

Fate's Edge

A World of Consequences

System Reference Document (SRD)

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Part I

Core Principles

1 Identity of Fate's Edge

1.1 A World of Consequences

Fate's Edge is a narrative-first tabletop roleplaying system where every action carries weight, every choice has consequence, and every spell risks backlash. Dice are not simply a measure of success or failure—they are instruments of fate, weaving opportunity with risk.

In this world, victory is rarely clean, and defeat is rarely final. Every roll pushes the story forward, not just by resolving what happens, but by revealing what it costs.

1.2 Design Goals

The design philosophy of *Fate's Edge* rests on three core goals:

Narrative Primacy

Mechanics exist to serve the story. Rules reward creativity and descriptive play, ensuring that characters are defined as much by their choices as by their numbers.

Risk as Drama

Every roll carries the potential for triumph and the shadow of complication. Tension, not certainty, drives the narrative.

Meaningful Growth

Advancement is more than improving statistics. Players invest experience not only in personal ability but also in influence, legacies, and the world around them.

1.3 The Central Question

At its heart, *Fate's Edge* asks:

What are you willing to risk, and what are you willing to pay, to reshape the world around you?

This question is both philosophical and mechanical. Players gamble with fate every time they act, and the consequences—good or ill—become the foundation of their legend.

1.4 Tone of Play

Fate's Edge is designed to produce stories that feel:

- **Cinematic**, with pacing tied to narrative beats rather than strict measures of time.
- **Consequential**, where even small choices ripple outward in meaningful ways.
- **Collaborative**, empowering both GM and players to co-create the unfolding drama.

1.5 Identity in Brief

Fate's Edge is a world balanced on a knife: every decision sharpens or dulls the blade, every risk cuts both ways.

2 Key Concepts

2.1 Narrative Time

Time in *Fate's Edge* is measured by story weight, not by clocks. Actions are framed in four narrative scales:

- **A Moment** — A heartbeat, a glance, a single strike or word.
- **Some Time** — A few minutes, enough for a skirmish, a careful lockpick, or a short negotiation.
- **Significant Time** — Hours, long enough to travel between locations, work a ritual, or endure a siege.
- **Days** — Large-scale endeavors: marches across a countryside, training a cadre, or recovering from wounds.

This framing gives players and the GM a shared sense of pacing and tension. The focus is always on narrative rhythm, not stopwatch precision.

2.2 Complication Points

Whenever a player rolls dice, each result of 1 generates a **Complication Point**. These are not mere penalties—they are narrative fuel. The GM spends them to introduce twists: broken weapons, misplaced trust, sudden weather, collateral damage.

Complications ensure that even a success carries texture. A hero may win the duel but lose the crowd's favor; a spell may ignite, but it leaves behind smoke and whispers.

2.3 Affinity

Races and cultures in *Fate's Edge* do not define characters through numbers alone. Instead, each provides an **Affinity**: a narrative edge or metaphysical bond. Affinities make certain Arts, skills, or actions more reliable, weaving identity into mechanics.

Wood Elves find quiet in nature; Dwarves in stone; Humans in adaptability. Each Affinity is a way the world itself leans in your favor.

2.4 Prestige Abilities

Prestige Abilities are high-level talents unlocked by mastering cultural arts or philosophies. They are narrative milestones as much as mechanical ones. A High Elf Echo-Walker, a Dwarven Spirit Shield, or a Human Bannerlord does not simply roll better—they reshape the story around them.

2.5 On-Screen vs. Off-Screen

Fate's Edge distinguishes between resources you see at the table and those that shape the world in the background:

- **On-Screen Resources** are companions, hirelings, or allies who stand beside you in danger. They add dice pools and flavor, but they can falter, be taken, or die.
- **Off-Screen Resources** are taverns, estates, titles, or networks of informants. They never swing a blade in combat, but they shape the story between sessions, turning XP into narrative leverage.

The choice between the two defines whether a character invests in independence, leadership, or legacy.

2.6 Why These Concepts Matter

Together, these concepts shift the game away from strict measures of efficiency toward dramatic consequence. Time is elastic, outcomes ripple, and choices reach far beyond the battlefield. This keeps the table focused not only on *what happens*, but also on *why it matters*.

Part II

Character Framework

3 Attributes & Skills

Characters in *Fate's Edge* are defined not by long columns of modifiers, but by the interplay of four **core attributes** and a lean, narrative-focused **skill list**. Together they shape dice pools, guide player expression, and reinforce the philosophy that *who you are* matters as much as *what you do*.

3.1 Attributes

Attributes represent broad aspects of a character's being. They are archetypal, not granular, and apply across many situations.

Body Strength, endurance, and physical action. Lifting a gate, wrestling an ogre, or running across rooftops all call on Body.

Wits Perception, cleverness, and reaction speed. Spotting an ambush, solving a puzzle, or drawing first in a duel depend on Wits.

Spirit Willpower, intuition, and resilience. Resisting fear, sensing lies, or pressing on through pain come from Spirit.

Presence Charm, command, and social force. Inspiring allies, bending wills, or commanding a hall all rely on Presence.

Each Attribute is rated from 1–5 for most mortals. Exceptional beings (angels, demons, dragons) may reach higher.

3.2 Skills

Skills are focused expressions of talent. They sharpen attributes into action and give players narrative handles for describing their characters. Each Skill is tied loosely to one or more attributes, but creative players may justify alternative pairings if the narrative fits.

Skill List

- Athletics — climbing, running, swimming.
- Brawl — fists, grappling, improvised fighting.
- Melee — blades, axes, polearms.
- Ranged — bows, crossbows, thrown arms.
- Stealth — hiding, shadowing, evading.
- Survival — tracking, foraging, navigation.
- Craft — smithing, alchemy, tinkering.
- Lore — history, cultures, languages.
- Arcana — magical theory, rituals, spellwork.
- Insight — intuition, empathy, lie detection.
- Diplomacy — negotiation, mediation, etiquette.
- Deception — disguise, misdirection, bluffing.
- Command — leadership, intimidation, rallying.
- Performance — music, oratory, storytelling.

Skill Ratings

- **0: Untrained** — You rely on raw attribute alone.
- **1: Familiar** — Basic competence, a journeyman's touch.
- **2: Skilled** — Trained and reliable in most circumstances.
- **3: Expert** — Professional mastery or long experience.
- **4: Master** — Renowned, your work or ability is widely recognized.
- **5: Legendary** — Almost supernatural; few mortals reach this level.

3.3 Attributes and Skills in Play

When players attempt a significant action, they combine the relevant **Attribute + Skill** to determine their dice pool. Attributes set the foundation of capability, while Skills give the roll texture and identity.

Body + Melee is raw steel and sinew.

Wits + Melee is anticipation and precision.

Presence + Melee is flourish, feint, and intimidation.

The same Skill, seen through different Attributes, tells a different story.

4 XP as Currency

In *Fate's Edge*, Experience Points (XP) are not a tally of victories. They are the **universal resource of progression**—a currency spent to shape your character, your influence, and your place in the world. Growth always comes from choice: hone the self, strengthen bonds, or weave deeper ties into the setting.

4.1 The Three Paths of XP

Players may allocate XP across three broad categories. Each represents a different philosophy of growth.

4.1.1 Enhance Self

XP buys personal mastery.

Attributes Raising an Attribute costs XP equal to $(\text{new rating} \times 3)$.

Example: Body $2 \rightarrow 3$ costs $3 \times 3 = 9$ XP.

Skills Raising a Skill costs XP equal to $(\text{new level} \times 2)$.

Example: Stealth $1 \rightarrow 2$ costs $2 \times 2 = 4$ XP.

4.1.2 Acquire Assets

XP can be invested into property, holdings, networks, and followers—worldly influence rather than personal prowess.

Off-Screen Resources. Purchased with XP, these assets provide leverage *between sessions*: a tavern, a title, a mercantile charter, a safehouse network. They solve problems off-screen but cannot intervene in an adventure scene.

On-Screen Followers (Assistance). Allies who act *in the scene* and lend their specialty.

- **Cost:** A follower with Specialty Cap C costs C^2 XP (one-time).
- **Specialty:** Define one narrow lane (e.g., *Bodyguard in melee*, *Scout on overland navigation*, *Archivist for ancient scripts*). The follower only assists in that lane.

- **Assist Dice:** When applicable, the follower adds *help dice* equal to $\min(C, \text{yourrelevantSkill})$, capped at +3 dice.
- **Slot Limit:** Only *one* follower may assist a given action.
- **Upkeep:** Each Downtime, pay Coin equal to C or spend a Scene tending the relationship. Miss two upkeeps: the follower becomes *Unreliable* until mended.
- **Risk:** If the GM spends *2+ Complication Points* on an action you take with assistance, they may endanger, injure, or separate the follower instead of you if fictionally appropriate.

Why C^2 and a +3 cap? A Cap 5 helper used to be the best XP deal in the game. Squaring the cost and capping assist dice keeps followers powerful but *not* more efficient than raising your own Skills. Followers become scene-shaping *tools* with obligations and risks, rather than a cheap dice battery.

4.1.3 Learn Talents

Talents are unique abilities that expand what a character can do. They are purchased with XP and often serve as stepping stones toward Prestige Abilities. They may be:

- **General Talents** — broadly available to any character.
 - *Battle Instincts* (Cost: 6 XP): Once per scene, re-roll a failed defense roll.
 - *Silver Tongue* (Cost: 4 XP): Gain +1 die when persuading or deceiving through speech.
 - *Iron Stomach* (Cost: 3 XP): Immune to mundane poisons and spoiled food; halve Complications from toxic sources.
- **Racial or Cultural Talents** — tied to Affinities and philosophies, reflecting the arts of a people.
 - *Stone-Sense* (Dwarves, Cost: 5 XP): Detect flaws in stone or earth; gain +1 die on Engineering or Craft rolls underground.
 - *Backlash Soothing* (Wood Elves, Cost: 6 XP): Once per session, reduce a magical Backlash Complication by 2 points when in natural terrain.
 - *Blood Memory* (Ykrul, Cost: 5 XP): After a battle, meditate to gain one temporary Skill die reflecting a foe's tactics for the next scene.
- **Prestige Abilities** — narrative-capstone powers available only at high investment. These are the pinnacles of a culture's arts.
 - *Echo-Walker* (High Elf, Cost: 20 XP; Req: Wits 5, Arcana 4): Step briefly into Aerisahl; once per arc, turn any Complication into a boon.

- *Warglord* (Ykrul, Cost: 18 XP; Req: Body 5, Leadership 3): Rally scattered warbands into a single host; once per campaign, may unify tribes under one banner.
- *Spirit-Shield* (Dwarves, Cost: 15 XP; Req: Spirit 4, Resolve 3): Once per session, erase up to 3 Complications from an ally's roll, taking 1 Backlash yourself.

4.2 Economy of Choice

Because XP is the sole currency, every expenditure forces tension:

- Invest in yourself to become unmatched in one arena.
- Invest in the world to gain influence and resources.
- Invest in talents to expand into new, unique possibilities.

There is no “wrong” choice — only the question: *Will you be remembered for what you mastered, what you owned, or what you became?*

5 Archetypes & Prestige Abilities

Archetypes represent broad playstyles, while Prestige Abilities are the capstone talents tied to culture, philosophy, or exceptional mastery. This section offers examples across the tiers of advancement to demonstrate how XP investment and narrative identity converge.

5.1 Archetype Examples

The Blade-Seeker (Solo Archetype)

Theme: The lone duelist whose personal mastery becomes legend.

XP Focus: Attributes (Body, Wits) and direct combat skills.

Play Impact: Thrives in spotlight scenes; less reliable for logistics or diplomacy.

Prestige Gateways: Duelist's Insight, Echo-Killer.

The Bond-Keeper (Mixed Archetype)

Theme: A hero who balances self-growth with allies, networks, or family.

XP Focus: Skills and Off-Screen Assets, with some Attributes raised.

Play Impact: Strongest when weaving personal hooks into group play.

Prestige Gateways: Hearth-Banner, Oath-Bound Captain.

The Spider (Mastermind Archetype)

Theme: The strategist who commands webs of allies, followers, and secrets.

XP Focus: On-Screen Followers, Off-Screen Assets, Presence.

Play Impact: Shapes campaigns through schemes, but risks backlash if resources collapse.

Prestige Gateways: Shadow Broker, Master of Coin.

5.2 Prestige Ability Examples by Tier

Tier II (41–90 XP)

Duelist’s Insight *Req: Body 3, Melee 3.* Once per duel, re-roll all failed dice if you describe a flourish tied to your rival’s weakness.

Hearth-Banner *Req: Presence 2, Leadership 2, Off-Screen Asset (Homestead).* Allies defending your home or banner gain +1 die to all rolls within its borders.

Tier III (91–150 XP)

Oath-Bound Captain *Req: Presence 3, Leadership 3, one On-Screen Follower.* When leading a unit, you may convert one Complication per roll into a rallying boon: grant +1 die to all allies on their next action.

Echo-Killer *Req: Wits 4, Arcana 3, Affinity (Elven).* Once per scene, negate an incoming magical effect by paying its Complication cost yourself.

Tier IV (151–220 XP)

Shadow Broker *Req: Presence 4, Subterfuge 3, Off-Screen Asset (Network).* Once per arc, declare that you “already had an agent there.” Spend 6 XP to permanently expand your Network’s reach into that region.

Spirit-Shield *Req: Spirit 4, Resolve 3.* Once per session, you may erase up to 3 Complication Points from an ally’s roll, at the cost of taking 1 Backlash Complication yourself.

Tier V (221+ XP)

Master of Coin *Req: Presence 5, Commerce 4, three Off-Screen Assets.* You may treat wealth as narrative leverage: once per session, erase a Diamonds-suit Complication by spending from your fortune.

Echo-Walker *Req: Wits 5, Arcana 4, Affinity (High Elf).* Once per arc, step briefly into the demi-plane of Aerisahl, gaining one automatic success on a roll *and* reshaping one drawn Complication into a boon.

Part III

Core Mechanic

6 The Art of Consequence

At the heart of *Fate's Edge* lies a single design principle: **every action carries consequence**. Dice do not merely determine success or failure; they shape the unfolding narrative by introducing new problems, twists, or opportunities. The system thrives on tension between intent and outcome, where even the best successes may carry unexpected costs.

6.1 Procedure

All significant actions follow a three-step process:

1. **Approach** — The player describes both *what* their character wants and *how* they attempt it. This defines the primary Skill and clarifies the fiction.
2. **Execution** — Build a dice pool equal to *Attribute + Skill* and roll that many d10s. Each die of 6 or higher counts as a success. Each 1 rolled generates a *Complication Point*.
3. **Outcome** — The GM interprets total successes against the difficulty of the task. Complication Points are then spent to weave narrative setbacks, collateral costs, or escalating danger.

6.2 The Description Ladder

The quality of the player's description affects the resilience of their roll against complication. More detail means more control over how the dice fall:

Basic Action Roll the pool as-is. All 1s remain as Complication Points.

Detailed Action A clear, descriptive flourish allows the player to re-roll one die showing 1.

Intricate Action A richly described, multi-sensory action allows the player to re-roll *all* dice showing 1, and add one positive narrative flourish to the scene if they succeed.

6.3 Complication Points

Complication Points (CP) are the engine of drama. They are not simple penalties, but narrative levers. The GM spends CP to introduce setbacks appropriate to the context, such as:

- Escalation — drawing more enemies, raising the stakes.
- Exhaustion — draining time, resources, or positioning.
- Exposure — revealing hidden actions, alerting foes.
- Collateral — harm or danger spilling over onto allies, innocents, or surroundings.

6.4 Design Intent

This mechanic ensures that every roll changes the story. Success without risk is rare, and even failure opens new narrative avenues. The dice shape the texture of events, but the story itself remains in the hands of the players and GM, always circling back to choice and consequence.

7 Advancement & XP

In *Fate's Edge*, characters do not advance through levels. Instead, growth flows from **Experience Points (XP)** — the universal currency of progression. XP may be spent to hone the self, acquire worldly assets, or unlock cultural prestige. This design ensures that every moment of advancement is the result of a meaningful choice.

7.1 Awarding XP

The GM distributes XP at the end of each session or arc. Choose a pacing mode appropriate to the campaign:

Gritty: 4–6 XP per session (slow burn; each purchase is weighty).

Standard: 6–10 XP per session (default pace).

Heroic: 10–14 XP per session (fast growth; shorter arcs).

Session Awards

- Table Attendance: +2 XP
- Major Objective Reached: +2–4 XP
- Discovery or Lore Unlocked: +1–2 XP
- Hard Choice Embraced: +1–2 XP
- Complication Spotlight (leaning into drawn Complications): +1–3 XP
- Bond/Flag Driven Play: +1–2 XP
- GM Curveball Award: +0–3 XP for standout creativity

Milestones

At the conclusion of a major story arc, grant:

- +8–12 XP to all players
- +2 XP bonus to one player for a signature moment of the arc

Complication Dividend

If a player accepts a high Complication card as drawn, without mitigation:

- Face Card: +1 XP
- Ace: +2 XP

7.2 Spending XP

Attributes: Cost = new rating \times 3. Downtime = new rating in days.

Skills: Cost = new level \times 2. Downtime = new level in days.

On-Screen Followers: Cost = Cap². Downtime = 1–3 days to recruit and brief.

Off-Screen Assets: Minor (4 XP, 1 day), Standard (8 XP, 1 week), Major (12 XP, 1 month).

Rush Rule

A player may skip downtime, but the GM creates a **Haste clock** of four segments. If the clock fills, the new ability or asset carries flaws or narrative complications.

7.3 Tiers of Reputation

Though there are no levels, XP spent creates soft “tiers” that shape world response:

Tier I – Rookie (0–40 XP): Local reputation; prestige locked.

Tier II – Seasoned (41–90): Regional notice; prestige abilities may be unlocked.

Tier III – Veteran (91–150): National influence; second follower slot suggested.

Tier IV – Paragon (151–220): Movers and shakers; rivals emerge to challenge.

Tier V – Mythic (221+): Legendary status; kingdoms and cults respond.

7.4 Archetypes in Play

The Solo

Invests XP primarily in self. *Strengths:* always ready, iconic spotlight. *Risks:* narrow toolkit; may lag in social or resource scenes.

The Mixed Player

Balances XP between self and assets. *Strengths:* adaptable, bridges party gaps. *Risks:* upkeep spread thin.

The Mastermind

Builds networks, followers, and assets. *Strengths:* broad reach, drives strategies. *Risks:* Complication fallout; vulnerable allies.

7.5 Training & Mentorship

- Training from a PC or NPC with Skill ≥ 3 or Attribute \geq new rating halves downtime.
- A vivid training montage may convert 1 day of downtime into on-screen play (twice per arc).
- Research or crafting may be handled as Significant Time with a simple project clock.

7.6 Optional Systems

Patronage Track

Spending 8+ XP on civic, guild, or temple projects grants a *Patron tag*. Once per arc, a Patron may erase a resource-related Complication (Diamonds suit).

Respec & Drift

- Light respec: Once per arc, redistribute up to 6 XP worth of Skills.
- Major pivot: With narrative justification, reclaim one Talent or Prestige at 50% refund.

7.7 End-of-Session Checklist

1. Did we reach a Major Objective? (+2–4 XP)
2. Who embraced Complications? (+1–3 XP)
3. Did Bonds or Flags drive scenes? (+1–2 XP)
4. Any discoveries or lore revealed? (+1–2 XP)
5. Attendance and GM Curveball awarded? (+2 +0–3 XP)
6. Any XP spending declared? Note downtime or begin Haste clocks.

Part IV

Magic & The Arts

8 Philosophy of Magic

Magic in *Fate's Edge* is not a tool of convenience but a dangerous negotiation with the fabric of reality. It is powerful, flexible, and transformative — yet every attempt to shape it carries risk. The dice never merely ask “*does it work?*” but always whisper “*what is the cost?*”

8.1 The Nature of Magic

- **Volatile by Design:** Magic is not fully understood, even by its most adept practitioners. Every working pushes against boundaries that resist being bent.
- **Risk Embodied:** Each spell generates Complication Points. These points do not vanish; they manifest as *Backlash*, unpredictable consequences that ripple outward.
- **Narrative Weight:** Casting is always a story moment. Even a “successful” spell alters the scene in ways the caster did not intend.
- **Thematic Consequence:** Backlash is not arbitrary; it aligns with the opposing or uncontrolled element of the Art invoked (flame flares out of control, shadows linger too long, storms roll beyond command).

8.2 The Caster's Burden

Magicians are defined not by what they can do, but by what they are willing to risk. A cautious spellcaster describes carefully, invests in detailed actions, and may survive long. A reckless one courts power at great personal and narrative cost. Both choices shape the story.

9 Casting Loop

All spellcasting follows a structured sequence called the *Casting Loop*. It unfolds across two phases of play: gathering strength, then weaving it into form.

1. **Channel** — The caster focuses, rolling **Wits** + **Arcana** to gather *Potential*. Each success becomes fuel for shaping the spell. Each 1 adds Complication Points immediately.
2. **Weave** — On the following turn, the caster rolls **Wits** + **(Art)** to shape Potential into a defined effect. The Description Ladder applies: Basic/Detailed/Intricate descriptions reduce or redirect Complication Points.
3. **Backlash** — Complication Points spent by the GM manifest as uncontrolled consequences. These are thematic to the Art and scale with the number of points spent: minor nuisances at low levels, dangerous disasters at high levels.

9.1 Example of Backlash

Fire Flames leap to unattended surfaces, smoke blinds allies, or the heat weakens structures.

Shadow Illusions persist too long, unseen things whisper truths best left hidden, morale crumbles.

Storm Winds scatter allies' plans, lightning arcs toward unintended targets, storms linger beyond the caster's will.

9.2 Design Intent

The Casting Loop keeps magic tense and thematic: no spell is “free.” Every magical act alters not just the world, but the flow of narrative itself.

Part V

GM Toolkit

10 Philosophy of Magic

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11.1 Backlash Severity Table

CP Total	Guidance for Backlash Severity
1	Minor nuisance: cosmetic damage, a brief distraction, harmless magical echo.
2–3	Noticeable setback: ally inconvenienced, unintended target struck, short-term vulnerability created.
4–5	Serious complication: uncontrolled spreading effect, structural harm, dangerous foe empowered or alerted.
6–7	Major consequence: battlefield-shaping hazard, lasting injury, environment altered in hostile ways.
8+	Catastrophic backlash: spell escapes caster’s intent entirely, permanent scars on landscape or soul, new long-term threat unleashed.

Table 11.1: Backlash guidance by Complication Points (CP).

11.2 Design Intent

The Casting Loop keeps magic tense and thematic: no spell is “free.” Every magical act alters not just the world, but the flow of narrative itself.

12 Deck of Consequences

The Deck of Consequences is a shared tool that externalizes risk and narrative fallout. Whenever a check generates Complication Points, the GM may draw from the deck instead of (or in addition to) improvising outcomes. This provides consistent tone and escalating tension.

12.1 Structure of the Deck

- **Suits = Domains of Complications**

171 Cups Emotional, social, or relational fallout.

171 Swords Harm, danger, or escalation of conflict.

171 Pentacles Resource strain, economic or material cost.

171 Wands Magical, spiritual, or cosmic disturbances.

- **Ranks = Severity of Complications** Higher ranks indicate more enduring or severe consequences:

Ace–3 Minor inconvenience or flavor complication.

4–6 Moderate setback with some narrative teeth.

7–9 Significant consequence altering the course of action.

10–King Major fallout, introducing new problems or lasting scars.

12.2 Using the Deck

1. Player rolls; each 1 generates a Complication Point.
2. GM may draw a card for each Complication Point.
3. The suit frames the type of complication; the rank determines severity.
4. GM interprets and narrates based on context.

12.3 Guidance for Mundane Skills

Not every task should rely on freeform GM invention. The following table offers examples to keep complications consistent across play.

Skill	Complication Domain	Examples by Severity
Athletics	Swords (harm)	Ace-3: Twisted ankle; 4-6: Lose grip, drop equipment; 7-9: Injury forces pause or retreat; 10-King: Serious wound, out of action.
Stealth	Cups (social) or Swords (harm)	Ace-3: A creak alerts suspicion; 4-6: Minor evidence left behind; 7-9: Spotted and pursued; 10-King: Ambushed or captured.
Crafting	Pentacles (resources)	Ace-3: Wasted materials; 4-6: Minor flaw, item unreliable; 7-9: Precious resource ruined; 10-King: Catastrophic failure or danger from collapse/explosion.
Persuasion	Cups (emotional/social)	Ace-3: Offended someone mildly; 4-6: Reputation takes a small hit; 7-9: Relationship strained; 10-King: Alliance broken, enmity gained.
Scholarship	Wands (cosmic) or Pentacles (resources)	Ace-3: Misremember detail; 4-6: Hours wasted chasing false lead; 7-9: Dangerous knowledge misapplied; 10-King: Catastrophic misunderstanding with lasting fallout.

Table 12.1: Mundane Skills and Example Complications

13 Player Archetypes at the Table

Not every group plays the same way. These archetypes describe *how* players spend XP and seek spotlight. They are styles, not classes; most characters drift between them across a campaign.

13.1 Assumptions for Examples

Unless noted, examples assume a 30 XP starting budget.

Costs: Attributes = (new rating \times 3), Skills = (new level \times 2), Followers = C^2 (Cap C), Assist bonus = $\min(C, \text{your Skill})$ up to +3 dice.

Off-Screen Assets: Minor 4 XP (single town, narrow help), Standard 8 XP (regional reach), Major 12 XP (multi-region, political teeth). Assets act between sessions; no direct scene dice.

13.2 The Solo

Definition: Invests XP primarily in **Attributes and Skills**. Minimal followers, minimal holdings. All power is *on the sheet*.

Typical XP Spread: 70–90% Self; 0–10% On-screen help; 0–20% Off-screen.

Solo: Example Build (30 XP)

- Raise **Body** 2→3: $3 \times 3 = 9$ XP
- Raise **Wits** 2→3: 9 XP (18 XP total)
- Skill **Melee** 0→3: $2 + 4 + 6 = 12$ XP
- *Remaining:* 0 XP

Result: Melee pool 6 (Body 3 + Melee 3) *or* a finesse line at 6 (Wits 3 + Melee 3). With Intricate descriptions, the Solo mitigates Backlash/Complications by rerolling 1s and leans on personal reliability.

Strengths Consistent scene impact; fewer moving parts; resilient to follower loss.

Risks Limited fiction reach between sessions; can stall when problems want logistics or networks.

GM Guidance Feed high-ceiling tests (tight DCs, layered stakes). Reward description—let Intricate actions sing. Give *hard* softlocks (locks, codes, customs) that force the Solo to collaborate or creatively frame scenes.

13.3 The Mixed Player

Definition: Splits XP between self-growth and **one or two** meaningful assets (either a small follower or a reliable holding).

Typical XP Spread: 50–65% Self; 15–25% On-screen help; 15–25% Off-screen.

Mixed: Example Build (30 XP)

- Raise **Presence** 2→3: 9 XP
- Skill **Sway** 0→3: $2 + 4 + 6 = 12$ XP (21 XP total)
- **Follower** (Cap 3 *Archivist*): $3^2 = 9$ XP

Result: Social pool 6 (Presence 3 + Sway 3). In scenes involving ancient texts, the Archivist grants up to +3 help dice (capped) if the PC's own Lore/Research is at least 3; otherwise, the help is limited by the PC's skill.

Strengths Versatile: credible in scenes, *and* has a lever for special problems.

Risks Juggling upkeep (Coin or scenes). The helper can be targeted when the GM spends 2+ Complication Points.

GM Guidance Present multi-key problems: one key favors the PC's sheet, one calls the follower/asset. Let off-screen assets set up on-screen advantages (credibility, entry, rumors) but never free wins.

13.4 The Mastermind

Definition: Prioritizes **followers, cadres, pets/familiars** and **off-screen networks**. Their sheet is the hub of a larger apparatus.

Typical XP Spread: 25–40% Self; 35–55% On-screen help; 20–40% Off-screen.

Mastermind: Example Build (30 XP)

- Attribute **Wits** 2→3: 9 XP
- Skill **Tactics** 0→2: $2 + 4 = 6$ XP (15 XP total)
- **Follower** (Cap 4 *Scout/Ranger*): $4^2 = 16$ XP
- **Off-Screen Asset** (Minor Safehouse Ring): 4 XP

*Over by 5 XP—trim by dropping Tactics to 1 (2 XP) and downgrading the asset to a single Safehouse contact (2 XP), or start with 35 XP if your chargen allows it. **Result:** In any navigation/stealth approach, the Scout provides up to +3 dice (capped by the PC's relevant skill). The Safehouse ring solves travel/logistics in downtime and seeds rumors.*

Strengths Scene control through assistance; strategic reach between sessions; strong heist/social planning play.

Risks Dependency on assist lanes; followers can be endangered on 2+ Complication Point spends; upkeep pressure.

GM Guidance Make lanes matter. Spotlight costs: only *one* assistant per action, +3 cap. Use consequence targeting fairly; endangering a follower should escalate stakes, not punish creativity.

13.5 Comparative Guidance at a Glance

	Solo	Mixed	Mastermind
XP Focus	Attributes/Skills	Split	Followers + Assets
Core Dice	Highest personal pools	Good pools + situational +3	Moderate pools + frequent +3
Off-Screen	Light	Some leverage	Strong leverage
Fragility	Low (self-reliant)	Medium (one helper)	Higher (helper risk, upkeep)
GM Dials	Hard DCs, layered stakes	Multi-key scenes	Lanes, logistics, comp-targeting

13.6 Balancing the Spotlight

- **Solos** earn spotlight through Intricate action—reward rich description with rerolls and fictional position.
- **Mixed** characters should unlock doors others can't, via their one specialty follower or asset.

- **Masterminds** shine in plans coming together; ensure each step needs a different PC so orchestration lifts everyone.

13.7 Advancement Notes

- **Followers Scale Fast:** C^2 costs keep high-Cap help rare. A Cap 5 bodyguard is 25 XP—roughly the same as taking a Skill from 0 to 4 *and* nudging an Attribute.
- **+3 Assist Cap:** Maintains parity—raising your Skill above 3 still matters; help doesn't eclipse mastery.
- **Off-Screen Assets** don't add dice; they *change the fiction*. Use them to set position (entry, cover, rumors, writs) so they feel worth the XP without stealing scenes.

A Sample Characters

This chapter presents three ready-to-play exemplars of the archetypes defined earlier. Each is system-legal using the costs defined in this book (Attributes: new×3; Skills: new×2; Followers: C^2 ; Assist cap +3; Off-screen assets by tier). Use them as pregens, benchmarks, or templates.

A.1 The Solo — Sable Kestrel, Road-Worn Duelist

Concept

A blade for hire who trusts steel, footwork, and a cool read of the room more than favors or retainers.

Build Summary (30 XP)

- **Attributes:** Body 3 (9 XP), Wits 3 (9 XP), Spirit 2, Presence 2 *18 XP*
- **Skills:** Melee 3 (2+4+6 = 12 XP), Observation 1 (2 XP) *14 XP*
- **Total:** 32 XP → drop Observation 1 (2 XP) or start at 32 XP tables. **Baseline 30 XP:** Body 3, Wits 3, Melee 3.

Dice Pools (Common)

- **Body + Melee:** 6 (brutal, direct)
- **Wits + Melee:** 6 (feints, tempo control)
- **Wits + Observation:** 3 (if taken)

Signature Move

Intricate Riposte: Declare a narrow objective (“*disarm without blood*”), describe footwork and angle; roll Wits+Melee (6d10). On 1s, Intricate rerolls minimize Complications; on a clean success, add a flourish (*opponent’s blade clatters to your boot*).

Complication Hooks (GM)

- *Overreach*: Fatigue clock; armor strap loosens; duel attracts unwanted gambler attention.
- *Collateral*: Stray blow nicks a banner; a house guard demands reparations.

Advancement Path

- Short term: Melee 3→4 (8 XP); Observation 0→2 (6 XP).
- Long term: Presence 2→3 (9 XP) to open a credible social line.

A.2 The Mixed — Bryn of the Ledger, Field Archivist

Concept

A scholar-adventurer who solves problems with keen recall and a single trusted specialist.

Build Summary (30 XP)

- **Attributes**: Presence 3 (9 XP), Wits 3 (9 XP), Body 2, Spirit 2 18 XP
- **Skills**: Sway 3 (2+4+6 = 12 XP) 12 XP
- **Follower**: Cap 3 *Archivist* (Lore/Research specialist) (9 XP)
- **Adjust**: To stay at 30 XP, delay Wits 3 until first advance *or* start at 33 XP tables.
Baseline 30 XP: Presence 3, Sway 3, Follower Cap 3.

Dice & Assist

- **Presence + Sway**: 6 (negotiations, permissions, de-escalation)
- **Archivist Assist**: Up to +3 dice on *Lore/Research/Occult* actions, capped by Bryn's own relevant Skill (encourages training to 3).

Signature Move

Stamped and Countersigned: Start a parley with a citation (*charter, doctrine, ledger mark*); roll Presence+Sway (6d10). If Complications, the GM may introduce red tape (*a missing counter-seal*); spend a minute with the Archivist to produce the cross-reference and earn a *position* advantage on the next roll.

Complication Hooks (GM)

- *Academic Rivalry*: A jealous clerk disputes your citation.
- *Paper Trail*: Your documents help you now but later implicate an ally.

Advancement Path

- Short term: Wits 2→3 (9 XP); Research 0→3 (12 XP).
- Long term: Off-screen Asset (Minor Scriptorium Cell, 4 XP) to seed rumors and requisitions.

A.3 The Mastermind — Ash Thorne, Quiet Conductor

Concept

A calm planner whose small crew and safehouses convert problems into steps.

Build Summary (30–34 XP)

- **Attributes**: Wits 3 (9 XP), Presence 3 (9 XP), Body 2, Spirit 2 18 XP
- **Skills**: Tactics 2 (2+4 = 6 XP), Skullduggery 1 (2 XP) 8 XP
- **Follower**: Cap 4 *Scout/Ranger* (16 XP)
- **Off-Screen Asset**: Minor Safehouse (4 XP)
- **Trim Options**: Drop Skullduggery 1 and the Safehouse to hit 30 XP; or accept 34 XP at generous tables.

Dice & Assist

- **Wits + Tactics**: 5 (planning, route selection, timing)
- **Scout Assist**: Up to +3 dice on movement/stealth/survival lanes, capped by Ash's Skill.

Signature Move

Three Doors Ahead: Ash frames the approach with two decoys and one true lane (Tactics roll). On success, pick one benefit: *split heat between decoys*, *advance a clock two ticks*, or *bank +1 forward* for the next ally action. On 2+ Complication Points, the GM may *target the Scout* or compromise a decoy.

Complication Hooks (GM)

- *Crew Liability*: The Scout's old feud surfaces.
- *Burned Safehouse*: A rival pays a porter to misdirect deliveries.

Advancement Path

- Short term: Skullduggery 1→3 (6+8 = 14 XP) to self-cap assists at +3.
- Long term: Follower Cap 5 bodyguard (25 XP) *or* Standard Safehouse Ring (8 XP) for regional reach.

A.4 At-the-Table Play Examples

Heist Entry (Intricate Actions)

Solo cases the guard's stance (Wits+Melee as feint-reading): success, banks a disarm detail for later. **Mixed** flashes a merchant writ (Presence+Sway), Archivist supplies a ledger note: +2 dice assist. **Mastermind** runs the decoy wagon (Wits+Tactics): success splits heat; one Complication Point: a junior guard memorizes faces.

Duel in the Courtyard

Solo declares "*first blood, no scars*", wins on clean 6+, rerolls 1s via Intricate. **Mixed** keeps the crowd aligned: reduces fallout with Sway; on Complication, a heckler changes the mood. **Mastermind** positions allies: next turn the Scout provides climbing lines (+3 capped assist) for a swift exit.

Debrief & Downtime

Solo buys Skill 3→4 to keep personal ceiling high. **Mixed** trains Research 0→2 and deepens the Archivist's narrative ties. **Mastermind** invests XP into a Standard Safehouse Ring to convert future *position* into on-screen advantage.

A.5 Conversion Notes & Reskinning

These statlines are intentionally lean. To reskin:

- Swap **Melee** for **Marksmanship** on the Solo to make a sniper.

- Change the **Archivist** to a **Quartermaster** (assist lanes: Logistics, Forgery, Procurement).
- Rebuild the **Scout** as a **Whisper-Familiar** for casters; same Cap rules, different fiction.

B Quick Reference Sheets

These condensed sheets summarize the core procedures, costs, and tables for use at the table. They are designed for GMs and players to keep the flow of play without flipping through chapters.

Core Mechanic: The Art of Consequence

1. **Approach:** Player states intent and method (Attribute + Skill).
2. **Execution:** Roll dice pool of d10s. Each 6+ is a success; each 1 is a Complication Point.
3. **Outcome:**
 - Basic** Roll as-is; tally Complications.
 - Detailed** Re-roll one 1.
 - Intricate** Re-roll all 1s; add one positive flourish if successful.

Attributes & Skills

Body Strength, endurance, physical force.

Wits Perception, cleverness, reflexes.

Spirit Willpower, intuition, resilience.

Presence Charm, command, social force.

Skill Ratings (0–5)

- 0 Untrained — rely on raw Attribute.
- 1 Familiar — basic competence.
- 2 Skilled — reliable training.
- 3 Expert — professional mastery.
- 4 Master — renowned in your field.
- 5 Legendary — near-mythic talent.

XP Costs

Attributes New rating $\times 3$.

Skills New level $\times 2$.

Followers (On-Screen) Cap² XP (e.g., Cap 3 = 9 XP).

Off-Screen Assets Tiered cost (Minor 4 XP, Standard 8 XP, Major 12 XP).

Deck of Consequences

Draw from the deck (or roll a d52 equivalence) when Complication Points are spent. Suits = type of complication. Rank = severity.

Suit	Complication Domain
Hearts	Emotional / Social fallout (fear, anger, betrayal)
Diamonds	Resource / Wealth loss (gear breaks, expenses rise)
Clubs	Physical harm / Obstacles (injuries, blockades, fatigue)
Spades	Mystical / Narrative twists (omens, curses, chance)

Ranks (1–10, J–K–A):

- 2–5: Minor setback, scene continues smoothly.
- 6–9: Moderate complication; new obstacle or clock starts.
- 10–King: Severe twist; alters stakes of the scene.
- Ace: Catastrophic turn; reshapes narrative or mission goal.

Magic Casting Loop

1. **Channel:** Wits + Arcana roll to gather Potential.
2. **Weave:** Wits + Art roll to shape spell.
3. **Backlash:** Complication Points spent through Deck of Consequences, themed to the opposing element.

Player Archetypes

- **Solo:** Invests in Attributes + Skills. Strong spotlight.
- **Mixed:** Balances self with one follower or off-screen assets.
- **Mastermind:** Multiple followers + networks, but more narrative liabilities.

Narrative Time

A Moment A heartbeat; single action.

Some Time A few minutes; quick exchanges.

Significant Time An hour or more; downtime actions.

Days Extended travel or projects.

GM Guidance at a Glance

- Spend Complication Points to **add story problems**, not punish.
- Always tie consequences back to **thematic domains** (Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs, Spades).
- Encourage Intricate actions: reward description with rerolls and narrative control.
- Let Off-Screen assets resolve downtime problems but keep adventures on the table.