

Game Master Book

0) Running Rules in 30 Seconds

- **Start with fiction.** First, describe the situation and the players' actions, then roll.
 - **Set the stakes before rolling.** Say: *what's at stake* and *what happens on a failure*.
 - **One decision → one roll → meaningful result.** Do not split one intent into 3 tests.
 - **Failure drives the game forward.** Do not 'reset' the scene – change it with a complication, cost, or pressure.
 - **Maintain consistency.** Same circumstances → similar Difficulty, similar consequences.
 - **Grid is optional.** By default, the game operates without a map: "Close / Near / Far / Very far."
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1.1. When to Roll?

A roll makes sense only when simultaneously:

- the outcome is **not obvious**,
- there is a **real stake** (something will change),
- both parties agree that **the mechanics have the right to decide**.

Do not roll when:

- the action is routine and without pressure,
- failure will not add anything interesting,
- success is certain and the cost has already been paid (e.g., players have time, tools, and security).

Example (no roll): The specialist has administrative access and calm conditions – opening standard doors in the base does not require a test.

Example (with a roll): The same doors, but the alarm is active, and a patrol is approaching in 30 seconds – this is a test because the stake is time and exposure.

1.2. Resolution Checklist (Table Procedure)

1. The player states: **what they do** and **what they want to achieve**.
2. You respond with: **what stands in the way** and **what the stakes are**.
3. Choose an attribute: **Strength** (S) / **Dexterity** (Z) / **Power** (M).
4. Determine **Difficulty** (T) or **Defense** (in combat).
5. Establish the situational modifier: **boost/lower the dice** and possible **assistance**.
6. Roll → result → consequence → update the scene.

Shortcut: **Description** → **Stakes** → **Attribute** → **T/Defense** → **Roll** → **Consequence**.

1.3. Difficulty (D): Scale and Practical Rules

Use a single scale throughout the game. This builds players' trust in the GM's decisions.

- **D 3 – easy:** favorable conditions, no pressure, minimal resistance.
- **D 4 – standard:** "normal job" in the adventure.
- **D 5 – difficult:** time pressure, risk, opponent, narrow window.

- **D 6 – very difficult:** clear enemy advantage, high risk, complex action under stress.
- **D 8 – heroic:** above-average achievement; usually requires an advantage, plan, or resource.
- **D 12 – legendary:** "wow" moment; rarely without preparation and often at a high cost.

Practical rule: if you don't know what to set – start at **D 4** and then justify "up" or "down".

1.4. Modifiers Without Calculations: Boost/Lower the Die

Instead of adding bonuses and penalties, in NDE you change the **size of the die** for one test.

- **Better situation:** boost the die by 1 step

`d4` → `d6` → `d8`
 → `d12` → `d20`

- **Worse situation:** lower the die by 1 step (in the opposite direction).

Ally's help: costs their action and provides a **boost of the die by 1 step** for the given test.

Example: Lock in silence (D 4) vs. lock in rain and under fire (D 5 + lowering the die, because of trembling hands and lack of visibility). This usually works better than "D 6 and +2 and -1."

1.5. Test Results: Success, Failure, and Game Pace

- **1 on the die:** failure + complication (complication definitely occurs).
- **Result < T:** failure (but the situation changes).
- **Result ≥ T:** success.
- **Maximum result on the die:** exceptional success (additional benefit).

How to design failure so it doesn't block the game?

Before the player rolls, establish 1–2 types of cost:

- **time** (someone gets there, something closes),
- **position** (worse positioning, exposed),
- **resource** (equipment, ammunition, energy, **Power** Point),
- **attention** (alarm, suspicion, track).

Example (fail-forward):

The player wants to force open the door. Failure doesn't mean "you don't open it."

Failure means: "you open it, but make noise – the patrol is now nearby, and the alarm level increases."

2) A Stroke of **Luck** (L S): How to Support Drama without Ruining the Game

Each hero starts a session with 2 L S. It is a tool for the players, but the GM is responsible for its 'economy' at the table.

2.1. What do players spend L S on?

Spend 1 L S to:

- perform a **reroll** (keep the better result),
- **upgrade a die by 1 step** for one roll,
- change a failure into a **success with a cost** (the GM adds a price).

2.2. When to Award Additional L S?


The GM can award +1 L S for:

- consciously taking risks that drive the scene,
- accepting consequences without "negotiating",

- creative solutions consistent with the convention,
- very good role-playing of relationships, motivation, or stakes.

Hygiene rule: award sparingly (1-2 per session per person in extremely generous games).  should be a "spark," not a constant fuel.

3) Conflict and Combat

NDE should fight quickly. If a battle lasts 60 minutes, it almost always means: too many enemies 'on  or too many small rolls.

3.1. Default Without a Map: Stage Distances

Use four distances:

- **Close** – within arm's reach (melee),
- **Nearby** – a few steps away,
- **Far** – the other side of the stage,
- **Very Far** – sniper/vehicle range.

In a turn, a character has: **Movement + 1 Action**.

Movement typically changes the distance by **1 degree** (Nearby → Close).

Example: A warrior is Nearby. In the turn: they run up (Close) and attack.

3.2. Option: grid – when you need precision

If you are playing on a grid:

- movement per turn: **up to 5 squares**,
- diagonals allowed,
- difficult terrain may cost "2 squares per entry" (optional).

All other rules remain identical.

3.3. Opponent Defense and Damage

In combat, instead of Difficulty, you use **Defense** (a kind of "D for combat").

Defense (approximately):

- **Weak** 4
- **Typical** 5
- **Elite** 6
- **Boss** 8 (legendary boss 12)

Attack: roll **Strength** (melee) or **Dexterity** (ranged) against Defense.

Damage (pace):

- a hit deals **1 Heart**,
- an extraordinary success deals **2 Hearts** or provides a strong effect (disarm, knockdown, disruption, distract).

Minions and elites (recommended model):

- **Minion:** 1 hit = removed from battle (defeated, flees, incapacitated).
- **Elite:** has **2 Hearts** (or "2 hits"), often has one tactical advantage.
- **Boss:** has **3 Hearts** + 1–2 "boss moves" (see 3.6).

This allows for quick encounters without counting points.

3.4. Cover, Advantage, and “Clear Terrain”

Instead of multiplying rules, use a single language: **boost the die / lower the die**.

- Light cover, smoke, poor angle: **lower the attacker's die** by 1 step.
- Good position, surprise, height advantage: **boost the die** by 1 step.
- Full cover: attack is impossible until the situation changes.

Example: A sniper in a window is 'Far' and has a height advantage → the attacker gets a die reduction. The team changes the scene: smoke grenade, flanking, circumventing – and the advantage disappears.

3.5. Order in Combat Without Counting Initiative

Recommended quick scheme:

1. **Players take actions** (in any order around the table).
2. **Opponents take actions.**
3. Repeat.

This allows players to plan short combinations without burdening the table with initiative.

3.6. How to Make a Boss Interesting (and Not Just a 'Damage Sponge')

A boss in NDE should have:

- **Defense 8** (or 12 in the 'season finale' version),
- **3 Hearts**,
- **1–2 unique moves** that change the scene.

Example Boss Moves (Universal):

- **Push Back:** anyone hit moves back by 1 distance (Close → Far) and loses position.
- **Shield Break:** the boss destroys a shield or forces someone out of hiding.
- **Call for Reinforcements:** 2 minions or one elite join the fray (best used once per fight).
- **Danger Zone:** an area becomes hazardous (fire, electricity, runes) – anyone who stays risks a test.

Rule: a boss's move should change the game field, not just 'deal more damage.'

3.7. Morale and Enemy Behavior (Light Procedure)

When:

- the first minion falls, or
- an elite loses the first Heart, or
- a boss loses the second Heart,

roll a d6 and decide:

- **1–2:** they retreat / seek cover / negotiate,
- **3–4:** they hold their ground,
- **5–6:** they charge aggressively.

Modify by +1 if they have the advantage, -1 if they are frightened or cut off.

4) Powers (M) from the GM's Side: How to Price Them and How Not to Ruin the Pace

In NDE, 'Power' encompasses magic, psionics, cybernetics, hacking, 'movie-level' charisma – depending on the world.

4.1. Power Scale: Difficulty and Power Points Cost

- **Trick:** T 4, cost 0–1 PP (small, short effect).

- **Standard:** T 5, cost 1 PP (single target, short jump, shield).
- **Strong:** T 6, cost 2 PP (area, control, healing).
- **Great:** T 8–12, cost 3 PP (scene-changing effect).

Tip: if the effect is to "change the rules of the scene" (ice bridge, blackout in a district) - it is a Great **power**.

4.2. Consequences of **Power** Failure

Failure should be specific and immediate:

- loss of **PM** (always),
- overload (loss of position, exposure),
- trace (digital/astral),
- side effect in the environment (noise, flash, smell, echo).

Example: A live hack during combat. Failure: **PM** is lost, and the system logs the intruder – the 'counter-ICE' timer starts.

4.3. Defense Against **Power**

If the fiction justifies it, allow a "counter-roll":

- **Dexterity** (dodge, reflex) or
- **Power** (resistance, counter-ritual, barrier).

A counter-roll should not multiply rolls. Use it where it makes the scene more interesting (e.g., paralysis, mind control).

5.1. Build Scenes in 5 Steps

1. **Scene Objective:** what the team is supposed to achieve (specific goal).
2. **Obstacles:** 2–3 different types (people, devices, environment).
3. **Threats:** opponents, hazards, traps, time pressure.
4. **Counter (optional):** 3–5 spaces; failures move the counter; a major consequence occurs at the end.
5. **Reward and Consequences:** what changes with success, what changes with failure.

This is the minimal 'scene engine'—it works in fantasy, sci-fi, and crime genres.

5.2. Clocks – Simple Version

A clock consists of 3–5 segments. It fills up when:

- a test ends in failure,
- someone makes noise,
- enemies have time to react.

When the clock fills up, a consequence occurs:

- alarm,
- reinforcements,
- path closure,
- resource loss,
- conflict escalation.

Example: "Alarm 0/4". Failure in stealth = +1. Exceptional success = -1 (optional).

When it reaches 4/4 – a patrol shows up and the doors lock.

5.3. How to Determine the 'Scene Difficulty' Without Counting Everything


For a team of 3–5 heroes:

- **Easy:** 3–5 minions or one elite without terrain advantages.
- **Standard:** 6–8 minions or an elite + 2–4 minions, or environmental hazard.
- **Difficult:** boss + 2–4 minions, or 2 elites + 3–5 minions, or countdown of 3.
- **Heroic:** boss + support + terrain pressure + countdown of 3–5.

Most Important: terrain and cover often mean more than the number of enemies.

6.1. Sneaking and Infiltration: "Alarm"



1. Set the counter **Alarm 0/3 to 0/5**.
2. Each failure = +1 alarm.
3. Players can decrease the alarm through actions (e.g., false signal, sabotage) – these are normal tests.
4. When the maximum is reached, an effect occurs: patrol, locking, lockdown.

Example: The team is walking down a corridor. The specialist wants to bypass the cameras ( , T 5). Failure = +1 alarm. Before they roll, they know what they are risking – and that's the key.

6.2. Chase: "Chase Distance"

Determine the **Distance** in steps, e.g. **3** (average).

Each "chase turn":

- the escapee makes a test (based on  or  depending on the method),
- the pursuer makes a test,
- a successful escapee increases the distance, a successful pursuer decreases it,
- when the distance drops to **0** – the pursuer catches up,
- when it increases to **5** – the escapee gets away.

Add obstacles (turns, crowds, barricades) as description + dice modifier.

6.3. Investigation: "Clues Instead of Test Walls"

Rule: **a key clue cannot be stuck behind a single test.**

If the investigative scene is to progress, the key clue is available:



- automatically (if players do something reasonable),
- or after a test, but failure gives it "with a cost" (time, false lead, alarm).

Example: Examining a body. Success: they get the truth. Failure: they get the truth, but the authorities arrive or someone notices them.

6.4. Social Conflict: Stakes, Pressure, Consequence

Do not turn the conversation into a 'dice-rolling battle.' Determine:

- what the NPC wants,
- what the players want,
- what the stakes are,
- how many 'moves' there are until the tipping point (counter 3-5).

 tests (influence, bluff, authority) or  tests (reading intentions) change the conversation's position. Failure incurs a cost (bad impression, loss of resource, time, hostility).

7.1. Complications on Failure (roll d6)

1. Loss of time / someone managed to react.
2. Exposure of position / increased alarm.
3. Minor damage: -1 Heart or resource loss.

4. Bad position: push, fall, exposure.
5. Loss or damage of equipment.
6. A new threat emerges in the scene.

7.2. Benefits on Exceptional Success (roll d6 "> d6)

1. Faster (save time or movement).
2. Quieter (no increase in alert level).
3. No cost (e.g., no MP expenditure / no terrain consequences).
4. Greater effect (increased range, additional target).
5. Better ally position (someone gets a dice boost in the next action).
6. Additional clue or narrative advantage.

7.3. Quick Enemy Entry (Note Format)

Name — Defense, Hearts, Tactics, Trick/Advantage

- **Minion:** Defense 4–5, 1 hit = disappears.
- **Elite:** Defense 6, 2 Hearts, one advantage (mobility/counter/cover).
- **Boss:** Defense 8 (or 12), 3 Hearts, 1–2 boss moves.

Example (universal):

Guard — Defense 5, 1 hit, holds the corridor, smoke grenade (once)

8) Safety and Table Agreement (Minimum)

- Establish what you are not playing (taboo topics) and what you will 'skip over'.
- Agree on a simple signal to interrupt a scene (e.g., 'stop' or 'pause').
- Resolve table conflicts through discussion outside of fiction, not 'rulings in anger'.

This improves the quality of the game more than any mechanics.

9) Modularity and Community Development: How to Keep It in Check

If you are building an NDE as an 'engine,' the easiest way for the community to develop it is through packages:

- **Genre Package** (fantasy/cyberpunk/horror): mapping of Powers, list of feats, equipment, adversaries, 1–2 procedures (e.g., fear, chase).
- **Adversary Package:** 10–20 entries for minion/elite/boss + tactics.
- **Adventure Package:** 1-page scenes with counters and stakes.

Requirement for Quality Contribution: each new rule should have:

- a sentence "what is this for" (what issue it solves),
- a short rule description,
- an example of 3–5 lines.

This way, the supplements will not disrupt the core and will be approachable for newcomers.