

WINTERWEB GAMES
THE WINTERWEB SYSTEM COMPILED NET BOOK

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Foreword To Winterweb Games

This file is a compilation of four separate books: the **PLAYER'S NET BOOK (PNB)**, the **CORE CONTENT NET BOOK (CCNB)**, the **CORE SETTING NET BOOK (CSNB)**, and the **GAME MASTER'S NET BOOK (GMNB)**. Although they can be distributed separately it seemed like, since digital distribution is so easy, combining them into a single compilation would make sense.

Note that each book will treat itself as being separate—so there might be a reference to the **GAME MASTER'S NET BOOK** within the **PNB** or, for that matter, a note that explains “**PNB**” means **PLAYER'S NET BOOK** despite that being explained elsewhere. This is because the books really are meant to be four separate works and so they will be treated as such.

How These Books Are Divided

The **PNB** deals primarily with player issues. Ultimately, the **PNB's** goal is to lay the groundwork for the system for new players and to get a player through character creation—provided that player has the appropriate content¹.

¹There is, at this point, some internal confusion over what content belongs where. Ideally, the **PNB** will have no specific content and will deal only with mechanics. That might, however, make diving into intense technical details necessary. Some compromise with the **CCNB** and **CSNB** might be necessary.

A Note On Formatting

Throughout this book a number of different formatting notations are used, but the one that is most important to point out is the notation for various statistics². A statistic, for example, **STRENGTH** is written with small capital letters. This signifies that what is being referenced is, in fact, a statistic and not something else. In other words, it ought to have rules for it being used in-game somewhere.

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²While you may not be acquainted with statistics and why they're important yet, they are vitally important within the game system.

Part I

THE PLAYER'S NET BOOK

Chapter 1

Introduction To THE PLAYER'S NET BOOK

1.1 Foreword

This book is aimed at outlining the basic concepts of the Winterweb role playing game¹ (or “RPG”) system for the “player” perspective. In other words, this will include most everything needed to actually *play* the game, but not to *run* the game. Running the game (the GM’s job) will be outlined in THE GAME MASTER’S NET BOOK.

1.2 Who Is This Game For?

This game is fairly complex and assumes that you, the reader, are all ready well-versed in similar games like DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS, GURPS, various computer games, and so on. Very little hand-holding will be done here and it is mostly up to the reader to understand the basic concepts as they will not be explained in detail.

¹A game involving a “game master” (someone who is agreed to run the game and arbitrate the rules) and any number of other “players”, within reason. This is one of those things that much will be left unsaid about.

1.3 What Is Needed To Play?

A Game Master, a set of dice (most notably d100s²), players, a setting (and “content”), the rules, a place to play, some time, and a desire to play.

One thing to note is that the setting and content will not be included here. That is, this book contains the rules but not an actual implementation of the rules. While this may seem a bit ornate, the rules themselves were designed to be abstracted away from any individual content and as such injecting the content back in here seems like a bad idea. Examples will be used, but a full set of content will be kept for a separate book. Don’t worry, it’ll still be free.

1.4 On The Book Itself

THE PLAYER’S NET BOOK³ is split into five separate chapters and it is advised that these be read in the or-

²Dice with one hundred sides. Most people use two, non-identical, ten sided dice instead of a single hundred sided die: the first determines the “tens” place and the second the “ones” place. A roll of “00” is considered 100. Other dice follow similar formats—d6 for six sides, d10 for ten sides, etc.

³“PNB” for short. This term will be used from here on in.

der they are presented here (Introduction, Statistics, Combat, Skills, Characters). Of course, it is impossible to create a single layout that works for everyone so if something doesn't make sense it can probably be skipped for the moment.

1.4.1 Version

This is the LyX⁴ version and will (ideally) be the version that is ultimately distributed. It will be distributed primarily in PDF format, though others are possible. A PostScript⁵ file or files in a number of other formats can also be distributed, at request. Comments and corrections are welcome.⁶

1.4.2 Copyright notice

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⁴Find more on LyX here:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LyX>

⁵PostScript is the language most printers use to typeset the pages they print. A PostScript document can be used to print a high-quality, platform-independent version of this book.

⁶My current email address is winter.ayars@gmail.com

Alternatively, visit the current website at:
<http://www.sharemotion.com/winterweb/>

Chapter 2

Statistics

Statistics are standardized, formal descriptions of a certain facet of a character. They describe in meaningful ways (to the game system) different things the character can and cannot do. A character could accurately be described as a collection of statistics that is meaningful in-game.

The Winterweb System is based on the d100 scale. In other words, each statistic has a particular score with a range from 0 to 99. This isn't completely true as the 99 point cap can be passed in a number of different ways, but that's getting into more advanced ideas.

Note that this way of viewing statistics is, at first at least, quite counter-intuitive. There are some things which seemingly are simply either-or prospects: someone without legs can't walk, someone with legs can. Now, whether a character has legs or not is determined by the character's race and advantages/disadvantages—both of which will be dealt with later—but many other characteristics seem to defy the 0-99 categorization. This is, ultimately, going to be dealt with in the Game Master's Net Book so at this point it will be assumed that the vast majority of statistics can be fit into the 0-99 scale.

2.1 Types Of Statistics

There are three basic types of statistics: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The reason for this division is as follows.

- **Primary Statistics** are the most basic measures of a character. They define the essential building blocks on which all other statistics are based. In any individual setting, all characters must have each primary statistic required by that setting's content. Really the only one this book is concerned with is, however, is EXPERIENCE; others will be dealt with in the GMNB¹ and in the individual statistics themselves in the various rules implementations. EXPERIENCE is used to purchase secondary statistics.
- **Secondary Statistics** are the statistics that are most varied. The vast majority of content is focused on secondary statistics. These are the ones most likely to follow the standardized form for statistics (with the possible exception of advantages/disadvantages) and they are the primary focus on which the game is centered.

¹GAME MASTER'S NET BOOK. This abbreviation will be used from here on in.

- **Tertiary Statistics** are those that are derived from the secondary statistics. For example, the chance to dodge an attack would be considered a tertiary statistic. These differ from secondary statistics in that they are not purchased on their own, but rather they are determined based on a character's secondary statistics.

2.1.1 Primary statistics

The most basic “statistic” also introduces an exception: EXPERIENCE. EXPERIENCE is an abstract measure of a character's capabilities; it can be acquired through combat, training, and just about anything else that a character does.

EXPERIENCE, however, does not use the 0-99 scale. There is no cap, so a character can have 1,000 or 1,000,000 EXPERIENCE. Of course, the GM might set a certain limit or might use higher or lower amounts depending on the level of power desired in a setting.

EXPERIENCE is the most basic statistic because it is used to “buy” nearly all others. With enough spent a character can be a master duelist, the best painter in the world, a legendary chef, or even a dimension-travelling mage. Because of the flexibility of this system it can fit a great number of different characters within the same ruleset—there's no need for WINTERWEB:EPIC!, WINTERWEB:IN SPACE!, or WINTERWEB:KIDS IN HIGH SCHOOL! beyond the alternate settings these would suggest. The “Epic” setting would simply assume characters of much higher EXPERIENCE than normal, and so on. This is, again, one of the advantages of the separation of content and mechanics.

It is important to note that although EXPERIENCE is an overall measure of a character's ability it is *not* necessarily a measure of overall combat capabilities.

A character with 1,000 EXPERIENCE spent toward creating the leanest, meanest fighting machine ever would easily defeat a character with ten times that much but only 500 EXPERIENCE spent on combat-related skills. EXPERIENCE, unlike in many other games, is not merely a scale from “bad at fighting” to “good at fighting”.

2.1.2 Secondary statistics

Secondary statistics are purchased by “spending” experience points. Although the experience points are not technically gone, they are spent. This will be dealt with in-depth in the experience section, however, and is not important here. Purchasing secondary statistics will be dealt with elsewhere, as well.

One other point with respect to secondary statistics is timing of purchases. In short, scores can be advanced virtually whenever a character has enough experience to do so. However, there are some recommendations and one rule regarding this. The one rule is that no score can be advanced in the middle of combat or during any other similar situation. The guideline for advancing scores is “whenever it is appropriate”.

In short, learning new things takes time, but sometimes less and sometimes more. It should be noted that advancing scores does not necessarily equate to “learning”, but that learning must take place before advancing a score; that is, a character can learn something and not have a mechanical reference for that (though it would be unusable in the actual game during the time there was no mechanical representation until the points were actually purchased) but a character cannot have the points before learning it. Sometimes a character can just pick something up quickly- a character who had mastered swordplay

might be able to just pick up an axe and "transfer" some of the old sword skill into axe skill (that is, spend some experience points on axe weapon skill) but a wizard who had never picked up an axe or any other sort of serious weapon before would not have the background to suddenly acquire those skills.

2.1.3 Tertiary statistics

Tertiary statistics are those that cannot be purchased (similar to primary) but that are instead derived from the secondary tier. One important distinction is that tertiary statistics are the ones most commonly used mechanically: making an attack requires looking at `ATTACK%`, `DODGE%`, and so on rather than at the secondary statistics of a character. Tertiary statistics could accurately be described as a lens through which the secondary statistics are viewed.

2.2 Formal Definition Of A Secondary Statistic

A statistic can be describe as a number² that is given meaning by a set of standardized descriptions and a much less standardized description. A statistic's score is determined in a number of ways, but most commonly by purchasing it with experience as a secondary statistic or as a tertiary statistic. Again, there are other ways but this book is primarily concerned with the ones that characters and players will encounter most commonly.

²The correct terminology to describe this specific number is "score". A score is the numeric representation of a statistic, most commonly (for Secondary Statistics) a representation of how much experience was invested in it and subsequently how powerful it is.

2.2.1 The Statistic block

(Insert a `TeX` formatted version of the standard statistic block here... blah, annoyingness. Yank the one from the CCNB)

2.2.2 Supertypes

To start with, each statistic has a "supertype" that fits it into the overall hierarchy of statistics. Think of any given supertype as a block of statistics related by some sort of fundamental conceptual similarity. Although there are many supertypes, the most common are listed here. Note that this list only includes secondary statistics. Primary and tertiary, of course, have similar lists.

- **Statistic**

The most basic type of statistic is the "plain" statistic. This typically represents a primary or tertiary statistic or one of the ability of everything, for example: strength, the character's accuracy in combat, and so forth. A statistic (of all types, not just the "statistic" supertype) can be purchased and used based on the 0-99 rating, see the section on purchasing statistics for more info.

- **Skill**

Skills are learned and generally specific or narrow facets of a character. A weapon skill may be untrained, but it is quite different from a statistic-not everything has the ability (maybe lacking the ability to physically use weapons or maybe lacking the intellectual capability, or whatever) to swing a sword or fire a gun. Skills represent a character's learned ability to "do something". For example, a complex martial arts

style would be a skill, calculus (and math in general) is a skill, the ability to hurl magical blasts of fire is a skill, and so on. The vast majority of ways to describe specific character traits fall under "skills". Skills are technically broken up into four sub-types of their own that are all "classified" as skills:

1. **Skill**

This is the "default" choice: any skill with a type of "skill" falls under this category. These are most commonly non-combat related and can be used freely.

2. **Combat Ability**

Combat abilities are "active" combat skills. Like the other two "ability" type skills they must be "equipped" in one of the ten "ability slots" before they can be used. Using a combat ability takes the character's action step for one turn in combat (see the section on the different steps of combat for more on this).

3. **Passive Ability**

Passive abilities are skills that have a continuous or automatic effect but that must be "equipped" in order for that effect to take place. "Ironskin³", a passive ability that allows a character to defend against physical attacks with endurance instead of evasion, is a passive ability.

4. **Reaction Ability**

Reaction abilities are similar to combat abilities, but instead of having an "active"

effect they are "reactive". They cannot be used during a character's "action step", but instead take effect when a particular condition is met. For instance, to counter-attack when an enemy attacks the character.

• **Advantage/Disadvantage**

Advantages represent an innate "advantage" over normal characters of the same race, class, and so forth. An ambidextrous character has the `AMBIDEXTROUS` advantage. A character that has an important and powerful family heirloom (for instance, a family sword) or some other type of item would have the `PERSONAL ITEM` advantage. Advantages might be set on a 0-99 scale (and most are) or they might also have "flat costs". In other words, the advantage might just have a single up-front cost to pay in order to gain access to it. The cost is usually determined depending on the cleverness of the GM.

An advantage might be "redeemed" later for the experience points spent in it-unlike most statistics, advantages are not necessarily permanent! However, the experience points regained by this is only half that of the experience spent-this is not an efficient means of storage. Furthermore, advantages redeemed in this manner probably ought to have role-playing reasons behind the redemption: a character with a super-human sense of smell that suddenly has "only" a normal level of olfactory capability with no reasoning doesn't make much sense. Some advantages simply cannot be "sold off" in that manner, however, without significant external intervention.

Disadvantages are the opposite: they are weaknesses the character has that the typical character of that race, class, and training would not

³Ironskin, and all other examples here, are at the time of this writing hypothetical. They may or may not make the final cut. If you like the sound of them and they don't: feel free to make them yourself!

have. A character that has lost an eye in battle might be partially blind, or a character might have only one arm, or a character might have a really bad temper. Disadvantages are basically restrictions on the character. However, in exchange for being restricted, the character gains a certain number of points. These are either based on the 0-99 scale or they have a flat cost.

Like advantages, disadvantages can be “redeemed” later-however, instead of getting experience points back they must be “bought off” by spending two experience points for every experience point gained by the disadvantage. For instance, a character with a disadvantage that granted 300 experience points would have to spend 600 to be rid of it. Like advantages these can be modified incrementally assuming they aren’t flat-costed. The disadvantage might be increased or decreased depending on the character’s desire. Like advantages, changes to disadvantages ought to be based in role-playing. A character that suddenly loses a nasty case of hydrophobia right before a long ocean voyage probably needs a good role-playing reason for this change. For instance, the hydrophobia might be “paid off”, but the character’s fear of water remains until after the voyage. As always, GMs should reward the behaviors of players that are desired and not reward undesirable behaviors. Finally, some disadvantages are essentially permanent. Limbs (usually) aren’t going to grow back just because some experience points were spent. Likewise, various extra-statistical means of removing a disadvantage (for instance, using healing magic to re-grow a lost limb) will probably fail as well. 10,000 points worth of QUADRIPLÉGIA aren’t going to suddenly vanish

because someone casts a “cure” spell on the character. However, spending the experience to “buy off” the disadvantage and then using heal magic might allow a character to re-grow a lost limb or so forth. The judgment of the GM and players comes into play here.

- **Class**⁴

Insert content here (damnit!)

- **Race**

A race is a special statistic that describes a character’s physical body. A race determines the character’s general appearance, abilities, and “place” in the world. The default race, human, costs nothing but other races can cost additional experience points to purchase. Many will have a “flat” cost in addition to a “racial score” that exists on the 0-99 scale. In addition, many races have their own racial skills, advantages, disadvantages, and so forth. Examples of races would be human, elf, dragon, orc, and so on. A character can be any race in theory, but in practice most characters will be the less powerful races because starting characters can’t afford the amount of experience required to be a dragon or a demon. Additionally, characters can occasionally be more than one race: for instance, a character might be half-elven or the character might have been turned into a vampire. In these cases the racial characteristics are combined. Note that not all races are compatible in this way.

⁴Classes are, at this point, not finalized. Classes may or may not exist in the final game depending on whether they add to the game or whether they are instead useless extra baggage.

2.2.3 Subtypes

A “subtype” is another description of the statistic. A statistic can have many different subtypes—each subtype describes a different part of the statistic. Although there are theoretically a limitless number of subtypes, a representative sample will be given here.

- **Combat Ability**

A combat ability is a skill that can be used in combat if it is equipped. A combat ability must be used during the “action step” of a character’s turn.

- **Reaction Ability**

A reaction ability is a skill that must be equipped. It triggers a certain action under the right circumstances.

- **Passive Ability**

A passive ability is a skill that automatically enhances the character’s other statistics as long as it is equipped.

- **Skill**

A skill is a generic form of learnable statistic. Skills can be nearly anything: knowledge of chemistry, ancient lore, cooking, proficiency with a weapon, jumping, and more are all skills.

- **Magic**

This is usually applied to skills or abilities and it signifies that the statistic in question is magic-based. All spells, for example, fall under the “magic” category.

- **Physical**

Physical skills, abilities, and so on, are “physically based”. In other words, they describe something the character can do: running quickly,

swinging a sword, and so on. Most combat-oriented skills are physical.

- **Mental**

Mental skills represent some form of knowledge the character has. For instance, math or heraldry would both be mental skills. Most social skills also fall under this category.

- **Trained**

This indicates that the statistic in question requires training to use. In other words, a character must have at least a score of one before it can be used.

- **Untrained**

Untrained statistics, in contrast to trained ones, do not require any point investment prior to being used. They can be used as though their score were “zero”. For instance, all characters can run so a “running” skill would be untrained—there is no requirement to invest points into it prior to using it.

- **Sphere**⁵

A “sphere” indicates the particular statistic belongs to a class’s “set” of abilities. For example, a skill that was “Knight Sphere” would be a skill Knights used.

- **Short Spell**

Short spells are spells cast in turns. In other words, the spell charges based on turns. Short spells are usually quick and easy or combat oriented or similar. The major advantage over long spells, of course, is the casting time— but in turn they do not have the same potential for power.

⁵As with classes, “spheres” may not make it to the final version of this game.

- **Long Spell**

Long spells are cast in larger periods of time—defaulting to “hours”, though sometimes they can require even “days” to cast—and in turn have much greater effects than short spells.

- **Unbound**

An unbound statistic does not exist on the 0-99 scale. In other words, it has no natural limit. Experience would be unbound, for example.

- **Flat Cost**

A statistic with a flat cost is a sort of cop-out on the GM’s part. In other words, it is one that could not be fit into the 0-99 scale. The statistic has a flat cost to purchase (hence the name) and once it is purchased is totally in effect.

- **Racial**

Racial statistics are those granted by a race and are specific to that race. The ability to fly would be a racial advantage, for example.

- **Constant**

A constant statistic is one that cannot be advanced merely by spending more experience points. Unlike a flat cost statistic it can be improved (or worsened in some cases) but it requires something special to change it. Most constant statistics fall under the advantage or disadvantage supertype.

- **Unpurchased**

An unpurchased statistic has a score that is not purchased through experience but it is instead determined through some other means. How to calculate the statistic is defined on a per-statistic basis.

2.2.4 Scores

A statistic’s score is the abstract representation of the character’s level of ability with the statistic in question. A score is (mostly) a number from 0 to 99 that is purchased with experience points. There are some exceptions, but for the vast majority this is the case.

2.2.5 Prerequisites

A prerequisite, as the name implies, is a set of requirements the character must fulfill in order to begin putting points in a particular statistic. Note that once the requirements are met the character can immediately put as much experience into the statistic as is desired. However, if the character stops meeting the requirements for some reason then the character can no longer invest new points in the statistic and, depending on what caused this, might be no longer able to use the statistic until the prerequisites are met again.

2.2.6 Descriptions

Descriptions are the “flavor” of a statistic. Though unlinked and linked effects determine the mechanics of a statistic, the description determines what the statistic *is* in-game. STRENGTH is different than MAGIC not just in what it does for a character in battle but in what it represents within the game world. Furthermore, descriptions are the “final arbiter” on the mechanical effects as well: if a character wants to do something unusual with a statistic the description can aid the GM in determining whether or not that is possible.

2.2.7 Unlinked effects

The unlinked effects of a statistic are the basic ways in which the statistic can be used. For example, STRENGTH (on its own) is used when a character wants to lift or crush something or otherwise use personal, physical strength to some effect. Note that the what is described in the “effects” section is more important than any general rule saying a character can’t do something. For example, a skill that allows a character to break the 99 point cap on a certain score trumps the rule that says 99 is the limit.

2.2.8 Linked effects

Like unlinked effects, the linked effects describe the mechanical effects of a statistic. However, linked effects are the result of combining statistics and (especially) skills⁶ rather than just the statistics on their own. For example, a character who wants to use a counter attack reaction ability must link that with the WEAPON SKILL of the weapon that character is using. The COUNTER ATTACK ability would then describe, in the linked effects section of the statistic block, how the skills were “assembled” and what the ultimate result would be.

⁶See the section on linking and chaining in the “Skills” chapter for more information on how this works.

Chapter 3

Combat

This chapter deals with combat—characters tend to get into fights a lot, so it is best to understand how combat works out in depth. Although combat is by no means a necessity of character life¹ it is assumed that there will be at least one serious encounter once every other adventure, probably more like once or twice per adventure. One thing to note is that combat in this system tends to be a more serious affair than in others. It takes a long time to set up and is intricate in and of itself so quality of combat is probably more important than quantity of combat. This was, in part, a conscious decision made with the goal of moving away from the “hack-and-slash” style of play that dominates many role playing games.

The phases of combat are the different steps that each combat goes through, from start to finish. Each phase consists of a certain set of steps, and some phases are repeated. Many of these are fairly obvious, especially to those who have a lot of experience with similar games, but nonetheless they will be detailed

¹In order to have a sample of how flexible this game system is I once wrote up an outline for a setting/content/rule-set in which the characters were politicians and as such would very rarely (if ever) actually engage in combat themselves. Of course, others engaged in combat—but on a mass, rather than individual, scale. In any case, the point is that entire campaigns can be set up in which this chapter is more or less unnecessary. That’s fine, but it will likely be the exception rather than the rule.

here.

3.1 Setup

To prepare for combat there are two important questions to consider: one is “what is the context in-game in which this combat is taking place and what are the implications of the context?” The terrain might be rocky or flat or maybe two opposing sides meet on opposite sides of a river with only one bridge between them. While that might seem to be an intimidating question, it isn’t quite as scary once some familiarity with the system is acquired.

The second question is to determine how the combat will be handled by the players. Essentially: will the game will be run tactically or not. “Tactical combat” is a reference to the grid system that many people prefer, As a warning: All the information on this site will be written up with abstracted combat in mind (in which there is no physical representation of the combat, but in which it is up to the players and especially the GM to keep track of everything) with notes made for tactical combat (ie, ranges and various things like that).

One “unit” of tactical combat range equals five feet of abstract combat range. Plan appropriately. Use

what works, change what does not. Do not underestimate the detail and depth a well run abstract combat can give, do not underestimate the advantages of the tactical combat mode. My advice as the creator is to always run in tactical mode except when it is impossible or impractical. Seeing how many of the rules center around combat, this is very important. If you have a difficult time visualizing combat and cannot use the tactical rules then either make notes as to who is in the "melee" and who is to the sidelines. Finally, in order to avoid confusion, the game should be run entirely in one mode or another- or let the players know it will be switching back and forth.

Furthermore, there are even more ways to run combat than the ones that are outlined in this chapter. As implied earlier, it is even possible to write up rules for combat in which it is groups of characters rather than individual characters who are focused on. Or maybe naval combat rules or a number of other options. Again, however, these will be assumed to be the default.

3.2 Terrain

Because of these things one side or the other might be "surprised" (or perhaps both sides are surprised) or maybe neither will ever become aware of each other as one side escapes through stealth. More powerful characters and creatures might even be capable of conducting combat when, for example, in non-connected rooms of a castle. A powerful Liche (or other creature with SPIRIT SIGHT) might be able to destroy the walls between rooms or maybe even TELEPORT through the walls or cast spells that don't require sight of the targets. With that in mind, it should be obvious that determining just what consti-

tutes an "encounter" for a particular group of characters or monsters or whatever else is an important job for the GM.

Smart beings will attempt to use terrain to their advantage, as will non-smart but instinctively combat aware creatures. For example, a party containing a powerful mage might try to find a narrow area where a couple fighter-types could hold off opposing forces while the mage prepares to unleash magical doom. An outnumbered force, similarly, will want to use narrow terrain to prevent the enemy to avoid being swarmed; conversely, a numerous force is wise to draw their opponents into the open and then surround them. This is one of the instances where creativity can add life to a campaign. Too many battles take place in a square, featureless room- throw some curves at the party. Even an inferior force can wreak havoc on a superior force if the inferior force is pouring burning oil onto them from an unreachable position. GMs (and players, too) are encouraged to read *The Art of War*, *The Book of Five Rings*, perhaps some Napoleon or Genghis Khan². Get some good ideas from the greats of history and borrow them.

Of course, conversely, not all characters are tactical geniuses- in fact, the majority probably aren't. Likewise, every orc in existence does not know how to properly execute a feinted retreat into superior terrain- well, unless the orcs in question are all trained in military strategy. In any case, none of this can happen without terrain. As above, what is the context?

²Although few illusions are had about the willingness of players to study old Asian manuals on war to get a leg up on fighting imaginary battles with their friends...

3.3 Awareness

It is important to determine how the various groups of would-be combatants are set up on the battlefield. Rarely do two groups of warriors just line up and have at each other- at least, rarely do successful ones. Much of the time, combat begins precisely because there isn't really anything other than to chop through the opposition in gruesome fashion. In fact, much of this game system could be said to detailing the various ways in which fantasy heroes and heroines chop through said opposition. But it is important that any system such as this first take care of how the characters managed to get them into a fix requiring the swords to be drawn and spells to be readied.

First of all, there is an assumption on the part of the rules that the GM is going to provide various things (like a plot- a reason for being "here", wherever "here" is- and some enemies or whatever else) that lead up to combat and then the system's job to take over. This section handles the transition.

3.3.1 When one party is aware, the other is not

This situation often occurs due to some scheme made on the part of the first party. Perhaps the first party is a group of bandits waiting for some juicy prey to wander into their ambush. Perhaps there's a demon tracking down the characters with intent to kill one or all of them. This is the GM's job, again, but once we get into a situation there are some general things that can be noted about the situation:

- The aware side will almost surely get the initiative
- The aware side will also often be able to decide

whether the fight should or should not take place

- The aware side has an advantage and should, if it is intelligent, work to consolidate and use that advantage (through stealth, decisive action, or whatever)
- Because one side has an advantage it can use that to get into appropriate position, however the unaware side will be caught in its "marching order" or just standing around or whatever else. It's important for the GM to keep track of marching order pre-combat.

3.3.2 When both or neither parties are aware

This situation often occurs when neither party has complete awareness, for example: a group of tomb raiders might stumble on some bandits using the tomb as a base of operations. The general notes about this situation:

- Neither side has a decided advantage in determining when combat occurs (it's up to whoever can react first)
- Note that this might not just occur because both parties lack sight or warning or whatever but also occur when both parties have very good awareness or preparedness. As a side note, if both parties are trying to set up close to each other it might be wise to move the whole distance between the two back.
- Both sides might be in their "marching order", or both might be prepared for anything (in defensive positions), or one side might be caught off-guard with the other being prepared.

3.4 Initiative

Initiative is important as it creates the ordering of who gets to go first and who has to go last in combat. This method is essentially whole-team turn based. In other words, each team rolls for initiative and then the higher of the two rolls gets actions first, then the lower, then the higher again, and so on. This is handy because it doesn't take many dice rolls to figure out the order of combat, but it also can lend to some silly situations (completely focusing on one character at a time and killing them while they are totally unable to do anything about it). The second version is recommended, but for large combats this version can save some time.

3.4.1 Initiative one

This is the recommended version of initiative. Instead of rolling a per-team initiative, take each member of combat and roll a $d100 + \text{AGI}$ and the highest result goes first, then the second highest, and so on until the lowest "initiative" has gone at which point the round ends and the highest takes action again.

3.4.2 (Variant) Initiative two

The second initiative system is similar to the first, except it allows for additional turns per round. Each character rolls initiative as per normal, but any result over 100 allows the character to take extra turns. A character can take one turn per 100 points of initiative.

3.4.3 (Variant) Initiative three

Blahblahblah, describe the FFT-like system here and why it sucks for practical use.

3.4.4 (Variant) SPEED primary score

SPEED (SPD) is an additional primary score like str, agi, and so on. The default rule-set does not use the SPEED statistic because under the two recommended initiative systems it does not affect a great deal of combat. However, if the second or third initiative variants described above are in effect or if the campaign calls for more focus spent on initiative (for example, in a campaign full of assassins where going first can mean the difference between "neutralizing" a sentry or alerting an entire army then speed might be worth using. The SPEED score replaces AGILITY in initiative calculations. SPEED may be as expensive as a full primary statistic (if the virtual real time rules are used then SPEED becomes a vital consideration for every single character just as hit points are) or it might be only 3x cost or some other number. The precise value will be up to the individual GMs and the standard rules set will not be concerned with it.

3.4.5 (Variant) Per-round initiative rules

While the standard rules make the assumption that initiative (and subsequently: order of actions in combat) will be determined at the start of combat and then left as-is, barring various in-combat possibilities, another possibility is to re-order initiative for each round. This rule is really only relevant for the per-character initiative rules, the per-team rules can lead to an aggravation of the problems found in those rules if a particular side of combat goes second one round and then first the next, leading to two actions in a row for every member of that team; and these rules are also (hypothetically) pointless for the virtual real time initiative system. However, as with

the speed rules above, sometimes initiative should become more of a focus in combat than it is under the standard system.

The per-round initiative rules are fairly simple: instead of rolling for initiative once, roll each round and then the highest initiative character gets first action as per normal. The primary problem with this system is how to determine the duration of various effects. For example, if effect duration is based on the character the effect was created by a "stun" spell that lasts one turn might not do any stunning at all: it might take effect after the target takes action on one turn and then end before the target takes action on another. This can lead to some unfortunate situations and should at least be examined before implementing these rules- although it isn't necessarily something that should never happen. The two alternatives to this are either an "absolute" duration (that is: note at what initiative value the effect came into being and make it last until that effect ceases) or alternatively to make durations dependent on their target's initiative if it has one (so 1 turn of stun would remove precisely one turn from the target, no more and no less). The first solution leaves the possibility of two or zero turns removed, though the randomness (and thus, chance of this happening) is reduced. The second has difficulties with specific abilities and effects that are beyond the scope of these variant rules to fully address. All of these have problems, but it is up to individual GMs to resolve them as they will not be dealt with further here.

3.5 Running Combat

(This one is probably going to be big... not sure how precisely to do it either...)

3.6 Turns and Rounds

Once combat is set up and initiative (and order of combat) is determined it's time for the various forces to actually come into conflict. The first round of combat can then begin. A combat round is defined as one cycle of turns from the highest initiative to the lowest. Note that the virtual real time initiative variant rules don't technically involve rounds. A turn refers to an individual character's actions in any one round. In any individual turn, the following steps are taken (in order):

3.6.1 Spell resolution

If the character is in the process of casting a spell the character can decide the spell is "ready" and actually cast it (if the requirements for casting are met, of course). Once the character decides to cast the spell, targets are determined and the effects worked out as described elsewhere. If the character decides to continue charging the spell then the character's actions are constrained for the rest of the turn. The character cannot move without losing the spell (note that certain skills and abilities can aid with this- notably, the "concentration" skill).

If the spell is lost, consult the variant rules on losing control of spells if you are playing by them. Additionally, the character cannot take normal action during the turn at all. Spellcasting requires time and concentration- unlike in some game systems, spell casters don't just recite a magical formula and suddenly meteors rain from the sky. Spellcasting involves wrestling with the very forces of the universe- it is not to be taken lightly.

3.6.2 Effect resolution

All effects created by the character have their duration reduced by one unless otherwise stated. Any effects that were created by the character and that have run out of duration (their duration is zero) are removed.

3.6.2.1 (Variant) Per-round initiative effect duration

Under the per-round initiative model (and possibly under various other situations) an effect's duration will depend on whoever is affected by it, rather than whoever created the effect. In this case, instead of decrementing (and subsequently removing) effects created by the character in question instead do the same to effects as they affect the character. Note that this might mean a particular spell runs out of its duration on one character sooner than another.

3.6.3 Acting or holding action

Once the above steps are taken care of, the character then gains the opportunity to take action. However, this is not always wise. Sometimes having a high initiative means either doing something foolish or doing nothing at all- in these cases, a wise character will instead delay acting. If the character skips the action step (detailed below) then that character can "slide down" in the initiative order for this round. By delaying action the character can wait until before or after the next character's turn or any other participant's turn.

Note that if the character delays for an entire turn (the character is the last one in the initiative order and takes no action, delaying again) then the character is instead moved to the top of the order for the

next round and all subsequent rounds. That is, if the character does nothing in one turn then that character automatically gets a chance to take the first action in the next round. If more than one character does this (for example, when no characters are left on the round's standard initiative order but there are still multiple characters holding action) then they are all placed at the front of the order in the next round on the basis of their initiative in that round. In other words, if character A holds, character B acts, and character C holds then the characters would take turns the next round in the order A, C, and finally B.

3.6.4 Character turns: movement and action

A character can, each round, take any two of the following three actions. In other words, the character can do one of the following: move then act, act then move, move then move a second time (a "double move" or "run" or what not).

3.6.4.1 Pre-action move

The character has an opportunity to take a move action and change position on the battlefield before taking any actual actions this turn. The character can move up to the MV rate in squares (or five foot increments) each move action.

3.6.4.2 Action

The character then gains a chance to act. Action is a variety of things, most likely the use of a combat ability (as defined elsewhere). If a combat ability is not used, a non-passive skill may be used. Certain reactive abilities can also be used as combat abilities

as determined by the ability in question. Finally, the character might decide to try to ad-hoc something not covered in the rules (a pirate trying to kick a lit barrel of gunpowder into some nearby water might fit here). The character can also decline to take action and can instead move on to post-action movement.

3.6.4.3 Post-action move

Finally, the character can then make a move as in the Pre-Action Move. Note that if the character moved and acted then this step cannot be taken.

3.6.4.4 (Variant) Multiple action rounds

If using an initiative system that allows a character to gain multiple actions per round³ it is important to ensure game balance is maintained. While this can be done by using a SPEED primary score it can also be done by weakening the effect of multiple actions. Under this variant, the first action a character takes in a round is a full turn and each subsequent turn the character *would* get due to high initiative is only a single action rather than two actions. This effectively halves the power high initiative under the second initiative system and helps maintain game balance.

3.6.5 Turn resolution step

This isn't a step in the strict sense, but anything that needs resolution will be resolved here. If nothing requires resolution (and at present nothing should) then the character's turn ends and the next person on the initiative order's turn begins.

³Most commonly the "Initiative Two" variant described above in the initiative section

3.7 When combat ends

Combat ends is when no participants have the ability and the desire to continue it. If one participant wants to continue and can, but another does not or cannot- combat will continue; this includes, for example, killing "downed" foes. (At least, if the character in question is not opposed to such actions!) Sometimes retreat is the best option- so fleeing can remove the ability for determined opponents to continue combat, or (for certain types of foes) it might also not. Sometimes all involved decide that they don't really want to fight and they can come to a peaceful conclusion to the combat. This is essentially the transition of the game back into the hands of the GM. One important note (especially for the players) is that this is the step that experience rewards are calculated and, depending on how the GM runs things, they might also be handed out at this time. However, a full discussion of experience awards is beyond the scope of this chapter and will be dealt with elsewhere.

Chapter 4

Skills

4.1 Foreword

Skills make the character. Really.

People like to say that characters are really all about the role playing and personality and so on, but skills are what make the character—at least, in this game system.

See, personality is great and it can even make characters. But skills are what give the characters a context. If there’s no need for that context then free-form works pretty well. But really, skills are very important. Now: skills can be determined by a character concept (as discussed in the Character chapter), but as far as the system is concerned the skills are very important.

There’s nothing worse than a great character concept being held back by an inadequate system. Well, actually there is. But for the purposes of this chapter that’s what we’re going to be assuming.

4.2 What Are Skills?

Skills are what a character knows. Most RPG characters will know a lot about chopping up monsters with sharp, pointy chunks of metal and there’s nothing wrong with that. It’s a classic (or cliché) for a rea-

son. But characters can also know ballet, understand calculus, be olympic swimmers, and so on. Characters can have hobbies and problems. Characters can know a lot of things and the game system has a responsibility to at least attempt to model that.

Skills are a specific sub-set of statistics that are descriptive of a *character*. Skills don’t describe how hard a character hits, but in what way the character hits; tertiary statistics describe how hard a character hits and other, similar things. Skills, though, are what give a character life within the game.

4.3 Equipping Abilities

Several references thus far have referred to “equipping” abilities, a process that will be explained here.

Abilities differ from skills or scores in that there is a limit to the number that can be accessed at any one time. The in-game justification of this is left up to GMs¹. Perhaps the characters are all robots with a hardware or software limitation, or perhaps all “abilities” are in fact spells (and purely non-magical

¹The out-of-character justification is that “abilities” are more directly related to combat and ought to be limited so that truly disgusting characters who have every combat ability in the game at 99 don’t get to just run everyone over with disgusting skill chains.

combat abilities would be skills) and thus equipping abilities would be like “memorizing” spells in certain other systems. Perhaps, although a character might be master of several different styles of martial arts, only a certain number of abilities are available at the level of recollection required to use them in combat. In any case, the standard rule is that by spending an action “bringing them to the surface” (so to speak) a character can re-configure an ability slot to fit a new ability. Note that this has implications for pre-combat setup as well! Wise characters attempting to pull off an ambush might notice if situation isn’t precisely what was expected and thus decide to readjust their abilities- though watch out that things don’t get out of hand during the readjustment!

As far as the actual process, up to ten² abilities can be equipped at any one time; note that this means it would take ten turns to completely re-configure a character’s abilities, although usually a large shift in ability emphasis could be done with fewer turns taken.

4.4 Chains³ and Links

A “link” is a way to describe that two scores should be connected in a particular fashion. A “chain” refers to a set of two or more linked scores (any number of separate things can be linked together, so long as all links are legitimate as defined by the individual skills/abilities). Earlier on, a “<~” notation was used to describe “substitute the lower of the two numbers”- what is being described to there can be

²For Development Purposes: Five? It seems 5-10 seems to be the most reasonable default, although starting at 4-6 and putting heavy emphasis on “extra ability slot” skills might be appropriate.

³Note: an official template for writing chains should be created. Using the ~> thing just doesn’t work.

formally called a “chain” between the linked scores. All chains follow two basic premises:

- They enable a combining of abilities, scores, or skills in a beneficial way- for instance, a particular sword technique must be linked with a sword skill in order to use it or a spell might be linked with the AREA MAGIC ability to give the spell an area of effect rather than making it single-target.
- A chain also requires the worst score in those linked be used for the calculation of the effect, so for example: a character with a FIRESTRIKE score of 40 and an AREA MAGIC: 2 score of 35 would have an effective score 35 for the FIRE-STRIKE+AREA MAGIC: 2 chain.

That is essentially the basics of chains, but in practice links and chains can be both complex and impressive. A particularly clever spell chain might produce some deadly results (FIRESTRIKE linked to the AREA MAGIC and RESIDUAL BURN abilities can leave large patches of dangerous terrain to cause a great deal of collateral damage, for example) although it would require keeping multiple scores within close point values of each other. An easy way to remember what score to use as the whole chain’s score is that, as in real life, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

Furthermore, there is a sort of “inverse link” which has the “~>” notation. This one is the opposite of a link and chain: the greatest, rather than the least, score is used.

A set of statistics that is “linked” together is formally known as a “chain”. Chains are treated just like individual statistics and skills—they could be considered virtual skills with their own score and “unlinked” effects.

Note also that there are two types of link, although for a large part these types are irrelevant. Linking “to” another statistic means that statistic (the “linked to” statistic) is the one that forms the base of the resulting chain. Linking “from” another statistic is merely the other end of the deal. Consider an example where Skill A links to Skill B, Skill B would subsequently be linked from Skill A. This is important in certain cases where there is some confusion over what the resulting chain actually does. For example, a WEAPON SKILL that is linked to another skill would merely enable that skill to be used with a weapon. A WEAPON SKILL linked from another skill, in contrast, would use the weapon skill’s “default attack” to make attacks and would be enhanced by the linked skill. Furthermore, both the WEAPON SKILL and this enhancement skill could link to a third skill that would be used as the core of that chain. Finally, as implied by those examples, only one piece of the chain can be the core, or the “linked from” statistic⁴.

4.5 “Magic Formula” for Cost Determination

The calculation of statistics for the various statistics can become difficult. Trying to create a villain who begins "life" as an extremely powerful character with lots of experience points, treasure, and so forth can be extremely complicated. The most difficult part depends on getting all of the statistics right. While at first the method of just adding the next level’s cost on and going from there might seem very simple (and it is under the conditions it was designed for—relative growth from "nothing") it is very difficult to

⁴However, hypothetically, a chain could perhaps be linked to another statistic or something like that. This will have to be determined later, most likely.

pull numbers out of thin air and have them mean something. However, thanks to the power of modern mathematics there is a solution:

$$n(x^2/2 + x/2)$$

Where n is the cost multiplier of the ability and where x is the desired level of the ability. Note that this formula assumes the ability is starting from zero.

I’m sure some of you are saying "You can’t honestly expect me to remember THAT!" or already reaching for the "close window" button.

Yes: I do expect you to remember that, or at least to run numbers through it. It isn’t so strange a formula. Many game systems (including D&D 3.0) use this same formula, except they don’t tell you about it. For instance:

$$1000(19^2/2 + 19/2)$$

Which happens to equal 190,000. If that number looks familiar but you can’t quite place it, let me clue you in: It’s the precise amount of experience required to reach character level 20 in Dungeons and Dragons 3rd Edition. Go look it up if you don’t believe me. But instead of giving you a formula they give you a chart. How many of you out there have that chart memorized? You don’t need to answer, it’s a rhetorical question.

While making (or memorizing) a chart from 0-99 might be impractical, the formula works in all cases—it just takes a bit more time. Yes, it probably requires a calculator. That’s just how it goes.

So with that in mind, it’s going to be taken axiomatically that if you are still reading you are fine with this formula. Don’t worry; for the most part it won’t be needed.

One thing to note is that the above formula only works when the starting value of the statistic is zero, that is: it only works for a freshly created character or statistic. However, another formula can come up with the number for a statistic given any starting statistic:

$$n(x^2/2 + x/2 - y^2 - y/2)$$

The variables are the same as the above, but y is the starting value of the ability. If you're careful you'll notice that if $y=0$ then the second part of the formula (the part that separates this one from the earlier one) comes out to zero. That's where the above formula comes from. In effect, this formula is "cost to reach x minus cost to reach y ".

Now, as an example, let's say strength has a $7x$ cost for a hypothetical "basic character" and we want to figure out how much EXPERIENCE 10 STRENGTH (the starting value) costs.

$$7(10^2/2 + 10/2)$$

So by that formula the final result is 385.

As a side note, this means that for a character with "even" stat bonuses (that is, all of the primary statistic modifications equal zero when added together) that means the character begins with 2310 experience, given all six stats start at 10.

Misc. interesting numbers:

- The number of experience points it takes to bring a 1x cost skill from 0-99: 4,950.
- The number of experience points it takes to take all 6 primary scores to 99 points at 7x cost: 207,900 experience.

Chapter 5

Characters

Characters are what, as players, most readers will be spending the majority of their time involved with. A “character” is a player’s in-game “persona” or “avatar”—although this avatar need not be identical to the play or, indeed, anything like the player!

5.1 Foreword

5.2 Starting Experience and Skills

5.3 Concept

A character’s concept is perhaps one of the most single important things about that character. A concept is, in a way, what drives all other parts of character creation. Establishing a concept is important in that it lets you determine what you want and what you do not want for your character- even assuming the content provided can be used to assemble the concept into a character. And if the content provided doesn’t have rules for what you want to know? It’s important to realize that early on and thus to either scrap the concept or to write up the content required to bring it to life.

5.3.1 Why concepts matter

I know some people out there are looking at this saying “Establishing a concept? That’s for those so-called ‘role players’, we don’t go for any of that”. Well, there’s some truth to that: a character’s personality, history, race, class, appearance, etc are all determined by concept. However, even for characters which lack those things (pure “numeric characters”) there is still a concept. “A damage sponge/tank” is a concept, even if it doesn’t involve much role playing. And if you’re building a character just to goof around with your friends on a Friday night? Well that’s a concept too! The concept there is “A character that is fun to use but not too involved”.

In order to establish a character’s concept, it is also important to consider what sort of “world” the character will exist in. What is the technology level? Are there guns available? If there aren’t, then a character with a gun is probably right out- if there are, then a character without a gun might be at a disadvantage. It is important to understand how the character will interact with the world, with the GM, and also with the other players. Building a character that doesn’t fit with the rest of the group might not be bad- but building a character that actively disrupts the players

surely is. This is why care needs to be taken when designing characters.

5.3.2 Some general “concept” questions

5.3.2.1 “Meta”, or “player” concerned questions

- Is the game “serious” or “light hearted”?
- Is “role playing” emphasized?
- What general power level are the other character concepts? (Characters designed with “high fantasy” designs generally don’t get along so well with more gritty or “realistic” characters.)
- How much min/maxing will the others do?
- What will the balance of combat vs. non-combat encounters be?

5.3.2.2 “History” questions:

- Where did the character come from?
- What sort of family does the character have?
- What sort of friends does the character have, or what sort would the character want?
- Similarly, did the character have any friends or acquaintances of note from before the current group?
- How did the character end up taking part in the campaign?

5.3.2.3 Common ground between the characters

Many groups or parties have little or no reason to be together, making the job of the GM much trickier and generally making friction between the party members inevitable. Having commonalities between the characters can help reduce unnecessary friction. The following are some good common links between the characters, though others are certainly possible.

- Shared goals or ideals
- Shared histories/family/etc
- Similar (or identical) employment
- Shared race or training/class
- Shared misfortune

5.4 Races

Once a character’s concept is filled out selecting the correct race is next in line. Sometimes selecting a race will be dictated by the concept, sometimes it’s chosen for different reasons, and sometimes races are picked for their mechanical advantages. In any case, choosing a race is one of the few pieces of the system that (more or less) cannot be undone. Barring essentially divine intervention or radical science: a character’s race is permanent. With that in mind, although a character’s race can sometimes be an obvious choice it is important to keep in mind that a race is a choice that can only be made at character creation.

Actual races will not be discussed here- look to the Content sections of the individual settings for those- but a brief overview of what goes into selecting a race will be.

One of the advantages of races is that, since they're permanent choices, they can often include big changes in the overall character. From a Mystic's "virtual statistics" to a robot's mechanical might¹, a race can encompass many fantastic and powerful advantages- or, again, maybe the character is more designed toward the flexibility in humans. One other thing to note is that races are one of the most important things for GMs to get "right" in order for the game world to be consistent. It's hard to have LORD OF THE RINGS style epic fantasies when one of the characters is a cyborg with laser cannons strapped on.

In order to select a race, first a general "up-front" cost must be paid. This cost includes setting statistics to a certain level or the cost of increasing a character's physical size (the cost of this should probably be discounted slightly) and also paying for the advantage of having permanent special abilities. For some races, this means they will be not purchasable at character creation²- however, with the GM's permission, a character might begin as an "immature" form of the race- not even having the basic racial characteristics fully developed. It is also important to note that some races might have some points in their starting racial characteristics which would drive the cost up further. This can be reconciled in a number of ways, but sometimes it is less reasonable than others- dragons grow from hatching to full-grown status over the course of thousands of years, so an immature dragon character would likely stay that way through most of the campaign unless the rest of the characters

(not to mention the campaign setting itself) could survive through that growth period. Once the race is paid for, the various racial skills and abilities open up for purchase and the baseline racial bonuses take effect. Note that sometimes these racial "bonuses" also remove abilities- as with the case of Mystics and the STRENGTH, AGILITY, and VITALITY scores.

5.5 Classes³

Once a character's race is selected, the next step in the process is to select a class and purchase skills and abilities. A character can choose to skip class selection and just go straight to the skills and abilities, but classes are often a good "deal" as they let the character have access to a number of skills or abilities at discounted cost in exchange for "bulk" purchase.

Classes might sometimes have an "up-front" cost, as with races, in addition to the cost of purchasing the class super-skill. However, most of these are the "advanced" classes which are not available at character creation anyway.

5.6 Statistics

Statistics are not the most important part of a character, but they are the part this system is most concerned about.

5.7 Putting It Together

¹See SAGA FRONTIER, an old Playstation game by Square, if you don't know what I'm talking about here.

²That is: they cost more than the 5,000 experience points available after buying all statistics up to 10. 5,000 is the "core content's" starting experience, at least: at the time of this writing

³Classes may not be used in the final version.

Part II

THE CORE CONTENT NET BOOK

Chapter 6

Introduction To THE CORE CONTENT NET BOOK

6.1 Notes To Self

Devise some way to get the statistic block to display correctly. This is gonna be blah-and-a-half. It will probably require using T_EX or L^AT_EX typesetting...

Primary and Tertiary Statistics

Secondary Statistics

6.2 The Standard Statistic Block

All statistics follow this format:

(NAME)¹

(type: Statistics, Skill, Advantage, Class, Race, Disadvantage, etc)

(subtype: Combat Ability, Reaction Ability, Passive Ability, Skill, Magical, Physical, Mental, etc)

¹This is the proposed statistic block format... Note that this is a “Subsection*” rather than a “Subsection”, in “noun” style.

Score: *(insert cost—for example “7x cost”, the score’s flat cost if it has one) (insert default value, if any)*

Prerequisites: *(insert prerequisites here) (description)*

Unlinked Effects²

(unlinked effects)

Linked Effects

(linked effects)

For example, let’s look at the Weapon Skill statistic:

WEAPON SKILL

Skill

Physical, Untrained

Score: 3x cost (Note: Variable cost, 3x is default but some weapons may cost more or less)

Prerequisites: None (Some weapons might require certain knowledge before their skills can be pur-

²This is a “Subsubsection*”, for now...

chased. For example, understanding firearms is a prerequisite to actually using them—this understanding can come due to cultural exposure or training, but it must be obtained. This is true for any weapon, but those that are unusual within a given setting are worth examining carefully.)

WEAPON SKILLS are used to determine the level of ability a character uses a particular weapon with. Each WEAPON SKILL must be picked for an individual weapon. WEAPON SKILLS are indispensable for the combat-inclined.

Unlinked Effects

An unlinked WEAPON SKILL is used to make a default attack. The weapon’s skill improves the chances to hit and determines weapon damage based on the following formulas. The first formula determines the ATTACK% (or chance to hit) with a given weapon. “WeaponSkill” is the weapon skill’s score, “ExternalBonus” is the external bonus given by other sources.

$$(WeaponSkill + Agi)/2 + 40 + ExternalBonus$$

Weapon damage is calculated by the following. “WeaponPower” is the weapon’s power bonus linked with the relevant primary score (usually strength—determined on a per-weapon basis), “WeaponBonus” is the weapon’s bonus damage, “SkillBonus” is the bonus as determined by the WEAPON SKILL (typically +1 bonus per 10 points in the weapon skill’s score).

$$WeaponPower * (WeaponBonus + SkillBonus)$$

Linked Effects

WEAPON SKILLS are often linked to certain techniques in order that they might be used with the

weapon in question. When linked to any other skill or ability a weapon skill grants the character use of that chain with the weapon in question.

If linked from a skill or ability, a weapon skill can be used to make a normal attack with the subsequent chain.

Chapter 7

Primary And Tertiary Statistics

7.1 Primary Statistics¹

Experience, dealt with in PNB, is the only primary statistic that this

EXPERIENCE (EXP)

Statistic

Untrained, Unbound, Unpurchased

Score: Special (See Below)

Prerequisites: Must be capable of gaining EXPERIENCE

EXPERIENCE is *the* core of all characters. EXPERIENCE is a measure of, literally, how experienced the character is. EXP is spent to purchase secondary statistics and, as such, forms the basis of character power.

Unlinked Effects

EXPERIENCE has two components, “expendable” EXP and “total” EXP. The first is the total EXP minus the amount of points spent thus far by the character. Total EXP is the total number of points gained by the character. Whenever a character spends points in a skill they should be subtracted from the expendable

¹Should be placed in the statistic block.

EXP and whenever a character gains points (for example, by defeating enemies in combat) they should be added to both components (in other words, added to total which subsequently increases the un-spent points). For example, a character with 15,000 total EXPERIENCE who has spent 13,500 EXP thus far would have 15,000 total and 1,500 expendable EXPERIENCE.

Linked Effects

None

7.2 Tertiary Statistics²

HIT POINTS (HP)

Statistic

Untrained, Unbound, Unpurchased

Score: Special (See effects for calculations)

Prerequisites: Must have a VITALITY score³

²These should be stuck into the statistic block

³Note that anything without VIT but that would have HP would have its own custom pseudo-HP to replace this statistic— notably, physical structures would have something like STRUCTURAL POINTS that are determined by the material used to create it and the mass of the structure.

HIT POINTS measure a character's ability to absorb blows, withstand punishment without serious injury, and survive various other physical hardships. Any character without an HP score has no physical form at all.

Unlinked Effects⁴

HIT POINTS are one of the most important scores a character has. Any time a character is attacked it is HP that are the default place the damage is subtracted from. For instance, a character who had 150 HP being struck by a sword for 30 damage would have 120 HP post attack. When a character's HP is dropped to zero by an attack that character falls unconscious⁵.

HP is technically made up of two separate sub-scores: the maximum HP, which rarely changes and is determined by the formula below, and current HP. Current HP is what suffers when a character is attacked and what is restored when a character is healed. Current HP can never exceed maximum HP and never drops below zero (any excess damage causes LP damage instead).

Formula for determining maximum HIT POINTS:

$$Vit * 10 + 50$$

Note that HP is capped at 999 total. This cap can be removed by certain skills.

Linked Effects

None.

⁴This is a "Subsubsection*", for now...

⁵Or is in danger of falling unconscious, depending on what i finally go with...

MAGIC POINTS (MP)⁶

Statistic

Untrained, Unbound, Unpurchased

Score: Special (See below)

Prerequisites: Must have a MAGIC score

MAGIC POINTS are a representation of a character's reserves of magic. They are used to cast spells and to use other magic-driven abilities. Each spell cast requires the expenditure of a certain amount of MP.

Unlinked Effects

MAGIC POINTS are spent upon completion of a spell and when the character runs out of MP (or has so few that casting the spell would reduce the character to fewer than zero) no spells may be cast. Note that a character can voluntarily reduce the MP cost of a spell (subsequently reducing its effects) as long as that does not reduce the cost to less than the minimum MP to cast rating.

Like HP, MP has both a maximum and a current component. Current MP cannot be reduced below zero as well. The maximum MP is 999 and determined by the following formula.

$$Magic * 10 + 10$$

Furthermore, every round in which a character does not expend MP and does not charge any spells that character regains a number of MP equal to the character's MAGIC score⁷.

⁶May not be included in the final system. Their range has not yet been determined (should be 0-99 or 0-999, more likely the latter due to the other things).

⁷Not sure if this is in the game yet, MP might regenerate more slowly or not at all...

Linked Effects

None.

Energy Points (EP)⁸**Statistic****Untrained, Unpurchased**

Score: Special (See below)

Prerequisites: (*insert prerequisites*)

ENERGY POINTS measure a character's present state of physical exhaustion. When a character's energy points are at maximum the character is not tired at all, when they reach zero the character falls unconscious from exhaustion. EP are spent to use special abilities and are also drained by certain attacks.

Unlinked Effects

There are two components to EP, a maximum EP and a current EP. If the current EP ever falls below one the character in question is knocked unconscious⁹. This does not cost the character LP, but if the character is subsequently attacked then both LP loss (as per normal) and HP loss (also as per normal, but with zero EVADE% as per helplessness) occurs. If the character is reduced to zero HP then standard unconsciousness takes over.

EP is calculated by the following formula¹⁰:

$$(Wil + Vit)/2$$

ENERGY POINTS are restored at a rate per round equal to 1/1th the character's total EP. Like MP regeneration, EP does not recover in a round in which

⁸May not be included in the final system. I'm thinking not as it's pretty arbitrary... Who knows, though.

⁹Or is in danger of it, depending on the rules used...

¹⁰At least, currently...

the character expended ENERGY POINTS.

Linked Effects

None.

7.2.1 MAGIC ACCUMULATION (MA)¹¹

MAGIC ACCUMULATION is the number of MP that a character can spend on a spell per turn charging the spell. For instance, with a MA of 60 the character could "charge" 60 points of MP per round. Such a character would, after two rounds of charging, be able to cast a spell with a minimum MP cost of 120 or lower, 120 MP (or fewer, at the caster's discretion—to the minimum MP to cast of that spell) would be expended. Furthermore, the spell's damage and hit rate would be improved over a one-turn casting.

ATTACK% (AT%)**Statistic****Untrained, Unpurchased, Unbound**

Score: Special (See Below)

Prerequisites: None

ATTACK% is used when a character is trying to attack someone or something.

Unlinked Effects

In order to determine the chance for success of a standard attack take the attacker's ATTACK% minus the defender's EVADE%. For example, an attacker with 75 ATTACK% attacking someone with a 20 EVADE% would have a 55% chance of landing a blow for damage.

Although ATTACK% is technically limited by the 99 point maximum (no attack can exceed 99% to hit,

¹¹This can likely be ditched for straight MAGIC instead

there is always a 1% chance of failure) the internal calculations are not limited in this manner. In other words a character with 130 ATTACK% hitting a character with 40 EVADE% would have a 90% (rather than 59%) chance to hit. However, if the same character attacked someone with only 10 EVADE% the 99 point maximum would come into play and the character would only have a 99% chance to hit.

ATTACK% is calculated based on the following formula. “WeaponSkill” is the relevant WEAPON SKILL’s score, “ExternalBonus” is the external bonus given by other sources.

$$(WeaponSkill + Agi)/2 + 40 + ExternalBonus$$

Linked Effects

None

MAGIC% (MG%)

Statistic

Untrained, Unbound, Unpurchased

Score: Special (See below)

Prerequisites: None

MAGIC% measures a character’s ability to “connect” with spell attacks (whatever “connecting” may be). MAGIC% is highly modified by what spell is cast.

Unlinked Effects

While many physical spells will easily have MAGIC% values into the hundreds, non-damaging spells will typically be in the lower ranges (i.e., 30-80%). Like ATTACK%, MAGIC% is modified by an avoidance score and cannot exceed 99% success rate. The formula to calculate MAGIC% is as follows.

$$Cha/2 + MPSPent/4 + SpellBonus$$

MPSPent is the number of MAGIC POINTS spent on the spell in question and SpellBonus is a pre-determined number (usually between 0 and 50) that each particular spell determines. Like AT%, targets get a chance to avoid the effects of spells. However, each spell uses a different one of RS%, EV%, or ED% to defend against. Which one is determined by the spell in question. RS% generally defends against purely magical attacks (especially mind-affecting ones), EV% against most physical attacks, and ED% against those that attack the character directly.

Linked Effects

None

EVADE% (EV%)

(*type*)

(*subtype*)

Score: (*insert cost*)

Prerequisites: (*insert prerequisites*)

EVADE% is used to enable characters to avoid physical blows, most commonly attacks from enemies.

Unlinked Effects

A character’s EVADE% is subtracted from enemy characters making physical attacks for the most part and it is also used to avoid traps and various other hazards. With traps, the trap will have a base ATTACK% depending on the trap’s effectiveness from which the character subtracts EVADE% from. EVADE% is calculated by the following formula¹²:

¹²A variant would use (AGI+SPD)/4, though that puts more emphasis on SPD...

$Agi/2 + bonuses$

Unlinked Effects

(unlinked effects)

Linked Effects

None

Linked Effects

(linked effects)

ENDURE%

Statistic

Untrained, Unbound, Unpurchased

Score: Special (See below)

Prerequisites: *(insert prerequisites)*

This statistic measures the ability to absorb and sustain blows like falling rocks, falls, and other methods of physical damage (including poison) that cannot be dodged. Like Evade% this one should be 0-50%.

Unlinked Effects

(unlinked effects)

Linked Effects

(linked effects)

RESIST% (RS%)

(type)

(subtype)

Score: *(insert cost)*

Prerequisites: *(insert prerequisites)*

RESIST% measures ability to withstand magical assaults, especially ones that attack the mind. RS% is another 0-50% scale.

Chapter 8

Secondary statistics

8.1 Spellcasting

Spellcasting in this system is different than how most people are used to. The primary limitation on a mage's ability to throw around magic isn't some arbitrary number of `MAGIC POINTS`¹ or number of spell memorizations but rather time. Casting spells is all about grabbing onto the reigns of the universe—you don't just snap your fingers and magic happens. Not mostly, at least.

Furthermore, some spells take more time than others. Throwing fireballs around generally doesn't take a lot of time (primarily because mages have fine-tuned that sort of magic to be quick—those that didn't ended up in the bellies of various large creatures with disturbing frequency) but destroying a castle wall with an earthquake might take a full day.

¹Although the default system does, at this point, include MP.

8.2 Combination/Cooperative Skills²

Combinations are essentially chains of skills that are distributed across characters. Additionally, cooperative skills are separate in that they are actually individual skills that are purchased with pre-requisites to the ones they are based on. Each combination skill is actually a variant on one or more other skills and “adds” that skill to a combination. For example:

(type: Statistics, Skill, Advantage, Class, Race, Disadvantage, etc)

(subtype: Combat Ability, Reaction Ability, Passive Ability, Skill, Magical, Physical, Mental, etc)

Score: *(insert cost—for example “7x cost”, the score’s flat cost if it has one) (insert default value, if any)*

Prerequisites: *(insert prerequisites here) (description)*

Unlinked Effects

(unlinked effects)

²Combinations are not supported in the Core Content. The rules are only provided here as a framework for additional content and for the sake of completeness.

Linked Effects*(linked effects)***8.2.1 (Variant) Skill-less cooperation**

If the content is designed with combinations in mind then it can include rules for cooperative chaining of skills. Under this model the “cooperative skills” would be built into the originals. Note that this means the resulting skills are more useful and as such should be priced accordingly.

8.3 The Six Primary Scores³

The following six statistics are the “primary scores” for characters. Each of these is a representation of some basic character capability.

It is important to note that, although with training the six primary scores can be improved they are separate from all others in that they measure the natural, generic capacities of a character. Although someone might be able to develop a certain sword technique or spell through hard work it is much easier with formal instruction- either through that of a mentor or through a book or through any number of external guides.

Although these six statistics can certainly benefit from external advice (a particular training regimen to increase agility, for example) they can all be developed just by putting concerted effort into their

³Not to be confused with “Primary Statistics”, the “Primary Scores” are “Secondary Statistics” that are fundamental to all player characters. Confusing? Yes. It helps to think of them as “strength, agility, vitality, magic, willpower, and charisma” and the rest of this document (and others) will do their best to use that terminology. Another way to think of it is that these are “primary” within the PNB, whereas the “Primary Statistics” are more important for the GMNB and the setting. Eventually a replacement term should probably be invented.

development. This is especially important to note in the case of MAGIC: by the basic scores, magic is not an exclusive trait or some inborn talent that only certain people or certain bloodlines can harness. Each person has the capacity for spellcasting and if one naturally has a bit more? Well, that doesn’t matter a great deal in the long run. Now, training to cast magical spells is another thing- like sword training, this stuff doesn’t just pop into people’s heads.

STRENGTH**Statistic****Untrained****Score:** 7x Cost, Default: 10

Prerequisites: The character’s race must have a STRENGTH score (that is: it must be corporeal and capable of movement)

STRENGTH is the general measure of a character’s physical capability both in bursts of activity (for example: combat) and over time (for example: a forced march). High STRENGTH generally indicates both of these characteristics, while low strength indicates a lack of them.

Unlinked Effects

STRENGTH allows a character to interact with the world physically. STRENGTH allows a character to do just what the name implies: lift things, push things, bend them, carry them, and so forth. A character can try to use STRENGTH for anything “strength” would be used for; the target number of the STRENGTH test (Strength score + 1d100 roll) is set by the GM based on the difficulty of the task at hand. Note that a strength score of one (or an AGILITY, VITALITY, MAGIC, WILL, or CHARISMA score of one) is enough to do many STRENGTH-related activities and

is not a sign the character is incapable of physical activity. Technically the character could perform any STRENGTH-based task that required a 101 roll or less. Characters who are weaker (that is: who would have sub-1 level STRENGTH) can take disadvantages to weaken themselves further.

Linked Effects

When linked to other skills or statistics strength enhances them. For instance, STRENGTH increases damage done by most weapons.

AGILITY

Statistic

Untrained

Score: 7x Cost, Default 10

Prerequisites: The character's race must have an AGILITY score (must be corporeal and capable of movement)

AGILITY measures a character's capacity for quickness and precision, especially under chaotic situations. While characters with low or medium AGILITY scores would be able to unlock a jail cell with ease (assuming the correct keys are available) it would take a character with a much higher agility to do it while hanging upside-down, with only one hand, while taking archer fire.

Unlinked Effects

AGILITY increases the character's quickness in combat (as measured by initiative) and it also increases accuracy with weapons and the ability to dodge enemy attacks. AGILITY is primarily useful whenever fine motor skills are required. A character walking

along a narrow surface would be an AGILITY-based action, as would juggling or catching a thrown item.

Linked Effects

When linked to other skills or statistics AGILITY enhances them. For instance, agility improves the damage done by most ranged weapons.

VITALITY

Statistic

Untrained

Score: 7x Cost, Default 10

Prerequisites: The character's race must have a VITALITY score (must be living)

VITALITY is a measure of physical toughness both in terms of strength reserves and in ability to withstand damage and assaults. A character with high VITALITY will be able to sustain multiple blows from lesser opponents—a character with low VITALITY should probably stay out of reach of even weak enemies.

Unlinked Effects

(insert effects)

Linked Effects

(insert effects)

MAGIC

Statistic

Untrained

Score: 7x Cost, Default 10

Prerequisites: The character's race must have a MAGIC score (must be capable of using magic)

MAGIC represents a character's capacity for working with energies of arcane (or otherwise) origin. MAGIC is not a representation of either intelligence or knowledge (the former is a function of the character's personality itself and the latter being dictated by what skills the character has purchased) but rather the strength of the character's spells and similarly magical effects.

Unlinked Effects

(unlinked effects)

Linked Effects

(linked effects)

WILL

Statistic

Untrained

Score: 7x Cost, Default 10

Prerequisites: The character's race must have a WILL score (must have free will)

WILL measures a character's self reflection, ability to withstand mental punishment, and general mental fortitude. Characters with high will scores can withstand extensive magical assaults (especially charm-type spells) or grueling conditions. Characters with low WILL are easily influenced and easily fatigued.

Unlinked Effects

(unlinked effects)

Linked Effects

(linked effects)

CHARISMA

Statistic

Untrained

Score: 7x Cost, Default 10

Prerequisites: The character's race must have a CHARISMA score (must have free will)

While WILLPOWER is a measure of internal mental fortitude, CHARISMA is a measure of a character's external mental presence. Grace, the force of magical attacks (especially those that include mental assaults), the ability to influence others, and a general social bearing. High CHARISMA characters can easily influence others whereas a low CHARISMA character finds influencing others difficult- not necessarily due to some like or dislike (a high CHARISMA character might be disliked- just irresistible) or other external views on the character, but rather the character's own charisma.

Note that a character with low CHARISMA is not necessarily reclusive. CHARISMA measures a character's ability rather than a character's desire. A character can have a high CHARISMA and still be antisocial, or the reverse: a character can have a low CHARISMA and be extroverted. The first type is the kind of character who others find distant and perhaps controlling (but effective) whereas the second type generally ends up either laughed at or outcast due to repeated social ineptness.

CHARISMA additionally is useful when trying to exert control over others through spellcasting- especially in the areas of "charm" and similar magic.

Unlinked Effects

(unlinked effects)

Linked Effects

(linked effects)

MOVEMENT is another exception from the 0-99 scale: four is a low number, eight a high number.

8.4 Variant Additional Scores

8.5 Miscellaneous Secondary Statistics

8.5.1 LIFE POINTS (LP)

How much serious injury a character can sustain before actually dying? Characters that lose all their HIT POINTS are knocked unconscious and begin to lose LIFE POINTS- when LIFE POINTS run out then that's it, the character is dead. Although there are even ways to bring back the dead (perhaps through twisted science, evil necromancy, or even divine resurrections) they are certainly not something that characters just throw around as easily as in other games. The most desired one (a resurrection fueled by deific power) requires giving an extremely powerful, inhuman being a reason to bring the character back to life- not something easily accomplished. LIFE POINTS are one of the rare exceptions to the 0-99 scale: four LIFE POINTS would be a low total, ten would be high.

8.5.2 MOVEMENT (MV)

This is how fast a character is on the battlefield. Even a quick (high-agility) character might not be able to run fast, and even the fastest character might get bogged down with heavy equipment. This is measured in 5'x5' "squares", so a character with 6 MOVEMENT (about average) would be able to move either six squares or thirty feet per round, depending on the system of combat used. Like life points above,

Part III

THE CORE SETTING NET BOOK

Chapter 9

Introduction

9.1 Notes To Self

Should this even be a part of the book? Can the setting be rolled into “content”?

Possibly, possibly not. Perhaps it should be included not because it needs to be to make the game playable but because it is a good demonstration.

Part IV

THE GAME MASTER'S NET BOOK

Chapter 10

Introduction to THE GAME MASTER'S NET BOOK

10.1 Forward to the GMNB

This book is designed to introduce the various concepts of this game system to game masters- the people who actually run the game and arbitrate the rules for the players.

- Magic% Skill: determines how much base magic% the spell has
- Effect skill: adds effects to the spell (ie, stun, death, HP drain, etc)
- And so on...

10.2 Notes To Self

Include a breakdown on spell skills and abilities into their base components- suggested breakdown:

- Spellcasting Skill: grants the character the ability to charge spells and cast them
- Range Skill: improves range
- Area Skill: improves AoE
- Target Skill: one target or one square or "self" or something else
- Damage Type Skill: determines what type of damage the spell will do (also what sort of evade%/resist%/endure% and def/magic def is used against it)

Note that this is mechanically a superior method to the whole-spell method presented in the PNB: Content chapter. It reduces the cost of individual spells to their components and lets the components be purchased once for all spells rather than once per spell. Spells should perhaps be slightly cheaper to compensate? Anyway, the other option is to have classes only pay for the components but get the whole spell. More realistically: not letting the characters buy spells in pieces is a better solution for now.

Part V

TABLES, LISTS, AND APPENDICES