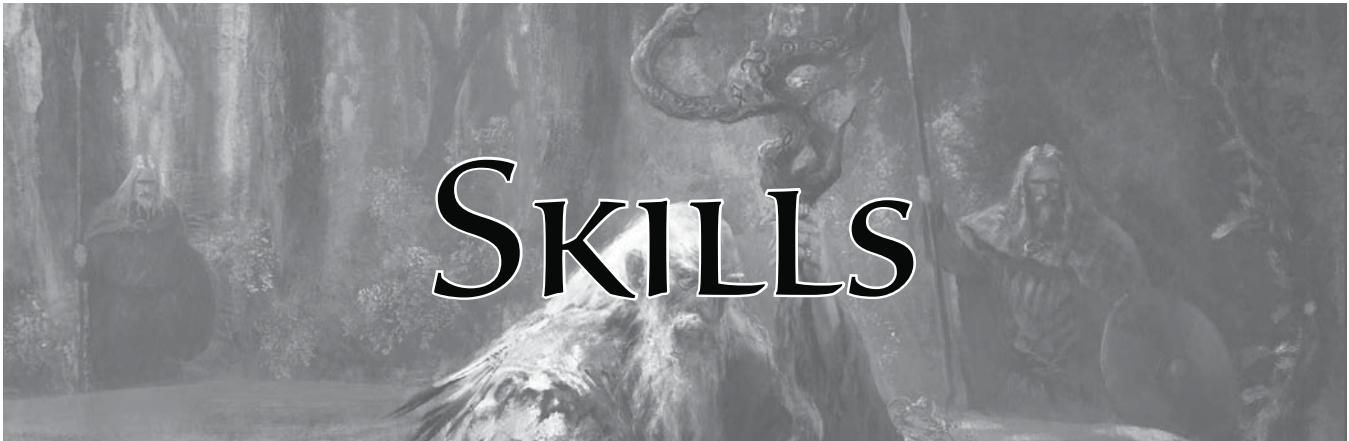


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SKILLS

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If characteristics and attributes define what a character is like, skills define what he can do. As explored in the previous chapters, all characters have a diverse set of skills drawn from their vocation and cultural backgrounds. This chapter explains how skills work, and provides greater definition for each skill used in MYTHRAS.

Skills are divided into two categories: Standard and Professional. Every character has the same set of Standard Skills. Professional Skills differ between individual characters and reflect expertise developed within a career and, to a certain extent, their culture. Despite these distinctions, Standard and Professional Skills work in the same way.

This chapter looks, first of all, at the basics of how skills work. Then the skills, Standard and Professional, are described. The chapter then concludes with some additional rules for how to handle skills in different ways, and under different circumstances.

HOW SKILLS WORK

A skill has a base value based on two characteristics; or one characteristic multiplied by two. There is no upper limit to a skill's value; it can exceed 100 and, in the course of play, characters can expect to see their skills reach such heights.

Whenever a character is called upon to resolve some form of test, challenge or professional ability 1d100 is rolled and compared with the skill's value:

- ❖ Equal to, or less than, the skill indicates a success
- ❖ Greater than the skill's value indicates a failure

There are certain special cases concerning success and failure that should be noted.

- ❖ Any roll of 01-05 is always a success
- ❖ Any roll of 96-00 is always a failure, irrespective of how high the skill's value

CRITICALS AND FUMBLES

Criticals and Fumbles represent spectacular successes and catastrophic failures; those cases where a character has either excelled in his attempt or failed miserably and utterly.

- ❖ A Critical success is equal to one-tenth of the skill's value (and this includes skills that receive a modifier – so modified skills may have a greater or lesser chance of a Critical outcome). Round fractions up when calculating a Critical success's range. For example, if a skill is modified to twice its normal value – from 40% to 80% say, then its critical range would be a roll of 08 or less.
- ❖ A Fumble is roll of 99 or 00. Skills with a value of more than 100% fumble only on a roll of 00.

The precise nature of a Critical or Fumble result is left to the Games Master to determine. The consequences could be wondrous or dire, depending on the circumstances. However, some examples of Critical and Fumble outcomes for each skill MYTHRAS uses are given in the skill descriptions later in this chapter.

AUTOMATIC SUCCESSES

There will be some occasions where a roll against a particular skill just isn't necessary – either because the task at hand is easily accomplished, or because, with enough time and concentration, success is guaranteed. Riding a horse at a gentle canter across an open meadow is an example of an Automatic Success where simply being skilled in the activity means that straightforward actions do not require any skill roll to resolve them. A crafter carving a piece of wood into a chair leg is another example where a skill roll is not necessary; it takes time to accomplish, but the craftsman knows how to do the work and, if he is not rushing, success is assured. A thief, undisturbed, with a set of lockpicks, can successfully pick the simple lock of a treasure chest given enough time to do so.

WHEN TO ROLL?

Part of the fun and drama of MYTHRAS comes in making a roll against a skill to see if success or failure is the outcome. It can be tempting to call for skill rolls for each and every challenge but, as outlined above, there are some cases where rolls are not needed. A list of likely scenarios where skill rolls are redundant is as follows:

- ❖ The activity or task is very routine to the character
- ❖ The character has enough time and all the tools necessary
- ❖ The circumstances and environment do not impose any stress
- ❖ There are no significant consequences to failure

Skill rolls should be used when they have a dramatic purpose. For example, although riding a horse at a gentle canter requires no skill roll, fleeing at a gallop from pursuing bandits does. Carving a chair leg may be a routine task for a carpenter, but carving an exquisite chair leg, with blunt tools, and in only a few hours, for a demanding sultan who executes those who do not please him, would need a skill roll. It is usually obvious when a dramatic purpose arises and a skill roll is necessary, but if in doubt, consider the consequences of failure: are they crucial to the plot? Does the chance of failure heighten tension, and make for an exciting possibility? Will a failure – or even superb success – add fun to the game? If the answer is Yes to any of these, then have the character make a skill roll.

MODIFYING SKILLS

There are some occasions where a skill roll is required but the chances of success need to be adjusted to reflect particular conditions. Fleeing bandits, for instance, might require an Athletics roll. But what if the character is fleeing through darkness or through treacherous undergrowth? In such a case the Games Master can insist on modifying the skill of the character to reflect the circumstances.

MYTHRAS uses a series of grades to determine how a skill is modified. These are as follows:

DIFFICULTY GRADE TABLE

Difficulty Grade	Skill Modifier
Automatic	No need to roll
Very Easy	Double the skill value
Easy	Add half again to the skill value
Standard	No adjustment.
Hard	Reduce the skill value by one third
Formidable	Reduce the skill value by half
Herculean	Reduce the skill value to one tenth
Hopeless	No attempt can be made

Where a character is already suffering a penalty from other circumstances the hardest difficulty grade takes precedence.

MYTHRAS does not provide a definitive list of situations and challenges which can incur skill modifications. What sort of modification is required for any particular skill or context is ultimately up to the Games Master to decide; according to the capabilities of the characters, his perception of the difficulty of the situation, and the dramatic tension at that particular moment.

SIMPLIFIED DIFFICULTY GRADES

Whilst difficulty grades are designed to scale with character skill, some Games Masters may find applying penalties results in the slowing down of their game. As an alternative the following option is provided:

SIMPLIFIED DIFFICULTY GRADE TABLE

Difficulty Grade	Skill Modifier
Very Easy	+40%
Easy	+20%
Standard	None
Hard	-20%
Formidable	-40%
Herculean	-80%

STANDARD SKILLS

Standard skills are common to everyone. They represent innate abilities and skills that most people employ on a regular basis from any walk of life.

ATHLETICS (STR+DEX)

Athletics covers a range of physical activities, including climbing, jumping, and running. If an adventurer is wearing armour, the distances he can climb, run or jump are affected by the Armour Penalty. The Movement section on page 69 describes these effects.

CLIMBING

With the right surface (hand and footholds), the right equipment (ladders, ropes, pitons), and enough time, characters can climb any surface without the need for a roll. Under normal circumstances, use the following guidelines:

- ❖ Climbing a rough or rugged surface (branching trees, scaffolds, piles of rubble, and so on): Half the Armour Penalty (rounded up) is subtracted from the character's base Movement. If the result is zero or less, they are too encumbered by armour to climb.
- ❖ Climbing a steep surface (pitched roofs, steep hills, and so on): The Armour Penalty is subtracted directly from the base Movement. If the result is zero or less, they are too burdened by armour to climb.
- ❖ Climbing a sheer surface (walls, cliff faces, and so on): Double the Armour Penalty is subtracted from the base Movement. As with previous situations, if the result is zero or less, the character cannot climb.
- ❖ Tests should be made for treacherous surfaces (such as sheer cliffs or wet surfaces), and if a character is distracted, or even attacked, during his ascent or descent.

A critical success permits the climber to scale the surface extremely quickly or avoid any hidden danger involved with the attempt.

A failure merely indicates that the climb was aborted.

A fumbled Climbing roll results in a fall; furthermore the character cannot attempt an Acrobatics roll (if he has that skill) to reduce falling damage.

JUMPING

A successful Athletics roll allows one to jump up to twice one's own height horizontally or up to half one's own height vertically (if the character has at least a five metres run-up available). If the jumper is jumping from a standing position then these distances are halved. Any jump of over half a character's maximum distance results in him falling prone on landing.

- ❖ If wearing armour reduce the jump distance in metres by half the Armour Penalty to a minimum of one normal step.
- ❖ For every full 20% a character has in Athletics, he can add an extra metre to a horizontal jump, or 20cm to a vertical one, if he has space to perform a run up.

On a critical success the character adds a further metre to his total distance, and remains upright on landing.

A fumbled roll indicates the character has landed awkwardly. He must immediately make an Endurance roll. If the Endurance roll is a success 1 point of damage is sustained to one leg. If the Endurance test fails, then 1d4 points of damage is inflicted instead.

RUNNING

A higher Athletics skill allows a character to run at a higher speed over short or long distances.

- ❖ For every full 25% a character has in Athletics, he can add an extra metre to his base Movement when sprinting, or half that when running over longer distances. In certain situations where space may be limited, such as Charging within a melee, the character can decide not to apply this bonus, and remain at his base racial or species movement.

On a critical success the character adds a further metre to his Movement rate. A failure causes the runner to increase a level of fatigue.

A fumbled roll indicates the character has pulled a muscle or torn a ligament, and must cease running. He must immediately make an Endurance roll. If the Endurance roll is a success 1 point of damage is sustained to one leg. If the Endurance test fails, then 1d4 points of damage is inflicted instead.

THROWING

Athletics can also be used for hurling large, unwieldy objects over distance or tossing smaller items with accuracy. Throwing is restricted for sports or improvised missile weapons - everything from small stones to bar stools. Weapons which are thrown using a specific technique to ensure it strikes point or blade first (rather than just achieving distance), such as javelins, axes or knives, use their Combat Style instead.

- ❖ A thrown object has a maximum range of one metre for every point the character's STR exceeds the object's SIZ.

BOATING (STR+CON)

The Boating skill covers the operation of small floating craft on rivers, lakes, and close inshore. Appropriate vessels are generally boats, canoes or rafts which travel short distances, and are unsuited to the rigours of the open sea. Most are propelled using oars, paddles, punts or simple sails; or can even be towed by animals. Ships with large crews or designed for long, overseas journeys are covered under the Seamanship professional skill.

The skill measures a character's competence in propelling a boat in the right direction and dealing with adverse conditions. With no

distractions and optimal conditions, a Boating roll is unnecessary, although lesser skilled characters may take longer to get where they need to as they manage the boat's handling.

A critical Boating success increases the vessel's Movement rate by one tenth.

A failed Boating roll implies the boat's movement rate is halved or it failed to reach its intended destination; for instance navigating to an isolated rock positioned above a waterfall.

A fumbled Boating roll indicates losing an oar, taking on water or some other serious inconvenience. If the weather is bad or the water violent, then a fumble causes the boat to capsize.

BRAWN (STR+SIZ)

Brawn is the efficient application of technique when applying raw physical force. The skill covers acts of applied might, including lifting, breaking, and contests of strength.

LIFTING

A character can lift and carry up to their STR in SIZ up off the ground, or drag double this amount, without needing a Brawn roll. As a mass equivalent, 1 point of SIZ equals, roughly, 5 kilograms. For every full 10% he possesses in the skill the character may add an extra point of SIZ or 5kg to his total.

For SIZ or mass above this the character needs to succeed in a Brawn roll. The maximum weight a character can briefly lift is equal to twice their STR, plus whatever bonus they gain from their skill.

Failing the Brawn roll may result in injury; the character must make a successful Endurance roll or suffer 1d3 points of damage to a random location below the head.

Fumbling the Brawn roll automatically results in injury.

Note that the size and shape of an object might make it impossible to lift, even if it is within the character's weight capacity.

BREAKING

A character can use Brawn to break objects with their bare hands – such as shoulder barging a wooden door. Take the character's maximum lifting capacity in SIZ and apply that value to the Damage Modifier table on page 9 to determine how much damage can be inflicted with each Brawn attempt, remembering that failed rolls may result in injury.

CONTESTS OF STRENGTH

Brawn rolls can also be used in opposed tests for breaking free from the grip of others, arm wrestling, and tugs of war. Such events are handled as a simple opposed roll. However, there comes a point where technique cannot overcome superior size and strength. In a contest, if a character's Damage Modifier is smaller than his opponents, his Brawn roll suffers a penalty; a difference of one step raises the difficulty to Hard, whilst two steps increases it to Formidable, and so on. Naturally the penalty is suffered by his opponent if the character is the stronger.

CONCEAL (DEX+POW)

Conceal is the counterpoint to Stealth, being the concealment of large objects rather than the character themselves. For instance conceal could be used to hide a chariot behind some rocks, or sweep away the wheel ruts of the chariot so its path cannot be tracked. The skill is versatile in application, anything from hiding a scroll in a library to disguising the presence of a trap or secret passage.

A critical success using Conceal indicates that the object has been hidden so cunningly that rolls attempting to discover it are one difficulty grade harder.

A failed Conceal roll means that the object will automatically be found if actively searched for.

A fumbled Conceal roll indicates that the attempt backfires spectacularly with the object falling, rolling, blowing out of its hiding place so blatantly (or otherwise revealed in an appropriate manner) that it draws the attention of everyone nearby.

CUSTOMS (INT x2)

Customs represents the character's knowledge of his own community; its social codes, rites, rituals, taboos, and so on. The skill is used when it is essential to accurately interpret or perform any socially important custom or to behave in a particular way.

A critical success with Customs indicates that the character has acted in an exemplary fashion or perceived a very subtle social nuance that will be of immediate or later value.

A failed Customs roll results in wry humour or minor irritation. A fumbled Customs roll indicates that the character has badly failed to observe his community's customs, and may have even given offence – whether intentional or not.

The ramifications of a fumbled roll depend very much on the nature of the culture or community, and may thus have very different outcomes, ranging from harsh rebuke, through ostracism, exile or even violent punishment.

DANCE (DEX+CHA)

Just about every culture uses dance in some way – either as recreation or as part of important rituals. It might be a court dance, a war dance, or a simple set of movements accompanying a prayer or ceremonial chant. The Dance skill measures a character's ability to move rhythmically and accurately (to a reasonable degree) when called upon to do so.

A critical success results in a dance that is expressive, fluid, and perhaps deeply affecting for those who witness it. The dance is as persuasive as any Influence roll, and can be used as such in situations resting on communication and personal credibility. Alternatively any subsequent Influence test is given a bonus equal to the critical score of the Dance skill. Of course, a critical Dance roll may very well result in tumultuous applause, and tokens of admiration and appreciation.

A failed Dance roll signifies a lacklustre performance.

A fumbled Dance is clumsy to both the dancer and those who watch it. The dancer trips or stumbles. Passion is lost, the execution is weak, and the dance fails to convey what it is meant to. Any skills resting on communication and personal credibility will suffer a penalty at the discretion of the Games Master.

DECEIT (INT+CHA)

Deceit covers all instances where a character attempts to mask the truth and offer a deceit of some kind; barefaced lying, misleading a guard or even bluffing (or cheating) during a card game. The skill also covers instances where hiding true emotions or motives is necessary (feigning pleasure when one is bitterly disappointed perhaps, or attempting to seem welcoming and open when the opposite is true). Deceit forms a counterpart to the Insight skill, and can be used to oppose Insight rolls when others are attempting to discern either truth or motive.

On a critical success the character has pulled off the deceit convincingly to the point where the truth will not be questioned in the future by those who are subject to the deception – unless something happens to expose the truth.

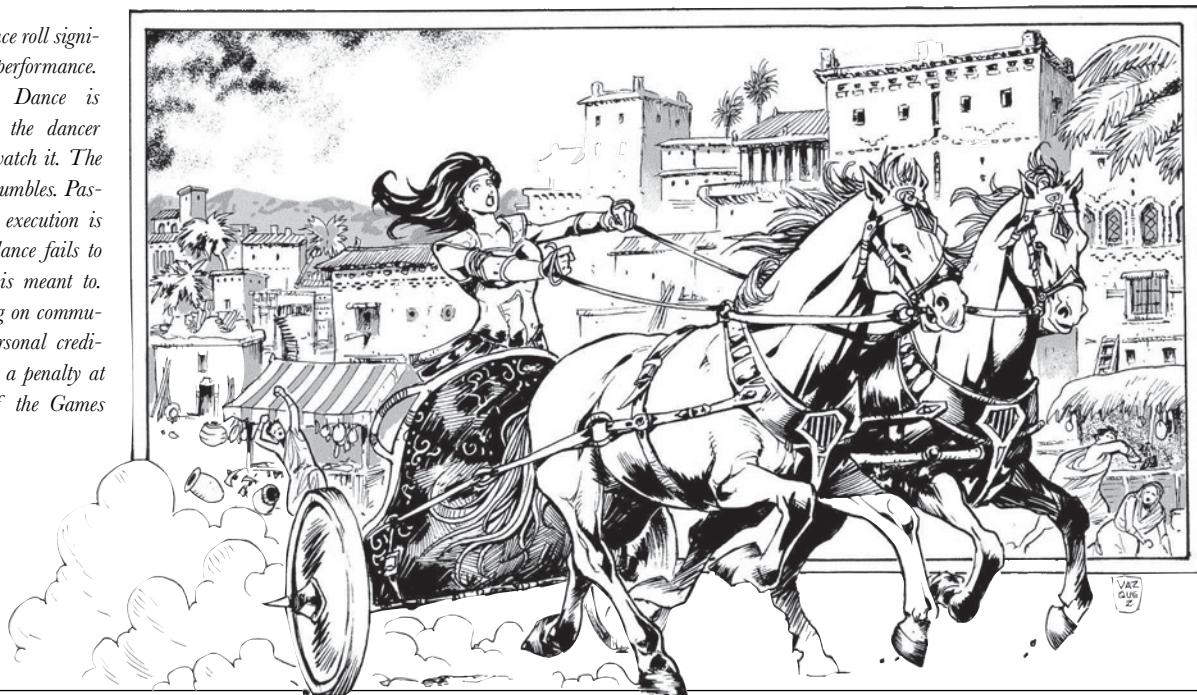
A failed Deceit roll indicates that the character lacked conviction or believability, prompting further investigation.

A fumbled Deceit roll represents a miserable failure to deceive – one so transparent that others may have difficulty believing the character at a future time.

DRIVE (DEX+POW)

Drive covers the control of wheeled or drawn vehicles, whether by one or more beasts of burden or more esoteric means: such as carts, carriages, chariots or sleds. Drive rolls are needed when a character wants to do something out of the ordinary with a vehicle – traverse treacherous terrain, jump obstacles, and so on. A roll is also necessary if the vehicle being driven is drawn by different beasts than the driver is used to (horses instead of oxen, for example) or there are more or fewer beasts teamed together to pull the vehicle (a four-horse wagon when the character is used to a two-horse team). In cases where either the beasts or their number are radically unfamiliar, a tiger drawn chariot for example, then the roll should be made more difficult.

Where two or more vehicles are contesting with each other, perhaps to overtake or force another off the road, the drivers should determine the result with an opposed Drive test.



A critical Drive roll either increases the vehicle's Movement rate by one tenth or permits the driver to perform some feat of skilful or flamboyant driving. A failed Drive roll halves the vehicle's Movement.

A fumbled Drive roll indicates either that the vehicle has broken down in some manner (wheel comes off or the harness breaks for example), or if the vehicle is engaged in a high speed or dangerous manoeuvre, it becomes unstable and overturns. An overturning vehicle requires all occupants to make a successful Acrobatics or Evade roll to leap clear of the wreckage, or sustain an amount of falling damage commensurate with its speed (see page 78).

ENDURANCE (CON x2)

Endurance is a character's capacity to endure physical stress, pain, and fatigue. It measures the body's ability to deal with potentially damaging or debilitating conditions, and is a general gauge of resilience, stamina, and metabolism. Endurance, like its counterpart Willpower, is used in any number of ways, but most specifically to resist the possible effects of injuries, including harmful poisons and disease.

In most cases Endurance is used in Opposed Tests but there are some circumstances where it is used as a standard skill roll.

A critical Endurance roll usually indicates that the character has managed to shrug off the worst possible assault on his body. In the case of injury he is often able to act when ordinarily he might be incapacitated.

A failed Endurance roll results in the character succumbing to whatever stress or injury it has been put under. A Fumbled roll means that the character is overwhelmed by the circumstances and becomes incapacitated. In the case of disease or poison he automatically fails any further resistance rolls against it.

EVADE (DEX x2)

Evade is used to escape from observed, impending danger, and can be used against ranged weapons (by diving for cover, for example), avoiding traps, changing the engagement distance in combat, and generally getting out of the way of a potential physical hazard. It can also be used as a resistance roll for certain types of magic.

Usually Evade will be opposed by another roll, but it may also be a standard roll in its own right. Trying to negate damage by leaping clear of a crashing vehicle, as mentioned in the Drive skill, is an example of a standard Evade roll. The typical circumstances for opposed rolls are as follows:

AVOIDING MISSILES

Evade is opposed by the Combat Style of the attacker.

THWARTING A TRAP

Evade is opposed either by the trap's Potency or its original designer's skill rating at the time the trap was made or set.

EVADING A HARMFUL SPELL

Opposed by the spell caster's score in the casting skill.

MANOEUVERING IN COMBAT

Opposed by the attacker's Evade skill.

Again, like Endurance, Evade is most often used in Opposed Tests. When used as a standard test, a critical Evade roll ensures that the evader retains some form of advantage or composure afterwards, such as avoiding all damage or slipping completely clear of further danger.

ANATHAYM'S SAGA

Anathaym, investigating a ruined temple, comes across a sarcophagus in the catacombs. She tries to open it, and triggers the centuries-old dart trap set by the sarcophagus's designer. The trap-setter's skill at the time was 65%; Anathaym's Evade is 57% which she must pit against the trap in an opposed roll.

Amathaym scores 45, and the Games Master rolls 31. Both are successful but Anathaym wins the contest with the higher roll. The trap is sprung as Anathaym lifts the sarcophagus lid, shooting a hail of darts towards her face; but Anathaym throws herself desperately to one side and, fortunately for her, the darts strike the wall behind.

Brushing herself down as she stands, Anathaym reflects on the dangers of ancient tombs, unaware of the guardian mummy lurching towards her from behind...

A failed roll usually means the character suffers whatever misfortune they were attempting to avoid.

If the Evade roll is fumbled, then the character has left himself wide open to the hazard, for instance sustaining maximum damage from a trap or ending up prone, and vulnerable to a follow up event.

The effects of Criticals and Fumbles during combat is a special case (see the rules for Evading in the Combat chapter, page 103).

FIRST AID (DEX+INT)

First Aid measures a character's ability to treat minor injuries and stabilise severe ones. First Aid may be applied only once per specific injury. Thus a character that is slashed twice in the leg may have each wound treated separately. If suffering some form of bodily harm which simultaneously affected several body areas at once, such as being burned by Dragon Breath, then a First Aid attempt is permitted for each individual location.

A character can self-administer First Aid, although depending on the circumstances (such as the location of the wound, its degree of severity and so forth) the roll may be subject to a greater degree of difficulty.

Applying First Aid takes 1d3 minutes. Neither party can do anything else during the treatment. When tending life threatening trauma, the patient is temporarily stabilised until the result of the

FIRST AID ACTIONS

Injury	Successful Treatment
Asphyxiated	The victim begins breathing again.
Bleeding	The blood flow is staunched.
Impaled	The impaling item is removed without causing further damage to the victim.
Unconsciousness	As long as the unconsciousness is not the result of poisons or narcotics then the injured party is restored to awareness.
Minor Wound	Treatment restores 1d3 hit points to the injury.
Serious Wound	Treatment restores the location to partial functionality.
Major Wound	A successful First Aid roll on a location suffering from a Major Wound does not return any Hit Points, nor restore functionality; but it does stabilize the area, and prevent immediate death resulting from the damage. More skilled healing is required to treat Major Wounds.

application is known. An injury that has had a previous form of First Aid applied cannot benefit from First Aid again, whether successful or not, until it has fully healed.

First Aid relies on having appropriate equipment – bandages, at the very least – available for the treatment. These can be improvised (a torn cloak to make a bandage or sling, for example) if necessary.

A critical First Aid improves the result of the treatment. On a Minor Injury it recovers 1d6 Hit Points, on a Serious Injury it recovers 1d3 Hit Points, and on a Major Injury it restores partial functionality (if possible), and permits it to heal naturally.

A fumbled First Aid attempt causes more harm than good: the injured location suffers a further 1 point of damage, potentially increasing the severity of the injury.

INFLUENCE (CHA x2)

Influence measures a character's ability to persuade others. It is used in a wide variety of situations; from changing someone's mind, through to bribing an official or guard.

Influence rolls are typically opposed by the Perception, Will-power or another Influence skill, depending on the circumstances, and are modified by how much a character is trying to influence behaviour. Attempting to persuade a close friend to loan you their horse may be relatively easy. Getting a usually incorruptible bureaucrat to accept a bribe is more difficult.

A critical success indicates that the character has been incredibly persuasive, so much so that not only is the character successful in what he is trying to attain but his next Influence test with the same person, no matter when it takes place, is one grade easier than the circumstances would normally dictate (A Standard roll becomes an Easy roll, for example, or a Hard roll becomes a Standard one).

A failure merely means that the persuasion was refused, with no subsequent issues.

On a fumble not only does the Influence roll fail; it also insults or offends the person being influenced. The specific reaction depends on the individual and the situation. It also means that further Influence attempts with this individual become one difficulty grade harder.

INSIGHT (INT+POW)

Insight is the ability to read or intuitively define another's verbal and non-verbal behaviour (such as body language or the manner of speech) to establish their motives and state of mind. Insight is used to determine if someone is telling a lie (and it can be opposed by the other person's Deceit skill), or to predict how someone feels about a particular situation. Insight can equally be applied to particular situations as well as other people: is that tavern a haven for trouble? Could the bandits be planning an ambush in the nearby hills?

On a critical success the Insightful character gains an in-depth understanding of the other person's current motives, thoughts and feelings. Using either Deceit or Influence against that person in a subsequent roll is one grade easier than circumstances would dictate (Easy rather than Standard; Standard rather than Hard, for example).

A failure simply means the character cannot discern anything specific at that time. On a fumble, the character completely misjudges the person's motives and actions. The Games Master should offer the character a series of private, deliberately misleading hints regarding the person's motivations and likely actions. It also makes consequent Deceit and Influence rolls one difficulty grade harder.

LOCALE (INT x2)

Locale measures a character's understanding of local flora, fauna, terrain, and weather in the area where he has spent the majority of his life, usually within his community. The character knows the common plants, trees and animals, their properties and behaviour; where the best fish can be found; the movements of game creatures; where to find shelter; the likely weather for the season, and the most common regional dangers. In neighbouring, yet unfamiliar locations Locale should be made one or more grades harder.

A critical success guarantees the character finds what he is looking for in abundance or knows precisely what something is. Subsequent skill rolls related to the subject of that Locale roll (Survival, for instance, or Track) become one grade easier.

A failure implies too little evidence to unambiguously identify or predict, or that whatever is being searched for cannot be found.

A fumble means the information needed is not just unobtainable but utterly misunderstood. Subsequent skill rolls dependent on that use of Locale become one grade harder.

NATIVE TONGUE (INT+CHA)

Native Tongue is the ability to speak one's own language, the one learned whilst growing up in one's home culture. It measures articulation, eloquence, and the depth of the speaker's vocabulary.

Unlike other skills, Native Tongue is not rolled against directly. Instead it is treated as a static representation of overall fluency, limiting the level of conversational interaction. This is described in more detail under the Language skill on page 47, but starting characters usually begin play fully fluent in their mother tongue.

The skill can be used in two ways. Firstly it can help to understand dialects of neighbouring peoples which share a common linguistic basis or origin. In such cases the skill is treated at least one grade harder, potentially affecting the character's fluency. Secondly, it can be used as a cap on verbal skills which require a good grasp of language. See Capping Skills on page 50.

PERCEPTION (INT+POW)

Perception is used for both passive observation and focussed detection; whether hunting for something specific, a general scan of an area or simple awareness of their surroundings. Specific conditions – darkness, for example – may affect the difficulty grade of the skill roll depending on the primary senses being utilised. Strong scents might make an olfactory Perception roll Easy rather than Standard, whereas trying to eavesdrop on a conversation in a crowded and noisy tavern would make the roll Hard.

A critical Perception roll reveals things that otherwise would not have been detected in addition to that which the roll was being used for.

Failure indicates nothing in particular was discerned.

Fumbling a Perception roll means that even the most blatantly obvious things are overlooked or misconstrued, potentially increasing the difficulty of subsequent skill checks. For instance, a fumbled Perception roll when trying to spot a trap might make an Evade roll Hard or even Formidable rather than Standard.

RIDE (DEX+POW)

Ride covers the ability to control and remain mounted on those creatures that are trained to be ridden. The skill can be applied to a diverse range of beasts, everything from mules to elephants; even flying or swimming creatures such as giant eagles or dolphins.

Riding an unfamiliar species is always one difficulty grade harder; whilst riding a species of a different medium (a horseman riding a dragon, for example) is two grades harder. Wild, untamed creatures cannot be ridden in a constructive manner until they have been broken and trained to be riding beasts.

A critical Ride result allows the rider to perform a feat of flamboyant riding (such as a jump or wingover) or temporarily increase his mount's Movement by one tenth.

A failure causes the mount to drop a level of fatigue.

A fumbled roll means that an accident occurs; either to the rider (who might fall off) or the mount whom suffers some form of injury, going lame or breaking one of its limbs for example.

SING (POW+CHA)

Carrying a tune is covered by Sing, anything from monotonous chants through to complex arias. Singing is an inherent part of most cultures, a prime source of entertainment, and perhaps used in its rituals. Important songs might be used for courting, inspiring soldiers before battle, or simply recounting a historical deed. The skill reflects the user's ability to maintain rhythm, keep in key and remember the correct words.

A critical Sing success can have one of several effects. If singing to earn money, increase by half again the amount earned due to the audience's appreciation of the performance. If being used to impress someone, a follow-up Influence or similar skill become one difficulty grade easier to make.

A failed Sing roll signifies a bland performance. If fumbled, then the song was off-key, out of tune, and poorly received. Halve the earnings and any attempts to influence or deceive afterwards become one grade harder.

STEALTH (DEX+INT)

Hiding out of plain sight, or moving with minimal sound are covered by the Stealth skill. Cover and conditions, such as darkness or loud background noise, improve the grade of the skill according to specifics of the environment. Similarly adverse conditions, such as a lack of cover or a quiet night will decrease the skill's grade. Circumstances also affect the difficulty of the attempt. For instance, a warrior wearing heavy armour can easily conceal themselves behind a wall providing they stand still or move very slowly, whereas moving quickly might cause their armour to jingle.

A critical roll means that any subsequent attempts to use skills to locate the character; follow him, observe him, and so forth are one grade harder.

A failure indicates that they are blatantly obvious, providing someone is bothering to locate them.

On a fumble the Stealth attempt has backfired and signals the character's presence rather than disguises it, or causes them to suffer some accident or misfortune; such as hiding on a window ledge then being knocked off when someone opens the shutter to investigate the strange noise.

SWIM (STR+CON)

Without development the ability to swim is limited to being able to thrash around, and keep one's head above the water for a short



time. Higher Swim percentages indicate being able to negotiate deeper and stronger waters, with less risk of drowning. Making a Swim roll therefore depends entirely on the conditions. Rough seas, strong currents, white water and rip-tides all reduce the grade of the skill no matter what the character's affinity for water might be. Under normal conditions a character's maximum swimming speed per round is equal to their base Movement rate, plus an extra metre for every full 20% they possess in Swim.

A critical Swim roll allows the character to add a further metre to his Movement rate.

Failing a Swim roll has no immediate consequences, save that the character gains a level of Fatigue.

If a Swim roll is fumbled then controlled movement ceases as the swimmer begins suffering cramps or is overwhelmed by turbulent conditions; future Swim rolls become one grade more difficult. From that moment on, all the swimmer can do is try to keep their head above water until help arrives or they become exhausted, at which point they'll likely start to drown. See the rules for Asphyxiation on page 71.

UNARMED (STR+DEX)

Unarmed is a universal Combat Style common to all characters, measuring the ability to defend oneself without the aid of weapons. The Unarmed skill covers the brawling and wrestling techniques known by that culture. However there are, of course, specific styles that enhance the ability to fight without weapons, offering advantages to those who learn them as a separate Combat Style.

As Unarmed is a Combat Style its critical and fumble effects are covered by the rules for combat, as detailed in the Combat chapter.

WILLPOWER (POW x2)

Willpower is a measure of a character's ability to concentrate, channel his force of will in a particular direction, or harden his psyche to possible mental shock. It is also a measure of personal resolve. The skill is used in all manner of situations where mental resilience is required, and this includes resisting magic. Although not a measure of sanity it can be used to endure traumatic events that would shake even the sanest, stable mind. Willpower is the mental counterpart to Endurance.

Again, like Endurance and Evade, Willpower is most often used in Opposed Tests. When used as a standard test, a critical Willpower roll indicates that the character has hardened his mind and spirit to the extent that no further attempts to influence him, or shake his resolve, will work. In the case of resisting magic, a critical success means that no further mentally afflicting spells cast by the opponent have any effect on the character for the remainder of that encounter.

The effects of failing a Willpower roll depend on the situation and circumstances – usually temporary capitulation to whatever is being done to him. A fumbled Willpower roll means that the character is utterly overwhelmed. His will is broken, and he has no means of resisting whatever it is that assails him mentally or spiritually. In the case of resisting shock or spells a fumbled Willpower roll means that the psychological effect of the spell becomes permanent until healed.

OPTIONAL RULE – LIMITS TO ENDURANCE AND WILLPOWER

There are limits to mental, and physical endurance; barriers beyond which the mind, and body cannot be pushed, and surrender becomes inevitable. Games Masters may wish to rule in their campaign that Endurance cannot exceed CON x5, and Willpower cannot exceed POW x5. The starting values for each skill are both calculated as normal, but have a defined limit.

perform convincingly: on stage, for example, or attempting to pass oneself off as another person.

A critical success is thoroughly convincing. In a performance context it guarantees a standing ovation or similar. In a social context then the actor is the character he portrays. It also means that any subsequent skill roll, such as Deceit, Influence or similar, is one difficulty grade easier (Easy rather than Standard, for example).

Failed rolls signify a lacklustre performance.

Fumbling an Acting roll means the performance convinces no-one, and is so bad that even the most unperceptive will see through the act, or perhaps worse, laugh and jeer.

ACROBATICS (STR+DEX)

Acrobatics covers acts of balance, gymnastics, juggling and tumbling. The skill can be used in its own right as a way to impress an audience, but also to help mitigate damage from falls. With a successful roll a character can move at full speed and sure-footedly across an unstable or narrow surface. If trying to mitigate damage from an unexpected fall, a successful Acrobatics reduces the distance as explained on page 78, *Falling*.

Acrobatics can be substituted for Evade if the situation warrants it. The benefit of this is that if the roll is a success, the character automatically avoids ending up prone.

A critical success doubles the movement rate when balancing or negotiating an unstable surface.

Failing an Acrobatics roll results in an unimpressed audience, or the premature aborting of whatever trick or tumble was attempted.

A fumbled Acrobatics roll means that balance and agility has been completely lost, causing the character to either fall off whatever he was balancing upon, drop a juggled object in a spectacularly bad way, or injure themselves performing an acrobatic tumble – suffering 1d4 points of damage to a random location.

ART (POW+CHA)

There are many specific art forms. Painting to Poetry; Literature to Sculpture. A character chooses an Art specialisation when taking this skill. Subsequent Art forms are advanced in separately. A roll is made whenever a character must impress or convince through his artistic medium.

A critical success indicates that artist creates something of stunning quality, elegance or beauty – worth half the standard value again of like products. Any subsequent skill rolls made to influence whomever commissioned the work, or those that simply admire it, become temporarily one grade easier.

Failing the roll creates something insipid, which neither impresses or sells for more than the materials used to create it.

A fumbled Art roll renders an artistic disaster. The effects of such a terrible situation need to be determined by the Games Master but, at the very least, represent a complete waste of time, materials, and talent that, if viewed publicly, could influence reputation.

BINDING (POW+CHA)

Binding is a magical skill used by animists to exert their will over spirits and creatures of the otherworld. It is used to bind spirits into fetishes, and control their actions once bound. Additionally, it can be used to summon and coerce a known spirit to perform a deed for a mutually acceptable service, forging a contract between them.

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Professional Skills differ between characters and represent more specialised forms of training and experience. Some Professional skills are gathered through cultural background and a character's career, as the name suggests. Although they differ between characters they work in the same way as Standard Skills.

Certain magical skills are also classed as Professional Skills: Invocation and Shaping are the two skills associated with Sorcery for example. These are only briefly described here. For more details see the relevant magical chapter.

ACTING (CHA x2)

Acting governs the art of being able to impersonate and convey a completely different character, whether in a staged performance or in a social situation. The actor portrays a personality and mannerisms different to his own in a convincing manner. Coupled with the Disguise and Deceit skills, this is a powerful way of becoming someone else entirely. An Acting roll is needed when it is essential to

Moreover the skill is used when engaging in Spirit Combat, and also measures the authority an animist has within a spirit cult. For further details see page [131](#) of the Animism chapter.

Binding is not limited to animists. The skill can be learned by other magical practitioners, and used in the binding of supernatural entities such as elementals and demons.

BUREAUCRACY (INT x2)

Understanding administrative procedures, records, and unspoken conventions are covered by the Bureaucracy skill. It is used to interact with officials or discover pertinent civic information. Depending on the sophistication of their culture, bureaucrats need not necessarily be literate. However their Bureaucracy skill cannot exceed the score of the Language or Literacy skill in which they work. Whenever red-tape or administrative landscapes need to be navigated, a Bureaucracy roll is necessary.

Critically succeeding in Bureaucracy lends a deep insight into the procedures and formalities of whatever it is the character is attempting to accomplish, achieving it in half the usual time. It also means any subsequent skills relying on the Bureaucracy roll are one grade easier (Influence, for example, or Deceit).

A failure results in becoming stonewalled or relevant documents misplaced, the user's inability to follow customary procedure resulting in subsequent skills relevant to the situation becoming one grade harder.

If the roll is fumbled then access is forbidden or the character alienates a key personage – so that their enquiry or request will never be satisfied.

COMMERCE (INT+CHA)

Commerce is used to evaluate the worth of goods and commodities, and to trade them for the best possible price. It is also used to understand the intricacies of business transactions in addition to securing a profit. A further use is in finding the best way to dispose of stolen and illicit goods – again for the best possible price. Commerce is obviously used when trading, and it can be opposed by either an opponent's Commerce skill or Willpower, reflecting the opposing side's attempts to further the deal in their favour. It is also used to judge the market value of goods, gaining an idea of price and where it will be best traded.

In transactions where rolls are not opposed, a critical success allows the character to secure the commodity or service at half its usual price, or sell it for double.

Failing the roll indicates that the commodity or service is secured at twice the price, or sold for only half the value.

A fumble means the character has insulted the purchaser or seller to such a degree that the transaction is lost. Alternatively it may indicate that they are cheated instead, ending up paying for something worthless or unwittingly selling something of potentially great value at a fraction of its cost.

Also see the section on Haggling, page [56](#).

COURTESY (INT+CHA)

This skill covers understanding how to act appropriately in a social or formal situation: modes of address, rituals, and conventions of behaviour, and so forth. It includes everything from who to bow to, and when, to how low; from when to use a particular title, to when it is appropriate to act informally.

Critically succeeding in a Courtesy roll makes any subsequent skill roll relevant to that situation one difficulty grade easier.

Failing a Courtesy roll means the user has not impressed the company with his attitude or manners; making any subsequent skill rolls a grade harder.

A fumbled Courtesy roll creates severe embarrassment and humiliation and, at worst, gives insult that, depending on the circumstances, could have a dire outcome. No further social intercourse is possible after a fumble.

CRAFT (DEX+INT)

Each Craft is a specialised form, and there are as many crafts as there are professions for them. Like Art, Craft is used to create the subject item. How long it takes depends entirely on the nature of the product: weaving a rug takes longer than throwing a pot, for instance, but time is not necessarily the most important factor: it is the skill of the crafter, the quality of the resources, and attention to detail.

A critical success creates an item of superior quality, in terms of durability, utility or beauty.

A failed Craft roll indicates a sub-standard result undermining its robustness, function or aesthetics.

A fumbled roll creates an item that is functionally useless and valueless. Alternatively an accident occurs during the crafting process, causing damage to property, stock or the crafter themselves; a pottery kiln collapsing or a smith striking his hand with a hammer for example.

CULTURE (INT x2)

Culture is the more specific form of the Standard Skill of Customs, relating instead to societies foreign to the character's own. Each Culture skill must be given a particular nation or society to which it applies. Mechanically it works in the same way as the Customs skill.

DEVOTION (POW+CHA)

Devotion is a magical skill which reflects the commitment of priests, and their ilk to the service of a deity or pantheon of gods. It not only measures the depth of devotion to a deity, but also governs the magnitude of any theistic miracles called upon by the theist, and the recovery of these blessings at an appropriate holy place.

Additionally the skill can indicate the standing of a theist within a religious cult. For further details see page [178](#) of the Theism chapter.

In some settings Devotion is not limited to professional priests. It may be adopted by those who simply wish to show respect to the gods even if they do not actively practice Theism, or indeed if the gods exist at all!

DISGUISE (INT+CHA)

Effecting a convincing disguise, using appropriate materials (costumes, cosmetics, wigs or hairpieces), is covered by the Disguise skill. Creating the disguise requires time and attention to detail, as well as access to the right materials to make it convincing. If some, or all, of these elements are not present then the Disguise roll's difficulty grade is made one or more steps harder.

Disguise can be augmented with Acting to enhance the overall effect of a deception (vice versa when performing), and so the two skills are complementary.

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A critical Disguise roll results in a completely convincing masquerade so potent that even their own mother or a lifelong enemy probably wouldn't recognise them.

Failing a disguise roll results in such a meagre attempt it permits passive onlookers the chance to see through it.

A fumbled Disguise roll either produces a disguise so crass that it instantly penetrated; or one which fails at a spectacularly inopportune moment. No amount of great acting can salvage the illusion when a false nose peels away or a poorly fitted costume rips off.

ENGINEERING (INT x2)

The design and building of large-scale structures, from houses to bridges, gates to siege engines, is in the remit of the Engineering skill. Rolls are necessary when planning large scale projects to ensure correct construction, but are also made when an engineer wants to assess a structure's integrity for whatever reason (state of repair or weak spots, for example).

A critical success highlights any unnoticeable major flaws or problems with the item under study. It also makes subsequent rolls dependent on the structure one grade easier. Alternately it may allow a tougher, more resilient construction to be built (a tenth more Hit Points or Armour Points).

Failing an Engineering roll results in a construction which is sub-standard (a tenth fewer Hit Points or Armour Points) or an inability to determine any structural information.

A fumble actively introduces a major flaw into a project or disastrously assesses the condition of an item, providing incorrect and misleading information. Subsequent rolls dependent on the Engineering check are made one grade harder.

EXHORT (INT+CHA)

Exhort is the magical skill used to call upon and channel the power of the gods. It includes knowledge of the history, myths, rituals, practices, prayers, and powers of the god or pantheon, and is essential to Theistic magic, being used to manifest divine miracles. For further details see page [178-179](#) of the Theism chapter.

FOLK MAGIC (POW+CHA)

Minor, petty magics are cast using this skill. It represents the character's knowledge of charms, cantrips or blessings, and how competent the user is when casting them. For further details see page [122](#) of the Folk Magic chapter.



GAMBLING (INT+POW)

The Gambling skill measures a character's competence in games of chance, and especially where money is staked on the outcome. It is used to assess the odds of success or failure or spot when someone is cheating. The skill can be used in an opposed or unopposed manner, depending on the situation. Spending the night in a faceless gambling den might only require a straight test, whereas a high stakes dice game involving notable personages may instead require several rounds of opposed rolls.

A critical Gambling success usually permits the character to win a game outright or clean out one of the participants.

Failure simply results in the character losing that hand or stake.

On a fumble, the character has completely misread the odds or has tragic bad luck. He loses everything gambled and is thrown out of the game.

Cheating allows a character to roll twice and take the best result. However each time this is attempted the cheater must roll an opposed test of their Sleight skill against the Perception or Gambling skill of everyone else playing. Failing to beat all the observers means that the cheater has been detected, with suitable results.

HEALING (INT+POW)

Healing is the in-depth knowledge of medical procedures, based on cultural practices. In a primitive or barbarian culture, for instance, healing will be based on the knowledge of herbs, and natural cures. In a civilised culture, drugs and more advanced treatments will be more common. In all cultures Healing includes the ability to set bones, suture wounds, and so forth. Obviously applying healing requires appropriate resources, and most practicing healers will have such things to hand (needles, gut or thread for sutures, herbs for poultices, and so forth). There are three main areas of Healing:

TREATING SERIOUS WOUNDS

A successful Healing roll restores 1d3 Hit Points to a Seriously Injured location. On a critical success this is raised to 1d3+1. If fumbled, damage is increased by 1 Hit Point.

TREATING DISEASES AND POISONS

If Healing is performed prior to the onset time, it counteracts the disease or toxin entirely, providing it overcomes the Potency of the malady in an opposed roll. If performed on a character who has already succumbed to the disease or toxin, a successful Healing roll permits the victim a new chance to resist, making it one grade easier. A critical

success increases it by two grades. A fumble however, makes the resistance roll one grade harder.

SURGERY

Surgery is the only way, other than magical healing, that a character can recover from a Major Wound. A successful First Aid roll is needed to stabilise a Major Wound (see the First Aid skill on page 41), and then a Healing roll can be made to set a shattered bone, stitch together the flesh of a stump or excise foreign objects lodged in tissue, so that the location can begin the road to recovery.

As long as the Healing roll is a success, the injured location begins to heal as normal for a location suffering a Major Wound (see Healing on page 80). On a critical success the location regains 1 Hit Point immediately; whereas on a fumbled Healing roll the patient must succeed in an Endurance roll or die from the procedure. Surgery cannot re-attach a severed limb.

INVOCATION (INT x2)

Invocation is a magical skill essential to Sorcery. It is the sorcerer's ability to successfully cast spells learned from a particular grimoire or mentor. It is a combination of understanding the formulae of the spell, the correct mental state, accompanying gestures and incantations, and so on. Increasing competence in this skill also improves the final intensity of the spells cast with it.

Each Invocation skill must be tied to a specific source of sorcerous knowledge, whether that be a particular spellbook, school of wizardry or even a demonic patron. For further details see page 161 of the Sorcery chapter.

LANGUAGE (INT+CHA)

This skill covers the speaking and comprehension of languages other than the character's own. Akin to Native Tongue (see page 42), the Language skill is not rolled against directly, but is treated as a static representation of overall fluency. Its value is used by the Games Master to limit the level of spoken interaction when the players converse with personalities in the game. Use the Linguistic Fluency table as a guideline.

LINGUISTIC FLUENCY

Language %	Conversational Fluency
01-25%	Knows only a few simple words, cannot phrase sentences
26-50%	Can understand and communicate in fragmentary, simple sentences, such as "Where temple?" or "How much food?"
51-75%	Fluent enough for general conversation
76% +	Able to express yourself with eloquence

Each Language skill is specific to a particular national or regional language which must be chosen at the time of learning. It can help to understand similar dialects which share a common linguistic basis or origin. Depending on the divergence, the skill roll should be treated at least one grade harder, possibly reducing the character's fluency.

Language is also used as a cap on verbal skills which require a good grasp of language. See Capping Skills on page 50.

LITERACY (INT x2)

Speaking a language fluently does not mean one can read and write it. Literacy is a specific skill, and different cultures and societies display different levels and approaches towards it. In some, literacy is reserved for the nobility, bureaucratic or religious classes. In others it is unknown with oral traditions prevailing instead.

Naturally Literacy is specialised according to its associated language, including Native Tongue. Before once can be literate in a Language one must be able to speak it. Literacy cannot exceed the character's related Language skill. The skill works similarly to Language in terms of how much of a document can be comprehended.

Literacy does not necessarily imply writing, as there are an infinite number of ways to record information. Some cultures might carve symbols into trees or lengths of bone, whereas others record history in complex patterns of knots in a tapestry. Neither are all forms of literacy based on phonetic alphabets; hieroglyphs and ideograms also being commonplace.

LOCKPICKING (DEX x2)

Lockpicking is the ability to open a mechanical locking system without the aid of a key or other device made specifically for the lock. It includes the techniques of levering open bolted or barred doors and windows without causing damage. The difficulty of the lock usually depends on the ability of the locksmith who created it, requiring an opposed test of Lockpicking versus Mechanisms skill of the crafter.

Where no skill value is provided for the lock a Games Master may adjust the difficulty grade of the Lockpicking skill instead, according to the lock's complexity. A thief attempting to pick an expensive and expertly crafted mechanical doorlock of a kind he has never seen before, might have to make his Lockpick roll one or two grades harder, for example. And some locks – invisible, recessed bolts and deadlocks – might be impossible to pick.

On a critical success the Lockpicker not only opens the lock silently and efficiently, but subsequent attempt to pick the same kind of lock becomes, for a short while, one grade easier.

A failure simply means the lock could not be picked.

On a fumble the lock becomes jammed: lockpicks break in the mechanism, or the mechanism is damaged internally. Whatever the cause, the jammed lock will ultimately attract attention.

LORE (INT x2)

Lore covers a specific body of knowledge which must be chosen when the skill is first learned. Astrology, Astronomy, Geography, History, Monsters, Mythology, Politics, Strategy and Tactics: these are all typical examples of Lore skills. Skill in a Lore means the character understands its fundamentals, how it can be applied to immediate challenges and problems, and can use the Lore to recall useful information.

A critical Lore success grants a high degree of insight into what is being studied. It also means that a subsequent skill roll relevant to that Lore becomes one grade easier. For example, a commanding officer who critically succeeds in a Lore (Politics) roll knows that not only is the approaching troupe part of a diplomatic envoy, but they are mercenaries unhappy with their situation. If he later tries to influence the mercenaries to change sides his roll would become one step easier.

Failing a Lore roll results in no useful information being gained.

A fumbled Lore roll indicates a complete misunderstanding of the subject. Facts are wrong, and subsequent skill rolls dependent on the Lore skill's accuracy become one grade more difficult.

MECHANISMS (DEX+INT)

Mechanisms represents the knowledge and skill to assemble and disassemble mechanical devices, such as traps. The skill of Mechanisms generally involves the creation of delicate contraptions with small working parts, as opposed to Engineering, which deals with massive constructions. It is a distinct discipline from Lockpicking and cannot be interchanged with that skill.

The time taken to deal with a mechanism depends entirely on its scale and complexity. Repairing a large cartwheel might take half an hour; whilst building a poison-needle trapped lock might take an entire week. When deciding on how long a Mechanism skill attempt should take, Games Masters need to consider the size, intricacy, tools needed, and any specific conditions. As a rule of thumb, Mechanisms rolls take a minimum of 1d3x10 minutes but this is for simplest and most straightforward of mechanical challenges. The timeframe may very well extend to months.

On a critical success the character achieves success in half the usual time, and with flawless results. Any future rolls attempting to disable or circumvent the Mechanisms are one grade harder.

A failure results in a device which is temperamental and prone to breaking down; attempts to bypass or render it inoperative are one grade easier.

On a fumble the mechanism is utterly broken, and has to be thrown away and started again from scratch.

MEDITATION (INT+CON)

Meditation is the ability to reach a state of deep relaxation and concentration, through emptying the consciousness of all distractions: external and internal. Technically a magical skill, it is a fundamental part of Mysticism controlling the depth of focus needed when augmenting skills to superhuman levels. As competence in Meditation improves, the more potent a mystic's abilities become.

Being a useful skill, Meditation need not be limited to just mystics. Since it helps to shut out distractions and relaxes the body, it allows the user to achieve rest even in the most uncomfortable of locations. A successful roll permits a character to recover Fatigue or Hit Points in situations normally forbidden by the rules.

MUSICIANSHP (DEX+CHA)

Musicianship covers the playing of musical instruments; from a simple reed pipe to a complex stringed instrument such as a harp. Each iteration of Musicianship is applied to a group of similar instruments. A musician who can play a reed pipe can also play a flute, panpipes or a recorder because the fundamentals are the same. He could not, however, play a harp or lute.

The chief groups of instruments are:

- ❖ Bow Strings (violin, cello, fiddle, and so on)
- ❖ Keyboards (piano, organ, clavinet, and so on)
- ❖ Percussion (drums, tom-toms, and so on)
- ❖ Plucked Strings (harp, lyre)
- ❖ Strummed Strings (lute, guitar, banjo etc)
- ❖ Wind (pipe, flute, trumpet, and so on)

A critical success indicates the musician creates music of stunning quality, elegance or beauty. Any subsequent skill rolls, such as Influence, become one grade easier.

Failing a Musicianship roll renders in a lacklustre performance. A fumbled Musicianship roll results in a musical disaster. Perhaps the instrument breaks or the piece of music performed is taken as a gross insult. The effects of such a terrible situation need to be determined by the Games Master but, at the very least, represent embarrassment that could influence reputation.

MYSTICISM (POW+CON)

Mysticism is a magical skill essential to Mystics. It measures their facility to perform superhuman acts through the channelling of inner resources, and either harnessing or suppressing certain passions or concepts. As competence in this skill improves, so does the mystic gradually approach perfection in those skills which are the focus of his training.

Each Mysticism skill must be tied to a specific foundation of mystical knowledge. This can be a religious sect, a book of esoteric teachings or perhaps a mountain-top residing hermit. The skill is more fully described in the Mysticism chapter on page [155](#).

NAVIGATION (INT+POW)

Whether using prominent landmarks, the stars or the varying taste of seawater, the ability to accurately direct travel is covered by the Navigation skill. Each Navigation skill covers a specific region or environment, such as Open Seas or Underground for example. It should be made during unusual journeys or when in completely unfamiliar territory.

A critical success in Navigation allows the user to locate a shortcut, such as a fast current or hidden pass.

Failing the roll results in delays due to uncertainty or temporarily losing the path.

A fumbled Navigation ends up with the user becoming utterly lost, unable to even backtrack.

ORATORY (POW+CHA)

Oratory is the art of delivering a speech to large group of people with the aim of conveying or swaying a point of view. It is a skill frequently used by politicians to drive home a policy, but is also used by commanders to inspire troops, and impose discipline on the battlefield. Wherever mass persuasion is needed, Oratory, rather than Influence, is used.

On a critical Oratory roll the orator sways the group completely to his argument, even winning over the most ardent of detractors. Subsequent rolls related to the Oratory are one difficulty grade easier.

A failed Oratory roll goes nowhere; people are as dispassionate or hostile as before.

On a fumble, the orator has alienated his audience, perhaps made himself look foolish, and may even have managed to compel the audience to believe the opposite of what he wanted to convey. Subsequent rolls dependent on the Oratory become one grade harder.

SEAMANSHIP (INT+CON)

This skill is used in exactly the same way as Boating (see page [39](#)) but is instead applied to large waterborne vessels powered by sail or banks of oars. It also covers the maintenance and upkeep of a ship:

assessing when repairs are needed, where it is safe to anchor, the dangers of violent weather, and so forth.

SEDUCTION (INT+CHA)

Seduction is the romantic or sexual persuasion of another person, a skill very different to Influence. It uses explicit signals – verbal and non-verbal – to elicit a sexually positive response. It also takes a significant amount of time: successful Seduction may take hours, days or weeks to achieve depending on the morals of the target, who always has the opportunity to resist a Seduction attempt with Willpower.

A critical Seduction roll yields a potent result, entrancing the victim or causing them to fall passionately in love (or lust). Subsequent skill rolls taking advantage of this relationship become one grade easier.

A failed Seduction leads to the seducer being rebuffed to some degree.

A fumble ends up causing emotional hurt or insulting the target. This completely ruins any further chances of seduction for the time being; it also makes subsequent skill rolls one grade harder. A disastrous Seduction attempt can lead to intensely grave consequences.

SHAPING (INT+POW)

Shaping is a magical skill that is the counterpart to Invocation. Successfully invoked spells can be manipulated or shaped by the sorcerer to meet specific requirements; extending their range, adding multiple targets, increasing duration, and so on. The Sorcery chapter on page [161-162](#) defines how Shaping works in detail.

SLEIGHT (DEX+CHA)

Sleight covers attempts to palm or conceal small objects (legerdemain and prestidigitation), and includes attempts to pick pockets, cut purses or cause a visual distraction. Naturally it is an essential thieves' skill.

Characters can attempt to manipulate any item as long as it is no larger than their hand. Sleight can be attempted with living creatures provided that the user has somewhere or something to conceal them with, a hat or baggy sleeve for example, but the skill becomes one grade harder to perform. Some objects, due to their size and mass cannot be manipulated with Sleight at all but require Conceal instead. Observers can pit their Perception skill against Sleight attempts to become aware of the deception.

On a critical Sleight success the character has manipulated the object so successfully that any subsequent attempts to locate it are one grade harder.

Failure means that the object is not concealed, and will be automatically detected if any effort is made to locate it.

If fumbled, not only is the item unconcealed, but it is dropped or otherwise fully exposed at a most inopportune moment.

STREETWISE (POW+CHA)

Streetwise represents knowledge of places and social contacts within a settlement. It covers everything from identifying potentially dangerous neighbourhoods, to finding local services – legal or illegal. How long a Streetwise attempt takes depends on what is sought. Finding a good inn will take less time than locating a fence for stolen goods or a fake trading permit.

A critical Streetwise success locates the precise person or place necessary to gain what he is seeking for, without unnecessary bribes or intermediary steps, which can result in the formation of a new contact.

Failing a Streetwise attempt merely results in wasting the time spent looking. A fumbled Streetwise means the character not only fails to find what is being sought, but also comes under unwanted, potentially dangerous attention: from local thugs or muggers to the resident militia, depending on circumstances.

SURVIVAL (CON+POW)

This skill covers surviving in a rural or wilderness environment where the benefits of civilisation are absent: foraging, building a fire, finding shelter or a safe place to sleep. When properly equipped rolls are usually unnecessary since the character may be carrying a tent, food supplies, and so on. Only when separated from their equipment or when environmental conditions turn bad does it become essential to utilise this skill. A roll is usually made once per day in such conditions.

A critical success indicates that the character locates a good source of food or shelter, and does not need to make a further Survival roll for a number of days equal to the critical range of his skill (one-tenth).

Failure results in the character gaining an automatic level of fatigue that does not lift until conditions change or the next Survival roll is made. A fumbled Survival roll ends up with a disastrous accident of some kind; encountering a fierce creature, suffering exposure or consuming poisonous food for example.

TEACH (INT+CHA)

Teach allows the user to pass on their knowledge and techniques in an easy to understand and constructive manner. Without this skill even the most capable of masters will suffer problems instructing others. Similarly to certain other skills, Teach is not rolled against directly, but acts as a limit to what actually can be taught to more advanced students. For further details see Training on page [73](#).

GENERAL VS. SPECIFIC TEACHING

Depending on the amount of complexity Games Masters wish to introduce, teachers may specialise in a particular area or range of subjects.

For example, Kara's philosophy teacher specialises in Teach (Meerish Philosophy). This covers the teachings of the great Meerish philosophers, historians, and cult priests.

If treated in this way Teach can function almost as a Combat Style, encompassing several different skills or areas of study. A thieves' cult might employ teachers who instruct in the related arts of Disguise, Stealth, and Sleight, under the Teach (The Hidden Path) skill.

Cults frequently employ teachers who train their members in specific cult skills (see page [199](#) of the Cults and Brotherhoods chapter).

TRACK (INT+CON)

The Track skill is used for tracking any form of game or quarry. It uses both obvious and ambiguous signs of passing to remain on the quarry's trail, including footprints, bruised leaves, scattered pollen, displaced rocks, and so on; small, tell-tale signs that are invisible to the non-skilled. Track rolls need to be made periodically, especially if conditions change abruptly (a rain shower, for example, will disturb certain signs). How often depends on how cunning the quarry has been. Conceal rolls can be used to oppose a Track roll.

With a critical success the tracker remains on the trail of someone or something not attempting to hide their spoils, irrespective of conditions, and does not need to make any subsequent Track rolls to locate the quarry.

Failing causes the tracker to lose the trail, forcing them to backtrack in order to pick it up again.

Fumbling a Track roll loses the trail utterly, forcing the user to abandon the pursuit or hunt. Alternately the tracker may wander blithely into a prepared trap laid by the stalked victim.

TRANCE (POW+CON)

Trance is a magical skill used by practitioners of Animism to attain the correct psychological state that permits the perception of, and transition into, the Spirit World. Further detail on how Trance works is given in the Animism chapter beginning on page [130](#).

DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

Although the basic rules for using skills in MYTHRAS are very straightforward, there are a multitude of different circumstances that arise during play that require skills to be handled in a slightly different way. The following sections look at these circumstances and situations, and show how to handle them.

REATTEMPTING SKILLS

In some situations a character will fail a skill attempt but be left in a situation where he could potentially try again. Example cases might be picking a lock or attempting to climb a sheer wall. Instead of simply denying any further attempts, kindly Games Masters may permit a follow-up, last-ditch attempt. However, the character will suffer some trepidation or lack of confidence which increases the difficulty of the skill roll by one grade.

If this second effort also ends in failure, the character is assumed to have given it his ‘best shot’, and cannot make any further attempts for the foreseeable future.

AUGMENTING SKILLS

It is possible for one skill to aid another. This is called *Augmenting*. Anathaym, for example, may find herself being chased by nomad raiders through countryside she knows well, and they do not. She could, in this case, augment her Drive with her Locale skill, knowledge of the local terrain giving her an advantage.

The Games Master will decide if augmentation is appropriate and possible. Any skill being used to augment another must be appropriate to the circumstances. In Anathaym’s example Locale is appropriate because she knows the area. If she was in unfamiliar territory it would not be permissible.

- « Characters can only augment the primary skill with a single other skill.
- « An augmenting skill increases the value of the primary skill by twice its Critical range (ie, 20% of the skill). So, in Anathaym’s case, using Locale 33% she would increase her Ride by 7%, giving her a Ride of 45%. However, the chances for Critical and Fumble are the same as if the primary skill was

unaugmented; so Anathaym would still only score a Critical success on a roll of 4% or less.

« Characters can augment other character’s skills to assist them.

All the above rules apply, so a character being aided cannot augment himself in addition. Likewise a character can only contribute one of his skills to assist another. So, for example, Anathaym, trying to scale a high wall, could have her Athletics skill augmented by a companion’s Brawn (representing a hitch-up).

CAPPING SKILLS

To ‘cap’ a skill with another means that for a particular roll, the primary skill is restricted to the value of a secondary skill, providing the latter is lower. This is normally done in situations where a character’s full knowledge or ability is limited by unusual circumstances.

Capping is a useful alternative to applying a difficulty modifier, especially in circumstances where the character is limited by their own capability.

ANATHAYM’S SAGA

Anathaym has a Lore (Strategy, and Tactics) skill of 48% which she normally rolls without penalty when organising battle plans with her native Meerish compatriots. Travelling across the plains of Korath however she is forced to use the local language with her hired nomadic bodyguards, in which she is far less fluent, knowing only a few basic words – Language (Korathian) 23%. Spotting an approaching enemy patrol of Zingriffi raiders, Anathaym attempts to organise her nomads to lay an ambush. In this circumstance the Games Master rules that her halting command of the local language will prevent Anathaym from being able to clearly explain her plan; capping her Lore (Strategy, and Tactics) skill to the value of her Language (Korathian).

CONTESTED ROLLS

Contested Rolls are used whenever a skill is actively resisted by an opponent. This can be anything from a character influencing a reticent guard to a sorcerer casting a spell against a monster. There are two types of contest: *Opposed Rolls* and *Differential Rolls*.

OPPOSED ROLLS

MYTHRAS frequently pits one skill against another – Stealth versus Perception when a thief attempts to cut a nobleman’s purse, say; or Deceit versus Insight when the same thief tries to deny the attempt when he is caught – are good examples of times where skills are matched against each other. These are known as Opposed Rolls, and are used where a challenge will result in either win or lose, pass or fail.

An Opposed Roll is determined thus: both participants roll their respective skills. The winner is the one who gains the better level of success. If the participants score the same level of success (a standard success each, or a critical each), then the winner is the one who has the highest dice roll still within the success range of the skill.

For example, Lodz, a thief of Meeros, attempts to cut the purse of Senator Odas. This calls for a Sleight roll by Lodz which, the Games Master says, will be opposed by Odas’ Perception. The dice are rolled: Lodz scores 45 on his Sleight skill of 70%, and Odas scores 63 on his Perception of 66%. Both have

succeeded in their rolls but, because Odas has rolled higher than Lodz, and is still within his skill range, he is judged the winner. Lodz has successfully cut the purse, but Odas has quite clearly seen him do it.

In a bid to save his skin, Lodz attempts to lie his way out of trouble. ‘The cord snapped, sir?’ Lodz protests. ‘I merely caught your purse as it dropped, and was about to return it to you.’ This calls for a Deceit roll for Lodz, opposed by Odas’ Insight roll. Lodz has Deceit 78%, and rolls 07 – a critical success. Odas has Insight 64%, and rolls 62. Here, Lodz quite clearly has the better level of success: a critical against Odas’ standard success. Lodz manages to sweet-talk his way out of a sticky situation, and he walks away thankful, but ruing his bad luck at so nearly being caught.

If both participants fail in an Opposed Roll then either:

- « Describe the situation, leaving both sides hanging in dramatic tension, then re-roll the contest to establish a winner
- « The Games Master should produce some explanation or circumstances that suit the nature of the failure

In the Lodz and Odas example, both of them failing in the initial rolls would mean that Lodz failed to cut the purse, and Odas failed to notice him trying: it is easy to re-roll the contest. In the case of Lodz trying to lie his way out of trouble, if both fail in their rolls then the Games Master informs the players that both of them are suddenly distracted by the sounds of a skirmish across the marketplace as a brawl breaks-out between rival merchants. Lodz can make a swift exit, and Odas has his attention absorbed by the merchants’ squabble.

Opposed rolls are frequently used in certain battle situations to overcome the effects of wounds or oppose a combat special effect. They are also used to resist poisons and disease, or shrug off the effects of baleful magic.

OPPOSED ROLL EXAMPLES

Activity	Opposing Skill Examples
Bargaining/Haggling	Commerce vs Commerce, Influence vs Commerce
Chasing/Racing	Athletics vs Athletics, Athletics vs Endurance, Ride vs Ride
Deceiving or Lying	Deceit vs Insight, Sleight vs Perception
Displaying Loyalty	Passion vs Passion, Passion vs Insight, Passion vs Influence
Getting out of the Way	Evade vs Athletics, Evade vs Mechanisms, Evade vs Ride
Hiding or Sneaking	Stealth vs Perception; Stealth vs Track
Pulling Rank	Influence vs Willpower, Deceit vs Willpower
Staying the Course	Endurance vs Endurance, Endurance vs Brawn
Swaying a Crowd	Oratory vs Willpower
Test of Strength	Brawn vs Brawn, Brawn vs Endurance
Test of Wills	Willpower vs Willpower, Seduction vs Willpower

DIFFERENTIAL ROLLS

Differential rolls are similar to Opposed rolls except that instead of a simple win or lose result, the difference in levels of success are calculated. Primarily used for the resolution of combat (see page 94), Differential Rolls can also be used in other situations where the Games Master wishes to increase the detailed results of a contest.

A Differential Roll is determined in the following manner: Both participants roll against their respective skills and suffer the results of their roll as if tested in isolation. There is no outright ‘winner’ per se, but whoever gained the higher level of success gains an advantage equal to the difference in the success levels between them (assuming one participant gains at least a standard success or better). If both participants score the same level of success (a standard success each, or a critical each), then there is no additional effect.

DIFFERENTIAL ROLL RESULTS

Result of Rolls	Antagonist Critical	Antagonist Success	Antagonist Failure	Antagonist Fumble
Protagonist Critical	No Benefit	Protagonist Wins 1 level of Success	Protagonist Wins 2 levels of Success	Protagonist Wins 3 levels of Success
Protagonist Success	Antagonist Wins 1 level of Success	No Benefit	Protagonist Wins 1 level of Success	Protagonist Wins 2 levels of Success
Protagonist Failure	Antagonist Wins 2 levels of Success	Antagonist Wins 1 level of Success	No Benefit	No Benefit
Protagonist Fumble	Antagonist Wins 3 levels of Success	Antagonist Wins 2 levels of Success	No Benefit	No Benefit

OPPOSED SKILLS OVER 100%

If the highest skilled participant in an Opposed or Differential Roll has a skill in excess of 100%, that participant subtracts the difference between 100, and his skill value from the skill of everyone in the contest, including himself. This reduces the skill value of the opponents but leaves him retaining the advantage.

The identification of who has the highest skill must be calculated after any other modifiers for circumstances have been applied.

GROUP ROLLS

Group Rolls are a time-saving way for Games Masters to determine the success of a group of individuals involved in the same task. There are two separate forms of Group Roll: *Team Rolls* and *Sorting Rolls*.

SIMPLIFYING SUBTRACTION WITH SKILLS OVER 100%

Games Masters may find ad hoc subtraction for skills over 100% slows down the flow of their game. As an alternative suggestion, penalties should be rounded up to the nearest 10%. Thus in a contest involving a skill of say 113%, instead of subtracting 13% from everybody in the contest, the Games Master can simply round the penalty up to 20% which is a faster calculation.

TEAM ROLL

In a team test, success is co-operative; everyone reaps the benefit from a single success. If the group of bandits hunting Anathaym are all trying to search for her hiding place in the forest, then any successful Perception roll will reveal her to all the bandits. The Games Master rolls once for the highest skill in the team (the highest Perception skill among the bandits, for example), and if the roll is a success, everybody in the team succeeds. If the roll is a failure, everybody fails.

A ‘reverse’ team test can be used in a situation where one failure can spell disaster. For example, if a group of hunters are attempting to stalk a deer, any failed Stealth test will startle the quarry. In this case, the hunter with the lowest Stealth skill rolls a Stealth test. If he succeeds, everyone succeeds. If the roll is a failure, everybody fails.

SORTING ROLL

In a sorting test, success is individual. For example, the same group of bandits are being chased by Anathaym, which calls for opposed Ride tests. Some of the bandits have a Ride skill of 40%, some of 50%, and some of 60%. The Games Master makes a group roll for the bandits, which results in a 49. Those with skills of 50% or more succeed, while the slower bandits - those on a skill of 49 or lower - begin to fall behind (unless the remainder of the bandits slow their progress to allow their fellows to keep up).



Games Masters need to judge when to use multiple rolls to a group roll. Multiple rolls – one roll for each individual in a group – is more realistic, but is time consuming. If it is important to keep a game flowing and individual skill successes are not so important, a Group Roll is more effective.

PROPORTIONAL SKILL SUCCESS

Occasionally it may be necessary to determine the success of a large group of people performing the same task, in a situation in which there is no margin for error. In this case, simply take the skill being used and apply that as the percentage of success for the whole group.

For example: a group of 100 troops are attempting to wade across a fast-flowing river a short distance from a high and treacherous waterfall. This calls for an Athletics skill test. A failed skill test for an individual would result in their being swept away by the current. Rather than rolling 100 skill tests,

or using a Group Roll to determine whether all 100 soldiers make it across, the Games Master can simply rule that the Athletics skill for the group represents what proportion of that group successfully completes the task. If the troops have an Athletics skill of 75, then 75 of them will make it to the other side of the river, and the remaining 25 will be swept away.

SKILLS SUMMARIES

All Combat Styles are
STR+DEX

STANDARD SKILLS

Skill	Basic Percentage	Skill	Basic Percentage
Athletics	STR+DEX	Influence	CHA x2
Boating	STR+CON	Insight	INT+POW
Brawn	STR+SIZ	Locale	INT x2
Conceal	DEX+POW	Native Tongue	INT+CHA
Customs	INTx2	Perception	INT+POW
Dance	DEX+CHA	Ride	DEX+POW
Deceit	INT+CHA	Sing	CHA+POW
Drive	DEX+POW	Stealth	DEX+INT
Endurance	CON x2	Swim	STR+CON
Evade	DEX x2	Unarmed	STR+DEX
First Aid	INT+DEX	Willpower	POW x2

Skills in italics are used in Magic.

Animism: Binding, and Trance

Mysticism: Meditation and Mysticism

Theism: Devotion and Exhort

Sorcery: Invocation and Shaping

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Skill	Basic Percentage	Skill	Basic Percentage
Acting	CHA x2	Literacy	INT x2
Acrobatics	STR+DEX	Lockpicking	DEX x2
Art	POW+CHA	Lore	INT x2
<i>Binding</i>	<i>POW+CHA</i>	Mechanisms	DEX+INT
Bureaucracy	INT x2	<i>Meditation</i>	<i>INT+CON</i>
Commerce	INT+CHA	<i>Musicianship</i>	<i>DEX+CHA</i>
Courtesy	INT+CHA	<i>Mysticism</i>	<i>POW+CON</i>
Craft	DEX+INT	Navigation	INT+POW
Culture	INT x2	Oratory	POW+CHA
<i>Devotion</i>	<i>POW+CHA</i>	Seamanship	INT+CON
Disguise	INT+CHA	Seduction	INT+CHA
Engineering	INT x2	<i>Shaping</i>	<i>INT+POW</i>
<i>Exhort</i>	<i>INT+CHA</i>	Sleight	DEX+CHA
<i>Folk Magic</i>	<i>POW+CHA</i>	Streetwise	POW+CHA
Gambling	INT+POW	Survival	CON+POW
<i>Healing</i>	<i>INT+POW</i>	Teach	INT+CHA
<i>Invocation</i>	<i>INT x2</i>	Track	INT+CON
Language	INT+CHA	<i>Trance</i>	<i>POW+CON</i>

PASSIONS

Object of Passion	Starting Percentage
A person, in a romantic or familial context	30% plus Loved one's POW+CHA
A person in a platonic context (a friendship or loyalty, for example)	30% plus Character's POW, and subject's CHA
A person in an aversive context	30% plus Character's POW, and subject's CHA
An organisation or group of people	30% plus Character's POW+INT
A race or species	30% plus Character's POW x 2
A place	30% plus Character's POW+INT
An object or substance	30% plus Character's POW x 2
A concept or ideal	30% plus Character's POW+INT