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Once we release SRD version 1.0 we expect that to be stable for some time.

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QuestWorlds SRD with annotations for individual contributions can be found at GitHub: <https://github.com/ChaosiumInc/QuestWorlds/pulls>.

## 1.0 Introduction

*QuestWorlds* is a roleplaying rules engine suitable for you to play in any genre.

It is a traditional roleplaying game in that there is a GM and players. The players play characters, each guided by the internal thoughts of their character as to what decisions they make, and the GM plays the world, including non-player characters (NPCs) and abstract threats.

It features an abstract, conflict-based, resolution method and scalable, customizable, character descriptions. Designed to emulate the way characters in fiction face and overcome challenges, it is suitable for a wide variety of genres and play styles. It is particularly suited to pulp genres (including their descendants comic books) and cinematic, larger-than-life, action.

It is a rules-light system that facilitates beginning play easily, and resolving conflicts in play quickly.

We refer to a rules-light but traditional roleplaying game as a storytelling game, after Greg Stafford's definition in *Prince Valiant*.

### 1.1 Why QuestWorlds?

*QuestWorlds* is meant to facilitate your creativity, and then to get out of your way.

It is well suited to a collaborative, friendly group with a high degree of trust in each other's creativity. Characters in *QuestWorlds* are described more in terms of their place in your imagination and the game setting than by game mechanics.

If your group are often at odds and rely on their chosen rules kit as an arbiter between competing visions of how the game ought to develop, or use mechanical options to decide “what action to take,” *QuestWorlds* is not a rules set that provides that structure. Make sure to discuss with your group whether you are collectively on board with trying a new play style dynamic, or if you would rather stick to more structured systems.

### 1.2 Version

The first version of these rules *Hero Wars* was published in 2000 (ISBN 978-1-929052-01-1)

The second version *HeroQuest* was published in 2003 (ISBN 978-1-929052-12-7). We refer to this as *HeroQuest* 1e to disambiguate.

The third version *HeroQuest: Core Rules* was published in 2009 (ISBN 978-0-977785-32-2). We refer to this as *HeroQuest* 2e.

*HeroQuest Glorantha* was published in 2015 (ISBN 978-1-943223-01-5). It is the version of the rules in *HeroQuest* 2e, presented for playing in Glorantha. We refer to this as *HeroQuest* 2.1e.



*QuestWorlds* was published as a System Reference Document (SRD) (this document) in 2020. The version of the rules here is slightly updated, mainly to clarify ambiguities, from the version presented in *HeroQuest* 2e and *HeroQuest* 2.1e. This makes this ruleset *HeroQuest* 2.2e, despite the name change. However, to simplify we identify this version as *QuestWorlds* 1e.

An Appendix lists changes in this version. As the SRD is updated we will continue to track version changes there.

## 1.3 Who Is This Document For

The primary audience for this document is game-designers who wish to utilize the *QuestWorlds* rules framework to implement their own game.

We also recognize that some people will use this document to learn about the *QuestWorlds* system before purchasing it, and some players in games where the GM has a rule book, may use this as a reference to help understand the rules.

For that latter reason, we address the rules here to a player.

However, this remains a technical document with few examples, advice, or other non-rules text to help you play your game, as such are beyond the scope of this System Reference Document.

It is expected that the designers of games you play based on these rules will include such guidance and context as is relevant to their game's particular genre or setting, presented in a format better suited for learning how to play.

## 1.4 Numbering

Sections within this document are numbered. This is for the benefit of game designers and reviewers.

This does not imply that game designers need number the rules in their own games.

Numbering however makes it easy to refer to rules in this document when page numbers may vary by presentation format for the purposes of error trapping or tracking changes. If you need to give us feedback about this document, that will assist us.

## 1.5 Participants

### 1.5.1 Players

You and your fellow players each create a Player Character (PC) to be the “avatar” or “persona” whose role you will play in the game. The PCs pursue various goals in an imaginary world, using their **abilities**, motivations, connections, and more to solve problems and overcome **story obstacles** that stand in their way.

When we say ‘you’ in this document we may mean either the player or their PC. Which of these we’re addressing should be clear from the context or explicitly noted.

### 1.5.2 Game Master

Your Game Master (GM) is the interface between your imagination and the game-world in which the PCs have their adventures; describing the people, places, creatures, objects, and events therein. Your GM also plays the role of any Non-Player Characters (NPCs) with whom your PC interacts in the course of your adventures.

We generally refer to the GM as ‘your GM’ in this document’s player-facing language. However, if you are the GM for a given game, this naturally refers to you.

## 2.0 Mechanics

In a *QuestWorlds* game, stories develop dynamically as you and your GM work together to role-play the dramatic conflict between your group’s PCs in pursuit of their goals and the challenges, or threats that your GM presents to stand in your way. Stories advance by two methods: conflict, where your PC is prevented from achieving their goals because there is something that must be overcome, a **story obstacle**, to gain a desired person, thing, or even status: the **prize**; or there is something that must be understood, a **story question**, to learn a secret, the past, or comprehend: a different **prize**.

Over the course of play, your GM will present various **story obstacles** and **revelations** as conflicts to the PCs, resulting in either **victory** or **defeat** for your character, which determines whether or not you gain the **prize** you sought. These conflicts can represent any sort of challenge you might face: fighting, a trial or debate, survival in a harsh environment, out-wooing rival suitors, and so on.

Rather than mechanically addressing the individual tasks that make up these conflicts, *QuestWorlds* usually assesses your overall **victory** or **defeat** in a single **contest** where you and your GM make an opposed roll pitting your characters **ability** vs the **resistance** the **story obstacle** or **story question** presents to you achieving the **prize**.

Whenever the GM presents a **story obstacle** or **story question** for you to overcome, you should **frame the contest** by describing what you are trying to accomplish, the **prize**, and which of your **abilities** (see below) you want to use to achieve that **prize**, and how.

Based on that **framing** and other factors, your GM will assess what **resistance** the characters face.

You roll a twenty-sided die (D20) against your PC’s **ability**, and your GM rolls a D20 against the **resistance**. Your GM will assess your overall **victory** or **defeat** in the contest based on the **success** or **failure** of both rolls, and narrates the results of your attempt to overcome the **story obstacle** or answer the **story question** and gain the **prize** accordingly. The direction of the story changes, in either a big or small way, depending on whether you gain the **prize** or not.

We encourage your GM to work with your suggestions when narrating the **victory** or **defeat**, but the final decision rests with them.

### 2.1 Abilities

Characters in *QuestWorlds* are defined by the **abilities** they use to face the challenges that arise in the course of their story. Rather than having a standard list of attributes, skills, powers, etc. for all characters, anything that you can apply overcome a **story obstacle** or answer a **story question** could be one of

your **abilities**. While your GM may provide some example **abilities** to choose from that connect your PC to a particular story or game world (whether created by your GM or by the designer of a particular game), you get to make up and describe most or all of your **abilities**.

Some **abilities** might be broad descriptions of your background or expertise, like “Dwarf of the Chalk Hills” or “Private Detective” - implying a variety of related capabilities. Others might represent specific capabilities or assets such as “Lore of the Ancients,” “Captain of the Fencing Team,” or “The Jade Eye Medallion.”

Ultimately, **abilities** are names for the interesting things your character can do.

### 2.1.1 Keywords

A **keyword** is a broad **ability** that often represents an occupation, a heritage, a belief system or participation in a community. The simplest way to use a **keyword** is as an **ability** that represents the competencies of an occupation, knowledge and attitudes passed down via a heritage, values of a belief system, or relationships from a community. In the kinds of fiction that *QuestWorlds* emulates it is usually enough to know that someone has a particular occupation or heritage to know what they can do.

A **keyword** reduces the number of **abilities** your PC needs to track, and is a simplification to help you easily create archetypical characters for a genre without excessive bookkeeping.

Your GM's genre pack should have a text description, which hints at the credible uses of a **keyword**.

Any broad concept you come up with for an **ability**, may be better presented as a **keyword**.

#### 2.1.1.1 Breakouts

A **breakout** allows you to track a competency within the **keyword** individually, as an **ability**.

If your character is renowned for a skill that credibly falls under one of your **keywords**, you create a **breakout ability** under the **keyword** at a **bonus** from the **rating** of the **keyword**. You write these specialized **breakout abilities** under the **keyword**, along with how much they've improved from the **keyword**:

Detective 15

- Deduction +5
- Hard Drinking +5

In this example, whilst the **rating** for most **contexts** in which Detective was an appropriate **tactic** would be 15, for contexts involving Deduction it would be 20.

A **breakout** begins at +5 when purchased during character creation or improvement. A **distinguishing characteristic** (see §3.0) under a **keyword** begins at +10.

The list of **breakout abilities** in a **keyword** is open-ended, but your GM's genre pack description of the keyword will provide inspiration, and might include a list of suggested **abilities** for unfamiliar settings, where it is less clear what a **keyword** encompasses.

Even if there is a suggested list, the potential uses of the **keyword** are always open-ended, provided they are credible. As the genre pack description tends to be assumed in the **keyword**, which is already

treated as an **ability**, it can be more interesting to have them *differentiate* your PC from the archetype.

### 2.1.2 Flaws

Your character may have one or more **flaws**. Unlike an **ability**, you do not use a **flaw** to accomplish something; instead the GM uses your **flaw** to hinder you from accomplishing something, or invokes your **flaw** to force you to act a certain way. **Flaws** are used to enrich your character and provide story obstacles to be overcome.

**Flaws** may be psychological challenges such as “Addict”, fears or compulsive behaviors such as “Afraid of Snakes” or “Needs Lucky Rabbit’s Foot”, physical challenges such as “One-Eyed,” “Wheelchair-Bound” or “Asthmatic.” A **flaw** might also be a philosophy such as “Code Against Killing,” “Pacifist,” or “Radical Candor” that limit your freedom of action. A **flaw** might be a relationship that creates obligations such as a “Frail Aunt,” “Single Dad,” or “Blackmailed”.

Many **flaws** describe attributes that can be viewed positively. By making it a **flaw** and not an **ability** you are inviting your GM to use it to make your life more difficult, not easier.

You should not use your **flaw** to accomplish something; if you feel that is likely, use an **ability** and flag to your GM when you want them to treat it as a **flaw** at an appropriate moment.

Ultimately, in *QuestWorlds* a **flaw** is simply something that you invite the GM to use to hinder or prevent your character doing something. In return for the GM exercising the **flaw** you gain **experience points** (see §8.1).

In play your PC may work to overcome a **flaw** and you may reach the point that you agree with your GM that story events mean that it is no longer relevant. You can then drop that **flaw** from your character sheet when you receive an advance (see §8.2).

You can add a new **flaw** if play suggests one might emerge, with discussion with the GM, when you receive an **advance** (see §8.2).

### 2.1.3 Ratings and Masteries

*QuestWorlds* **abilities** are scored on a **rating** of 1–20, representing the **target number (TN)** you need to roll or less to succeed in a **contest** (see §2.3 for more details).

Once your **ability** passes 20, you would always be able to roll under it on a D20. So to allow abilities to scale over 20 we use **tiers** of capability we refer to as a **masteries**.

We denote a **rating** with a **mastery** as **TN** + M, for example 7M represents a **TN** of 7 and one **mastery**. We represent abilities above 20M as **TN** + M2, for example 4M2 represents a **TN** of 4 and two **masteries**.

The progression of **ability ratings** is: 1-20, 1M-20M, 1M2-20M2, 1M3-20M3 and so on.

Specific *QuestWorlds* games or genre packs may use other symbols relevant to their setting or genre to denote **mastery** instead of M. If so, this should be clearly noted by their designers.

For how **masteries** work in play, see §2.3.6.

### 2.1.4 No Relevant Ability

You may sometimes be faced with a **story obstacle** or **story question** for which you have no relevant **ability** whatsoever. In such cases, you may still enter into conflict with the **story obstacle** using a **stretch** or a **rating** of 5 for your **contest** roll.

### 2.1.5 Understanding Ratings

*QuestWorlds* treats **ratings** as a measure of how effective you are at solving problems with the **ability**, and does not limit what you can do with that **ability**, provided your actions are credible in genre.

## 2.2 Possessions and Equipment

Your character will generally be considered to have whatever equipment is reasonably implied by your abilities. Having an “Athenian Hoplite” **ability** will mean that your character possesses bronze armor, a shield, a spear, and a short-sword; while a “Country Doctor” would be expected to have a well-stocked medical-bag and possibly a horse & buggy in the right setting.

However, if you wish your character to possess something that is particularly special, interesting, or unusual, you may also enumerate it as a rated **ability** in its own right, just like any other **ability** your character might use to solve a problem.

In play, the degree to which you can overcome **story obstacles** with your possessions depends not on any qualities inherent to the objects themselves, but to the **rating** of your relevant **ability**. However the significance of various sorts of gear lies in the types of actions you can credibly propose, and what their impact might reasonably be. An “Invisibility Cloak” **ability** implies very different fictional capabilities than “Souped-up Muscle Car” does.

Conversely, if in the course of play you find your character in a situation without equipment essential to utilize an ability effectively, or where your character’s gear is poorly suited to the task at hand, your GM may take into account in assessing credibility-based **situational modifiers** (see §2.5).

### 2.2.1 Wealth

In *QuestWorlds*, wealth is treated as just another way to overcome **story obstacles**. Many characters may not even have an explicit wealth **ability**, with their wealth or assets instead implied by **abilities** representing their background, profession, or status. Whether explicit or implied, the relevant **rating** is not an objective measure of the size of your fortune, but instead indicates how well you solve problems with money and resources.

## 2.3 Contest Procedure

You choose an **ability** relevant to the conflict at hand, describe exactly what you are trying to accomplish, and how. Your GM may modify these suggested actions to better fit the fictional circumstances, and describe the actions of the NPCs or forces on the other side of the conflict.

### 2.3.1 Framing the Contest

### 2.3.1.1 Contest Framing Overview

When a conflict arises during the game, you and your GM start by clearly agreeing on:

- What goal you are trying to achieve. We call this the **prize**.
- What the **story obstacle** is you are trying to overcome or **story question** you are trying to answer.
- What **tactic** you are using to and overcome it.

This process is called **framing the contest**.

### 2.3.1.2 Conflict: Goals vs Obstacles

**Contests** in *QuestWorlds* don't simply tell you how well you performed at a particular task: they tell you whether or not you overcame a **story obstacle**, or learned the answer to a **story question** which moves the story in a new direction. Unlike some other roleplaying games, a **contest** in *QuestWorlds* does not resolve a task, it resolves the whole **story obstacle** or provides a complete answer to the **story question**.

If you need secret records which are stored in a vault within a government compound, your goal is to get the information to answer a **story question**. Answering that **story question** may involve many possible tasks, evading guards, lock-picking, forging credentials, etc. - but the **contest** doesn't address those individually. The **contest** is framed around the entire conflict against the **story question** as a whole.

In a fight, your **story obstacle** may be the opponents themselves, who you are fighting to capture or kill. Just as often you are seeking another goal and you might just as easily attain it by incapacitating or evading your foes. In this case, beating the enemy is a task, not the **story obstacle**. For example, if an **ally** has been accused of treason by the King, your goal could be to prove the **ally's** innocence. The power of the King threatening your **ally** is a **story obstacle** to be overcome, and a trial by combat could be a **contest** to resolve the conflict with an **ability** like "Knight Errant."

In a court trial, your goal is likely a particular verdict, while the **story obstacle** might be the opposing lawyer, an unjust law, or even the justice system itself. In this case, jury selection, a closing argument, revelatory evidence, or legal procedural challenges are tasks, not the entire **story obstacle**. The overall conflict encompasses all those things.

A conflict to overcome a **story obstacle** or **story question** moves the story forward when it is resolved. If it is merely a step toward resolving a **story obstacle** it is a task and not a conflict. While those component tasks may be interesting parts of narrating **tactics** and **results**, your GM should be sure to look for the **story obstacle** or **story question** in conflict when framing a **contest**.

If there is no **story obstacle** or **story question** to your actions, your GM should not call for a **contest** but simply let you narrate what you do, provided that seems credible.

For example, you are traveling from one star system to another. In the next star system you hope to confront the aged rebel who holds long-forgotten secrets that could bring freedom to the galaxy. Your GM feels there is no useful **story obstacle** for you to **contest** against, and so lets you describe heading down to the spaceport to secure a ship, meeting the captain and crew of your vessel, and traveling to the next world. Your GM encourages you to summarize what happens quickly so you can get to the meeting with the old rebel. Your GM knows their **story question** to convince the old rebel to part with their secrets is the real drama.

### 2.3.1.3 No Repeat Attempts

A **contest** represents all of your attempts to overcome a **story obstacle** or reveal the answer to the **story question**. If you lose it means that no matter how many times you tried to solve the problem, you finally had to give up. You can try again only if you use a new **tactic** to overcome the **story obstacle** or answer the **story question**.

### 2.3.1.4 Tactics

You either choose an **ability** that represents any ‘key moment’ in overcoming that **story obstacle** or answering that **story question**, or a broad **ability** that lets you overcome the whole **story obstacle** or solve the mystery of the **story question**. We call this choosing a **tactic**.

Your **tactic** might describe your using an **ability** that helps you overcome a task within the **story obstacle** or **story question**: sneaking past the guards, picking the locks, choosing the right jury or skewering your opponent with your foil. Or, your **tactics** might describe using a broad ability like “Ninja”, “Lawyer”, or “Fencer” to overcome all those challenges that might form part of the **story obstacle** or **story question**.

Either way, if you succeed at that roll, you overcome the whole **story obstacle** or learn the answer to the **story question**. Or by failing at that roll, you fail to overcome the **story obstacle** or reveal the answer to the **story question**, not just fail at one task.

When deciding on your **tactic**, focus on how your unique abilities would help you overcome the **story obstacle** or reveal the answer to the **story question**. This as the “key moment” where we focus on your PC. Use this moment to reveal your PC’s strengths to the group.

Your GM will determine if your **tactic** passes a **credibility test**. Credibility depends on the genre, as what is not credible in a gritty police procedural might be in pulp. If in dispute, your GM should discuss with the group whether they consider your **tactic** credible for the genre. If your action is not credible, your GM will ask you to choose a different **tactic**.

**Extraordinary abilities** in some genres give you the capability to do the incredible. For example in a superhero genre you might fly or be invulnerable to bullets, in a fantasy genre hurl magical lightning bolts. A genre pack for the game should help define what incredible **tactics** are allowed for that game as part of an *Extraordinary Powers Framework*.

The GM can narrate the remaining tasks that make sense of the story depending on your **success** with that roll, or have them occur ‘off-stage’ for speed. Think of the way TV or Cinema often cuts to the key moment of drama in a break-in, over showing us the whole heist from beginning to end.

### 2.3.2 Target Number, Bonuses and Penalties

Your **ability’s rating** may be modified by a number of factors. Your **target number**—the number you must roll under or equal to on a D20 to succeed—is your **rating** with any applicable **modifiers**. Positive **modifiers** are **bonuses**; negative **modifiers** are **penalties**.

**Bonuses**, may raise your **target number** high enough to gain a **mastery**. **Penalties**, may lower an **target number** to the point where it loses one or more **masteries**.



The following rules sections describe sources of **modifiers**: **augments** (see §2.6), **hindrances** (see §2.7), **stretches** and **situational modifiers** (see §2.5), **consequences** and **benefits** (see §2.8).

**Modifiers** apply to PC's **target numbers** only (see §2.3.3). The GM applies a **bonus** or **penalty** to the **resistance** to reflect the needs of the story, but after that it is not further modified.

If **penalties** reduce your **target number** to 0 or less, any attempt to use it automatically **results in failure**. You must find another way to achieve your aim.

### 2.3.3 Resistance

Your GM chooses a **resistance** to represent the difficulty of the **story obstacle** or **story question**. By default, the **base resistance** starts at 10.

When setting **resistances** it is important to understand that whilst traditional roleplaying games simulate an imaginary reality, *QuestWorlds* emulates the techniques of fictional storytelling.

Understanding this distinction will help you to play the game in a natural, seamless manner.

For example, let's say that your GM is playing a game inspired by fast-paced, non-fantastic, martial arts movies in a contemporary setting. You are running along a bridge, pacing a hovercraft, piloted by the main bad guy. You want your character, Joey Chun, to jump onto the hovercraft and punch the villain's lights out.

Your GM starts with the proposed action's position in the storyline. They consider a range of narrative factors, from how entertaining it would be for you to have a succeed, how much failure would slow the pacing of the current sequence, and how long it has been since you last scored a thrilling victory. If, after this, they need further reference points, your GM can draw inspiration more from martial arts movies than the physics of real-life jumps from bridges onto moving hovercraft. Having decided how difficult the task ought to be dramatically, your GM will then supply the physical details as color, to justify their choice and create suspension of disbelief, the illusion of authenticity that makes us accept fictional incidents as credible on their own terms. If they want Joey to have a high chance of success, your GM describes the distance between bridge and vehicle as impressive (so it feels exciting if you make it) but not insurmountable (so it seems believable if you make it).

In *QuestWorlds* your GM will pick a **resistance** based on dramatic needs and then justify it by adding details into the story.

Your GM determines the **resistance** from a **base resistance**. If your GM feels that it is hard then they will increase the **resistance** by a **modifier** depending on their view of how difficult the obstacle is for you (see Modifiers in §2.4). Increasing **modifiers** make it harder to succeed, and decreasing **modifiers** easier.

The **modifier** never reduces the **resistance** value below 0. If the GM assesses a **modifier** for the resistance that would take the **target number** below 0, it becomes an **assured contest** (see below).

All **contests** use the **base resistance** + *optional modifier*, except for **contests** to determine **augments**. **Augmenting** always faces the **base resistance**.

#### 2.3.3.1 RESISTANCES TABLE



| Resistance      | TN  | Modifier |
|-----------------|-----|----------|
| Simple          | 0   | -20      |
| Easy            | 0   | -15      |
| Routine         | 0   | -10      |
| Straightforward | 5   | -5       |
| Base            | 10  | -        |
| Challenging     | 15  | 5        |
| Hard            | 20  | 10       |
| Punishing       | 5M  | 15       |
| Exceptional     | 10M | 20       |

Although a TN of 0 is treated as an **assured contest** (see below), further **modifiers** (see §2.4) may adjust that value so that there is a **TN** above 0.

We show the **target number** for the **base resistance** of 10, and the **modifier** value to use if you are using Resistance Progression (see §2.13) to figure this from the new **base resistance**.

### 2.3.4 Resolution Methods

The basic resolution methods are as follows:

#### 2.3.4.1 Contest

The **contest** is *QuestWorlds*' primary resolution mechanic for overcoming **story obstacles**, and is used the most often where the outcome is uncertain. It also provides the foundation for other types of uncertain **contest**, including several **sequences** (see §5.0). As such, it receives both an overview of key concepts here as well as a more detailed treatment in §4.

A **contest** can be summarized as follows:

1. You and your GM agree upon the terms of the **contest**.
2. Your **target number (TN)** is your **rating**, adding any **augments** (see §2.6), **hindrances** (see §2.7), **stretches** and **situational modifiers** (see §2.5), **consequences** and **benefits** (see §2.8).
3. You roll a D20 vs your relevant **target number**, while your GM rolls a D20 vs the **resistance**.
4. Your GM determines the difference in the **successes** between the two rolls to assesses the **outcome** (see §2.3.6).
5. Your GM then narrates the **outcome** of the conflict as appropriate and assesses any **benefits** or **consequences** that arose (see §2.8).

If you enter into conflict with another player rather than a **story obstacle** or **story question** presented by your GM, you both roll your relevant abilities for the **contest** instead of against a GM-set **resistance**, and your GM interprets the **results**, as described above.

#### 2.3.4.2 Assured Contest

Some **obstacles** don't require a roll to overcome. You'll just do it and keep going, much as you get dressed in the morning or drive your car to work. We call these kinds of contests **assured** contests

because your **victory** is assured. Your GM may want to describe your **victory** as a sweat inducing challenge for you, even though there is no risk of **defeat**, to highlight the heroic struggle of your PC to beat the obstacle, nonetheless.

As your character advances, the challenges that qualify for **assured contests** will become more complex. If you face a driving challenge, the bar for assured will be much lower for a champion Formula 1 racer than a typical commuter.

**Assured contests** are the GM's primary tool to establish your character's competence. This makes them one of the most powerful and frequently used tools in a GM's tool chest. Remember, your GM doesn't have to, and usually shouldn't advise you you're involved in an **assured contest**, so it's best to treat all **contests** as if your skin is on the line.

Your GM may also use an **assured contest** when there is no interesting story branch from **defeat**. If failing to open the derelict spaceship's hatch means that the story of your exploration of the ancient space hulk would end abruptly, your GM may choose to make it an **assured contest**. **Assured contests** may be used to find clues when your GM is running a mystery and correct application of one of your **abilities** should reveal the information and allow the story to continue, over becoming mired due to a missed roll and missing clue.

Sometimes your GM will decide potential complications could arise in overcoming an **story obstacle** or answering a **story question**. Or they may want to give you a boost if you do particularly well. If so, they will call for you to make a die roll even though your **victory** is not in question. Your GM will use your die roll **outcome** (see §2.3.7) to decide if any unforeseen **consequences** or **benefits** arose from your actions, but still gives you a **victory**.

An **assured contest** can be summarized as follows:

1. You and your GM agree upon the terms of the **contest**.
2. The GM may decide that you simply gain the **victory** and there are no **consequences** or **benefits** beyond that.
3. If not the GM conducts a contest.
4. Your **target number (TN)** is your **rating**, adding any **augments** (see §2.6), **hindrances** (see §2.7), **stretches** and **situational modifiers** (see §2.5), **consequences** and **benefits** (see §2.8).
5. You roll a D20 vs your relevant **target number**, while your GM rolls a D20 vs the **resistance**.
6. Your GM compares the difference **successes** between the two rolls to assesses the **outcome** (see §2.3.7).
7. Your GM then narrates how you obtained your **victory** and any **benefits** or **consequences** that arose.

### 2.3.5 Die Rolls

To determine how well you use an **ability**, roll a 20-sided die (D20). At the same time, your GM rolls for the **resistance**.

Compare your rolled number with your **target number (TN)** to determine the **result**. Remember that **bonuses** and **penalties** may mean your **TN** gains or loses a **mastery**.

- **Big Success:** If the die roll is equal to the **TN**, you succeed brilliantly, and gain *two* **successes**. This is the best **result** possible.
- **Success:** If the die roll is less than the **TN**, you succeed, but there is nothing remarkable about the success. You gain *one* **success**.
- **Failure:** If the die roll is greater than the **TN**, you fail. Things do not happen as hoped. You gain *zero* **successes**.

### 2.3.6 Additional Successes

You can gain additional **successes** beyond the dice roll. An additional **success** comes from one of two sources.

- Each **mastery** you have gives you an additional **success**.
- You can spend a **story point** (see §7.0) to receive an additional **success**.

If you have multiple **masteries** you receive additional successes for **each** of them.

The additional **successes** add to any **success** obtained on the die roll.

If a PC with a **mastery** rolls a **big success** they receive an **additional success** for the **mastery** and two **successes** for the **big success**, making a total of *three* **successes**.

### 2.3.7 Outcome

Your **successes** and the **resistance's** successes are compared to determine your overall **outcome** which will be either **victory** or **defeat** for the **contest** as a whole.

For a contest:

- If you have a *more* **successes** than the GM, then you have a **victory** and you gain the **prize**.
- If you have a *fewer* **successes** than the GM, then you are **defeated** and do not gain the **prize**.
- If you both have the *same* number **successes**, including if you both have *zero* **successes**, then the higher roll has a **victory** and gains the **prize**. If your rolls tie, then there is a standoff with neither side able to take control of the **prize**.

For an assured contest:

- You have a **victory** and you gain the **prize** set out when the **contest** was framed.

#### 2.3.7.1 Degrees of Victory

Your **degree** is the difference between your **successes** and the **resistance's** successes. It is a **degree** of **victory** if you win and a **degree** of **defeat** if you lose.

If you have *two* **successes** and the resistance has *zero* **successes** you have *two* **degrees** of **victory**. If you have *zero* **successes** and the **resistance** has *one* **success** you have *one* **degree** of defeat. If you have *one* **success** and the **resistance** has *one* **success** you have *zero* **degrees** and **victory** belongs to the high roll.

A lot of the time your GM won't need to figure out the **degrees** as knowing you won or lost is enough.

### 2.3.7.2 Narrating Outcomes

Your GM narrates the contest **outcome**. Their narration should take into account the **prize** and the **tactics** used by each side. Your GM may invite you to contribute more detail on your actions as part of that narration, if they wish. But the GM is the final arbiter of how the story progresses as a result of the rolls - provided they respect the **outcome** in which you win or lose the **prize**.

Your GM should bear in mind your **result** when describing the outcome. The **degree** is a guide for the GM when narrating the outcome as to how convincing a victory was. If you have *zero degrees*, the GM should describe your actions as successful, but the **resistance** as competent. If you have *two degrees*, your GM should describe a convincing **victory** in which your adversary is clearly outclassed.

The GM is narrating a car chase through the busy streets of New Los Angeles. The PCs are trying to catch the demon-worshipper Ath'Zul who has stolen The Eye of Lorus from a museum. Some examples of how the GM might interpret **outcomes** as follows:

- PC one **success** vs. Ath'Zul one **success**, the PC has the higher roll, *zero successes* difference, and *zero degrees* of victory: Ath'Zul tries to shake the PCs, his hover bike, weaving in and out of traffic, but the PCs are always on his tail, and catch him at the lights on Bradbury Junction.
- PC one **success** vs. Ath'Zul zero **successes**, the PC has *one* success difference and *one degree* of **victory**: Ath'Zul tries to shake the PCs, his hover bike, weaving in and out of traffic, but the PCs force him off the road, where his bike loses repulsor lift and halts.
- PC two **successes** vs. Ath'Zul zero **successes**, the PC has *two* successes difference *two degrees* of **victory** : Ath'Zul tries to shake the PCs, his hover bike, weaving in and out of traffic, but he crashes into a parked car, spilling Ath'Zul and the stolen artefact over the road.

Your GM should avoid robbing your PC of competence by describing your **defeat** as due to your incompetence when you may have rolled a **success**.

The **degrees** may be more directly used when considering **consequences** and **benefits** (see §2.8)

### 2.3.7.3 Confusing Ties

Your GM will describe most tied **outcomes** as inconclusive standoffs, in which neither of you gets what you wanted.

In some situations, ties become difficult to visualize. Chief among these are **contests** with binary **outcomes**, where only two possible results are conceivable.

Your GM can either change the situation on such a tie, introducing a new element that likely renders the original **prize** irrelevant to both participants, or they can resolve the ties in your favor as a **victory**.

### 2.3.7.4 Victory at a Price

Your GM may treat *zero degrees* of **victory** as 'victory at a price' and *zero degree* of **defeat** as 'defeat with a boon'. The 'price' is a cost that the victor pays for obtaining the prize, a 'boon' is something positive the loser takes away. Your GM may ignore this option, and simply award you or deny you the **prize**, if they cannot think of a dramatically interesting reason to provide a 'price' or 'boon'. Your GM may use **consequences** to represent a 'price' and **benefits** to represent a 'boon', see §2.8. Your GM may also decide that the 'price' or 'boon' is represented by the narration.

- PC one **success** vs. Ath’Zul one **success**, the PC has the higher roll, *zero successes* difference, and *zero degree* of **victory**: Ath’Zul tries to shake the PCs, his hover bike, weaving in and out of traffic, but the PCs are always on his tail, and catch him at the lights on Bradbury Junction, *by ramming their pursuit car into Ath’Zul’s bike, damaging both vehicles*. The GM may award a **consequence** (see §2.8) to represent the damage to the PC’s car, injuries from the crash, or displeasure from their commander for damaging more police property.

### 2.3.7.5 One Outcome, For the PC

There is one **outcome** to a **contest** and it always applies to the PC. Your GM does not consider a separate outcome for the **resistance**, instead they narrate the **outcome** based on whether the your PC obtains the **prize** and describe how the story branches for the **resistance** based on their interpretation of that. Rules on **benefits** and **consequences** in §2.8 and narration considerations such as ‘victory at a price’, only apply to your PC, not to the resistance.

The only exception to this is a PC vs. PC contest, where each sides **outcome** needs to be determined.

## 2.4 Modifiers

Your GM uses **modifiers** throughout the game. **Modifiers** increment by 5. See Table 2.4.1, Modifiers, for details of the scale.

A positive **modifier** is a **bonus** and a negative **modifier** is a **penalty**.

**Modifiers** represent:

- The **modifier** to apply to the **base resistance** when determining the **resistance’s TN**; harder challenges have a **bonus** added to the **base resistance**; easier challenges have **penalty** subtracted from the **base resistance** (see §2.3.3).
- A **stretch** based on a lack of credible abilities to overcome an obstacle (see §2.5)
- A **situational modifier** based on the **tactics** chosen by a PC (see §2.5)
- The **outcome** of an **augment** (see §2.6) or **hindrance** (see §2.7)
- The **bonus** of a **benefit** or **penalty** of **consequences** (see §2.8).

### 2.4.1 MODIFIERS SCALE TABLE

| Penalty | Bonus |
|---------|-------|
| -20     | -     |
| -15     | -     |
| -10     | -     |
| -5      | -     |
| -       | -     |
| -       | 5     |
| -       | 10    |
| -       | 15    |
| -       | 20    |

## 2.5 Bonuses and Penalties from Tactics

Your GM can give you **bonuses** and **penalties** to alter your **target number** due to unusual circumstances you helped to create, or have some control over. Commonly, your GM gives you a **bonus** or **penalty** because the **tactic** that you chose seems likely to give you an advantage, or a penalty. This will be a **stretch** or a **situational modifier**. If an unusual situation applies to a **resistance**, the GM should choose a **resistance** that reflects that.

### 2.5.1 Stretches

When you propose an action using an **ability** that seems completely inappropriate, your GM rules it impossible. If you went ahead and tried it anyway, you'd automatically fail—but you won't, because that would be silly.

In some cases, though, your proposed match-up of action and **ability** is only somewhat implausible. A successful attempt with it wouldn't completely break the illusion of fictional reality—just stretch it a bit.

Using a somewhat implausible **ability** is known as a **stretch**. If your GM deems an attempt to be a **stretch**, the PC suffers a -5 or -10 **penalty** to their **target number**, depending on how incredible the **stretch** seems to the GM and other players. Your GM should **penalize** players who try to create a 'do anything' **ability** that they then **stretch** to gain from raising fewer **abilities** in advancement to ensure balance with other PCs.

The definition of **stretch** is elastic, depending on genre.

Your GM should not impose **stretch penalties** on action descriptions that add flavor and variety to a scene, but do not fundamentally change what you can do with your **ability**. These make the scene more fun but don't really gain any advantage.

### 2.5.2 Situational Modifiers

Your GM may also impose **situational modifiers** when, given the description of the current situation, believability demands that you should face a notable **bonus** or **penalty**. Your GM should use the scale in §2.3 Modifiers when determining a **bonus** or **penalty**; most modifiers should +/5 or +/-10.. **Bonuses** and **penalties** of less than 5 don't exert enough effect to be worth the bother. Those higher than 10 give the **situational modifier** a disproportionate role in determining **outcomes**.

During a **sequence** (see §5.0), they should typically last for a single **round**, and reflect clever or foolish choices.

## 2.6 Augments

You may sometimes face **contests** where more than one **ability** may be applicable to the conflict at hand. In such cases, you may attempt to use one **ability** to give a supporting bonus to the main ability you are using to frame the **contest**. This is called an **augment**. It results in a **bonus** to your **target number**. For example, if your character has the **abilities** "The Queen's Intelligencer" and "Master of Disguise", you might use the latter to **augment** the former when infiltrating a rival nation's capitol. Similarly, a character with "Knight Errant" and "My Word is my Bond" **abilities** might use one to **augment** the other when in conflict with a **story obstacle** the character has sworn to overcome.

Abilities that represent special items, weapons, armor, or other noteworthy equipment can be a common source of **augments**. However, this grows tired if over-used and you should try and restrict repeated use of equipment in this way to **contests** where they are particularly interesting or apropos.

**Augments** can also come from other characters' **abilities** if one character uses an **ability** to support another's efforts rather than directly engaging in the **contest**. **Augments** can even come from outside resources like support from a community, see §8, or other circumstantial help.

If you have a good idea for an **augment**, propose it to your GM while the **contest** is being framed. When making your proposal, describe how the **augmenting ability** supports the main one in a way that is both *entertaining* and *memorable*. Don't just hunt for mechanical advantage, show your group more about your PC when you **augment**, their attitudes, passions, or lesser known **abilities**. If you are **augmenting** with a **broad ability** like "Fool's Luck", be prepared to describe the unlikely events that tilt the scales in your favor. Your GM will decide whether the **augment** is justified and can refuse boring and uninspired attempts to **augment**, where you are just looking for a bonus to your roll and not adding to the story.

You may only use one of your own **abilities** to **augment** the **ability** you are using in the **contest**, and you may not use an **ability** to **augment** itself. You may not use a **breakout** to augment it's parent **keyword** (see §2.1.1), or another **breakout** from the parent **keyword**. Another player character may also augment you, however, **augments** from other player characters supporting you, only give you *one bonus* to add to your **target number**, regardless of the number of supporters you have.

Your GM should bear in mind the credibility of more than one PC helping you. When persuading someone a cacophony of voices may not help, unless you are trying to intimidate; when fighting someone, only so much backup helps you take your opponent down; when flying a starship into the cave on the asteroid, only some crew activities provide credible help. The GM may thus decide to limit the number of augments from other PCs. Consider a group contest (see §4.2) instead if many PCs want to act against the **resistance**.

If your GM accepts your **augment** proposal, it will be resolved by the method below. The main **contest** then proceeds as normal, with any bonus from the **augment** added onto the **rating** of the **ability** chosen when **framing the contest**. The **augment** remains in effect for the duration of the **contest**.

### 2.6.1 Augment Procedure

Your GM treats an **augment** as an **assured contest**.

If the use of the **ability** to augment seems unlikely to fail, your GM simply awards you a **bonus**, or +5. If your description of how you were using the **augmenting ability** was dramatic or entertaining, your GM may increase this to a **bonus** of +10.

As with any **assured contest** GM might still ask you to roll if there is a risk that the **augment** results in a **penalty** to other **abilities** such as resources or **relationships** (see §6.0), which become stressed in providing the **augment**, or that more variation in **bonuses** is possible (such as the **augmenting ability** having several **masteries**).

On a **victory** base the **bonus** of the **augment** off the **degree** of the **victory** (see §2.3). So *zero degrees* of **victory** yields +5 bonus. On a **defeat** still award a +5 bonus, but apply a **penalty** related to **degree**



of the **defeat** to the **tactic** used to **augment**, as described above.

## 2.7 Triggering Flaws

During play, either you, or your GM, may decide that your **flaw** has been triggered. A **flaw** might apply to the **tactic** you are using in upcoming **contest**, when it is called a **hindrance** (see §2.7.1). Alternatively a **flaw** might simply come into play when you want to describe your PC acting in a certain way, and you or your GM feels that one of your **flaws** could prevent this, or you, or your GM, feel that a situation raises a challenge that means one of your **flaws** would lead to you responding in a certain way.

### 2.7.1 Hindrance

If you describe a **tactic** that is in conflict with a **flaw**, your GM may decide to impose a **penalty** called a **hindrance** against you in the upcoming **contest**. You should choose to remind your GM when you feel a flaw might be triggered. Your GM may also use an **ability** on your character sheet against you in this way too, if appropriate. This may be the case for relationships you have, philosophies you espouse, or groups you belong to.

Your GM should follow a similar approach to **augment**s when applying a **hindrance**. They should ask themselves if it is *fresh, interesting or illuminates character*. In a movie or book would your **flaw** be prominent here?

If your GM feels that there is no uncertainty as to whether the **flaw** applies to your **tactic** in the contest they apply a **penalty** of -5 or a **penalty** of -10 depending on how serious a handicap the **flaw** is. (In effect an **assured contest** for the flaw).

If your GM feels that it is uncertain as to whether the **flaw** hinders you, or you are able to overcome it, and you agree that you wish to try, treat it as a **contest**. Roll the rating of your **flaw** against the **base resistance**. On a **victory**, you receive a **penalty** from the **degree** of your **victory** (see §2.3). For example, if you get *zero* successes use a **penalty** of -5, on *one* success, use a **penalty** of -10 and so on. On a **defeat**, you overcome the **flaw**.

When you experience a **penalty** due to a flaw, you gain an **experience point** (see §8.1).

### 2.7.2 Act according to your flaw

At times the direction of the story you are all telling may place your PC in situations when it seems likely they would act according to their **flaw**. The addict may reach for drink or drugs following an emotional setback, a lust for vengeance may come between your PC and showing mercy, prejudices or bigotry may prevent you from seeing others positively.

If you chose to act according to your **flaw** there is no contest, simply describe your character behaving as the **flaw** dictates. This might result in a **hindrance** to further actions (see §2.6.1)

If you wish to act against your **flaw**, your **tactic** must pass a **credibility test** as to how you try overcome your **flaw** in this instance. In effect, pick an **ability** to resist the **flaw** with. Then you must obtain a **victory** in a **contest** against your **flaw**. On a **victory** you may act in a way that contradicts your **flaw**.



If you submit to your **flaw**, your GM might impose a **hindrance** on further actions (see §2.6.1). You should not contest this **hindrance** unless the situation is not related to the one which triggered your **flaw** in this instance, or significant time has now passed.

Your GM may impose a **penalty** against an **ability** if you gain the **victory** against your **flaw** representing your struggle against your inner nature, violating dearly held principles, or letting down dependents. This is often true where the GM invokes a flaw from a **keyword**. For example, if you had the **keyword** “Gangster” and decide to inform on a fellow mobster, your GM might invoke the **flaw** of “Code of Silence” even if it is not a **breakout** under your **keyword**; this is particularly appropriate where facts such as the “Code of Silence” have been established in game. Even if you overcome your **flaw**, and inform on your fellow mobster, the GM might still impose a **penalty** on use of the **keyword** to interact with your crime family for having breached the “Code of Silence.”

Similarly, your GM might give you a **bonus** for acting according to your **flaw**, representing the sacrifices you have made for dependents or a temporary boost from satisfying your inner demons. For example, if your superhero “Speedster” goes to see the premiere of his partner’s new play, instead of heading to the docks to stop Dr. Squid’s shipment of Vibrium, your GM might award you a **bonus** to your relationship to your partner.

If you choose to, or your GM compels you to, act according to a **flaw**, you gain an **experience point** (see §8.1).

## 2.8 Benefits and Consequences

**Contests**, in addition to deciding whether you overcome a **story obstacle** or answer a **story question**, gaining the **prize**, may carry additional **consequences** or **benefits** related to the PC’s **outcome**.

Your GM may simply determine narrative **consequences** and **benefits** from what makes fictional sense, given the agreed **prize** for the **contest**, as described above. Optionally, your GM may assign you ongoing **bonuses** and **penalties** that may affect related future **contests**, related to the **outcome** of this **contest**. Your GM should always respond to the flow of the story, if narrative **consequences** are enough, they should not reach for additional mechanical **bonuses** or **penalties**. Your GM should use mechanical **bonuses** or **penalties** where it strains credibility that there is no ongoing **consequence** or **benefit** from the **outcome** of the **contest**.

In a fight, it may strain credibility that a **defeat** does not leave you impaired for further physical activity. In a display or oratory before the assembled townsfolk, it may strain credibility if they would not later act according to your rousing words. In a romance, it may strain credibility if the wonderful date night does not improve your chances of taking your relationship to the next level.

### 2.8.1 Consequences

After a **contest**, you may suffer **consequences**: literal or metaphorical injuries.

- In a fight or test of physical mettle, you wind up literally wounded.
- In a social contest, you suffer damage to your reputation.
- If commanding a war, you lose battalions, equipment, or territories.
- In an economic struggle, you lose money, other resources, or opportunities.
- In a morale crisis, you may suffer bouts of crippling self-doubt.

Your GM may assign a **penalty** to reflect this **consequence**. The **penalty** will depend on how severe they feel the **consequences** are. If your opponent defeats you, your GM can use the **degree** of the **outcome** as the **penalty** (see §2.3). Whilst this is a good ‘rule of thumb’ a GM can use their discretion as to the story needs and assign a different **penalty**.

If you **defeat** your opponent, your GM may still decide that you suffer a **consequence**, representing fatigue, exhaustion, disapproval or other expenditure of resources on earning the **prize**.

- In a fight, you are left bruised and battered.
- In a social contest, you sacrifice the trust of a marginalized group.
- If commanding a war, you must sacrifice some of your forces for victory.
- In an economic struggle, you take significant losses to win market share.
- In a morale crisis, your resolve alienates the cowardly.

If you have *zero* **degrees** of **victory** your GM might assign a **penalty** of -5 or -10 to represent effort expended in the **victory**. If you have *one* **degree** of **victory**, your GM might assign a **penalty** of -5, for similar reasons, if it makes dramatic sense.

### 2.8.1.2 Ending a PC's story

Your GM should not impose a narrative **consequence** on your PC that takes them permanently out of the game, such as by death, without discussion. Some games allow characters to be taken out of the story by the result of a dice roll, but QuestWorlds is a co-operative storytelling game where a failed dice roll should not automatically remove a character from play. However, you, or the GM, might feel that your PC's story has come to an end with this failure, and you can consent to that **outcome**. Usually, your GM should refrain from suggesting this option unless the story itself suggests it.

A story-ending **outcome** may not just be death. It can include anything that takes the PC out of play, such as exile, dismissal from the secret agency, a broken heart. In some cases the ending to your PCs story could be ambiguous, allowing the PC to return at a future point when the story makes their salvation possible.

Your GM must declare that the stakes of a particular **contest** place a PC at risk of this being a story ending moment, before the dice are rolled. This may be important for credibility in the story that the group is telling. In this case there should be an option for the PC to avoid, or backdown from a **contest**, that has a risk of ending their story. You should usually use a **sequence** for any conflict where a PC's continuation in the story is at stake. This should be a dramatic moment, truly worth focusing at a task level on, not rolled up into conflict resolution by a **contest**.

### 2.8.2 Benefits

Just as when you can experience ongoing ill effects from a **contest**, you can gain ongoing benefits from a **contest**.

- In a fight or test of physical mettle, surging adrenaline leaves you sharp for the next encounter.
- In a social contest, you gain confidence and admiration from your triumph.
- If commanding a war, you gain strategic advantage over your enemy.
- In an economic struggle, your profits can be re-invested, or you drive competitors into the ground.
- In a morale crisis, you are buoyed up by success, nothing can stop you now.

Remember that the **benefit** does not have to be directly related to the **ability** used. Look to the goal of the **contest**. The abilities or situation should reflect the **story obstacle** that was overcome, **story question** that was answered, or the **tactic** used to overcome it.

- In a fight or test of physical mettle, your triumph has everyone rallying to your cause.
- In a social contest, you win powerful **allies** who will strengthen you in your fight against your enemies.
- If commanding a war, you pillage the enemy city and enrich your army.
- In an economic struggle, you gain status as one of the wealthy elite.
- In a morale crisis, your rallied troops strengthen your army.

Your GM may assign a **bonus** to reflect this **benefit**. If you win the **prize**, your GM may choose to use the **degree** of your **outcome** to determine the **bonus** (see §2.3). Whilst this is a good ‘rule of thumb’ a GM can use their discretion as to the story needs and assign a different **bonus**.

If you lost the **prize**, your GM may still decide that you gain a **benefit**, representing learning, gratitude, or resolve developed from losing the **prize**.

- In a fight or test of physical mettle, you learn your opponent’s weaknesses.
- In a social contest, many feel sympathy for you though they cannot support you.
- If commanding a war, you win the trust of your soldiers through shared suffering.
- In an economic struggle, your organization becomes leaner and fitter.
- In a morale crisis, you reflect on your failure and gain new inner strength.

On *zero* **degrees** of **defeat** your GM might assign a **bonus** of +5 or +10 to represent a glimmer of hope for the PC despite the **defeat**, such as gaining an insight into the **resistance’s** weakness. If you have *one* **degree** of **defeat** your GM may assign a **bonus** of +10, for similar reasons, if it makes dramatic sense.

### 2.8.3 Recovery

**Consequences** lapse on their own with the passage of time. Your GM will determine when the **consequences** have faded, and you should ask about whether they still apply at each new game session. The worse the **consequence**, the longer it may last, though the GM may reduce the **penalty** in increments of -5 as you recover, reflecting the passage of time. However, you’ll often want to remove them ahead of schedule, with the use of **abilities**.

#### 2.8.3.1 Recovery Abilities

When deciding the **tactic** to use for recovery, the **ability** used to bring about recovery from a **consequence** must relate to the type of **consequence**.

- You can aid recovery from physical injuries with medical **abilities** or extraordinary healing **abilities** such as magic, regenerative powers, or super-science.
- You can remove mental traumas, including those of confidence and morale, with mundane psychology **abilities** or through **extraordinary abilities** such as telepathy. You might also remove them through a dramatic confrontation between the victim and the source of the psychic injury.
- You can remove social injury through social **abilities** or extraordinary social **abilities** such as charm spells, love potions, or mind control. You probably have to make a public apology of some

sort, often including a negotiation with the offended parties and the payment of compensation, either in disposable wealth or something more symbolic.

- You can fix damage to items and equipment with some sort of repair **ability**. If you want to fix an extraordinary item, you may require genre-specific expertise: a broken magic ring may require a ritual to reforge.

### 2.8.3.2 Recovery Resistances

The **resistances** to remove a states of adversity is the **base resistance** modified by the **bonus** equal and opposite to the **penalty**. So if you were suffering from a penalty of -10, you modify the **base resistance** +10.

### 2.8.3.3 Recovery Contests and Sequences

Your GM should almost always resolve healing attempts as **contests**. An exception might be a medical drama, in which surgeries would comprise the suspenseful set-piece sequences of the game, and your GM might chose a **sequence**. If the source of recovery is an NPC, the contest should always relate to the **tactic** used to obtain the services of the NPC.

Any **victory** on a recovery attempt, clears the **consequence** (and so remove any **penalty**). On a *zero* **degree victory** your GM might choose to apply a **consequence** to the **ability** used to recover representing exhaustion (of supplies, energy, etc.).

### 2.8.4 Waning Benefits

Just as you recover from **consequences** with time, or through recovery, so **benefits** fade with time.

At the beginning of a session, especially when a significant period of game-world time passes between the conclusion of one session and the beginning of the next, the GM may declare that all **benefits** have expired or waned. A waning benefit may reduce its **bonus** with time, as the effect fades. You are no longer charged with the confidence of your recent victory, the fans have forgotten your last concert, or the people of the village have started to think once again about the day-to-day struggle of their lives not how the stranger helped them. Benefits always decline in increments of 5 (§ see 2.3).

An expired benefit no longer gives you a **bonus**, your past victories no longer bring you solace, your fickle fans have moved on to the latest sensation.

### 2.8.5 Multiple Benefits And Consequences

A PC may apply **bonuses** from multiple **benefits** to a single **contest**, or apply **penalties** from multiple **consequences** to a single **contest**. **Benefits and consequences** may cancel each other out.

Because it is confusing to track both **benefits and consequences** against the same **ability** your GM may simply rule that one cancels the other out. This is particularly true of social **contests** where a moment of shame can erase your previous triumphs, or your confidence eroded by a **failure**. Physical benefits may cancel out, flushed with victory you may be able to ignore pain, but it may defy credibility for wounds to be healed by an athletic performance.

Your GM may simply rule that **benefits** and **consequences** cancel out, or they may take the difference between the two benefits and create a new one. For example if you have a +10 **benefit** from impressing the crowd with your previous performance in the dance **contest**, but then suffer an injured ankle with a **consequence** of -5, your GM may rule that your twisted ankle cancels out your energy from the last performance, or your GM might rule that your success sees you through the pain, but you are now only +5 **benefit** to impress the crowd.

### 2.8.6 BENEFITS AND CONSEQUENCES BY DEGREE

| Degree of Victory | Degree of Defeat | Penalty | Bonus |
|-------------------|------------------|---------|-------|
| -                 | 3                | -20     | -     |
| -                 | 2                | -15     | -     |
| -                 | 1                | -10     | -     |
| -                 | 0                | -5      | -     |
| (Tie)             | (Tie)            | -       | -     |
| 0                 | -                | -       | 5     |
| 1                 | -                | -       | 10    |
| 2                 | -                | -       | 15    |
| 3                 | -                | -       | 20    |

Although your GM is at liberty to assign any **bonus** or **penalty** they believe is credible, this table offers suggested **modifiers** for different **degrees of victory and defeat**.

## 2.9 Mismatched and Graduated Goals

Sometimes, the two sides in a **contest** may have goals that do not directly conflict one another. A huntsman pursues a nurse, who is trying to escape through the forest with two small children. The huntsman wants to capture the nurse. The nurse wants to save the children.

When encountering **mismatched goals**, your GM should determine whether the mismatch is complete, or partial.

In a **complete mismatch**, neither side is at all interested in preventing the other's goal. A **complete mismatch** does not end in a **contest**; your GM asks what you are doing, and then describes each participant succeeding at their goals.

In most instances, the **contest** goals are not actually **mismatched**, but **graduated**. You have both a **primary** and a **secondary** goal. In this case, your GM frames the **contest**, identifying which goal is which. It is possible to have **tertiary** goals and so on, but avoid needless sub-division.

On a **victory** you choose one more **graduated** goals than you have **degrees**. On *zero* **degrees** of **victory** you choose one; on *one* **degree** of victory you choose two, and so on. Normally, the GM should give the player the choice of which goals they wish to choose. This goes to the heart of character - what is more important to you?

On a **defeat** you normally get nothing, but when there are **graduated** goals on *zero* **degrees** of defeat,

your GM may choose to pick one of your goals to give you. The GM may choose to go against the PC's likely preference here - the PC doesn't get the choice they would have made given they had to sacrifice something.

The nurse has **graduated** goals: escape the huntsman and save the children. On a *zero* **degree** of **victory** she will have to decide between capture and the safety of the children. On *one* **degrees** of **victory**, she can have both.

## 2.10 Mobs, Gangs, and Hordes

Sometimes you will be outnumbered by your opponents. Your GM can treat many as one. Your GM treats a crowd as a single **resistance** with one **rating**. When selecting a **resistance** your GM should factor their numbers into the **rating**. Numbers are not always an advantage. Whilst in a fight, numbers give you a significant advantage - provided the mob has room to maneuver - in an attempt to win 'hearts and minds' too many voices can be counterproductive, unless you are trying to intimidate. The final decision on the amount of help provided by numerical advantage rests with your GM.

In a sequence, when the mob loses an exchange, your GM describes individuals within it as being hurt or falling away. When it wins, they describe them overwhelming you.

## 2.11 Ganging Up

Sometimes you may outnumber your opponent. As above, the GM should alter the **resistance** depending on how significantly you outnumber them and depending on whether numbers provide advantage.

## 2.12 Mass Effort

Clashes of massive forces resolve like any other **contest** or **sequence**. These include:

- Military engagements
- Corporate struggles for market share
- Building competitions
- Efforts to spread a faith or ideology
- Dance competitions

If you are not participating in the **contest** and have no stake in its **outcome**, then your GM doesn't bother to run a **contest**. The GM just chooses an **outcome** for dramatic purposes.

Otherwise, your GM will start by determining your degree of influence over the **outcome**. They are either:

- **Directing**: The success of the effort depends mostly on your leadership. For example, you might be a military leader facing a force of roughly equal potency. As all else is equal, the better general will win the day. In this instance, if you are in command, your **tactic** should be a relevant leadership **ability**.
- **Contributors**: The outcome of the battle hangs in the balance and your efforts may tip the balance in favor of your side. You roll against a **resistance** determined by the GM, either in a **contest** (see §4.0) or **sequence** (see §5.0) representing the odds of your shifting the odds in your

favor. If a PC leads the effort your GM should award them a **bonus** or **penalty** reflecting the **outcome** of the contest. They should then roll as described in Directing above. If an NPC leads the effort the **outcome** is that of the **contest** or **sequence**, and the PCs effort is assumed to tip the scale either way.

- **Participants:** You have little influence over the **outcome**, but must struggle to prosper within the conflict. The GM predetermines the **outcome** of the overall competition on dramatic grounds. To determine your fate in the battle, you roll against a **resistance** determined by the GM from the overall battle **outcome**, in a **contest** (see §4.0) or **sequence** (see §5.0).

## 2.13 Resistance Progression

Your GM may decide that **resistance** to your actions gets harder, as the campaign progresses. This reflects the trope of the type of challenges you face getting tougher as you improve.

Your GM should adopt a strategy that mimics a TV show where the **resistance** does not increase during a season of the show, allowing our protagonists to get more competent as the show progresses towards its climax. In the next season though the **resistance** usually goes up, and the writers reflect this with more challenging opposition in the new season of the show. At the same time, the opposition that was tough in the first season, now become mooks that can be easily dispatched to show the increased competence of the protagonists.

In that case your GM should increment the **base resistance** by +5 to +10 for the next campaign you play with the same characters. The size of the change should reflect the increase in your previous **abilities** in the last campaign. For example, if in the last season you increased your **occupation keyword** by +10, your GM may decide to increase the **resistance** by +5 or +10 to reflect the more challenging opposition in the new campaign. The GM should consider triggering **resistance progression** when your PCs find it difficult to earn **experience points** because they too regularly outclass even the climatic encounters (the boss monsters) of their game.

Your GM should also take into account that the opposition you were improving with respect to the previous season should now be considered more-easily defeated mooks, and use lower **ratings** for them when they appear in the story or even allow them to be taken out with an **assured contest**.

### 2.13.1 No Progression

Your GM may also decide that the **resistances** do not get harder as the campaign progresses, reflecting the PCs **ability** to disregard minor challenges, and simply choose harder **resistances** to challenge the players and allow them to earn **experience points**.

## 3.0 Character Creation

The first step in creating your character is to come up with a concept that fits in with the genre of the game that your GM intends to run. With that, you can assign **abilities**, **ratings** for those **abilities**, and if required **flaws**.

In addition, you will want to give your character a name, and provide a physical description. We recommend focusing on three physical things about your PC that others would immediately notice,



over anything more detailed.

Your GM should not use this method for creating NPCs. NPCs do not require definition via **abilities** and **keywords**. Instead, your GM simply describes the NPC, and picks an appropriate **resistance** in any contest with them, based on their feeling for what would be **credible** for that NPC. If in doubt the GM just uses the **base resistance** for a mook, with a suitably higher **resistance** for a boss. The design intent is to remove the need for the GM to prepare stat blocks, making improvisation of NPCs easier, and shifting focus to the NPCs personality or role in the story instead.

### 3.1 As-You-Go Method

1. Choose a **concept**. Your **concept** is a brief phrase, often just a couple of words that tells the GM and other players what you do and how you act. Start with a noun or phrase indicating your **occupation keyword** or area of expertise, and modify it with an adjective suggesting a **distinguishing characteristic**, a personality trait that defines you in broad strokes:

#### 3.1.1 EXAMPLE CONCEPTS

| Distinguishing Characteristic | Occupation   |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Haughty                       | Priestess    |
| Hotshot                       | Lawyer       |
| Noble                         | Samurai      |
| Remorseful                    | Assassin     |
| Sardonic                      | Ex-mercenary |
| Slothful                      | Vampire      |
| Naive                         | Warrior      |

2. Provide your character with a name.
3. You have 12 **ability** slots and up to three slots for **flaws**.
4. Your character concept uses two slots: one for their occupational **keyword** and one for their **distinguishing characteristic**.
5. The first time you use an **ability** (including your **distinguishing characteristic** and **occupational keyword**), assign a **rating** to it (see §3.4).
6. If the series uses other **keywords**, such as those for culture or religion, you will need to spend an **ability** slots on those.
7. When events in the story put you in a situation where you want to overcome a **story obstacle**, or discover the answer to a **story question**, make up an applicable **ability** on the spot. This may be a **breakout ability** from a **keyword**. You are restricted to only one **sidekick**.
8. If you want, describe any **flaws**.
9. When you have used all your **ability** slots, you must use **experience points** to buy more. Once you have used all of your **flaw** slots, you must buy off an existing **flaw** with **experience points** to gain more.



## 3.2 Keywords

We recommend that you build your PC around one or more **keywords** (see §2.1.1).

**Keywords** are best suited for use as the PC's occupation, heritage, beliefs, or memberships of a community.

In certain genres, your GM may require that your PC has multiple **keywords**: for example, one for **occupation**, another for species or culture, and perhaps a third for religious affiliation.

### 3.2.2 Doubling Up

In some settings, an **ability** may be listed in more than one of a PC's **keywords**. You should choose only one to list it under.

If your **distinguishing characteristic** is an **ability** that fits under a **keyword** then you can make it a breakout there.

## 3.3 Flaws

You may assign up to three **flaws** to their PC. Common flaws include:

- Personality traits: surly, petty, compulsive.
- Physical challenges: blindness, lameness, diabetes.
- Social hurdles: outcast, ill-mannered, hated by United supporters.

Certain **keywords** include **flaws**. **Flaws** gained through **keywords** do not count against the limit of three chosen **flaws**.

## 3.4 Assigning Ability Ratings

You have now defined your **abilities** and **flaws**. These tell everyone what you can do.

Now assign numbers to each **ability**, called **ratings**, which determine how well you can do these things.

Assign a starting **rating** of 15 to the **ability** you find most important or defining. Although most players consider it wisest to assign this **rating** to their **occupational keyword**, you don't have to do this. Assign a **rating** of 15 to your **distinguishing characteristic**.

All other **abilities** start at a **rating** of 10.

A **breakout** from a **keyword** starts at +5. In some cases, you may treat your **distinguishing characteristic** as a **breakout ability** from a **keyword** in this case, treat it as a +10.

**Flaws** are assigned a **rating** equivalent to your **abilities**. The first **flaw** is rated at the highest **ability**, the second shares the same **rating** as the second-highest **ability**, and the third equals the lowest **ability**. As **abilities** improve, so the **rating** of your **flaw** changes to reflect those changes.

**Flaws** should include **breakouts** when figuring the PC's highest **ability**.

All **flaws** after the third are given the same **rating** as the lowest **ability**. You may designate **flaws** from **keywords** as your first or second-ranked **flaw**.

Now, you get 20 **improvement points** to spend to improve your **abilities**. Each **improvement point** increases an ability by +1. You cannot increase a **breakout** with **improvement points**. The maximum starting **ability rating** is 5M; the maximum starting **breakout rating** is +5, or +10 for a **distinguishing characteristic** (see §3.0) agreed with your GM to be under a **keyword**.

You can modify an ability using **improvement points** after a roll. This may allow you to **succeed** and not **fail**.

Some genre packs may require you to have additional **keywords** that reflect the setting. These additional **keywords** come from the 12 **abilities** allowance, so in many genres you will have fewer wildcard **abilities** but better fit the setting.

## 3.5 Prose Method

### 3.5.1 Alternative Character Creation

This is the an alternative character creation method in which you write a piece of prose and then pull **abilities** from that. Its intent is to emulate a character description in fiction, and indeed PCs can be built by copying text from a story and then identifying **keywords**. It is the least ‘fair’ of the character creation options.

Your GM should choose either “As You Go” or “Prose Method” not both. Choose the “Prose Method” only if your players are comfortable writing a short biography for their character.

### 3.5.2 The Prose Method

You write a paragraph of text like you would see in a story outline, describing the most essential elements of your character. Include **keywords**, personality traits, important possessions, relationships, and anything else that suggests what you can do and why. The paragraph should be about 100 words long.

Compose the description in complete, grammatical sentences. No lists of **abilities**; no sentence fragments. Your GM may choose to allow sentences like the previous one for emphasis or rhythmic effect, but not simply to squeeze in more cool things you can do.

Once your narrative is finished, convert the description into a set of **abilities** and **flaws**. Mark any **keywords** with double underlines. Mark any other word or phrase that could be an **ability** or **flaw** with a single underline. Then write these **keywords**, **abilities** or **flaws** on your character sheet. Remember that some **abilities** and **flaws** may be a **breakout** from a **keyword**.

There is no limit to the number of **abilities** you can gain from a single sentence, as long as the sentence is not just a list of **abilities**. If your GM decides a sentence is just a list, they may allow the first two **abilities**, or they may tell the player to rewrite the sentence. Note, however, that you cannot specify more than one **sidekick** in your prose description.

## 4.0 Contests

A **contest** is the default resolution method for **story obstacles** or **story question** where there is a dramatic branch from uncertainty. If the branch does not lead to new story, just use an **assured contest**.

A **contest** is conflict resolution, we don't resolve the individual tasks that form part of the **story obstacle** or **story question** instead we resolve the whole **story obstacle** or **story question** in one roll. When you pick your **tactic** it may encompass your approach to the whole, or be a spotlight moment, where the part stands for the whole. In the latter case your chosen **tactic** is the focus of the key moment. It all comes down to this moment, where you win the **prize** or your plans go awry. Your GM will narrate your passage through the other obstacles once the outcome is known, but the focus of win and lose always hinges on this moment.

Using **contest** as the default speeds up play, and keeps the story hitting major events, reinforcing the sense of adventure.

## 4.1 Contest

### 4.1.1 Procedure

A **contest** can be summarized as follows:

1. You and your GM agree upon the terms of the **contest**.
2. You choose a **tactic**. Your **target number (TN)** is your **rating**, adding any **augments** (see §2.6), **hindrances** (see §2.7), **stretches** and **situational modifiers** (see §2.5), **consequences** and **benefits** (see §2.8).
3. Your GM determines the **resistance**. If two PCs contend, your opponent figures their **TN** as described in step 2.
4. You roll a D20 vs your relevant **ability**, while your GM rolls a D20 vs the **resistance**.
5. Your GM compares the difference **successes** between the two rolls to assesses the **outcome** (see §2.3.7).
6. Your GM then narrates the **outcome** of the conflict as appropriate and assesses any **benefits** or **consequences** that arose (see §2.8).
7. Award **experience points** if appropriate (see §8.1).

## 4.2 Group Contest

In the **group contest**, multiple participants take part in a **contest**. Each of you in your group conducts an individual **contest** against the GM, and the **outcomes** for each side are collated to determine the victor.

A **group contest** may pit all of you against a single **resistance**, representing one **story obstacle** or **story question**. Alternatively, a **group contest** may be a series of paired match-ups between two groups of contestants. If your PC is matched against multiple opponents, your GM should consider increasing the resistance instead of rolling multiple times (see Mobs, Gangs, and Hordes §2.12). If the resistance is forced to face off against multiple PCs the GM should consider, lowering the resistance (see Ganging Up §2.11).

### 4.2.1 Procedure

A **group contest** can be summarized as follows:

1. Your GM **frames the contest**.

2. You choose a **tactic**. Your **target number (TN)** is your **rating**, adding any **augments** (see §2.6), **hindrances** (see §2.7), **stretches** and **situational modifiers** (see §2.5), **consequences** and **benefits** (see §2.8).
3. Your GM determines the **resistance**. If two PCs contend, your opponent figures their **TN** as described in step 2.
4. For each of your group
  1. Roll a D20 vs your relevant **ability**, while your GM rolls a D20 vs the **resistance**. Determine the **degree of victory or defeat** for the individual PC from the **outcome** (see §2.3.7).
  2. Add the number of **successes** scored in the contest to a running total of **successes** for each group, regardless of the individual **outcome**. **Victory or defeat, successes** count towards the group **outcome**.
  3. Award **experience points** if appropriate (see §8.1).
5. The side with the highest number of **successes** is the overall victor in the **contest**. Award **experience points** if appropriate (see §8.1). If the number of **successes** is tied the contest ends in a stalemate, with neither side gaining control of the **prize**.
6. Determine **degree of victory** from the difference between the **successes** scored by each side.
7. Describe the **outcome** based on the agreed **prize**.

If the result is a tie, but it does not make sense for there to be no outcome, then award the PCs group a *zero* **degree victory**

It is possible that you suffer a **defeat**, even though your side gains the **victory**. It is possible that, as a result, that your PC will suffer a **consequence** (see §2.8) related to your **defeat**, even though your side won. If your side loses, then you may suffer both a **consequence** for your own individual **contest**, and a **consequence** for the overall **contest**.

It is possible that you gain a **victory**, even though your side suffers a **defeat**. It is possible that, as a result, that your PC will obtain a **benefit** (see §2.8) related to your **victory**, even though your side lost. If your side won, then you may gain both a **benefit** for your own individual **contest**, and a **benefit** for the overall **contest**.

### 4.3 Multiple Contestants, One Prize

Sometimes, there can be only one. When you are in a contest with multiple contenders, but only one of you can win the **prize**, you have to beat everyone else. Typical examples include athletic contests, beauty contests, a game show, or an election.

When you compete for a single **prize** you compare your **result** with the other contestants. Your GM should find the highest number of **successes** obtained by any of the contestants. If there is only one contestant with that number, the GM awards them the **prize**. Otherwise, your GM will compare the **rolls** of everyone who shares that number of successes. The contestant with the highest **roll** wins the **prize**. If two contestants match on the highest **roll**, then the **contest** finishes in a **tie**, and the winners must share the **prize**. If sharing the **prize** does not make sense, then your GM awards it, in order of preference, to the highest **ability**, a **PC** over an **NPC**, GM's choice.

It is possible that all the contestants lose. In this case, the GM needs to decide if it possible for no one to win, because they failed to finish the race or did not answer the questions in the final round of the game show. If they cannot fail to win, it goes to the highest roll, as above.

Use a **contest** when you have multiple contenders for a single **prize** over a **sequence** (see §5.0).

### 4.3.1 Procedure

Multiple contestants and one prize can be summarized as follows:

1. Find the highest number of **successes** amongst the participants.
2. If only one contestant has that number of **successes** amongst the players, award them the **prize**.
3. If multiple contestants share that number of **successes** the contestant with the highest **roll** wins the prize.
4. If two or more contestants match on the highest **roll**, there is a **tie** and the contestants with the matching **roll** share the **prize**.
5. If the **prize** cannot be shared then award to in order: highest **ability**, a **PC** over an **NPC**, GM's choice.

## 5.0 Sequences

Most conflicts should be resolved simply and quickly, using the **contest** rules. However, every so often, your GM wants to draw out the resolution, breaking it down into a series of smaller actions, increasing the suspense you feel as you wait to see if they triumph or fail.

Think of the different ways a film director can choose to portray a given moment, depending on how important it is to the story, and how invested they want us to feel in its outcome. For example, there are two ways to shoot a scene in which a thief breaks into the bank to steal the contents of the safe.

- The action can be portrayed quickly, cutting to a moment with the thief, their ear pressed against the safe trying to get the tumblers to fall into place. Then they sigh with relief, open the safe, and get whatever is inside. In this instance, the story is about what happens after the thief gets what's in the safe, not about what might happen to them if they fail.
- Another film might instead choose to make the bank robbery a pivotal turning point in the story, if not its climactic moment. It would spend many scenes building up to the safe-cracking sequence: obtaining the plans of the bank, learning the movements of the guards, crawling through the air conditioning ducts, sliding past the motion sensors and pressure plates, and finally cracking the safe itself.

A **contest** mirrors the first approach. A **sequence** mirrors the second. If your GM wants to focus on how you complete a sequence of tasks to overcome the **story obstacles** or **story questions** then then use a **sequence**.

Even a movie driven by action and suspense will typically include only a handful of these set-piece sequences. They need the rest of their running time to build up to their big moments, to make us care about the characters, and to give us quiet moments to contrast with the white-knuckle parts.

So pacing may always trump your desire to work through the sequence of tasks, as your GM may wish to resolve this conflict quickly. This is especially true if only one player is involved.

Your GM may be tempted, to adjudicate every fight with a **sequence**, because fights seem like they should be played out blow-by-blow. They should resist this temptation, as fights are often repetitive

trading of blows that can drag when everyone repeats actions from **round** to **round**. Only use **sequences** for fights where the PCs want to do more than slug it out toe-to-toe with their opponents until only one is left standing.

## 5.1 Sequence

### 5.1.1 Overview

A **sequence** is a succession of **contests**. It represents a set of tasks required for the PC to overcome an obstacle.

A **sequence** is played out in **rounds**. Each **round** represents an attempt by the PC to wear down the **resistance** by succeeding at a task, that makes up part of the goal. In a **sequence** where a PC thief tries to break into a bank to steal from the safe, individual rounds might represent:

- Obtaining the plans of the bank
- Surveillance to learn the movements of the guards
- Crawling through the air conditioning ducts
- Sliding past the motion sensors and pressure plates
- Cracking the safe itself.

The GM needs to be aware of pacing during this, skipping potential obstacles to try and time the final roll to be as the thief cracks open the safe (or fails triggering more complications).

**Sequences** are longer and more dramatic than **contests**. Your GM uses **sequences** when the drama of the conflict is as important as the **outcome** to the story. A **sequence** generates suspense with a back-and-forth struggle. It is something you and your GM should visualize and describe.

A **sequence** consists of one or more **rounds**, which you resolve as **contests**. However an individual **round** does not decide the **outcome** of the whole **sequence**, only who has momentum at that time.

Different types of **sequence** change how we record who has the upper hand at any one time, based on the **degrees** of the **contest** outcome.

- In a **scored sequence**, the first contestant to have five ‘strikes’ against them loses. We *tally* **resolution points (RP)**.
- In a **wagered sequence**, we *tally* **advantage points (AP)**, which represent momentum and position. The contenders trade **APs** until one of them runs out.
- In **chained sequence** we *tally* **resolve**, which represents willingness to continue. If you choose **chained sequence** all contests become a **chained sequence**.

Your GM uses this record, either *tallying* or applying **consequences**, to determine when to trigger the end of the **sequence** and the **outcome** for the victor.

#### 5.1.1.1 Procedure

1. Your GM **frames the sequence**.
2. You choose a **tactic**. Your **target number (TN)** is your **rating**, adding any **augments** (see §2.6), **hindrances** (see §2.7), **stretches** and **situational modifiers** (see §2.5), **consequences** and **benefits** (see §2.8).

3. Your GM determines the **resistance** (see §2.3.3). (If two PCs contend, your opponent figures their **TN** as described in step 2.)
4. Carry out one or more **rounds**, repeating as necessary.
  1. Your GM decides which contender has the initiative, the ‘aggressor’, and describes what they are trying to do to achieve the **prize**. The ‘defender’ describes how they counter the aggressor’s attempt to seize the **prize**. If it is not obvious from the unfolding narrative, your GM should choose your PC as the ‘aggressor’.
  2. Resolve the **round** as described for the **sequence** type.
  3. The outcome determines the new *tally* or applies **consequences**. Tied **results** leave the score unchanged.
  4. Determine if an opponent is knocked out of the **contest** from their *tally* or **consequences**, according to the rules for that **contest** type.
  5. The winner has an opportunity to perform a **parting shot** (see §5.1.8).
5. Determine the **outcome** according to the **sequence** type. Award or deny the **prize**, and give **experience points** if appropriate (see §8.1).
6. Determine **benefits** or **consequences**.
7. Describe the **outcome** based on the **story obstacle** or **story question**

### 5.1.2 Group Sequence Overview

**Group sequences** proceed as a series of **sequences** between pairs of PC and opponents, interwoven so that they happen nearly simultaneously.

As in a **sequence** between a single PC and an opponent, each per pair of adversaries contend in a **round**. Usually the PCs make up one team, and their antagonists the other.

A **group sequence** continues until one side has no active participants. If you **defeat** your opponent you can pair with a new opponent. The new opponent might be unengaged, but might also be engaged in an existing pairing. When you pair with an unengaged opponent, you begin a new **sequence**. If your opponent is already engaged in a **sequence**, you participate in the existing **sequence** and points tally for that type of **sequence**. Alternatively, if you are unopposed, you may choose to help lower the *tally* of an existing participant with an **assist** appropriate to that **sequence** type. Of course, you may be later engaged by an opponent who becomes free yourself.

You may lose some pairings amongst the PCs, but still win if the last participant standing is a PC; otherwise if the last participant belongs to the opposition you lose.

#### 5.1.2.1 Group Sequence Procedure

1. Your GM **frames the sequence**.
2. You choose a **tactic**. Your **target number (TN)** is your **rating**, adding any **augments** (see §2.6), **hindrances** (see §2.7), **stretches** and **situational modifiers** (see §2.5), **consequences** and **benefits** (see §2.8).
3. The GM determines the **resistance** (see §2.3.3). If two PCs contend, your opponent figures their **TN** as described in step 2.
4. The PCs choose their opponents in order of their **TN** where it makes sense. Otherwise your GM will allocate opponents to you dependent on what makes narrative sense.



5. Establish an order of the paired **sequences**. The narrative may indicate who should go first but use your group's **TNs** from highest to lowest if no other option presents itself.
6. For each pairing your GM carries out one **round**. Then they repeat by carrying out more **rounds** in order, as necessary.
  1. Your GM decides which contender has the initiative, the 'aggressor', and describes what they are trying to do to achieve the **prize**. The 'defender' describes how they counter the aggressor's attempt to seize the **prize**. If it is not obvious from the unfolding narrative, your GM should choose your PC as the 'aggressor'.
  2. Resolve the **round** as described for the **sequence** type.
  3. The outcome determines the new *tally* or applies **consequences**. Tied **results** leave the score unchanged.
  4. Determine if an opponent is knocked out of the **contest**, according to the rules for that **contest** type.
  5. The winner has an opportunity to perform a **parting shot** (see §5.1.8).
7. As one of a pair is eliminated from the **group sequence**, their victorious opponents may then move on to engage new targets, either *starting new contests* with an unengaged opponent or *joining an existing contest* (see §5.1.9). These new contest are added to the end of the existing roster. Alternatively, unengaged contests may **assist** (see §5.1.10) those who are engaged.
8. The group with the last undefeated contestant wins.
9. Award **experience points** if appropriate (see §8.1).
10. If necessary, your GM can determine your group's **degree of victory or defeat**. If your group has the "last contestant", your GM should use the **outcome** for the contest in which your group **defeated** the opponent with the highest **ability rating**. If the opposition has the "last contestant", your GM should use the **outcome** for the contest in which the PC with the highest **ability rating** was **defeated**. In the event of a tie for **ability rating** pick the **outcome** that has the smaller **degree of victory or defeat**. Often, individual **outcomes** will be enough and there is no need to figure this out.
11. Describe the **outcome** based on the **story obstacle** or **story question**.

### 5.1.3 No Nesting

Your GM should never "nest" one **sequence** inside another. If a **sequence** is in progress and you want to perform an action your GM should treat it as an **unrelated action** (see §5.1.8), or disallow it completely during the current **sequence**.

### 5.1.4 Switching Abilities

You may describe an action in a **sequence** that is not covered by the **ability** that you started the **sequence** with. There are two possibilities here: either you are trying to provide color to your actions in the **round**, without seeking to gain advantage, or you are seeking to gain advantage over your opponent with a novel **tactic**.

In the former case, you can continue to use the **ability** you started the contest with, as you should not be penalized for wanting to enhance the contest with colorful or entertaining descriptions.

In the latter case you should switch **abilities**, and your GM must decide if the **resistance** changes because of your new **ability**. Your GM is encouraged to reward **tactics** that exploit weaknesses that



have been identified in the story so far with a **bonus** from a **situational modifier**. Sometimes your GM may respond with a higher **penalty** from a **situational modifier** because your **tactic** looks less likely to succeed due to conditions already established in the story.

Either way any *tally* does not change.

### 5.1.5 Asymmetrical Round

You may choose to briefly suspend your attempt to best your opponent in a **sequence**, in order to do something else. An instance where you are trying to do something else and your opponent is trying to win the **contest** is called an **asymmetrical round**.

In an **asymmetrical round**, you do not change the *tally* against your opponent, or inflict **consequences** if you win the **round**. Instead, you succeed at whatever else you were doing. Your *tally* is still altered, or you suffer **consequences** if you lose the **round**. Often you will be using an **ability** other than the one you've been waging the **contest** with, one better suited to the task at hand. This becomes additionally dangerous when the **TN** associated with your substitute **ability** is significantly lower than the one used for the rest of the **sequence**.

In addition to secondary objectives, as in the above example, you may engage in **asymmetrical round** to **augment** (see §2.6) yourself or others.

### 5.1.6 Disengaging

You can always abandon a **sequence**, but, in addition to failing at the **story obstacle**, you may also suffer negative consequences as your opponent may take a **parting shot** against you, as though you had suffered a **defeat**. Likewise, your opponent might seek to disengage before being defeated, entitling you to a **parting shot**. Taking the **parting shot** is always optional as it may worsen the attacker's position.

### 5.1.7 Unrelated Actions

If you are not currently enmeshed in a **round**, you may take actions within the scene that do not directly contribute to the **defeat** of the other side. These **unrelated actions** may grant an **augment** to yourself or to a teammate. You may achieve a secondary story objective. This resembles an **asymmetrical round**, except that, as you are not targeted by any opponents, there is no additional risk.

### 5.1.8 Parting Shot

Immediately after you **defeat** an opponent, you may attempt to worsen the defeat suffered by your opponent by engaging in a **parting shot**. This is an attempt (metaphoric or otherwise) to kick your opponent while he's down:

- Striking an incapacitated enemy
- Attacking a retreating army
- Attaching one more punitive rider to a legal settlement
- Demanding additional money from a business partner
- Delivering one last humiliating insult

The **parting shot** is another **contest** against your **defeated** opponent. The **ability** you use must relate to the consequences the opposition will suffer, but needn't be the same one you used to win the **contest**. If the loser is a PC they use a suitable **ability** to resist; otherwise the GM rolls a suitable **resistance** value.

The mechanics for a **parting shot** differ for each **sequence** type, reflecting the *tally*.

### 5.1.9 Joining an In-Progress Contest

When you wish to join a **sequence** in progress, you and your GM should discuss whether you accept the current framing. If so, you can participate. You simply select an opponent and start a new **round** with them. The mechanics for joining an in-progress **contest** differ for each **sequence** type, reflecting the *tally*. If you want to achieve something other than the goal established during framing, you may instead perform **unrelated actions**, including **assists** and **augmentations**.

In some types of conflict, many-against-one may have an advantage. In a melee for example it is more difficult to fight two or more opponents. In other types of contest many-against-one may actually hinder because contenders get in each other's way, such as an attempt to persuade another. In situations in a **sequence** where numerical advantage exists, award a **situational modifier** usually of +/-5 or +/-10. This is a **bonus** if the PCs outnumber their opponents and a **penalty** if they don't. Don't use this rule if you are treating the **resistance** as a mob (see §2.10)

### 5.1.10 Assists

You may take an **unrelated action** to grant an **assist** to a teammate enmeshed in a **round**. Describe what your character is trying to do to improve the position of the target. For example, your PC might throw them a weapon, jeer at an opponent, or simply shout words of encouragement. **Assists** are subject to the same restrictions as **augmentations**: they must be both credible and interesting.

The mechanics for a **assist** differ for each **sequence** type, reflecting the *tally* or **consequences**.

## 5.2 Scored Sequence

A **scored sequence** consists of one or more **rounds**; each **round** is a **contest**.

In a **scored sequence**, we *tally* the position of the contestants in a **scored sequence** via **resolution points**. Once *five* or more resolution points have been *tallied* against a contestant, they lose that **scored sequence**.

In a **scored sequence** each **round** represents attempts by both parties to overcome their opponent and so is a *single* **contest**.

Your GM should determine who has the initiative to choose their **tactics** for any **round**, based on their interpretation of the flow of events. Their opponent has to react to that **tactic**. If in doubt your GM should defer to you over your opponent to describe what you do in the **round**, and describe the NPC reacting to that.

### 5.2.1 Resolution Points

You score **resolution points** equal to *one* more than the **degree** of the **outcome**. So a *zero* **degree outcome** produces *one* **resolution point**, a *one* **degree outcome** produces *two* **resolution points** and so on. (You can take the shortcut of adding *one* to the difference in **successes** of the two rolls, if you prefer).

#### 5.2.1.1 RESOLUTION POINT TABLE

| Degree | Value |
|--------|-------|
| 0      | 1     |
| 1      | 2     |
| 2      | 3     |
| 3      | 4     |
| 4      | 5     |

#### 5.2.1.2 Resource Point Knowledge

Your GM should make the **resource point** totals for each side public.

#### 5.2.1.3 Followers

You may choose to have your **followers** take part in **scored sequences** in one of three ways: as full contestants, as secondary contestants, or as supporters.

**Contestant:** The **follower** takes part in the **contest** as any other PC would. You roll for your **followers** as you would their main characters. However, your **followers** are removed from the **contest** whenever 3 **resolution points** are scored against them in a given **round**.

**Secondary contestant:** To act as a secondary contestant, your **follower** must have an **ability** relevant to the **contest**. The **follower** sticks by your side, contributing directly to the effort: fighting in a battle, tossing in arguments in a legal dispute, acting as the ship's navigator, or whatever. Although you describe this, you do not roll for the **follower**. Instead, you may, at any point, shift any number of **resolution points** to a **follower** acting as a secondary contestant. Followers with 3 or more **resource points** lodged against them are removed from the scene.

**Supporter:** Your **follower** is present in the scene, but does not directly engage your opponents. Instead they may perform **assists** and other **unrelated actions**.

**Followers** acting in any of these three capacities may be removed from the **contest** by otherwise unengaged opponents. To remove a **follower** from a scene, an opponent engages your **follower** in a **contest**. Your GM sets the **resistance**, or if it is another PC's **follower** they determine the relevant **ability** of the **follower** engaging yours. On any failure, your **follower** is taken out of the **contest**.

Your GM determines any long-term implications for the follower being removed from the **contest**. Whilst your GM should not end your character's story without consent, such as via death, they may choose to end the story of a follower in such circumstances, viscerally demonstrating the threat that the PCs face.

### 5.2.1.4 What the Score Means

Your **resolution point** score tells you how well you're doing, relative to your opponent, in the ebb and flow of a fluid, suspenseful conflict. If you're leading your opponent by 0–4, you're giving them a thorough pasting. If you're behind 4–0, you're on your last legs, while your opponent has had an easy time of it. If you're tied, you've each been getting in some good licks.

- In a fight, scoring *one RP* might mean that you hit your opponent with a grazing blow, or knocked him into an awkward position.
- Scoring *two RPs* might mean a palpable hit, most likely with bone-crunching sound effects.
- A *three RP* hit sends them reeling, and, depending on the realism level of the genre, may be accompanied by a spray of blood.

However, the exact physical harm you've dished out to them remains unclear until the **contest's** end. When that happens, the real effects of your various **victories** become suddenly apparent. Perhaps they stagger, merely dazed, up against a wall. Maybe they fall over dead.

- In a debate, *one RP* might occasion mild head nodding from spectators, or a frown on your opponent's face.
- *Two RPs* would occasion mild applause from onlookers, or send a flush to your opponent's face.
- On *three RPs*, your opponent might be thrown completely off-track, as audience members wince at the force of your devastating verbal jab.

If the opposition represents multiple opponents, then an **RP** loss may represent their ranks thinning.

In interpreting the individual **contest rounds** within a **scored sequence**, your GM is guided by two principles:

1. No effect is certain until the entire **scored sequence** is over.
2. When a character scores points, it can reflect any positive change in fortunes, not just the most obvious one.

### 5.2.2 Scored Sequence Outcomes

Your GM uses the difference in **resource points** between the contestants to determine the **degree** of your **victory** or **defeat**.

#### 5.2.2.1 SCORED SEQUENCE OUTCOME TABLE

| Difference | Degree |
|------------|--------|
| 1-2        | 0      |
| 3-4        | 1      |
| 5-6        | 2      |
| 7-8        | 3      |
| 9+         | 4      |

Your GM applies results as described in §2.3.7.2, including assigning **benefits** and **consequences**.

### 5.2.3 Parting Shot

If you succeed in your **parting shot** roll, you score additional **resource points** against your opponent, worsening their defeat.

However, if your opponent succeeds, they take the number of **resolution points** they would, in a standard **round**, score against you, and instead subtracts them from the number of **resolution points** scored against them in the **round** that removed them from the **sequence**. If the revised total is now less than 5 **RPs**, they return to the **sequence**, and may re-engage you. Your GM describes this as a dramatic turnaround, in which your overreaching has somehow granted them an advantage allowing them to recover from their previous misfortune.

Where it makes sense, unengaged PCs may attempt **parting shots** against opponents taken out of the **sequence** by someone else. You may not revive your teammates by using your lamest abilities to make **parting shots** on them; this, by definition, does not pass a **credibility test**.

### 5.2.4 Risky Gambits

During a **scored sequence**, you can attempt to force a conflict to an early resolution by making a **risky gambit**. If you win the **round**, you lodge an additional 1 **resolution point** against your opponent. However, if you lose the **round**, your opponent lodges an additional 2 **resolution points** against you.

If both contestants engage in a **risky gambit**, the winner lodges an additional 2 **resolution points** against the loser.

### 5.2.5 Defensive Responses

In a **scored sequence**, you can make a **defensive response**, lowering the number of **resolution points** lodged against you in a **round**. If you win the **round**, the number of **resolution points** you lodge against your opponent decreases by 1. If you lose, your opponent lodges 2 fewer **resolution points** against you. The total number of **resolution points** assigned by a **round** is never less than 0; there is no such thing as a negative **resolution point**.

### 5.2.6 Assists

The **assist** alters the score against your teammate according to the **outcome** of a **contest**.

Your first **assist** faces the **base resistance**. Each subsequent **assist** attempt to the same beneficiary increases the **resistance** by +5. The **resistance** escalation occurs even when another PC steps in to make a subsequent **assist**. This escalation allows the occasional dramatic rescue but makes it difficult for players to prolong losing battles to excruciating length. Your GM should make it seem credible by justifying the increasing **resistances** with descriptions of ever-escalating countermeasures on the part of the opposition.

Your GM may adjust the starting **resistance** up or down to account for campaign credibility or other dramatic factors. If an **assist** as proposed seems too improbable or insufficiently useful, your GM should collaborate with you to propose alternate suggestions.

On a victory, you reduce the number of **resolution points** by *one* more than the **degree** of the **victory**. On a defeat, you increase the number of **resolution points** by *one* more than the **degree** of the **resistance's victory**. See table §5.2.2.1.

Scores can never be reduced below 0.

### 5.2.7 Joining an In-Progress Contest

If you join in an existing **scored sequence** use the same *tally* of **resolution points**; your fate is now bound to your comrade's fate. In this case, two PCs may face off against the same opposition, both sharing the same *tally*.

It is usually a better tactic to reduce a comrades *tally* via an **assist** if they have **resolution points** against them, before joining them, so that you don't risk being brought down by them.

## 5.3 Wagered sequence

A **wagered sequence** consists of one or more **rounds**. In a **round** *both* you and your opponent take actions in turn; a pair of **exchanges**. Each **exchange** is a **contest**.

In a **wagered sequence**, we *tally* the position of the contestants in **advantage points (AP)**. Once a contestant reach *zero* or fewer **APs** they lose that a **wagered sequence**.

Your GM should determine who has the initiative to describe what they are doing for any **exchange**. They describe the **tactic** for their **exchange**, and wagers a matching number of **APs**. Their opponent then describes their reaction to that **tactic** to determine the ability used in the contest. Next, their opponent then describes their **tactic** and wagers a matching number of **APs**. The initiative holder then describes their **tactic** in response.

These **exchanges** are then conducted in order of the highest **AP wager** first.

If a contestant falls below *zero* **APs** as a result of their opponent's **exchange**, they immediately lose, and do not get to conduct their own **exchange**.

If on the second **exchange** of the **round**, a contestant no longer has the **AP** that they **bid** remaining, they should change their action to reflect a lower **bid**.

If, on the second **exchange** the contestant's original intent no longer makes sense in the unfolding narrative, they can change their **tactic** but they do not change their **wager**.

### 5.3.1 Advantage Points

#### 5.3.1.1 Starting AP Totals

You describe your action towards the desired **prize** and what **ability** you use. The **ability** used in the contest can be varied, but **APs** are always calculated on the first **ability** that you use in a contest. That **ability** must be used in the first **round**.

Figure your starting **advantage point (AP)** total using the **TN**. So a **TN** of 15 is 15**APs**. The **AP** include +20 for each level of **mastery**, so a **TN** of 5M is 25**APs**. Your starting **APs** and can also be increased by **followers** (see below).

The GM figures starting **APs** for the **resistance** from the **resistance TN**.

### 5.3.1.2 Wagering Advantage Points

You gamble a number of your **APs** in an attempt to reduce your opponent's **AP**, but if you fail the attempt you lose the **AP** or may even transfer them.

You describe your action towards the desired **prize**, what **ability** you use, and how much risk you take. "I want to climb straight up to that outcrop, taking chances if needed." You should specify your **wager**; if you do not, your GM determines this based on the amount of risk you are taking.

The size of the **wager** mirrors how bold and risky your character's action is. Extreme or aggressive actions mean a high **wager**, and cautious actions require less.

If you describe an all-out offensive with your sword cutting vicious arcs, you need to wager a lot of **APs**; if you say that you are circling your foe cautiously, a low **wager** is in order.

Your GM will look at the level of risk you are taking, and may suggest that you change your **wager** to better match your actions.

If you do not declare a **wager** before rolling the die, your GM will decide how many points are **wager** (using 3 as a default), with riskier actions calling for higher **wagers**.

### 5.3.1.3 Losing Advantage Points

The number of advantage points lost by a contestant is a multiplier of their **wager** depending on the **degree** of the **victory**. Determine the multiplier used as follows:

### 5.3.1.4 WAGERED SEQUENCE EXCHANGE TABLE

| Degree   | AP loss by loser              |
|----------|-------------------------------|
| Tie      | Both lose 1/2 wager, round up |
| 0        | 1/2 x wager, round up         |
| 1        | 1 x wager                     |
| 2        | 2 x wager                     |
| 3        | 3 x wager                     |
| 4        | 4 x wager                     |
| <i>n</i> | <i>n</i> x wager              |

If the victor rolled a **big success**, the **APs** lost by the loser are gained by the winner - a **transfer**.

### 5.3.1.5 Followers and Advantage Points

**Followers** can act in *one* of the following ways during a **contest**:

- A follower can **augment** you with their **abilities**.
- You can use one of their **abilities** as if it were your own.
- For a **follower** with a relevant **ability** or **keyword**, you can simply add their **APs** to yours at the beginning of the **contest**.



Neither you nor the GM makes rolls for **followers**. Instead, their actions are subsumed into yours.

You can assign your **followers** to someone else, although you may have to succeed at a contest to persuade a reluctant follower to go along.

#### 5.3.1.6 Advantage Point Knowledge

Once your opponent has won or lost **APs** during the current contest, you can ask the GM what the opposition's **AP** total is. This is where the element of skill comes in. When choosing how many **APs** to stake, you must weigh the effect they want to gain if you succeed versus the risk you face if the action fails.

#### 5.3.1.7 Advantage Point Recalculation

**Advantage points** are only relevant for the length of a particular **wagered sequence**. Your PC does not have any until the next **wagered sequence** begins, when you calculate them all over again.

#### 5.3.1.8 What the AP Total Means

**Advantage points** represent who has the advantage in a **sequence**. They represent who is enters the fray in the best starting position because of skill, support, or conviction.

Losses represent:

- Losing *momentum*.
- Becoming overcome by *fatigue*.
- *Morale* is failing.
- Becoming close to losing *consciousness* from repeated blows.
- Losing the support of the *audience*.

If the opposition represents multiple opponents, then an **AP** loss may represent their ranks thinning.

When your GM narrates **AP** losses they need to be guided by two principals:

1. No effect is certain until the entire **wagered sequence** is over.
2. When a character loses points, it can reflect any negative change in fortunes, not just the most obvious one

### 5.3.2 Wagered Sequence Outcomes

Your GM uses the final **AP** total of the loser to determine the **degree** of the **victory** or **defeat** for the PC.

#### 5.3.2.1 WAGERED SEQUENCE OUTCOME TABLE

| Final AP Total | Degree |
|----------------|--------|
| 0 to -10 AP    | 0      |
| -11 to -20 AP  | 1      |
| -21 to -30 AP  | 2      |
| -31 or -40 AP  | 3      |

| Final AP Total  | Degree |
|-----------------|--------|
| –41 or fewer AP | 4      |

Your GM may apply **consequences** and **benefits** for your PC as they see fit, based on this outcome.

### 5.3.3 Parting Shot

A **parting shot** allows another round, in which only contestants with positive **APs** can act. You once again **wager APs** and use an appropriate **ability** against your opponent. Your **wager** must reflect what you are doing to drive them to greater defeat.

If you succeed, their **AP** will decrease; their **outcome** may or may not change.

**Parting shots** are risky; if you fail, an **AP** transfer might bring your opponent back into positive **APs** in which case they get an **exchange** in this **round** (and subsequent rounds as normal). Your stumble gave them an opening that they exploited in an effort to snatch **victory** from the jaws of **defeat**.

### 5.3.4 Desperation Stake

You can stake more **advantage points** than you currently have, to a maximum of your starting **AP** total. This allows you to attempt a **desperation stake** even when you are within a single **AP** of **defeat**. Your GM can never stake more **advantage points** than they have.

### 5.3.5 Second Chance

If your PC falls to 0 or fewer **advantage points** in a standard **wagered sequence**, you are **defeated**. In a **group wagered sequence**, however, you can try a **second chance** to stay in the **contest**. A **second chance** represents the knack to come back when your opponent turns away to gloat or deal with the other player characters. A character may only attempt one **second chance** in any **wagered sequence**.

To attempt a **second chance**, you must be free from attention by the opposition. You must spend a **story point**. You can use a relevant **ability** in a **contest** against the number of **APs** your PC is below 0. Even if you succeed, a **consequence** applies: take a –6 to further actions in this contest.

If you win the **contest**, you rejoin the contest with a positive **AP** total. Your new total is a 1/4 of your original **AP** total at the outset of the **contest**, round up.

Your GM should not use a **second chance** for the **resistance**.

Your GM may decide to impose a **consequence** on you, even if you are later victorious in a contest, or your team wins the prize, that represents the adversity you suffered that brought you initially to defeat.

### 5.3.6 Assists

You can transfer some or all of your **advantage points** to another contestant engaged in a **wagered sequence** on your side. With more **advantage points**, they can stay in the **sequence** for longer, or make larger **wagers** without driving themselves to **defeat**.

State the number of **AP** you are trying to transfer. (The GM may suggest a higher or lower **wager** based on the action you describe.) The number of **APs** you are attempting to transfer is the **resistance** you face in a **contest**. You lost the **APs** whether or not you **succeed** in the contest.

You cannot transfer **advantage points** to yourself.

If a **follower's AP** are already included in your **AP** total, the **follower** cannot transfer them to you.

### 5.3.7 Joining an In-Progress Contest

Both you and your opponent use your existing **AP** totals.

## 5.4 Chained Sequence

A **chained sequence** consists of one or more **rounds**; each **round** is a **contest**.

Electing to use a **chained sequence** changes all **contests** into **sequences**. A **contest** is always just a **round** of a **sequence**.

In a **chained sequence** each **round** represents an attempt by both parties to overcome their opponent. After each **round**, participants who are able to continue must decide if they wish to continue the **sequence** or if they wish to **disengage** and yield the **prize** to their opponent.

In a **chained sequence** we track **resolve**. Once your **resolve** reaches *zero* you cannot continue without recovering **resolve** (see §5.4.9).

When electing to use **chained sequences** be aware of the impact of this choice.

Your GM should award **consequences** and **benefits** to a victorious PC after the **sequence** ends (see §2.6).

Your GM should determine who has the initiative to describe what they are doing for any **round**, based on their interpretation of the flow of events. If in doubt your GM should defer to you over your opponent to describe what you do in the **round**, and describe the NPC reacting to that.

### 5.4.1 Resolve

**Resolve** represents your resistance to the exhaustion of your mental, physical, emotional or social reserves. Once your **resolve** is gone, you quit.

The loser of a **round** in a **sequence**, loses **resolve** equal to their opponent's **degrees of victory** plus one, see §5.4.1.1.

When your resolve hits *zero* it initiates a crisis, your desire to struggle on is gone: you collapse into exhaustion; you give in to despair; you succumb to your wounds; you flee in fear... depending on what harmed you. You cannot continue with the **sequence** and lose the **prize**. Until you recover positive **resolve**, you must rest and may not initiate a **sequence**.

Your **resolve** may become negative due to losses from a **round**. You cannot return to play until your **resolve** becomes positive.

### 5.4.1.1 RESOLVE LOSS TABLE

| Degree of Victory | Lost Resolve |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 0                 | 1            |
| 1                 | 2            |
| 2                 | 3            |
| 3                 | 4            |
| 4                 | 5            |

### 5.4.2 Chained Sequence Outcomes

Your GM uses the number of **resolve points** scored against the losing contestant to determine the **degree** of your **victory** or **defeat**. Do not count **resolve points** traded for **consequences**, but do count any losses absorbed by followers.

#### 5.4.2.1 CHAINED SEQUENCE OUTCOME TABLE

| Loss | Degree |
|------|--------|
| 1    | 0      |
| 2-3  | 1      |
| 4-5  | 2      |
| 6-7  | 3      |
| 8+   | 4      |

Your GM applies results as described in §2.3.7.2, including assigning **benefits** and **consequences**.

### 5.4.3 PC Resolve

A PC begins with a *starting resolve* of *five*. On your PC's sheet record your current **resolve**. You can use check boxes to visually represent **resolve**.

#### 5.4.3.1 Exchange Resolve for Consequences

As an alternative to losing **resolve** in a **round**, you can choose to take a **consequence**.

Your GM should create a **consequence** which should be appropriate to the source of harm. A **consequence** only negates **resolve** losses from the most recent **round**; a consequence cannot negate **resolve** losses from earlier **rounds**. If you accept that **consequence** you do not lose **resolve** for this **round** but instead take the **consequence**.

- Instead of marking 1 point of **resolve**, the GM offers a penalty -5.
- Instead of marking 2 points of **resolve**, the GM offers a penalty of -10.
- Instead of marking 3 points of **resolve**, the GM offers a penalty of -15.
- Instead of marking 4 points of **resolve**, the GM offers a penalty of -20.

You can't buy off 5 points of **resolve**, instead your resolve is immediately reduced to *zero* and you yield the **sequence**.

#### 5.4.3.2 Resolve and Extraordinary Powers

In some settings your use of extraordinary powers may be exhausting and may cost **resolve**.

A setting may use one of several approaches to **resolve** losses for extraordinary powers.

- Usage of the power always costs **resolve**.
- Usage of the power costs **resolve** on any **degree of success**.
- Usage of the power costs resolve on a partial victory (*zero* **degrees of success**).

The **resolve** cost will be specified in the genre pack for the setting. Typically the more incredible the usage of the power, the greater the cost in **resolve**.

#### 5.4.4 Followers

You may choose to have your **followers** take part in **chained sequence** in one of three ways: as full contestants, as secondary contestants, or as supporters. You track resolve for **followers** as you do for a PC, but a **follower** begins the game with *three* resolve. **Retainers** are treated as a group for tracking **resolve** but **sidekicks** are handled individually.

**Contestant:** The **follower** takes part in the **contest** as any other PC would. You roll for your **followers** as you would their main characters.

**Secondary contestant:** To act as a secondary contestant, your **follower** must have an **ability** relevant to the **contest**. The follower provides an **augment** to your character in a **chained sequence**. In addition, if you suffer a **defeat** in a **round** of a **chained sequence** you may transfer that **resolve** loss to a **follower**. Doing so takes that **follower** out of further **rounds** of the **chained sequence**, even if they still have remaining **resolve**. Any **augment** your **follower** provided is lost.

**Supporter:** Your **follower** is present in the scene, but does not directly engage your opponents. Instead they may perform **assists** and other **unrelated actions**.

If a **follower** checks off *three or more* **resolve** they leave your service immediately - they may be dead, exhausted, or in despair - and must be replaced.

#### 5.4.5 NPC Resolve

We divide NPCs into two categories for **resolve**: mooks and named NPCs.

Your GM should track **resolve** losses for an NPC. An NPC cannot trade **resolve** losses for a **consequence**.

##### 5.4.5.1 Mooks

A mook is a faceless, nameless NPC who exists to allow your PC to impress us with their competency. A mook yields a **sequence** after suffering *one* point of **resolve** loss.

### 5.4.5.2 Named NPCs

A named NPC starts with between *three* **resolve**.

Your GM should decide if an NPC has recovered any **resolve** losses between encounters. An NPC who is reduced to *zero* resolve should not re-appear in the story - your PC has overcome them.

Some rare encounters, extraordinary NPCs who your GM intends as an individual threat to a group of NPCs, may have greater **resolve**. This should be used sparingly.

### 5.4.6 Resolve for Impersonal Opposition

Impersonal opposition - a security system, a science or engineering problem, a mountain to climb or wilderness to cross - can have resolve too, representing how resistant it is to resolution. Impersonal opposition may include people, where a large number can be treated in an abstract fashion - the prison guards, the ship's crew - as such the **rating** reflects a collective **resistance**.

To justify your loss of **resolve** in a conflict, your GM should only call for a **sequence** when it can be explained how you might become worn out attempting to overcome the obstacle or run out of time, otherwise your GM should let you succeed if you have a relevant **ability**. The **resolve** of impersonal opposition represents your progress - as you complete more steps towards overcoming the opposition - defeating security systems, winning hearts and minds - then the **resolve** of the impersonal opposition ebbs away.

For a lot of impersonal opposition, where it has not taken on the role of a "character" or become a key obstacle in the evolving story, your GM will just set the **resolve** at *one*.

For more challenging impersonal opposition, your GM may consider setting **resolve** at *three* for an individual conflict, or higher if overcoming it is a group effort. Where **resolve** represents overcoming a group being treated as a single opponent, then a **resolve** of *four* or *five* may be appropriate.

### 5.4.7 Group Chained Sequence Outcomes

In a **group chained sequence** the side that has the last contestant that has not disengaged or exhausted their **resolve** gains the **prize**.

### 5.4.8 Parting Shot

If you succeed in your **parting shot** roll, you inflict additional **resolve** losses on your opponent, worsening their **defeat**.

However, if your opponent succeeds, they take the number of **resolve** they would, in a standard **round**, score against you, and instead subtracts them from the **resolve** scored against them in the **round** that removed them from the **contest**. If your opponent now has positive **resolve**, they return to the **sequence**, and may re-engage you. Your GM describes this as a dramatic turnaround, in which your overreaching has somehow granted them an advantage allowing them to recover from their previous misfortune.

Where it makes sense, unengaged PCs may attempt **parting shots** against opponents taken out of the **sequence** by someone else. You may not revive your teammates by using your lamest abilities to make

**parting shots** on them; this, by definition, does not pass a **credibility test**.

#### 5.4.9 Assists

An unengaged PC or follower may attempt to help another PC recover **resolve**.

#### 5.4.10 Joining an In-Progress Contest

On a **round** of a **group chained sequence**, if you are otherwise unengaged you can engage with any opponent who remains. As **resolve** only changes with **recovery** both participants use their existing **resolve**.

#### 5.4.11 Recovery

Without intervention, your PC will recover, given time. Your GM should decide at what point your character recovers their resolve and can return to play. As a guideline: one or two points of resolve heal with a short rest, good meal, or time spent relaxing with friends; three or four points of resolve requires a longer period of recuperation, therapy or medical assistance; five points of resolve requires a long period of peaceful rest, away from conflict, to heal.

You may decide that you cannot wait for time to restore your PC, and instead want to use **abilities** to accelerate your **recovery**.

##### 5.4.11.1 Recovery Abilities

When deciding what **tactic** to use for **recovery**, credible choices depend on the nature of the conflict.

- Medical **abilities** both conventional and extraordinary, such as first aid, trauma surgery, regenerative powers or AI doctors, can be used to recover from physical injuries.
- Psychological **abilities** both conventional and extraordinary, such as therapy, psychiatry, meditation or telepathy, can be used to recover from mental injuries.
- Social **abilities** both conventional and extraordinary, such as leadership, charisma, magical glammers or familiarity with social networks can help recovery from social injuries.
- Engineering **abilities** such as mechanical repair, fusion engineering or blacksmithing can be used to repair damage to equipment.
- **Abilities** that represent beliefs, convictions, or ties to a community can be used in multiple situations to recover, representing the emotional ties that keep your PC going despite adversity. Your GM is encouraged to be liberal when allowing the usage of emotional ties to recover, provided their usage is 'fresh' within an episode.

##### 5.4.11.1 Recovery Sequences

Any attempt to recover is also a **chained sequence**. Your GM must decide how long each round takes in game time - the limitation on attempts to restore **resolve** is usually time.

On a **victory** you restore **recovery** equal to the **degrees of victory** plus *one* (see 5.4.11.2).

On a **defeat** your GM has the following options:

- Lost time is the only penalty - use this when there is little risk to helping others.



- The helping PC loses **resolve** - use this when there is a risk of the helping PC becoming exhausted or otherwise drained by their efforts.
- The PC being helped loses further **resolve** - use this when any intervention carries a risk of worsening the position such as when attempting to fix losses to relationships or mental health.

As with all **resolve** losses the PC losing **resolve** may opt to take a **consequence** instead, and the recovery **sequence** ends immediately. If it is credible, then **resolve** losses during recovery may also be transferred to **followers**.

The resistance for a recovery roll is always the **default** resistance.

When nested within another sequence the first **recovery** roll faces the **base resistance**. Each subsequent **recovery** attempt to the same beneficiary increases the **resistance** by +5. The **resistance** escalation occurs even when another PC steps in to make a subsequent **recovery**. This escalation allows the occasional dramatic rescue but makes it difficult for players to prolong losing battles to excruciating length. Increasing attempts to bring someone back from exhaustion become harder.

#### 5.4.11.2 RECOVERY OUTCOME TABLE

| Degrees of Victory | Gain | Degrees of Defeat | Loss |
|--------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| 0                  | 1    | 0                 | 1    |
| 1                  | 2    | 1                 | 2    |
| 2                  | 3    | 2                 | 3    |
| 3                  | 4    | 3                 | 4    |
| 4                  | 5    | 4                 | 5    |

#### 5.4.11.3 Exhaustion

If your resolve becomes **exhausted** (reaches *zero* resolve), you return to play with your starting **resolve** permanently reduced by *one*. This is the impact of trauma on your reserves to cope with further stresses.

When your starting **resolve** becomes *zero* your PC succumbs to the strains of an adventurous life and must retire from play, perhaps dead, perhaps in exile, perhaps incapacitated. It is time to create a new character.

You might decide to retire your PC earlier - as your starting **resolve** lowers your PC's ability to cope with a life of adventure diminishes.

### 5.5 Wagered Sequences vs Scored Sequences vs Chained Sequences

Your GM chooses ONE form of **sequence** for their game, and sticks to it. The **sequence** rules presentation here is modular: your GMs should choose the one that matches their genre.

**Scored sequences** are fast and simple, and we consider them the default. **Wagered sequences** have the drama of wagering and tend to encourage high-octane stunts, but can take longer to resolve. **Chained sequences** make all **contests** a sequence, where resolve is slowly worn down.

You can think of this as a continuum. At one end are gritty genres where you want to use a **chained**

**sequence** to reflect how punishing conflict is. At the other end are gonzo, larger-than-life genres where you want to use a **wagered sequence** to encourage crazy stunts and outrageous action. In the middle is the **scored sequence** which lets you focus in on tasks to add suspense and drama, without being too grim or too over-the-top.

If in doubt, use a **scored sequence** by default.

## 5.7 Lengthy Sequences

There's no particular time scale associated with **sequences**. But some **sequences** may by their very nature be a drama that can't be resolved at one point in the narrative. Examples include political campaigns, construction projects, or seductions. These can be resolved by **sequences** where each **round** is conducted at an appropriate moment, rather than in close succession.

Your GM will need to keep track of the *tally*. They need to keep the running total for **advantage points** or **resolution points**, and perhaps track running totals for **consequences** or **benefits** in a **chained sequence** if they only impact future **rounds** in the **sequence**. They will also have to track the **resistance**, though this might change as the context changes (a civil war started by the players could impede their castle-building plans).

The challenges of each round will vary, and you may use a different **ability** or **augment** in the each round.

## 6.0 Relationships

Abilities may represent your relationship to NPCs.

### 6.1 Supporting Characters

Many relationships connect you to NPCs controlled by the GM.

When you try to use one of these relationships to solve a problem, your **tactic** is your relationship **ability**. You can't simply go to the **supporting character** you have a relationship with, stick them with the problem, and expect to see it solved.

If you succeed, the **supporting character** helps you solve the problem. If you fail, they don't. As with any **ability**, you must still specify how the NPC goes about overcoming the **story obstacle** or answering the **story question**. Calls on relationships are almost always **contests**.

In crucial situations, it may seem dramatically inappropriate for you to solve a problem indirectly, by working through others.

You may expose the **supporting character** to serious risk. When **supporting characters** undertake significant risk, the **supporting character** may suffer a **consequences** commensurate with the **degree** of the **defeat** in the **contest**. Or it may simply be your relationship that is damaged or destroyed. Your GM should feel more at liberty to frame a contest with **supporting character** death, exile, or breakdown as an outcome than with a PC. If the character dies or otherwise suffers a change of status that renders them useless to you, you lose use of the relationship **ability** until your next **advance** (see §8.2) where you can replace them. Your GM should work with you to introduce a replacement at an appropriate

moment in the fiction. Before putting **supporting characters** at serious risk, your GM should make sure the players understand the magnitude of the possible consequences.

## 6.2 Allies

An **ally** is a character of roughly the same level of accomplishment as you, often in the same or a similar line of work. For every favor you ask of them they'll ask one of you. These reciprocal favors will be roughly equivalent in terms of risk, time commitment, resistance class, and inconvenience.

## 6.3 Patrons

**Patrons** enjoy greater access to assets than you, either through personal ownership (as in a wealthy entrepreneur or rich aristocrat) or authority (as in the governor of a state or province or the head of an organization). They may lend you advice or provide you with assets but are too busy and important to personally perform tasks for you. They may hire you to do jobs, or issue orders within a command structure to which you both belong.

When you roll your **patron** relationship, your GM adjusts the **resistance** depending on what you have done for them lately.

## 6.4 Contacts

A **contact** is a specialist in an **occupation**, skill, or area of expertise. **Contacts** provide you information and perform minor favors, but will expect information or small favors from you in return.

You can describe a **contact** as being a particular individual, or as a group of similar individuals.

### 6.4.1 Occupational Contacts

Any **occupational keyword** can be treated as a source of **contacts**. However, using an **occupational keyword** as a source of **contacts** will always be a **stretch** (see §2.5). To more reliably draw on particular **contacts** associated with your occupation, you should take a **breakout ability** under the **occupational keyword**.

## 6.5 Followers

A **follower** is a **supporting character** that travels with you and contributes on a regular basis to your success.

There are two types of followers: **sidekicks** and **retainers**.

**Followers** need not be people, or even sentient beings: you can write up a spirit guardian, trusty robot, or companion animal as a **follower**.

### 6.5.1 Sidekick

A **sidekick** is a **supporting character** under your control. Most of the time they stay at your side to render assistance, but they can also go off and perform errands or missions on their own.

You should give your **sidekick** a name. You should, when asked, explain how the **sidekick** came to be your **follower**, and why they continue in that role.

**Sidekicks** start with three **abilities**, one rated at 15 and the others at 10. Any of these **abilities** may be a **keyword**. At least one of them should indicate a **distinguishing characteristic**.

If the sidekick is nonhuman or a member of an unusual culture, one of its three starting **abilities** must be its species or culture **keyword**.

Once you have determined the **sidekick's** base **abilities**, you can allocate 10 **improvement points** amongst them, as described in Assigning Ability Ratings (see §3.4).

You can improve these **abilities** through the expenditure of **experience points**.

You may use any of your **sidekick's abilities** as your own. The **sidekick** can go off and do things without you.

### 6.5.2 Retainers

A **retainer** is a more or less anonymous servant or helper. You may specify a single **retainer**, or, where appropriate to your character concept, an entire staff of them.

Like any other **ability**, a **retainer ability** allows you to overcome relevant **story obstacles** by engaging in a **contest**. To model the contribution of **retainers**, when you are acting, you can use them to **augment** your **ability**. Your GM can rule that **consequences** apply to **retainers**.

**Retainers** generally regard you with all the affection and loyalty due to an employer or master. If you treat them more poorly than is expected for their culture, your GM should increase the **resistance** of attempts to make use of their talents.

## 6.6 Relationships as Flaws

Certain relationships with **supporting characters** act as **flaws**. They impose obligations on you, prompting your GM to present you with **story obstacles** you have no choice but to overcome or **story questions** you need to answer. Your GM should award you an **experience point** at the conclusion of any session of play where you or your GM created dramatic complications for you via a **relationship** that is a flaw.

### 6.6.1 Dependents

A **dependent** is a person, usually a family member or loved one, who requires your aid and protection. Your GM should periodically create storylines in which your **dependent** is endangered.

Rather than taking a **dependent** as a **flaw**, you may find it more fruitful to specify the nature of your relationship as an **ability**, such as *Love for Wife* or *Love for Son*.

### 6.6.2 Adversaries

An **adversary** is a rival, enemy or other individual who can be relied upon to periodically disrupt your plans.

The **adversary's** goals are probably the opposite of yours, although they could be a bitter rival within the same community, organization, or movement.

To treat an **adversary** as an **ability**, rather than a **flaw**, describe your emotional response to them. Examples: *Hates Leonard Crisp*, *Fears the Electronaut*, *Sworn Vengeance Against Heimdall*. That way, you still inspire your GM to add the plot elements you desire, but can use your antipathy toward the enemy to **augment** your **target numbers** against them.

## 7.0 Story Points

*QuestWorlds'* design favors pulp stories and cinematic action. **Story points** mirror the ability of heroes in these genres to “cheat death”, or “escape with one bound”.

Normally, your GM should ensure that **defeat** takes the story for your PC in an interesting new direction. Unlike some games, where your goal is to win against challenges set by the GM, in a storytelling game your goal is to tell a good story together. Just as in fiction the protagonist can suffer all sorts of reversals, so in a storytelling game, your PC should suffer all sorts of adversities before they triumph (or meet their tragic end). As a result, we recommend against the tendency to ‘buy off **defeat**’ with **story points** in the middle of the story. Instead, use **story points** when **defeat** would damage the conception of the character that you have been building during the story, or lead to an unsatisfactory climax to the story.

Your GM should push the story in an interesting new direction on **defeat** not send it to a dead end. If there is no interesting branch from **defeat** they should consider an **assured contest** instead.

In other genres, it may feel less appropriate that you can ‘cheat certain death.’ For those genres you can simply drop **story points** without impacting the game.

In games with a strong player vs. player element, your GM should dispense with **story points** as they become disruptive if used against each other.

### 7.1 Story Point Pool

At the beginning of play, your GM will create a **story point pool** for your group. The **story point pool** has one **story point** per PC.

During play you can **burn** one or more points from this **pool**, after which it is lost. You can decide to spend **story points** at any time. You do not need agreement from the other players to do so.

#### 7.1.1 Refreshing Story Points

Because you burn a **story point** to use it, your **story point pool** may become exhausted. The GM has three choices for **refreshing** your **story point pool**:

- The **story point pool refreshes** at the beginning of every session of play.
- The **story point pool refreshes** whenever your PCs engage in genre-appropriate downtime. Usually the GM plays this out as a montage, asking your character to describe genre appropriate activities in this time period. For example: in a police procedural series, the PCs might gather at a cop bar to drink and talk about their personal problems; in a series about high-school paranormal

investigators they might gather in the school library to chill with their mentor, the librarian, and talk about teenage problems.

- The **story point pool refreshes** whenever the GM deems it necessary, based on their desire to allow you to edit the upcoming story.

Ultimately your GM is always the arbiter of when and how the **story point pool refreshes**. On a refresh your **story points** pool resets to one **story point** per PC.

### 7.1.2 Story Point Pool Summary

To summarize:

- At the beginning of a session you have 1 **story points** per PC in the pool.
- During the session you may **burn story points**.
- **Story points** that are burned are lost from the **story point pool**.
- The GM decides on the conditions to a refresh a **story point pool**.
- The **story point pool** refreshes to 1 **story point** per PC in the pool.

## 7.2 Success with a Story Point

You can burn a **story point** to gain an additional **success** (see §2.3.6)

### 7.3 Plot Edits

*QuestWorlds* is a co-operative game, and you may create details about the setting as the normal part of narration. Your GM should allow this, as long as they do not break credibility. So, you may describe your PC walking over to the pot of soup bubbling on the fire, swiping a drink from the tray the waiter is carrying at the governor's ball, or taking the monorail to the next city to continue your investigation. Your GM should allow these additions without interruption, providing it does not confer significant advantage to your PC. Mostly this will be using elements that have already been established as part of the setting.

A **plot edit** is a more significant moment of good fortune that you wish to narrate, that provides advantage to your PC. You are not just describing something that is plausible in the environment, but something whose existence aids you in overcoming **story obstacles** or revealing the answer to a **story question**.

A **plot edit** might be thought of as 'fate' or 'luck.'

Burning **story points** for a **plot edit** allows you to modify the setting or environment in your PC's favor. The chance encounter in the street with an NPC, favorable weather, car keys in the sun visor, the forthcoming eclipse, the wind that fills the sails.

Your GM is the arbitrator of whether a **plot edit** is allowed. It should not suspend the disbelief of the other players in the game or setting or hamper their enjoyment. It should not derail or short-circuit the game's entertainment. The **plot edit** should, by contrast, be something that enhances the story for all the players.

The cost, in **story points**, of a **plot edit**, is given by the following table.

### 7.3.1.1 PLOT EDIT TABLE

| Level    | Cost | Impact  | Example  |
|----------|------|---|--|
| Marginal | 1    | A substantive change that does not alter the situation but offers an alternate avenue for resolution                    | The gate guard at the secret government facility tonight is an old war buddy established by the PC in a prior scene and cemented as a relationship |
| Minor    | 2    | A substantive change that does not flow from previously established facts in the story. A <i>dens ex machina</i> change | The XO of the Patrol ship is an old drinking buddy of your PC, a fact not previously established in play   |
| Major    | 3    | A stroke of good fortune that is unrelated to prior events and resolves a conflict or reveals a secret                  | The vampire has failed to notice the approaching sunrise, which disintegrates them just as they are about to drain the incapacitated PC            |

## 8.0 Experience

During a session of play your character will have the chance to learn from experience or overcoming personal obstacles. When your character learns, they gain a **experience points**. **Experience points** can be used to improve your character.

### 8.1 Earning Experience Points

You gain one **experience points** for any of the following:

- When your **outcome** for a **contest** is a **defeat**.
- Your GM uses a **flaw** or other **ability** against you in a contest with you (see §2.6). This happens either when the story forced you to confront a **flaw**, or the GM gave you a **hindrance** (see §3.4), if the **hindrance** results in a **penalty**.

Note the following restrictions:

- You only gain an **experience point** for each of your **abilities** or **flaws** once in a session of game play.
- You do not get **experience points** for an **augment**, **AP gifting** or **assist**.
- You do not gain an **experience point** from an **assured contest**, even if you roll to determine **benefits** or **consequences**.

You can gain a maximum of five **experience points** in any one session. Once you have earned five **experience points**, you cannot gain further **experience points** in that session.



### 8.1.1 Experience on Defeat

Awarding **experience points** on **defeat** is a self-correction mechanism.

- It slows your advance if your PC regularly outclass the **resistance**. This pushes your GM to introduce threats that **credibly** present a greater threat to your PC.
- If you regularly buy off **defeat** with **story points** you will find it harder to advance. In *QuestWorlds* your GM should provide an entertaining story branch on defeat; you should not need to buy **defeat** off, unless it damages your character conception or is the climax.

If the GM finds that the PCs are no longer regularly earning **experience points** they can consider using **resistance progression** (see §2.13) to increase the **base resistance** so that more **contests** will feature a high enough resistance to earn **experience points**.

## 8.2 Improving Your Character

When you accumulate 10 **experience points**, you can buy an **advance**. An **advance** allows you to select two of the following. You cannot choose an option more than once, unless it is repeated.

- 10 **improvement points** across standalone **abilities**.
- 10 **improvement points** across standalone **abilities**.
- 5 **improvement points** across **keywords**.
- 5 **improvement points** across **keywords**.
- increase an existing breakout **ability** by +5.
- a new breakout **ability** at + 5.
- a new standalone **ability** at 10.
- Turn a stand-alone **ability** into a **keyword** by adding a new +5 breakout **ability** to it.
- Drop a **flaw**, or turn it into an **ability** if story appropriate and agreed with the GM.
- Replace a **supporting character** who has been lost (see §6.1).

In addition, if you have less than three **flaws**, you may add another, provided it fits the story, when you take an **advance**.

You may spend **improvement points** immediately, or in play, even after a roll. You may not spend **improvement points** to increase **breakouts** only **keywords** or standalone **abilities**.

In some genres you may wish to maintain a tally of the total **experience points** earned as a measure of your reputation.

### 8.2.1 Rate of Advancement

We assume an average earning rate of two **experience points** per session. This would lead to you gaining an advance every five sessions. If your rate is lower than one **experience point** a session, your GM should choose one of these options:

- Provide more credible threats
- Use **resistance progression**
- Reduce the cost of an **advance** to five **experience points**.

### 8.2.2 Directed Improvements

On occasion your GM may increase one of your **abilities**, by +5, +10 or +15, or give you a new **ability**, usually rated at 10. These are called **directed improvements**.

**Directed improvements** are usually rewards for overcoming particularly important or dramatic **story obstacles** or answering a dramatically important **story question**.

Your GM will tend to use them to raise **abilities** that would otherwise fall behind, but should increase due to story logic, or introduce new **abilities** for the same reason.

Your GM might give you a new **flaw** to represent a story outcome from a contest, that leads you with a hindrance to future action. If you have three or more **flaws** you can ask your GM to drop one in favor of the new **flaw**, if you it seems story appropriate.

### 8.2.3 Timing of Improvements

Your improvements happen immediately, when you cross the threshold to buy an **advance**, or a GM awards you a **directed improvement**.

## 8.3 Milestone Improvements

Your GM may decide that they do not want to track **experience points** earned during a game. In this case they may switch to **milestone improvement**.

Under **milestone improvements** the GM simply declares that your PCs have reached a point in the story where we should see them improve their **abilities** and award you an **advance** (see §8.2).

Your GM should not use both **experience points** and **milestone improvements** but choose one. If in doubt, choose **experience points** as the default. **Milestone improvements** do not naturally balance against the **resistance** and the GM may need to use **resistance progression** to continue to up the threat level against your PCs (see §2.8).

## 9.0 Community Resources and Support

Some series revolve around the relationship between a band of influential figures and the community they protect. In defense of the community, they can **bolster**, expend, and juggle its various **resources**.

These rules allow your GM to track the rise and fall of the fortunes of your community, and your impact on them.

If your GM intend to play a game centered around a community, you should have a relationship **ability** to that community.

It is possible that you have relationships with other communities that are not the focus of play. Treat these relationships as **abilities** that you can call on, but your GM should not track these communities with these rules. Your GM should pick the level of community that provides the greatest dramatic potential from its competition for **resources**, friendly or otherwise, with its rivals.

Some campaigns do not center on a community, with the adventurers being footloose wanderers. In that case, even if you have community **abilities**, your GM will not track any community. Before you decide this though, consider where your PCs might turn for help, succor, or aid. Is there somewhere in the campaign defined as a place of refuge and safety for you. It may well be that there is a community, the bar where other footloose adventurers all meet, who will help each other out in a tight spot for example, that your GM can model.

## 9.1 Community Design

### 9.1.1 Defining Resources

Communities have **resources** that your GM defines. Your PC can try to draw on their community's **resources** to use them as **bonus**. If your community is in difficulty, a strained **resource** might act as a **penalty**. Your GM should focus on no more than five or so broadly-labeled **resource** types, so that the PCs can care about (and have a chance of successfully managing) all of them.

Most communities have variants of the following **resources**, perhaps with more colorful names:

- Wealth — the capacity of the community to provide financial help, whether counted primarily in dollars, credits, or cattle
- Diplomacy — the relationships with other groups through which a community can obtain favors, while minimizing the cost of its reciprocal obligations
- Morale — the community's resolve to achieve its goals, and willingness to follow the directives of its leaders

The following abilities might appear, depending on setting:

- Military — its capacity to defend itself from outside threats, and to aggressively achieve its own aims through force of arms (for settings where communities of the size you're tracking field their own armed units)
- Magic — the capability of a community to perform supernatural acts (for fantasy worlds)
- Technology — its access to specialized, rare or secret devices or scientific knowledge not shared by its rivals (for post-apocalyptic or SF worlds)

Similar communities in the genre, should have the same set of **resources**.

### 9.1.2 Rating Resources

Your GM distributes each of bonuses of: 5, 10, 15, and 20 between the four of the five **resources**. The last resource has no **bonus**. Note that the size of the group doesn't affect the **bonuses**.

### 9.1.3 Community Questionnaires

Your GM may create a questionnaire that asks the players to make choices about the priorities of their community. The responses to each question should be multiple-choice. Each choice you make adds points to a score for each **resource** type. Points are awarded according to what the answer reveals about the community's relative priorities. An answer may give points to more than one **resource**.

You can choose your answers by consensus, majority vote, or take turns.

When you're done, rank the **resources** in the order of the scores. Assign the high **bonuses** to the highest scores and the lowest to the low.

A questionnaire also introduces your setting in a punchy, interactive format, and tailors the community to the players' desires, increasing their investment in it.

## 9.2 Drawing on Resources

You can use community **resources** as a **bonus** to your **abilities** after convincing the community to let you expend precious assets. This requires a preliminary **contest** using a social **ability**, most likely your community relationship. Your GM will use a **moderate resistance** as the baseline, with higher **resistances** when your proposals seem selfish or likely to fail, and lower ones when everyone but the dullest dolt would readily see their collective benefits. Your GM may increase **resistances** if your group draws constantly on community **resources** without replenishing them.

The lobbying effort and the actual resource use require framing, a clear description of what you are doing, and other details to bring them to fictional life. You cannot use **resource abilities** directly, but as an **bonus** to your own **abilities**.

Use of community **resources** should pass the threshold for being *memorable* and *entertaining*. Normally there should be a clear benefit to the community, or risk to the community. The PC's actions should be in support of the community, not themselves. Community involvement becomes part of the story. A certain amount of routine support for your character is assumed; a **bonus** implies that the community is expending abnormal effort on your behalf, that will cost the community itself.

### 9.2.1 Resource Depletion

Unlike character abilities, each use of community **resources** temporarily **depletes** it. Regardless of **outcome** a **resource** takes a **penalty** of -5 when used. Effectively, this reduces the **bonus** by 5.

Your GM decides when a **resource** is restored to its original value. Your GM should decide what the credible interval is for the community to recover from the expenditure of effort. At that point, your GM restores the **bonus** for the **resource**.

You might chose to use a **resource** when it is already depleted, in which case you use it at its reduced value. Your GM may use this to represent attrition to your community from a continued struggle. A **resource** that is depleted enough to fall below *zero* becomes a **penalty**.

Threats to community **resources** act as a spur to PC action. Your GM may rule that the **outcome** from a **contest** where you did not use the **resource** may still deplete a community **resource**.

### 9.2.2 Required Resource Use

As part of your GM's setting design, they may specify that certain actions in a setting always require the use of a community **resource**. Because the **resource** use is obligatory, it need not meet the usual criteria for entertainment value.

### 9.2.4 Resource as a Penalty

A **resource's bonus** may fall below 0. If you require use of a community's **resources** (see §9.2.2) your actions will be subject to a **penalty**.

### 9.2.4 Bolstering Resources

Your GM may offer you the opportunity to **bolster** a community **resources** ahead of need by seeking out and overcoming relevant **story obstacles**. If you succeed, the community resource improves by +5. Your GM will set the **resistance** for the **bolster**. The community's higher ranked resources should have higher **resistances** to **bolstering**. As a default, use the current **bonus** as the **modifier** to **base resistance** as the **TN** for the **bolstering**.

For clarity, a **resource** rated at +M can be bolstered to +M2.

**Bolstering** lasts until the **resource** is used. When your GM depletes a **bolstered resource** following usage, they remove only the additional +5 from **bolstering**.

If a **resource** is already suffering from a **penalty**, bolstering removes that **penalty** instead of improving it by +5.

### 9.2.5 Background Events

In the background all sorts of other events periodically alter the community's prosperity. These include the actions of other community members, who are **depleting and bolstering resources** all the time, as well as the unexpected intrusion of outside forces.

Your GM may decide that the community's **bonus** in a **resource** is temporarily at a higher or lower due to these outside events. Your GM decides when the **resource** returns to normal. This may require you to overcome a **story obstacle**.

## 10.0 Appendix

### 10.1 Glossary of Terms

**Ability** Anything you can apply to solve a problem or overcome an obstacle.

**Advance** A package of improvements to your **abilities** and **keywords** earned through **experience points** or **milestone advancement**.

**Advantage Point (AP)** A measure of advantage in a **wagered sequence**.

**Ally** A **supporting character** of roughly equal ability to your own.

**AP** Abbreviation for Advantage Point.

**AP Gifting** When you help another character, whilst uninvolved in a **contest**, by giving them **advantage points** in a **wagered sequence**.

**AP Lending** When you help another character, whilst engaged in a **contest**, by lending them **advantage points**, in a **wagered sequence**.

**Asymmetrical Exchange** In a **wagered sequence**, where you are pressed by an opponent, but want to do something other than contend directly for the **prize**.

**Asymmetrical Round** In a **scored sequence**, where you are pressed by an opponent, but want to do something other than contend directly for the **prize**.

**Assist** In a **scored sequence**, if you are unengaged you may use an **assist** to reduce the **resolution points** scored against another character.

**Augment** Using one **ability** to help another **ability**.

**Assured Contest** You have an appropriate **ability** and the GM feels **failure** is not interesting, or makes the PC looks un-heroic.

**Background Event** An off-stage **bonus** or **penalty** applied to a **resource**.

**Base resistance** The **TN** for a **moderate resistance class**, from which all other **resistance classes** are figured as a **bonus** or **penalty**.

**Benefit of Victory** Long term positive **bonus**, because you won a **contest**, against a challenging opponent (not -6 or less than your **ability**). Usually a **state of fortune**.

**Bolster** A **story obstacle** to apply a bonus to a community **resource**

**Bonus** A positive modifier.

**Burn** Using a **story point** as a bump. The **story point** is lost after burning.

**Catch-Up** When you cross a **mastery** threshold you can increase lesser used **abilities** to ensure they keep pace.

**Contact** A **supporting character** who shares an **occupation** or interest with your character.

**Contest** Where there is uncertainty as to whether a PC can overcome a **story obstacle** or discover a secret, then your GM can call for a contest to determine if the PC succeeds or fails.

**Consequences** Long term negative modifier, because you lost a contest. Usually a **state of adversity**.

**Contest Framing** Setting the stakes of the **contest**, what is this conflict about. Often not the immediate aftermath of victory.

**Credibility Test** Is it possible to perform the action without an **ability**, with an ordinary **ability**, or only with a **extraordinary ability**?

**Crisis Test** Used to determine if a **resource** that has a **penalty** creates a crisis.

**Defeat** Your **result** is worse than the **resistance's** result.

**Defensive Response** In a **scored sequence** you can choose a defensive **tactic** which reduces the **resolution points** you lose on a negative **result**.

**Degree** The difference between the **successes** of the victor and the loser in a **contest**.

**Dependent** A **supporting character** who depends on your PC.

**Depletion** Use of a community **resource** leads to its depletion.

**Directed Improvement** When your GM grants you a new **ability**, or an increase to an existing one, to recognize a story event.

**Distinguishing Characteristic** The dominant personality **ability** that others recognize in a character.

**Exchange** In a **wagered sequence** a round is divided into two **exchanges** where both aggressor and defender act. In a **group wagered sequence** a round consists of a sequence of **exchanges** where everyone acts in turn. The GM determines the order of action.

**Experience Points (XP)** When you experience **defeat**, or a **flaw** you may gain an **experience point**, which accumulate between sessions.

**Extraordinary ability** Certain genres allow player characters to have **abilities** that exceed human norms, these are **extraordinary abilities**. A genre pack normally outlines what is possible as part of its extraordinary powers framework.

**Failure** Rolling over your **target number**.

**Final Action** A last action by a PC on 0 AP in a **wagered sequence**

**Flaw** An **ability** that penalizes you instead of helping you.

**Follower** A **supporting character** under your control. Either a **sidekick** or **retainer**

**Framing the contest** You and your GM agree on the **prize** for the victor, and your tactic in trying to win it.

**Group chained sequence** A **chained sequence** in which more than a pair of opponents contend for the **prize**

**Group scored sequence** A **scored sequence** in which more than a pair of opponents contend for the **prize**

**Group wagered sequence** A **wagered sequence** in which more than a pair of opponents contend for the **prize**

**Group Contest** A **contest** where one side has multiple participants.

**Graduated Goals** When a contestant has a **primary** and **secondary** goal, and may have to choose between them.

**Story Point** Allows you to alter fate for a player character, either by a **bump** to their **result** or a **plot edit**.

**Keyword** A single **ability** that encompasses a range of abilities within it, such as an **occupation** or culture. An **ability** within an **umbrella keyword** is a **break-out ability**, an **ability** within a **package keyword** is a **stand-alone ability**.

**Milestone Advancement** A method for improving a character where the GM declares when you receive an **advance**.

**Mastery** An **ability score** that rises above 20 is said to have a **mastery**.

**Mismatched Goals** When the opposing sides in a **contest** want different **prizes**.

**Modifier** A change to the PC's **target number** from the situation; the strength of the **resistance** to the PC's actions.

**Occupation** An **ability** that indicates the profession, or primary area of expertise, of your character.

**Outcome** A **contest** has an **outcome**, described as a **victory** or **defeat** in obtaining the **prize** that was agreed in **contest framing** for any PCs involved.

**Parting Shot** An attempt to make your opponent's **defeat** worse in a **sequence** (**scored** or **extended**), by 'finishing them off'.

**Patron** A **supporting character** with superior assets.

**Penalty** A negative modifier.

**Prize** What is at stake in the **contest**, decided during **framing**.

**Rating** An ability has a **rating**, between 1 and 20, indicating how likely a character is to succeed at using it.

**Resistance** The forces opposing the PC in a conflict, or concealing a secret that must be overcome by using an **ability** in a **contest**. A **resistance** is measured as a **base resistance** modified by a **degree** depending on how easy or hard the obstacle is to overcome in genre.

**Resolution Point (RP)** In a **scored sequence** an **RP** tracks the advantage one contestant has over the other.

**Resource** A community **ability** that your PC may draw on.

**Result** The **outcome** of a die roll against a **TN**. One of **big success**, **success**, and **failure**

**Retainer** A **follower** of your PC who is not 'fleshed out' and cannot act independently.

**Risky Gambit** In a **sequence** you can take an action that puts you at more risk on defeat, but enhances victory.

**Round** A **sequence** is broken into a series of rounds, each of which is an attempt to obtain the **prize**.



In a **wagered sequence** a round is further broken into a number of **exchanges** in which all participants have the chance to act. Resolution is via a **contest** that affects the *tally* used for that **sequence** type, or applies immediate **consequences**.

**Scored Sequence** A **sequence** where we track the relative advantage one contestant has over another using **resolution points**

**Second Chance** An attempt by **defeated**, but unengaged, PCs to re-enter a **wagered sequence**.

**Sequence** A **contest** where we drill-down to the individual exchanges that resolve the conflict. We support **scored**, **extended**, and **chained sequences**

**Sidekick** A fleshed out **follower** of your PC who can act independently.

**Situational Modifier** A **bonus** or **penalty** modifying a **target number** due to notably clever or foolish **tactics**.

**Supporting Characters** Additional characters under the player's control that play a supporting role to their PC.

**Contest** A one roll resolution method, the default **contest** type, used when learning the **outcome** matters more than the breakdown of how you achieved it.

**Stand Alone Ability** An **ability** raised separately to a **keyword**. It may have been added to the character as part of a **package keyword**, or on its own.

**Story Obstacle** Something that prevents you from getting what you want, the **prize**. A **story obstacle** is the trigger for a **contest**.

**Story Question** Something that you need to understand before you can move forward in a story, the **prize**. A **story question** is the trigger for a question.

**Stretch** A **penalty** applied to an **ability** because it stretches credibility that it is a reasonable **tactic**.

**Success** Rolling under your **target number**. It can be a **big success** or just a plain **success**.

**Tactic** How you intend to use one of your **abilities** to overcome a **story obstacle**

**Target Number (TN)** The number, either an **ability rating**, or a **resistance**, to roll under or equal to in order to **succeed**.

**TN** Abbreviation for **Target Number**

**Unrelated Action** An action when you are disengaged in a **sequence** that does not relate to your attempt to win the **prize**.

**Victory** Your **result** is a better roll than the **resistance**.

**Wager** Also an **AP Wager** or **advantage point wager** is your wager in a **wagered sequence**.

**Wagered sequence** A type of **sequence** in which you track the relative advantage one opponent has over another using **advantage points**.

## 10.2 Version Changes

### Version 3.0

These are the major changes in this version of the rules

- Moved to measuring a result by a number of successes and comparing them, simplifying masteries.
- Split hero points into story points (bumps) and experience points (character improvement). Flaws generate experience points as do failures.
- Removed the Degree of Victory. Now just calculate outcome degrees from success counts.
- Changed degree of success and failure, to degree of victory and defeat, as success and failure are for individual rolls, victory and defeat once compared.

- Made degrees codify the +5, +10, +15, ... progression used throughout, for example degrees of resistance.
- For outcomes clarified that contest results are only reciprocal between PCs. When the contest is against a resistance set by the GM, the results indicate whether the PC gains the prize, and the GM narrates the result for the resistance based on this.
- Changed outcomes to emphasize degrees. This change is designed to dissuade GMs from misunderstanding that the prize is obtained on a marginal victory, one of the most common result types, and instead encourage GMs to allow PCs to fail forward on a zero degree victory by introducing downstream complications or consequences.
- Provided clarity that consequences of defeat and benefit of victory are optional and the GM should focus on using the prize to narrate the outcome of a contest, only applying mechanical benefits or penalties if they make sense.
- Specific Ability Bonuses are dropped. They were hard for the GM to adjudicate and the same intent is better served by using a stretch on a broad ability when contesting against a PC with a more specific ability.
- Made it clear that only a PC should use a parting shot, not the resistance.
- Sequences replace all 'long' contest types. Between version 1 and version 2 extended contests switched to scored contests, this approach restores both variants, but changes the name to a sequence generically, factoring out commonality, and to scored and wagerding respectively. Goal is to show contest as the atomic unit within a sequence.
- Dropped edges and handicaps - we use a resistance not stats, so makes no sense to have edges and handicaps
- Added Mythic Russia's Plot Edits
- Simplified how multiple opponents are handled.
- Clarified contest outcomes for sequences, and how to determine the overall winner in a sequence.
- Do not allow transfers in a wagered sequence where the abilities differ by 6 or more. Consistent with benefits of victory and prevents 'loading up on mooks' as a strategy.