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ForePlay

Introduction

This is it, *ForeSight* "Lite", or *ForeSight* for people with real lives. If you've played any skill-based RPG before you can probably figure out 90% of these rules from the character and cheat sheets.

While this game is (even) lighter than the original *ForeSight*, you may find it's actually more detailed where it counts (e.g. by reducing the number of *attributes* from 9 to 4, many things are simplified, especially for the GM, but by giving each attribute several *aspects* greater detail can be added where needed; similarly detailed rules that tended not to be used much in practice, such as Fatigue, are much simpler), thanks to stealing ideas from some of the better game designs[1] of the last twenty years.

You will need at least one D10 (ideally one per player), copies of the character and cheat sheets, writing implements, and an adventure or something. A version of these rules that works in web browsers will be forthcoming.

Darn Good Reason

Every rule in a role-playing game will be broken at some point, and many will be broken frequently. A player or GM who wants to stretch or break or ignore a rule should give a Darn Good Reason.

That's it.

[1] The *ForeSight* rules owe a great deal to SPI's *Universe,* FGUI's *Aftermath,* and Victory Games's *James Bond 007*. These new rules add Bioware's *Fallout* and Pinnacle's *Savage Worlds* to that list.

Attributes

Characters have four attributes: physique, coordination, wit, and mentality. For normal human beings, the attributes range from 1 (pathetic) through 2-3 (average folks) to 10 (olympian).

A starting character typically has 20 attribute points to divide among his/her four attributes. (Typical NPCs — "ordinary people" — generally have 8-12 attribute points.)

Aspects

Each attribute has several "aspects" which govern skills and tasks performed with those aspects. By default each aspect equals its attribute, but various things may affect an aspect rather than the whole attribute, e.g. a perk may enhance a character's strength (an aspect of physique) but reduce his/her dexterity (an aspect of coordination).

Physique drives strength, endurance, and health. Coordination drives dexterity, agility, and reflexes. Wit drives intelligence, memory, and perception. Mentality drives empathy, charm, and willpower.

In as sense you can think of intellect and coordination as the "finesse" attributes (they tend to drive most skills), while mentality and physique are the "muscle" attributes (they determine the ability to suck it up and dish it out).

Skills

Characters may have any number of skills. Each skill is associated with an **aspect** of an **attribute** simply to guide the GM as to which aspect will most likely be used with the skill. In practice, using a skill means using that skill as a situational modifier for performing a task.

Skills can be used with any aspect of any attribute.

> E.g. Science is associated with Intelligence, but remembering some piece of obscure Scientific trivia might well involve Memory, while spotting signs that a

particular phenomenon confirmed an earlier prediction might involve Perception.

A character obtains a skill at base level (usually somewhere either –5 for "hard" skills and –3 for "normal" skills) by spending a skill point, and then raises the skill by spending one skill point per level up to 0, and then two points per level to its maximum value (usually +4). When using a skill it acts as a modifier on the aspect on which it is based.

Not having a skill should always be worse than having it at minimum level. As a rough guide, it's like having the skill at minimum level with an additional –2 modifier.

E.g. a character with Wit 4, Perception +1, and Notice +1 will (usually) receive a +6 on rolls using his/her Notice skill.

A starting character typically has 50 skill points to divide among his/her skills. (Typical NPCs typically have 20 skill points.)

Attributes	Aspects	Skills
Physique	Strength	Climbing (-3), Swimming (-3)
	Endurance	
	Health	
Coordination	Dexterity	Firearms (-3), Archery (-5), Lockpicking (-3), Sleight of Hand (-5)
	Agility	Fighting (-3), Acrobatics (-5), Dancing (-3)
	Reflexes	Driving (-3)
Mentality	Willpower	Stealth (-3), Intimidation (-3), Guts (-3), Mana (-3), Piety (-3)
	Empathy	Riding (-3), Detect Lies (-5), Spirit (-3)
	Charm	Confidence (-3), Disguise (-5)
Wits	Intelligence	Boating (-3), Science (-5), Repair (-3), Gambling (-3), Streetwise (-3), Powers (-5)
	Memory	History (-3), Knowledge Fields (-3)

Attributes	Aspects	Skills
	Perception	Piloting (-3), Notice (-3), Survival (-3), Tracking (-3)

Rounding

In general, round to nearest (i.e. fractions of a half or more round up).

Derived Abilities

Various abilities are derived directly from attributes or their aspects.

Base Damage is Strength/2.

Base Move is equal to Physique (in meters).

Toughness (which determines how hard the character is to shake or wound in combat) is equal to physique x 2 + mentality. It follows that a typical NPC will have a toughness of 6–9, while a typical player character will have a toughness of 15.

Pasts, Perks, Flaws, & Quirks

Pasts, Perks, Flaws, & Quirks are what make characters distinctive. **A starting character typically may pick three perks**. Some perks — they are italicized — should be considered congenital (i.e. you start with them or not, but you cannot acquire them through experience). Quirks are free (they tend to have a downside and an upside which pretty much cancel each other out) but a character should not have more than a few quirks lest he/she become a basket case. Flaws actually give you one attribute point or two skill points. Pasts are simply a special case of the preceding.

> Note that **some Flaws are serious bummers** and getting one attribute point or two skills points in exchange might seem like a bad deal. This isn't intended to be a store: *design the character you want*. Sometimes a weakness is just a weakness.

(And no, a character who is rendered quadriplegic or blinded via a wound in combat doesn't suddenly get two skill points.) Perks tend to fall into two types, minor advantages and major advantages with an offsetting minor advantage.

Traits	Description
	Flaws (receive 2 skill points or 1 attribute point)
Blind	Can't see (obviously), –4 for typical Perception tasks, +1 to Perception tasks primarily involving touch or hearing, +3 if they solely involve touch or hearing.
Myopic	Can be corrected with technology (in which case it's a Quirk), –4 for Perception tasks requiring distance vision, –2 for typical vision-related Perception tasks, +1 for very close-up work (e.g. lockpicking)
Quadriplegic	Physical activity is essentially out of the question. –4 Strength, –4 Health, –4 Endurance (atrophy).
Paraplegic	–2 Health, –2 Endurance (neither applies if Fitness Freak), obviously simply can't do stuff requiring legs, and –2 Agility in general.
One Leg	Basically paraplegic without prosthetic. With prosthetics will range from –4 Agility, halve base move to –1 Agility, 80% base move with current technology.
One Arm	If it's the primary arm, +1 with one-handed tasks, –2 with tasks that usually require two hands. If it's the secondary arm character will learn to compensate, so no offhand modifier for one-handed tasks.
Deaf	Can't hear (obviously), –4 for Perception and Empathy tasks where hearing is important (but not crucial, e.g. notice someone sneaking up from behind), –1 where hearing is merely helpful (e.g. realizing a storm is brewing, determining emotion when face-to-face)
Hard of Hearing	Can be corrected with technology (in which case it's a Quirk), otherwise like being Deaf, but –3 and –1.
One-eyed	–1 Perception involving vision (–2 if depth perception is crucial)
Disfigured	–3 for interpersonal interactions, –6 for anything sexual (unless they don't care or they're kinky that way, in which case a positive modifier might apply), +1 Willpower

Traits	Description
Paranoid	Borderline (conspiracy nut level) not clinical: +2 Perception (but lots of false positives), –2 Empathy, –2 Charm and –1 Health, –1 Endurance unless Health Nut or Fitness Freak
Major Phobia	–4 for dealing with a specific (and reasonably common) fear (e.g. the outdoors). Will often hesitate, and in combat must make a Willpower check or simply waste that turn.
Quirks (free, but don't take too many)	
Weakness for the Ladies/Guys	Character can't help him/herself — he/she likes members of the (whichever) sex and will tend to be fixated on *at least* one at any time. Will do anything to save and/or avoid hurting the subject of his/her current fixation, and often past fixations too. On the plus side, he/she has learned a thing or two about romance and sex (+2 where appropriate).
Ugly	Ugliness will tend to worsen interactions with the appropriate sex (–2), and sometimes other people (–1). But the character has either learned to suck it up (+1 Willpower), turned it into a joke (+1 Charm) or gained insight (+1 Empathy).
Nervous Disposition	+1 Perception, –1 Health
Minor Phobia	–2 when dealing with a specific fear (e.g. Snakes), +2 to notice object feared (but there *will* be false positives). Will also hesitate, and in combat must make a Willpower check or (on failure) go completely defensive or (on critical failure) freeze.
Perks (get 3 for free)	
Weight Training	(requires Physique 6+) +1 strength
Musclebound	(requires Physique 8+) owing to incredible training ("wheel of pain") the character is astonishingly strong (+3 strength, +1 to toughness), but consequently not so light on his/her feet (–2 agility, –1 base move).
Fitness Freak	(requires Physique 6+) +2 Endurance
Flexible	+1 Agility, additional +1 Acrobatics, Stealth, Dancing
Health Nut	+2 Health
Aspberger's	(requires Wits 8+) high-functioning Autistic. –2 Empathy, –1 Charm, +2 Intelligence, +1 Memory

Traits	Description
Obsessive	(requires Wits 6+) gets incredibly focussed on one thing, gaining +2 on any Wits or Mentality roll relevant to it, but –2 to unrelated Wits or Mentality rolls.
Perfect Recall	(Requires Wits 6+ and Obsessive) has perfect autobiographical memory (remembers everything he/she did or read since childhood). Can become lost in memories.
Twitchy	(Requires Coordination 6+) +2 Reflexes, +1 Perception, –1 Endurance, –1 Health
Ambidextrous	(Requires Coordination 6+) character suffers no "off-hand" penalty.
Strong-willed	(Requires Intellect 6+) +1 to willpower.
Bullheaded	+2 to willpower, –1 to empathy and charm.
Iron Stomach	(Requires Physique 6+) +2 to health.
Patient	Character can deliberately take twice as long to do something — non-combat — right (+2 modifier), and can make a Willpower check to try a previously fumbled task again.
Quick	(Requires Coordination 6+) +1 to reflexes.
Greased Lightning	(Requires Coordination 6+) +2 to reflexes, –1 to health and endurance
Silvertongue	Has a melodious or otherwise entrancing voice. +2 to charm (when speaking), gifted singer.
Tiny	(Physique ≤8) –2 to Strength, –1 to be hit in combat, +1 to dodge, +2 to stealth, –1 to toughness.
Huge	(Physique 6+) Character is very big (not just tall), +2 strength, +1 to be hit, –1 to dodge, –2 to stealth, +1 to toughness
Nondescript	Character tends to be ignored and overlooked. (Incompatible with Ugly, Deformed, Attractive, Drop Dead Gorgeous, Huge, etc.)+2 to Stealth where blending in with crowds, etc., +1 to Empathy, Perception, –1 to Charm.
Attractive	(Requires Physique 4+) Enhances the character's charm (+1, +2 with the appropriate sex) and can be distracting (–1 where appropriate, e.g. to concentration or patience).

Traits	Description
Drop Dead Gorgeous	(Requires Physique 4+) Enhances the character's charm (+2, +4 with the appropriate person) and can be distracting (–2 where appropriate, e.g. to concentration or patience), but the character is incredibly memorable and will attract unwanted attention (–4 stealth where trying to look unremarkable).
Eidetic Memory	+2 memory, perfect recall

A character may have any number of Pasts. Each Past will count as a perk, flaw, or quirk based on how beneficial or detrimental it tends to be. In general, a character will not acquire new pasts unless significant downtime occurs (e.g. a character who rescues a beautiful prince/princess and then, in downtime, settles down and marries him/her, might acquire a new Personal Tragedy when the love of his/her life is brutally slain by the Forces of Evil).

Pasts	Description
	Flaws
Outcast & Alone	Perhaps the last of his/her kind, the character is a member of a vanishing, persecuted group with no friends or family and nowhere to call home.
Marked for Death	The character is sought by powerful enemies who themselves are respected or feared by the general population. His/her status is immediately obvious to anyone who spends time with him/her, e.g. because of a visible mark, or well-publicized appearance.
Tick Tock	Character is doomed, either by a terminal disease or some other unavoidable destiny. If this doom is ever averted, it will be replaced by Hollow or, at the GM's discretion, some other downside (e.g. reveral of the benefits from having taken the flaw at a minimum).
Hollow	Something utterly *shattering* happened to the character that "killed him/her inside" leaving a husk. The character feels removed from the world and other people, unable to truly love or even care about anyone or anything.
	Quirks

Pasts	Description
Shady	Character's past legal transgressions have left him/her with a dubious reputation with the Establishment. Simply put, he/she is one of the "usual suspects".
Blue Blood	To the manner, but not the means, born.
Disowned	Character has somehow offended his/her family/clan, and not only will not receive their help but may in fact be actively persecuted by those nearest but not dearest.
Perks	
Rich	Born with a silver spoon in his/her mouth, the character is to the manner born, and has the pedigree, connections, and old money ties to prove it.
Famous	A famous celebrity, the character's name (or face) opens doors, fans come out of the woodwork, and the oddest people will do him/her favors. +2 for interpersonal interactions with fans. It can be pretty hard to go unnoticed though (–1 or –2 to disguise and stealth attempts, depending on circumstances). And the character receives +1 in some skill that helped make him/her famous (e.g. writing or singing).
Trained from Childhood	The character has been trained from childhood for a special purpose (and is most likely something of a monomaniac) but has extraordinary abilities as a result (+1 Physique, +1 Coordination, or access to a highly unusual ability).
Mysterious Mentor	Taken under the wing of a wise and mysterious person, the character was exposed to unusual experiences, knowledge, and training. Character has access to a usually unobtainable ability, or has learned special techniques in otherwise normal abilities (access to a restricted ability or set of abilities, +1 Mentality, or +1 Coordination).
School of Hard Knocks	The character has done it tough — survived and thrived in a third world prison or the foreign legion or by turning the Wheel of Pain. It's left him/her tough as nails, but psychologically scarred. (+1 Physique, +1 Willpower, –2 Empathy.)

Pasts	Description
Ex-Military	Character's past experience in the military has left him/her with extensive contacts in the military and training with weapons and other skills not available to the general public. +1 to two of, or +2 to one of Guts, Stealth, Firearms, Archery, Fighting, Repair, and Endurance.
Ex-Cop	Character's past experience as a law enforcement officer has left him/her with extensive contacts and not a little influence in the police force. Detect Lies +2 or Intimidation +2.
Ex-Spy	Character's past experience in covert operations has left him/her with extensive contacts in the intelligence community. +1 Perception, +1 Charm.
Marked by Destiny	The character's role in events has been foretold by prophecy. Mysterious coincidences and sometimes the hand of fate itself seems to guide the character to his/her fate.
Abandoned & Self-Sufficient	Fending for him/her-self from a tender age, the character is streetwise and tough. +1 Willpower, and +2 Streetwise.
The Best	The character is a renowned (or should be a renowned) expert in some specific thing owing to a combination of diligent study, practice, experience, and personal obsession. This has left his/her personal life something of a ruin, but gives him/her a +2 in one specific skill.

Resolution

ForePlay has *one resolution rule* — an **active ability** (usually an aspect of an attribute or a skill) of some kind is either opposed by a **difficulty** or an **opposing** ability roll (the "target number"). To determine success or failure you make a D10 roll and add the ability. (If the target is an opposing ability, that has to be rolled too.)

D10 resolution rolls are *open-ended* (see **Open Ended D10 Rolls** below).

- If the roll is two or more below the target number, it's (at least) a **solid failure**.
- If the roll is one less than the target number, it's a **bare failure**.
- If the roll is exactly the target number, it's a **bare success**.
- If the roll is above the target number it's (at least) a **solid success**.

Rolls more than five above or below the target number will be **critical** successes and failures respectively (see below).

The Little Golden Book of Difficulty

It's important for GMs to have a good feel for a resolution system. *Is what I'm asking of the players too easy or too hard?*

- +5 is much easier
- –5 is really hard

When difficulty is 10 or more higher than ability, a task is nearly impossible. If skill is within one point of difficulty or higher, a task is trivially easy.

To put it another way, a ±1 modifier in the "sweet spot" of the resolution system makes a 10% change to success chance. The "sweet spot" is the range of difficulties that are 1–10 points higher than abilities.

For normal people (with attributes at 1–4 and +1 or +2 as their best skill) a difficulty of around 10 is roughly 50/50, 15 is roughly 1/10, 20 is roughly 1/100, 25 is roughly 1/1000 and on and on.

Players will tend to have attributes at 3–8 with +1 or +2 as their best skill, which makes 15 around 50/50 for a top skill and 10 50/50 for a secondary skill.

Checks & Tasks

Resolution determines the outcomes of Tasks. "Check" is used as a shorthand way of saying a "difficulty 10 Task".

Thus, when something is said to require an Attribute/Aspect/Skill check, this is a difficulty 10 task.

> E.g. Tuscaloosa Tully is afraid of Spiders (Minor Phobia), so when faced with a situation involving spiders he must make a Willpower Check to overcome it. Minor Phobias inflict a –2 situational modifier, so the roll would typically be D10 + Willpower – 2 vs. 10.

Open-Ended D10 Rolls

D10 rolls to perform (or oppose) a task are **open-ended**.

If a D10 roll results in a "natural" 10 reroll at +5 replacing the original 10 if new roll is higher.

If the D10 roll is a "natural" 1 reroll at –5 replacing the original 1 if the new result is lower.

Note: rerolls only go in the original direction — i.e. if the initial roll was a 10, only rerolled 10s are open, and if the initial roll was a 1 then only rerolled 1s are open.

> E.g. a player rolls for success and gets a 10, so she rerolls (at +5) and gets another 10 (+5 = 15), so she rerolls again (at +10) and gets a 1 (+10 = 11 — lower than 15). So the final roll is 15.

How Open Ended?

It's up to the GM to decide whether die rolls are completely open-ended or restricted. In essence, if you allow one reroll only, it's a bit like using a D100-based game, so "one in a hundred" outlier results will occur. I would recommend you allow at most two rerolls until and unless you've formed a strong opinion otherwise. (It's worth noting that in general, the rules do not deal with anything beyond "double criticals", so extreme die rolls tend to be for entertainment value rather than anything else.)

Criticals

For every five full points by which a resolution roll exceeds a task's difficulty (target number), one level of **critical success** is achieved.

Critical successes achieve better outcomes than solid success, e.g. extra damage, and/or a quicker or better outcome.

For every five full points by which a resolution roll fails, one level of **critical failure** is achieved.

In general, **a critical failure should make trying again trying again harder** (e.g. a person trying to pick a lock may have jammed the lock, or may be taking a fundamentally incorrect approach that will never pan out).

A double-critical failure should make trying the same approach again impossible (e.g. the lock picks may have snapped off inside the lock) or be slightly harmful (e.g. the lock pick snapped off and made a noise that might have alerted a guard).

A player may announce before making a roll what it is he/she wants from it (more damage, faster result, more information, etc.) as a guide to what a critical success might yield (e.g. the player might be more interested in finding all the information or finishing quickly).

> Note that a player shouldn't be double-dipped (e.g. because you're in a hurry you get a negative modifier, but you also need a critical to be quick enough) for — say — being in a hurry or aiming carefully. If a character receives a negative situational modifier for being in a hurry then (solid) success indicates that the result was achieved despite being in a hurry (and failure will generally indicate that less time was wasted in the process of failing). In this case a critical might indicate the result was achieved *even* faster than expected, or that the result was surprisingly good despite the rush.
>
> Of course it might be that the player is in a hurry but not *enough* of a hurry, in which case double-dipping might make sense. Remember that there can always be a *darn good reason*.

Opposed Resolution

In some cases where two (or more) characters will be directly opposing each other (e.g. playing cards or one person is attacking another who is parrying or dodging). In such a case both (all) sides roll D10, add skills and situational modifiers, and compare results — each treating the other's roll as the difficulty. But, if the rolls are equal, the outcome is considered a bare success for all those who tied, or a stalemate (no outcome) depending on which makes sense.

> E.g. Alyssa swings her sword at Kiir who elects to parry, Alyssa has a skill of 6 and situational modifiers of +3 for a total of +9, Kiir is using a shield with a skill of 5 and situational modifiers of +5 for a total of +10.

If Alyssa rolls 6 + 9 = 15 and Kiir rolls 5 + 10 = 15 both achieve "bare success", which makes perfect sense — Alyssa hits but only scores a "glancing blow" (–5 to damage) — and Kiir blocked most of the damage.

If Alyssa rolls 8 + 9 = 17 and Kiir rolls 2 + 10 = 12 then Alyssa scores a critical hit (extra damage).

If Kiir rolls 6 + 10 = 16 and Alyssa rolls 2 + 9 = 11 then Kiir scores a critical parry (and thus has opportunity to counter-attack).

Chips

In heroic settings (it's up to the GM to decide whether his/her setting is "heroic" or not) all players receive three **chips** for each character they control per game session (these chips cannot be saved between sessions) and the GM receives one chip per player character and major non-player character per session.

Note: this is *ForePlay's* equivalent of the "Hero Point" mechanic from *ForeSight* which was borrowed from *James Bond 007*, and influenced by the "bennies" mechanic from *Savage Worlds*. If you're interested in where ideas came from it seems to have originated with the "Hey look, it's Halley's comet" rule in SPI's *Commando*.

Second Chances

After any resolution roll by or directly affecting a character under his/her control a player (or the GM, in the case of an NPC) may elect to cash in one chip to make an extra roll and if he/she prefers it substitute that roll for the original roll. A player cannot cash in a second chip on a single roll.

Cheating Death

Immediately after suffering a wound a player may cash in one or more chips to avoid one wound level per chip. The wounds still take effect, but the character recovers from the wound(s) once the fight is over. This might also allow an otherwise *thoroughly* dead character to gasp out some last words or scrawl a message in blood. (The character might easily be left for dead by enemies or thought dead by friends.)

Damage

The *damage value* of a weapon or attack is used as an ability that is opposed by a target's *toughness*. If the damage fails then the target is assumed to have suffered no injury of consequence.

Barely successful attacks are considered "glancing blows" and do –5 damage.

If the damage succeeds then the target is **shaken**. (Bare success works just as well as any, but like any bare success isn't open-ended.)

Each time the damage "criticals" the target suffers a **wound** (as well as being shaken).

> E.g. a character with a toughness of 12 is stabbed with a typical dagger by an assailant with Strength *4* (Base Damage 2) +3 for the dagger, for a total of D10 + 5. On a roll of *7* (+ 5 = 12) to 11 the target will be shaken the target will be shaken (obviously a roll of 10 or more is pretty unlikely). On a roll of 12 or more — a critical success (D10 + *4* is *17* or more) — the target suffers a wound, and so on.

It follows from the preceding example that a typical person stabbing another typical person (with a toughness of 8, say) with a typical dagger has a good chance of shaking them, and some chance of wounding them, but not much chance of killing them — which is as it should be. Let's look at a more severe example:

> An NPC bystander with a toughness 8 is hit by a stray 9mm pistol round (+10) at close range. The damage roll is D10 + 10. A roll of –2 or better will shake them, and a roll of 3 or more will wound them.

Because damage die rolls are resolution rolls, and resolution rolls are open ended, there's a chance that any hit can kill, although it's may be minuscule. (This is an important example of where the GM may wish to cap how open-ended resolution rolls are.)

Shaken

In combat a shaken character is easier to hit, and may only take a Primary, Secondary, or Minor action, and incurs a –2 modifier to all activity.

At the end of his/her turn, a "shaken" character performs a Health or Willpower (whichever is better) roll. Success means the character is no longer shaken. A critical success means that if the character suffered wounds in being shaken, one wound will be shrugged off once the character is able to take a short rest (i.e. generally after the fight ends). A critical failure means the character suffers an additional wound (from bleeding or some other problem).

Wounds

Each wound a character or major NPC has suffered causes a –2 modifier to all activity.

In typical "heroic" settings, NPC "extras" (throwaway characters) are assumed to be out of the action after suffering one wound. More significant characters will take more wounds to eliminate.

Incapacitation and Death

Player characters will survive up to three levels of wounding with no chance of death.

A character who has suffered four or more wounds must make a health roll with a difficulty of 10 (modified by the –2 cumulative modifiers for being wounded, if nothing else) to avoid being incapacitated (e.g. fall unconsciousness). If the failure is critical, the character dies.

Hit Location

A simple system for deciding where someone gets hit (assuming that an attack isn't directed at a specific location in the first place) is to roll D10 and consult hit location table. The GM should feel free to override it given circumstances.

Melee Attack	Ranged Attack	Hit Location	Special Effects (Optional)
1–2	1	Left Leg	Crit-breaks, double-crit severs
3–4	2	Right Leg	
5	3–4	Abdomen	If shaken, –2 to recover, double-crit inflicts *three* wounds
6–7	5–7	Chest	double-crit inflicts *three* wounds
8	8	Left Arm	Crit-breaks, double-crit severs
9	9	Right Arm	
10	10	Head	Crit knocks unconscious, double-crit inflicts *three* wounds

Exhaustion

Characters who engage in a lot of physical activity (several hours of light exercise, an hour of moderate exercise, a few minutes of strenuous exercise, or a minute or so of combat) will become tired (–2 to all activity), but can usually recover after a short rest (this is an Endurance check). If the Endurance check fails, then the character is exhausted, and will only recover after sufficient rest.

If characters can't take breaks (as described above) then they must make an Endurance check at –2 (per break missed) to avoid becoming exhausted.

Aside from this, Exhaustion works a lot like being wounded. You can get multiple levels of exhaustion, their effects are cumulative, and four or more levels can kill you. Recovering from exhaustion is quicker than recovering from wounds (see below).

Resting and Exhaustion

A character who is able to "fully rest" (get a good night's sleep, etc.) recovers up to three levels of exhaustion.

A character who is able to take a "short rest" (sit down, eat a meal, etc.) recovers one level of exhaustion.

The GM should not allow characters to benefit from multiple short rests taken one after another or from a short rest taken immediately after a good night's sleep and so forth.

Powers

Powers are skills which confer upon a character a set of related abilities. A power may have pre-requisites (e.g. possession of some other Power, possibly at a certain minimum level), and the abilities they confer may require a certain level themselves (e.g. "Fire Elemental Destruction" might confer the ability to cast single fire bolts, but at level 3 you get a cone of fire, at level 5 an fireball, at level 9 wall of fire, and finally at level 11 fire storm).

Powers are grouped according to their Power Pool (of course the GM may have other ideas). The GM may wish to place restrictions on who can get which powers. E.g. it may not be allowed for a character to learn powers from more than one category, or it may not be possible to learn both Water Elementalism and Fire Elementalism.

Magical Powers

Magical Powers are assumed to result from a character's extra insight into the nature of the Universe, and from dealings with creatures from other planes of existence (demons, imps, sandestins, efreeti).

Magic draws from the **Mana** power pool.

Magical Powers	Description
Fire Elementalism	Fire Magic, both offensive and defensive
Earth Elementalism	Earth Magic, both offensive and defensive
Water Elementalism	Water Magic, both offensive and defensive
Air Elementalism	Air Magic, both offensive and defensive

Magical Powers	Description
Protection	Spells of protection
Black Magic	Spells dealing with curses and afflictions
Necromancy	Spells dealing with death and the undead
Summoning	Spells of Summoning
Apportation	Spells of movement and action at a distance
Illusion	Spells of Deception
Transformation	Spells of Transformation

Divine Powers

Divine Powers are assumed to result from a character's relationship to — and favor with — one or more gods, and in particular from channeling the powers of those gods. In general, divine powers are "deniable" — i.e. their manifestation will tend to be attributable to natural phenomena or luck. Only extraordinary interventions will be unambiguously miraculous.

Divine Powers draw from the **Piety** power pool.

Divine Powers	Description
Healing	Healing through divine intervention
Protection	Avoiding, preventing, and mitigating injury
Providence	Food and shelter
Destruction	Smiting enemies
Avatar	Assuming a deity's role

Mystical Powers

Mystical Powers are assumed to derive from a character's inner spiritual attunement. It follows that the character's state of mind is very important for determining the effectiveness of mystical powers — strong feelings, a lack of calm, acting outside

oneself, and self-deception will all tend to detract from a character's powers or corrupt their effects.

Mystical Powers draw from the **Spirit** power pool

Mystical Powers	Description
Awareness	Total awareness of one's true surroundings
Weapon Mastery	Oneness with a chosen weapon
Self Mastery	Perfection of self-discipline
Mobility	Perfection of movement
Shadow Mastery	Perfection of stealth

Psionic Powers

Psionic powers are assumed to derive from a character's extraordinary mental gifts. It follows that these powers are essentially mundane — just like using any other skill or faculty they may be tiring, but there isn't some special "stuff" upon which they draw.

Using Psionic Powers — like any other kind of exertion — can cause **Exhaustion**.

Psionic Powers	Description
Telepathy	Ability to communicate mind-to-mind and at high levels dominate others
Telekinesis	Ability to move things at a distance
Mind Block	Ability to shield one's own and others' minds
Precognition	Ability to project the likely outcomes of actions and sometimes to receive cryptic warnings of likely futures
Monitor	Ability to monitor vitals of self and others, and at high levels to heal

Power Pools

In general, powers will draw on a Power Pool. Power Pools are skills which determine how long and often powers may be used.

Using a Power will often require a character to "draw from his/her Power pool" at a specified difficulty. This means making a Power Pool roll at that difficulty.

If the roll critically fails then the character's pool becomes exhausted (gains a level of power pool exhaustion) and the character cannot use the power (he/she couldn't gather enough power).

If the roll fails then the character becomes exhausted, but the power operates as normal (he/she used up all his/her juice).

If the roll is a success then the power operates as normal at no cost to the character.

If the roll is a critical success or better then the power draw was a "free action" (i.e. in combat the character doesn't use a main action up and can — in most cases — immediately use the power).

Power Pool Exhaustion

Power Pool Exhaustion works like ordinary Exhaustion except for that Power Pool only. Each level of Power Pool Exhaustion inflicts a –2 (cumulative) modifier to all further uses of Powers drawing on this pool. Characters recover from Power Pool Exhaustion by resting (see below).

(Double critical failures may cause extra levels of exhaustion and/or even worse effects.)

Resting and Power Pools

Recovering from power pool exhaustion works just like recovering from ordinary physical exhaustion with one wrinkle:

A character suffering from more than one kind of exhaustion will only reduce one level of one exhaustion from a short rest, and will reduce one kind of exhaustion by two levels and other kinds by one level from a full night's sleep.

> E.g. after running after a fleeing wizard through the narrow, crowded streets of Ikal Jakar and then barely defeating said wizard in a dual of mystic talents and raw magic power, Bill the Mighty is suffering from two levels of physical

exhaustion, one level of mystic power pool exhaustion, and three levels of magic power pool exhaustion.

After taking a few minutes to catch his breath and drinking some water, he is able to eliminate one level of exhaustion, and chooses to reduce his/her physical exhaustion by one level. He goes back to his room at the inn, bolts the door, and falls asleep almost instantly. When he wakes he reduces his magical exhaustion by two levels (to one level) and his physical exhaustion and mystical exhaustion to nil. After performing his morning exercises and taking a long walk to clear his head, Bill sits down to a nice long lunch and eliminates his remaining level of magic power pool exhaustion.

Combat

Basic actions in combat, such as shooting people or hitting them with blunt implements, are handled using the resolution rules. The key question these rules address is this: in tense situations, who gets to do what, and when?

Rounds

Combat is resolved in rounds, each assumed to represent three seconds or more of actual time. (The idea is that combat tends to involve brief bursts of violent activity separated by indeterminate periods of waiting for someone to make a move.) During a round, each character takes a turn — but characters will often want, and should be able, to do stuff out-of-turn, which is where things get confusing.

Unaware, Active, or Reactive

At the beginning of each turn each character will either be **Unaware** (i.e. they don't realize what's going on), **Active**, or **Reactive**. An Active character is attempting to get in the first blow. A Reactive character is waiting for an opening, or watching for a trigger event. Any character who is not Unaware must choose to be Active or Reactive at the beginning of each round.

Reactive characters can only perform a **Main Action** in response to an external event (which they notice!). It follows that if all the characters in a combat decide to be

Reactive and no outside event triggers any action, nothing much will happen. (The two samurai circled each other warily…)

Trigger Events

Reactive characters must state what their trigger will be (i.e. when they will act). GMs should note that in some cases a character may pick a trigger that they're not certain to see, in which case when the event occurs they may need to notice it in order to act. E.g. if a sniper is trying to stop an assassination he/she might pick as a trigger event "anything looking like a shooter appearing in a window in one of those buildings over there". Obviously he/she may not see such a shooter in time.

Quite often a character will specify a trigger event (e.g. they might be trying to shoot a target with a sniper rifle from a hotel room window) when a completely different event — which they notice — occurs (e.g. the door to the hotel room is burst open by a SWAT team). The GM may allow the reactive character to react to the unanticipated event, but not

Who Goes First?

At the beginning of a round, each character (who is not Unaware) elects to be Active or Reactive.

Initiative is determined by Active characters making a Reflex and Reactive characters making a Perception roll (situational modifiers apply, of course). **Highest active goes first** (ties resolved by the ability used in the roll, i.e. Reflex for Active, Perception for Reactive).

Unaware characters are likely to cease being unaware pretty fast once the action starts. Where applicable, treat them as Reactive characters who roll at –5 and don't get a Main Action.

Pre-emption

If an Active character does something which acts as a Trigger for a Reactive character, then the Reactive character may — indeed often will — want to act before the Active character finishes what he/she is doing.

> E.g. if an archer is waiting for a mage to do something suspicious and the mage starts casting a spell, then the archer may want to shoot the mage before the spell goes off.

If one action is of a more complex type than the other then **the simpler action goes first**. In other words Minor goes before Secondary goes before Main. But if they are of the same type, then **higher initiative goes first**.

Turns

Note: I've tried to be as similar in terminology and conception to the D20 System here to minimize the new stuff you need to learn. Where I depart markedly from D20 System I will try to make it very clear.

During a character's turn he/she may perform a **Main** action, a **Secondary** action (or Move), and a **Minor** action. Some other things (e.g. screaming epithets) don't count as actions at all. (Unlike D20, there are no explicit "free actions". It's either of no consequence or it's not free.)

In general, Main actions require focus and concentration, Secondary actions (also called, but not always, Secondary actions) are performed with little thought (e.g. walking), and Minor actions are performed with little thought which take almost no time (e.g. dropping something in your hand).

A character can choose to perform a Secondary action in place of his/her Main action, and can choose to perform a Minor action in place of a Secondary action.

Sprinting: a standing character may sprint (run double base move + D10m) as his/her whole turn. If a character is not on foot but, say, operating a vehicle, the basic idea is that "going as fast as you possibly can" occupies all one's attention.

Action	Description
	Main Actions
Attack	The character may perform a melee attack on a target within range, and until the next turn perform any number of Parry, Dodge, or Opportunity Attack actions (at a –2 modifier for each previous Parry, Dodge, or Opportunity Attack).

Action	Description
All Out Defense	The character may perform any number of Parry or Dodge actions at a –1 modifier for each previous Parry or Dodge.
Charge	The character moves in a straight line for at least 2m but no more than *base move* and then performs a melee attack on a target within range. The character may also perform any number of Parry, Dodge, or Opportunity Attack actions (at a –3 modifier for each previous Parry or Dodge).
All Out Attack	The character performs a wild attack at +2 to hit and damage but leaves him/her-self wide open (cannot parry or dodge) and unbalanced. The character may perform additional Opportunity Attack actions (at –2 for each previous such action).
Grapple	The character enters or remains in close combat with a target. (This is a whole topic in and of itself, see Grappling.)
Shoot	The character may perform a ranged attack (single shot, short burst, long burst, panic fire, or area fire).
Bead	A reactive character aims (or continues to aim) at a target, ready to shoot. He/she can perform a ranged attack at that target at any time (until next turn) as a minor action.
Dive for Cover	A standing character may move up to base move and then drop to squatting or prone. While moving the character is a
Secondary Actions	
Step	A standing character may move up to half base move and assume any facing. A squatting or prone character may move one meter or assume any facing.

Action	Description
Rise	The character may change stance from kneeling or squatting to standing, from lying down to prone, or from prone to keeling or squatting. After rising, a character will be unbalanced.
Pop Out	A character behind cover may pop out from behind cover just enough to look around or shoot.
Move	A standing character may move up to base move meters. A prone character may move up to half base move meters.
Steady	The character recovers his/her balance. If the character was not unbalanced, any shooting the character does this turn receives a +1 modifier.
Simple Action	The character may perform a simple action, such as tossing an object with no great force or accuracy, open or close a door, or flip a switch or press a button.
	Minor Actions
Drop	The character may drop from standing to kneeling or squatting, or prone.
Pull Back	A character behind cover may pull back entirely behind cover (as best he/she can).
Maintain Grip	If grappling, a character can maintain his/her level of advantage or disadvantage as a minor action. Failing to grapple or maintain grip will allow the other party to escape or improve their advantage level.
Very Simple Action	A character may perform a very simple action, such as dropping a held object or flipping a switch or pressing a button their finger is already poised to flip or press.

Stance & Balance

In general, **the rules assume characters are standing in combat**. If an action makes no sense given a character's stance then he/she can't do it or incurs a big negative modifier. There are lots of explicit modifiers for taking certain actions in non-standing stances.

Broadly speaking there are five stances: Lying down (flat on ground face up), Prone (flat on the ground or crawling, but generally face-down), Kneeling (on one knee, which is good for stability but lousy for mobility), Squatting (which is not good for stability, but better for mobility), and Standing.

Many actions leave a character unbalanced, which incurs negative modifiers for any action involving coordination. A character recovers balance by taking the Steady action.

Parry, Dodge, & Opportunity Attack

Most of combat resolution is simply resolution, but melee combat is a bit more complex. Parries and Dodges (permitted by certain melee Actions) allow you to block, deflect, or avoid a melee attack and are handled via opposed resolution. Dodges may also be employed against thrown weapons and powers.

The first and most important thing to note is that while eligible characters can perform as many of these actions as they like between one turn and the next, each a negative modifier for each such action already taken (typically –2 cumulative).

> E.g. Kiir just attacked a large ogre who seems pretty tough to kill. Before his next turn he notices an orc standing next to the ogre preparing to cast a spell, and performs an opportunity attack. Then the ogre takes a swing at him and he decides to parry — but incurs a –2 for having taken an opportunity attack. He survives the ogre's attack but then sees an orc in the rear throwing a spear at him — he prepares to dodge (at –4).

A character who is eligible to parry or dodge may elect to parry or dodge (one or the other, not both) any (melee) attack from in front.

Parries use the parrying character's weapon's parry modifier, +1 if the character has not used that weapon to attack (or counter-attack) that turn.

If a parry "barely succeeds" (i.e. is equal to the attacker's roll) then the attacker scores a glancing blow (–5 damage). If a parry is a critical success then the defender may immediately counter-attack (a free melee attack which itself can be parried or dodged); if the parry is a double-critical then the attacker is left off-balance, and the defender may exchange places with the attacker and change facing if so desired, or counter-attack, or disarm the attacker.

Obviously, counter-attack must be directed at the one whose attack was parried.

Dodges are simply Agility rolls, but when a character dodges a melee attack (not a thrown weapon) he/she can elect to give ground (back up 1m) and gain a +1 modifier to dodge.

If a dodge "barely succeeds" then the attacker scores a glancing blow (–5 damage). If a dodge is a critical success then the attacker is left off-balance, and the dodging character may shift position by one meter (in addition to any ground given). If a dodge is a double-critical, then the attacker is left off-balance, and the defender may exchange places with the attacker and change facing if so desired.

Optional: If you want more player input, the dodging character can pick a direction (back and left, back and right, or straight back) and the attacker can try to guess it. If the attacker guesses correctly, he/she gains +1 on the attack and can follow the dodging character; if not the dodging character gains a +2 modifier — this makes giving ground more effective unless space is constrained.

Opportunity Attacks are simply quick and easy melee attacks that someone paying attention can get in if a target presents itself.

Grappling

> **Important Note**: the following rules are only guidelines. It's simply impossible to anticipate the things that characters will want to do at close quarters. Examples from movies that spring to mind are the fight over the luger and fountain pen inside the tank in *The Last Crusade* or the guy getting his hand pinned to a window sill in *Blood Simple*. From literature there's the fight in *The Killing Machine* where Gersen pins the hetman's arms with his knees and bashes him to unconsciousness by smashing his nose with his forehead because both of his arms are useless. There is simply no game system that can come close to covering all these bases.

Grappling is generally a struggle between two people who both want the same thing (e.g. a gun) or where one person is trying to restrain the other.

Characters may choose to rely on Fighting skill or brute Strength when grappling.

Once a character is being grappled, he/she can only escape if he/she has "the advantage" or if the character with the advantage stops maintaining grip.

In general, grappling characters cannot move other than to drop (usually onto the ground – i.e. prone).

There are three levels of advantage: partially restrained (anything other than grappling that the disadvantaged character tries to do will be at –2), restrained (the disadvantaged character only has one arm free, and incurs –4 to any actions with that arm), and completely restrained (the disadvantaged character is reduced to harsh language).

Where the characters are fighting over the same item, replace the word "restrained" with "control". Partial control allows the item to be triggered (but not aimed), control allows it to be used at –4, and complete control means you've got it and can step back in triumph.

When a character succeeds in grappling, they improve their advantage level one notch (plus one level per critical). (It follows that if you merely Maintain Grip then your advantage will tend to slip away.)

Experience

Characters gain experience by adventuring. Experience allows characters to develop (fairly slowly — the idea in ForeSight is to start with the character you want to play, more-or-less, rather than slowly grind your way there).

- Completing a typical (4-5h) session is worth 10xp.
- Completing an adventure is worth an additional 10xp.
- Successful completion of a significant objective is worth 10xp.
- One skill point costs 15xp.
- One attribute point costs 50xp.
- A new perk costs 100xp and GM agreement.

Ranks

Ranks represent in broad strokes just how over-the-top a character is. Characters are divided into four ranks:

Rank	Requirements
Wannabe	This is where everyone starts (and some beginning characters will be here)
Adventurer	Four skills at 8 or better
Hero	25 attribute points, four skills at 10 or better, one other skill at 12
Legend	30 attribute points, four skills at 10 or better, another two skills at 12 or better

The Perks of Rank

Aside from bragging rights, upon first noticing a character has achieved a rank beyond adventurer a character receives a free perk. Characters cannot lose a rank once obtained even if, for instance, an attribute is reduced by a horrible injury.

Note that many starting characters will qualify as Adventurers right off the bat, and thus will get a fourth perk.

Stuff

Human beings — and characters — are tool users. There are two reasons to use stuff, because it lets you do something you couldn't otherwise do (e.g. fly) or because it helps you do something better (e.g. binoculars).

Almost any item will have at least one associated Performance Modifier (PM), or sometimes just "modifier", or sometimes just an unlabeled raw number (e.g. –2 or +1).

This is the modifier to tasks performed using the object *in the manner intended*. E.g. if the GM casually describes a sword as +1 then this makes it a better sword, but doesn't make it better when used to hammer in nails, or when thrown.

Some items, especially the kinds of items adventurers often use, will have multiple modifiers — e.g. melee weapons will tend to have Attack, Parry, and Damage modifiers, and Reach values (how far away you can attack with them).

Prices

Prices are often expressed in svu ("standard value units") — a coin used by Jack Vance in his Gaean Reach novels. In these rules, a svu represents the value of an hour of unskilled labor or a meal at Macdonald's (the *Economist* actually uses a similar method for determining real standard of living in different countries), which in the US as of 2010 is around $8.

Weights & Measures

I use the metric system by default because — well — it makes sense and happens to be convenient for melee combat (a typical melee weapon is good to around 1m, while polearms and such are typically good out to around 2m). If you don't have a feel for the metric system here's a very quick guide:

- 3m is about 10 feet, 10km is about 6 miles, 1 foot is about 30cm
- 100km/h is about 60mph
- 1kg is about 2.2lb ("double and add 10%"), 28g is about 1oz
- 1gal. is about 4L, 30mL is about 1 fluid oz
- 0°C is 32°F, 38°C is about 100°F, water boils at 100°C or 212°F

Weapons

Attack: melee attack modifier.

Parry: melee parry modifier.

Damage: damage modifier. If a B appears in the formula, that's Base Damage (Strength/2). Damage can be annotated with a type (e.g. M for melee, I for impact, B

for beam, F for fire, and so on), and penetration (nP where n is the amount of armor that the weapon ignores).

> E.g. a dagger might have a damage of B+3M, while a 9mm pistol might have a damage rating of B+7I.

Reach: maximum range you can attack at. Almost always 1m or 2m.

Weapon	Attack	Parry	Damage	Reach	Usage	Weight	Cost
Dagger	0	–2	B+3M	1m	1H	400g	2svu
Sword	+1	+1	B+8M	1m	1H	1kg	5svu
Hand and a Half	+1	0	B+10M	1m (2m if 2H)	1-2H	1.5kg	8svu
Two-handed Sword	+1	0	B+13M	2H	2H	2kg	20svu
Spear	0	–1 (+1 if 2H)	B+6M2P	1m (2m if 2H)	1-2H	2kg	4svu
Pike	0	0	B+10M3P	2m	2H	4kg	8svu
Poleaxe	+1	0	B+10M1P	2m	2H	5kg	15svu
War Axe	0	–1	B+10M	1m	1H	2kg	4svu
Battleaxe	0	–1	B+12M	1m (2m if 2H)	1-2H	3kg	7svu
Mace	0	–1	B+8M2P	1m	1H	1.5kg	3svu
War Hammer	0	-2	B+10M3P	1m	MH	2kg	4svu
Military Pick	0	–2	B+9M4P	1m	MH	2kg	5svu

Weapon	Attack	Parry	Damage	Reach	Usage	Weight	Cost
Small Shield	0	+2	B+2M	1m	OH	3kg	4svu
Medium Shield	0	+2	B+4M	1m	OH	5kg	8svu
Large Shield	0	+1	B+4M	1m	OH	8kg	12svu

Shoot: ranged attack modifier.

Ammo: number of shots, if appropriate. A † indicates the weapon itself is thrown.

Range: the weapon's range increment (–1 to hit per range increment)

Usage: 1H (one-handed), MH (main hand; even an ambidextrous character may only use one), OH (off-hand), 1-2H (can be used one- or two-handed; can be used two-handed at +1 to hit and damage if melee, +2 to hit if ranged); M-2H (main- or two-handed, +1 to hit and damage if melee, +2 to hit if ranged), 2H (two-handed).

Weapon	Shoot	Damage	Ammo	Range	Usage	Weight	Cost
9mm Automatic Pistol	0	+10I	12	2m	1H	2kg	100svu
9mm SMG	-1	+12I	30	4m	1-2H	4kg	150svu
5.56mm Assault Rifle	–1	+15I2P	30	20m	1-2H	4kg	200svu
Pump-Action Shotgun	–1	+20I	8	3m	1-2H	6kg	200svu

Armor

Protection: this is the bonus to the target's toughness when resolving damage, annotated as per weapon damage to indicate what it protects against (Pn protects against penetration in this case, and the type * indicates protection against all other types of damage).

Perception: wearing a helmet makes it a lot harder to see and hear what's going on around you. This is the modifier to perception when wearing a helmet made of this stuff.

Dexterity: wearing armored gloves makes you a lot clumsier. This is the modifier to dexterity when wearing gloves made of this stuff. (Obviously, in a lot of cases — especially out of combat, you can just take them off.)

Agility: wearing heavy armor tends to make you less agile. This is the modifier to agility when wearing a suit made of this stuff (it can be assumed that 1/3 of the modifier comes from the arms and 2/3 from the legs). Simply wearing a "vest" of armor has no impact on agility.

> E.g. chainmail armor might have a protection rating of 6M 3*, while thick kevlar might be rated 6I2P 2*.

Note: the cost and weight given is for a complete suit of armor, including helmet. The costs of individual or smaller pieces as a proportion of the full cost is given in a separate table.

Armor	Protection	Perception	Dexterity	Agility	Weight	Cost
Leather	4M 2*	0	–2	0	4kg	50svu
Chainmail	6M 3*	0	–2	–1	20kg	250svu
Plate	8M2P 5*	–2	–4	–2	25kg	1ksvu
Kevlar	6I4P 2*	–1	–2	–1	10kg	1ksvu

Notes: kevlar is not normally sold in suits. A 24 layer kevlar vest — providing good protection against most handguns and shotguns — costs around $500 and weighs around 3kg. Chainmail is usually combined with a rigid helmet.

Vehicles

Cruise: this is the speed (and in some cases altitude) at which the vehicle operates most efficiently, which is useful for gauging long-distance travel.

Max: this is vehicle's maximum speed (and possibly altitude). Submarines will have a negative maximum altitude. Flying subs will have two values.

Terrain: this is a rough guide as to how good the vehicle is at dealing with rough terrain, essentially "what reduces the vehicle to below half speed". For a typical automobile this might be "gravel road". For a helicopter this might be "bad weather".

Accelerate: this is a modifier used for tasks involving acceleration (e.g. pulling away from someone in a chase).

Turn: this is a modifier used for tasks involving sharp turns or other difficult maneuvers (e.g. swerving into an alley during a chase).

Redline: this is a modifier — usually negative — for safely operating the vehicle at maximum speed. (Often useful for determining if you can just "pull away" from someone chasing you.)

Passengers: how many other people (than the operator) the vehicle is designed to carry. Obviously you can almost always carry more in a pinch.

Cargo: this is how much stuff the vehicle is designed to carry (in addition to passengers).

Nonhuman Characters

There are basically two kinds of nonhuman characters we need to consider. The first — quasi-human — is like a human in prosthetic makeup (e.g. basically every nonhuman intelligent species in *Star Trek* or *Stargate* that isn't a one-off special effect, and pretty much all the folks in typical fantasy settings) and the second — truly nonhuman — is "fundamentally not like a human in at least one significant way" (e.g. like the uplifted dolphins in *Startide Rising*).

> **Aside**: anthropomorphized bunny rabbits, etc., much fall into the quasi-human category. If you're operating in a setting which is completely divorced from reality, it's hardly worth arguing over such nuances.

In general, neither these rules — nor our minds — are terribly well adapted to handling a setting where truly nonhuman character is central (just as you'd probably want some solid and explicit combat mechanics for handling underwater or zero-G combat if pretty much every fight were going to be underwater or in zero-G).

The chances are that even truly nonhuman characters will be operating in a fairly familiar environment (walking around on solid surfaces with some kind of gravity…) and incurring some kinds of restrictions on their activities, or using prosthetics, or a bit of both.

> **Examples**: in David Brin's *Sundiver* there's one alien race that's basically a potted plant with prosthetics; Clifford Simak's dogs have robot servants who act as their "hands" towards the end of *City*; the dolphins in *Startide Rising* wear cyborg harnesses that allow them to move around on land and provide hands for manipulation; and — one of my favorites — the aquatic aliens in the *Fifth Element* walk around in Earth in bulbous water-filled spacesuits.

Quasi-Humans

Many settings — e.g. science fiction, fantasy, and horror — will be populated with quasi-human characters.

Typically, **quasi-humans will simply have some modifiers to their attribute ranges and/or aspects which flow through to the skill system**.

Quasi-humans will often have particular talents for certain skills (e.g. they may be gifted archers or have a knack for certain magical powers) and **special abilities** (e.g. they may have fold-up wings and be able to fly, or the ability to hold their breath for ten minutes).

Quasi-humans will often have specific weaknesses, limitations, or vulnerabilities (e.g. vampires, by tradition, cannot withstand sunlight, lycanthropes lack control over their transformations, orcs dislike bright light and have trouble seeing in it).

> E.g. the GM may decide to have "Gray Elves" inspired by *Lord of the Rings* (i.e. glowing fair-haired people who are simply better in every way than humans

> and live forever). Such characters might have higher stats ranging from 3-12 (instead of 1-10) and get 10 extra points to throw around.
>
> Usually, GMs will be more concerned with "game balance" and opt not to create quasi-humans who are ridiculously superior to everyone else. (Who wouldn't want to be a Gray Elf?) Thus you get a bunch of tradeoffs: dwarfs are strong but not so agile, elves are agile but not so strong, orcs are strong but not so smart or attractive, and so on.

True Nonhumans

Figuring out how to represent truly nonhuman characters is likely to be challenging, especially if you want players to play them. **In many cases a GM will be to "paper over" the differences** for most situations. Thus we get dolphins with walking harnesses and prosthetic limbs — "standard gear" that, unless the character is forced to operate without it, converts a truly nonhuman character into a quasi-human character.

Sometimes there is no way to cover up a difference and it just becomes a recurring component of the kinds of stories you can tell.

> E.g. giants are pretty similar to humans in many respects, only bigger, but when added to a typical party in a fantasy setting the impact can be far-reaching. Buildings and caves where crucial story points are supposed to take place become inaccessible. Actions requiring discretion become laughable. None of this is impossible to deal with, and it may even add greatly to the entertainment value of stories if handled well, but it can also be a major pain in the butt.

Damage Scale

Very large nonhuman things (characters, monsters, stone monoliths) may be significantly harder to wound or kill.

Damage Scale is the number of wounds you need to score on such a character to have the effect of one wound on a normal character. Normal characters have, effectively, a damage scale of one. If damage scale is not mentioned, you can assume it's one. When it is mentioned, it will be 1.5 or higher.

Non-Player Characters

Non-player characters (or NPCs) are simply characters — although, in practice, they will often have incomplete or rough descriptions. Fortunately, it's easy to create rough sketches of NPCs — for minor characters the GM need only think about four attributes, and major skills will tend to be roughly comparable to the attributes they're based on. So a thug will tend to have high physique, and fair-to-middling coordination, and skills to match. Done.

There's an even quicker way to define an NPC: take an NPC archetype from the table below. If you want extra detail, apply some NPC Modifications.

NPC Archetype	Physique	Coord	Mentality	Wits
Thug	5	3	2	2
Guard	4	3	2	2
Gang Leader	4	4	3	4
Shopkeeper	3	2	4	3
Accountant	2	2	3	4
Scholar	2	2	4	5
Teacher	3	3	4	4
Soldier	4	4	2	2
Commando	5	5	3	3

When quickly creating characters out of thin air, the important thing to remember is that physique (and to a lesser extent mentality) make characters tough, while coordination and wits make them skillful (at least potentially).

Major NPCs are also just characters and can be described in as much detail as the rules allow if so desired. (Even major NPCs don't usually need the level of detail players require for their characters, and the GM should feel no need to count points or painstakingly follow the rules.)

Monsters

The difference between a "monster" and a "truly-nonhuman" character is not perfectly obvious. In general, monsters do not have distinct personalities — their proclivities are better described in terms of instincts or expected behavior — and they may also have unique capabilities outside the scope of skills or powers (essentially skills or powers perhaps with no overarching attribute or aspect).

In general, the four attributes are a good starting point for describing monsters (although monsters may be lacking some attributes or aspects entirely — e.g. a non-corporeal monster might have no strength or health and a gelatinous ooze might have no intelligence, memory, or any mentality at all). Monsters will also tend to have intrinsic armor, special abilities (often these can be described as skills, powers, or weapons), and size. Some monsters will be unusually tough (beyond what the rules for characters allow for) — the simple way to express this is Damage Scale.

Modifications

Modifications are essentially adjectives with formal definitions. Any class of object in ForeSight (e.g. weapons, vehicles, NPCs, monsters) has associated modifications which let the GM (or player) specify things of that kind more precisely.

In general, the word used for a modification should express very clearly the game effect, examples include "heavy", "sporty", and "shoddy".

General Item Modifications

These are modifications that can apply to almost anything you buy or make.

Modification	Effect
Shoddy	–1 when used as intended, 10x more likely to fail or break. Usually cheaper: Costs 0.5–0.75x.
Luxurious	Made of expensive materials; comfortable; looks/smells good. Costs 2x or more (the sky's the limit).

Modification	Effect
Ruggedized	Designed to survive being knocked around; weighs more and is bigger than usual. Costs 2x.
Reliable	Built to unusually high standards. 10% as likely to fail or break. Costs 2–5x.
Quality	Designed to be unusually good in some specific respect (e.g. fast or accurate or whatever) but often there's a tradeoff (e.g. it may be heavier or more delicate or less reliable). Costs 2–5x.
Jerry-Built	Put together out of scavenged parts or rebuilt from a hulk. –2 when used as intended, 10x more likely to fail or break. Who knows what it cost? The person or people who put it together will often have an excellent idea of how to fix anything that goes wrong, however: +2.

Vehicle Modifications

Modification	Effect
Fast	+10% cruise/max, +1 accelerate, –1 turn, –1 redline, cost 2x
Sporty	+1 accelerate, +1 turn, cost 2x
Armored	–25% cruise/max, –2 accelerate, –1 turn, +1 redline, cost 3x
Utility	–10% cruise/max, –1 accelerate, –1 turn, cargo 4x
Transport	-10% cruise/max, –2 accelerate, –2 turn, cargo 10x
Police	+10% cruise/max, +1 accelerate, cost 2x
Cheap	–10% cruise/max, –1 accelerate, –1 turn, –1 redline, cost 0.5-0.75x
Jerry-Built	–25% cruise/max, -2 accelerate, –2 turn, –1 redline
Luxury	–10% cruise/max, –1 accelerate, –1 turn, cargo 2x, passengers 2x
Quality	+10% or +1 at something, –10% or –1 at something else, cost 2-5x
Passenger	–10% cruise/max, –1 accelerate, –1 turn, passengers 4x, cargo 4x

Melee Weapon Modifications

Ranged Weapon Modifications

Armor Modifications

NPC Modifications

Monster Modifications

Acknowledgements

The original idea of a role-playing game with actual rules belongs to Dave Arneson and Gary Gygax. Their rules initially borrowed from TSR's *Chainmail*. The way *D&D* was and is actually played is owed in large part to Steve Perrin, who went on to design *RuneQuest* — which replaced *D&D*'s classes, saving throws, and alignments with skills, opposed resolution, and social factions. Any skill-based role-playing game is a spiritual descendant of *RuneQuest*.

ForeSight was born from the demise of SPI, which had produced *Universe* — the first SF RPG that didn't utterly suck. *Universe* had a general-purpose skill/resolution/experience system, but it was pretty badly designed and — more importantly — with SPI's demise it became a dead end. I looked around for a replacement — a simpler, cleaner game system which did a good job with ranged combat — and found *James Bond 007*. *ForeSight* started life as a generalized version of *James Bond 007* with different attributes, and SF-flavored skills and fields of knowledge.

Having replaced *Universe*, I didn't see why my players (or I) needed to use a different set of rules for non-SF settings, which led to *HindSight & The Age of Reason*, *ForeSight Enhanced*, and *ForeSight 2004*.

The resolution system — adapted from *007* — has always been a mixed blessing. The original *ForeSight* play-testers were, to put it mildly, not intimidated by math. (Most were Math, Physics, or Comp Sci majors.) *007* used a resolution table, but *ForeSight*

reduced it to some simple formulae we could all calculate in our heads. Great for us, but kind of horrible for most people.

ForePlay is essentially *ForeSight* pared down with a replacement resolution system inspired by (but quite different from) *Savage Worlds*'s open-ended polyhedral die rolls. This of course begs the question — why use *ForeSight* over *Savage Worlds*?

ForeSight is roughly twice as fine-grained as *Savage Worlds*. In other words, there is more scope for differentiating characters and gradual development in the course of a campaign (every attribute or skill in *Savage Worlds* is essentially on a scale of 1–5; *ForePlay* is 1–10. The resolution system in *Savage Worlds* is has bumps and gaps (e.g. you can't roll a 6 on a D6) — "it doesn't matter if you have a good game master" runs true, but it also applies to *D&D* or *Lord of the Dice*[2]. Most importantly, *Savage Worlds* is intentionally written as a non-serious pulp RPG, which means that it colors the underlying material in a way you don't necessarily want to. I prefer for my settings to speak for themselves, and not have things like "smarts" and "bennies" superimposed on them.

I don't want to criticize *Savage Worlds* — it's a large part of the reason these rules exist, and it's a fine set of rules within the limitations its designers *consciously chose*. Any problems it has are in fact far less significant than more complex RPGs such as D&D, RuneQuest, or GURPS, all of which have features and deficiencies that are clearly accidental.

ForePlay was created using *iWork 08/09*, *Pages 08/09* in particular (the finest damn world-processor on the planet), and is typeset in *Cochin and Futura*.

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[2] *Lord of the Dice* was a joke RPG proposed by Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan in *Different Worlds* many years ago (it's been reproduced here: http://www.costik.com/lodice.html) — in essence roll a bunch of numbers, give them names, whenever you want to do something roll lots of dice and if they're "high enough" you succeed. The point is that this works as well as or better than most RPG rules. "It doesn't matter if you have a good game master."