# #. KARMA POINTS

Karma points are a metacurrency that is earned by the players by engaging with the main themes of the game: There are Persona points, awarded for bringing the characters to life; Endeavour points, awarded for pushing the action and the story forward; and Torment points, earned by highlighting characters’ suffering.

Regardless of type, Karma points are earned during memorable moments of the game, and will be used later in other notable moments.

Despite them being a **META**currency, they are well-ingrained with other game elements and crucial for the core gameplay.

Before explaining just how to get the Karma points, and what to use them for, we’ll make a short detour to explain the related Setback mechanic.

Claiming Setbacks:

Why are Karma Points Important?

<Nice explanation from Burning Wheel>

When a character claims a setback, it means that either something bad happens to them outright, or that they have great difficulty with a task, which could easily have consequences of its own. Either way, it is caused by the character’s personal shortcoming or temporary inability (due to injury or stress).

The important thing to note is that a character claims a setback at the behest of his controlling player, and in a way chosen by that player (not the GM!). If you’re wondering why would a player ever penalize themselves in such a way – there’s a good reason for that, and it will be presented right after we cover how to claim the setback in the first place.

A setback can be claimed in 2 ways.

Claiming Setbacks, Method 1:

A setback can be claimed when a character is performing a Skill Test that is either Difficult or Challenging to them, and it comes in two severities: **Minor**, which increases the DC of the test by d3, and **Major**, which increases the DC of the test by 2d3 (roll immediately upon claiming a setback).

Either way, before rolling for the Skill Test, the player must announce it by saying “I want to claim a minor setback because [reason]” or “I want to claim a major setback because [reason]”.

The GM can veto claiming a setback if the reason makes no sense (“I scraped my knee so I can’t sing well”; “I’m not sure if I’ll be able to use this crowbar effectively – I’m afraid of crows”).

Claiming Setbacks, Method 2:

With the first method, which is more oriented towards the mechanics of the game, the consequence is tied to a Skill Test (and is manifested only if the test is failed). The second method is more narrative, and requires the player to state directly what is the bad thing that happens to his character (and it’s not rolled for, it happens automatically).

Claiming setbacks like this is freeform and can be done whenever it feels appropriate – before, during, or after a Skill Test, or even when no Skill Test is involved – whenever inspiration strikes! For example:

“I want to claim a minor setback here: The thug parries my blow with great force and my sword comes flying out of my hand due to my hand injury. I’ll have to draw my dagger against him.”

“I’m feeling uneasy on this cliff because of my fear of heights and it’s making concentrating on the spell difficult – the spell misfires. I claim a major setback.”

This still doesn’t have to be fully narrative-oriented. It’s allowed to touch upon other established game mechanics – for example, make a character receive a wound, some Stress or Exhaustion points, and so on.

If the proposed setback is inconsequential or makes no sense, the GM may veto it. Otherwise, the player and the GM must agree whether it counts as a minor or major setback, depending on whether it represents a moderate or a huge problem to the character.

Gaining and Using Karma Points:

Each type of Karma point is gained and used in its own unique way, corresponding to the underlying theme it represents.

Persona Points:

**Earned by:**

* Claiming setbacks by invoking characters’ personalities (as described by their Beliefs, Instincts and Traits) can earn Persona points. One point is automatically earned after a major setback is claimed. After a minor setback, the point is earned on a d6 roll of 4+. <BW has good examples for this>
* Humor – making everyone at the table laugh while staying in character.

**Can be used for:**

* **Inspiration:** Gain +1 Focus or +1 Skill Exponent for one Skill Test. Each bonus can only be applied once to a single test.
* **Push it to the Limit:** Automatically pass a single Effort Test after a Skill Test instead of rolling. No usage limit.
* **Will to Live:** Spend along with an Endeavour point to re-roll a Critical Injury d20 roll with a +2 bonus to the new roll. This bonus is cumulative, meaning that if you're re-rolling the result same Critical Injury over and over (which requires spending another pair of points each time), the bonus stacks to +4, then +6 and so on. <Some catch?>

Endeavour Points:

**Earned by:**

* Achieving personal goals, or reaching important milestones towards a larger goal or in an overarching story (provided that the character contributed significantly in the process – no points are awarded just for being an observer while others do the work!).
* Having the right skill/tool/ability (or similar) to move the story forward when nobody else does.

**Can be used for:**

* **Fortune Favours the Bold:** Re-roll **all** the dice of a single Skill Test.
* **Moment of Clarity:** Roll an extra die for a single Skill Test and also consider an additional die when counting successes (same as applying an additional level of RotE).
* **Will to Live:** <See 'Will to Live' entry for Persona points.>

Torment Points:

Make it Interesting, not Tedious!

Players should strive to claim setbacks when it has the potential to make trouble and send the story spinning in an unforeseen but interesting direction. Don’t be a jackass and purposefully sabotage play at every opportunity!

If a player persists in being disruptive, the GM should not reward such behaviour with Karma points. And maybe everyone should stop playing for a moment, and talk about what’s acceptable at the table and what they expect from the game.

**Earned by:**

* Claiming setbacks with Hardships, Wounds or Traumas as the reason can earn Torment points. One point is automatically earned after a major setback is claimed. After a minor setback, the point is earned on a d6 roll of 4+. *Get your character in an even worse situation, make them suffer, make them hate life!*
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**Can be used for:**

* **Retribution:** Gain 1 Automatic Success for an action made to antagonize an enemy (Antagonizing can be attacking, intimidating, torturing, or any other act of direct violence against them). Gain another Automatic Success if this person has hurt you before, and yet another if this person is your nemesis.

*An eye for an eye, and the whole world will be blind!*

* **Rage:** For 10 seconds, or 1 round in a Combat/Sequence, your Steel is infinite.

*Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering…*

* **Will to Live:** Same as the ‘Will to Live’ entry for Persona points. However, spending one Torment point is enough to benefit from the effect, but with the following addition:

If it was another person who caused the Critical Injury, you must then vow to revenge against them (it does not have to be the one who directly attacked you; for example, if it was a hired thug, you can vow to revenge against whoever hired them - make the story interesting).

*The cycle of violence never ends!*

Moldbreaker:

<https://forums.burningwheel.com/t/playing-against-beliefs/9745/24>

Awarded for portraying the struggle and character growth

When somebody achieves Moldbreaker, they can take either 1 Persona or 1 Endeavour point.

End-of-Session Awards:

At the end of each session up to 3 awards are given: Embodiment, MVP and Martyr. These awards represent an additional opportunity to earn Karma points.

Which player/character receives them is determined by a fair vote by everyone at the table (the GM breaks ties).

**Embodiment** is awarded to the player who was the best at highlighting their character’s personality, by playing out their Traits, Beliefs and/or Instincts, and by evocative acting and roleplaying. This award is worth 1 Persona point.

**MVP (Most Valuable Player)** is awarded to the character who contributed the most towards completing tasks and moving the story forward. This award is worth 1 Endeavour point.

**Martyr** is awarded to the character who suffered the most and had the most horrible time during this session, and whose players let everyone else know that. This award is worth 1 Torment point.

It is also possible to vote that nobody gets a specific award, in case nobody earned it during the session. Try to be just and objective. Also, players may not vote for themselves.