Go Nova!

Action at the Speed of Narrative

NOVA6 gets you in the game quickly, rewards creative play, and balances mechanics with narrative control.

The unique pass/fail dice pool with escalating stunt points provides easy to interpret outcomes ranging from disastrous failure to amazing success.

Every action test can incorporate all relevant modifiers without the need for extensive charts or lists.

The rules are designed to be intuitive and keep the action moving.

NOVA6 Core is universal to support many genres. It also includes guidance on how to build your own games and settings that will make your stories and adventures even more unique.

www.nova6.com

LEGENDSMITHS

NOVA6

Core—RC 8

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GO NOVA!

Welcome to NOVA6, the Legendsmiths roleplaying system where **action moves at the speed of narrative**!

If you've never played a roleplaying game before, you and some friends get together and create a group of characters that are at the center of a story you build together. It's not all just conversation, though—sometimes the choices you make when telling your story will have an uncertain outcome, and you will use dice and the rules in this book to resolve that drama.

We present NOVA6 Core in a universal fashion, to support many genres, and we also provide guidance on how to build your own games and settings that will make your stories and adventures even more unique.

For more NOVA6 support, check out www.nova6.com!

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO PLAY?

Pencils, paper, about seven regular dice with six sides (ideally a set for each player), and some tokens to track various things within the game—poker chips, bottle caps, pennies, etc.

PLAYERS AND GAMEMASTERS

In NOVA6, you are either a player or a gamemaster. As a player you portray one of the protagonists of the game, called a *player character* (*PC*). You choose and describe what your character says and does. You also handle the mechanical side of your character—rolling dice, choosing abilities, and keeping track of results of those activities.

As a *gamemaster* (*GM*), you take responsibility for the world the characters inhabit. You decide and describe what every *non-player character* (*NPC*) says and does. You describe the scenes and create situations they encounter. You also act as the final arbiter of the rules, determining the outcome of the characters' actions and how they shape the story.

You all work together to create a fun, engaging experience. NOVA6 is a collaborative endeavor—share ideas and look for opportunities to make the story as entertaining as possible.

DICE NOTATION

NOVA6 uses a common abbreviation "#d" for when dice are called out in the text, The "#" is the number of six-sided dice and the "d" is there as a reminder that the rules are referring to dice. A plus "+" or a minus "-" sign may also be included to indicate whether the dice are a bonus or a penalty.

For example, 2d means two six-sided dice, and if written as +2d would mean the rules intend the dice as a bonus.

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CORE RULES

THE BASICS

NOVA6 is meant to move quickly: choose an appropriate *skill* and *action*, make an *action test* to determine the outcome, and describe how you achieved that outcome.

SIX SKILLS

NOVA6 Core uses a core set of six *skills*: Fight, Interact, Move, Physique, Resolve, and Wits. These are used to resolve all actions in the game. See The Details (p. 4) for more.

- *Fight* is used for all forms of physical combat.
- *Interact* covers the entire gamut of social interactions
- *Move* is used to skillfully move and maneuver.
- *Physique* represents your physical strength, power, and endurance.
- *Resolve* represents your mental strength, power, and endurance.
- *Wits* represents your higher-order reasoning, knowledge, and perception.

FOUR ACTIONS

In NOVA6, there are four *basic actions* that cover anything a character might want to do. See The Details (p. 4) for more.

- Use **Create advantage** to improve your circumstances for a future action.
- Use **Overcome** to bypass any obstacle between you and your goal.
- Use **Attack** to cause harm to a target.
- Use **Defend** to negate an attack or create advantage action against you.

The GM sets the *difficulty* based on the relative challenge of your action test (p. 10) or the *opposition* (p. 48) for your action.

ACTION TEST

When making a test you *gather the dice* (six-sided) and *determine the outcome*.

GATHER THE DICE

1. Gather the dice from one skill, one perk, as well as any other talents, features, advantages, and conditions that apply. These are *bonus dice*.
2. Gather any dice from difficulty, disadvantages, and conditions. These are *penalty dice*.
3. Remove a bonus and penalty die until only bonus, penalty, or no dice remain.
   - You are *up* if you have bonus dice remaining.
   - You are *down* if you have penalty dice remaining.
   - You are *even* if you have neither bonus dice nor penalty dice remaining.
4. Before you roll, you or the GM may trade dice for stunt points at a 2-to-1 rate.
   - If you have more than four dice, trade dice until you have four or fewer.
   - If you are up, the stunt points are yours when you succeed.
   - If you are down, the stunt points go to the GM if you fail.
5. Add three base dice to your remaining dice and roll:
   - If you are up, choose any three dice to be your *action dice*.
   - If you are down, the lowest three dice are your action dice.
   - If you are even, the only three dice you rolled are your action dice.

ONLY YOU, THE PLAYER, ROLL

This keeps the focus of the action on you. If an antagonist attacks, then you roll to defend. If an antagonist tries to flee, then you roll to keep up.

This also forces the GM to really consider why dice are being rolled in the first place. If resolving a situation with a roll seems awkward, maybe it shouldn't be a roll at all.

DETERMINE THE OUTCOME

Your action dice determine the outcome of your action.
1. Add together your action dice to determine your total.
2. If your total is equal to or greater than 11, you succeed.
3. If your total is less than 11, you fail (or choose *success at a cost*).
4. If your action dice are triples, you earn a *stunt point* if you succeeded or the GM earns a stunt point if you failed.
5. Certain talents and features may trigger if your action dice contain doubles.

SIMPLE SUCCESS AND SIMPLE FAILURE

Succeeding on the action test without earning a stunt point is known as *simple success*: you got what you wanted without embellishment or cost.

Conversely, failing on the action test without the GM earning a stunt point is known as *simple failure*, and failure should be interesting or meaningful in some way. Otherwise, don't bother rolling—narrate the outcome and move on.

SUCCESS AT A COST

Failure doesn't always mean you don't achieve your goal. Sometimes you get what you want, but it costs you something—time, loss of an asset or resource, damage, or a new aspect. Work with the GM to determine an appropriate and interesting cost.

> You attempt to leap over a pit and fail. Does this mean that you A) fall in, B) decide not to leap after all, or C) almost make it across and are hanging on the far edge? Option A is rarely an appropriate choice for simple failure, although it may be a fitting use of a GM stunt. Option B is appropriate if losing your action is significant, such as when you are being pursued. Option C is an example of success at a cost. It is appropriate in many situations, especially if there is a narrative consequence associated with the outcome (e.g., an ally must scramble to your aid instead of stopping a stone door from slamming shut, you likely need another action to climb out and simple failure there would result in a fall).

STUNTS AND STUNT POINTS

Beyond simple success and failure, stunts are where things get exciting. Stunts allow players to improve their success to achieve bigger effects, discover new information, change the situation to their advantage, work more quickly, and more.

There are three main ways players will earn stunt points:
- Succeeding with triples
- Trading bonus dice (two dice for one stunt point, by default)
- Invoking an aspect

Similarly, GMs earn and spend *GM stunt points* on behalf of NPCs, but they earn stunt points when players fail with triples or by trading penalty dice (Gather the Dice, Step 4).

See Stunts (p. 37) for more details on how to use your stunt points.

NARRATIVE CONTROL

NOVA6 uses plot points to give players more narrative control. With plot points, players can introduce new elements to the scene, invoke and discover aspects, turn failure into success, perform stunts, and much more. Plot points are a finite resource, but you will have ample opportunities to earn them throughout play.

THE DETAILS

This section expands the concepts presented in The Basics (p. 2) and provides additional detail around action resolution, time and duration, action modifiers, and the structure of scenes.

FOUR BASIC ACTIONS

The four basic actions should be all you need to handle any choice a character might make. Each action provides a summary description of how it is used, including some examples. Additionally, each action includes details for a simple success.

CREATE ADVANTAGE

The *create advantage* action covers a broad range of activities, unified around the theme of using your skills to take advantage of the environment or your situation.

Sometimes that means you're doing something to actively change your circumstances (throwing sand in an opponent's eyes), but it could also mean discovering new information that helps you (learning a weakness through research) or taking advantage of something you've previously observed (an opponent's nasty temper).

The difficulty of create advantage is the target's opposing skill with the defend action.

SIMPLE SUCCESS
- Create a +1d brief advantage for you or an ally.
- Choose a simple success option from the advantage basic effect (p. 18).

OVERCOME

Locked doors, yawning chasms, and fiendish puzzles. When there is an obstacle between you and your goal, you use the *overcome* action to deal with it. Look at it as the catch-all action—if it doesn't fit into one of the other three actions, it's probably an overcome action.

The difficulty of overcome is set by the GM or may be determined by an opposing skill.

SIMPLE SUCCESS
- Overcome 1d of advantage or disadvantage.
- Overcome an obstacle (e.g., climb a barrier, move from one zone to another).

ATTACK

The *attack* action is the most straightforward of the four actions—when you want to hurt someone in a conflict, it's an attack. An attack isn't always physical in nature—some skills allow you to attack mentally, or even socially.

The difficulty of attack is the target's opposing skill with the defend action.

SIMPLE SUCCESS
- Cause 1 damage.

DEFEND

Whenever someone attacks you in a conflict or tries to create advantage against you, you get a chance to *defend*. As with attacks, this isn't always about avoiding physical danger—some of the skills allow you to defend against attempts to harm your mind or damage your reputation.

SIMPLE SUCCESS
- Negate a create advantage or attack action against you or an ally.

ADVANCED ACTIONS & TESTS

The action rules laid out thus far are enough to play and have fun, but this section provides some additional details for a slightly crunchier game. Feel free to use these rules or not.

ACTION TEST FORMAT

NOVA6 presents specific skill tests as the skill, capitalized, followed by the action. For example, Wits create advantage. When referring to a specific application or perk of a skill, write that in parentheses after the skill: Wits (notice) create advantage.

List opposing skills second after the keyword "vs": Wits (notice) overcome vs Move (stealth) create advantage.

If skill talents are relevant (p. 56), they will be listed in superscript format with F for *Focused*, S for *Specialized*, and P for *Practiced*: Wits (notice) overcome vs Move[FS] (stealth) create advantage. This example shows that the opposing skill is Focused and Specialized, which will affect the number of GM Stunt Points generated.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Special actions refer to either basic actions applied with special circumstances or actions that fall outside of the four basic actions.

REACTIONS

Reactions are basic actions you take in response to actions against you. For example, when someone tries to hit you with a baseball bat, you defend with Fight as a reaction. Someone trying to sneak past you would trigger a Wits reaction. Reactions do not penalize your other actions, but modifiers apply to reactions as normal.

SNAP ACTIONS

Snap actions are minor actions you can take during your turn. You can take a single snap action without penalizing your other actions on your turn, but additional snap actions count as basic actions (and thus impose multiple action penalties).

Focus. When you take the *focus* snap action, you gain +1d to the next basic action you take, but any other actions (including reactions) suffer a -1d penalty until the start of your next turn. You may not take multiple basic actions if you use the focus snap action.

Move. You may move anywhere within your current zone if that movement does not require a Move overcome action. You can also stand from a **PRONE [A]** position.

Ready. When you take the *ready* snap action, you may ready one accessible item, reload a weapon, or activate an item (e.g., open a door, flip a switch).

UNSKILLED TESTS

Tests are almost always based on a skill. However, sometimes you will need to make an *unskilled test*—these are tests for which no skill applies. Examples include: determining the order in conflicts, determining if you have a specific piece of gear, or winning games of pure chance (if the outcome matters). An unskilled test does not include skill ranks, though talents, features, and conditions may still provide bonus or penalty dice.

DOING MORE THAN ONE THING

You can always try to do more than one thing at a time. The rules vary depending on your intent and whether you are attempting to do more with a single skill or if you are using multiple skills. For example, you can use a single skill to attack multiple targets. You can create multiple outcomes and attempt to run, jump, and climb as a single action. You can even attempt to use different skills for different actions all at once.

MULTIPLE TARGETS

If you intend to affect multiple targets with a single action, apply the highest difficulty from all your potential targets, and choose which target is affected first when you succeed. Use the *Increase Scope* stunt to affect additional targets.

> *Attack All The Goblins (Fight attack).* You face a gang of goblins (Fight 1d) lead by a goblin boss (Fight 2d). You make your Fight attack at -2d (the highest difficulty from the boss) and roll. On success, you can apply your attack effect to any goblin or the goblin boss and use stunt points with the *Increase Scope* stunt to apply that effect to additional goblins as well.
>
> You could choose to only face the goblins (-1d difficulty) but then you could not use stunt points to affect the boss as well.

MULTIPLE OUTCOMES

If you intend to create multiple outcomes with your success, apply the highest difficulty from any opposition and choose which effect is generated first when you succeed (unless there is a logical progression). Use the *Create Effect* stunt to create additional outcomes.

> *Scramble Away (Move overcome).* You want to run two zones (-0d), climb a fence (-0d), and jump to the roof (-1d), so you attempt a Move overcome (-1d difficulty from the jump). If you succeed you manage to run two zones, and then each additional outcome requires a stunt point.

MULTIPLE SKILLS

You can perform multiple actions using different skills on your turn. Each action after the first imposes -1d to all actions until the start of your next turn. If failing at an action precludes subsequent actions, do not make the subsequent action tests.

> *Run, Ambush, and Attack (Move overcome, Move create advantage, Fight attack).* Your plan is to run around the corner (to the next zone -0d), ambush your pursuers (vs Wits of -1d), and then shoot them (vs target's Move of -2d). Because each action is a distinct skill/action pair, you would make three tests, each at an additional -2d multiple action penalty, though you're hoping that the advantage you create will be enough to offset the penalties to your attack.

GROUP TESTS

Group tests occur when you need to evaluate the group's performance against a single objective. Decide if the group succeeds when any character succeeds or only when everyone succeeds, and whether participation is mandatory.

ANY SUCCEED

Any character that succeeds earns success for the group.

Other members of the group can add any stunt points to the group success, to a maximum of three stunt points, or use them individually.

Examples include group search attempts, unskilled labor, and so on.

> A gang of four meddling kids are trying to search for clues to a g-g-ghost that is haunting an old fun house in an abandoned amusement park. Frank and Daisy succeed with one stunt point each, and Wilma also rolls a success, so the gang succeeds as a whole with two stunt points.
>
> Unfortunately, their pal Shabby just can't seem to keep it together and fails with two stunt points. It turns out while the gang finds some useful clues, Shabby runs into the g-g-ghost, staggers back in terror, hits the ride's control lever, falls into one of the carts on the track, and is whisked away! Zoinks!

ALL SUCCEED

All characters must succeed for the entire group to succeed.

You can use stunt points to offset the failures of other members of the group or use them individually. You cannot use stunt points to improve the group's success as a whole.

Certain tests may allow players to opt out of the test—count them as failures automatically to avoid complications from GM stunt points. Tests where everyone individually must overcome an obstacle typically prohibit players from opting out. Tests where one character can directly compensate for another's lack of skill (e.g., asset creation) may allow players to opt out.

Examples include sneaking past a guard as a group, climbing a cliff face, building a raft, and so on.

> *Group Sneak.* A group of four adventurers are trying to sneak past an enemy camp with a Move overcome (stealth) test. Three of the characters succeed and earn one stunt point which they use to offset the failure of the fourth character.
>
> *Group Build.* The PCs need to construct a raft to cross a river with a Wits (craft) test. Stunt points are used to offset other character failures to ensure the raft is large enough to carry all members of the group.

TIME

You resolve actions by taking *turns* at one of two different time scales: *action time* or *narrative time*. When all characters have taken a turn, you have completed a *round*.

TURNS

During your turn, you can take one or more actions. Once you have taken your actions, your turn is over and the next character takes their turn.

ROUNDS

A round starts with no one having taken a turn and lasts until all characters in the scene have taken a turn, at which point a new round begins. In action time, a round is about 6 seconds, while in narrative time a round can be minutes, hours, days or even longer.

ACTION TIME

Action time covers immediate activity and resolves in at most a few minutes. Use action time to resolve short bursts of activity.

NARRATIVE TIME

Narrative time represents longer periods of activity including investigations, research, exploration, extended chases, escaping from pirates, enduring hardship, or other forms of discovery. This usually occurs in the minutes, hours, or days between conflicts.

SETBACKS: FAILURE DURING NARRATIVE TIME

The consequences of failure should always be meaningful. Failure during a scene in narrative time should penalize the character during a future action—Success at a Cost (p. 3) is common during narrative time.

NOVA6 calls these failures setbacks.

Tracking Setbacks

The simplest way to track these setbacks is with a setback die. You gain a setback die for a simple failure (Success at a Cost), as well as any stunt points associated with this failure.

Hand the player a specific color of dice (we suggest red) to set in front of them.

Using Setbacks

The GM can use setback dice, removing them from the character in one of two ways:
1. Include these dice in any of the assigned character's action as penalty dice.
2. Trade two setback dice to add 1 GM stunt point after the action test is resolved.

Grifter is part of a team hired to protect a client who is very nervous about the situation. *Grifter* uses their action during an exposition scene (p. 13) to build rapport with a create advantage action. Unfortunately, they roll poorly and not only fail, but with the GM earning a stunt point. This could then go a number of different ways.

First, *Grifter* fails and makes the client even more nervous, resulting in a setback die from the stunt point.

Alternatively, *Grifter* succeeds but with a cost. The create advantage is successful, but they earn two setback dice (failure plus stunt point). Hopefully, the advantage is worth it as their frustration with the outcome may result in some unfortunate outcomes later on when the setback dice make actions more challenging or increase their impact.

Finally, the player could invoke an aspect and spend a plot point to offset the stunt point, resulting in simple failure. The client's disposition remains unchanged.

DURATION

The Time and Duration Steps table summarizes the units of time used to measure action intervals and effect durations. When an effect reaches the end of its duration, the entire effect ends. For example, a Grifter creates advantage on a security guard of **enraged 2d** for the entire scene. When the scene ends, the advantage goes away entirely.

When the rules say that something takes one step more or less time, it means you should find the step for the current effect and then move one step down (more time) or one step up (less time).

Time and Duration Steps Table

Duration	Duration Interval	Time
Instant [I]	Starts and ends immediately	-
Brief [B]	Lasts until the end of the target's next turn	A Few Seconds
Quick [Q]	Lasts until the end of the next round	10-15 Seconds
Scene [S]	Lasts until the end of the scene	Rounds
Temporary [T]	Lasts until the target successfully rests or recovers	Minutes to Hours
Lasting [L]	Lasts until the next milestone	Hours to Days
Long-Lasting [LL]	Lasts until the next major milestone	Days to Weeks
Enduring [E]	Lasts until the next epic milestone	Weeks to Years
Permanent [P]	Lasts until redefined	Possibly Forever

SPECIAL DURATIONS

The Special Duration table highlights three durations that are not part of the standard time and duration steps progression.

Special Durations Table

Duration	Duration Interval
Action [A]	Lasts until a character uses an action to end the effect
Maintained [M]	Lasts until you no longer spend an action to maintain
Sustained [Su]	Lasts until you end the effect; you have a cumulative -1d penalty per sustained effect

ACTION INTERVALS

You can complete most actions during your turn (Instant [I]), but some actions may require more time. You can define the duration of an action using the standard durations up to the Scene [S] duration, or possibly a number of successes as in a contest (p. 15)—the contest being one character's action versus the rest of the actors in the scene. If the action requires more than a scene, then it should occur in Narrative Time (p. 8).

You can reduce the time required to perform the action more by spending stunt points for the *Decrease Time* stunt.

When described in text, write the duration in brackets. For example, a wits action requiring a full scene would be written Wits [S].

> While breaking into the offices of Megacorp, the GM offers Ryan that searching the CEO's office requires a Wits [Scene] create advantage test, but that much time could be risky. Ryan decides to risk it and hopes to earn a stunt point to search the office quickly enough to avoid discovery.

MODIFIERS

Modifiers come in two flavors: bonus dice and penalty dice. Things that make you more likely to succeed grant bonus dice, while things that make you more likely to fail impose penalty dice.

Bonus dice are indicated as +#d, where # is the number of bonus dice to be added to your action test. Conversely, penalty dice are indicated as -#d, where # is the number of penalty dice to be added to your action test. Certain modifiers, such as conditions, can help or hinder depending on the circumstances—these are simply indicated as #d, where # is the number of dice added as bonus or penalty dice as appropriate.

SUMMARY

SKILL RANKS

The character's skill ranks are added as bonus dice.

Skill ranks are written in plain Title Case, followed by a number of dice indicating the number of ranks: Wits 2d.

DIFFICULTY

The difficulty of a test will add from -0d to -5d.

Difficulties are written in plain Title Case, followed by a number of penalty dice: Fight -1d.

PERKS

If the character has a relevant perk, add +1d. Only one perk can be applied per test.

Write perks in italic lowercase: *leaping*.

TALENTS & FEATURES

Specific talents and features will add bonus dice in specific situations.

Talents & Features are written in bold, italic Title Case: ***Well-Trained***.

ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

Advantages and disadvantages add bonus (+) or penalty (-) dice respectively.

Advantages and disadvantages are written in bold lower case, followed by a number of dice and (optionally) a duration: **off-balance -1d [T]**. If no duration is listed, it is brief [B].

CONDITIONS

Conditions are added as bonus dice if they help an action or penalty dice if they hinder an action. For example, darkness is a bonus to Move (stealth) but a penalty to Wits (notice).

Conditions are written in bold, italic lower case, followed by a number of dice indicating the magnitude of the condition and (optionally) a duration: ***darkness 2d***. If no duration is listed, it is permanent [P].

Oops!
I Forgot Some Modifiers

Don't sweat it, just keep playing. If the modifier could have impacted success or failure, spend a plot point and succeed or earn a plot point and accept the failure.

DIFFICULTY

The *difficulty* of a test is a number of penalty dice from -0d to -4d (-5d or more for superhuman difficulties). The default difficulty for a test is -0d. For opposed tests, the difficulty represents the opponent's skill ranks, as well as their relevant perks, talents, and features as detailed in Opposing Skills, p. 48. For unopposed tests, the difficulty represents the inherent challenge of the task (e.g., some locks are harder to pick than others) using the Difficulty Table.

Difficulty Table

Difficulty	Description	Expertise
-0d	Simple	Untrained
-1d	Routine	Trained
-2d	Challenging	Skilled
-3d	Intimidating	Expert
-4d	Heroic	Master
-5d+	Nigh Impossible	Superhuman

CONDITIONS

Conditions are modifiers that apply to all relevant tests, either as bonus dice if they help you or penalty dice if they hinder you. Conditions have a default duration of permanent [P].

Examples include things like **bad weather 1d [T]**, and **brightly lit 1d**. Ignore conditions that apply to you and your opponent equally, as the bonus and penalty dice will simply cancel each other out.

Note cards, sticky notes, or erasable tokens are useful to keep track of conditions during play. Avoid getting wrapped up in trying to account for every little influence on a particular action—focus instead on the things that matter most.

COVER

Cover increases a target's coverage property (p. 20) by +1 (half cover) or +2 (near-total cover). An attack that hits a target behind cover but does not earn enough stunt points to overcome its coverage must reduce the damage by the cover's soak value (see the Cover Soak Table). Any remaining damage is applied to the target.

Cover Soak Table

Material	Soak
Wood	Door 5, wall 7, tree (small 9, medium 13, large 16)
Brick	Wall 8 (+5 vs. fire)
Concrete	Wall 11 (+5 vs. fire), reinforced +2
Steel	Door 10, airlock 15, safe 19, vault 25 (+5 vs. fire)

RANGE

You can use an effect with this property at a distance with labels of close, near, far, distant, remote, or obscure. Range can either help you (stealth, evading a ranged attack) or hinder you (hearing an assassin, making a ranged attack). The relative distance for each range increment is detailed in the Range Distance Table.

Most human senses have a range of close for discerning detail, such as understanding a conversation or recognizing specific characteristics or features. General awareness has a range increment one step larger to near, indicating the presence or absence of a thing via sight or sound. Characters can perceive High contrast activity (e.g., movement against a static background, shouting) at a range of far.

Increasing the effective range of an effect or action requires you to use the *Increase Scope* stunt, incrementing the range by one step. In general, you cannot use more than one stunt point to increase range.

Range Distance Table

Range	Relative Distance	Approximate Disatance
Close	Immediate vicinity or within your current zone (p. 25)	Within 10m (1 zone)
Near	Just outside your current zone and in the general area	About 30m (3 zones)
Far	Outside your general area but within sight or shouting distance	About 100m (10 zones)
Distant	About as far as you can see with some detail	About 300m (30 zones)
Remote	Effective maximum line of sight in most terrain	About 1000m
Obscure	Out to the horizon; requires altitude or open terrain	Out to 5000m

SENSES

The ability to sense your surroundings is pretty critical to acting within them without some kind of penalty. For example, if you can see in the dark and your target cannot, then you are at an advantage. Conversely, if your target can see well and you cannot, then you are at a disadvantage. Sense-based conditions range from 1d (slightly obscured) to 4d (completely obscured).

SIZE

Size provides a bonus to smaller creatures when attacking with or defending against physical attacks and sneaking by or perceiving other creatures. Conversely, larger creatures suffer a penalty. For example, a *small 1d* creature attacking a *huge 2d* creature would have a total size modifier of +3d. A *large 1d* creature attempting to spot a *small 1d* creature would have a total size modifier of -2d. Consider however that some large creatures might have such large features that allow them to affect an area, effectively ignoring this modifier.

Size Table

Size	Modifier	Profile	Example
Colossal	4d	50m	Ship, whale, building
Gargantuan	3d	25m	Stone column, house, small whale
Huge	2d	10m	Elephant, rhino, truck
Large	1d	5m	Bull moose, polar bear, small car
Medium	0d	2.5m	Human
Small	1d	1m	Human child, average dog; heavy object
Tiny	2d	0.5m	Small human child, small dog, cat; medium object
Diminutive	3d	0.25m	Book; light object
Miniscule	4d	0.1m	Can or another small container; personal object

SCENES

A scene is the basic unit of storytelling during the game that results in some kind of meaningful progress of the plot. Avoid creating scenes just to roll some dice or consume resources. This does not mean that every scene must result in a milestone, just that the time you spend on the scene should be impactful in some way.

To run a scene: describe a situation, present it to the players, and resolve their actions as they navigate through it. Everyone should get at least one action during a scene. While the spotlight falls on one character, everyone should have an opportunity to contribute to the scene in some way.

You can structure a scene as a *challenge, exposition, contest,* or *conflict,* which occur in either *action time* or *narrative time* (p. 8).

SETTING THE SCENE

To open a scene, answer some key questions:

- Where and when is the scene taking place?
- What is the environment like? What are a couple of relevant situation aspects?
- Who is involved in the scene? How are they positioned, if relevant?

CLOSING A SCENE

When closing a scene, remind everyone to reset their aspect tracking (invoked or compelled), as well as resetting any effects or talents that are only usable once per scene.

CHALLENGES

A challenge is a series of tests that you use to resolve an especially complicated situation. Each test deals with part of the challenge, and you take the individual results together to figure out how the situation resolves.

To set up a challenge, decide what individual tasks or goals make up the situation, and treat each one as a separate action test. Depending on the situation, one character may be required to take several actions, or multiple characters may be able to participate. If the test is a group test, decide whether it is an any succeed or all succeed group test (p. 6).

The GM need not announce all the stages in the challenge ahead of time—they may add, remove, or change elements of the challenge as it unfolds to keep things exciting.

> The characters are the crew of a ship caught in a storm. They decide to press on to their destination despite the weather, and the GM suggests this sounds like a challenge. Steps in resolving this challenge could be calming panicky passengers, repairing damaged rigging, and keeping the ship on the right heading.

HAZARDS

Hazards are tests within a challenge. Failing a hazard test could prevent further progress in the challenge, cause damage, impose setbacks (Setbacks: Failure During Narrative Time, p. 8), or all of the above.

Example Hazards

> ***Conceled Pit Trap:*** Wits defend -1d or Fall 1 story (*damage 3; physical (bludgeoning), temporary [T].)*
> ***Deadfall:*** Move defend -1d or Slam (damage 4; physical (bludgeoning, temporary [T]).
> ***Compromising Setup:*** Interact defend -1d or Setback (1 setback on failured, +1 per stunt).

EXPOSITIONS

An exposition scene is a series of individual tests that help build the narrative, move the characters through the world, or set up a future scene. You can also use exposition for journeys or montages when there is no opposition or obstacle.

Exposition scenes occur in narrative time. Each character should take only one action that represents the outcome of what they focused on during the exposition. While it is certainly possible to run multiple exposition scenes, you should limit the number to no more than three to avoid a cycle of endless preparation and to keep the story momentum high.

Use expositions to prepare for a challenge, conflict, or contest. Most expositions are resolved with individual create advantage actions that result in assets (Advantage Basic Effect, p. 18) or setbacks (Setbacks: Failure During Narrative Time, p. 8) to be used later in the story.

> The characters have been hired to protect a client that is meeting some shady characters to hand deliver some stolen tech. They have a few hours so the GM asks the group how they spend their time before the meet.
>
> *Ronin* spends her time casing the meet point, looking for escape routes, avenues of approach, sniper positions, and possible stash points.
>
> *Worlok* retreats to their sanctum to meditate and realign their matrix for defense.
>
> *3dg3* pops into the local JavaJoint to sip stimspresso and explore the deep web for any info on the shady characters they are about to meet.
>
> *Grifter,* meanwhile, can see that the client is very nervous about the situation. Knowing that nervous people make bad decisions, they decide to spend ther time with the client, building rapport. Hopefully, this will be useful to keep the client safe and focused if things go sideways.

INTERLUDES

Creating certain assets or aspects may require significant time and resources. Run these expositions as normal, just be sure to account for relevant requirements. The assets or aspects created by interludes can also justify new character developments such as skills, talents, or features.

Example Interludes

- Gaining favor with a monarch.
- Completing an apprenticeship to gain access to an organization.
- Visiting a distant land to acquire a unique artifact.
- Training with a reclusive martial arts master to learn a new technique.
- Conducting meaningful research in support of a personal goal.
- Studying with a reclusive wizard to learn a new unique spell.

CONTESTS

When characters compete against one another for the same goal, but do not directly try to hurt each other, it's a contest. Examples include chases, arguments, and sporting events.

Contests are resolved in action time. During a round, each player character takes an action, usually overcome, to determine how well they do—the number of *successes* they generate for themselves or their opponent.

The difficulty modifier for the action is usually set by the skill rank of the NPC involved in the contest or by the environment. NPCs can trade dice for stunt points as normal to earn extra successes each round, with their remaining skill ranks used as the contest difficulty.

BUILDING SUCCESS

For player characters, simple success counts as a single success towards the total successes required for the contest, and each stunt point can be used to earn an additional success or to remove a success from another participant.

NPC successes are tracked individually against each PC. NPCs earn a single success when that PC fails a test, and GM stunt points can be used as additional successes.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The GM defines the number of successes required to win the contest, tracking the results of the rounds over time. A quick contest would require three success, a longer contest (two to three turns in length) would require five, and a long contest would require eight.

The GM will also decide if individual participants can succeed or fail independently and what happens if a participant fails.

> Montana Smith is trying to chase down some smugglers. The GM has decided this will be a Move (boats) [5 successes] challenge. Montana will need to accumulate 5 successes before the smugglers. The smugglers have Move 2d and thus will earn 1 extra success in each round, possibly more if Montana fails. Montana will need to earn some stunt points to have any chance of catching up with these ne'er-do-wells.

CONFLICTS

Conflicts are used to resolve situations where characters are trying to harm one another. It could be physical (a sword fight, a wizard's duel, a battle with laser blasters), but it could also be mental (a shouting match, a tough interrogation, a magical psychic assault) or even social (attempting to show up a rival suitor, a tense negotiation).

Resolve conflicts in rounds and usually in Action Time (p. 8).

INITIATIVE

Determine the order of action in a conflict by an unskilled *initiative* test. Players that succeed take their turn before the opposition, in any order, while those that fail take their turn after the opposition.

Each stunt point on an initiative test provides one free bonus action that can be used during the conflict.

Interrupting

If you delay your turn to see what your opponent chooses to do, you must commit to an action and then succeed at a new initiative test to interrupt them. If you fail, they act before you, which may result in your action having no effect (e.g., they move away).

Defending Another Character

You can choose to defend another character by accepting -1d penalty to your defend reaction. Your reaction must make narrative sense. For example, you can use Fight to block a melee attack against an adjacent character or Move to dive in front of a ranged attack.

BONUS ACTIONS

At the end of each round, everyone has the opportunity to perform a single action as a *bonus action*. Certain talents and features grant bonus actions, as does earning a stunt point on an initiative test or spending a plot point. You can choose a snap action as your bonus action.

If multiple characters are taking bonus actions, they are resolved in the same order as initiative.

BASIC EFFECTS

NOVA6 uses three basic effects: advantage, damage, and soak. This section describes each effect, along with how the effect is written, the results of simple success, and how the *Increased/Decreased Effect* stunts affect that result.

PROPERTIES

Each effect may also include additional *properties* that further define how an effect works, typically by enhancing or limiting the effect.

UNIVERSAL PROPERTIES

Universal properties are listed at the end of this section (p. 21) and can apply to any of these basic effects.

SPECIAL (S) STUNTS

Some effects can have unique stunts. You can trigger special stunts once per action with a stunt point.

EFFECTS IN WRITING

The rules use a short-hand syntax when describing effects in the text as follows:

- Write Advantages and Disadvantages in **bold**, lower case: **+1d advantage_name [B]**
- Write other effects with the effect name in bold, italics, Title Case, punctated with a colon (if in-line) or a period (on a new line; preferred) between the effect name and the effect description written in lower case on its own line within the text:
  - ***Damage Effect Name.*** Damage 1; physical (bludgeoning) or mental (emotional) [T].
  - ***Soak Effect Name:*** soak 1; physical or mental [B].

ADVANTAGE

Advantage effects represent anything that create an advantage (bonus dice) or disadvantage (penalty dice). Examples include gear (jet packs, climbing gear) and spells (jump, true strike). Each advantage or disadvantage will have a short description that identifies when and how it applies.

Characters can overcome all advantages, disadvantages, aspects, and assets with an action appropriate for the created effect or by suffering an appropriate consequence.

SIMPLE SUCCESS

The base level of effect is a +1d brief [B] advantage to a specific skill for you or an ally. Alternatively, you can choose one of the following outcomes:

- Create a new situation or character aspect of either a Brief [B] or Action [A] duration.
- Discover a situation or character aspect that you didn't know about.

INCREASE EFFECT

The Increase Effect stunt for advantage effects allows you to choose one of the following:

- ① Increase the magnitude of an advantage or disadvantage by 1d.
- ① Expand the advantage to all physical or all mental skills as appropriate.
- ① Convert the advantage to a disadvantage for a specific skill. If the disadvantage limits the target's movement, the disadvantage applies to any movement-related actions, possibly requiring an overcome action where none was required before.
- ① Convert a basic advantage into an asset (p. 59) with a single use.
- ① Increase the number of uses of an asset you have created.
- ② Expand the advantage to all skills.

DECREASE EFFECT

The Decrease Effect stunt for advantage effects decreases the magnitude of the advantage or disadvantage by 1d.

DAMAGE

Damage effects represent anything that cause physical or mental stress, with the ultimate result being incapacitation or death. Every damage effect has a *damage rating* and *damage type* (physical or mental). Many damage effects also include a damage subtype (bludgeoning or emotional are the defaults).

Simple success with an attack causes damage equal to the damage rating, though stunts may increase the damage and the target's soak may reduce it. For the impact of damage and possible consequences, see Stress & Consequences, p. 27.

Damage Examples

> Physical weapons (guns, knives), spells (fireball, magic missile), and mental attacks (fear, psychological torture).

SIMPLE SUCCESS

The base level of effect is damage 1 and the default duration of stress resulting from damage is scene [S].

INCREASE EFFECT

The Increase Effect stunt for damage effects increases the damage rating by 2.

DECREASE EFFECT

The Decrease Effect stunt for damage effects decreases the damage rating by 2.

DAMAGE PROPERTIES

DAMAGE SUBTYPES

Damage subtypes do not change damage but may interact with certain talents or features. Depending on your setting, you might define one or more for your themepack. The most common subtypes and their abbreviations are:

- Physical: ballistic, **bludgeoning**, fire, impaling, and slashing.
- Mental: **emotional**, fear, and psychic.

Bold descriptors are the default damage subtypes. Additionally, you may find these uncommon physical descriptors useful: acid, cold, endurance, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, radiant, and thunder.

DIRECT

Damage effects with the *direct* property ignore the target's soak but must also specify a special effect or condition that completely negates the attack. For example, a poison gas could be direct (air filtration or no need to breath). If the target is wearing a gas mask, they would not be affected by the poison gas.

PIERCE

Pierce represents the ability of damage to punch through soak. If a damage effect has a higher level of pierce than the level of hardened of the soak (0 by default), the soak value is halved (round down).

REACH

Damage effects with the *reach* property can be used to attack past an opponent or obstacle.

REDUCED PENETRATION

Double the target's soak value before reducing damage.

SOAK

Soak effects represent anything that can protect a character from physical or mental harm. Examples include physical armor (full plate, leather jacket), spells (mage armor, bark skin), and exceptional abilities (tough hide, mental barriers). Every soak effect has a *soak rating* and a damage type (physical or mental) against which it applies.

Each point of soak rating reduces incoming damage by 1.

SIMPLE SUCCESS

The base level of effect is soak 1 with a brief [B] duration.

INCREASE EFFECT

The Increase Effect stunt for soak effects increases the soak rating by 2.

DECREASE EFFECT

The Decrease Effect stunt for soak effects decreases the soak rating by 2.

SOAK PROPERTIES

COVERAGE

Soak with the *coverage* property can be completely bypassed with a well-placed attack. Coverage specifies the number of stunt points the attacker must spend to bypass the soak.

HAMPERED

This condition applies to all Physique (endurance), Move create advantage, and Move overcome rolls. Each rank in Physique negates 1d of **hampered**.

HARDENED

Hardened soak is more difficult to pierce. Each point of hardened negates 1 level of pierce.

IMPROVED PROTECTION

Soak with the *improved protection* property offers a special stunt that reduces the duration of stress resulting from damage by one step (lasting becomes temporary, temporary becomes scene, and so on). It can only be chosen once per attack.

LIMITED SOAK

Soak can be further limited to apply only against a specific damage subtype (p. 19) or other special effect, or to apply against everything but that. Examples include a force field that only works against fire or faerie resilience that works against everything but cold iron.

SOFT SOAK

Unlike normal soak, *soft* soak cannot reduce incoming damage to less than 1. Apply soft soak after all other soak. Soft soak is halved as normal by pierce.

UNIVERSAL PROPERTIES

AREA

An *area* effect works against everyone within a specific area. The area property specifies the number of zones affected, as well as the shape of the area (cone, line, sphere, etc.)

When an NPC targets PCs, the NPC's skill should be modified as normal for conditions. Any remaining bonus or penalty dice are applied as a modifier to the Move defend action of PCs in the area. Simple success grants 1 stunt point for use on the *Decrease Effect* stunt, as does each additional stunt point.

When a PC targets NPCs, they make a single attack test with modifiers for conditions, but not for defender skill ranks. NPCs can trade dice of Move for stunt points as normal for use with the *Decrease Effect* stunt. If they have 1d remaining they get an additional stunt point.

You can use stunt points for the *Increased Effect* stunt, but this only increases the effect on a single target. In order to apply *Increased Effect* to more targets, you must first use the *Increase Scope* stunt to increase the number of targets affected by the *Increased Effect* stunt.

Explosion

When using an area effect with the *explosion* property, make an attack against a single target as normal, applying the full effect on success. All other targets in the zone defend against half the effect as specified in the area property. Additionally, stunt points must be applied to the primary target of the attack or the other targets in the zone separately.

Selective

When using an area effect with the *selective* property, you may choose which targets within the area are affected.

Aimed

When using an area effect with the *aimed* property, only targets that you could target normally are affected. In most cases this means you need to be able to see someone to target them.

AUTO

Auto effects must also take the uses property.

Auto effects can affect multiple targets in quick succession or a single target multiple times. Examples include machine guns or a flurry of punches that is too exhausting to use more than once.

You gain +3d to the action but the *uses* property is automatically **EXHAUSTED**.

You can use stunt points to apply the effect to multiple targets or a single target multiple times.

Single Mode

If you use an *auto* effect without applying the action bonus the *uses* property cannot be **EXHAUSTED**.

Auto Only

Auto only effects must always apply the auto action bonus.

BURST

Burst effects must also take the uses property.

Burst effects are a reduced form of *auto* effects. Examples include certain pistols and assault rifles, or spells like magic missile.

You gain +1d to the action, and risk exhausting your *uses* as normal.

You can use no more than three stunt points to apply the effect to multiple targets or a single target multiple times.

Single Mode

If you use a *burst* effect without applying the action bonus the *uses* property cannot be EXHAUSTED.

Burst Only

Burst only effects must always apply the burst action bonus.

DURABLE

Durable objects have six stress boxes, like characters (3 STRESSED, 2 *staggered*, 1 incapacitated).

FRAGILE

Fragile objects have no stress boxes and are incapacitated if any damage it receives exceeds its soak.

OBJECT

Many effects manifest in the game as objects. At its most basic, an effect that has the object property cannot be used if the object is not on your character.

By default, all objects have the *required hands (one hand)* property. You can redefine that with the *required hands* property.

Objects can be *reliable* or *unreliable,* which changes the cost of creating advantage on that object.

Objects can also be *durable* or *fragile,* which change the object's number of stress boxes.

Breaking Objects

Objects have three stress boxes, one of each severity (STRESSED, *staggered*, incapacitated). Smaller objects do not have a stressed box, while larger objects might have one to three extra boxes.

Objects that are STRESSED or *staggered* are malfunctioning in some way.

An object ceases to function when it is incapacitated, effectively broken but repairable. If it takes any more damage that gets through its soak, it is destroyed and is no longer repairable.

An object is also destroyed if it takes 12 damage after soak at any time.

RANGED

You can use the effect on a target out to the listed range. You may use the *Increase Scope* stunt to increase the range +1 step, but no further.

Accurate

Reduce the difficulty of the attack by 1d when you use the Focus snap action with this effect.

Limited

You may not use *Increase Scope* to increase the range of the attack.

Max

Max defines the maximum number of stunt points that can be used to increase range and defaults to 1.

Thrown

Effects with this property increase their range by 1 step for every 2d of Physique.

RELIABLE

Creating an advantage effect on a reliable object costs an additional stunt point (simple success is not enough).

RELOAD

Effects with the *reload* property require the specified amount of time to reload. For example, a weapon with reload (snap action) would require that you spend a snap action on your turn to reload the weapon.

REPAIRABLE

These objects can be sacrificed like any asset, but can be repaired and brought back into play. This requires a successful Wits (craft) action during an exposition scene or a rest.

REQUIRED HANDS

Most objects require hands to use—think most weapons, a phone, or even a bag. However, some non-object effects also require hands—magic is often described as requiring a free hand.

The *required hands* property specifies the number of hands required to use an effect. One Hand (1H) is the default.

One Hand (1H)

The effect requires one hand to use.

Two Hands (2H)

The effect requires two hands to use.

Versatile

The effect can be used with one hand or two. When used with two hands, gain a stunt point when you succeed in using the effect.

SKILL MINIMUM

Effects with a *skill minimum* require a certain skill rank to use effectively. Failure to meet the skill minimum imposes penalty dice on any action to use the effect equal to the difference. For example, if you try to use a heavy weapon that requires Physique 2d, but your Physique is 1d, you would suffer -1d to any attacks with that weapon.

SKILL MAXIMUM

Effects with a *skill maximum* limit the maximum rank of skill that can be used when the effect applies. If two effects apply a skill maximum, reduce the lower effect by -1 (to a minimum of 0). For example, if you had Move 3 and wore armor with Max Move 2, you could only use 2 ranks of Move for any Move action. If instead you wore two pieces of armor that both had a Max Move of 2, your Max Move would be 1. This only limits ranks, not other bonus dice.

SLOW

You cannot use the *Increase Scope* stunt to affect additional targets.

TIRING

Weapons with the *tiring* property take a toll on the wielder. The tiring property can be triggered with a stunt point from an attack, at which point it inflicts 1 direct damage [S] on the wielder of the same type that it causes. For example, a tiring physical weapon (axe) would cause physical damage, while a tiring mental weapon (mind blast) would cause mental damage.

TWO-SHOT

Two-shot effects are extremely reduced forms of *auto* effects and can be used in one of three ways:

- You gain +1d to the action.
- You can use one stunt point to apply the effect to multiple adjacent targets or a single target multiple times.
- If the effect has the *uses* property, you can use the effect twice before you risk exhausting your *uses*.

UNRELIABLE

Increase any advantage effect applied to the object by 1 stunt point. This can reflect poor craftsmanship, damage, or just general instability.

USES

An effect with the *uses* property has some limitation on how many times it can be used. Examples include ammunition for guns, batteries for robots, and mana for spells.

The *uses* property can be triggered with plot point, or a stunt point from either a successful defend action against the effect or a failed attack, at which point the uses are exhausted. Once the uses are EXHAUSTED, the effect cannot be used until you refresh plot points (see Milestones, p. 80), until you successfully rest (p. 31), or succeed at a special test (e.g., Gear Test, p. 45).

Ammo

With *ammo*, you can only regain uses by acquiring more of the appropriate ammunition. Use an action to consume an extra ammunition asset and remove the EXHAUSTED aspect from the *uses* property.

For effects that require a gear test to remove the EXHAUSTED aspect, you can use an exhibition scene to acquire additional ammuniton assets. Additionally, you may find additional ammuniton assets during a scene, but this should only be the result of finding an ammunition cache rather than just scavenging enemies.

High Capacity

High capacity lets you prevent *uses* from being exhausted once per scene.

MOVEMENT

ZONES

Zones are a convenient way to divide a larger space into smaller spaces without worrying about an exact map. A human-scale zone is small enough that you can interact directly with someone (e.g., walk up and hand them something)—around 10 meters square. Most conflicts occur within five or fewer zones.

Zones should give a tactical sense of the environment, and help you capture the essential details of the scene. Here are some additional guidelines:

- If you can describe the area as bigger than a house, you can probably divide it into two or more zones.
- If it's separated by stairs, a ladder, a fence, or a wall, it could be divided into zones.
- Large open areas should be divided into multiple zones—think of a gridiron football field. If the conflict will include longer ranges, track the number of zones a character has moved using the following guidelines:
  - 10 zones of movement will put you at Far range and takes about 5 rounds.
  - 30 zones of movement will put you at Distant range and takes about 15 rounds.
  - Moving farther during a conflict is usually impractical.
- "Above X" and "below X" can be different zones, especially if moving between them takes some doing—think of the airspace around something large, like a blimp.

When you're setting up the zones, note any zone aspects or conditions that could make moving between those zones problematic.

NON-PHYSICAL CONFLICTS

Even though this section discussed zones in terms of describing a physical conflict, this is not necessarily the case. Zones can just as easily be used to describe other conflicts, such as cyber or mental conflicts. In a cyber conflict, zones could be nodes on a network, while a mental conflict might range between memories, mental constructs, or even conflicting desires and fears. Any conflict where you might move from "here" to "there" or otherwise maneuver for position could be an opportunity to use zones.

ENCUMBRANCE

Both soak (p. 20) and load (p. 58) can impose conditions that make it more difficult to move, fight, and travel long distances. The penalties from soak and load stack.

SOAK

Soak may impose the *hampered* condition, which applies as a penalty to Physique (endurance), Move overcome, and Move create advantage tests.

LOAD

Load level may impose the *burdened* condition, which applies as a penalty to Physique (endurance) and all Move tests.

FALLING

The amount of damage resulting from a fall is determined by the number of stories fallen and the type of surface you hit when it stops. A hard fall, of less than one story, causes 2 damage.

Falling from a greater height increase the damage by the number of stories you fall, and a jagged surface increases the damage. The Falling Table summarizes damage and timing.

One story is approximately 3-4m or 10-14 feet.

FALLING DAMAGE

Falling. Damage 1 per full story to 15 stories, +1 per 2 full stories thereafter; physical (bludgeoning), temporary [T]. Hard surface adds +2 damage and stunts on doubles (2 stunt points on triples). Jagged surface adds +1-4 damage and pierce 1 per 4 full damage from distance (depending on material). Soft earth is +1d to overcome, sand +2d, and water +3d. Water (or other similar substance) also reduces duration to scene [S].

Falling Table

Distance	Damage	Time Required
2 stories	4	Just before bonus actions during first round of falling
15 stories or less	1 per story	At the end of the first round of falling
Up to 45 stories (180m)	15 plus + 1 per 2 stories over 15	Start of the same turn you started falling one round later
Up to 90 stories (360m)	30 (max)	+1 round

RESOLVING A FALL

A successful Move (overcome) reduces the damage by 2, GM Stunts increase the damage to 12, and then increase the duration after that.

A fall of three stories onto a hard surface will make most characters *staggered* (5 damage), while a fall of six stories will incapacitate most any character (8 damage). A fall of seven stories (9 damage) is most likely lethal without some mitigating circumstances.

TIME REQUIRED TO FALL

You can fall 2 stories before you can take your next bonus action. If you still have more distance to fall, you have a bonus action to change your circumstances.

You can fall a total of 15 stories by the end of the round in which you started to fall.

During the next round, you can fall up to 45 stories by the start of the turn in which you started to fall.

After that you are at terminal velocity and fall 90 stories per round if you fall in an earth-like atmosphere and gravity, maxing out at 30 damage (plus any modifications for surface).

BONUS ACTION

During a bonus action while falling you can perform a Move (create advantage) to try and prepare for the Move (overcome) when you land.

Alternatively, you could attempt to arrest your fall if there is something to grab on to by succeeding at Move (overcome) with a difficulty of -1d per 4 damage (at the time you attempt your action).

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

STRESS TRACKS

You have two *stress tracks*: physical and mental. Each track has several *stress boxes*, divided into three different *consequences*: STRESSED, *staggered*, and incapacitated. You manage and recover boxes for each track separately. You also have two *damage thresholds*: your **staggered** threshold is 4 and your incapacitated threshold is 8.

The damage type of an attack (physical or mental) determines which stress track you use.

GAINING STRESS BOXES

By default, each stress track has six stress boxes: 3 STRESSED, 2 *staggered*, and 1 incapacitated. You gain one additional physical stress box per 2d of Physique, and one additional mental stress box per 2d of Resolve. Talents may grant additional stress boxes as well.

When you gain an additional stress box, you gain an incapacitated stress box first, then *staggered*, and finally STRESSED. If you gain a fourth stress box, repeat this process starting with an additional incapacitated stress box.

TRACKING STRESS

The damage from an attack is reduced by your soak (if any).

If the damage is reduced to 0, it has no effect. Otherwise, compare the damage to your thresholds.

If the damage equals or exceeds your incapacitated threshold (8), fill in an incapacitated box. If the damage equals or exceeds your **staggered** threshold (4) but not your incapacitated threshold, fill in a staggered box.

If the damage is below your **staggered** threshold, fill in a stressed box. When you fill in a box, use the duration (B, Q, S, T, L, LL, E, P) of the damage that caused you to fill it. You only ever fill in one box per attack.

If you need to fill in a stress box and all the boxes of that consequence in the appropriate stress track are already filled in, you must fill in a box of the next highest consequence. If there is no higher box to fill, you are incapacitated. When you fill in all the stress boxes of given consequence within a stress track, you suffer that consequence.

If your incapacitated box is full, and you are incapacitated some other way, fill an additional incapacitated box with the duration of that effect.

Example Stress Tracker

Physical	Consequence	Mental
4 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	STRESSED	☐ ☐ ☐ 4
☐ ☐ ☐	*staggered*	☐ ☐
8 ☐ ☐	incapacitated	☐ ☐ 8

EXCESS DAMAGE (12+)

If the damage total is 12 or more, subtract 11 and *Increase Time* once for each 2 full damage remaining.

This also means once you've used the *Increase Effect* stunt to increase the damage to 12, any excess stunt points should be used to *Increase Time*.

CONSEQUENCES

You suffer a consequence as the result of filling in all the stress boxes of that consequence within a stress track (physical or mental).

STRESSED is an aspect that can be invoked against you without limit by spending a plot point, ignoring the normal rule that limits invoking more than once (p. 34).

When you are *staggered* you have a -1d disadvantage for all actions.

When you fill all your incapacitated boxes (by default this is one box) you can spend a plot point once during a scene to remain in the scene, but your incapacitated box remains filled. If you take enough damage to fill an incapacitated box that is already filled, track this damage in an additional incapacitated box and you are incapacitated (with possible additional consequences—see The End, p. 28). You will need to recover from all incapacitated boxes to return to play).

INCAPACITATED

If you are incapacitated, you can no longer act in the scene. Whoever incapacitates you narrates what happens to you. It should make sense based on how you got incapacitated—mental stress might cause you to run from the room in shame or terror, while physical stress might render you unconscious.

The duration of the stress that incapacitates you determines when your character can return to play.

THE END

In some games, oblivion is an important reality that characters must face. Your group should decide whether characters can meet a permanent end. Consider the following options to tweak the experience:

- Damage of 4 more than your incapacitated threshold ends your character.
- Taking damage while you are already incapacitated ends your character.
  - For tension, if the damage did not directly target your character, you can avoid your end with a successful overcome action (Physique or Resolve).
- You must treat incapacitated boxes with an overcome action at the end of the scene (see Treatment, p. 32). Success stabilizes your character until the appropriate duration has passed to recover. Failure, or simply not taking action to treat the stress box, ends your character.

SUMMARY OF DAMAGE RESOLUTION

Damage and soak properties are resolved in the following order:
1. Hardened negates pierce (p. 20)
2. Pierce halves soak (p. 19)
3. Soak reduces damage (p. 20)
4. Compare damage to damage thresholds
5. Consider options to reduce the damage (p. 29)
   - Concede
   - Make a Sacrifice
   - Acquire a Grave Aspect
6. Fill in one STRESSED, *staggered*, or incapacitated box as required
   - Use the abbreviation for the damage duration to fill the box
   - If all the boxes of the required level are filled, fill in a box at the next level
   - If there are no boxes to fill, you are incapacitated

REDUCING DAMAGE

You have several options you can choose to reduce the damage you take, but each one has a cost.

CONCEDE

You can choose to concede during a conflict at any time with an appropriate story. When you concede, you either earn a plot point, reduce the effect by 2 stunt points, or reduce the damage taken by four. You also get some narrative control over the way in which you are incapacitated. Conceding can be offered as part of Success at a Cost (p. 2).

MAKE A SACRIFICE

You can reduce the damage you would suffer by two (reduce the effect by 1 stunt point) if you sacrifice an appropriate gear or asset, such as a piece of equipment. Especially useful assets (such as leaving a wallet at a crime scene or losing a magical shield) might even offset four damage, 2 stunt points (or more).

This option requires GM approval, and the sacrifice should be meaningful. Additionally, you cannot sacrifice temporary assets that created through skill actions. For example, you could not sacrifice **ANGLE ON JIMMY THE FISH [2]** to escape a Zombie Horde.

If you are using Signature Assets (p. 59), they should offset four damage (or 2 stunt points)—more if the asset is especially meaningful to the scene or plot.

> **Zombie Horde.** A horde of zombies are going to drag you to the ground and make you the guest of honor for dinner. As painful as it is, you declare that they grab your backpack instead (including everything in it), giving you the opportunity to escape.
>
> **Broken Shield.** A skillful enemy hits you hard with a Fight attack. Knowing you would be incapacitated otherwise, you sacrifice your shield and declare it is smashed to pieces as a result of the attack. You better think of something, because you probably won't survive the next blow.

GRAVE ASPECT

Grave aspects are new aspects your character acquires from which you are unlikely to recover over the course of a scenario.

You can choose to suffer a grave aspect when you take damage. Reduce the damage you would take by two and acquire a new aspect with a duration one step greater than that of the effect. You can reduce the damage multiple times by increasing the duration each time until you have an aspect with a duration of Permanent [P].

Grave aspects can be removed like any other effect with a duration. Narratively, physical grave aspects could require Wits (medicine) to treat, while mental grave aspects could require Interact (therapy) to treat.

You may only acquire one grave aspect per scene.

NPCS AND GRAVE ASPECTS

NPCs cannot acquire grave aspects.

STRESS EXAMPLES

Simple Gunshot Wound

You are hit by a light pistol for 4 physical damage [T], equaling the ***staggered*** threshold. You mark a T in a ***staggered*** box. While you can recover Temporary [T] stress at a rest or milestone, you must succeed on a Physique overcome action to recover a ***staggered*** box.

Make a Sacrifice

You currently have one physical ***staggered*** box marked and take 5 damage. This would not only fill a ***staggered*** box, you would also gain the ***staggered*** consequence since that would be the last ***staggered*** box to mark on your physical stress track.

Luckily, you have a shield and decide to make a sacrifice, especially since it's *repairable*. This reduces your damage to 3, which is below the ***staggered*** threshold. You mark a stressed box and keep fighting.

Fear and Loathing

Suddenly, an UNKNOWABLE HORROR appears! On top of that, your mental incapacitated box is already filled from the last horrible thing you saw, and you already spent a plot point to not be incapacitated.

Feeling the fear as you shake the dice, you fail your Resolve test horribly! The GM informs you that you take 8 mental damage [L].

Depending on the situation, you might have something allowing you to make a sacrifice. Perhaps you are holding the MacGuffin, and you drop it into an abyss. Losing a useful item would normally reduce damage by 2, but dropping the MacGuffin is probably worth damage reduction of 4.

You decide not to make a sacrifice. You have no mental soak, so you take the full 8 damage. This result exceeds your incapacitated threshold and your incapacitated box is already filled, so you are incapacitated. Since you want to stay active in the scene, you decide to accept a grave aspect. The duration of the damage is Lasting [L], which will make the grave aspect Long-Lasting [LL] and reduce your damage by 2 to a total of 6.

Thinking carefully, you declare "I WILL NEVER BE ALONE AGAIN [LL]", record that as a new aspect, fill in a ***staggered*** box (since you still are taking 6 mental damage), and you stay in the scene.

RECOVER

Throughout a scenario you will acquire stress and consequences. You remove these in multiple ways: duration, rally during a conflict, rest between milestones, and recover upon achieving a milestone.

RECOVERING CONSEQUENCES

If all the stress boxes of a given severity within a stress track are full and you recover one of those stress boxes, the consequence no longer applies. This also means when your incapacitated box is filled, you are incapacitated until you clear that box.

RECOVER STRESS BY DURATION

You clear stress boxes based on their duration interval. This is especially important for Brief [B] and Quick [Q], which will clear during a scene.

RECOVER TEST REQUIRED FOR STAGGERED OR INCAPACITATED BOXES

Recovering a *staggered* or incapacitated box requires a successful overcome action to clear after the appropriate duration interval (use Physique or Resolve to recover physical or mental stress boxes respectively). *staggered* boxes have no penalty, while incapacitated boxes require a stunt point to recover. Use a stunt point to clear an additional box of that severity or lower, and of the same or shorter duration. Roll only once at the time interval.

Should you fail a recover test, you can attempt it again when you rest or at the next milestone. If the duration is shorter than Temporary [T], change it to [T]. Subsequent failures require you to repeat this process.

RALLY

During a conflict, you can spend your entire turn to *rally*. When you rally, you attempt an overcome action (Physique for physical, Resolve for mental) to clear one **STRESSED** box of Scene [S] duration. Each stunt point earned on this roll clears an additional stressed box or increases the duration that can be cleared.

You may only benefit from one rally per conflict without spending a plot point. *staggered* and incapacitated boxes cannot be removed by a rally.

REST

A rest is an exposition scene (p. 13) that enables the characters to catch their breath and recover.

Characters must be able to rest free from impending threats, and they must not be under any time pressures. Examples include holing up in a room or retreating to a safehouse in The Sprawl. The specific duration of a rest is irrelevant.

If the characters are in an area with a looming threat, you may require an all succeed group test to create the advantage required to rest. The skill used for the test will depend on the nature of the threat, but Wits (survival) is most common in the wilderness and Wits (streetwise) in urban settings. Move (stealth) is also appropriate for chase scenes. Failure results in either a setback (p. 8), or the introduction of a challenge or a conflict to resolve before a rest is possible.

BENEFITS

When you rest, gain the following benefits:
- Reset all aspect tracking (invoked or compelled)
- Recover stress and remove effects of Temporary [T] duration or shorter.

You cannot take another rest until you either complete a *milestone* (p. 80) or sacrifice future Refresh. All characters must agree to reduce their next Refresh by one plot point in order to take an additional rest before you have completed a milestone.

MILESTONE RECOVERY

You recover automatically after completing a milestone (certain Features may modify this, see Survival Mode, p. 58). The type of milestone completed determines the duration of effects or consequences removed.

BENEFITS

When you recover, you reset all uses and aspect tracking (invoked or compelled), and recover stress and remove effects by duration as follows:

- Minor   Lasting or shorter
- Major   Long-Lasting or shorter
- Epic   Enduring or shorter

TREATMENT

You use skills to improve your chances to recover or to remove stress through actions. Use Wits for physical stress and Interact for mental stress.

Use your action to create advantage during a Rest (p. 31) for a pending recover test.

Use your action to overcome during a conflict, challenge, or contest scene to remove a **STRESSED** box with a Scene [S] duration. Use the *Increase Scope* stunt to treat **staggered** box (1 stunt) or incapacitated box (2 stunts). Use the *Increase Time* stunt to increase the duration you treat by 1 step.

Use your action to overcome during a Rest (p. 31) to remove a **staggered** box with a Temporary [T] duration. Use the *Increase Scope* stunt to treat an incapacitated box (1 stunt).

Use your action to overcome during a Rest (p. 31) to reduce the duration of a **STRESSED** box by one step.

ASPECTS

An *aspect* is a word or phrase that describes something special about a person, place, thing, situation, or group. Almost anything you can think of can have aspects. Aspects are written in bold SMALL CAPS, optionally followed by a duration. If no duration is listed, it is permanent **[P]** and will remain true until something happens to make it no longer true.

For example, a person could be THE GREATEST SWORDSWOMAN ON THE CLOUD SEA. A traumatic event might leave you SHOCKED **[L]**. A gun might become JAMMED at an inopportune time. Any limitation to how or when an aspect applies should be inherent in its name.

TYPES OF ASPECTS

There's an endless variety of aspects, but no matter what they're called they all work pretty much the same way. The main difference is how long they stick around before going away.

GAME ASPECTS

Game aspects are permanent fixtures of the game, hence the name. While they might change over time, they never go away. Game aspects are usually defined during campaign creation, though events during play can change or add game aspects. They describe problems or threats that exist in the world and are going to be the basis for the story.

Everyone can invoke or compel a game aspect at any time; they're always there and available for anyone to use.

Examples: THE KING IS DEAD, WINTER IS COMING, A REBEL ALLIANCE

CHARACTER ASPECTS

Character aspects are just as permanent, but smaller in scope, attached to an individual PC or NPC. They describe a near-infinite number of things that set the character apart, such as significant personality traits or beliefs, backgrounds or professions, an important possession or noticeable feature, relationships, problems or goals, and titles, reputations, or obligations a character may have.

Examples: CAPTAIN OF THE SKYSHIP NIMBUS, ON THE RUN FROM THE KNIGHTS OF THE CIRCLE, ATTENTION TO DETAIL, I MUST PROTECT MY BROTHER

SITUATION ASPECTS

Situation aspects generally do not last longer than the scene [S], and then only as long as they make sense. Situation aspects can be attached to the environment the scene takes place in—which affects everybody in the scene—but you can also attach them to specific characters with the create advantage basic action.

Examples: MOONLESS NIGHT, UNRULY MOB, COVERED IN TAR, DENSE THICKET

USING ASPECTS

Players and GMs can invoke or compel aspects to change an outcome or enrich the story, using *plot points* (p. 36) to control the frequency. You invoke an aspect to gain some benefit, and you compel an aspect to create a complication.

ASPECTS ARE TRUTH

Character aspects serve as a great guide for when not to roll: pilots know about planes, the king's advisor understands the rules of succession, and accountants can balance books.

Besides knowing how to use aspects, it's important to understand how NOT to use them. First and foremost, aspects represent the truth of things. If a car is **ON FIRE**, it's going to burn. No one needs to spend a plot point to make that happen. However, if the drifting smoke from the fire interferes with a sniper's shot, that is an example of invoking the aspect. A **GIANT OF A MAN** does not need to spend a plot point to reach the jar on the high shelf, but they do if they are going to turn failure into success as they reach out to grab their falling friend.

This is also true when it comes to establishing facts. If a character is a **SORCERER OF THE AZURE ORDER**, we know that the character is a sorcerer and they are a member of something called the Azure Order. But if a player introduces a hated enemy of the Azure Order and explains how it complicates their life, that's a compel.

INVOKING ASPECTS

The primary way you use aspects is to *invoke* them. If you are in a situation where an aspect is beneficial to your character or detrimental to your opponent, you can invoke it. In order to invoke an aspect, briefly explain why it is relevant, spend a plot point, and choose one of these benefits:

- Reroll all of the dice
- Turn simple failure into simple success
- Turn simple success into simple failure
- Create a basic effect
- Add or negate a stunt point

The group must buy into the relevance of a particular aspect when you invoke it. The GM is the final arbiter. The use of an aspect should intuitively make sense, or you should be able to provide a brief narrative as to why it makes sense.

You can invoke multiple aspects on a single roll, but you cannot invoke the same aspect multiple times on a single roll. For example, if you still fail after a reroll, you will have to choose another aspect (and spend another plot point) for a second reroll or to turn failure into success. You must be involved in an action to invoke an aspect—you cannot invoke an aspect on behalf of someone else.

> You hit the bandit, but you really want to make a lasting impression. You decide to spend a plot point and invoke your **DREADFUL TO BEHOLD** aspect to add a stunt point, which you use to create advantage and give him a new character aspect, **FILLED WITH DREAD**.

INVOKING ASPECTS MORE THAN ONCE

You may not invoke an aspect more than once in the same scene until it is invoked against you or otherwise compelled.

Multiple players can invoke the same situation aspect during a scene—the limitation is relative to the individual. For example, a **SLIPPERY FLOOR** can be invoked by everyone once during a scene. You can track this by putting the character's initials (or appropriate symbol) next to the aspect until the scene ends.

COMPELLING CHARACTER ASPECTS

You *compel* a character aspect to make a situation more dramatic or complicated. Start by explaining why the aspect is relevant and then offer the details of the complication, creating a new situational aspect, triggering an event, or introducing some other story element. The GM and the players involved in the compel can negotiate the terms of the complication a bit and reach a reasonable consensus. The compelled character then has two options:

- Accept the complication and receive a plot point from the *plot pool* (p. 36).
- Spend a plot point to prevent the compel from happening.

The complication from the compel occurs regardless of anyone's efforts—once you've accepted and taken the plot point, you can't use your skills or anything else to mitigate the situation. You must deal with the new story developments that arise from the compel.

If you pay to prevent the complication from happening, then you describe how you avoid it, possibly with help from the group. Sometimes it just means that you agree that the event never happened in the first place, and sometimes it means narrating your character doing something proactive. Whatever you need to do to have it make sense works fine, as long as the group is okay with it.

GM COMPELLING PLAYERS

The GM can compel player aspects as often as fits the story and is an important part of how players gain plot points in between refreshes.

COMPELLING YOURSELF

You can always suggest a compel on yourself. If the GM agrees, you receive a plot point and realize the complication.

> You are among the guests of honor at the governor's mansion when you spot a very valuable Remington bronze. You decide to liven things up and offer a compel for your
> "COLLECTOR" OF FINE ART aspect. The GM thinks this sounds like a lovely idea and gives you a plot point from the plot pool and introduces a new plot element: a well-to-do socialite apparently saw you steal the bronze and now wants to meet, perhaps to leverage your larcenous talents!

PLAYERS COMPELLING PLAYERS

You can always suggest a compel on another player's aspects, but the targeted player can prevent the compel *without spending a plot point.*

PLAYERS COMPELLING NPCS

You can spend one of your plot points to compel an NPC's aspects. The GM can spend one of their GM plot points to prevent the compel from happening.

FINAL ARBITRATION

The GM is the final arbiter for both the result of a compel, as well as whether a compel is valid in the first place. Use the same judgment you apply to an invocation—it should make instinctive sense, or require only a small amount of explanation, that a complication might arise from an aspect.

PLOT POINTS

Plot points are one of your most important resources in NOVA6—they provide you with a degree of narrative control, enabling you to nudge the story in a desired direction.

Plot points are always earned from and spent into an unlimited pool of plot points called the *plot pool*.

THE PLOT POINT ECONOMY

For the most part, the use of aspects revolves around plot points. Ideally, you want a consistent ebb and flow of plot points going on throughout your sessions. Players spend them to be awesome in a crucial moment, and they get them back when their lives get dramatic and complicated. If your plot points are flowing the way they're supposed to, you'll end up with these cycles of triumphs and setbacks that make for a fun and interesting story.

You indicate your supply of plot points by using tokens, such as poker chips, glass beads, or other markers. We advise against using candies, unless you want players eating their plot points.

REFRESH

Each player has a *refresh* that specifies how many plot points they start each *scenario* with (p. 79) and how many they refresh when completing milestones. You draw plot points from the plot pool.

The default refresh is three plot points. If you have more plot points than your refresh, you do not reset to your refresh but instead keep the extra.

EARNING PLOT POINTS

You earn plot points from the plot pool in the following ways:
- Accept a compel
- Have your aspects invoked against you
- Concede in a conflict

SPENDING PLOT POINTS

You spend plot points into the plot pool in any of the following ways:
- Invoke an aspect
- Invoke consequences
- Compel an NPC's aspects
- Refuse a compel
- Activate a talent or feature (if required)
- Take a bonus action in a conflict

THE GM AND PLOT POINTS

The GM also gets to use plot points, starting each scenario with one plot point per PC.

The GM can spend and earn plot points (as above) on behalf of NPCs.

GM REFRESH

The GM refreshes their plot points from the plot pool whenever the players refresh their plot points.

STUNTS

Stunts enable you to go beyond simple success and failure to create additional effects, modify the base effect of an action, discover new information, change the circumstances and more.

Your action dice (p. 2) determine any free stunt points you might earn from rolling and you can always invoke an aspect to get one more.

You then spend your stunt points on one or more stunts and describe the outcome.

EARNING STUNT POINTS

You earn one stunt point (SP) on a success when you:

- Trade 2 bonus dice before rolling
- Roll triples
- Spend a plot point and invoke an aspect

Additionally, you may earn one when you:

- Trade 1 bonus die before rolling a Specialized skill
- Roll doubles with a Focused skill
- Apply a special Talent

RULE OF AWESOME

The Rule of Awesome states:

Stunts should always result in awesome.

If you choose a stunt that would result in no additional effect, the GM will explain why nothing happened—this should reveal about one stunt point's worth of information. That stunt point is still used, but the result is that you learn something important about the situation or your adversary that will be useful instead.

If you spent more than one stunt point, you can then spend all but one of your stunt points on a different stunt.

CORE STUNTS

Spend a stunt point to perform a *stunt*. The cost for stunts with multiple levels of effect is indicated by the symbols ①, ②, or ③.

   The Core Stunts Table includes a variety of stunts that cover most situations, but this should not be considered an absolute list. Use these as a guideline for anything that might be appropriate for the situation.

Core Stunts Table

Name	Description
Create Effect	Create a basic effect appropriate for the skill. See the individual effect (such as Advantage, Damage, or Soak, p. 13) for details. This can be used to introduce an object or create advantage.
Declare	Declare something about the scene, such as a situational aspect or NPC. The declaration must be a result of or related to your action (e.g., while attempting to sneak past a guard, you describe how the guard decides to take a smoke break). If a declaration would contradict critical story elements, the GM will work with you to come up with an appropriate alternative. ① *Subtle* change: introduce a situational aspect. ② *Minor* change: introduce an NPC extra to the scene. ③ *Major* change: introduce a group of NPC extras or an NPC principal to the scene.
Discover	Ask the GM to reveal additional information. ① *Some* additional information related to your discovery, usually well hidden or restricted to a limited few. ② *Most* of the information related to your discovery, but not the darkest, most forbidden, or lost secrets. ③ *All* discoverable details concerning your target or outcome, including deepest secrets.
Increase Effect/ Decrease Effect	Increase or decrease a basic effect that has no more than a brief [B] duration, typically 1d per stunt point. See the individual basic effect (such as Advantage, Damage, or Soak) for details.
Increase Scope	① Increase Range one step. ① Treat a *staggered* box during a scene. ① Treat an incapacitated box during a rest. ① *Some* targets in the zone (an additional principal or 2-3 extras of equal or lesser skill). ② *Most* targets in the zone, either all extras or 2-3 principals. ② Treat an incapacitated box during a scene. ③ *All* potential targets within the zone.
Increase Time/ Decrease Time	Increase or decrease a duration or interval. Brief/Action ↔Quick ↔Scene ↔Temporary ↔Lasting ↔Long-Lasting ↔Enduring ↔Permanent
React	Perform a single action as a reaction that cannot generate stunt points. Choose this stunt only once per turn. You cannot move between zones as a reaction. This is a very versatile stunt. For example, it can be used to make a counterattack, attempt to Rally (p. 31), or take a ready snap action.
Special (S)	Talents and features may have special stunts, denoted by (S). Unless otherwise noted, special stunts can only be activated once per action.
Trigger Property	Trigger a property as per its rules.

CHARACTER CREATION

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHARACTER?

Whether you're talking about fantasy, science fiction, superheroes, or gritty cop shows, NOVA6 works best when you use it to tell stories about people who are proactive, competent, and dramatic.

Characters should be **proactive**. They have a variety of abilities that lend themselves to active problem solving, and they aren't timid about using them. They don't sit around waiting for the solution to a crisis to come to them—they go out and apply their energies, taking risks and overcoming obstacles to achieve their goals.

This doesn't mean that they don't ever plan or strategize, or that they're all careless to a fault. It just means that even the most patient among them will eventually rise and take action in a tangible, demonstrable way.

Characters are **competent**. They aren't bumbling fools who routinely look ridiculous when they're trying to get things done—they're highly skilled, talented, or trained individuals capable of making visible change in the world they inhabit. They are the right people for the job, and they get involved in a crisis because they have a good chance of being able to resolve it for the better.

This doesn't mean they always succeed, or that their actions are without unintended consequence. It just means that when they fail, it isn't because they made dumb mistakes or weren't prepared for the risks.

Characters lead **dramatic** lives. The stakes are always high for them, both in terms of their personal struggles and the challenges they face. Like us, they struggle with their issues, and though the external circumstances of their lives might be a lot bigger in scope than what we go through, we can still relate to and sympathize with them.

This doesn't mean they spend all their time wallowing in misery and pain, or that everything in their lives is always a world-shaking crisis. It just means that their lives require them to make hard choices—and live with the consequences.

CHARACTER CREATION STEPS

Follow these steps to create a character:
1. Choose your core aspects: high concept, background, motivation, and trouble.
2. Record your level (1 by default).
3. Spend 6 + level advances on skills and talents.
4. Choose gear and assets as appropriate.
5. Choose a name.
6. Record your plot refresh (3 by default).
7. Record any additional physical or mental stress boxes (1 per 2d of Physique/Resolve, plus Talents).
8. Record attacks and defenses (if appropriate).

THEMEPACKS AND GAME CREATION

NOVA6 Core *themepacks* define the core aspects, skills, and talents used to create characters for a game. This chapter uses a default Universal Themepack that is appropriate for most games of NOVA6 Core.

See Game Creation (p. 65) for details on creating your own themepack.

CHARACTER SHEET

Character sheets are used to record the important character data in a common format. This is helpful when learning the game or building characters for the first time.

THEMEPACK SPECIFIC SHEETS

Themepacks often include a custom character sheet with game-specific character options—before playing, check if there is a character sheet for your game's themepack.

TRACKING ADVANCES—BOXES

NOVA6 uses a simple approach to track character advances: check a box. This simplifies the character-building process by tracking the key choices you make in an easy to tally format.

SIMPLIFY

If you separate the character-building process from the character recording process, you can simplify the character sheet. Even something as small as a business card can be enough for recording all relevant character data.

Do not record skills or talents you do not have. For example, Mimi Kazan has no Physique, but we do record Fight 0 since she has a relevant perk (pistols) we want to track:

Miriam "Mimi" Kazan   **Level** 1   **Refresh** 3

I am a **DOWN AND OUT PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR** who was **BORN AND RAISED IN NEW YORK CITY.** I feel **COMPELLED TO HELP THOSE IN NEED** because I **ESCAPED FROM A LIFE OF CRIME.**

Fight 0 *pistols*   **Signature Assets**
Interact 2 (Focused) *persuade*   Snub-nosed .38
Move 1 *move through a crowd*   Dressed to the nines
Resolve 1   I know a place to stay
Wits 1   Sgt O'Mally is a friend
Talents: *Well-Trained*

	STRESSED	*staggered*	incapacitated
Physical Stress:	[ ][ ][ ]	4 [ ][ ]	8 [ ]
Mental Stress:	[ ][ ][ ]	[ ][ ]	[ ]

LEVEL

PLOT REFRESH

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

CORE ASPECTS

High Concept

Background

Motivation

Trouble

OTHER ASPECTS

ATTACK

Attack **Damage** **Type**

DEFENSE

Defense **Soak** **Type**

STRESS TRACKER

Physical	Consequence	Mental
4	STRESSED	4
	staggered	
8	incapacitated	8

GEAR & ASSETS

NOVA 6
Universal Themepack

SKILLS

Ranks		F	P	S
☐☐☐☐☐	**Fight**	☐	☐	☐
Perks:				
☐☐☐☐☐	**Interact**	☐	☐	☐
Perks:				
☐☐☐☐☐	**Move**	☐	☐	☐
Perks:				
☐☐☐☐☐	**Physique**	☐	☐	☐
Perks:				
☐☐☐☐☐	**Resolve**	☐	☐	☐
Perks:				
☐☐☐☐☐	**Wits**	☐	☐	☐
Perks:				

SKILL TALENTS

Check the box next to the chosen skill.

Focused. Gain +1 SP on doubles with this skill. Max rank for this skill increases by 1.

Practiced. Choose a simple success with this skill if you are *up* without rolling, or you may reroll any ones on an action test once.

Specialized. Gain a perk and the ability to trade 1d for +1 SP on success with this skill.

CORE TALENTS

☐ *Danger Sense*. Surprise actions have no advantage against you. When you oppose with Move you can use success and stunt points for movement.

☐ *Lucky*. +2 refresh.

☐ *Quick*. +1d on Initiative, +1 bonus action per conflict, and +1 SP on doubles.

☐ *Resolute*. +1 mental stress box, +1d to Resolve (defend).

☐ *Strong Body*. +1 Fight & thrown damage, negate 1d burdened/hampered, +1d Physique (overcome, create advantage).

☐ *Strong Personality*. +1 interact damage, +1d Interact (overcome, defend).

☐ *Tough*. +1 physical stress box, +1d to Physique (defend).

☐☐ *Well-Trained*. Gain 3 perks that provide
☐☐ +1d to a specific action, or all actions if narrowly defined.

CORE ASPECTS

Your character is defined by four core aspects: High Concept, Background, Motivation, and Trouble. These aspects capture the most fundamental and important elements of your character and are what set you apart from other characters—a group might have two fighters, but you'll be the only OUTCAST BERSERKER IN SEARCH OF A HOME.

HIGH CONCEPT

Your high concept is a phrase that sums up what your character is about—who you are and what you do. It's one of the first and most important aspects for your character.

Think of this aspect like your job, your role in life, or your calling—it's what you're good at, but it's also an obligation and likely filled with its own challenges. A well-defined high concept comes with some good and some bad. Examples include: FORMER ADVISOR TO THE KING, DOWN AND OUT PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR, or GANG ENFORCER FOR THE TRIAD.

BACKGROUND

Your background represents your roots. It can represent where you are from geographically, but it can also represent your emotional or spiritual history. If change is inevitable, then your background is who you used to be. Background is a great opportunity to provide contrast to your high concept.

The TROUBLED WARRIOR SEEKING PEACE (high concept) may have once been A SIMPLE FARMER (background). Other examples include RELUCTANT HEIR APPARENT, DISAVOWED CIA OFFICER, or BORN AND RAISED IN NEW YORK CITY. Backgrounds will often resemble high concepts but represent a different time in your character's life.

MOTIVATION

Your motivation is the thing that drives you—what makes you get out of bed in the morning and do what you do. Characters often work together toward a common goal, but they are unlikely to have identical motivations. Even the members of a highly-disciplined military unit are going to have varying motivations. One might be serving primarily out of a LOVE OF COUNTRY, while another is COMPELLED TO HELP THOSE IN NEED. Other examples include RECLAIM THE UNDERWORLD, REDEEM MY FAMILY HONOR, or SPREAD THE LIGHT OF LENSAE.

Choosing a motivation that puts you in conflict with another member of the group can make for some fun roleplaying, provided both sides can handle the conflict maturely and keep it from disrupting the overall development of a shared story.

TROUBLE

Finally, every character has some sort of trouble aspect that is a part of their life and story. If your high concept is what or who your character is, your trouble is the answer to a simple question: what complicates your existence?

Trouble brings complication into your character's life and drives you into interesting situations. Your trouble shouldn't be easy to solve—if it was, your character would have already done so. Nor should it paralyze your character completely. You shouldn't have to deal with your trouble at every turn, unless that's the point of the story. Examples include ESCAPED FROM A LIFE OF CRIME, IN DEBT TO THE MAFIA, or IRREPRESSIBLY GREEDY.

Your trouble should not restate or follow directly from your high concept—saying that a HIGH-SOCIETY CAT BURGLAR (high concept) is COMPELLED TO STEAL SHINY THINGS (trouble) might be a little obvious and probably best left as part of the high-concept. Use your trouble as an opportunity to flesh out your character and bring in new and diverse elements.

LEVEL

The GM decides the starting *level* for the game. Level is an abstract measure of overall character experience and capability and determines the initial number of advances you can use to develop your character.

For information on gaining levels, see Milestones (p. 80).

What Level Am I?

SKILLS AND TALENTS

You acquire skills and talents by spending *advances*. These represent a character's overall capabilities and (with GM permission) can also be used to acquire special features from the themepack.

A rank in a skill or a talent costs one advance, while features can cost one or more advances.

SKILLS

Skills determine your success or failure with any test. At level one, you are limited to one rank in any skill.

See Skills (p. 47) for more details, as well as examples of perks for each skill.

PERKS

Perks represent additional proficiency with a single action, or with all actions for a narrow focus of a skill. Perks are acquired via the Specialized or Well-Trained talents.

TALENTS

Talents provide special abilities or enhanced capabilities, sometimes even breaking the rules to do so. Work with your GM to fill in missing talents that are important for your character.

See Talents (p. 55) for additional details on core talents,

RECOMMENDATIONS

Most characters should consider the following talents at least once at some point in their development: *Focused, Practiced,* and *Specialized.* If you take one of these talents, fill in the corresponding "F", "P", or "S" box on your character sheet to indicate the skill to which it applies.

Focused. You have great potential and can do things no one else can do—the archer that can pin a fly to the wall at a hundred meters.

Practiced. You may not be flashy, but you always get the job done—the safecracker that has seen it all.

Specialized. You are remarkable in a specific application of a skill—the world's foremost freeclimbing expert.

GEAR AND ASSETS

Gear and *assets* are features representing items or relationships associated with your character. The universal themepack assumes you can choose any gear and assets that align with your core aspects, skills, and talents. Choose one key piece of gear or asset for each of your core aspects.

See the Features section for more details about Gear (p. 58) and Assets (p. 59), especially if your game requires equipment for extended survival, exploration, or other activities.

NAME

We can't all be the **HERO WITHOUT A NAME.** It just gets confusing.

PLOT REFRESH

Characters start with a plot refresh of three. That means you will start each act with at least three plot points. Talents, such as Lucky, can change increase this number.

We find that the easiest way to indicate your plot refresh is to fill in the bubbles for plot refresh you don't have. For example, if you have a plot refresh of 3, you would completely fill in the 4 and 5 bubbles. At the end of a session you can then put a line through a bubble to indicate your current plot points.

STRESS BOXES

Characters start with six stress boxes (3 **STRESSED**, 2 *staggered*, and 1 incapacitated) in each stress track but may gain more from skills and talents. You gain one additional physical stress box per 2d of Physique, and one additional mental stress box per 2d of Resolve. The Tough and Resilient talents grant an additional physical or mental stress box respectively.

ATTACKS & DEFENSES

Depending on the game, you may have specific attacks (e.g., weapons and spells) or defenses (e.g., body armor and super powers). Record them under the appropriate section.

You're Done—Go Play!

SKILLS, TALENTS, AND FEATURES

SKILLS

Skills describe broad groups of competencies at something that your character might have gained through innate talent, training, or years of trial and error. They are the basis for everything your character does in the game that involves challenges and chance.

CORE SKILLS

Each core skill (Fight, Move, Interact, Physique, Wits, Resolve) provides examples of how you can use the skill to perform the four basic actions of NOVA6 Core, as well as examples of perks most often associated with a specific skill.

Should you decide to modify the skills, or expand on them, the core skill descriptions should give you a good foundation on which to build your game and themepack.

SKILL RANKS

Skills are measured by ranks: 0 (untrained), 1 (trained), 2 (skilled), 3 (expert), and 4 (master). Rank 5 is only available as part of a Feature (see p. 57) when appropriate for your game.

Each rank in a skill gives +1d to rolls you make with that skill. Higher ranks require that a character be higher level: rank 2 requires 5th level, rank 3 requires 10th level, and rank 4 requires 15th level.

The talent **Focused** allows you to exceed these limits by +1d.

Skill Ranks Table

Rank	Description	Bonus Dice	Requirements
0	Untrained	-	-
1	Trained	+1d	-
2	Skilled	+2d	Level 5
3	Expert	+3d	Level 10
4	Master	+4d	Level 15
5	Superhuman	+5d or more	Feature

PERKS

Perks are specializations within a specific skill. When making a test with that skill, you gain +1d if you have an applicable perk. Having more than one applicable perk does not grant additional bonus dice. A perk doesn't have to exactly match a skill application, as long as it is related. The *Keen Eyes* perk could apply to a Wits (notice) test.

Perks can be defined as nearly anything. In general, broad perks only apply to one specific basic action, while more narrow perks apply to all relevant actions.

For example, specializing with all light blades is broad and would need to be limited to a specific action, such as attack or create advantage. Specializing with rapiers is narrow and would not require choosing a specific action. The respective Fight perks would be *Light Blades (attack)* and *Rapiers*. The GM is the ultimate arbiter of what is broad and what is narrow.

OPPOSING SKILLS

When you take an action opposed by another character, the difficulty is equal to the opponent's skill ranks in an appropriate skill, modified by any relevant perks, talents, and features.

To assist in determining difficulty, you can use the following Opposing Skills Table. Do not feel constrained by this table. If the context of an action suggests a different opposing skill, go with that.

Opposing Skills Table

Skill	Action	Opposing Skill
Fight	Overcome	Fight Overcome*
	Create Advantage	Fight Defend
	Attack	Fight or Move Defend
	Defend	Fight Attack
Interact	Overcome	Interact Defend
	Create Advantage	Interact or Resolve Defend
	Attack	Interact or Resolve Defend
	Defend	Interact Attack
Move	Overcome	Move Overcome*
	Create Advantage	Wits or Move Defend
	Attack	Move Defend*
	Defend	Fight Attack or Move Create Advantage
Physique	Overcome	Physique Defend*
	Create Advantage	Physique Defend
	Attack	Physique Defend
	Defend	Physique (any)
Resolve	Overcome	Wits Create Advantage*
	Create Advantage	Wits Defend*
	Attack	Resolve Defend
	Defend	Resolve or Interact Attack
Wits	Overcome	Wits Defend
	Create Advantage	Move Defend
	Attack	Fight or Move Defend
	Defend	Wits or Move Create Advantage or Overcome

* These actions are often unopposed and use the Difficulty Table, p. 10

FIGHT

The Fight skill covers all forms of physical combat: unarmed and armed, ranged and melee.

EXAMPLE PERKS

Daggers, Sneak Attack, Judo (defend), Grappling, Firearms (attack), Bows (create advantage), Shortbow, Pistols.

OVERCOME

You won't typically use Fight outside of a conflict, though you might use it to demonstrate your prowess or perform a trick shot, possibly as part of a contest.

CREATE ADVANTAGE

You can use Fight to create advantage in physical conflicts, including many classic maneuvers: stunning strikes, grappling, disarms, trick shots, suppressing fire, and so on. You could even use Fight to assess another fighter's style, spotting weaknesses in their form that you can exploit.

DISARM, KNOCKDOWN, AND PUTTING THE TARGET AT DISADVANTAGE

You disarm a target using the advantage effect options (p. 18) to create the aspect **DISARMED [A]** or **PRONE [A]**.

You can also use the same options with the *Increase Effect* stunt to turn an advantage into a Move disadvantage for the target, with the magnitude of that advantage as an indicator of how severely **off-balance** they are.

These are examples of two common maneuvers you might perform in a fight but are by no means the limit of disadvantages or aspects you can create on your opponents.

GRAPPLE

A simple success imposes a maintained **grappled 1d [M]** disadvantage against Fight, Move, or the use of two appendages (treat the head as an appendage). You also suffer this disadvantage except with respect to your target. The target can attempt a Move action if it succeeds on a Physique snap action at -1d to lift you.

Use Fight or Physique vs Fight or Physique to overcome the grapple or improve it via create advantage on future actions, adjusting the effect by 1d for success or each stunt point.

ATTACK

Fight is most often used to make attacks. Melee attacks can be either armed or unarmed and can target anything within your zone. Ranged attacks can be thrown or have a range listed with by the attack.

BASIC MELEE ATTACK

Damage 1; physical (bludgeoning), scene [S]
Alternatively, make a Physique overcome reaction to shove or throw your target.

BASIC RANGED ATTACK

Damage 1; physical (bludgeoning), ranged (close, thrown), object (rock or similar required), scene [S]

DEFEND

You use Fight to defend against melee attack or create advantage attempts, as well as pretty much any action where violently interposing yourself could prevent it from happening.

You can't use this skill to defend against ranged attacks (use Move instead).

INTERACT

The Interact skill covers the entire gamut of social interactions, from making friends to interrogating suspects. Interacting with NPC extras is typically just a single overcome action, but NPC principals or PCs may require a contest.

EXAMPLE PERKS

Deceive (create advantage), Duping Guards, Provoke (attack), Intimidating

OVERCOME

You can use Interact to overcome almost any obstacle that can talk, or that can at least understand.

Examples include bluffing your way past a guard, tracking down a missing person, intimidating a stoolie for information, or convincing a jailor to let you go.

CREATE ADVANTAGE

Interact can be used to create a wide variety of advantages, generally representing emotional states, social maneuvering, or deception.

Examples include instilling someone with confidence, infuriating your opponent, telling convincing lies, or getting key information from your network.

ATTACK

You can use Interact to cause emotional harm to a target as a mental attack. Your relationship with the target and the current circumstances determine if you can use this action—usually you need some kind of relevant connection, aspect, or asset.

Attacking someone to make them angry or reckless is actually a create advantage action, not an attack.

BASIC EMOTIONAL ATTACK

Damage 1; mental (emotional), scene [S]

DEFEND

You use Interact to defend against all Interact actions.

MOVE

The Move skill represents your ability to skillfully maneuver, whether on foot or in a vehicle, including chases or races. Additionally, it covers all movement styles—quick, stealthy, elusive, etc.

EXAMPLE PERKS

Athletics (overcome), Climbing, Dodging (defend), Driving (create advantage), Motorcycles, Stealth

OVERCOME

Move can be used to overcome and move past any physical obstacle—climbing a wall, ramming a barrier, sneaking past a sentry, etc. You use overcome actions with Move to move between zones in a conflict, especially if there are conditions or aspects that restrict movement.

MOVEMENT

As a single overcome action you can move into an adjacent zone. If your path is unimpeded, you do not need to roll. If you want to move farther or if your path is obstructed, however, you need to succeed at a Move overcome test. Success generally means you move one additional zone or overcome an obstacle, with each stunt point adding an additional zone.

Climbing

Climbing over an obstacle requires an overcome to move past the barrier. Moving a zone still requires additional stunt points.

Moving vertically, climbing or otherwise, requires an overcome just to move into an adjacent zone located above you. Additional zones of movement vertically cost two stunt points instead of one.

Swimming

Swimming requires an overcome success to tread water or move into an adjacent zone. Rough waters or strong currents can penalize you. Additional zones of movement cost two stunt points instead of one.

> **Run and Jump.** You are chasing an assassin across the rooftops, and need to leap from one building to the next. You succeed at a Move overcome with a stunt point. You leap the gap between the two zones and make it another zone with your stunt point.

CREATE ADVANTAGE

Move is often used to create advantage for a subsequent action, such as getting to higher ground or setting up an ambush. You can also use Move to dodge and give yourself advantage against physical attacks.

ATTACK

Move is almost never used to make attacks—unless you're attacking a target by ramming them with a vehicle, in which case the vehicle takes the same damage as the target.

DEFEND

You can use Move to defend against Fight attacks (melee or ranged) and create advantage attempts in physical conflicts, as well as to prevent opponents from moving past you if you are able to physically interfere. You can also use Move to hide and defend against attempts to find you with Wits (notice).

PHYSIQUE

The Physique skill represents your strength, power, and endurance. Where the Move skill helps you avoid, the Physique skill helps you withstand.

You gain one additional physical stress box per 2d of Physique (p. 27).

EXAMPLE PERKS

Strong (overcome), Bend Bars/Lift Gates, Healthy (defend), Poison Resistance, Bear Hug (create advantage)

OVERCOME

You will often use Physique to overcome obstacles that benefit from the application of strength, such as locked doors and big rocks, or endurance, such as marathons and holding your breath.

SHOVE

A simple success moves the target away from you. A stunt point moves them anywhere within your zone, while 2 stunt points moves them to an adjacent zone. However, if there are objects or clutter in the zone you may not be able to shove them more than just away from you.

THROW

As with shove, but this requires an additional stunt point to get the target airborne, which can potentially clear any objects or clutter, or enable any other cinematic objective (e.g., throwing a target into the back of a moving vehicle).

CREATE ADVANTAGE

Physique can be used in physical conflicts to hold someone in place once you've grabbed them, or as a way of discovering a target's physical impairments, such as the grizzled mercenary's bum leg. Physique can also be used to create a physical obstacle, such as blocking a door with a piece of furniture or smashing a beam to create a shower of debris.

ATTACK

Physique is not used to injure people directly—see the Fight skill for that. However, if you have the target **grappled [M]** you can use Physique to crush the target as an attack, defended by Physique.

BASIC PHYSIQUE CRUSH ATTACK

Damage 1; physical (bludgeoning), scene [S], target must be **grappled [M]** by you.

DEFEND

You use Physique to defend against physical ailments, such as fatigue, poison, and disease, or to provide active opposition to a target's movement, provided you're in a small enough space to block access with your body or you have grabbed them and are trying to prevent their escape.

RESOLVE

Resolve skill represents your mental fortitude, the same way that Physique represents your physical fortitude.

You gain one additional mental stress box per 2d of Resolve (p. 27).

EXAMPLE PERKS

Fearless, Games (overcome), Chess, Psionics (attack), Telepathy

OVERCOME

You can use Resolve to pit yourself against obstacles that require mental focus or patience. Puzzles and riddles sometimes fall into this category, as does any mentally absorbing task, such as doing complex math in distracting circumstances. As a general rule, use Resolve when success is a function of time rather than intellect.

Contests of Resolve might reflect games where patience is paramount or, in settings where magic or psychic abilities are common, a battle of wills.

CREATE ADVANTAGE

You can use Resolve to create advantage for yourself on other primarily mental tasks, representing a state of deep concentration or focus. Examples include blocking out distractions as you analyze a crime scene with Wits or focusing on an enemy to analyze his movements with Fight.

Creating advantage in this way should only be appropriate when spending an action to create advantage has some element of risk associated with it, such as time, or in a broader contest where multiple skills may affect the outcome.

ATTACK

Resolve isn't really used for attacks. However, in settings that allow psychic abilities you might use Resolve for psychic conflicts. Such an ability usually requires a talent or feature.

DEFEND

You use Resolve to defend against mental attacks and attempts to influence your emotions, including all Interact actions. Resolve represents your control over your responses.

WITS

The Wits skill covers the entire range of higher-order reasoning, from knowledge and professional aptitude to insight, perception, and problem-solving.

LANGUAGES

In most settings, you can read, write, and speak your native tongue. You can spend a plot point to declare you know a language for the scene. If you want to know the language without spending a plot point, buy it as a Wits perk.

EXAMPLE PERKS

Acute Hearing, Awareness (create advantage), Conceal (create advantage), Deduction (overcome), Crime Scenes, Hidden Doors, Medicine (create advantage), Notice (overcome), Specific Language, Surgery (overcome)

OVERCOME

You can use Wits to overcome any obstacle that requires applying your knowledge, cunning, or senses to achieve a goal. For example, you might use Wits to decipher an ancient language on a tomb wall, know the atomic weight of antimony, spot a hidden passage or deduce that a murder victim was recently divorced based on subtle clues. Other examples include fixing equipment, analyzing a crime scene, or winning at chess.

    Note that this isn't license for GMs to call for Wits rolls left and right to see if you know how to change a light bulb—that's boring. Instead, use Wits rolls when success or failure would result in something interesting.

CREATE ADVANTAGE

You can use Wits to create advantages that represent planning, know-how, insight. For example, you might use Wits to jury-rig or sabotage a device, research a creature's weakness, or conceal your position with camoflage. Other examples include eavesdropping on a conversation, aiming a weapon, calculating the trajectory of a rocket, or creating a forged document.

    Note that while Wits may help you notice that a buyer is sweating, getting them to reveal why, intentionally or otherwise, requires Interact.

AIM

You create advantage by properly lining up a ranged attack to compensate for a target's range, size, concealment, or movement. The difficulty of this action is the target's Move.

ATTACK

Wits is not usually used to attack, though it is used to make attacks with indirect fire weapons and other advanced weapon systems, such as orbital lasers.

    Wits most often gets used to prepare for an attack by aiming (see above).

DEFEND

About the only time you'll use Wits to defend is to spot an ambush (defend against Move create advantage) or to discover that you're being observed (defend against Wits).

TALENTS

Talents are the secret ingredients that make characters truly unique and let them break the rules—system rules or setting rules. If there's something that not everyone can do, the ability to do it is probably a talent.

Talents also reinforce the themes of your setting. In a cyberpunk setting, talents can represent the archetypes you expect to see: *Mercenary*, *Hacker*, *Drone Pilot*, and so on. Each of those talents would provide a unique benefit related to the archetype.

BUILDING TALENTS

Reason from the desired effect—what does the talent ultimately allows you to do? This approach helps you make talents that are interesting and relevant to your setting. Once you have the description of the effect, consider the ways that you can represent that effect mechanically.

Talents can break any rule in NOVA6, so feel free to get creative. Some examples:

- New stunts or improvements to existing stunts.
- Access to features: powers, signature gear, vehicles, sidekicks, etc.
- Bonus actions, stunt points, etc.
- Extra stress, soak, refresh, etc.

Tweaking the core talents is also an excellent place to start.

BALANCING TALENTS

Keep in mind when balancing a talent that it represents an entire level of advancement. Players are often choosing between a talent or another rank in a skill, so use that as a guide for the relative power of a talent. If taking a skill rank would provide more benefit than the talent, the talent isn't powerful enough. If taking the talent provides two skill ranks of benefit, the talent is too powerful.

Creating talents can be a balancing act, but don't let that worry you. Do your best to make it balanced, and if it turns out that you messed up one way or the other, fix the talent and give the affected players a plot point during the next session as a way of saying you're sorry.

If you created a talent, but have decided that it's too powerful, you have a several options:

- Eliminate some of its benefits.
- Limit how often the talent can be used (e.g., once per scene).
- Add a cost (e.g., pay a plot point).
- Split the talent into two talents and make the first a prerequisite for the second.

Regardless of what you decide, make the talent fun and interesting. Consider that over the course of a complete character advancement in NOVA6 Core that you will take seven advancements when you start and 9 more by level ten. Make each one count.

CORE TALENTS

The core talents listed here are appropriate and recommended for almost any game.

DANGER SENSE

Surprise actions that would normally have an advantage due to the element of surprise, such as from a Move (stealth), Wits (conceal), or Interact (deceive) create advantage action, have no advantage against you. Additionally, if you oppose the action with Move, you can use your success and stunt points for movement during your reaction.

FOCUSED
TAKE ONCE PER SKILL

Choose a skill when you take **Focused**. Instead of earning a stunt point on triples when you succeed with this skill, you earn a stunt point on doubles and two stunt points on triples. In addition, your maximum rank in the skill is increased by one, although you must still use an advancement to increase the skill.

NPCs with the **Focused** talent generate one GM stunt point on a failure with doubles, and two on triples.

LUCKY

You gain +2 refresh.

PRACTICED
TAKE ONCE PER SKILL

Choose a skill when you take **Practiced**. You worked hard to make your skilled action test routine. You may choose to achieve simple success without rolling on an action test when *up* (more bonus dice than penalty dice), or you can reroll any ones on an action test outcome once.

QUICK

You gain +1d on initiative tests and one free bonus action each conflict. Instead of earning a stunt point on triples when you succeed on initiative, you earn a stunt point on doubles and two stunt points on triples.

RESOLUTE

You are much more resolute than normal. You gain +1 mental stress box and add +1d to Resolve defend tests.

SPECIALIZED
TAKE ONCE PER SKILL

Choose a skill when you take **Specialized**. You gain a perk with this skill, and once per test with this skill you may set aside one bonus die to earn an additional stunt point if you succeed.

STRONG BODY

You are much stronger than normal. Increase your Fight melee damage by +1 and add +1d to Physique overcome and create advantage tests.

Additionally, you negate either 1d of **burdened** or 1d of **hampered** (see Encumbrance, p. 26).

STRONG PERSONALITY

You are much stronger willed than normal. Increase your Interact damage by +1 and add +1d to Interact overcome and defend tests.

TOUGH

You are much tougher than normal. You gain +1 physical stress box and add +1d to Physique defend tests.

WELL-TRAINED
TAKE MULTIPLE TIMES

You gain 3 perks.

FEATURES

Features let you build or tailor special elements to fit your game. If your game were a movie, this is where the special effects budget would go.

Some examples of features include:

- Magic and supernatural powers.
- Specialized gear or equipment.
- Vehicles owned by the characters.
- Organizations that the characters control or patronage.
- Special locations.
- Special rules.
- Dramatic events.

Character features require GM permission or a theme-specific cost to acquire. Permission is the narrative justification that allows you to take a feature in the first place. Theme-specific cost is how you pay for the feature, both to have it as part of your character and possibly the cost to activate it.

THE BRONZE RULE

The Bronze Rule (also known as the Fate Fractal from the game Fate) states:

Anything can be a character.

Your gun? Sure. The storm outside? Absolutely. The scene itself? Why not? You can give anything aspects, skills, talents, and health, and here's the thing that makes this technique cool—they don't have to be the same ones the PCs get. It doesn't make sense for the storm outside to have Fight and Physique, but what about Cold and Sleet? Your gun doesn't need a physical or mental stress track, but what about an ammo stress track? And scenes already have aspects all over the place!

If you can represent a new thing as a character, it's typically easier to do that than to create a new rule out of whole cloth. Not everything works this way, and there are some things you might not want to represent this way, but it's a powerful tool that you can apply to a wide variety of situations.

There's another extension of this technique—new rules for characters can be represented using the existing components of a character. You can represent magic through skills, super powers using talents or features, and being corrupted by an ancient and seductive force with a stress track.

CREATING A FEATURE

Making a feature starts with a conversation. This should happen during game creation or character creation.

You or your group needs to decide on the following:

- What elements of your setting are appropriate for features?
- What do you want the feature to do?
- What character elements do you need to fully express the feature's capabilities?
- What are the costs or permissions to have features?

Once you've figured all that out, look to the examples in this book to help you nail down the specifics and create a write-up similar to what we have here. Then you're done!

GEAR

Gear generally provides capabilities or effects not a part of your core character. Gear is the universal themepack approach to handling the concept of equipment and common items without having to track items explicitly. You typically only define the key gear required for your character identity, usually driven by aspects. Any other gear is available with a successful *gear test* to determine if you have something specific, and is modified by *load level*.

LOAD LEVEL

A character's load level is an abstract representation of their level of preparedness. Heavier loads provide advantages but are typically more expensive and can impose the **burdened** condition, which applies as a penalty to Physique (endurance) and all Move tests (see Encumbrance, p. 26).

Load levels of Light, Medium, or Heavy have an aspect to describe the type of gear it contains, such as **FOREST SURVIVAL** or **TRAVELING SCHOLAR**, which can be invoked noramlly.

It is generally assumed that you remove your load at the start of a conflict, though this can be risky if you must flee or concede.

Load Level Table

Load Level	Burdened	Survival Test	Gear Test
Unprepared	-	-1d, daily	none
Basic	-	daily	-1d
Light	-1d	daily	+0d
Medium	-2d	weekly	+1d
Heavy	-3d	monthly	+1d

SURVIVAL TEST

Your load level determines the frequency of Wits (survival) test in a survival situation.

Failing a survival test is usually physical damage 2; direct, temporary [T].

GEAR TEST

A gear test is an unskilled test modified by your load level. Talents and features can all provide bonus dice on this test, while the rarity or legality of the item in question can provide penalty dice. On a success, you have access to the item for the scene. You can use the *Increase Time* stunt to gain access to the item until the end of the act (or longer) instead.

NEW TALENT: PREPARED

You gain +1d for any gear test and once per scene you have an extra stunt point for gear. Instead of earning a stunt point on triples when you succeed, you earn a stunt point on doubles and two stunt points on triples. You can use one stunt point to provide a piece of gear to all PCs, and one stunt point will allow you to keep the item for the scenario.

SURVIVAL MODE

Characters must enjoy some safety and downtime to enjoy the rewards of a milestone.

Minor milestones require a rest (see Recover, p. 31).

Major milestones require a rest as well, with three successful exposition scenes to approximate a full day's rest. Alternatively, a day's retreat to an objectively safe location (e.g., home, village inn, safehouse, etc.) will also suffice.

Epic milestones require a successful exposition scene to create a refuge for a full week's rest and reflection, a week's rest in an objectively safe location (e.g., home, village inn, safehouse, etc.), or an appropriate interlude (see Expositions, p. 14) to explain the changes to your character.

ASSETS

Assets generally improve your odds of success with actions if the asset has value relative to the current objective or plot. They may be key pieces of information, a favor, a jury-rigged tool, or some other useful thing. The GM may award assets, or you can create an asset with the *Increase Effect* stunt using the Advantage basic effect. Define an aspect that describes the asset with a number in brackets to indicate the number of uses (e.g., [1]). An asset has a single use by default, but you increase the number of uses of the asset or expand the scope of the asset as with any other advantage (subject to GM approval).

By default, you can remove one use of a relevant asset to add one bonus die to an action, or you can trade 2 uses for a stunt point after the roll. Alternatively, you can remove one use of the asset and spend a plot point to invoke it as an aspect. Unless the GM says otherwise, an asset with no remaining uses is removed.

Examples include **JUNKYARD TURBO CHARGER [1]** or **ANGLE ON JIMMY THE FISH [2].**

SIGNATURE ASSETS

These are the assets that help define a character and emphasize their aspects and skills. This works well as a complement to the universal themepack Gear (p. 58) rules, and is especially appropriate for games where gear is not all that central, such as in a 1920s investigative horror game.

A simple way to handle this is to define an asset for each aspect. Alternatively, a themepack might define three to four Signature Assets that reinforce the game or setting. For example, a **MEMENTO**, a **PERSONAL ITEM**, and a **CONTACT**.

Unlike normal assets, Signature Assets are permanent and do not have a limited number uses. Signature Assets will provide a +1d bonus to actions when use of the asset is appropriate by design, but you cannot spend a plot point to invoke it as an asset (since there are no uses). However, you can sacrifice (p.29) the asset to pronounced effect.

REPLACING SACRIFICED SIGNATURE ASSETS

You can replace signature assets between scenarios at a major or epic milestone. Alternatively, you can replace it during a scene by spending a plot point to define an appropriately meaningful item as a new Signature Asset.

FLAWS

Flaws are features that make things more difficult for a character and are generally paired with an advance or some other helpful feature. For example, a creature might have a flaw that makes them vulnerable to iron paired with a feature that gives them the ability to fly.

Flaws should be used sparingly, and only when the flaw affects a character most of the time. Otherwise, an aspect would be enough to handle most character flaws.

LIMITATION

Frail. You have -1d on all Physique rolls, and you cannot put ranks in Physique.

One-Eyed. You have -1d on all rolls that rely on sight, including ranged attacks.

SHORTCOMING

Pushover. You have one fewer physical and mental stressed boxes.

Unlucky. You start with 1 refresh instead of 3.

VULNERABILITY

Susceptible to Magic. Actions against you with magic gain +1 stunt point.

Vulnerable to Iron. Attack actions against you with iron weapons result in two stress boxes being filled instead of one.

ECONOMY

NOVA6 Core does not include rules for pricing or other ecomonic models. Such things are setting specific and the Universal Themepack provides some guidance on starting equipment, but detailed pricing is left to your specific game.

A simple approach would be to modify a gear test by the rarity or cost of an item (e.g., -1d at $100, -2d at $1000, -3d at $10,000, -4d at $100,000, plus -1d per x10). Wealthy characters could take an Interact or Wits perk appropriate for wealth creation, and can leverage those perks and related skill talents during an exposition scene to create wealth assets.

NEW TALENT: WEALTHY

Gain +1d to all gear tests. Once per scene gain +1d to any action to create advantage or overcome where wealth can be an advantage. You can purchase this talent multiple times.

ARCHAIC WEAPONS

All archaic weapon damage has a duration of temporary [T] unless otherwise specified. All weapons and armor are object assets.

You can trigger (S) special stunts once per action with a stunt point.

BOWS

Ammo, bodkin arrows. (S) pierce +1

Ammo, broadhead arrows. (S) +3 damage (if damage-soak is 0 or more)

Shortbow. Damage 3 (pierce 1); ranged (near), physical (impaling), reliable; 2H, reload (snap action), uses (ammo)

Bow. Damage 4 (pierce 1); ranged (near), physical (impaling), reliable; 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d), reload (snap action), uses (ammo)

Longbow. Damage 5 (pierce 1); ranged (near), physical (impaling), reliable; 2H, skill minimum (Physique 2d), reload (snap action), uses (ammo)

CLUBS

Club. Damage 3; physical (bludgeoning), scene [S]

Greatclub. Damage 6; physical (bludgeoning), scene [S]; 2H

Mace. Damage 3; physical (bludgeoning)

Morningstar. Damage 4; physical (bludgeoning), versatile; skill minimum (Physique 1d)

Quarterstaff. Damage 5; physical (bludgeoning), versatile, scene [S]

CROSSBOWS

Ammo, bodkin bolts. (S) pierce +1

Ammo, broadhead bolts. (S) +3 damage (if damage-soak is 0 or more)

Crossbow, light. Damage 4 (pierce 1); ranged (near, accurate), physical (impaling); 2H, reload (action), uses (ammo)

Crossbow, heavy. Damage 6 (pierce 1); ranged (near, accurate), physical (impaling); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d), reload (action), uses (ammo),

HAFTED WEAPONS

Axe. Damage 4 (pierce 1); physical (slashing); tiring

Battleaxe. Damage 5 (pierce 1); physical (slashing), versatile; skill minimum (Physique 1d), tiring

Greataxe. Damage 6 (pierce 1); physical (slashing); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 2d), tiring

HEAVY BLADES

Sword. Damage 4; physical (slashing)

Longsword. Damage 5; physical (slashing), versatile

Greatsword. Damage 6; physical (slashing); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d)

LIGHT BLADES

Dagger. Damage 3; physical (impaling); +1d to conceal
Short Sword. Damage 4; physical (impaling)
Rapier. Damage 3 (pierce 1); physical (impaling)
Scimitar. Damage 3; physical (slashing)

POLEARMS

Javelin. Damage 3; ranged (close, accurate, thrown), physical (impaling)
Halberd. Damage 5 (pierce 1); physical (slashing), reach; 2H, skill minimum (Physique 2d)
Glaive. Damage 4 (pierce 1); physical (slashing), reach; 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d)
Spear. Damage 5; ranged (close, thrown), physical (impaling), reach, versatile

MISCELLANEOUS

Ammo, sling bullet. +1 damage
Gauntlet. Damage 2; physical (bludgeoning), scene [S]
Knuckles. Damage 2; physical (bludgeoning)
Shield. Damage 3; physical (bludgeoning), scene [S]
Sling. Damage 3; ranged (close), physical (bludgeoning); 2H, uses (ammo)
Whip. Damage 2; physical (bludgeoning), reach, (S): **grappled -1d [M]**

ARCHAIC ARMOR

LIGHT ARMOR

Padded. Soak 1; physical; coverage 1
Leather. Soak 2; physical; coverage 1
Studded Leather. Soak 3; physical; coverage 1, *hampered 1d*
Cap. +1 coverage for light armor or cover
Full Suit. Add Max Move 2d, remove coverage property
Shield (wooden). +1d to defend with Fight or Move

MEDIUM ARMOR

Hide. Soak 4; physical; coverage 1, Max Move 2, *hampered 1d*
Light Chain. Soak 5; physical; coverage 1, Max Move 2, *hampered 1d*
Light Plate. Soak 6 (hardened 1); physical; coverage 1, Max Move 2, *hampered 2d*
Helm. +1 coverage for light and medium armor or cover
Full Suit. Add *hampered 1d*, reduce Max Move by -1, and remove coverage property
Shield (metal). +1d to defend with Fight or Move; repairable

HEAVY ARMOR

Scale Mail. Soak 4 (hardened 1); physical; coverage 1, Max Move 1, *hampered 2d*
Chain Mail. Soak 5 (hardened 1); physical; coverage 1, Max Move 1, *hampered 2d*
Plate. Soak 7 (hardened 1); physical; coverage 1, Max Move 1, *hampered 3d*
Great Helm. +1 coverage for all armor or cover; -1d with Wits (sight and hearing)
Full Suit. Add *hampered 1d*, reduce Max Move by -1, and remove coverage property
Shield (tower). +1d to defend with Fight or Move, skill minimum (Physique 1d); or create advantage to place and provide cover (soak 5 or +1d to defend with Fight or Move and coverage +1)

MODERN WEAPONS

All modern weapon damage has a duration of temporary [T] unless otherwise specified. All weapons and armor are object assets. Rifles, shotguns, and automatic weapons are not practically concealable on a person unless otherwise specified.

You can trigger (S) special stunts once per action with a stunt point.

AUTOMATIC WEAPONS

Assault Rifle, light. Damage 6 (pierce 1, burst); ranged (far), physical (ballistic); 2H, uses (ammo, high capacity)

Assault Rifle, medium. Damage 7 (pierce 1, burst); ranged (far, accurate 1), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d), uses (ammo, high capacity)

Machine Gun, light. Damage 6 (pierce 1, auto); ranged (far), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d), uses (ammo, high capacity)

Machine Gun, medium. Damage 7 (pierce 1, auto); ranged (far), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 2d), uses (ammo, high capacity)

Machine Gun, anti-vehicle. Damage 9 (pierce 1, auto); ranged (far), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 3d), uses (ammo, high capacity)

Submachinegun, medium. Damage 4 (auto); ranged (near), physical (ballistic); 2H, uses (ammo, high capacity)

Submachinegun, heavy. Damage 5 (auto); ranged (near), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d), uses (ammo, high capacity)

EXPLOSIVES

Dynamite, stick. Damage 5; ranged (close, thrown), area (1 zone, explosion), physical (fire); +1 damage per stick.

Grenades, fragmentation. Damage 6; ranged (close, thrown), area (1 zone, explosion), physical (ballistic)

Grenades, concussion. Damage 3 (direct); ranged (close, thrown), area (1 zone, explosion), physical (force), direct (sealed armor)

Grenades, flash-bang. Damage 2 , scene [S]; ranged (close, thrown), area (1 zone, explosion), physical (force), direct (sealed armor). Plus **blind and deaf -4d [S]** (defend with Physique); area (1 zone, sphere), direct (sight and sound flash defense)

PISTOLS

Ammo, armor-piercing. Pierce +1, damage -1.

Ammo, magnum. Pierce +1, (S) damage +3, ranged (max +1 step); weapon must be designed to use this ammo, skill minimum (Physique +1d)

Pistol, recreational revolver. Damage 1; ranged (close), physical (ballistic); reliable, slow, uses (ammo); +2d to conceal

Pistol, recreational target. Damage 1; ranged (near), physical (ballistic); uses (ammo)

Pistol, compact. Damage 2; ranged (close), physical (ballistic); uses (ammo); +1d to conceal

Pistol, light. Damage 3; ranged (close), physical (ballistic); uses (ammo)

Pistol, medium. Damage 4; ranged (close), physical (ballistic); uses (ammo); -1d to conceal

Pistol, heavy. Damage 5; ranged (close), physical (ballistic); skill minimum (Physique 1d), uses (ammo); -1d to conceal

Pistol, extra-heavy. Damage 6; ranged (close), physical (ballistic); skill minimum (Physique 2d), uses (ammo); -2d to conceal

Revolver. Add reliable and slow properties

RIFLES

Ammo, armor-piercing. Pierce +1, damage -1.

Ammo, magnum. Pierce +1, ranged (max +1 step); weapon must be designed to use this ammo, skill minimum (Physique +1d)

Bipod. Reduce skill minimum (Physique) by 3d. Requires an action to activate (set up).

Rifle, recreational. Damage 2; ranged (far), physical (ballistic); 2H, uses (ammo)

Rifle, compact. Damage 4; ranged (far), physical (ballistic); 2H, uses (ammo)

Rifle, short. Damage 5 (pierce 1); ranged (far), physical (ballistic); 2H, uses (ammo)

Rifle, light. Damage 6 (pierce 1); ranged (far, accurate), physical (ballistic); 2H, uses (ammo)

Rifle, medium. Damage 7 (pierce 1); ranged (far, accurate), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d), uses (ammo)

Rifle, heavy. Damage 8 (pierce 1); ranged (far, accurate), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 2d), uses (ammo)

Rifle, extra-heavy. Damage 9 (pierce 1); ranged (far, accurate), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 3d), uses (ammo)

Scope, reflex. Fight +1d with the focus snap action against targets out to near range. Aim +1d out to far range.

Scope, short. Fight +1d with successful aim (Wits) on targets out to distant range. Weapon is Fight -1d if used without aiming first. Cannot aim at close targets.

Scope, medium. Fight +1d with successful aim (Wits) on targets out to remote range. Weapon is Fight -1d if used without aiming first. Cannot aim at close or near targets.

Scope, long. Fight +1d with successful aim (Wits) on targets out to obscure range. Weapon is Fight -1d if used without aiming first. Cannot aim at close, near, or far targets.

Bolt-Action. Add reliable and reload (snap action) properties

SHOTGUNS

Shotgun, light, buckshot. Damage 6 (reduced penetration, burst only); ranged (near), physical (ballistic); 2H, uses (ammo)

Shotgun, light, slug. Damage 7; ranged (near), physical (ballistic); 2H, uses (ammo), slow

Shotgun, medium, buckshot. Damage 7 (reduced penetration, burst only); ranged (near), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d), uses (ammo)

Shotgun, medium, slug. Damage 8; ranged (near), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 1d), uses (ammo), slow

Shotgun, heavy buckshot. Damage 8 (reduced penetration, burst only); ranged (near), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 2d), uses (ammo)

Shotgun, heavy slug. Damage 9; ranged (near), physical (ballistic); 2H, skill minimum (Physique 2d), uses (ammo), slow

Breach-load. Add reliable and reload (action) properties

Double Barrel. Add the two-shot property

Sawed-Off. Buckshot gains Fight +1d with reduced range (close); slugs gain Fight -1d with reduced range (close); can be used 1H if you increase the skill minimum (Physique +1d); -1d to conceal

MODERN ARMOR

BODY ARMOR

Body Armor, Light. Soak 1 (4 vs. ballistic); physical, can wear under clothing; coverage 1

Body Armor, Medium. Soak 2 (6 vs. ballistic); physical; coverage 1

Body Armor, Heavy. Soak 3 (8 vs. ballistic, hardened 1); physical; coverage 1, *hampered 1d*

Body Armor, Trauma Plate. +1 level of hardened and *hampered 1d* for body armor

Combat Helmet. +1 coverage for body armor or cover

Full Suit. Add Move max 2d, *hampered 1d*, remove coverage property

MISCELLANEOUS

Leather Jacket. Soak 2; physical; coverage 1

Motorcycle Body Armor. Soak 3; physical; *hampered 1d*

GAME CREATION

SETTING

There are two major steps to creating a NOVA6 game: defining the setting and using that to choose or build your themepack.

When defining a setting, the GM and players will answer five key questions:
- Who are the protagonists?
- What is the world like?
- What is the scope?
- What are the issues?
- What people and places are important?

WHO ARE THE PROTAGONISTS?

The first step in creating your NOVA6 game is deciding what sort of people the protagonists are going to be. You're not making characters yet, but if everyone wants to be a ragtag group of rebels on a dilapidated spaceship, defining a pseudo-medieval setting with knights and dragons might be a waste of time.

Your decisions here will tell you virtually everything you need to know to get the ball rolling: what the protagonists are good at, what they might care about, the problems they're likely to face, the kind impact they could have on the world, and so on. You don't need complete answers, but you should at least have a rough idea.

Crimson Suns: Post-Apocalyptic Fantasy

> Ryan and his players have talked about the kind of game they want to play next, and everyone agrees that a post-apocalyptic fantasy game à la Dark Sun would be fun. The protagonists will be unlikely heroes, setting out to change the world for the better.

WHAT IS THE WORLD LIKE?

Next, you will need to provide some broad strokes that define the world in which your protagonists will live. You're probably already familiar with the idea of a setting, but in short, it's everything that the characters interact with: people, organizations, technology, strange phenomena, and mysteries.

If you're using a setting that already exists, such as from a movie, novel, or game, then many of these ideas are ready for you to use. Of course, you may have ideas of your own to expand the setting, such as new organizations, villains, and locations.

Inventing your own setting is significantly more work, but many find it to be extremely rewarding. It is beyond the scope of this book to tell you how to make a setting, but there are a lot of resources available, both in print and online, on defining and refining the world you envision. One word of advice, though—do not try to invent too much up front. As you will see over the course of the chapter, you are going to be generating a lot of ideas just through the process of game and character creation, so the details will come in time.

> The world is hot and unforgiving, SCORCHED BY TWO SUNS AND MILLENNIA OF MAGICAL WAR. Most inhabitants just barely get by, with very little hope for the future. STORMS OF WILD MAGIC constantly threaten to sweep through, twisting reality and leaving devastation in their wake. RUINS OF PAST CIVILIZATIONS DOT THE LANDSCAPE, BURIED BY SHIFTING SANDS.

WHAT IS THE SCOPE?

Next, decide how personal or epic your story will be. The setting itself might be small or it might be vast, but where your stories take place determines the scope of your game.

At one extreme are stories about characters dealing with personal problems—personal demons, family issues, neighborhood crime. The world at large may have big problems, but the characters have no role to play in solving them. This is not to say that the characters' problems are inconsequential, but rather that they affect fewer people.

At the other extreme are stories about characters out to save the world, or even all of existence. These characters still have personal problems, they just play less of a role in their day-to-day lives. But no matter the scope of the game, the stakes are high for the characters.

> The group decides that they want to start somewhere between the two extremes. The characters are not out to save the world (yet), but their adventures will take them outside of their village. Perhaps they will take on the insane mage that has been terrorizing the area or discover a new source of water for the region.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Next, decide what threats and forces will spur the protagonists to action. Every setting needs to have something going on that the characters care about—a peril they want to fight, a wrong they want to right, etc. These are the setting's issues.

To define these issues, you will come up with two aspects that are available to invoke or compel for the duration of the game. The issues should reflect the scope of your game and what the characters will face. These are broad ideas—they don't just affect your characters. Issues take two forms:

- **Current Issues:** These are problems or threats that exist in the world already, possibly for a long time. Protagonists tackling these issues are trying to change things, to make it a better place. Examples: a corrupt regime, organized crime, rampant poverty and disease, a generations-long war.
- **Impending Issues:** These are things that have begun to rear their ugly heads and threaten to make the world worse if they come to pass or achieve a goal. Protagonists tackling these issues are trying to keep things from slipping into chaos or destruction. Examples: an invasion from a neighboring country, the sudden rise of a zombie horde, the imposition of martial law.

Make sure that to add some thematic flourishes to the aspects. AMBITIOUS RUSSIAN MOB BOSS is more interesting than ORGANIZED CRIME. Feel free to write down some context or additional details along with the aspects, if it will help everyone remember why the issue matters.

> Ryan wants to start things off with two issues, so after some discussion the group decides to have one current issue and one impending issue. For the current issue, Shawn suggests CULT OF THE SERPENT GOD, a cult lead by an insane mage trying to become a god. For the impending issue, Nicole suggest WATER IS RUNNING OUT to reflect that all villages in the region are slowly drying up.

MORE OR FEWER ISSUES

The default number of issues is two: either two current issues (for a story solely about trying to make the world a better place), two impending issues (for a story about striving to save people from threats), or one of each. The latter option is common in fiction: think about the stalwart heroes who work against some impending doom while already discontent with the world around them.

Of course, you don't have to use the default number of two issues—one or three also works, but it will change the game a bit. A game with one issue will revolve around just that issue—a quest to rid a city of evil, or to stop evil from happening. A game with three issues will show off a busy world, one where the characters are strained against multiple fronts. If you think you need to focus down or expand the scope of your game, talk it over with the group and start by tweaking the number of issues to best fit what you're after.

CHANGING ISSUES IN PLAY

Issues can change as the game progresses. Sometimes, the issue evolves into something new. Sometimes, the characters will succeed in preventing or resolving the issue. And sometimes, new issues will emerge. The issues you define now are just to start things off.

WHAT PEOPLE AND PLACES ARE IMPORTANT?

Finally, decide on important people and places. At this point, you've got your issues figured out and you may have thought of some organizations or groups that feature prominently in your game.

Now put some faces to those issues and those groups, so that your protagonists have people to interact with when they're dealing with those elements. Do they have any particular people who represent them, or exemplars of what the issue refers to? If you have any ideas at this point, write down the person's name, relationship to organizations or issues, and an aspect defining their high concept.

Do the same for any notable places in your setting. What are the important places where things happen? Any place where you expect multiple scenes to take place is a great starting point. Just like with people, write down the location name, relationship to people, organizations, or issues, and an aspect defining its high concept.

You may flesh these people and places out later, depending on their role in the story. New people and places will be introduced to and leave the story as it progresses.

If there is a piece of your setting that is meant to be a mystery that the protagonists uncover, define it only in loose terms. You can detail the specifics when you discover them in play.

> Looking back at the elements that have been introduced so far, the players decide to introduce some people and places that relate. Shane introduces the Azuran Hunters and defines their high concept as ASSASSINS TRAINED TO KILL MAGES. Shawn wants to expand on the cult he introduced, so he introduces Sahir Thaeabin, SNAKE SORCERER WITH A GOD COMPLEX. Nicole introduces a nearby oasis where most of the nearby villages get their water. She decides that the locals just call it The Oasis, and she gives it the ONLY WATER FOR MILES AROUND high concept. Finally, Ryan decides that the characters are meeting for the first time in Stonegate, HEAVILY FORTIFIED TRADE CENTER and the largest city of the region.

THEMEPACK

Now that you have defined your setting you need to build a themepack that reflects it. A themepack specifies the game elements of characters, as well as any special rules, features, gear, and so forth. NOVA6 Core includes a universal themepack that is appropriate for the majority of games, but creating your own themepack will let you really capture the important elements of your setting.

Each themepack specifies at least the following:
- Theme Trait(s)
- Aspects
- Skills
- Talents & Features
- Gear & Assets
- Stress Tracks
- Special Rules
- Character Creation Rules

THEME TRAITS

Each themepack needs to have one or more theme traits. A character's theme traits are aspects that represent the most important narrative element of the character. Deciding how you want to represent them will make a big difference in how characters are defined.

In the universal themepack, a single theme trait is represented as the **HIGH CONCEPT** aspect and is completely freeform to allow for the most flexibility. A classic fantasy game might have two traits, **CULTURE** and **CLASS**, with a predefined set of options for each, while a 1920s investigative horror game might have one trait that defines the character's **PROFESSION**, with choices that reinforce the setting and a freeform option for wildcards. In general, it is best to have one major trait or two minor traits. Any more risks muddling the theme of the game.

In some games it may be appropriate to bundle specific skill, talents, or features with a trait option. For example, a fantasy race might get a bonus rank in Physique. If you do so, balance positive features with negative features or fewer starting advances.

> Ryan and his group have already defined the setting for their Crimson Suns post-apocalyptic fantasy game. They could use the universal themepack, but Ryan is going to create a custom themepack to help reinforce the most important elements of the setting.
>
> First, he needs to decide how he wants to structure theme traits. He wants to incorporate the classic fantasy tropes. He decides to use two theme traits, CULTURE and CLASS, with a predefined list of options for each. Each culture will also get a special feature to help reinforce how they have survived in such a hostile world, but that will come later.

ASPECTS

In addition to the theme trait, you should include a few more aspects to help round out characters. In the universal themepack, besides the **HIGH CONCEPT** there are **BACKGROUND**, **MOTIVATION**, and **TROUBLE**. For a classic fantasy game, **ALIGNMENT** might be a more familiar approach than **MOTIVATION**.

See Aspects (p. 33) for more information on how to use aspects.

> Next, Ryan will have to decide what other aspects are important, besides the theme traits. He likes the **TROUBLE** aspect from the universal themepack. It's a dog-eat-dog world, but he wants to know what the characters won't do, so he also includes a **PROSCRIPTION**—what is the line the characters won't cross?

SKILLS

When creating your game, you may want to modify the core skill list or create your own. Reinforcing the story by creating skills specific to your theme can make for a richer game experience since they are one of the primary mechanical ways to reinforce the setting for your game.

When thinking through your modifications, focus on the main themes of your game. A game of deep political intrigue could warrant several social skills, while a classic hack and slash dungeon crawl might only need one, or even none! See Skills (p. 47) for more detail.

> Crimson Suns is a traditional fantasy-adventure setting, so the core skills should work well. However, because magic is an important part of the setting, he decides to introduce a new Magic skill. His final skill list ends up being: Fight, Interact, Magic, Move, Physique, Resolve, and Wits.

EXAMPLE SKILL LISTS

CORE SKILLS
Fight, Move, Interact, Physique, Wits, Resolve

APPROACHES (FATE ACCELERATED)
Careful, Clever, Flashy, Forceful, Quick, Sneaky

CLASSIC FANTASY
Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma

SATURDAY MORNING CARTOON
Chutzpah, Physique, Smarts, Zip

TALENTS & FEATURES

Talents and features are an important way for players to make their characters unique and awesome. NOVA6 Core includes a default set of talents that we strongly recommend you include in every game.

Talents are special abilities that enhance a character's core capabilities. This includes adding new uses for skills, enhancing existing uses for skills, or adding abilities that fall outside the scope of skills entirely. See Talents (p. 55) for more detail.

Features are broader than talents. A feature is anything that gets special treatment in the rules and that is technically part of a character or is controlled by a character. See Features (p. 57) for more detail.

Beyond the core talents, you should think through some of the archetypical "schticks" of characters in the setting. In a setting where highly trained archers keep the wild beasts at bay, a talent that reflects that exceptional prowess with bows would be appropriate. If magic or psionics are an important part of the setting, you will want to represent them with talents or extras (if not their own skill).

> There are three main thematic elements that Ryan wants to reinforce with talents and features: magic, the different cultures, and the dire nature of life in the wasteland.
>
> For each culture, he creates a special feature that will capture the essence of what makes them unique: the First Folk are hardy and focused, Nomads are swift and deadly, the Fallen are savage and stealthy, the Children of Doran are prodigious spellcasters, and the Mantids are inscrutable hunters.
>
> For magic, he creates a series of talents that culminates in the powerful *Archmage* talent. On the opposite side, he creates a talent that makes the character more resistant to magic, and another to represent the special training that the secretive Azuran Hunters receive.
>
> Finally, he adds a talent that makes characters more resistant to the harsh environment of Crimson Suns, making them more resistant to dehydration and reducing how often they will have to check for heat exhaustion, which is a new rule he wants to include.

GEAR & ASSETS

Your approach to gear and assets will also significantly affect the feel of the game. If players are tracking individual coppers and struggling to afford that new bow they've had their eye, that will feel very different from a game in which players have access to whatever gear they need.

One approach is to provide characters with some amount of starting money and let them buy whatever they want. On the one hand, this is easy and flexible, but it can also take a lot of time. It also tends to encourage a certain paranoid mindset in which players end up buying a dozen bells "just in case".

Another approach is to provide specific roles with a package of gear from which to choose. For example, the warrior may get to choose a longsword or axe, a short sword or shield, and full leather armor or scale hauberk. The rogue would have different options. This significantly speeds up character creation and reinforces roles, while still allowing some flexibility.

A third approach, and default approach for the universal themepack, is to define Signature Assets (p. 59) for each character and handle any other gear (p. 58) in an abstract manner.

> Ryan wants to reinforce the differences between classes, so he decides to create different sets of starting gear and assets for each class. Beyond that, he expects players to track and spend actual coins, in true old-school fashion.

STRESS TRACKS

You will need to decide what stress tracks are important for your game. The universal themepack includes PHYSICAL and MENTAL stress tracks. When making this decision, think about the ways a character in the setting can be hurt, and if doing so can result in them becoming incapacitated.

For a game of political intrigue, you might decide that a REPUTATION stress track is important, as characters conduct character assassination and disinformation campaigns. Another game might decide that CORRUPTION resulting from meddling with forbidden magics is worth tracking separately.

When it comes to stress tracks, less is more. If you have too many, it not only makes it harder to keep track, but it also makes it harder to work together to take out an opponent when each character is causing a different kind of stress. If you do decide to add an additional stress track, ideally it creates new opportunities for stress and incapacitated that previously didn't exist and does not require the introduction of new damage types or forms of attack.

The recommended default for most stress tracks is six stress boxes (3 STRESSED, 2 *staggered*, 1 incapacitated). You can start with more or fewer but do so with caution. Start with the default and see how it goes.

> Ryan decides that food and water are important enough in the setting to represent them as a Food & Water stress track. His hope is this will increase the tension around surviving in such an inhospitable setting. He keeps the default six stress boxes, but has the *Desert Dweller* talent provide +1 stress box.

SPECIAL RULES

You will need to decide if there are any expanded or custom rules that will be important to your setting. Your group may find it helpful if you create a *Special Rules* summary sheet.

> Ryan is going to use the expanded Food & Water rules, with some minor changes to work with the new Food & Water stress track. He also wants to create special rules for wild magic zones, where centuries of magical battles have warped and twisted reality, and heat exhaustion.

CHARACTER CREATION RULES

Once you have all the individual elements of characters defined plus any special rules, you will want to modify the default step-by-step character creation rules to walk players through making a character with your new themepack.

For details on the universal themepack, see Character Creation (p. 41).

> Now that he has all the elements of his themepack defined, Ryan needs to modify the character creation rules. He starts with the steps from the universal themepack, but makes a few changes to reflect the unique elements of the Crimson Suns themepack:
> 1. Choose your culture and class.
> 4. Choose gear and assets from the list for your class.
> 7. Record your physical, mental, and food & water stress boxes.
>
> With that done, the Crimson Suns themepack is ready to go!

RUNNING THE GAME

GAMEMASTERING

If you're the gamemaster, then your job is a little different from everyone else's. This section is going to give you a bunch of tools to make that job easier during play. The role of the GM was discussed briefly in the NOVA6 introduction, but let's take a more detailed look at your unique responsibilities.

START AND END SCENES

One of your primary responsibilities during the game is to decide definitively when a scene begins and ends. This might not seem like that big a deal, but it is. You're the person primarily responsible for the pacing of each session. If you start scenes too early, it takes a long time to get to the main action. If you don't end them soon enough, then they drag on and it takes you a long time to get anything significant done.

The players will sometimes help you with this, if they're keen on getting to the next bit of action, but sometimes they'll naturally be inclined to spend too much time bantering in character or focusing on details. When that happens, it's your job to step in like a good movie editor and say, "I think we've pretty much milked this scene for all it's worth. What do we want to do next?"

INTERPRET THE RULES

It's also your job to make most of the moment-to-moment decisions about what's legit and what's not regarding the rules. Most often, you're going to decide when something in the game deserves a roll, what type of action that is (overcome, attack, etc.) and how difficult that test is. In conflicts, this can get a little more complicated, like determining if a situation aspect should force someone to make an overcome action or deciding whether a player can justify a specific advantage they're trying to create.

You also judge the appropriateness of any invocations or compels that come up during play and make sure that everyone at the table is clear on what's going on. With invocations, this is straightforward—if the player can explain why the aspect is relevant, you're good to go. With compels, it can get a little more complicated, because you need to articulate precisely what complication the player is agreeing to.

CREATE SCENARIOS

…and nearly everything else too.

Finally, you're responsible for making all the stuff that the characters encounter and react to in the game. That not only includes NPCs with skills and aspects, but it also includes the aspects on scenes, environments, and objects, as well as the dilemmas and challenges that make up a scenario. You provide the prompts that give your group a reason to play this game to begin with—what problems they face, what issues they must resolve, who they're opposing, and what they'll have to go through to win the day.

PLAY THE WORLD AND NPCS

As the gamemaster, it's your job to decide how everyone and everything else in the world responds to what the characters do, as well as what the characters' environment is like. If a player botches a roll, you're the one who gets to decide the consequences. When an NPC attempts to assassinate a player character's friend, you're the one who gets to decide how they go about it. When the characters stroll up to a food vendor in a market, you get to decide what kind of day the vendor is having, what kind of personality they have, what's on sale that day. You determine the weather when the characters arrive at a dark cave (hint: **DARK AND STORMY,** of course).

Fortunately, you don't have to do this in a vacuum—you have a lot of tools to help you decide what would be appropriate. The process we outline in Game Creation should provide you with a lot of context about the game you're running, whether that's in the form of aspects like current and impending issues, specific locations that you might visit, or NPCs with strong agendas that you can use.

Characters' aspects also help you decide how to make the world respond to them. As stated in the Aspects and Plot Points sections, the best aspects are double edged swords. You have a lot of power to exploit that double edge by using compels. That way, you kill two birds with one stone—you add detail and surprise to your game world, but you also keep the player characters at the center of the story you're telling.

This facet of your job also means that when you have NPCs in a scene, you speak for and make decisions for them like the players do for their characters—you decide when they're taking an action that requires dice, and you follow the same rules the players do for determining how that turns out. Your NPCs are going to be a little different than the PCs, however, depending on how important they are to the story.

TYPES OF NPCS

Non-Player Characters (NPCs) are characters controlled by the GM and are of two types: principal and extra.

PRINCIPALS

Principals are essential to the story and will interact with the player characters in significant ways. Principals are created like any other player character, including (especially) core aspects.

EXTRAS

Extras have limited interaction with the player characters. They might be recurring characters, but in general they will exist either as lackeys, toadies, bit parts, or characters with little control over the plot. Extras have half as many advances as a PC or principal of the same level and generally only need a high concept aspect.

NPC Extra Stress Boxes

Extras have only three stress boxes, one of each severity (stressed, staggered, taken-out).

PROMOTING EXTRAS

Player characters sometimes create unexpected job openings, or a seemingly unimportant extra gets caught up in the action in an unexpected way. In this case, fill in the remaining details for the NPC, such as aspects and name, and take enough advances to bring them to the same level as a player character of the same level.

In some instances, it might be desirable to promote an extra to principal more gradually. Use your judgement, but one additional advance per appearance by the extra is a good starting point.

UNOPPOSED NPC ACTIONS

If the PCs are doing nothing to interfere with an NPC, the outcome should align with the story in whatever way the you decide is most appropriate and interesting. If there is some question as to whether an NPC could succeed at an action, communicate that the NPC will succeed on their next action unless the PCs do something to interfere.

As a guideline, NPCs will spend a full turn to overcome an obstacle with a difficulty equal to their skill and will spend an extra turn creating advantage to overcome an obstacle with a difficulty 1d higher than their skill. They will not attempt actions of greater difficulty unless there are other conditions that favor the NPC.

GANGING UP

When multiple NPCs take an action against a player character, they gang up and the player only rolls once against the whole gang. Increase the difficulty by 1d with a gang of two NPCs, 2d for three to four NPC, 3d for five to eight NPCs, and 4d for more than that.

TRADING DICE

If you need to understand how well an NPC does on an unopposed test, assume that they succeed unless they have an aspect that suggests otherwise. Then trade dice as normal for stunt points. If they have the *Specialized* talent, they can trade 1d for a stunt point one time, otherwise they trade any remaining dice at 2d for one stunt point.

GROUPS OF NPCS

When dealing with large numbers of NPCs, think of the difference between the NPCs' skill rank and the difficulty of their course of action as an indicator of the number of NPCs that will succeed. A difference of 4d or more indicates that no NPCs would succeed. NPCs in this situation would only make such a doomed attempt if the conditions or their aspects demanded it. A difference of 1d means that roughly a quarter would make it, halving for each additional die (2d equals an eighth, and 3d a sixteenth). NPCs that don't succeed either made the attempt and failed or refused to make the attempt at all.

> *Bandit Chase.* A bandit is chasing you through the ruins of a village. As an expert in freerunning, you easily scale some of the ruins (-2d difficulty) and end up on the roof (-3d difficulty). Bandits are not known for their acrobatics, but they are also not incapable of climbing (Move 1d). The GM informs the player that the bandit is in pursuit and is struggling to keep up (spending an extra turn to get onto some of the ruins), but they stop short of the roof (which is -3d difficulty compared to their 1d of skill).
>
> *Goblin Horde.* A horde of goblins is chasing you towards the remains of a bridge over a chasm. You decide to make the leap in the hopes that they cannot pursue and the GM describes it as Move -3d. You attempt the leap and succeed. The GM knows that the goblins have Move 1d (2d different from the difficulty), and thus describes that most of the horde stops, several (25%) attempt the leap, with many of them falling into the chasm and only a few (half of those who attempted—an eighth of the horde) land beside you.

THE UNWRITTEN RULES

Here we discuss the unwritten rules of gamemastering, both in general and for NOVA6. Well, they're more like guidelines. And they're written.

But "The Written Guidelines" didn't sound as good.

RULE ZERO

Many roleplaying games include some variation on Rule Zero, which states: "The GM is always right." But we're not a fan of that, so we'll rephrase it:

The GM should sacrifice the rules for the sake of fun.

Either way, the intent is the same: these rules are meant to be used to create a fun experience for everyone involved. If the rules are getting in the way of doing so, they're wrong. Period.

For example, as a GM you like to roll dice and have more fun when you are actively participating in that way. We say: roll 'em! Mechanically, NOVA6 works just fine with this approach.

THE GOLDEN RULE (OF FATE)

Fate introduced the Golden Rule of Fate, which states:

**Decide what you're trying to accomplish first,
then consult the rules to help you do it.**

This might seem like common sense, but it is called out because the order is important. In other words, don't look at the rules as a straitjacket or a hard limit on an action. Instead, use them as a variety of potential tools to model whatever you're trying to do. Your intent, whatever it is, always takes precedence over the mechanics.

Most of the time, the very definition of an action makes this easy—any time your intent is to harm someone, you know that's attack. Any time you're trying to avoid harm, you know that's defend. But sometimes, you're going to get into situations where it's not immediately clear what type of action is the most appropriate. As a GM, don't respond to these situations by forbidding the action. Instead, try to nail down a specific intent, in order to point more clearly to one (or more) of the basic game actions.

THE RULE OF FIVE

NOVA6 is built on a five-point scale:

None, one, some, most, all.

Numerically, it ranges from 0 to 4. The skill system parallels this scale, as do the magnitude of all modifiers. For example, consider a darkness spell. If the spell fails, it has no effect (0d). Simple success creates a shroud in the area, imposing -1d to rolls that rely on sight. Stunt points can increase this: -2d or -3d represents a progressively deeper darkness, while -4d represents total darkness. In most cases, this means that rolls that rely on sight simply fail.

Another example is area effects. If a character attacks a zone with a spray of bullets, the five-point scale indicates how many targets are affected. If the attack fails, no targets are hit. Basic success affects one target, while stunt points can increase this to some, most, or all targets in the target's zone.

STORY FRAMEWORK

The stories you tell with your charcters evolve over time. As players, you experience them through *sessions* of play filled with *scenes* (p. 13) of meaningful action and resolution through the course of a *scenario* that may be part of some grander *saga*. As characters, you experience them by achieving *milestones* and earning *rewards*. You also use milestones to mark duration (p. 8). Also, as the characters wear down over the course of a session, the benefits inherent in reaching a milestone (see below) help to propel the story forward.

The NOVA6 Story Framework is our interpretation of traditional dramatic structure. A scenario (like a play or movie) is divided into three to five milestones (*drama:* acts). Play leading to the first milestone reveals the goal of the scenario (*drama:* exposition). Subsequent play allows the characters to explore the story and learn how to achieve the goal with the second and third milestones (*drama:* rising action and climax). Finally, play through the last two milestones leads to the scenario's conclusion (*drama:* falling action and denouement). By relying on timeless story-telling techniques, NOVA6 enables you to forge your sessions, story arcs, and campaigns, into a truly satisfying whole.

> This framework is not a hard set of rules but a collection of guidelines. Think of it as a vocabulary that you can use to describe the structure of your adventure rather than as a specific formula.

SESSION

A session is a period of real-world time during which you play your game. There is no minimum or maximum length of time, but generally sessions last from 2-8 hours, and most commonly 4-6.

Depending on the pacing of the game, a session should be enough time to complete several scenes and achieve a milestone, but we all know that those pesky players can affect that pacing dramatically.

SCENARIO

A scenario is a unit of game time usually lasting from one to four sessions ending in a major or epic milestone.

Usually, a scenario is a self-contained story from beginning to end, although it can be part of a larger saga. Players often use the terms scenario and adventure interchangeably.

SAGA

A saga is a significant storyline for the characters built upon multiple scenarios, with the last scenario ending in an epic milestone.

MILESTONES

Milestones are the key points or objectives in a scenario. They give the story framework internal structure and consistency, while at the same time allowing the GM to control pacing over sessions and campaigns. Milestones also trigger character *rewards,* lending special importance to advancing the story. Use this handy shorthand to stay on track: minor milestones mark progress through a scenario; major milestones are the primary objective of a scenario; and an epic milestone is the primary objective of a scenario that ends a saga.

Milestones also mark the end of certain durations. See Duration (p. 7) for more detail.

REWARDS

As characters achieve milestones they change, improve, and deepen their relationship with the story. Some of the rewards for completing a milestone might be as simple as changing an aspect to reflect the current state of affairs, or it could be as significant as gaining an entirely new character feature.

Trading talents or features, or redefining character aspects, might require an exposition (or even an interlude, p. 14), depending on the context of the story.

Upon achieving a milestone, all characters:

- Refresh plot points
- Recover (p. 31)

Minor Milestone

A minor milestone marks the achievement of a short-term objective that is part of a scenario. It is a small, but notable, step in the journey. A typical gaming session will contain, and often end with, one minor milestone. These milestones create a sense of rhythm in the storytelling and give the players a feeling of accomplishment.

> A party of Dungeoneers finally fight their way to an abandoned inn where they are supposed to meet a mysterious sorcerer, or the Crimson Rebellion successfully blackmails the new king's treasurer.

Minor Reward. You may redefine one aspect that is not a high concept. Characters under level 5 gain a level, but only once per scenario. If the scenario has multiple minor milestones, usually the middle minor milestone should be the one to provide a level reward.

Major Milestone

A major milestone is like the ending of the first or second part of a movie trilogy; it brings events to a satisfying conclusion, but it is clear there is more to the story. Attaining a major milestone marks the conclusion of a scenario and is most often the work of several sessions of play.

> The Occult Investigation Bureau finally steals the tome they'll need to stop the ritual, or the Dungeoneers unearth the second piece of the Tripartite Crown.

Major Reward. You may redefine a character aspect that is not a high concept, and you may trade one talent and one perk for another, as implied by the story. Characters gain a level.

Epic Milestone

We instinctively know an epic milestone when we see one. Hurling the ring into the volcano, slaying the dragon, and destroying the planet-killing battle station are all obvious examples. They are the very stuff sagas are made of. If you are playing a campaign, this is the culminating moment. Of course, the characters can go on a new adventure afterwards, but they are forever changed by what they have accomplished.

Epic Reward. You may alter any single character aspect, including a high concept, trade one talent, one feature, one skill rank, and one perk for another, as implied by the story. Characters gain a level after an epic milestone.

MILESTONES IN PLAY

The following are examples of the uses and effects of milestones in three vastly different campaigns. The first campaign, *The Dungeoneers,* features a fantasy quest with a classic dungeon crawl motif. A party of desperate adventurers seeks to get fabulously rich by finding and uniting the pieces of the legendary Tripartite Crown. The second example follows the *Occult Investigation Bureau* in their never-ending battle against the Ancient Ones, fiendish unnamable entities seeking dominance over the Earth. And finally, there is the *Crimson Rebellion,* a pulpy space opera that is set on Mars in the distant past. It combines action with court intrigue, romance, and deception.

EXAMPLE: THE DUNGEONEERS

In their first scenario, The Dungeoneers slog their way through sewers choked with alchemical waste to reach the Celestial Library. Just getting into the library is challenging enough to qualify as a minor milestone.

They refresh plot points, and since they are all level 3, they gain a level. Also, the pursuit of the Tripartite Crown gives the warrior Almgrim big ideas! He changes his motivation aspect from ADVENTURE FOR ITS OWN SAKE to SECRETLY YEARNS FOR POWER.

A few sessions later, the Dungeoneers narrowly avoid the library guards and steal the first piece of the Crown. This counts as a major milestone.

Again, plot points refresh and the characters gain a level. After seeing how the campaign is shaping up, Armand the Thief, decides to replace his talent **Lucky** with **Danger Sense**.

Several sessions later, and with the first two pieces of the Crown in hand, the party descends into the Depths of Baradahm, the deepest dungeon any of them have ever seen. After overcoming a maze of sliding corridors and smashing blocks, the party bests a demi-lich in a knock-down, drag-out battle for the ages. At last, they complete their quest and so achieve their epic milestone.

The characters level up, refresh plot points, and much to the chagrin of the rest of the party, Thargus the Magus dons the Tripartite Crown... changing her high concept from SCRAPPY WIZARD ON A WING AND A PRAYER to THE ONE WHO WOULD RULE THEM ALL.

EXAMPLE: OCCULT INVESTIGATION BUREAU

We join the agents of the Bureau as they trek into the wilds of Idaho, hot on the trail of a cult that practices human sacrifice. They manage to corner the cult's second in command after a wild chase through the Bitterroot Mountains. The cult leader explains the cultists will soon perform a ritual on Wizard Island at the center of Crater Lake—then promptly leaps to his death before they can interrogate him further! This combination of chase and clue count as a minor milestone.

Professor Ivanov, shaken by the cultist's "dedication," changes his trouble aspect from FAINTING SPELLS to SUFFERS FROM NEURASTHENIA. The characters refresh their plot points.

Back in town a few days later, the agents are jumped as they pore over back issues of the local paper for clues. They get into a shootout with a corrupt sheriff but survive. Their research turns up a bit of local folklore about a squid-like creature that lives in Crater Lake, waiting for the right moment to emerge and walk the earth. The same article contains a phonetic version of a Native chant meant to keep the creature in its watery prison. Armed with this vital information they achieve a major milestone.

The characters refresh their plot points and Dr. Kornheyser, having discovered that the cultist from the chase was actually a long-lost relative, changes his motivation aspect to THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL.

Eventually the OIB agents do manage to stop the cultists, but only after Dr. Kornheyser is torn to pieces in the process. Dr. Ivanov lives but a giant eye watches him from the shadows of any lake-like surface. The surviving characters achieve an epic milestone.

Devastated by this turn of events, Professor Ivanov changes his trouble aspect to QUITE, QUITE MAD. The characters level up and refresh their plot points, but they may never want to leave home again.

EXAMPLE: CRIMSON REBELLION

Young Vasha of Redstone watches as her Father, Exarch Redstone, is murdered in a palace coup. Narrowly escaping with her life, Vasha swears vengeance on her usurping Uncle. She contacts her closest friends who, as fate would have it, are all in the Capital. The group is comprised of level 5 characters. Together they swear a blood pact that Vasha's uncle will never keep the throne and set to work right away. Through seduction, one of the characters (Slyph of the Dusty Marches) learns of the plans for the Exarch's coronation and they all know what comes next.

Having achieved a minor milestone, they refresh their plot points, but they do not level up since they are level 5.

After discovering the treasurer's scheme to sell titles in the new regime, they extort her for access to the royal air barge. After some timely sabotage, and the heroic sacrifice of one of their number, the Rebellion crashes the barge into the coronation procession. Although the new Exarch survives the crash, the emboldened masses rise up against him. As the Exarch flees to the Summer Palace on Olympus Mons, the characters achieve a major milestone.

Vasha changes her trouble aspect from BURNING FOR BLOOD to HARDENED BY LOSS. Everyone, of course, refreshes their plot points, and they all level up.

After several failed attempts to lure the Exarch out of his impregnable retreat, the Rebellion bribes a guard to let them inside in the guise of a touring troupe. Getting into the palace is a major milestone. The characters gain a level and get a much-needed plot point refresh.

Vasha's mother recognizes her and, in a tearful reunion, agrees to help her, only to later betray Vasha to the Exarch! Luckily, the head Palace Guard, Maximus, overhears the double-cross and vows to help Vasha—he's been IN LOVE WITH VASHA FOR YEARS, of course. After an elaborately faked execution, Vasha begs Maximus to help the Rebellion, and he agrees. The campaign reaches its climax in a pitched sky-car battle between the Rebellion and the Exarch's loyalists in the thin air above Olympus Mons. Too late, the Exarch discovers that his sky-car pilot is none other than Vasha herself!!! After Vasha hurls the Exarch to his doom, she no sooner lands than she finds herself hailed as the new Exarch.

Naturally, this is the saga's epic milestone, so all the characters level up, refresh plot points, and can undergo epic change. Since Vasha's ascendance has serious ramifications for the story, she can and should completely rework her aspects. She switches her trouble aspect to WISTFUL FOR SIMPLER TIMES, her motivation to REFORGE A SHATTERED KINGDOM, and her high concept to UNEASY LIES THE HEAD THAT WEARS THE CROWN. She has also outgrown her old feature, *The Rebellion's Whisper Network*, so with the GM's permission she replaces it with a new feature, the title *Exarch of Redstone*. And while her new position might seem to unbalance the game, there are still plenty of intrigues, plots, and problems to keep the campaign going for years…

CONCLUSIONS

Concluding a scene, resting, or reaching a milestone all have different effects and rewards. It is important for the GM to ensure everyone clears effects and stress when appropriate, and that players get to enjoy the rewards they have achieved throughout the story.

COMBINED RECOVERY AND REWARD TABLE

Below is a table that combines the key elements of recovery and milestone rewards based on time or event.

TIME

The point when you remove effects and stress and receive rewards.

EFFECTS AND STRESS REMOVED

The duration of effects to remove or stress boxes to clear. Recovering a ***staggered*** or incapacitated box requires a successful overcome action (use Physique to recover physical stress boxes or Resolve to recover mental stress boxes), and incapacitated boxes impose a -2d penalty. Roll only once at the time interval.

Should you fail a recover test, you can attempt it again when you rest or at the next milestone. If the duration is shorter than Temporary [T], change it to [T]. Subsequent failures require you to repeat this process.

REWARD

The specific rewards you receive at a given point. This also includes resetting any aspect, effect, or talent tracking.

Recovery and Reward Table

Time	Effects & Stress Removed	Reward
Scene	Scene [S] or shorter	- Reset all aspect tracking (invoked or compelled) - Reset any effects or talents usable only once per scene
Rest	Temporary [T] or shorter	- As Scene
Minor	Lasting [L] or shorter	- As Scene - Refresh plot points - Gain a level (if under level 5; once per scenario) - Redefine one aspect (not High Concept) - Trade one perk for another
Major	Long-Lasting [LL] or shorter	- As Scene - Refresh plot points - Gain a level - Redefine one aspect (not High Concept) - Trade one talent for another
Epic	Enduring [E] or shorter	- As Scene - Refresh plot points - Gain a level - Redefine one aspect - Trade one talent, feature, skill rank, and perk for another

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