

Kismet

'Kismet' is a Turkish word, derived from the Arabic *قسمة* 'qisma', meaning one's *share in destiny*.

In *Agora*, kismet functions as a so-called **metacurrency**, used to aid rolls and to track long-term character development. It is similar to **experience points** in some ways. There are four kinds of kismet: **Lots**, **Ego**, **Fidelity**, and **Health**. You earn the different kinds of kismet through play, or in **debriefings**, and you spend them in play to **KISS dice**, to eventually advance your ability **ranks**, or to avoid certain death.

Lots

You can have **up to eight Lots at a time**. Every character starts with 1d6 Lots, or they may *take the average* and start with 3 Lots. Lots can be represented on your **character sheet** by filling in or erasing the diamonds (◇ ↔ ◆), or by using glass beads, the faces of a d8, or some other kind of token¹.

Lots represent the smallest parcel of fate that a player can use to manipulate their character's destiny. You can think of them as tiny cosmic favors that you can trade to manipulate the dice, like cashing in a bit of karma.

Spending Lots

Spending a Lot on a roll counts as a KISS, letting you re-roll a die of your choice *with no questions asked*. Normally, you may only spend one Lot per roll while KISSing.

Little Wishes

Lots can also be spent outside of rolls to influence the narrative in small ways: *namely*, to make reasonable requests of the environment, or to suggest that something should exist in the world. Things that have little mechanical bearing on the game, but which would change the flavor of something, or which would help you to chew the scenery. If you're willing to spend a Lot, and your **Peers** agree, then your 'little wish' is made manifest.

Earning Lots

There are four ways to earn back Lots during play. Each option may only be used *once per session per respective avenue* though, to avoid 'kismet milking'.

- **Representing a trait** that you've designated as a **feature**, awarded by your **Peers** within the moment, for really embodying the trait and doing it justice. (Or ask them afterwards if you think you earned it).
- **Limiting yourself with a trait** that you've designated as a **scar**, counting it as a difficulty factor against yourself for a Task.
- **When one of your goals is advanced** and that progress codified within the results of a roll.
- **When you get a good idea**, your **FC** may reward good lateral thinking and creative solutions (especially when it's something they didn't think of) to help encourage you to give it go.

You can also earn Lots from up to three sources in the **debrief** at the end of every **chapter**:

- If your **Principles** drove you to play in unusual way, or forced a decision to be made that you were not expecting. In other words, if you felt challenged by what your **FC** had laid in front of you.
- If you can list something that your character learned about the world or another character (and write it down).

- If you can list something that you — *the player* — learned about your character, that you did not realize until you played them that way.

Convert excess Lots to exp

If you would have earned a Lot but already have eight, then convert the excess into **exp** for any **jobs** of your choice.

Ego

You either have Ego, or you don't, at any given time. Every character starts the game with Ego, unless you choose to start with +2 Lots instead. You can represent whether you currently have Ego or not by filling in or erasing the diamond (◇ ↔ ◆) on your **character sheet**, using the faces of a coin or a playing card, or using some other kind of binary token¹.

Ego represents *quite literally* your character's sense of self, and also the part of their psyche that believes they have control over their own reality. *Ego is a force*: A force that makes the world conform to their vision.

Spending Ego

Spending Ego on a roll counts all your 6s twice. Meaning that your 6s effectively turn into double-successes. This should be done right at the end of **KISSing**, as any that landed on 6s from being re-rolled are doubled too.

Shoo Black Swans!

A 'Black Swan', as defined by Nassim Taleb, is a highly improbable event that, while not random, was not expected and *thus appears random*. Black Swans are entirely a matter of perspective: **you cannot entirely know what you *do not know***.

Ego can also be spent outside of rolls to influence the narrative in larger ways: *namely*, to put off a **consequence** right as it's about to rear it's head. This doesn't prevent the consequence from occurring, it just *delays the inevitable*. This can have a stronger mechanical effect than **making little wishes**, because it can reduce the difficulty of an upcoming roll, or temporarily remove an NPC from a scene, or otherwise change the situation in just about any way that your **Peers** agree is appropriate.

Earning Ego

There are four ways to earn back your Ego during play. Each option may only be used *once per session per respective avenue* though, to avoid 'kismet milking'.

- **Comedically timing a trait** that you've designated as a **feature**, awarded by your **FC** within the moment, if it made everyone laughed. (Or ask them afterwards if you think you earned it).
- **Tragically timing a trait** that you've designated as a **scar**, forcing a roll to be *challenging* (or automatically failing if it's *already challenging*).
- **When using a habit presents an unforeseen dilemma**, puts you under duress, embarrasses or disturbs someone else, or otherwise creates interesting drama.
- **When you take the lead from your FC and introduce a roleplaying-centered scene**, where you talk extensively in-game with a **VINPC** or a fellow **Player Character**, or take time to describe some of the set-dressing and mood, making the experience of play more collaborative.

You can also earn Ego from up to three sources in the **debrief** at the end of every **chapter**:

- If you — *the player* — produced or commissioned a piece of artwork (eg. painting, poetry, music, etc.) that immortalizes a moment from the campaign, or if you maintained a campaign diary or session vlog during the last chapter.
- If your **Peers** think your character acted mostly as a 'mule' this scenario; for doing all the work that no one else wanted to do, picking up all the slack, consistently offering help, or thanklessly saving everyone's skin.
- If your **Peers** elect you as the 'Most Valuable Peer' (MVP) for the chapter; for demonstrating a good understanding of the rules, offering suggestions to the other players when prompted, taking good notes, and discussing the game away from the table.

Convert excess Ego to Lots

If you would have earned Ego, but already have it, then take a Lot instead. (And if you're already full up on Lots too, then add an **exp** to a **job** of your choice instead).

Fidelity

Characters do not start with any Fidelity. It is a gauge that *slowly ticks up to three*, at which point you can spend it. Since Fidelity changes so infrequently, it is best to represent it by filling in the diamonds (◇ → ◆) on your **character sheet**, and erasing them all once you spend it (ie. ◆◆◆ → ◇◇◇).

Fidelity represents a measure of your long-term success at establishing and upholding *your truth* — your version of reality — whatever that may be, and for whatever good or ill that it may bring to others. Fidelity is the *quintessence of kismet*; the stuff that lets you reach **mythic** levels of excellence.

Spending Fidelity

Once your Fidelity gauge is full, it may be **spent at any dramatically appropriate time to permanently advance the rank of one of your abilities** by one step (ie. 6 → 5 → 4 → 3 → 2 → 1). This should be done right at the end of **KISSing**, as any dice that landed within the new rank while being re-rolled are counted as successes too.

Earning Fidelity

You earn Fidelity by not faltering in your Creeds as they are **challenged** by your **FC**, over the course of multiple sessions.

Fidelity is only gained during **debriefings** or **development sessions**, usually at the end of a **campaign arc**: Your **FC** should ask you something like, "*Which of your Creeds have not faltered?*", to which you should respond by reading them all aloud and letting your **Peers** press you further and point to times when they think you *may* have faltered. If you can defend your position and convince them, by proving that your beliefs are unwavering and that your oaths are still ironclad, *then and only then* do you earn the Fidelity.

When you earn a point of Fidelity, you *also* gain a new Gambit. Choose one appropriate to your current **character tier**, with the guidance of your **Peers**.

Important: *Once you have earned Fidelity, it cannot be taken away.* Changing a Creed after carrying it for so long does not make you weaker. Altering the wording of a Creed but keeping the same message is also fine.

Do not convert excess Fidelity

This is a rare case, but *if you are about to earn Fidelity and your gauge is already full* — meaning you haven't spent your current Fidelity yet, for whatever reason — then spend it immediately on whatever ability you like, advancing it's rank, and then earn the new Fidelity point.

Changing the Gauge?

With the gauge's size set to 3, by default, that means that one must acquire 9 Fidelity to take *one ability* from rank 5 to rank 2, which assuming you earn about 1 Fidelity every 15-20 sessions would take at least 150 sessions! This sounds like a lot, and it is, but this slow kind of character progression forms a 'supercycle' that encapsulates all the other progression cycles in [Agora](#).

Shortening (or lengthening?) the Fidelity gauge will drastically change your long-term experience with the game, so this *must absolutely be discussed* with your [Peers](#) if you're considering it.

Health

You start with two Health, best represented with dice¹, or by filling in the diamonds (◇ → ◆) on your [character sheet](#).

Health represents both your physical and mental well-being, your capacity to continue fighting for what you believe in, and a measure of your energy for action. It is a complex stat, which can be damaged and healed; but those *wounds always leave scars*.

Health is your **minimum dice pool size** for both [Checks](#) and [Tasks](#).

If your [Peers](#) allow it, you may opt to start the game with one Health point fewer, and instead *start with a point of Fidelity* — representing something in your character's recent past that they stood up for and were wounded because of their stance.

Spending Health (aka. Cheating Death)

When you are faced with [deathly consequences](#), you may **spend a Health die to escape with your life**. You *take a wound* in the process, instead of dying.

The way you cheat death may be described in any way you feel is fitting for the situation, but feel free to open up the discussion to your [Peers](#) if you're stuck.

For example: It may be that some dramatically appropriate complication arises, which throws everything you thought you knew into turmoil; or that a friend saves you at the last moment; or that your sheer force of will and disregard for death carries you through; or perhaps it's just dumb luck.

Whatever the case, you survive what *should have been* a fatal situation.

Representing Wounds

A **wound** is a special kind of [condition](#) that **reduces the rank of one of your abilities by one step** (ie. 1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5 → 6)² *until you heal*. The name that you give to the wound, as you write it on your character sheet, should reflect the kind of injury that was done to you, so:

- **Mental wounds** might mean some kind of brain damage, or damage to your eyes or ears, it could mean psychological trauma, or that part of your face or body is disfigured which affects your confidence.
- **Physical wounds** might mean broken bones, muscle damage, a bad infection or disease, or poisoning, organ rupture, or a lost limb, or something equally debilitating.

The nature of your wounds informs the nature of the scars they will **eventually leave**, though this can also change during **development sessions**.

Regaining Health (aka. Healing)

You regain a Health die when you come to a point of inner turmoil — playing through that conflict in an engaging manner — **and, in turn, change one of your Principles to reflect your new stance**. Once you give up on something you believed in and start trying to move in a new direction, *that* is when you recover the Health.

Put another way: *You only heal when you change your mind.*

Important: Changing a Creed in this way *does* exclude the possibility of earning **Fidelity** from it, but if the change of heart happens early enough in an arc then your **Peers** may consider the new Creed as still being eligible for earning Fidelity, so long as you keep it till the end.

Convalescence

As you heal, **your wound is eventually replaced with a scar**, a kind of trait that can be used to earn **Lots** and **Ego** (as described above). The exact point at which this happens is decided by your **Peers**, but it's usually during **downtime** or **development sessions**.

Sometimes convalescence can happen at the same time as the healing, but generally it doesn't: Meaning that *it's possible to be wounded while at full Health*.

I'm Dying?

If you are wounded, *and refuse to change your mind to heal*, and then get hurt again but still want to live, then you will drop to zero Health. **You don't immediately die at zero Health, but you are dying!**

If your character is dying — aside from the immediate mechanical effects of not being able to make **Checks**, and not having a minimum pool size for **Tasks**, *and the debilitating effects of any wounds you carry*, meaning automatic failures will be more common — **they will actually die at some point before end of the current chapter unless they change their mind about something** and then seek medical assistance.

Similarly, **you will die if you are faced with death but refuse to spend your Health to cheat it**, or if you are faced with deathly consequences (again) while at zero Health.

Death is not 'The End'

Many stories involve death. Some campaigns will involve it more than others, some will involve death not at all. Be sure that you have your **Consent and Safety Tools** in place before potentially killing a character, or letting one die. But ultimately Health is an *additional consent tool*, to ensure that: **when a character does die, they die for a good reason**.

If your character dies, you can make a new one during a **development session** and they will very likely be able to join the campaign during the next chapter.

Notes

1. So long as you write a reminder to yourself, or fill in / erase the diamonds on your sheet, at the end of each session so that you don't forget how much kismet you have *between sessions*.
2. If the chosen ability is already at rank 6, then you are completely unable to use that ability (failing all rolls with it automatically), until you heal.