Skills:

Skills represent characters' areas of expertise.

There are 26 skills in the game divided into 7 groups - one group for each attribute. Each skill has a primary attribute that governs it, and this always corresponds to the group to which the skill belongs (for example, the primary governing attribute of every Might-based skill is Might). Skills also have a secondary governing attribute which doesn't necessarily have to be different from the primary one (For example, Reflex is purely a Reaction-governed skill).

<Why we have Skills and Skill Tests>

# Skill Tests:

Skill tests are usually rolled against a static target value (called Difficulty Class, abbr. DC) determined by the GM.

To perform a Skill test, the player rolls a number of six-sided dice. The test is successful if the number of dice that come up with 4 or more meets or exceeds the DC.

**How many dice to roll:**

The base number of dice to roll is equal to the modifier of the primary governing attribute of the skill in question. Also add the modifier of the secondary governing attribute lowered by 1, but only if that would increase the number of dice rolled.

Reminder:

AttributeModifier = FLOOR(AttributeScore / 2) - 1;

If the character attempting the Skill test has any ranks for the Skill in question, he takes an additional die per rank.

Other effects that may alter the number of dice rolled for a skill test (most prominently Advantage/Disadvantage, Deus Ex Machina, Specializations, Effort and Traits) are described in their respective sections.

**Special cases:**

If the testing character would have zero dice to test with, he may roll 2 and discard the higher one. If he would roll a negative number of dice (try to imagine that!), the test automatically fails (but it may be "attempted" regardless).

## Fumbles:

A fumble is when a character doing a skill test screws up majestically.

Whenever you roll a skill test, one die in the pool will double as a fumble die. If there are multiple dice in the pool (and there will be most of the time), you’ll need a way to distinguish it from the others – for example, by colour or size. In the case of negative total modifier, when no dice are rolled and the test automatically fails, you should still roll one fumble die.

If the test in question ends up being successful, nothing special happens with the fumble die. However, if the test is failed and the fumble die came up with a 1, the testing character is in danger of fumbling, though that needs to be confirmed. To do that, roll a single d6. A result of 3 or less confirms the fumble – something has gone seriously wrong and major complications are introduced. A result of 4 or more avoids the fumble and the overall result of the test remains an “ordinary” failure.

## Results of the test:

<Copied from Burning Wheel Gold>

### Two Directions

When a player sets out a task for his character and states his intent, it is the GM's job to inform him of the consequences of failure before the dice are rolled.

“If you fail this...“ should often be heard at the table. Let the players know the consequences of their actions. Failure is not the end of the line, but it is complication that pushes the story in another direction. Once that is said, everyone knows what's at stake and play can continue smoothly no matter what the result of the roll is.

### Failure Complicates the Matter

When a test is failed, the GM introduces a complication.

*“You can by to pick the lock, but you don't have much time. It is highly likely that the guards will return before you finish.”*

Try not to present flat negative results - "You don't pick the lock." Strive to introduce complications through failure as much as possible. Death should only be the result of failure in the rarest, most dire situations. The GM must present the players with varied, twisted, occult and bizarre ramifications of their decisions. Death is only the last resort. And more often than not, a player will let everyone know when he is prepared to risk his character's life for success.

Lastly, the rules for specific subsystems, like fighting, injury and sorcery, will guide you in adjudicating the severity of a failure result.

### Let It Ride

One of the most important aspects of skill tests in game play in **(not)** Burning Wheel is the Let It Ride rule: A player shall test once against an obstacle and shall not roll again until conditions legitimately and drastically change. Neither GM nor player can call for a retest unless those conditions change. Successes from the initial roll count for all applicable situations in play.

The GM cannot call for multiple rolls of the same ability to accomplish a player's stated intent. Nor can a player retest a failed roll simply because he failed. Tests must be distilled down to as few rolls as possible. The successes of those rolls ride across the entire situation, scene or session.

If a player failed a test or generated no successes, the result stands. If he was hot and got seven successes, those stand for the duration.

# Supporting Mechanics:

This section will describe various rules that provide options for both the players and the GM to spice up skill tests.

## Attribute Tests:

Attribute tests are a simple mechanic that mostly server to supplement the Effort mechanic described below. An Attribute test is always rooted in one of the 7 primary Attributes (for example, it might be Intelligence-based).

To perform an Attribute test, roll a d12. It's successful if you get a number that's equal to or lower than the score of the Attribute in question. If any modifiers are present, clamp the final result between 1 and 12. A result of 1 is always successful, and 11 and 12 are always failures.

What exactly happens when an Attribute test succeeds or fails will be noted when it is called for.

**Note:** Attributes are never to be tested in the same way as skills (with six-sided dice, DC values etc.)! If you would test an attribute, find an appropriate skill to test instead.

## Effort:

Effort is a mechanic used by the players to gain a bit more 'oomph' for skill tests they deem important.

A player attempting a skill test may choose to roll up to 3 additional dice for this test using the Effort mechanic. The limit is raised to 4 dice if the testing character has the PGA for this test at 7 or higher (looking at scores here), and to 5 if he has it at 11 or 12. Using effort costs 1 Focus (see the following section for more information on Focus).

After the skill test is done, the player needs to do a number of attribute tests equal to the number of effort dice used (the attribute test is rooted in the skill's primary governing attribute). Failed tests increase the character's Stress by 1. Attribute tests rolled for this purpose are called "effort tests".

The player can announce he's using effort before rolling the skill test. He may also roll additional effort dice after rolling the skill test (still subject to the limit for total number of effort dice he can roll), with two additional caveats: First, it costs 1 Focus to start rolling effort dice after the skill test is done (on top of the 1 Focus required to use effort at all). Second, the player must do one more effort test than usual.

### Enervation:

Effort tests are modified by the testing character's Enervation score. Since rolling high on effort tests is bad, players will want to keep their Enervation scores as low as possible. Enervation is most commonly gained from wearing armour or carrying a lot of equipment. It can never be negative.

## Focus:

Focus is a derived attribute that describes one's ability to combine their skills with the situation at hand in order to increase the chances of overcoming a given obstacle. It represents both craftiness and the ability to work under pressure or while stressed or wounded.

A character's Focus score is equal to their Equilibrium modifier + 2.

You'll notice that various effects that grant bonus dice for skill tests beyond the usual attribute modifier + skill rank cost Focus. For example, receiving aid from a friendly character costs 1 Focus and as we've already seen, using effort costs 1 or 2 points of Focus.

It's important to note that Focus is never spent, it only imposes a limit on the number of helpful effects that a character can utilize for a single skill test. However, as characters get more tired, wounded and/or stressed out, their Focus scores will get reduced, and they will need to rest and heal before they're back up to full strength.

Should an unfortunate character end up with a negative Focus score, DCs for any skill tests that he attempts will be increased by 1 per point of Focus below zero, until his Focus score improves.

## Fields of Related Knowledge (FoRKs):

<Copied from Burning Wheel Gold>

A player may have his character use his varied experience to help himself. We call this using your Fields of Related Knowledge or FoRKs.

When testing a skill, each related skill the character possesses can be used like help to add an additional die (+1d) to the roll. If the related skill is rank 7 or higher, add +2D.

*"Rich's 3 Orc Great One is laying waste to his inferiors with his Axe skill. Rich wants to fight dirty, so he adds a die from his Brawling skill - he describes his Orc throwing elbows and knees and generally being a bastard."*

FoRKs are situational. The players suggest them through roleplay, and the GM arbitrates which are applicable and which are not. Players describe how their FoRK affects their actions. GMs then incorporate the FoRKs into the results of the test. Also, just to be clear, attributes may never FoRK.

FoRKing 1 skill costs 1 Focus (even when it adds 2 dice).

## Aid:

When a character is attempting a skill test, other characters may choose to help him. He rolls 1 additional die for each helper that succeeds on the same skill test, but with the DC halved (rounded down). The GM decides what's the maximal number of characters that can effectively help (more than that, and they might even get in the way).

Where appropriate, the helpers may roll a different skill than the testing character (GM's discretion). In any case, the helping character should describe how exactly is he helping.

It costs 1 Focus for the testing character to receive aid from one helper.

**Note:** The testing character must agree to receive help from others. If he does not, then no bonus dice are gained for the test. If the other characters are especially stubborn, they might even impose disadvantages to the testing characters for getting in the way (a successful Concentration test can sometimes negate this - it's up to the GM).

## Conditional Modifiers:

<Placeholder>

### Skills in relation to characters' backstories:

You'll notice that most skills are only vaguely defined - Melee Combat, Outdoorsman, Lore and Artistic could mean a lot of things - this keeps the skill system simple but also creates an opening for the characters' backstories to come into play.

A character who has spent his entire life in a desert might have a high Outdoorsman rank, but still not be able to survive in a jungle. A wrestler probably isn't proficient in the use of halberds. Having lots of ranks in Artistic does not mean that your character is great at painting, sculpting, singing, dancing, game design etc. all at once.

To represent this in-game, the GM should impose penalties to skill checks related to lack of familiarity, according to the table below.

======|===============================================================

+0 DC | Task/Topic directly related to character's former experiences;

| He should be familiar with it.

======|===============================================================

+1 DC | Task/Topic very similar to character's experiences; There's a

| good chance he has dealt with it (if indirectly) in the past.

======|===============================================================

+2 DC | Task/Topic is loosely related to something else the character

| is familiar with; With some luck he could make it work.

======|===============================================================

+4 DC | Task/Topic is unrelated to anything the character has done

| before. Chances are he doesn't know anything about it.

======|===============================================================

If the characters know what's coming their way, they can try to get informed (ask around the town, read a book, consult the divine etc.). This reduces the penalties above by 1 (one DC, not one "step"). Over time, as characters become more familiar with their new circumstances, these penalties will diminish.

OTHER STUFF:

Note: Advantage = +1d6; Disadvantage = +1 DC