Game Master Book

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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."

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."

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

Each hero starts a session with **2 Ł `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 Ł `S` on?

Spend 1 Ł `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 Ł `S`?

The GM can award **+1 Ł `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). Ł **S** should be a "spark," not a constant fuel.

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3) Conflict and Combat

NDE should fight quickly. If a battle lasts 60 minutes, it almost always means: too many enemies 'on **HP** ' 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 <span class="rpg-token token- `d6` "> `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.

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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 (**M** , 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 **Z** or **M** 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).

M tests (influence, bluff, authority) or **Z** 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 <span class="rpg-token token- d6 "> 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)

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)*

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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.

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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.