# General System

## Action Rolls

When a character encounters a situation where their success is uncertain, the Storyteller should call for an Action Roll to determine the outcome.

The Storyteller will ask for a combination of an Attribute and Ability that is appropriate for the situation, and then determine an appropriate Difficulty for the roll.

The Player will then roll a number of Ten-Sided Dice (d10’s) equal to the combined rating of the selected Attribute and Ability--this combined number is called the Dice Pool.

This will be referred to as [Att+Abi] xd10’s.

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| **Only roll if the Result is unknown**  If the outcome of an action is already known beforehand (either as a failure or a success), there is no need for a roll--simply declare what happens and continue on with the story. |

### Successes

After rolling their Dice Pool, the player needs to count the number of dice that are showing digits equal or greater than the Target Number of 7. Examine the results of six rolled dice:

**1, 4, 4, 7, 8 , 8**

The values of 7, 8, and 8 are greater than or equal to (7), so they are each counted as a success, meaning this particular roll would result in 4Successes.

### Double 10’s

A die that shows 10 is counted as two successes, rather than one. If the roll had instead been:

**1, 4, 4, 7, 8, 10**

7 and 8 would be counted once, and 10 counted twice, making 4 successes on the roll.

### Difficulty

*Before a roll is performed*, the Storyteller should determine the **Difficulty** of the roll--the number of successes that the roll must match or exceed for the action to be considered a success.

* **Difficulty 1 (Easy)**- This task is expected to be passed by a skilled mortal, but there is still a reasonable risk of failing.
* **Difficulty 3 (Typical)**- This task is challenging to a mere mortal, but a hero is expected to pass it. Picking a lock, calming an irate guardsman, or basic first aid would fall under this category.
* **Difficulty 5** **(Difficult)**- Tasks which are daunting fall in this category--climbing a sheer cliff in winds, charming a staunch Dynast with sweet words, or avoiding the bite of a venomous beast.
* **Difficulty 7 (Challenging)**- Tasks which should be near-impossible for any mortal. Such as noticing things in pitch darkness, or landing on a precise spot hundreds of feet below.
* **Difficulty 9 (Impossible)**- Tasks a mortal could not possibly do, no matter the circumstances. Running straight up a building, leaping across a chasm unassisted, or keeping a patient alive without a heart for hours at a time with their bare hands.

### Threshold Successes

Some rolls are not as much concerned with *whether* the character succeeds, but *by how much*. This is simply the difference between the total Number of Successes rolled, and the Difficulty.

If a Player rolled Four (4) Successes on a Difficulty One (1) task, they would then have Three (3) Threshold Successes.

### Contested Actions

Certain actions are contested between abilities of two or more characters, rather than a simple difficulty.

In this case, all characters simply roll their appropriate Dice Pool, and compare who got the highest number of Successes.

#### Taking the Average

The Storyteller should take the average number of successes for non-player characters as ½ their Dice pool, which is their [Att + Ability +/- Modifiers]

*There are two characters in the scene: a guard and a thief. The guard is keeping watch, and the thief is attempting to sneak past them. The dice pool for the player-controlled thief would be Dexterity + Stealth.*

*Since this is a NPC, and there are no dice-affecting powers active, the storyteller simply takes the average: (Cunning + Awareness)/2. Should the thief match or surpass that number, they successfully sneak past. Should they not, the guard discovers them*.

## Drawbacks

Exalts can push themselves past their mortal limits and achieve the impossible--but it often comes at a price.

Ater the Player rolls and all effects finalized, the Player may choose to **Take a Drawback**. In exchange, they gain **+2 successes** to a roll, or **+1** **Defense**. Only one drawback may be taken per action.

**Note:** Drawbacks cannot be taken for Luck Rolls, Limit Break, Join Battle or anything else that uses a 1d10 as its roll.

A Drawback can be any sort of action that the Storyteller deems to be a proper **Price to Pay** for succeeding (or exceeding) their roll.

The following are a list of Examples, but should not be treated as exhaustive or exclusive:

### Gain Limit

*Immediately Limit Break at 10.*

The character gains 1 point of [Limit](#_toc164), representing the spiritual stress required to do the task.

### Wound/Exhaustion

*Cannot take more than (-5) total Wounds/Exhaustions at a time.*

The strain from pushing beyond their natural constraints causes the character to become injured or exhausted.

For the remainder of the scene, and then until the character can take an uninterrupted, restful night’s sleep, the character suffers (-1) dice to any roll made with the Attribute Category (Physical, Social, or Mental) they used on this roll.

### The Scene Turns Sour

*This Drawback may only be taken once per scene.*

After this action, the scene becomes negative, if not mildly hostile, towards the character. Perhaps they offended a vital character with their action, or they accidentally gave a secret up to the Antagonist that they can use.

## Botching

If a character fails their action, they may choose to *worsen* their failure dramatically, as represented by taking a Drawback. In exchange, they will gain a [**Strife Point**](#_toc199).

If at all possible, the Player should try to include their **Great Curse** as reasoning for this Botch. Perhaps a prideful character could not help but reveal a secret in their boasting; a compassionate one unable to hide their disgust at conditions of the city when talking to an official.

## Advantages and Disadvantages

The difficulty of an action can be modified by various conditions, whether it be environmental, helpful, or antagonistic. Advantages and Disadvantages are collectively called **Modifiers**.

Advantages grant characters extra dice to roll with on their action, whereas Disadvantages increase the difficulty of the roll.

For clarity, Advantages are written as (+X) dice, whereas Disadvantages are written as (-X)--as they can also be interpreted as losing successes from a roll.

Any **Modifier** should be something significant to the scene--something that would perturb even an Exalt. A light rain, while thematic, would not count as a disadvantage. Only when the levels of pummeling rain (-1), or even a raging Typhoon (-4)

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| **Natural Modifiers and Difficulty**  Difficulty is a measure of “Base difficulty + all Disadvantages”. This can often be forgotten when choosing a Difficulty for a task, or when countering specific modifiers.  If a player removes the “visual impairment” modifier from a Difficulty 7 task, it is up to the Storyteller to decide how much of the Difficulty for the task was a result of “visual impairment”, and how much is simply the base difficulty of the task. |

## Stunting

The setting of *Exalted* encourages wild, ambitious, and perhaps dangerous actions of the characters. When a player describes their character doing a “cool” action, the Storyteller should reward them.

When a player performs a stunt, they get **+2 Dice** for their action.

But the true power is that-should they succeed on the roll-what the player describes is what actually happens in the setting. What is impossible becomes temporarily possible. A list of example Stunts is provided with each Ability, as inspiration.

There are limits to Stunting. A Player cannot dictate the actions or emotions of characters, for example, and the Storyteller reserves the right to reject or alter the stated effects of the stunt as needed.

The guiding philosophy of stunts is the “Rule of Cool.” If the stated action is “cool” and enhances an existing action, it should both be allowed and encouraged.

### Assisting

A player may assist another character, granting them +2 dice. The receiving character may only accept one Assist per roll.

The Receiving Player may both accept an Assist, as well as stunt their own action.

Assisting is considered a Primary Action.

## Essence

Essence is the fundamental energy that flows through the world, all creatures, and mortals. Exalts are able to guide their own Essence flows to create powerful effects upon the world, called Charms.

A character’s Essence Rating is a measure of how in tune the character is with the flows of energy through and surrounding them. Much like an Attribute, it has a Rating ranging between One and Five. (Mortals have a Rating of Zero.)

The Rating of Essence cannot be directly trained. Instead, it only increases in rating as the character gains xp.

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| **The Uniqueness of Player Characters**  Player Characters are unusual in the sheer speed and heights they can reach with Essence. The constant stress and challenge of adventure accelerates the gain of Essence far beyond what is normal in the world of Exalted.  Non-Player Characters do not follow the same rapid gain of Essence that Player Characters do, and are often constrained and capped, limiting what Essence Rating they can reach based on their circumstances.  Dragonblooded, for example, would find it takes a lifetime to even reach Essence 3--only the eldest of their kind would have access to Major Charms. |

### Motes

Essence expenditure is measured in *Motes*. When activating a Power that requires motes of Essence the exalt will drain from their mote pools: **Personal** and/or **Peripheral.**

**Personal Motes** are intrinsic to the character. Expenditure of these motes are subtle and do not agitate their anima banner. However, they regain more slowly at a rate of **2 Motes per Hour** of non-strenuous activity.

**Peripheral Motes** are the character’s ability to manipulate the world immediately surrounding them, channelling it to their will. Using these motes will **expose their anima banner**.

Peripheral Mote pools are automatically refilled at the start of each Scene.

#### Antagonistic Locations

There are certain locations that are either devoid of Essence, such as the **Underworld**, or are filled with antagonistic Essence that cannot be easily drawn inward, like **The Wyld**.

In these locations, all characters will suffer a Penalty to their Peripheral Mote pool, lowering their capacity.. For example, the penalty suffered by Underworld would be as follows, as the characters descends deeper away from Creation:

* Shadowlands: -5
* Underworld: -10
* The Labyrinth: -15
* The Void: -20

## Anima Banner

Exalts are brimming with energy, their souls suffused with the crackling energy.

Whenever a character **uses Peripheral Motes**, this energy crackles to life, and their very soul starts to show to the world in the form of the **Anima Banner**--a display of light that starts as a soft glow and eventually escalates to a towering bonfire of personal iconography and symbols deeply personal to the character.

**Using enough Peripheral Motes in a single action** will inflame the anima banner:

* **(0m) Dim** The natural state of the anima. It is invisible to all natural senses, but may be seen by those that can peek into the Spirit Realm.
* **(1-5m) Glowing** A thin outline of the anima appears around the character, with the respective Caste Mark appearing on their brow. Characters may still disguise and hide their anima through mundane means, such as clothes.
* **(6-10m) Burning** Essence burns and sheds from the Exalts body, much like the burning of a fire. Hiding the anima at this level is impossible through mundane means.
* **(11m+) Bonfire** A grand display of solidified Essence wraps around the body, shining its personal iconography to all of those in the scene.

Anima Flare takes 15 minutes to naturally abate and decrease in rating, so long that no action inflames them again. Often, this means that the Burning and Bonfire Levels will be active for an entire scene.

Exalts may choose to intentionally increase their anima to any desired level by committing One Mote (as a Reflexive Action.). This effect immediately dissipates after releasing the mote to its natural state, and does not need time to abate.

#### Splitting Motes

When taking an action, a Player may split their motes between their Personal and Peripheral motes in order to avoid their Anima banner flare.

For example, activating a 10m charm can avoid a Burning Bonfire anima level by paying 5m from the Personal Mote pool, and 5m from the Peripheral Mote pool. Doing so would only activate the Glowing Anima level.

## The Great Curse

Exaltation is a great and wondrous blessing from the Gods, but with it comes a great and terrible Curse. Perhaps, as the ancient and lost stories speak, the slain Enemies of the Gods lay this Curse upon their servants as a last, spiteful word in their dying breath. Or perhaps it is simply inalienable nature of man, exemplified and given root in power.

Regardless of its source, every Exalt carries with them the Great Curse, an aggrandized character flaw that can interrupt and sabotage a character’s well meaning in spite of their better nature.

Each Exaltation carries with a different interpretation and influence of the Great Curse:

* **Solars** suffer by their own Ego. They are those that tirelessly seek greatness and perfection, and may find others or even themselves not up to the standards they desire.
* **Lunars** suffer from being trapped between worlds and are conflicted by the unknown. Are they man or beast? A part of society or apart from it? Their form is constantly shifting, so who are they really?
* **Abyssals** have a portion of their self consumed by the void: something that is lost and that can never be reclaimed. It may be their name and relations; their lost vitality; a loss of emotion and feeling.

Each individual Exaltation book details their Great Curse, but it is important to know that these are all  *suggestions*. So long as a character has a flaw that affects their decision, it is an acceptable Great Curse.

### Limit

The stress and wear of an Exalt’s life will build and press upon them, eventually driving them to a breaking point. This is represented by **Limit Points**.

Ranging from 0-10, **Limit Points** represent how strained the Exalt is--how much wear and tear their psyche and soul is under.

A character gains limit by:

* Choosing it as a Drawback.
* Acting against one of their Intimacies, or other deeply-held beliefs. (One Limit per scene).   
    
  This can range from directly suppressing Intimacies in order to proceed with the “greater good”, to being tricked and swindled into taking action against your Intimacies, such as through Social Influence.  
    
  Ultimately, the decision of whether or not the Character has “acted against their Intimacy” is a personal one, and should be at sole discretion of the Player.

If the character reaches **10 Limit**, or if they fail on their **Limit Trigger**, the character will enter into a **Limit Break.**

At the end of a Limit Break, reset to 0 Limit.

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| **The Calming Effect of Time**  Typically, Limit *only* resets after a Limit Break. However, long spans of rest, meditation, and peace may ease the Exalt down from their stressed life.  So long as the time breaks are particularly restful, the Exalt may lose 1 Limit per week. |

### Limit Triggers

When detailing out their Great Curse, the Player will also need to decide what sort of events will **inflame** their Great Curse. This is called the **Limit Trigger.**

A compassionate character might balk whenever they see a wanton, senseless act of cruelty upon another--such as a slave being whipped. Another might be the sense of failure and dejection when a plan spirals out of control.

When this event occurs (and the character has at least 2 Limit,) the Player must roll a 1d10. If the die roll matches or exceeds their current Limit, the Character is able to control their emotions for the remainder of the scene. (They do not have to roll multiple times in a scene).

However, if the roll is **under** the current Limit, the Character enters a **Limit Break**.

### Limit Break

When a character **Limit Breaks,** they lose all perspective on anything that does not align with their **Great Curse** and will make active and considered effort to fulfill it, damn the consequences.

A character Limit Breaking does not lose their faculties, nor do they forget their Intimacies--but those are simply *secondary* to their Great Curse. Often they will use convoluted and strange reasoning to justify their actions.

A Limit Break lasts for an entire scene. Only performing a grave offense against their own deeply-held Intimacies would be enough to snap the character out of their actions.

At the end of a Limit Break, reset Limit to 0.

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| **Ticking Time Bomb**  There will be occasions when a character enters Limit Break, but turning it into a Limit Break Scene just doesn’t fit--it occurred during a lighthearted scene, or when the Exalt is in the middle of nowhere on their own, or the scene was just wrapping up...  If this occurs, with both the Storyteller and Player in agreement, the Character can postpone the Limit Break to a more appropriate scene--just don’t wait *too* long. |

## Strifes

The world of Creation will push even the mighty Exalted to the brink, and in those moments of desperation, forcing them to delve into reserves they did not know they had. This moment is called a **Strife**.

Players are restricted to keeping no more than **5 Strife Points** at a time. If Strife is gained above this limit, it must immediately be spent in the Scene or be lost.

### Using Strife

#### Strife Expression

Each Exalt and their Caste, has a unique **Expression** that can boost their Dice rolls.

For example, Solars may double a favored dice, while Sidereals manipulate what the Target Number of a roll will be.

Each Exalt’s particular Strife Expression is detailed in their respective book.

#### Turn the Scene

In addition to their Exalt and Caste Strife Expressions, all players may use a strife point to **Turn the Scene** (typically in their Favor.)

There is no roll required: the Player describes the actions their character does, and it simply happens.

So long as a character *should* be able to do something, and it is *cool* for them to do so, it *does.* In this way, Turning the Scene can be thought of as a more powerful Stunt.

There are a few guiding restrictions to keep in mind, similar to a Stunt:

* Other character’s actions cannot be dictated: only those under control of the Player’s.
* The Action cannot *directly* solve the scene; it can only assist and guide it.
* The Action should flow naturally from the character--a Solar cannot suddenly shapeshift, for example.

##### Example 1

*The Archer turns from the Dragonblood threatening her and focusing her essence into a point on their arrow. With a sharp hiss of air, she lets it loose into the nearest mountain, watching as the arrow explodes in an impressive show of Anima. The mountain rumbles as the snow dislodges, causing the newly-fallen snow to groan, rumble, and then start cascading into a deadly avalanche which rushes into the passage, sealing it and cutting off the dynasts reinforcements.*

“I’m going to use my archery to cause an avalanche”. This example accomplishes two dramatic things: it changes the environment, but ultimately it is about stopping the Antagonist’s time constraint on their battle. It assists the Player and their scene, but does not solve the pressing issue--the fight with the Dragonblooded.

##### Example 2

*The Sorcerer looks apprehensive at his map. The desert has become inhospitable to their travels, and the rations for their mortal followers slim--if a solution isn’t found, they will arrive exhausted, or be forced to take a detour through the Guild’s controlled areas. His brown furrows, then suddenly shoots up: “Turn the caravan west, I see a Dragonline I can tap for water!”*

“He’s going to use Sorcery to pull up water from the ground.” In this situation, the problem being addressed is exhaustion or avoiding a bad decision--preventing a negative.

##### Example 3

*The Crafter analyzes the complex door in front of them, which is blocking their way, the code shifting and twisting before their eyes. “I can simply craft a new key to the puzzle. Hold on for a moment.”*

“The door is locked? I can just open it with crafting.” Is **bad** because the main objective of this scene is to get past the door blocking their path. In a different scene where the door was not the main obstacle, this *might* be acceptable. Instead, an alteration can be suggested:

*The Crafter analyzes the shifting patterns of the door, then with a swift kick, lodges one of the panels shut, stopping the patterns from constantly moving. “There, that should be easier to read now.”*

“The puzzle glyphs are moving? I’m going to jam them down so it lowers the difficulty.”

### Gaining Strife

Strife may be gained through two ways: **Botches** and **Scene Complications**.

[Botches](#_toc77) are Player-driven choices to drive their character's failure into a *magnificent* failure--a low so that they may later rise to even greater heights.

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| **Rejecting Strife**  Players, by accepting the Strife, are giving up their ability to change the course of the event.  They have the option of refusing to take the Strife Point, defying the Storyteller's influence. (This must be an all-or-nothing decision between all Players receiving the Strife--all must reject, or else all must accept.)  If this happens, the Storyteller must let the Player Characters challenge the event in a fair manner.  The Storyteller should also take care not to *abuse* the Complication mechanic to the point where it becomes unfun--if they find that Players are constantly rejecting Strife, or grumbling and accepting, make sure to talk with the Players to see if the direction of the game is what everyone agrees with. |

#### Complications

A **Complication** is a tool for the Storyteller to inject danger, twists, and story momentum into the Story--*without Player Characters being able to meaningfully react.* (The Characters will almost certainly react, but the outcome is a forgone conclusion.)

In other words, while Players can spend Strife to Turn the Scene in their *favor*, Storytellers can give Strife to Turn the Scene *against* the Players--not simply describe challenges or consequences of actions.

The Storyteller gifts a Strife Point to all Players who are affected by this event--and this single Strife Point guarantees the *outcome* of the event in the Scene, no matter how many attempts are made.

**Examples:**

* An Antagonist group escapes after their defeat in a fight, slipping the bonds or escaping pursuit.
* The Caves the Party is in start rumbling, warning of an imminent collapse in but two short Rounds.
* A source of information shoots down interrogation techniques, refusing to divulge important details.

The main source of Strife is gained by players choosing to **Botch** their rolls.

Another source is being gifted a point by the Storyteller in exchange for letting certain events unfold as described--in spite of Player actions. For example, after a combat scene with a recurring antagonist, the Storyteller would grant a Strife point to allow the antagonist to escape without a (successful) pursuit, so they can lick their wounds and try again.

## Elsewhere and Equipment

The mechanisms of reality are flawed. Items, particularly those not paid attention to, have a tendency to reappear and move to alternate locations. Mortals will often attribute this forgetfulness, or not recognize the incongruity at all, when in reality it is the tireless motions of the Loom taking shortcuts.

Exalts, long ago, learned how to quietly and easily exploit this--simply though sleight of hand, they can store their physical items in places and not feel the weight nor brunt of the equipment. It is not unusual for an Exalt to suddenly pull out a large daiklaive from little more than a handbag’s opening.

Sidereals have labeled this flaw as “Elsewhere,” since the items are neither here nor there, but somewhere “else..” It is certainly a problem that needs to be fixed...eventually.

Elsewhere is not all-powerful. The Exalt must reasonably be able to carry the items in the first place, and it must not be something that has a particularly close and important tie to reality. For example: living creatures or anything with sapience. As well, while time does not affect items inside of Elsewhere, it will rapidly catch up once pulled out.

Items stored in Elsewhere of a dead Exalt will eventually reassert themselves into reality--often by finding themselves in nearby containers that may not have existed until needed for this precise purpose.

## Storyteller Timelines

Rather than count the exact minutes and hours of effects, Exalted rely on a more cinematic approach. A charm’s duration may be declared as a *Scene*, for example.

* **Round** How long it takes for all characters to each perform a set of Actions, typically in Combat or an Encounter.
* **Scene** Long enough to set out and accomplish a single, dedicated task. Combat from start to finish would be a scene, as would characters searching for clues in an old abandoned monastery. This typically spans minutes to hours.
* **Session** A single sitting of when Players begin and end roleplaying, spanning an entire night.
* **Story** Several sessions that form a full narrative arch: from establishing a threat to reaching the resolution.
* **Chronicle** A complete game, encompassing all the stories relevant to a set of characters.

## Magnitudes

*Exalted* is styled in more of a cinematic, broad-sweeping style game rather than a precise simulation wargame. Instead of detailing out every person, time frame, or area, it will instead deal with measures of *magnitude.*

Some Powers will declare an increase (or decrease) in a *magnitude*. Those magnitude definitions are as follows:

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| **Group Magnitudes** | | | |
| Scale | Population | Name | Military Designation |
| 0 | 1 | Individual | - |
| 1 | 10 | Party/Group | Squad |
| 2 | 50 | Crowd | Troop |
| 3 | 100 | Hamlet | Company |
| 4 | 500 | Village | Battalion |
| 5 | 1,000 | Town | Regiment |
| 6 | 10,000 | City | Army |
| 7 | 100,000 | Prefecture | - |
| 8 | 1,000,000 | Province | - |

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| Time Magnitudes | |
| Scale | Name |
| 0 | Second (Instant) |
| 1 | Minute (Moment) |
| 2 | Hour |
| 3 | Day |
| 4 | Week |
| 5 | Month |
| 6 | Season |
| 7 | Year |
| 8 | Decade |
| 9 | Century |