

# CROSSROADS

*A classless, gritty narrative system about who you become in the world that breaks you.*

## What is Crossroads?

Crossroads is a story driven TTRPG about moral and ethical choices, diplomacy, growth, and the scars it leaves on the characters. Instead of levels or classes, your character grows through paths and marks

You will not slay thousands of monsters or collect hordes of treasure. There are no experience points or hit points. No giant character sheets filled with combat abilities with long descriptions and niche interactions. Crossroads is filled with Character development. It is a roleplaying game, weighted towards roleplay. You will make choices that define who you are and what remains thereafter. The rules are there to enhance the narrative, not stifle it.

The reason for this systems existence was my ever-growing annoyance with the gameplay loop of Dungeons and Dragons and Pathfinder, where 95% of the rules and abilities are combat focused. In return the trifurcated nature of TTRPGs, being Combat, Exploration and Social, ended up heavily weighted towards combat. In a lot of ways, DnD tempts players to start combat, to seek out ways to use their giant character sheets and cool abilities. DnD might be a good wargame, I'd say its okay, but it is not good for the 2/3rds of the totality of the typical TTRPG experience.

Crossroads takes a different approach, where the rules take a backseat to the experience of roleplay. I want the rules to strengthen character development, not combat. Combat in Crossroads is treated as any other encounter, to be solved and overcome, not with miniatures and maps, but with wit and will. Skill challenges and Trait rolls are the core of all scenes in Crossroads. In DnD combat is slow and tactical. In crossroads its fast paced and leaves lasting scars.

## The basics.

Dice: d10 system

Tone: Gritty, low magic, morally gray

Focus: Politics, diplomacy, sacrifice, character growth

## The Character Sheet

Your sheet has six parts.

Name and origin.

Paths (total of 4)

Traits (Mind, Body and Spirit)

Marks (permanent consequences, good or bad)

Bonds (People, factions or ideals)

Notable Talents (The niche things you are specifically good at)

## Paths

At the start, make 3 paths. They can be ideals, goals, emotions, or moral stances. Each should be short, personal and evocative. Remember, they are going to be with you for a long time. They need to be deeply intertwined with your character.

## Examples

1. **Path of the Shepherd:** I protect those who cannot protect themselves
2. **Path of the Broker:** Everyone has a price, everything is negotiation.
3. **Path of the Convict:** Crime is in the eye of the beholder.
4. **Path of the Flame:** It is by divine right I make my choice.
5. **Path of Vengeance:** You are driven by a personal vendetta

During play your character will face situations where the **paths** you have chosen will come into play. You or the GM may invoke a specific **path** related to a scene, where your choice in the scene will leave a **Mark** (A lasting consequence)

Each path evolves differently depending on your choices. There are no premade fixtures in Crossroads.

### **Example:**

The Player is playing Threna with **Path of Vengeance**

GM: Before you stand the grand Empress, she who sentenced your father to death many years ago. You have been waiting for this moment for a long time.

Player: I am going to invoke the **path of vengeance** and attack her in anger.

The GM, can either create marks in anticipation of a decision, make one up on the spot, or wait until next session to give the mark. Either way the scene continues and **Trait** rolls or **skill challenges** are had.

Should the player choose to not attack the Empress, then a different mark will be given.

## Traits

You have three traits:

**Mind:** This is your knowledge, wit, awareness and deceit

**Body:** This is your endurance, might, reflexes, suffering,

**Spirit:** This is your conviction, empathy, will, charisma, insight

You have a 3, 2 and 1 to assign as you please. When you attempt something that has the possibility to fail, the GM will ask for you to roll a d10 and add the number from the relevant trait against the difficulty table.

7-9: you succeed, but at a cost

10+: you succeed fully

Less than 6: You fail

## Skill Challenges

A lot of in world scenes might end up in scenarios where a lot of rolling or slowing down of momentum incurs. A chase scene, escaping a burning building, combat. These are solved with Skill Challenges. A skill challenge is a set of 3 Trait rolls that determine the outcome of the task at hand. The combination of fails, partial successes, and successes, determines how the challenge goes. In group activities the GM can use the average of what is rolled for each of the three trait checks.

## Marks

After choosing a path when the GM asks for it, you gain a mark. A mark is both a narrative and mechanical vehicle. It changes who you are and how you play.

Example

**Mark of Loss:** You chose to defend someone in need, but now your character lost an eye. You have -1 when making a Mind check to perceive something. You have gained the respect of the poor in X region, gain a bond with them.

**Mark of Deceit:** You chose to lie in a critical moment and now gain a +1 to **Mind** checks when lying in the future. Lying now comes easier to you as truth is losing meaning.

**Mark of Conviction:** After beating down a thief stealing bread to survive you have become a stalwart defender of the law, but at what cost? People now fear you. Nuance has become a thing of the past; your world turns ever blacker and whiter.

Notice that not every mark gives a + to a trait but rather aims to give bonuses or minuses depending on situations. You can gain abilities, or **bonds** or **grit** or **reputation**

## Magic

Magic in Crossroads is a bit nebulous thing. Crossroads is not intended to be a high magic system with lots of rules. The point is to not be bogged down by tons of text and hypertextual referencing and rules lawyering, but rather a collective storytelling system. So this is more of a recommendation than a hard rule. If a player chooses to play a spellcaster. Make that into a path. Path of the spellcaster or something adjacent or related to that. This path opens marks that will let you influence the world around you through magical abilities. These can be totally homebrewed and unique to the character who is playing.

## Notable Talents

Chose two notable talents your character has. Make them specific to an interest or topic. When rolling a trait check pertaining to your notable talents you can add +1. As you progress through the campaign, the notable talents become better on the GMs discretion. You can also gain notable talents through marks.

A notable talent can be, juggling, singing, carpentry, persuasion, sprinting, horse riding, swordplay, chemistry, and so much more.

## Advantage and Disadvantage

Whenever you make a roll that would go against or in alignment with your bonds, or if the GM thinks it applicable, you can be asked to roll with disadvantage or advantage. This takes the form of rolling a d10 twice and taking either the lower (disadvantage) or the higher roll (advantage)

## Bonds

You begin with 2 bonds. A bond ties you to someone, somewhere or something in the world. You will gain and lose bonds over time. A bond can give you **advantage** or **disadvantage** on a Trait roll depending on if you are acting in alignment with the bond. So, if you owe someone your life, and later have to kill them, you make the **Body** check with disadvantage. Equally if you are rolling to save them, you roll with advantage.

Bonds are a liquid thing, and you might end up with no bonds or 10 bonds depending on how the story unfolds.

## Fractures

Sometimes during play, you end up deciding against a path or bond. If a bond fractures, you lose the bond and gain a fracture mark. If you fracture a path, the old path becomes inactive and a new path, co-created with you and the DM, comes into play.

Example: A holy priest deciding to abandon his faith for evil. Losing Path of the Holy and gaining Path of the Dark One.

## Grit

Each player starts the campaign with 3 grit. These can be used to reroll a Trait dice once. Gaining grit is very difficult and only happens true gaining marks. You might never gain more grit. You might gain a few. Be careful not to waste them on small things.

## Reputation

Keep track of how factions view you. There are five levels: Loved, Trusted, Tolerated, Watched, Hunted. Each choice might shift one faction's stance.

## Character example

**Name:** Tihar “Teel” Knuckledragger Name

**Origin:** Factory worker and ex union buster

**Traits:** Mind 2, Body 4, Spirit 3

### Paths:

**Path of the Proletariat:** You are a hard-working everyday man. You find trust in the common struggles and understand those of lower class.

**Path of the Repentant:** You used to be a union buster and are trying to repent for those violent sins.

**Path of the Revolutionary:** The workers of the sootworks need a voice and a leader and you believe yourself to be a just one.

**Path of the Wanted:** You are wanted by the law in 4 out of the 5 continents.

**Bonds:**

Caucasian Female (A childhood friend and fellow worker)

The Overseer (A man deserving the death sentence)

**Notable Talents:**

Carpentry

Reading