## Experience

Bostonian characters start their careers with some experience. Most characters start the game with skill levels of 8-11 in most of their skills and 13-17 in a few primary skills. As characters adventure and use their skills, they gain expertise and their skill levels increase.

### Improvement Points

Improvement points are the means by which a character increases his skill levels. Each skill has a separate improvement point total. The player should keep a note of the improvement points earned in each skill. When a character earns enough points in a particular skill, he erases the improvement points for that skill and the skill level increases by one.

**Example of Improvement Point Totals**: Zahn the Demon Hunter has the following skills marked on his sheet:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Skill Name* | *Level* | *Imp. Points* |
| *Combat: Swords* | *13* | *2* |
| *Stealth* | *12* | *2* |
| *Trading* | *11* | *1* |

He goes on an adventure where he earns 2 improvement points in his sword skill, 1 in stealth and 1 in trading. After adding the improvement points to his character sheet, it looks like this.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Skill Name* | *Level* | *Imp. Points* |
| *Combat: Swords* | *13* | *2+2=4* |
| *Stealth* | *12* | *2+1=3* |
| *Trading* | *11* | *1+1=2* |

Looking at the skill chart, we see that Combat: Sword takes 5 improvement points to raise and trading takes 3. Zahn does not yet have enough experience to raise these skills. However, Zahn has the required 3 points to raise his stealth skill. His new stealth skill level is 13 and he erases his improvement points in that skill. His character sheet now looks like this.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Skill Name* | *Level* | *Imp. Points* |
| *Combat: Swords* | *13* | *4* |
| *Stealth* | *13* | *0* |
| *Trading* | *11* | *2* |

Characters have a chance to earn improvement points in their skills when they receive checks through using their skills, or by succeeding in their adventures.

### Skill Checks

When characters successfully use their skills in an adventure, the GM might award them a skill check. A skill check is awarded when a character successfully uses a skill in a fashion that furthers his own ends, the ends of his adventuring group, or the plot. The GM has the final decision as to whether a skill check is warranted for a character’s actions. Here are some guidelines.

* Did the skill use have some purpose? Actions that further the goals of the character or his group often deserve a check. Actions that are frivolous, or are taken to “practice” the skill do not get checks. Practicing skills is simulated by assigning free checks to that skill (See Free Checks).
* Did the action entail some risk? Risk does not necessarily mean risk of death. It is hard to imagine a situation where a character using the administrate skill is risking death. Characters may risk money, time, honor, and loss of face or respect when they take action. Actions that entail risk should have more of a chance to earn checks than actions that do not.
* Did the action challenge the character? A character that has a skill level of 18 in a skill is no longer challenged by mundane tasks. Generally, if a character’s skill level is 8 or more points higher than the DL of a task, no check is awarded for the task. It is simply not challenging enough.
* A flurry of activity where the character uses a skill repeatedly in a short period of time is generally worth only one check in that skill. For instance, in a combat, characters can earn one check in each of their combat, parry, block and dodge skills. However, unless they do something exceptional, they only earn one check in each… no matter how many times they swing their swords.
* A skill roll is not required to gain a skill check. Players may prefer to describe or role-play the use of skills like conversation, persuasion and administrate. Based on the GM’s discretion and the gaming group’s style of play, successful role-playing of these skills may warrant a skill check.

#### Turning Checks into Improvement Points

At the end of a gaming session, each character has the opportunity to convert skill checks into improvement points. For each skill check earned in a given skill, roll a d30. If the die roll is higher than the character’s current level in that skill, the check is erased and an improvement point is earned. If the roll is equal to or lower than the character’s current skill, the check is lost and no improvement point is gained.

**Example of Rolling for Improvement Points**: After a hard night of adventuring, Zahn has earned one check in combat: swords and one in trading. His skill in swords is 13. He rolls a d30 and gets a 17. Since this is higher than his skill level, his check becomes an improvement point. For trading, he rolls a 2. That is lower than his current skill level of 11 and the check is lost.

### Free Checks

At the end of each gaming session, the GM should award free checks to the characters. Free checks are just like skill checks. However, free checks can be saved and used to learn new skills or they can be assigned to skills the character already possesses. Once assigned, a free check acts just like a skill check and a roll is made to turn it into an improvement point.

###### Suggested Free Check Awards

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Free Checks** |
| The game went poorly. The PCs did not have much success. They missed clues and opportunities to role-play. They were not thinking. A bad night. | 0 for each PC |
| An average night. Some successes, some failures. Nothing spectacular happened, but everyone performed adequately. | 1-2 for each PC |
| A good night. The PCs succeeded in some goal, perhaps finishing a small scenario or defeating an important bad guy. They did well and earned a reward. They were thinking and role-playing well. | 2-3 for each PC |
| A great night. Some major success was achieved and an important goal reached. The role-playing and tactical thought was excellent. | 3-4 for each PC |
| This character solved some important puzzle, dealt with his plotline or achieved some personal goal. | +1-2 for that PC |
| Each session, the players nominate and vote for a “Cool Move” award. The winner of this award gets an extra free check. | +1 for that PC |

### Acquiring Talents

In addition to increasing their skill levels, characters can use their experience to acquire useful talents. Talents are purchased and raised using Free Checks or Free Improvement Points. Checks assigned to skills cannot be used to buy or increase talents.

To purchase a talent, the character must have one set of the prerequisites listed in the talent chart.

**Example of Talent Prerequisites**: Vorlund returns from his adventures having saved 5 free checks. He wants to use those checks to purchase the Door Finder talent. Looking at the talent’s entry in the chart, he sees that the prerequisites are listed as follows:

* + - *Conceal 15+*
    - *Detect Traps 15+*
    - *Investigate 15+*
    - Streetwise 15+

This means that to gain the Door Finder talent, he must have any one of the listed skills. Luckily, Vorlund has the Conceal skill at level 16 and so he can begin purchasing his talent.

If you have the prerequisites, purchasing talents is very similar to raising a skill with skill checks. Each check spent gives you a roll to see whether the check converts to an improvement point. Roll a d30 and **if you roll under your current skill level**, you gain an improvement point. Once you have earned the requisite number of improvement points, the talent is yours.

It is important to note that the roll to convert checks to buy talents requires you to ***roll under*** your skill level. This is in contrast to raising your skills; those rolls require you to ***roll over*** your level. Thus, as your level in a skill increases, it becomes harder to increase further, but it becomes easier to purchase associated talents.

**Example of Talent Prerequisites**: Vorlund is trying to purchase the Door Finder talent using his Conceal skill which is level 16. He spends five free checks and rolls a d30 five times resulting in 17, 12, 9, 19 and 6. Three of those rolls are under his skill level of 16 and so he now has 3 improvement points in Door Finder and needs only two more to begin using the talent in play.

### Free Improvement Points

One thing experienced Runebearer players will note is that as the characters’ skills get higher, the chance of converting checks into improvement points goes down considerably. Some players and GMs like the slow pace of mid to high level character advancement. Others want to see their characters improve at a steadier rate. As a solution to this issue, the GM can award free improvement points for the completion of adventures in addition to the free checks he awards normally.

A free improvement point may be applied to any skill, regardless of how high the character’s skill level is, and no roll is needed to convert it. Thus a character with a magic skill of 29 can spend 5 free improvements and get to 30 with no rolls involved. Free improvement points can also be spent on new talents without the player having to roll.

Generally, free improvements should be given when the characters achieve their goals, complete a major adventure, or somehow further the plot. An award of 1-2 free improvements is appropriate in this case.

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### Learning New Skills

Characters can use their free checks to learn new skills. A character must find a trainer, materials and possibly perform research at a university or library. How the PCs find their trainers and materials is up to the GM. He may choose to role-play it, or deal with training off-screen.

The chart below provides guidelines for training times and costs. These will be modified by the campaign economy, circumstance and GM discretion. PCs could be forced to pay handsomely for their training, or could receive free training as a reward for performing a quest.

Remember, these are just guidelines. Having trainers, materials and research where none is needed can shorten the time required to learn the skill by 25-50%. Alternately, characters may be able to do without a required category if they are willing to take 2 to 3 times longer to learn the skill.

When a character learns a new skill, he figures his base skill level using the chart. The character records the new skill and base level on his sheet. From there, the skill increases normally through skill checks and free checks.

**Example of Learning Skills**: Zahn decides to spend a number of saved free checks on self-improvement. He spends several weeks studying the art of trading by wandering Ismoth’s many bazaars. After 6 weeks and a fair bit of money spent bartering with clever merchants, the GM allows Zahn to spend 10 free checks on the trade skill. Because the trade skill has a default value of half, once Zahn learns the skill, he gets his full base level. His CHA is 8, his PER is 12 and his WIL is 14. This gives him a trade of 9.

###### Learning New Skills

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill/Skill Type** | **Checks** | **Time** | **Materials** | **Trainer** | **Research** |
| Acrobatics | 20 | 2-4 months | No | Yes, 200-600 p | No |
| Alchemy | 20 | 6-12 months | Yes, 1000-3000 p | No | Yes, 250-1000 p |
| Artifacts | 15 | 2-4 months | No | No | Yes, 250-1000 p |
| Carousing | 10 | 2-6 weeks | Yes, 50-300 p | No | No |
| Combat Skills: Axes, Swords, etc. | 10 | 2-6 weeks | No | Yes, 100-300 p | No |
| Crafts | 5 | 2-12 months | Yes, 100-1000 p | Yes, 1000-2000 p | No |
| Herbalist | 15 | 2-4 months | Yes, 100-200 p | No | Yes, 100-500 p |
| Knowledges | 5 | 2-28 days | No | No | Yes, 10-500 p |
| Languages | 10 | 2-12 months | No | No | No |
| Outdoor Skills: Navigate, Survival, Track | 10 | 2-12 weeks | No | No | No |
| People Skills: Acting, Administrate, Conversation, Diplomat, Orate, Persuasion, Streetwise, | 10 | 2-6 weeks | No | No | No |
| Physical Skills: Climb, Fast Draw, Stealth, Swim | 10 | 2-6 weeks | No | No | No |
| Physician | 20 | 6-12 months | Yes, 500-1000 p | Yes, 3000 p | Yes, 100-500 p |
| Repair | 15 | 2-6 months | Yes, 100-400 p | No | Yes, 100-200 p |
| Ritual Spells | 5 | 1-4 weeks | Yes, varies | No | Yes, varies |
| Scholarly Skills: Ancient Knowledge, Engineer, Rune Knowledge, Theology | 15 | 2-6 months | No | No | Yes, 200-1000 p |
| Trade | 10 | 2-6 weeks | Yes, 100-500 p | No | No |
| Trap Skills: Detect, Disarm | 10 | 4-8 weeks | Yes, 100-200 p | No | Yes, 100-200 p |