

Conjoined Skill Checks

Many times, a DM will ask for an ability check, but there are multiple skills that could be used to solve the problem. At many tables, the DM will then either pick one of those skills or allow the player to pick the one they prefer to use. There are also many circumstances where a single skill may not be wholly representative of the situation presented. In times like these, a DM can choose to ask for a conjoined skill check; rather than players rolling a single ability check, a player will roll an ability check for each of the requested skills and combine them together. Conjoined checks should be set at significantly higher DC's.

As an example, say a player is attempting to identify the corpse of an animal, but the animal has been corrupted by the influence of an extraplanar entity, perhaps from the Abyss or the Far Realm. Rather than asking for either an Intelligence (Nature) or Intelligence (Religion) check, the DM can ask for a conjoined check of both skills. If the DC was set at 15 for each check, a reasonable DC for the conjoined check would be between 25 to 28; due to the complexities of interactions between the two skills, a conjoined check is typically slightly lower than the combined DC's, although the DM may choose to adjust the balance for their games as they see fit. After the DM sets the DC, the player will then roll both an Intelligence (Nature) and an Intelligence (Religion) check, combining the totals of both rolls; if they roll a 13 on the Nature check and a 16 on the Religion check, their conjoined check is a 29 total. Based on the DC, the player would then be able to identify the corpse.

If a conjoined check uses more than two ability checks, adjust accordingly; the more checks done, the further the DC should shift from the combined DC value. A good base rule is to lower the DC by 1 to 3 points per check made. If you play at a table where natural 20's or natural 1's automatically succeed or fail, you can treat a singular critical success or fail as an adjustment to the DC, lowering or raising the DC by 3 points. For instance, if the DC is 28, but a character rolls a natural 20, the DC is lowered to 25 instead; the player then must still meet that conjoined DC.

For determining each ability check, each one adds the relevant ability modifier and any proficiency bonus they have for that skill, including expertise if applicable. However, since the conjoined check is only a single check, an individual character can only benefit once from other bonuses. Effects such as Guidance, Bardic Inspiration, or advantage on a d20 roll can only be applied to a single subcheck for the conjoined check. The player can choose which of the skill checks to apply each bonus to. Penalties to the roll follow the same rules.

Conjoined Checks for Group Checks

Conjoined checks can also be useful for collaborative efforts; rather than one player making a roll with advantage due to another player's assistance, a DM can ask for each of the involved players to make a collaborative conjoined skill check. Each player would then make their own check (or checks, if the base check is a conjoined check itself) and add their totals together. Since each player is making their own checks, each player can benefit once from their own instance of a bonus (or penalty, if relevant); for instance, both players could receive and use Bardic Inspiration. As such, a conjoined skill check for a group will often be higher; even if each character does not have bonuses to their checks, a larger number of players increases the chance that a character will have a bonus of some kind. Therefore, conjoined skill checks for groups should be set closer or even equal to the combined total DC.