a single size and class of weapon, ex: longswords. Other weapons don't have the same weight and feel, so the aspect does not apply. When you gain an aspect, circle the I, S, or P modifier in the box. You get an advantage die to that one type of roll with that one weapon only. You may instead choose to add one to your attacks per round, the first Speed number. If you do so, circle the number to remind yourself that you already have that aspect and can't add it again. Your attack time with the weapon, the second Speed number, changes accordingly. As you gain additional aspects, you may apply the bonus to different aspects of the same weapon, or choose a different weapon to gain an aspect in.

2.5.5 Endurance & Ki

Endurance points are based on the starting amount for your Body attribute capacity plus your BDY attribute level. You can get more endurance points from physical skills through the passion system. You'll need endurance points to push through a forced marsh without taking penalties, to move during a power attack or block, and various combat passions that need an endurance point to activate. Spellcasters need endurance when they run out of *Ki* points. Some physical skills can also grant extra Endurance points. Just note the total and mark it before the slash, with the number of endurance points remaining after the slash.

Ki point are based on the starting amount for your Mind attribute capacity plus your MND attribute level. You get more ki points from various mental skills through the passion system. Ki points can be used for either fast effects (like magic or psionic powers) or to temporarily dismiss the effects of some types of mental and emotional stress. Spellcasters that spend all their ki on spells may have very little left over to deal with social penalties.

STEP 6: MONEY & EQUIPMENT

Your starting money and equipment is based on your background roll. Your social background puts you in one of five wealth groups: *Noble, Wealthy, Average, Poor,* or *Very Poor*. Your occupation (and possibly heritage) may have a modifier

such as "Poor:Gear" or "Extra:Gear". This bumps your gear into a different wealth group. Every campaign setting may use a different gear table. Cultures may override the gear table as well!

Gear also includes Tools, Weapons and Armor. Index your wealth group on the given tables to find what tools and other gear you start with. Your armor training also determines what type of armor you start with. You start with one suit of the given armor type. It may not be brand new if your background is poor, but its functional and fully repaired.

You start with one weapon per weapon proficiency. Throwing knives come in braces of two, shuriken and darts in sets of 3. There is a cost limit per weapon in each category. Index half your background number, rounded up, on the WEALTH LIMITS table. If you have Extra:Gear then add +2 to the limit, while Poor Gear lowers the limit by 2. You start with the weapon if the it's value is less than the limit from the table. If the price is higher, you can drop it's quality to also drop it's price. The reverse may be true only if the item has special value (such as an heirloom) and is described in the character background.

Every weapon starts with a full magazine or quiver. For extra ammo, divide your background by 3 and round down before indexing on the WEALTH LIMITS table. This is your total allowance for extra ammo. Extra ammo may include extra braces of knives, extra arrows (even specialty arrows). You can include boot daggers and other odd weapons in this list too.

CURRENCY TABLE

Currency	USD	Value	#/lb
1 Bronze Piece	$0.05	20 per Cr	50
1 Copper Piece	$0.10	10 per Cr	50
1 Cr or Silver Piece	$1.00	10 CP	200
1 Electrum Piece	$10	10 SP	200
1 Platinum Piece	$50	50 SP	200
1 Gold Piece	$100	2 PP	200
Large Gold Piece	$400	4 GP	50
1 oz Gold Bar	$2000	1250 SP	16

The above table is considered the standard currencies in the game and the typical monetary unit is Credits (Cr) or silver (SP) for most systems. When determining the value of created items, the value will be in Cr/SP. Electrum is a mixture of various metals including at least 20% silver and some quantity of gold. It is primarily used in very old fantasy settings.

Silver, electrum, platinum, and small gold pieces weigh roughly 2.25 g (roughly the size of a US dime). The large gold, copper, and bronze coins are about 9 g, slightly larger than the a Roman Aureus. Credits are assumed to be digital

and have no weight while many intergalactic societies may use precious metals as a medium of exchange. Obviously, any information that the setting provides will override these basic guidelines.

The value of goods and services that gold buys has not changed since at least the time of Ancient Rome, so you can usually convert a modern price in any currency into a certain weight of gold and then find its value using the table.

Your character gets the starting money (in credits, dollars, or silver) listed for your background for additional purchases, food, lodging, etc. Generally, people don't walk around with hundreds of coins on them, so characters convert as needed in local towns. For example, 256 Bronze would be equivalent to $5.12 or 5 silver + 6 bronze ($0.12). Obviously, any information in a particular setting will override these guidelines. More information on currency is in CREATING CAMPAIGN WORLDS.

2.6.1 Miscellaneous

Encumbrance Your basic encumbrance is determined by your armor as a measure of weight and restrictiveness. Your armor proficiency (if any) will reduce this number. The result will determine two penalty levels to determine various modifiers from armor. See ENCUMBRANCE starting on page 73.

Weight Use the die roll for your weight as determined by the CREATURE SIZE table. Add your body attribute modifier to the roll and any weight-lifting passions before multiplying. Weight is in pounds. As a quick test, you can take your weight size number and cube it and find the average weight for this size.

Height Use the die roll indicated for your height by the CREATURE SIZE table. Height is in inches.

Hit Mod This is the modifier dice to your chance to be hit and to *Stealth* checks. Negative numbers are how many disadvantage dice to add while a positive number is how many advantages. The Hit Modifier is based on weight size and is normally the same as the Reach Modifier, which is based on height size.

Reach Mod This modifier is just like your hit-modifier, but is applied to your melee attacks on others because of your size and reach. You should also apply this to any attempts to *Conceal* your person.

Free Movement This is the amount of movement you can make during a combat action or on a 1 second step/turn action.

BMI Body Mass Index. The average for a given creature's size is given on the Creature Size table. Your BMI *level*

can be used in rare saves, but otherwise, it's just a convenient way to help visualize a creature's bulk when confronted with inhuman heights and weights. Calculate the BMI using the following standard formula, where weight is in pounds and height is in inches[1]:

$$BMI = \frac{weight}{height^2} \times 703$$

Body Mass Index

BMI	Description
< 18.5	Underweight
18.5 - < 25	Normal
25 - < 30	Overweight
30 +	Obese

Step 7: Getting Intimate

2.7.1 Intimacies

How does your character feel? What is their purpose in life? Do they have goals? What do they really want? A good character is a complex mix of emotions and flaws. How is this character flawed? Why? What are they most scared of?

The character's inner conflicts will fuel their outer conflicts. Perhaps your wandering monk is questioning their faith, but is scared of what their purpose would be should they *lose* that faith. Consider the many relationships in the character's life and how these people have affected them. What has this driven this person to *do*? Pick a person. Who were they? How did they influence you?

Focus on what the character wants, what drives them, and select at *least* 1 of each intimacy; but generally 3-4 outer, 2 inner, and 1 defining. These can represent relationship ties like loved ones, or maybe it's someone you hate, or an important business contact. It could be an ideal or doctrine that someone important to you put in your head. Is it your faith? You can have obsessions, too!

If someone threatens your intimacies, this can create intense reactions. You always hold deeper intimacies in higher regard than outer intimacies. Unless in combat or you are using Luck, then an intimacy applies to a roll only if the whole table agrees that it should apply. An intimacy for which you spend an activation only needs 1 other player (or the GM) to agree to applicability.

[1] For metric (kg/m) remove the ×703

It's hard to see each other's intimacies. Especially the deeper ones! If someone knows our intimacies, it grants them a certain degree of power over us. They can be used against us in social interactions. So intimacies are things we keep guarded under lock and key. They can also inspire us to greatness. You will need the appropriate passions to unlock the full potential of your intimacies. AFTER THE BATTLE has more information on using intimacies.

Outer Intimacies

Your outer intimacies are the things that keep you going every day, the stuff that drives you. What are the really important things in your life? These can be important people, your faith, or anything you are really passionate about. What makes life fun? And be honest. If you are just making it through every day for money, you can list *money* as an intimacy! Maybe it's hate! Hate is a motivator! What do you hate most? Maybe you want to be famous. Most people will have more than 1 outer intimacy. To get started, what are you most scared of? That's your *Fear* intimacy. What is the one thing guaranteed to drive you to anger? List that as your *Rage* intimacy, and you might want more than one! Who do you care about most? There is a bond/tie!

Inner Intimacies

Inner intimacies can be found by examining your outer intimacies and asking why your character values (or hates!) that particular person, thing, or idea. Why is the outer intimacy important to you? What does it do for you? Inner intimacies will overrule outer intimacies, and often inner intimacies are the *source* of the outer intimacies. If you named a person in your outer intimacy, why is that person important to you? What do you gain from that relationship with that person that you don't get from someone else? If you listed money, what will you do with the money? What does that money buy you that you need? If you listed a phobia, what does this fear take from you? What does this say about your values? People only crave the things they don't have! You only crave food when you are hungry. You crave power when you feel powerless!

All inner intimacies are considered on the same level as your own life, except one. These will be more important than outer intimacies and will override them. The Noble one is a bit higher than other deep intimacies. What inspires you to be a better person that is valued above you own life? For many people, this will be the welfare of their children. This is your noble intimacy.

Defining Intimacies

Repeat this process for your defining intimacy. Armed with the knowledge you have discovered about this person, dig a

level deeper. What's the core? Boil it down and condense it! What defines you? What is your reason to exist? In most cases, you only have 1 deep intimacy! What you find by working through intimacies is that no matter how different our outer intimacies are, once we drill down to the inner intimacies, we find that *we are all the same. Maybe if we learn to see the people around us as people that are just as flawed and scared as we are, we can see that they are one of* **us,** *not* **them!**

Changing Intimacies

You aren't expected to know your true reason to exist before the game starts! Just write your character's current thoughts on the matter because it's expected that these intimacies will change over time!

When a defining moment happens for your character in the game, check your intimacies and reevaluate the importance of each of them. At the end of an Act, add or subtract intimacies at the "Outer" level, or move other intimacies up or down 1.

2.7.2 Skill Aspects

Skill aspects are specific areas of a skill that you are passionate about or interested in. They are actually a type of passion, covered in PASSION & STYLE. Primary skills without a style will gain aspects at 4th and 8th levels. Skills with a style get whatever the style gives you! These aspects only apply to a specific check of a specific skill. In some cases, an aspect may have the same name in multiple skills. An example would be your local community name would could be used as an aspect of history, geography, and other skills, but each is a separate aspect.

An aspect for a skill is typically written in parenthesis next to the skill. If the aspect applies (GM has final say) then you get an advantage die to your skill check. Aspects earned from your background or personal trait are permanent while other skill aspects are lost if the skill training changes. See the skill description for specifics.

2.7.3 Envisioning Your Character

Your heritage & ancestry will have a basic description to get your started.

Consider your skin tone, eye color, and hair color, which may be indicative of a particular clan or country. A set of random generation tables are provided. Eye color will modify hair color. The probability of right and left handed is close to the actual distribution of people in the real world. Your appearance level dictates a few unusual characteristics you should note (and these stay with you even when changing physical form). But there is more to your character vision than just personal appearances.

The best characters are multidimensional, not just a collection of stats to beat up bad guys. How does your character's personality affect their looks, hair, and clothing style? What sort of clothing accessories do they use? Do they have tattoos or piercings? What are they and what do they mean to this character? Can you envision your character? In addition to details like physical appearance, consider details that *affect* the character's appearance. What is their favorite meal? Favorite song? How do they walk? What sort of gestures do they make? How do they speak? A character will have a specific rhythm of speech, grammar, and vocabulary.

What matters to this person? What do they hope to do? What is their best moment? Their worst? How do they feel about the government? Do they hate it? What do they hate most? What do they fear most? After every question, remember to ask *why?*

Finally, what do *others* think of this character and *why?*

2.7.4 Write A Background Story

Character background is incredibly important. This is where you really get to know *who* your character is and why they do what they do.

The GM will be adding "hooks" to the story so that the story is relevant to your character's goals. The GM may include people from the character's background in the story. Stories that are personally relevant help to keep the game realistic. After all, people need good reason to risk their lives! Be prepared if the GM asks you change a few details to better integrate things, usually the names of places or sometimes a person from your past. If you aren't comfortable with any of the changes, discuss it with the GM before play starts.

Now write it down on a separate sheet of paper, just a few paragraphs. There are no significant battles, special births (except as indicated by a Personal Trait), or heroic tales in your background. No epic adventures! Those adventures happen during the game!

Instead, consider where you learned each skill. Occupations are normally taught by someone. If you have secondary skills or a la carte skills, then describe how you learned them and why you have an interest in that area. What was your

home life like growing up? Did you get along with your siblings? Do you still?
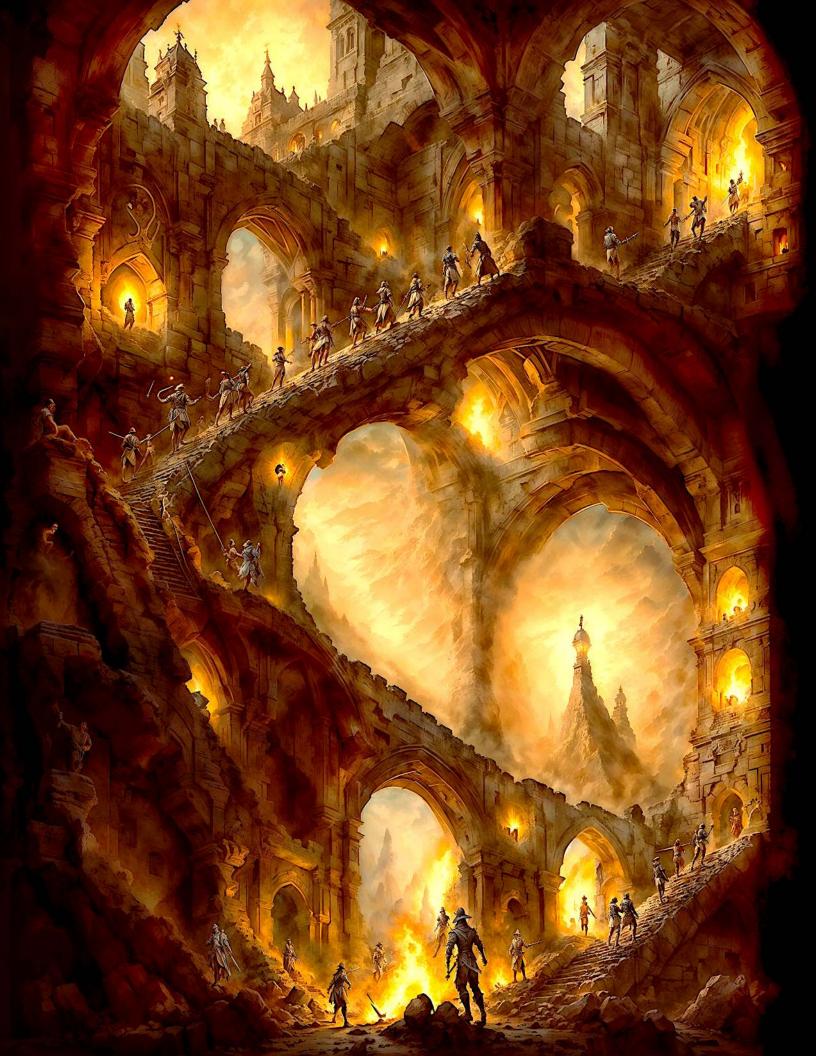
Focus on you as a person and the people that influenced your life. This may include the characters of other players. Talk to the other players and your GM if you plan on including other players in your background. You want to list the other PC's as intimacies. Some GMs may actually prefer when characters start the game already close friends or family. Include reasons for intimacies and any emotional damages, flaws, or special traits in your background and how these were acquired.

Your GM will likely give 5-10 Bonus XP for a detailed background story. One method for doing this fairly is to come up with a pop-quiz that changes each campaign. A character gets 1 point for every question that the background answers. Backgrounds are generally not shared between players, so I tend to make this like an oral exam given in private. If you know a quiz answer, but it's not written down, you can add it during the test and still get the XP bonus. That way you have the information, which I may want to make use of later!

The Art Of Combat

COMBAT systems are drastically different between different role-playing games. Some systems are mostly "theater of the mind", meaning all the action takes place in your imagination, while others use 3D figures on a grid for exact positioning. Some systems are designed for more heroic combat, while others drive home the idea that combat is dangerous and often "crunchy". Virtually Real tries to be fast, crunchy, exciting, and tactical. Combat can not only hurt you, possibly well after the combat is over, but you can die!

The defender will have a range of defensive options depending on the attack and amount of time available for a defense. Note that all forms of Dodge are based on your Agility attribute, which does not increase as quickly as a combat skill. You will find ranged combat to be much deadlier against a skilled opponent. You obviously can't dodge bullets, but your dodge movements make you a more difficult target and less likely to take damage in a critical area. Any serious attempts will require a lot of movement, negating the opportunity to return fire.

Overview & Design

Virtually Real was specifically designed for a balance of realism and speed with a focus on tactics and immersion. The detail of combat resolution helps the GM describe the action without random location tables while supporting called shot locations. The skill system provides combat resolution as a detailed form of skill contest. Tactics follow naturally rather than memorizing abstract rules. What works in real life, works in Virtually Real! Combat flows as a series of cut-scenes describing each action in chronological order. Your time from offense to offense is based on your weapon size, reflex attribute, skill level and what sorts of defenses you use. Movement exceptionally granular, allowing direct counter to your opponent's every step.

3.1.1 Combat Overview

Don't be scared by what seems like a ton of rules! Players only need to focus on what your character is *doing*. Roleplay it! Memorizing rules is not required!

The GM should be familiar with the rules here, but treat them as suggestions. Like a skill check, it's "close enough" to get the tactics right, and that's what matters. Suggestions are provided for a wide range of combat situations, giving the GM as many examples as possible as to how the game was intended to be run. This helps the GM learn how to adjudicate situations that aren't covered. The GM is free to come up with a ruling that fits the situation rather than dig out the book. Theater Of The Mind combat is supported for long distances and as an optional variant for melee.

Let's start by breaking down the basic flow. We'll then dive right in and explore every aspect of tactical combat.