Skills are words or short phrases describing the things a character can do. Attacking and defending in combat, gathering information, social interactions, and magic are all taken care of with skill checks. Skills range in level from 1 to 9.

Some things like “breathing under water” can either a skill or a background. If there is some chance for the character to fail like for a water-breathing spell, then it is a skill. Having gills is a background.

Players get several skills at character creation and more can be learned or created during the story. Skills learned or created in this way start at level 1. If the character has a related skill the new skill instead starts at half of the related skill’s level. For example, a character with level 7 in “sand magic” might be able to start doing level 3 “dirt magic”.

Players make their own skills. This usually happens at character creation but more can be made or learned throughout the story. The Storyteller should work with players to make sure skills are acceptable and no one takes “god powers”. Storytellers should also limit skills they think might be a problem. Giving the player an item that grants the skill makes it easy to take away. Remind players to take “common language” and “observation” so their characters can talk to each other and see things.

A skill check needs to be rolled if a character’s ability to do something is in question. Simple tasks like walking down a flight of stairs do not qualify unless the character is very drunk. To roll a check, first, declare what the character is trying to do. Then, pick an appropriate skill and attribute combination and roll 3 dice. If the total on the dice is greater than the sum of the skill and attribute the check fails. Otherwise it succeeds. Low rolls on checks are good.

When a check is rolled mark whether it succeeded or failed next to the skill it was rolled for. If the character’s INT is a higher level than this skill mark an extra success or failure. If the character has a related skill of higher level than the checked skill mark an extra success or failure. When a skill accumulates both successes and failures equal to the level of the skill clear the successes and failures and level up the skill.