

WORLD OF DARKNESS PLAYER PACKET

HUNTER THE VIGIL



As long as monsters have prowled the darkness
brave and desperate mortals
have walked out of the protective ring of firelight
to pursue those shadows

SOME DIE,

MANY GO MAD,

But someone else always picks up the candle
and steps into the dark...

OVERVIEW

The World of Darkness is very much like the world that we live in, only as the name would suggest it's filled with metaphorical darkness. It's a modern horror setting where there are things that go bump in the night.

Light in the Darkness

Your characters are Hunters who have taken up "the Vigil". In other words when things go bump in the night, you bump back. Your characters are people who somehow or other managed to have the wool pulled from over their eyes. You are aware of the fact that vampires and witches and werewolves exist in the world, lurking in the darkness. You've decided to pick up a candle and head out into that darkness, fighting back for humanity.

But be wary. One of the most important themes of Hunter is "He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster." Sometimes monsters have families, and aren't entirely what they seem. Sometimes you have to do horrible things to protect the people you love. "When you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you." Of course, this isn't to say that every vampire or witch you face is going to actually be using their magic to protect orphans. Just that sometimes you can become every bit the monster you fight. Whoever your characters are, there are a few things that they'll have in common. First, make sure that you know each other. Second, think about how they came in contact with the supernatural, and why they now go around performing shotgun exorcisms and staking rich people in the heart. And last, think about who they are beyond the Vigil. How do they support their 'hobby'? How do they avoid getting caught?

Terms to Know

These are a few useful terms that might come up in a game. They're also useful to give you a feel for how your characters might talk and refer to things. You don't have to know these terms, but it is useful, and can be fun.

Hunter: Anyone who fights back against the supernatural.

Vigil: The never ending war between humanity and the things that prey on it. Sometimes referred to as "the Candle", as in "carrying the candle"

Cell: A group of Hunters with a common goal, or at least who Hunt together. Usually range from two to twenty.

Cellmate: Allies in your cell.

Cancer Cell: A cell with supernatural members.

Slasher: A serial killer who seems to possess supernatural abilities. Many of them are former Hunters.

Twilight: A state of ephemera where ghosts and spirits exist. Sometimes other creatures live in Twilight as well. Not actually a different world, more like a frequency. Also called The Grey.

Cult: A group that worships or follows a cult leader, often a supernatural monster. Cults are dangerous and morally questionable targets for Hunters, since they're ostensibly human.

Rogue: As in "gone rogue"; a hunter who betrays his cell.

Pariah: Someone who (allegedly) has "retired" from the Vigil.

ENE: Short for "Extranormal Entity"; Anything of supernatural origin. Originally used by the Government sanctioned Hunter Conspiracy known as Taskforce: VALKYRIE, the term spread to other cells.

Compact: A regional network of Hunters working together and communicating beyond the Cell level.

Conspiracy: A national or international group of Hunters, often with backing and gear that individual Cells couldn't hope to have. Many of them also embody the adage of "He who fights monsters", using their own extranormal abilities.

Things in the Darkness

There are many monsters out there, lurking in the shadows. This is just a taste of them, and an example of what you might face--and, if you're an experienced Hunter, what you might know about. Keep in mind though that these accounts are flavoured by Hunters. How true they are is uncertain.

The Walking Dead

Vampires live in the shadows, but they aren't singular monsters. They have whole secret societies, meeting in dark places and posh nightclubs and penthouses paid for with decades worth of blood money. They seduce and pervert, and worse, some of them even think that they've been sent by God to punish the world. The quintessential enemy of the Hunter, and for good reason. These monsters seem to dip their fingers in all the pies they can. Many Hunter cells have dug too deep only to find out that churches and hospitals and businesses were funded by leeches. Fire and sunlight can turn them to dust. Crucifixes, running water, garlic... those are all best left in the movies.

Ghosts aren't always evil, but they are always troublesome. Sometimes it's tough work putting down a relative or even an old flame. But they're never who they seem to be, and you've just got to deal with it and make sure they stay in the ground forever. It isn't their fault but they're getting put away all the same. You can sometimes get them to stop showing up by laying them to rest properly, but sometimes it's just simpler and quicker to salt the bones and burn the body.

Zombies rarely end up showing up on their own. Usually it's either a corpse reanimated by a ghost for some sinister revenge, or the plaything of a vampire or witch. But sometimes these undead *things* show up hiding in the sewers, making the air and water thick and foul. Something about those things makes them feel just *wrong*. Thankfully, the scary son of a bitches burn just as good as anything else. But try not to let them

get near a breaker box or they start shrugging off bullets.

Things that Change Shape

Lycanthroes honest to God werewolves. They can tear a man in half quicker than he can pull a trigger. Sometimes they appear as young kids, barely even out of high school, but most of them are older than they look. Whenever they show themselves as monsters, it makes any sane human being run for cover. Unfortunately, most Hunters aren't sane human beings anymore. The worst thing about them is that in addition to being shapeshifting tanks with fur and claws, they can use strange ritual magic and talk to ghosts. Silver seems like a good idea until you realize if you don't get a good enough shot, you're just gonna have a pissed off six hundred pound wolf.

Demons will make you wish you'd said your prayers at night. They try to look like people, most of the time, but they really aren't. They're things from Hell or elsewhere, cast out of heaven or come up from the depths to torment and steal souls. Or maybe they just like causing trouble. Sometimes special symbols will ward them off, sometimes they won't. Sometimes they can be bargained with, sometimes they can't. Worse, sometimes they come to you trying to make the bargain. And sometimes it's *really* hard not to accept. Some even claim that God is a broken cosmic machine, and they're trying to fix it.

Changeling sc claim they were kidnapped by fairies. Hell, sometimes Hunters seem to have fought Real Actual Fairies. It's hard to tell which is which, though. Sometimes changelings look like normal humans, but you beat them down and they turn into sticks and leaves. Other times they look normal only until you catch them in the corner of your eye and see their antlers and fangs. Whatever they are, they aren't human. Some Hunters think they're like the legends say, and what the fairies leave behind. Others think that if they're telling the truth, then whatever happened to them has made them into monsters. Either way, a couple iron shavings in a shotgun seems to solve the problem.

Human Hearts Grown Dark

Witches and sorcerers are humans who have tapped into something powerful. But as the saying always goes, 'power corrupts'. They cast spells, sometimes it seems like their power is unlimited, but it isn't. They rely on their focuses (foci?) and their talismans (talisman? Talismen?) to keep their magic in check. Human sacrifice, necromancy, nothing is off the table for witches. Suffer them not to live. Unfortunately they have a nasty habit of being immune to bullets. If you don't catch them off guard they're nearly unstoppable. But if you do, the look on their faces is priceless. At least until a .45 slug goes through it and turns it into hamburger meat.

Cultists are the sad humans who give themselves up to the monsters. They worship them like Gods, letting vampires feed from them, or letting themselves be experimented on by sorcerers. Sometimes they worship demons or are trying to bring about nameless

darkspawn from beyond the stars, whatever the case is, they've thrown their lot in with the monsters. The sad fact is sometimes people just want to be sheep. But sheep get slaughtered.

Slashers are terrifying. They don't know dark rituals. They don't know spells or have magical blood. They aren't fairies or shapeshifters. They're the kid in the hockey mask who won't stay dead, they're the woman who kills drunks for flirting, they're the man with the hook for a hand who stalks young couples. They're terrifying and yet they're completely human. Mad. But human. They're men and women who've become monsters all on their own somehow. They're honest to God movie monsters, able to charm you into killing yourself or ignore a shotgun to the face. What's worse?

THE VIGIL CREATES THEM...



CHARACTER CREATION

Concept

Concept is the heart of character creation. Whenever you're unsure of what your character is, always go back to your concept and think about who they are. At its core, a concept is a simple statement of purpose, or an archetype. "Protective Sunday School Teacher" or "Single Dad Fighting Evil". It informs your character and shows off who they are. At the same time, though, don't be afraid to stray from your concept or tweak it. Don't be afraid to change it and repurpose it as you continue to make your character. Remember also to go beyond just what their elevator pitch is.

At this stage you'll also want to be answering those questions from before. How did you end up involved in the **Vigil**? What made you aware of the supernatural, and what did you do before? What do you do now? Think about these things before moving on. Then try and sum your concept up with a single phrase (you don't have to be pithy, but sometimes it helps)

Virtue and Vice

Characters don't exist in a vacuum, and the things they do have consequences, both for themselves and others. Vice and Virtue are two ways that a character can play to their nature and reaffirm their inner strength. Mechanically, this means that they regain Willpower. **Virtues** are the things that make characters feel good about themselves. They're what they'd always do if they lived in a more perfect world, and often they help others. Twice per Chapter when your character struggles and indulges a Virtue--at cost to themselves--they regain all of their Willpower.

Vices on the other hand are less confirmation of who your character wishes they were and more a release valve. When the bully mocks others or the alcoholic drinks, they're giving into their lesser nature, but giving in means getting back. There's no limit to the number of times that you can indulge in a Vice, and you don't need to worry about struggling for it.

The sad fact of the matter is that good is harder to do in the **world of Darkness**.

While there is a big list of Vices and Virtues to choose from on page 152 of *The God-Machine Chronicle* (page 53 in the Rules Update PDF), essentially Virtues and Vices are something that can and should be unique to each individual character. Just keep in mind that--for a sane human character, at least--a Virtue should be something "Good" and difficult, and a Vice should be something easy. Vices often have a tendency to push others away.

Here are a few sample Virtues and Vices.

Generous (you give 'til it hurts), **Courageous** (you don't run away, even when you should), **Righteous** (you don't let injustice go unpunished), **Trustworthy** (you don't go back on a promise)

Hateful (you often do things out of spite), **Cruel** (you hurt others for the thrill), **Cowardly** (you run away before things get tough), **Alloof** (you sit it out when it comes to fraternization)

Aspirations

Characters should always have some sort of motivation or goal. Aspirations are those motivations. They're individual character goals. Some of them are simple to accomplish and could be completed as early as the first session while others are more difficult and can form entire chronicles. As such, Aspirations are separated into two types: short term and long term.

Short term aspirations are things like replacing a broken guitar, finding a monster, learning an occult secret, or proving your loyalty. They're things that can be accomplished in a single session or through a single action. Every time you manage to pull off your aspiration, you'll receive an extra **Beat** at the end of the story and then replace the Aspiration before the next session.

Long term Aspirations are things that take more time to work towards, and may not even be accomplished within the story. They're things that you strive to even when you might not ever be able to complete it. Any time you work towards a long term Aspiration, you'll receive a Beat. When you finally complete it, erase it from your sheet and you'll get one full **Experience**.

One important thing to note is that Aspirations can be things that your character wants to accomplish, but they can also be things that you want to happen. You can use Aspirations as a way of telling the Storyteller what you want a game to be about. Aspirations like "**Fail at communicating with the dead**" or "**Suffer a Breaking Point**" are entirely appropriate, especially for the short term.

Profession

Every character has a Profession. A profession isn't so much what a Hunter *does*, it's what they *are*. They take their mortal life and pour it into the Vigil. A craftsman might design death traps for monsters, while a detective devotes his life to locking the ones he can behind bars. Socialites gain allies, and break a monster's social connections, while an Artist might memorialize the fallen. Pick two Skills for your Profession. These are your Asset Skills. You'll get a free Specialty in one of them at character creation. The Professional Training merit can strengthen your Profession.

Attributes

It's finally time to get to the nitty gritty of creating a character. The mechanical components, the actual *stats*. Attributes are your primary stats, that represent your natural talent in certain areas. (Almost) every roll that you make will use at least one Attribute, sometimes two. Attributes are set up like this:

MENTAL **PHYSICAL** **SOCIAL**

POWER Intelligence Strength Presence

FINESSE Wits Dexterity Manipulation

RESISTANCE Resolve Stamina Composure

Intelligence measures your ability to think, reason, and remember things. It's the primary skill for researching a topic or memorizing something.

Wits is for quick thinking, reactionary actions, and is especially useful for perception and noticing details. It's also used to calculate Defense.

Resolve is a character's ability to keep on track and avoid being pushed around. Resolve is what keeps a characters focused on the task at hand, and is also used in calculating Willpower.

Strength is sheer physical force. It measures things like how much you can carry, how well you can use weapons, and how good a character is at breaking things.

Dexterity is a measure of reaction time, agility, and a character's ability to interact with the world through hand eye coordination. It also is used to calculate Defense and is used in firearms attacks.

Stamina is hardiness and constitution, and is used when resisting poison or illness, as well as when determining a character's health.

Presence measures charisma and force of personality, how much a character stands out and can socially throw their weight around.

Manipulation is social subtlety, and how well your character can convince others to do what they want. It's more about making people think something was their idea in the first place.

Composure is strength of personality, and the ability to keep calm and collected under pressure. It also adds to Willpower and Initiative.

Attributes and skills are all measured in ratings of "dots", from one to five. Each Attribute starts at one dot, and you then have a number of dots to allocate between them based on which categories you want to be best. You will have 5/4/3 to distribute between Mental, Physical, and Social attributes. Which is primary, secondary, or tertiary is up to you. Try not to have more than a single attribute with only one dot, if

that.

Skills

Skills are your secondary stats. They aren't used nearly as often as Attributes, but *most* rolls will still involve a skill. They're also divided between **Mental**, **Physical**, and **Social**, but unlike Attributes, there are twenty four skills, eight for each category. A brief description follows:

Mental

Academics: This skill measures your knowledge of things like history, literature, and researching.

Computer: The ability to program, code, and understand how software works (hardware generally falls under Crafts). This *doesn't* cover basic computer use; characters know that already.

Crafts: Technical knowledge of how to put things together and create new things.

Investigation: Searching for things, finding clues, and putting together solutions to puzzles.

Medicine: Healing and anatomical knowledge.

Occult: An important skill for a hunter, this measures how much you know about the supernatural.

Politics: Getting through the red tape of bureaucracy and understanding how complex systems work.

Science: Knowledge of natural sciences, such as chemistry.

Physical

Athletics: Running, jumping, climbing, throwing and all around generic physical activity. Adds to a character's Defense.

Brawl: Fighting and martial arts. Brawl attacks generally do bashing damage.

Drive: Tactical and offensive driving, for chases or stunts. Much like computers, characters are assumed to know how to drive from point A to point B without the skill itself.

Firearms: Shooting guns. Firearms attacks ignore Defense unless the target is in melee range.

Larceny: The ability to perform sleight of hand (for good or ill) and other less savoury actions, like picking pockets or locks.

Stealth: Knowing how to stay unnoticed and move silently without being detected. Usually contested by Wits + Composure or Wits + Stealth.

Survival: More of a knowledge, this covers your ability to forage for food and find shelter when outside the comfort of your home.

Weaponry: Fighting with knives, swords, staves, or other melee weapons that aren't hand to hand. Most weapons deal lethal damage.

Social

Animal Ken: Dealing with, understanding, and handling animals. Can be used to train animals as well as calm them down.

Empathy: The ability to understand and sympathize with people, or at

least know where they're coming from. Often it's used to spot lies or figure out what people are hiding.

Expression: Singing, performing, and telling stories. The ability to put your emotions out into the world and move others.

Intimidation: Imposing your will on someone else through threats, force, or outright violence.

Persuasion: Getting people to do what you want, and to like you more. Very useful in social maneuvering.

Socialize: Dealing with large groups of people or social gatherings. How well you can make nice with a bunch of people as opposed to a single person.

Streetwise: Politics for the criminal class. It governs how well you know where to find illegal things like fences

Subterfuge: Lying, bribery, and subtle half-truths all fall under this skill. Bluffing.

Much like with your Attributes, you'll be able to assign your skills to primary, secondary, and tertiary categories. You'll have 11/7/4 to distribute between all 24 skills. Remember, though, you only need about four dice to succeed on a roll, and untrained skill use is penalized: -1 for physical and social skills, and -3 for mental skills. Keep in mind that for mental skills you will be able to use things like libraries, though. As a general rule of thumb, skills are soft-capped at three dots at character creation¹

In addition, you'll be able to choose three **Specialties**. These are certain situations that provide an additional die to a Skill roll so long as the Specialty comes into play. Feel free to come up with your own Specialties that are flavourful for your character. Up to three Specialties can be used on a single roll, so long as all of them apply.

Merits

There are a number of Merits, and each one allows a character to do certain things that they otherwise couldn't, such as using special maneuvers in combat, using skills in new ways, or getting bonuses to traits. Merits are the bread and butter of character creation, and choosing the ones that fit your character best is going to take some time and thought. Don't be afraid to ask other characters or the Storyteller what they think might be good. Some merits even help out the rest of your cell.

You get ten dots to distribute between merits at character creation. If a Merit is a Style, each dot represents one part in a sequence of specific abilities or bonuses. Some merits can also be bought several times, to represent different social connections or areas of expertise.

¹ This is another house rule. Rules as written it's possible to have 5, but I find that leaves little room for growth.

Traits

Coming into the home stretch of character creation, there are only two more sections left. Now we deal with a character's derived traits. These are stats that aren't bought up with points, but are instead calculated based on Attributes and skills. There aren't a lot of them, but they are still important.

Health

One of the most important traits, bar none. The World of Darkness is a very dangerous place, especially for Hunters. Characters don't have very much health, and healing is slow. It's always important to watch out for your health and keep from rushing into danger unprepared. For every character, health is calculated by adding their **Size** to their **Stamina**. For almost every human character, except those with the Small or Giant Merits, Size is going to be 5. The average human (but not the average PC) therefore has 7 boxes of Health. There will be more on how health works in the next section. Keep in mind that whenever you take damage in one of your three rightmost health boxes, you'll take an increasing penalty to all actions due to your wounds. But if your rightmost box is filled with at least **Bashing** damage, you'll also gain a **Beat**.

Willpower

Another incredibly important trait, Willpower measures a character's ability to push through and fight against the odds. For most characters, Willpower is difficult to recover, and involves struggling against great odds or indulging in vices (and less often virtues) to regain some edge. As Hunters, though, your characters will have additional abilities to regain Willpower by **Risking** it. More on this in the later section.

For all characters, the willpower pool is determined by combining **Resolve** and **Composure**. Every time you spend a point of it, you lose the ability to use it until you've regained it. Sometimes you'll have the chance to sacrifice a willpower dot. In that case, it's gone for good, and you'll have to buy another one at the cost of one Experience.

Defense

While Health and Willpower measure pools, Defense measures how well you can avoid getting hit. It isn't perfect, since with each attack it goes down by one point, but without it a character is a sitting duck. At the beginning of each round of initiative, Defense refreshes.

To determine a character's Defense, first take the lower of **Wits** or **Dexterity**, and then add the character's dots of **Athletics**. Certain Merits allow for a character to substitute their dots of **Brawl** or **Weaponry**

for Athletics instead. There will be more on Defense in the section on combat.

Speed

Not all characters move the same way. Speed measures how many yards or meters a character can move in a single turn. While **World of Darkness** is rarely played with a grid, speed can still be very important in some situations, like foot chases.

Every character's speed is based off of their species factor (the base speed of the species) and has **Strength** and **Dexterity** added to it. Some supernatural monsters can increase their speed, making them difficult for Hunters to keep up with.

Initiative Modifier

Where a character acts in the combat roster is known as **Initiative**. Characters who act faster have the chance to put down enemies before they become a problem, or to run away before they get in danger. Weapons and armour often penalize initiative, and certain merits and combat options can alter a character's place in the initiative roster.

Unlike most rolls in **World of Darkness**, initiative is a single d10, with your modifier added to it. A character's initiative modifier is determined by adding their **Composure** and their **Dexterity**.

Integrity

The last part of building a character is to put on the final touches. By now you should have a good idea of who your character is and what they can do. When coming up with their skills and attributes, if you've kept your Concept in mind, you've probably thought about who your character is and what their past was like to explain how they got those skills. This is where your understanding of your own character really comes to the forefront.

In **World of Darkness**, your characters will face all kinds of adversity, and often they'll see and do things that will shake them to the core, frightening and unnerving them, or making them harder and more calloused. The measure of this is known as **Integrity**.

Characters with high Integrity are moral, upstanding, and more aware of who they are. Characters with low Integrity are broken, troubled, and often dangerously mad, having experienced things that have driven them to the edges of sanity. Player characters start at seven Integrity, and depending on what they experience, they suffer **Breaking Points**. Integrity starts at 7, and what might cause it to drop is based on the in-character answers to the following questions.

What is the worst you've ever done?

This is a very relative question. Not everyone is a saint, but neither are they monsters. What was the thing your character did that made them feel the worst?

What is the worst thing you can imagine yourself doing?

What can you reasonably see your character doing, even though they know that it's wrong? These are things that could very well come up during your Vigil.

What is the worst thing you can imagine someone else doing?

The news is filled with violence and depressing stories, and people will always find ways to hurt each other. What does your character think is one of the worst things people can do to each other? What don't they understand people doing?

What have you forgotten?

The world of Darkness is filled with strange things. The supernatural touches people's lives, usually at the fringes. It's hard to get through life without seeing *something*, even if your rational mind calls it a dream.

What is your most traumatic experience?

Again not everyone has lived a horrible life, and this is a very relative thing. What happened to your character that hurt them the most? What tested their faith in humanity, or the goodness of the universe? This sets the bar for what will shake you later. The answers to these questions will set a baseline for your character's future Breaking Points. More on how they work will be found later, in the mechanics section.



PLAYING THE GAME

Now that you've created a character, it's time to learn what all the stuff on that sheet does. The core mechanic is incredibly simple. Take an Attribute and either another Attribute or a Skill, add up the number of dots you have, and then roll that many ten sided dice. For every die that comes up 8,9, or 10, that roll is a "success". In most cases, all you need to accomplish a task is a single success. Of course, often your roll will be penalized to represent the difficulty of the situation, but as a rule of thumb having four dice is usually going to succeed.

10-Again

Any time that you roll 10 on the die, set that die aside. Count up the total number of successes, and then reroll any tens. If you get another ten, do the same thing. Some Merits, powers, and situations can even grant dice 9- or even 8-Again quality, allowing you to reroll successes for the chance at even more.

Exceptional Successes

While you only need one success to accomplish a task, many times having more successes is a good thing. If you get a full five successes, it's known as an **Exceptional Success**. Generally if you roll an Exceptional Success, the roll will not only succeed, but have additional bonuses.

Rolling an Exceptional Success can often regain you a point of Willpower.

Instant Actions

The most common type of roll, Instant actions take up a single turn, which lasts around three seconds. Instant Actions are generally a simple Attribute + Skill or Attribute + Attribute roll, and one success is all you need to accomplish your task.

Extended Actions

Sometimes an action takes longer than a single turn. When that happens, the action is Extended. The roll for an Extended action is the same as for an Instant action (Attribute + Skill, or rarely Attribute + Attribute), but the time between each roll is longer, dependent on the action in question. You'll also be looking for a target number of successes, instead of just one. Picking a lock might take only a turn for each roll while researching an ancient text might have each roll represent an hour or even a day of work.

Resisted Actions and Contested Actions

Not every action is simple. Sometimes you're working against someone. In these cases, actions are either Resisted or Contested. A resisted

action subtracts a resistance trait from it's roll (attacks are resisted by Defense, for instance) while a Contested roll has both characters rolling off against each other, and whoever gets the most successes is the winner.

COMBAT

The World of Darkness is a dangerous place, and while it's usually best to solve problems without coming to combat (even if that means things like hidden explosives), sometimes it can't be avoided. Whether it's a disagreement coming to blows, or Hunters desperately fighting back against a monster, combat is often a brutal, bloody affair that's over as quickly as it starts, but with one side injured and beaten.

When combat is called for, everyone involved rolls their Initiative (a single ten sided die plus Composure plus Dexterity, minus any weapon or Tilt modifiers). The numbers are then laid out in a roster from highest to lowest marking the order each character acts. Then the character with the highest initiative acts, and initiative continues in descending order until it reaches the end, when it resets at the top.

Melee Combat

In close quarters, characters attack using **Brawl** and **Weaponry**. Roll **Strength + Brawl** for martial arts, whether it's boxing or judo, and **Strength + Weaponry** whenever your character is using an object to harm someone, from a baseball bat to a samurai sword. The attack roll is penalized by the opponent's Defense score. If the attacker manages to get a single success, they deal damage equal to the successes, as well as the damage rating of the weapon, if they were using one. Weapons of all sort deal lethal damage, while fists, teeth, and feet tend to only deal bashing damage without special training. If you don't want to deal full damage to someone, you can spend a point of Willpower and instead do bashing damage. It's hard not to hurt someone when you're beating them with a baseball bat or a tire iron, though.

Ranged Combat

Guns are deadly, but they have a specific range of efficacy. In melee range, they have to deal with an opponent's Defense score, but outside of that range (about five feet) they ignore Defense, and an opponent has only their Armour to protect them. To make an attack with a gun or similar weapon, roll **Dexterity + Firearms**. As with melee attacks, the damage dealt is equal to the successes plus the damage rating of the weapon.

Throwing a weapon has a shorter range, (generally a number of yards equal to the character's Strength + Dexterity) and has to contend with Defense, but sometimes you have to work with what you have. To use a thrown weapon—or a bow and arrow—a character rolls **Dexterity + Athletics**.

Defense and Dodging

Character's aren't completely at the mercy of their attackers. Especially at close range, characters have their defense to penalize attacks, measuring how well they can get out of the way and avoid being hit. Basic Defense is the lower of Wits or Dexterity added to Athletics. Every time a character is attacked, though—even if that attack doesn't hit—their defense is reduced by one for the round. By spending a point of Willpower, you can add +2 to your Defense.

At any time a character can double their remaining Defense—even if it's been reduce to one or it's the highest it can go—and roll that as a dice pool. Every success shaves one success off of the opponent's roll. The downside to this is that it makes the attack roll Contested instead of Resisted, and the character loses their Defense for the rest of the round.

A character can willingly forgo their Defense, allowing an attack to go through without being Resisted, to keep their Defense high.

Armour

Even if an attack gets passed a character's Defense, they still have their armour. While it isn't easy to come by—and is even harder to hide—armour can be a life savor for characters. Every armour's stats are written in X/Y form. The first number reduces all damage, while the second number is the bulletproofing, and downgrades firearm damage from lethal to bashing.

If an attack hits, the final number is first downgraded (if it's a firearm attack) equal to the bulletproofing value, and then the final damage is reduced by the total armour value (lethal is ignored first, if there's any armour value left, the bashing is ignored).

Armour isn't perfect, though. If ever an attack would be completely negated by armour, the person in armour will take at least one point of Bashing damage.

Grappling

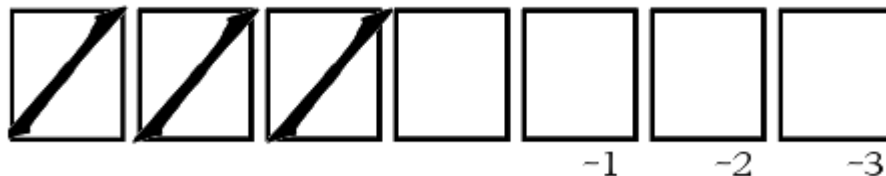
Sometimes characters get up close and personal even more than melee combat. When this happens, the characters get into a grapple. To engage in a grapple, the attacker rolls **Strength + Brawl** as usual, penalized by the opponent's defense. From then on, the next time either character's initiative comes up the first time in a round, they engage in a contested **Strength + Brawl** roll. The winner gets to choose one of the following, or two on an exceptional success.

- Control a weapon by unholstering it or taking it
- Deal damage equal to successes as bashing, or use a weapon you've controlled.
- Break free, which is Reflexive, and allows another action
- Disarm your opponent, and remove a weapon from the grapple, if you first Controlled the weapon.
- Drop prone, taking your opponent with you. This means either side needs to break free to stand up.
- Hold your opponent in place, forgoing both your Defenses
- Restrain an opponent, tying him with duct tape or rope
- Use a human shield.

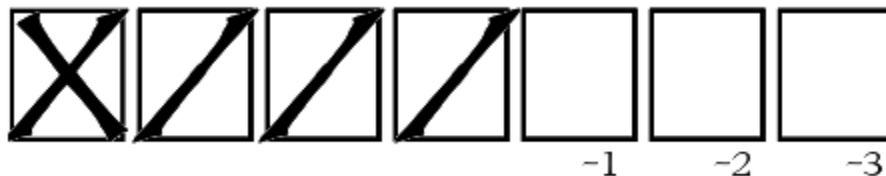
Health and Healing

Damage can be a serious thing, taking characters out for weeks at a time. Bashing damage heals quickly, only taking about half an hour for each point of bashing to go away, but Lethal takes two days each. Aggravated is the worst, taking a full week to recover from a single point. These healing times can be mitigated through medical care, but prevention is always going to be the best cure.

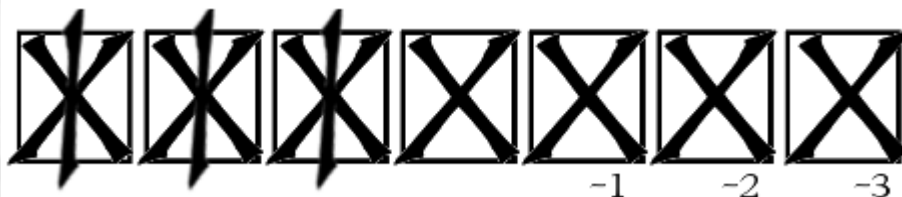
When you take bashing damage, it's marked with a single slash. For instance, if a character is hit for three bashing damage, it would look like this



The damage starts from the left and goes to the right. Lethal damage is marked with a cross. If a character takes lethal damage, it pushes the bashing to the right.



Whenever a character takes a hit to their rightmost three boxes, they start taking **wound penalties**. The first box is a -1, and each box after that is a further -1. If a character's health track is filled, they take -3 to all actions until they can heal themselves, because their injuries are so distracting. A character who takes bashing damage in their -3 box needs to roll **stamina** to stay on their feet. This is the only roll that doesn't suffer wound penalties. Any further damage will upgrade any Bashing to Lethal, pushing the track further to the right. If a character's rightmost health box is filled with lethal, they pass out, and start to bleed. Each minute one point of lethal is upgraded to **Aggravated**. This is marked with an asterisk.



Just as Bashing damage in excess of a character's health will wrap around to lethal, lethal damage that goes passed the rightmost box will upgrade itself to Aggravated, writing over any lethal damage. Most of the time aggravated damage only happens because of extreme damage, but sometimes supernatural powers or even powerful mortal weaponry can cause aggravated damage.

WILLPOWER

Sometimes a situation calls for a character to push themselves, and go beyond their normal capabilities. When things come down to the wire, and stress is setting in, characters can exert **willpower** to go to the limit. In game terms, before any active roll, a player can spend a point of Willpower to add three additional dice to the roll, or on any passive Resistance, they can add two to the Resistance trait. Characters generally regain willpower through sleeping, getting a point back every night they get at least six hours of rest. Characters also regain Willpower by fulfilling their **Virtue** and **Vices**. Any time once a scene a character can indulge in a Vice to regain a single point of Willpower. Twice per *chapter*, a character can work towards their Virtue and struggle for it to regain all Willpower. Willpower can also be rewarded for amazing successes or triumph against the odds.

Risking Willpower

Willpower can also be "Risky". Any time you can spend Willpower, so long as it's in pursuit of your character's Vigil, you can risk your Willpower. Instead of the usual +3 to a roll, you can choose *two* of the following:

- You gain an Exceptional Success on three instead of five, or for an attack roll the damage rating increases by one.
- Gain the 9-Again quality, or if you already have it, 8-Again.
- Remove the 10-Again quality from any Contested rolls
- Or gain +3 as usual.

If your risk succeeds, you gain back the point of Willpower you spent, as well as an additional point of Willpower and a Practical Beat. This can only be done once a scene, and if the roll fails, it's automatically a Dramatic Failure, but it also earns the character *two* Practical Beats.

INTEGRITY

Every character has a moral compass, and a sense of how the world is supposed to work. Integrity is a rating of that. Characters with low Integrity are often callous, spiteful, and perhaps even evil. They've seen and done things that have tortured them and haunt their dreams, and shattered their worldview.

Whenever a character violates their integrity, or is faced with an action that shakes their outlook on life and understanding of the world, the character suffers a **Breaking Point**, and the player rolls **Resolve + Composure** to resist degenerating, and dropping Integrity. The roll is penalized or gains a bonus based on the circumstances around the traumatic event.

Failing a roll means loss of Integrity, as well as a relevant Persistent Condition.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

As you play your character, you'll have the chance to grow and learn new things. All of your character's traits can be bought up with "Experiences", which represent the growth of your character.

Experiences come from earning Beats.

Beats are earned in several ways. The primary methods of taking Beats are listed here:

- Resolving a Condition
- Fulfilling an Aspiration
- Fulfilling the Beat requirements of a Condition
- Taking damage in one of your last three health boxes
- Choosing to turn a failure into a Dramatic Failure
- Good roleplaying, tactics, or story progression
- At the end of each session
- Experiencing a Breaking Point

Many merits and powers also either allow you to take conditions or impose them on others, giving you more opportunities to earn Beats. For every five Beats, a character gains one Experience, which can then be used to buy up new traits. A dot of each trait costs the following:

- Attribute: 4 Experiences
- Skill: 2 Experiences
- Specialty: 1 Experience
- Merit: 1 Experience
- Integrity: 3 Experiences
- Willpower Dot: 1 Experience

As you gain new Skills and Merits, your character will become more rounded and capable. But keep in mind that much of the time you'll need to justify your Experience expenditures. You can't gain a specialty in Art History if you've never learned anything about the subject before.

Many Merits require teachers, and some social merits will even involve stories to acquire them. Sometimes these merits can even be awarded during game play, in which case they don't need to be purchased, but don't fall under the Sanctity of Merits unless they are.