# Encounters

From the intricate dance of ballroom politics, to battlefield war bands, to the high-drama of a courtroom, an Exalt’s life will be filled with scenes of great importance where the fate of the world hinges on well-spoken speeches or careful deliberation.

## Goal

An Encounter starts with a **Goal** for the scene: what the Players intend the outcome of the scene to be. If there is no clearly defined goal, or that goal is unreachable, an Encounter should not start.

*On the southern shores of the Inland Sea party decides that they will need a full caravan to traverse the Burning Sands.. There is a local Trade-Prince whom they think they can convince to finance and supply them this caravan.*

## Key Issues

Once the stated Goal of the Encounter has been established, the Storyteller should come up with 2-4 **Key Issues** that will need to be overcome to accomplish this goal, and how much **Influence** is required to overcome the Key Issues.

Key Issues range the gamut from personal ideology to political entanglements to logistics. So long as it is something that prevents the party from moving forward, and is (relatively) self-contained, it may be a valid Key Issue.

Once the Storyteller has come up with the Key Issues, they will need to tell the Players the *number* of Issues at play. The *nature* of the Issue may be revealed at their discretion.

#### Influence Requirement

* Simple 5 Influence
* Average 10 Influence
* Complicated 15 Influence

*The Storyteller decides there are 3 Key Issues preventing the Trade-Prince from funding the caravan:*

*1. Needing a return on investment. (Simple). Understandably, the Trade-Prince will need to be convinced it is worth his while to dedicate so many resources to this goal. This Key Issue can be easily guessed, so is revealed on Encounter start.*

*2. Antagonistic Sycophants (Simple). The Trade-Prince has surrounded himself with sycophants, who deeply despise any perceived change to their position. The Party must silence their influence.*

*3. Fear of the Immaculate Order (Average) (Hidden). Through the party’s past actions, the Trade-Prince has secretly caught on that they are Anathema. He does not personally care, but he will need a way to make sure that the Immaculate Order will not find out about this deal--or at least be convinced of this fact.*

### Gathering Influence

There are a thousand ways to approach the scene and its Key Issues: starting rumors, researching tactics, beguiling tricks, intimidation.

Taking any action to tackle a Key Issue directly is called a **Gather Influence** action.

A Gathering Influence action operates just as any normal action--first the Storyteller must decide if the Action *is possible* in the given context, and then assigns the Difficulty of the roll.

If the roll is not appropriate, the Storyteller should inform the Player before they take up the action.)

What is different is that all Threshold Successes of the roll become converted into Influence--in addition to the normal outcome of the action. These Influence Points are then applied against the *specific* Key Issue being addressed.

**Influence** = Successes - Difficulty

*The Socialite of the group, a Solar Eclipse, moves to address the “Antagonist Sycophants” Key Issue by suppressing the Intimacy the Trade-Prince has of them. He performs a “Influence Intimacy” Social Action, rolling 5 Success against the Prince’s 3 Resolve. He gains 2 Influence Points against the Key Issue, as well as successfully lowering the Prince’s Intimacy.*

Once enough Influence has been gathered against a Key Issue, it is considered *resolved*, and the Players are one step closer to their Goal.

Overflow Influence is allowed, and can help secure the safety of a contested Key Issue.

#### Examples

* Impassioned speech
* Delving into research
* Sweet-Talking
* Intimidation of Sycophants

|  |
| --- |
| **Not Everything is a Gathering Influence Action** There are plenty of actions that are helpful, useful, and actionable in the scene--but they aren’t Gathering Influence Actions. For example: Discovering Intimacies.  The general rule of thumb for rulings is “Does this directly, singularly address the Key Issue.” If not, it is not a Gathering Influence Action. |

#### Exhausting Supply

The Storyteller may choose to “exhaust” a source of influence, meaning that further Gathering Influence Rolls cannot be done on this source. After all, there is only so much you can intimidate bystanders to do in one Scene.

This limitation should be clearly expressed to the Players so that they may take this factor into account--either by changing their approach, or finding new sources of Influence for the scene.

### Hidden Key Issues

The Storyteller should try to give hints and paths toward discovering the nature of Hidden Issues.

Players, in turn, may use an action similar to “Probe Intimacy” to divine the nature of the Hidden Issue, with the same rules and effects--the Player summarizes a list of actions, events, or behaviors, and then attempts to divine what the Key Issue behind them is.

As well, it is perfectly possible for Players to gather Influence over a Key Issue they do not fully understand.

A Player Intentionally “going in blind” is taking a risk--if their assumption is wrong on the Issue, they do not gain any Influence Points for their roll, no matter how many Threshold Successes they roll.

*The Players have managed to completely avoid uncovering the nature of the Third Key Issue. So far, the Storyteller has dropped hints that the Trade Prince may know of their true nature in their conversations, and has even told them that intimidating a particular Sycophant (with deep ties to the Immaculate Order) could be applied to the hidden Key Issue, if they wanted.*

*One Player now decides to use the "Probe for Key Issue," trying to divine the relationship between the Sycophant and the Trade Prince. They succeed on their roll, and the Storyteller responds by noting that the Trade Prince "Fears what that man represents," and notes that the man has signs of the Immaculate Order woven into his clothes.*

### Altering/Adding Goals

During the Encounter, the Players may decide they want to alter the ultimate goal--perhaps they have decided to push further, or have found an alternate goal they prefer.

In both cases, the Storyteller should add an additional Key Issue to encapsulate this difference. They may decide to drop an existing Key Issue if the altered goal no longer applies.

## Flow

An Encounter is not like a Combat Scene--the timing is fluid, and actions do not follow a set order, depending primarily on the natural flow of the narrative.

However, a “Round” is still defined: each character has one and only one Full Action (Primary + Secondary) in a round.

The Storyteller should make sure that all Players know they have the *option* to act each Round.

|  |
| --- |
| **Balancing Antagonist Actions** The Storyteller is allowed to increase the number of actions Antagonists can take per Round, if necessary. (The number of Player Characters is large, the number of Antagonists small, etc.)  The Rule of Thumb is that the number of Antagonist Actions should be around 1 for every 2 Player Character Actions. |

## Antagonist Goals

Antagonists are operating on their own goal during the scene, and have their own Key Issues that they must Gather Influence upon.

Typically, the Antagonist’s Goal and Goals and Key Issues are directly related to the Party's--whether in direct opposition, or competing to get there first. For convenience sake, these are referred to as the "the same" Key Issue.

However, antagonists having the same Key Issue is not a *requirement*--they may be working on a seperate Goal for the scene, and they have tangential or completely unrelated Key Issues. Typically, these start out as Hidden to the Party.

|  |
| --- |
| **Abstract Antagonists** It is easy to recognize an antagonist when it is an individual. However, Antagonists can be anything--from mobs of people to an avalanche to Time itself closing off a Key Issue. |

### Sabotaging Influence

The Antagonist and Party's Influence tracks are independent of each other--only a dedicated **Sabotage Influence** Action allows one side to disturb the other's Influence.

This action is nearly identical to a Gather Influence action, save that the Threshold Successes of the action are *taken away* from the opposing party's influence over the Key Issue.

The Character is not allowed to split the effect of Influence: it is either fully a Gathering Actionor a Sabotage Action.

### Key Issue Control

Once one side or another has reached the Influence Requirement of a Key Issue, they have *control* over the issue.

Control may be taken away if a different side gains more Influence than the previous owner, either by decreasing it through sabotage or reinforcing their own claim..

If a side manages to keep control over a Key Issue for a full Round, it becomes *locked* and can no longer be challenged.

## Encounter End

The Encounter ends the same Round that all Key Issues become *controlled*--though they do not need to be under control all by the same *side.*

If a Goal's Key Issues are completely controlled by one side--they will achieve their Goal.

A Goal with split Key Issue control will find they have a *partial* victory--they do not get the full Goal they wanted, but they do not get nothing at all.

When weighing a Partial Victory, the Storyteller should lean heavily into the uncontrolled Key Issues--why will this bring trouble to them? Perhaps they get what they want, but only at a certain cost?

|  |
| --- |
| **Final Argument** Typically, the Encounter is wrapped up with a *Final Argument*, where a chosen Player Character summarizes what has happened in the Encounter, rolling it together and pointedly delivering as a capstone.  This Final Argument cannot change the result of the Key Issues, but a well-delivered Final Argument can transition to the next course of action. |