

Fate's Edge

System Reference Document

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1 Core Principles

1.1 Identity of Fate's Edge

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.

1.2 A World of Consequences

1.2.1 Design Goals

- **Narrative Primacy:** Mechanics exist to serve the story.
- **Risk as Drama:** Every roll carries the potential for triumph and complication.
- **Meaningful Growth:** Advancement is more than improving statistics.

1.2.2 The Central Question

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

1.2.3 Tone of Play

- Cinematic, with pacing tied to narrative beats.
- Consequential, where even small choices ripple outward.
- Collaborative, empowering both GM and players.

1.3 Key Concepts

1.3.1 Narrative Time

Time is measured by story weight:

- **A Moment** — A heartbeat, a glance, a single strike or word.
- **Some Time** — A few minutes, enough for a skirmish.
- **Significant Time** — Hours, long enough for travel or rituals.
- **Days** — Large-scale endeavors: marches, training, recovery.

1.3.2 Story Beats

Whenever a player rolls dice, each result of 1 generates a Story Beat (SB). These are narrative fuel. The GM spends them to introduce twists.

1.3.3 Affinity

Each culture provides an Affinity: a narrative edge or metaphysical bond. Affinities make certain Arts, skills, or actions more reliable.

1.3.4 Prestige Abilities

High-level talents unlocked by mastering cultural arts or philosophies. They are narrative milestones as much as mechanical ones.

1.3.5 On-Screen vs. Off-Screen

- **On-Screen Resources:** Companions, hirelings, or allies who stand beside you in danger.
- **Off-Screen Resources:** Taverns, estates, titles, or networks of informants.

2 Core Mechanic

2.1 The Art of Consequence

2.1.1 Procedure

All significant actions follow a three-step process:

1. **Approach:** The player describes both what their character wants and how they attempt it.
2. **Execution:** Build a dice pool equal to *Attribute + Skill* and roll that many d10s. Each die of 6+ counts as a success. Each 1 rolled generates a **Story Beat (SB)**.
3. **Outcome:** The GM interprets total successes against the difficulty (DV) of the task. Story Beats are then spent to weave narrative setbacks.

2.1.2 The Description Ladder

- **Basic Action:** Roll the pool as-is. All 1s remain as Story Beats.
- **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.

Rule — Re-rolling 1s and SB Re-rolling 1s does not remove the Story Beats already generated by those dice. If any re-rolled dice show 1 again, they generate additional SB as normal.

Let C_0 = initial 1s, C_r = 1s on re-rolls \Rightarrow **Total SB** = $C_0 + C_r$.

Example: You roll 7d10: {9, 8, 5, 4, 3, 1, 1} $\Rightarrow C_0 = 2$. You re-roll both 1s (Intricate): {6, 2} $\Rightarrow C_r = 0$. Final: successes = 3, SB = 2 (the initial SB remain).

2.1.3 Story Beats

Story Beats (SB) are the engine of drama. They are not simple penalties, but narrative levers. The GM spends SB to introduce setbacks appropriate to the context:

- **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.

2.1.4 Design Intent

This mechanic ensures that every roll changes the story. Success without risk is rare, and even failure opens new narrative avenues.

2.1.5 GM Quick Reference: Adjudicating Skill Checks

Difficulty Ladder (set before the roll)

DV	Name	When to Use
2	Routine	Clear intent, modest stakes, controlled environment.
3	Pressured	Time pressure, mild resistance, partial info.
4	Hard	Hostile conditions, active opposition, precise timing.
5+	Extreme	Multiple constraints, high precision, dramatic failure.

Outcome Matrix (after the roll) Let S be successes (≥ 6) and C be SB (number of 1s rolled).

Case	Guidance
$S \geq DV$ and $C = 0$	Clean Success: Deliver the intent crisply.
$S \geq DV$ and $C > 0$	Success & Cost: Grant the intent; spend/bank SB for complications.
$0 < S < DV$	Partial: Progress with a fork.
$S = 0$	Miss: No progress. Cash/bank SB.

SB Spend Menu (guidance)

- **1 SB:** Minor pressure: noise, trace, +1 Supply segment.
- **2 SB:** Moderate setback: alarm raised, lose position/cover, lesser foe or lock.
- **3 SB:** Serious trouble: reinforcements, key gear breaks, rail tick.
- **4+ SB:** Major turn: trap springs, authority arrives, scene shifts.

Assistance, Boons, & Description

- **Assists:** One helper per action; total Assist dice across sources are capped at +3 (unless a specific Talent states otherwise).
- **Boons:** A player may re-roll one die after seeing the pool. Once per session, in downtime, you may convert 2 Boons → 1 XP (max 2 XP via conversion per session). Hold cap: 5. Trim to 2 at scene end.
- **Description Ladder:** Basic (roll as-is), Detailed (re-roll one 1), Intricate (re-roll all 1s and add one flourish on success).

2.2 Time Guidance Framework

2.2.1 Narrative Time Scales

Time in Fate's Edge is measured by story weight, not by clocks:

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

2.2.2 Game Structure Definitions

Scene

The basic unit of narrative play (Some Time to Significant Time); resolves a specific question or conflict.

Player Turn (Beat)

Declare action → GM sets position → roll → resolve outcome → manage consequences.

Round

Simultaneous or near-simultaneous actions within a scene (primarily for combat), representing a few seconds.

Session

One complete game session (typically 3–6 hours), containing 2–4 major scenes and resolving significant narrative progress.

Campaign

Entire story arc (6–20+ sessions) with major character development and lasting consequences.

2.2.3 Magic and Ritual Time

- **Standard Casting:** Channel and Weave phases each take 1 Player Turn; resolves within a single scene.

- **Ritual Casting (Optional Rule):** Channel and Weave phases each require 1 Scene (Significant Time).
- **Rites Invocation:** Invoke takes 1 Player Turn; Weave takes 1 Player Turn. High-Power rites may require extended time by fiction.

Extended Rituals Attach long rituals to clocks:

- 4-segment clock: Significant Time (hours)
- 6-segment clock: Extended Time (days)
- 8+ segment clock: Campaign Time (weeks/months)

Advance the clock through player actions, scenes, or set intervals.

2.3 Worked Micro-Examples

- **Lockpick Under Watch (DV 2):** Roll 6 dice: 10, 8, 5, 4, 1, 1 $\Rightarrow S = 2, C = 2$. *Success & Cost.* Door opens; GM spends 1 SB for a squeal (patrol starts moving) and banks 1 SB to bring that patrol around on the next beat.
- **Charm the Captain (DV 2):** Roll 5 dice: 7, 6, 6, 2, 1 $\Rightarrow S = 3, C = 1$. *Success & Cost.* Passage granted; GM spends 1 SB: “He expects a favor on the return leg—he’ll collect.”
- **Traverse the Pass (DV 3):** Group pools to net 3 successes but produces $C = 3$. *Success & Cost.* GM spends 2 SB to add Fatigue 1 to all from cold and exposure, banks 1 SB to crack a wagon axle next scene.

Fail Forward: Every Roll Matters When you **MISS** on a *significant action*, you gain 1 **Boon**. Boons can be spent immediately for re-rolls, Asset activations, Rites, and other abilities. You can hold up to 5 Boons (trim to 2 at scene end).

A miss only awards a Boon if all three are true:

1. Procedure followed: intent and approach declared; DV set; roll resolved.
2. Stakes stated: what changes on success; what bites on failure.
3. Consequence lands now: the GM spends or banks SB, applies a condition, or advances a thread.

Rehearsal/null-risk probes and repeated identical attempts in the same scene do not award Boons.

3 Combat System

3.1 Core Philosophy

Combat in Fate’s Edge is not a separate mini-game; it is simply conflict under sharper focus. It uses the same dice pool system and SB economy as all other actions. The rules are designed to emphasize narrative consequence, positional play, and risk management.

3.2 Structure of Combat

- **Rounds:** Each round represents a few seconds of action.
- **Turns:** Each participant takes one significant action per round.
- **Scenes:** A battle is one scene unless the fiction dictates otherwise.

3.3 Taking Action

On your turn, declare intent and method as normal:

1. **Set Position:** The GM decides if you are Controlled, Risky, or Desperate.
2. **Build Pool:** Attribute + Skill (+ gear, + assists, +1 from Imbuement if active).
3. **Roll:** Each 6+ is a success. Each 1 generates SB.
4. **Resolve:** Successes vs DV, SB spent by GM, Position/Effect applied.

3.4 Position & Effect

Controlled

You act from safety or advantage. Failure still leaves you options.

Risky

Standard case. Failure has teeth, but not ruin.

Desperate

High stakes. Failure is severe; success may bring extra XP (mark Desperate use).

Effect Effect is narrative reach:

- **Limited:** Scratch or slow progress.
- **Standard:** Expected impact (downing a guard, disabling a lock).
- **Great:** Overwhelming impact, bigger than expected.

3.5 Damage & Consequences

When you take harm:

- **Level 1 Harm:** Minor injury or hindrance. -1 die to related actions.
- **Level 2 Harm:** Serious wound. -1 die to most actions until treated.
- **Level 3 Harm:** Critical injury. You are incapacitated or dying.

Harm may be resisted (roll Attribute vs DV 3; 1s generate SB). On a hit, reduce harm by one level.

3.6 Teamwork

- **Assist:** Spend 1 Stress or Boon to add +1 die. Max +3 dice from assists.
- **Setup:** Make a roll to improve another's Position or Effect.
- **Protect:** Take harm or consequence meant for another.

3.7 GM Guidance for SB in Combat

Use SB to escalate combat fiction:

- **1 SB:** Reinforce enemy cover, minor injury, reveal new foe.
- **2 SB:** Reinforcements arrive, key gear breaks, enemy gains +1 die.
- **3 SB:** Enemy unleashes a Rite or summon, terrain shifts, ally is endangered.
- **4+ SB:** Scene twists—fires spread, the floor collapses, Patron omens manifest.

3.8 Combat and Magic

- **Casting:** Casters spend an action to Weave and another to Cast. Requires the Caster's Gift talent.
- **Rites:** Invoking a Rite is 1 action. Push may be applied for +1 Obligation.
- **Invokers:** May spend Significant Time for rituals or Crack the Seal for instant cast at the cost of Obligation and Symbol compromise.
- **Imbuements:** Require 1 action once per scene to activate, then provide +1 to one Weapon and one Thematic Skill for the remainder of the scene.

3.9 Worked Example

Kael swings his Imbued blade at a cultist (DV 2). He rolls 5 dice: 9, 7, 5, 2, 1.

- Successes = 3 (hit), SB = 1.
- GM grants success: cultist is cut down.
- GM spends 1 SB: "Blood sprays across the sigil—energy flares, the summoning accelerates."

4 Talents and Advancement

4.1 What are Talents?

Talents are the building blocks of character specialization. They represent learned techniques, supernatural gifts, or cultural inheritances. Each Talent costs XP, and their costs are tied to impact.

4.2 Talent Costs

- **2 XP** — Minor edge (e.g., Caster's Gift, +1 situational bonus, small narrative trick).
- **4 XP** — Major edge (e.g., Patron's Symbol, a strong summon upgrade, permanent +1 effect in a niche).
- **6+ XP** — Prestige abilities, rare and campaign-defining.

4.3 Gaining Talents

- Spend XP earned through play.
- XP comes from fulfilling Drives, resolving Arcs, trading Boons (2 Boons = 1 XP, max 2 XP/session), and GM awards.
- XP is spent between sessions or during downtime.

4.4 Magic Access Through Talents

Caster's Gift (2 XP):

Grants access to Weave & Cast freeform spellcasting using the Eight Elements. Without this, characters cannot freeform cast.

Familiar (2 XP):

Required to access Patron features such as *Patron's Gift*. Binds a Thiasos.

Codex (4 XP):

Required to fully join a Patron's service as a Warlock. Grants access to that Patron's Rites and Obligation system.

Patron's Symbol (4 XP):

Minor Asset. Allows an Invoker to access a Patron's Rites via ritual precision. Each Patron requires its own Symbol.

4.5 Imbuements

Patron's Gift (Free, Requires Thiasos)

Duration: Scene; Range: Touch; Stacking: No.

Effect: Imbue one item with temporary magical power related to your Patron's domain. The item functions as a magical weapon (+1 Melee) and specialized tool (+1 thematic Skill) for the scene.

Activation: Requires 1 Action once per scene.

Push It: The item's power persists for one additional scene but marks +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

4.6 Advancement

- Characters advance primarily through acquiring Talents.
- Each 8–12 XP represents significant growth.

- Characters may retrain (swap out) one Talent per arc with GM approval, if fictionally justified.
- Advancement should always reinforce narrative identity: what drives, obligations, and affinities are shaping the character?

4.7 Prestige Abilities

Prestige abilities are narrative milestones unlocked through mastery or story events. They are priced at 6+ XP and include campaign-shaping effects:

- Breaking fundamental limits of casting or rites.
- Access to forbidden summons.
- Rewriting obligations or reshaping patron bargains.

4.8 Worked Example

Sable earns 2 XP from fulfilling a Drive and 1 XP from trading in 2 Boons at session's end. He now has 4 XP. He buys the Caster's Gift (2 XP) and saves the other 2 XP toward a Patron's Symbol. Next downtime, he will be able to invoke Ikasha's rites through ritual.

5 The Magic System

Magic in Fate's Edge is expressed through three interconnected paths. You may specialize in one, or mix them at greater bookkeeping cost. All paths share the same dice engine and SB/Obligation economies, but their flavor and risks differ.

5.1 Three Faces of Magic

Caster (Freeform):

Requires **Talent: Caster's Gift (2 XP)**. Grants access to Weave & Cast using the Eight Elements. Flexible, creative, and risky (Backlash on 1s).

Rites User (Warlock):

Requires **Patron + Thiasos (Familiar) + Codex (4 XP)**. Grants access to a Patron's Rites. Structured, powerful, but debt-driven through **Obligation**.

Invoker (Symbol Path):

Requires one or more **Patron's Symbols (4 XP each)**. Grants access to that Patron's Rites via rituals. Safe but slow; can *Crack the Seal* to cast instantly at steep Obligation cost.

5.2 Casting (Freeform)

Weave & Cast Casters describe the effect in terms of the Eight Elements (Earth, Fire, Air, Water, Fate, Life, Luck, Death). The GM sets DV and Effect based on scope.

- **Weave:** Player builds dice pool and rolls. On success, they stabilize the spell's form.
- **Cast:** A second roll channels the effect into the world.
- **Backlash:** Any 1 rolled may cause narrative backlash related to the Element.

Limits Casters can attempt any effect that can be described, but the larger the scope, the higher the DV. Improvisation is costly; reliable effects require repeated use and narrative justification.

5.3 Rites Users (Warlocks)

Requirements A Patron bond, a Thiasos (Familiar), and a Codex (4 XP) mark a character as a Warlock.

Invocation

- **Action Cost:** Invoking a Rite requires 1 Action.
- **Obligation:** Each Rite used marks Obligation on its clock.
- **Push It:** Once per Rite, you may Push to increase its duration or potency by +1 step at the cost of +1 Obligation.

Obligation Clock Tracks the Patron's claim. When full, the GM resolves the debt in-fiction. Obligation is reduced through service or downtime actions.

5.4 Invokers (Symbol Path)

Patron's Symbol

- **Minor Asset, 4 XP each.**
- Each Symbol is consecrated to one Patron and grants ritual access to that Patron's Rites.
- You may hold multiple Symbols, one per Patron.

Ritual Invocation

- **Time:** Requires Significant Time (typically 10–30 minutes).
- **Obligation:** Completing a ritual always marks +1 Obligation.
- **No Push:** Invoker Rites cannot use Push It benefits.
- **Symbol Display:** The Symbol must be visible throughout the ritual.

Crack the Seal (Instant Cast) As part of an Invoker Rite, you may immediately resolve the effect by setting the Symbol to *Compromised* and marking +2 Obligation segments (+3 if High-Power). The GM may spend 1 SB on-theme. The Symbol remains but must be restored in downtime.

Restoring Symbols A Compromised Symbol is inert until repaired. Use a downtime action and test (DV 3 or fiction-appropriate). Success restores it; a shaky result leaves it Neglected (rituals work but cost +1 Obligation).

Invoker Path Limitations

- Cannot Push.
- Environment must be suitable (ritual space, purity, etc.).
- Max simultaneous rituals = Spirit. Starting a new ritual ends the oldest or adds +1 Obligation to it.
- Carrying 4+ Symbols causes interference: the first ritual each scene marks +1 extra Obligation.

5.5 Patron's Gift (Imbuements)

Patron's Gift (Free, Requires Thiasos)

Duration: Scene; Range: Touch; Stacking: No.

Effect: Imbue one item with +1 Weapon (Melee) and +1 Thematic Skill (Patron domain) for the scene.

Activation: Requires 1 Action once per scene.

Push It: The item's power persists for one additional scene but marks +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

5.6 Mixing the Paths

Players may combine Casting, Rites, and Invoking, but each path introduces its own bookkeeping:

- Casters track Backlash.
- Rites users track Obligation.
- Invokers track Symbol states (Maintained, Neglected, Compromised).

Mixing provides flexibility but less efficiency than specialization. Specialists gain stronger benefits, while mixers gain narrative breadth.

6 Summons and Outsiders

6.1 Definition

An **Outsider** is any being not native to the world of Fate's Edge. This includes summoned spirits, demons, celestials, and entities that arrive from beyond the veil of the Eight Elements. They are powerful but dangerous to bind.

6.2 Summoning (Pact-Whisperer Core)

Summoning is a way to call and bind Outsiders for temporary aid.

1. **Call** (1 Action): A spirit manifests at Near range. Choose a Spirit Template.
2. **Bind**: Choose one: spend 1 Boon or mark 1 Fatigue.
3. **Leash**: Set Leash = Cap + 2 segments (Cap is the Outsider's tier, typically 1/3/5 for Lesser/Greater/Elder).
4. **Tick Leash** whenever any occur:
 - Spirit takes harm.
 - You command against its nature.
 - You split focus (take another significant action while it acts).
 - A rival contests it.
 - It moves from Close to Far quickly.
 - It crosses a [WARD].
5. **Departure**: When the Leash fills, the spirit acts to its nature once, then departs.

Limits: Only one active summoned spirit at a time (unless a Talent says otherwise). All summons depart at Downtime unless explicitly sustained.

6.3 Boon Finesse

Once per round, you may spend 1 Boon to clear 1 tick from your current spirit's Leash. You cannot do this after the Leash has filled.

6.4 Outsider Caps

- PC-summoned Outsiders: Cap is limited by Talents (Lesser = 1, Greater = 3).
- NPC Outsiders: GM assigns based on story needs (Lesser = 1, Greater = 3, Elder = 5).

6.5 Tags for Summons & Outsiders

Certain Tags specifically interact with Outsiders.

WARD:

Creates a magical edge/zone that Outsiders must test to cross.

- DV = Outsider's Cap.
- Hit: Outsider crosses and its Leash gains +DV segments.
- Partial: Outsider crosses and its Leash gains +1 segment.

- Miss: Outsider fails to cross this beat.

BANISH:

Drives a visible Outsider toward departure.

- DV = Outsider's Cap.
- Hit: Add +DV segments to its Leash (or Exit Tally).
- Partial: Add +1 segment.
- Miss: No effect.

UNWARD:

Suppresses or dismisses a [WARD].

- DV by fiction (materials, sanctity, prep, locus, opposition).
- Hit: Ward dismissed/suppressed.
- Partial: Ward suppressed briefly (1 beat).
- Miss: No effect.

6.6 Unified Leash / Exit Tally System

- Summoned Outsiders track their service via a **Leash** (Cap + 2 segments).
- Non-summoned Outsiders affected by [WARD] or [BANISH] gain a temporary **Exit Tally** = Cap + 2. When the tally fills, they act to nature once, then depart.

6.7 GM Guidance

- Summons are not permanent allies; they are volatile forces.
- Always color Outsider behavior by their Elemental resonance and domain.
- When the Leash fills, deliver a memorable “act to nature” moment before they vanish.
- Use SB to escalate Outsider complications: a jealous Patron, a backlash of strange omens, or collateral spiritual harm.

7 Story Beats and Boons

7.1 Story Beats (SB)

Story Beats are the core dramatic currency of Fate's Edge. They represent the risks, twists, and unintended consequences that emerge from every action.

7.1.1 Generating SB

- Each die result of **1** generates 1 SB for the GM.

- Re-rolling a 1 does not remove its SB; if the re-rolled die also shows 1, it generates additional SB.
- Certain Harm effects or narrative triggers may also generate SB on future rolls.

7.1.2 Spending SB

The GM spends SB to introduce complications:

Escalation:

Draw more enemies, raise the stakes.

Exhaustion:

Drain time, resources, or positioning.

Exposure:

Reveal hidden actions, alert foes.

Collateral:

Harm or danger spills onto allies, innocents, or surroundings.

Menu of SB Spends (Guideline):

- 1 SB: Minor pressure (noise, trace, +1 Supply segment).
- 2 SB: Moderate setback (alarm raised, lose cover, lesser foe arrives).
- 3 SB: Serious trouble (reinforcements, broken gear, major twist).
- 4+ SB: Scene-shaping turn (trap springs, authority arrives, narrative shift).

7.1.3 Limits on SB

- **Base SB Budget:** $4 + \text{Character Tier}$ (e.g. Tier I = 5, Tier II = 6).
- **Scene Limits:** 12 SB max for standard scenes, 16 SB max for climactic scenes.
- **Session Limit:** 20 SB total per session.
- **Threads:** Max concurrent complication threads = Tier + 1.

7.2 Boons

Boons are the player-facing reward for meaningful failure or bond-driven actions. They represent insight, opportunity, or a sudden edge.

7.2.1 Earning Boons

- On a **Miss** (0 successes), if the stakes are meaningful and SB is spent/banked, the player gains 1 Boon.

- On a bond-driven assist with an **Intricate Description**, the player may gain 1 Boon (once per bond per session).
- Other narrative rewards: The GM may award Boons for spotlighting bonds, sacrifices, or creative solutions.

7.2.2 Spending Boons

- Re-roll a single die in a pool.
- Activate an on-screen Asset.
- Power a Rite or magical ability.
- Improve Position by 1 step.
- Convert into XP: Once per session, during downtime, convert 2 Boons \rightarrow 1 XP (max 2 XP).

7.2.3 Limits on Boons

- Hold up to 5 Boons at a time.
- At the end of a scene, reduce held Boons to 2 (excess are lost).
- Max 2 Boons earned from failure per scene per character.

7.3 Interplay: SB and Boons

- SB fuels the GM's complications; Boons fuel the players' resilience.
- Every roll potentially adds to both sides: Successes drive story, 1s feed the GM, and misses feed the players.
- This dual economy ensures narrative momentum—every result matters.

7.4 Example

Kael rolls 6 dice to pick a lock under watch. Results: {9, 7, 5, 3, 1, 1}. Successes = 2, SB = 2. He succeeds, but the GM spends 1 SB for a squealing hinge and banks 1 SB for guards incoming. Because it was a Success & Cost, no Boon is awarded. If Kael had missed entirely, he would have gained 1 Boon.

8 Combat Positioning, Range Bands, Harm, and Tactical Clocks

8.1 Range Bands

Keep distance simple. Use bands to answer: can you reach them, affect them, or see them right now?

Close

Arm's length, grapples, knives. You can touch, shove, or clinch.

Near

Same room/street segment/skirmish space; a quick step or two away.

Far

Same site/area but not in immediate reach; you need time, route, or a long implement.

Absent

Off-screen / away; outside the current scene frame (requires a cut or travel to interact).

For brevity's sake, assume **Near** unless otherwise specified.

Melee Flag At any moment, the GM may mark two parties in **Melee** if they are in Near and directly engaged. This is a flag, not a separate band.

- **Enter:** 1 Move to engage from Near (Risky if under fire).
- **Leave:** 1 Move to break off; if threatened, test to *Disengage* at Risky. On Partial/Miss, suffer a soft consequence and remain in Melee.

Movement (beats, not meters)

- 1 Move shifts one band: Close↔Near or Near↔Far.
- *Dash* (your action) shifts two bands: Close→Far or Far→Close in one go.
- Terrain/obstacles may add +1 Move (crowds, rubble, locks) or demand a test first.
- Break contact: Leaving Close cleanly can be a Disengage test; on success you step to Near without a complication.
- Absent↔Far/Near: use a Travel clock [2–4] or a quick cut; under pressure, treat as Risky.

Targeting & Tools

- **Melee/Touch:** Close only (or Near on long polearms at Limited Effect).
- **Thrown/Short magic:** Near; at Far expect Limited Effect or +1 DV unless the source says otherwise.
- **Firearms/Long bows/Line spells:** Near and Far if stated; at off-band, decrease Effect or increase DV by +1.
- **Social:** Near by default; at Far you need voice, signal, or proxy; at Absent you need message, oath, or setup.
- **No line of sight:** either raise DV by +1, drop Effect a step, or require [REVEAL]/[MARK] to proceed.

Perception, Stealth, Cover

- **Notice:** Near is normal. Far is harder—raise DV by +1 or impose Limited Effect, especially in noise/cover.

- **Hide:** Break line of sight or move to Far; at Absent you're off the current frame unless someone tracks you.
- **Cover:** Improves Position or reduces consequence severity; quality/angle sets the bump.

8.2 Position Dynamics (Hybrid)

Position (Controlled / Risky / Desperate) Position sets consequence severity on a Partial/Miss; it does not change DV.

- **GM Spend (1 SB):** Shift Position one step worse for the current action or apply a brief environmental shove (smoke, crowd surge, slippery ledge) that justifies the shift.
- **Player Spend (1 Boon):** Shift Position one step better for your current action or cancel a single 1-step GM shift just declared.
- **Narrative Triggers (free):** Flanking, reinforcements, collapsing cover, superior leverage, or proof can move Position one step (GM call). Say why.

Limits: One Boon shift per action. Multiple forces can't stack beyond one step each way—resolve in order declared.

8.3 Combat-Specific Consequence Types

Use suits as a shorthand for consequence domains:

- **Hearts:** Morale, fear, command/control breakdown.
- **Spades:** Physical harm, positioning changes, weapon status.
- **Clubs:** Resource depletion, gear damage, fatigue.
- **Diamonds:** Environmental hazards, reinforcements, magical/spiritual backlash.

8.4 Harm Integration

Harm tracks tie into the SB economy:

- **Minor (–):** Generate 1 SB on your next **two** rolls.
- **Moderate (=):** Generate 1 SB on your next roll; –1 die to relevant actions.
- **Severe (‡):** Generate 2 SB on your next roll; –2 dice to relevant actions.
- **Critical (†):** Generate 3 SB on your next roll; you are out of action until treated.

8.5 Tactical Clocks

Track persistent combat conditions with clocks:

- **Mob Overwhelm [6]:** Enemy numbers become advantage.

- **Fatigue Spiral [4]:** Exhaustion affects performance.
- **Morale Collapse [6]:** Fear undermines effectiveness.
- **Environmental Collapse [8]:** Terrain/fire/building failure.

8.6 Magic in Combat (Quick Integration)

- **Casting:** Requires *Caster's Gift (2 XP)*. Channel and Weave are each 1 Player Turn; in a hurry, treat as Risky with tighter consequences.
- **Rites:** 1 Action to Invoke; may *Push It* for +1 Obligation to extend potency or duration.
- **Invokers:** Rituals take Significant Time; *Crack the Seal* converts to a 1-Action instant cast, sets Symbol to Compromised, and marks +2/+3 Obligation (GM may spend 1 SB on-theme).
- **Imbuements (Patron's Gift):** Requires 1 Action once/scene to activate; grants +1 Weapon (Melee) and +1 thematic Skill for the remainder of the scene. *Push It* adds one scene and +1 Obligation.

8.7 GM Quick Cues

- Start at **Risky/Standard** in **Near**. Shift Position for rushes or retreats; shift Effect for reach/quality.
- If distance is fuzzy, ask: "Do you need a beat to get there?" If yes, spend a Move; if no, you're Near.
- Call **Melee** when knives are actually in play—don't track hexes.
- Prefer one memorable complication over many petty penalties.

8.8 Worked Micro-Examples

Rush the Marksman *You sprint from Far to Close in one go (Dash).* GM calls it Risky. You roll and get a Hit with 1 SB. You reach Melee; GM spends 1 SB to twist your footing (Position drops a step for your next action).

Veil and Strike *You activate Patron's Gift (Action) and then attack.* Your Imbued weapon grants +1 and your thematic Skill applies. You hit, but roll a 1: GM banks SB and later spends it to have a ward flare that exposes your silhouette.

Crack the Seal Under Fire *You present the Symbol and Crack the Seal to drop a [WARD] ring.* Instant cast: Symbol → Compromised; mark +2 Obligation. You hit; an Outsider tries to cross and adds +DV to its Leash on a Hit per [WARD] rules.

9 Rites, Invokers, and Symbols

Magic in Fate's Edge is expressed in three intertwined practices: **Rites**, **Invocations**, and **Patron Pacts**. Each represents a different philosophy of engaging with the unseen world.

9.1 Rites and Patrons

Characters who enter into service with a Patron gain access to their Rites. This path emphasizes ritual, sacrifice, and relationship with a higher power.

- **Thiasos:** A circle of believers or cultists bound to the Patron. Provides narrative justification and a base of operations.
- **Codex:** A body of lore and ritual instructions, forming the basis of a Warlock's magic.
- **Rites:** Formal rituals, often requiring time, components, or ceremonial actions. They can reshape scenes, summon allies, or curse enemies.

9.2 Invokers and Symbols

Invokers pursue a looser relationship with Patrons, using a symbolic shorthand to access their power.

- **Symbols:** Each Symbol represents an aspect of a Patron's domain. Purchasing a Symbol costs 4 XP. A character may hold multiple Symbols, each tied to a specific Patron.
- **Invocation:** With a Symbol, the Invoker can perform the Rites of that Patron as full rituals. By compromising the ritual (cutting corners, sacrificing safety), they may instead cast the Rite as an action.
- **Conflict:** Invokers who attempt to use a rival Patron's Symbol risk backlash, narrative consequences, or permanent scarring of their connection to the unseen.

9.3 Rites vs. Casting

Casting in free-form requires the **Casting Talent**. Rites users without this talent cannot freely improvise magic, but instead channel through Codex instructions or Symbols. This ensures that Rites remain structured and distinct from open-ended spellcasting.

9.4 Interaction with Imbuements

Imbuements may be layered onto Rites or Invocations:

- They require a 1/scene activation action.
- Provide either a +1 weapon bonus or a +1 thematic skill bonus, as chosen when gained.
- They do not automatically empower Rites, but a clever Keeper may allow imbuements to augment ritual focus, implements, or symbolic resonance.

9.5 Specialization vs. Mixing

A character may pursue multiple magical paths (Summoner, Caster, Invoker, Rite-user), but specialization is rewarded. Mixing paths increases bookkeeping and resource expenditure without necessarily providing greater power. Most players will find greater narrative and mechanical impact in deepening a single approach.

10 Tags & Effects Library

10.1 Using Tags

Tags only function when *printed on a Talent, an Ability, or as the result of a Spell/Rite*. They do nothing on their own. Unless specified otherwise, **DV is set by fiction**, and duration defaults to **Scene**. When a Tag affects an **Outsider**, use the unified rules in §10.7.

10.2 Control & Countermagic

[DISPEL] End an ongoing magical effect/construct. DV by fiction. **Hit:** dismiss/suppress per source text. **Partial:** suppress briefly or shrink scope. **Miss:** no effect.

[COUNTER] Interrupt a cast/rite in progress. Window: during the listed casting/rite window. DV by fiction. **Hit:** cancel. **Partial:** degrade Position/Effect or impose a cost. **Miss:** no effect.

[BARRIER] Create cover/obstruction. DV by fiction. **Hit:** place barrier with integrity [2/4/6]. **Partial:** narrow/fragile lane. Counters: [DISPEL], brute force, clever route.

[SEAL]/[UNSEAL] Lock or unlock a container/door/portal (not a spirit). DV by fiction. **Hit:** locked/unlocked; state allowed bypasses. **Partial:** short-lived/leaky seal.

10.3 Concealment & Revelation

[VEIL] Obscure a person/thing/zone. DV by fiction. **Hit:** impose disadvantage on scans/Notice vs. subject; specify limits (angle, distance, scent). **Partial:** works only at range or under dim. Counters: [REVEAL], strong light, proof.

[REVEAL] Expose illusions, disguises, hidden clauses. DV by fiction. **Hit:** surface the truth/sign; say how it shows. **Partial:** a tell/clue, not the full picture.

[MARK] Tag a target for tracking or leverage. DV by fiction. **Hit:** place a visible/invisible mark; once/scene you or an ally gain +1 die when acting directly against the Marked target. **Partial:** noisy/short-lived. Counters: [CLEANSE], [DISPEL], or listed materials (salt/iron) if text allows.

10.4 Boons & Burdens

[CURSE] Inflict a sticky hindrance with a clear release. DV by fiction. **Hit:** apply a named condition. **Partial:** milder/intermittent. Counters: **[CLEANSE]** or listed keys.

[CLEANSE] Remove/suppress a condition (poison, disease, **[CURSE]**, fear). DV by fiction. **Hit:** remove one named affliction. **Partial:** suppress/reduce for the scene.

[FORTIFY] Harden a person/place/object against a vector (fire, blades, fear, sway). DV by fiction. **Hit:** raise Position or reduce consequence severity vs. that vector this scene. **Partial:** limited scope (one ally/doorway).

10.5 Influence & Oaths

[COMMAND] Issue a clear order to a sapient target. DV by fiction (authority, leverage, fear, ritual standing). **Hit:** comply now or suffer an immediate cost (GM states). **Partial:** hesitate/bargain/partial. **Miss:** refusal/blowback.

[OATH] Bind parties to terms; breaking has teeth. DV by fiction (witnesses, sanctity, stakes). **Hit:** enforceable pact with stated boon and breach consequence. **Partial:** loophole exists. Counters: release clause, **[CLEANSE]** if text allows.

[SANCTIFY] Consecrate a zone to a code/patron. DV by fiction. **Hit:** specify allowed/prohibited acts; violations start Risky or impose a soft consequence. **Partial:** patchy coverage. Counters: opposing rite, profanation, time.

10.6 Movement & Making

[PASSAGE] Declare a route as permitted/easy. DV by fiction. **Hit:** allies on that path gain improved flow (Position/Effect bump or ignore 1 level of difficult terrain). **Partial:** one ally/segment only.

[TRANSPORT] Move a target across an obstacle (blink, lift, pull). DV by fiction (mass, range, warding). **Hit:** relocate within listed range; state tells/costs. **Partial:** arrive off-balance, drop gear, or worse Position.

[CONJURE] Create a useful object/cover/hazard. DV by fiction. **Hit:** conjure item/zone with integrity [2/4/6] or a ticking hazard (burn/freeze/haze). **Partial:** fragile/short-lived. Counters: **[DISPEL]**, force, time.

10.7 Outsider-Specific Tags

[WARD] Challenge Outsiders crossing a warded edge/zone.

- **DV = target Cap.**
- **Hit:** crosses; add +*DV* segments to its Leash (or Exit Tally).
- **Partial:** crosses; add +1 segment.
- **Miss:** fails to cross this beat.

The ability must explicitly state it affects Outsiders (or other targets).

[BANISH] Drive a visible Outsider toward departure.

- **DV = target Cap.**
- **Hit:** add +*DV* to its Leash/Tally.
- **Partial:** add +1.
- **Miss:** no effect.

[UNWARD] Unmake/suppress a [WARD] created by a Talent/Ability or Spell result. DV by fiction. **Hit:** dismiss/suppress per text. **Partial:** weaken/suppress briefly (about one beat). **Miss:** no effect.

10.8 Elemental Backlash Coloring (Reference)

On Partial/Miss (or double-1s on a Hit), color consequences by Element:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Earth → rubble, pin, heavy footing; vs. Air → sound carries, exposure. | • Fate → options close, only-one-way; vs. Luck → mischance hits ally. |
| • Fire → burns, flares; vs. Water → slick, sputter, dim. | • Luck → side-effect elsewhere, fragile success; vs. Fate → harsher fixed outcome. |
| • Air → scatter, drop, vertigo; vs. Earth → stuck, dust choke. | • Life → overgrowth, fever; vs. Death/Dreams → numbness, sleep-tug. |
| • Water → leak, flood, cold drag; vs. Fire → smoke, shorted gear. | • Death/Dreams → fade, threshold opens/closes; vs. Life → pain returns, rot. |

10.9 Stacking & Duration Rules (Global)

- **No Same-Source Stacking:** Multiple scene-long effects from the same source do not stack; take the best instance.
- **Identical Tag Collision:** If two abilities would grant the same Tag in the same window, use the stronger; the weaker is suppressed while it lasts.

- **Default Duration:** Scene, unless a source states otherwise.
- **DV by Fiction:** Potency, preparation, place, materials, and opposition set DV (typ. 2–4; 5+ for set-pieces).

11 Backlash, Obligation, and Ritual Consequences

This section codifies how magical risks bite and how Patron debts accrue. It unifies the fallout for **Casting (freeform)**, **Rites (warlock path)**, and **Invocations (symbol path)** in a way that is fully consistent with the core SB/Boon economy.

11.1 Backlash (Casting: Weave & Cast)

Backlash colors the cost of magic and is always expressed through fiction first.

- **Trigger Windows:**
 - *Primary:* On a **Partial/Miss** on either the *Weave* or *Cast* roll.
 - *Also:* On a *Hit* that shows **two or more 1s**, minor backlash may ride alongside success.
- **Expression:** Choose a consequence flavored by the spell’s Element (see §10, Elemental Backlash). Options include: worsen Position by 1; impose a condition or brief Harm; drain time/resources; alert foes; create a fragile side-effect.
- **SB Integration:** Backlash does *not* generate extra SB by itself; it is one way the GM spends the SB created by rolled 1s (see §2). The color (Fire, Fate, etc.) guides *how* that SB spend lands.
- **Scale:** Small/local effects (DV 2) prefer small backlash; bigger spans (DV 4–5+) invite larger, more persistent fallout.

Backlash Menu (guideline) Pick one on *Partial*; pick two on *Miss*. Always color by Element.

- **Position Shift** (–1 step) for your current or next action.
- **Fleeting Harm/Condition** (e.g., sear, vertigo, chill) that matters for this scene.
- **Exposure/Noise** draws notice or complicates stealth.
- **Resource Drain** (time, focus, a component damaged).
- **Collateral Spark** threatens an ally or fragile thing nearby.

11.2 Obligation (Rites: Warlock Path)

Rites bind you to a Patron through **Obligation**. Each Patron has its own clock.

- **Marking Segments:** Invoking a Rite marks its listed Obligation (typically +1 segment). *Push It* adds +1 more.

- **Cross-Patron Interference:** If you Invoke Rites from two different Patrons in the same scene, immediately mark +1 Obligation to the *second* Patron (jealous attention).
- **Resolution:** When a clock fills, the GM resolves debt in-fiction (audits, omens, service, seizure of a boon). Reduce/clear by fitting service or downtime actions.

Patron's Gift (Imbuements) and Obligation

- **Activation:** 1 Action once/scene to empower an item with +1 Weapon (Melee) and +1 Thematic Skill for the scene.
- **Push It:** Extend for *one* additional scene; mark +1 Obligation to that Patron.

11.3 Invocation via Symbols (Invoker Path)

Symbols allow ritual access to a Patron's Rites without a bond.

- **Access:** Each **Patron's Symbol (Minor Asset, 4 XP)** grants ritual access to that Patron's Rite list.
- **Ritual Completion:** Completing an Invoker ritual *always* marks +1 Obligation on that Rite's clock, even outside scene context (attention cost).
- **No Push:** Invoker rituals cannot use *Push It*.
- **Environment:** Requires a suitable ritual space; the Symbol must be openly displayed during the rite.

Crack the Seal (Instant Cast) Convert a ritual into a one-action cast by compromising the Symbol.

- **Cost:** Set the Symbol to *Compromised* and mark +2 segments on that Rite's Obligation clock (+3 if *High-Power*).
- **Instability:** The GM may immediately spend **1 SB** on-theme to reflect ritual instability.
- **Aftermath:** Restore during downtime with a fitting test (DV 3 or by fiction). *Success:* Maintained. *Shaky:* Neglected (future rituals add +1 Obligation until properly restored).

Rival Symbols and Mixed Use

- **Rival Symbol Penalty:** Displaying or carrying a rival Patron's Symbol while Invoking another Patron's Rite worsens Position by 1 for that action and immediately marks +1 Obligation to the current Patron; on any rolled **1**, the GM may also trigger a Patron omen/glitch.
- **Multi-Symbol Overload:** Carrying 4+ different Symbols causes choir effects: the first Invoker ritual completed each scene marks +1 additional Obligation.
- **Concurrency:** An Invoker may sustain at most **Spirit** ongoing Invoker rituals. Starting a new one either ends the oldest or marks +1 Obligation on it.

11.4 Interruption & Counterplay

- **[COUNTER]** can interrupt *Weave*, *Cast*, or a *Rite* within its casting window (DV by fiction).
- **[DISPEL]** ends or suppresses ongoing effects (DV by fiction).
- **[UNWARD]** suppresses/dismisses **[WARD]**s; **[BANISH]** and **[WARD]** interact with Outsiders per §10.7.

11.5 GM Budget Dials (Practical Limits)

Keep pressure high but readable.

- **SB Budgets:** Use scene/session limits in §7.
- **Obligation Pace:** A typical session sees 2–4 segments marked for an active warlock; spikes occur on set-pieces or heavy *Push* use.
- **Backlash Visibility:** Favor big, legible consequences over many minor pinpricks.

11.6 Micro-Examples

Fire Cast, Partial You *Weave* flame to blind a squad (DV 3). Partial with two 1s. GM spends SB to *Position -1* (flare blinds you too) and colors backlash as singed lashes; patrol is alerted (*Exposure*).

Warlock Push and Debt You Invoke *Circle of Denial [WARD]* and *Push It* to harden the ring. Mark +1 Obligation for the Rite plus +1 for the push. When a demon tests the ring, use **[WARD]** vs Cap; on its Hit, add +*DV* to its Leash.

Crack the Seal Under Fire You present Ikasha's Symbol and *Crack the Seal* to lay an instant shadow lane. Symbol → Compromised; mark +2 Obligation. GM immediately spends 1 SB to dim all lights (panic), then the lane forms. During downtime, you restore the Symbol (Arcana DV 3): a shaky hit leaves it *Neglected* until you perform the full rite of cleaning.

12 Character Creation & Starting Build

12.1 Starting Build Points

Players begin with **30 XP** to allocate during initial character creation. This represents a balanced baseline for competent starting characters.

12.2 Enhanced Starting Builds

Players may exceed the standard 30 XP build through narrative engagement:

- **Bonds:** Up to two player-defined mutual bonds may be taken for **+2 XP total**. (See bonds and bond-driven play in the core rules.)
- **Complications:** Up to two initial complications may be accepted for **+4 XP total**. *Note:* Scenes start with **+1 banked SB per complication per character** until those complications have cleared.

This allows for a maximum starting build of **34 XP**. Players are encouraged to aim for 30 XP and use bonds/complications to mitigate slight overages while maintaining narrative balance.

12.3 Recommended Approach

GMs should encourage players to:

- Target 30 XP for balanced starting characters.
- Use bonds and complications to enhance characterization rather than pure mechanical optimization.
- Consider the narrative implications of any starting advantages.

12.4 Initial Complications (Reminder)

For each *initial complication* taken at character creation:

- Start each scene with **+1 banked SB per character with initial complications** until those complications have cleared in play.

12.5 Early Talent Choices (Magic Access)

- **Caster's Gift (2 XP):** Required for Weave & Cast freeform magic.
- **Familiar / Thiasos (2 XP):** Required for Patron features such as *Patron's Gift*.
- **Codex (4 XP):** Required to fully join a Patron's service as a Warlock (Rites access, Obligation).
- **Patron's Symbol (4 XP):** Minor Asset. Grants ritual access to a Patron's Rites via the Invoker path. One Symbol per Patron.

12.6 Quick Build Guides

Caster (Freeform) Buy *Caster's Gift (2 XP)*. Invest in Arcana-adjacent attributes/skills. Expect backlash; leverage aligned loci, tools, and prep for DV/Effect nudges.

Rites User (Warlock) Acquire *Thiasos (Familiar)* and *Codex (4 XP)* tied to a Patron. You can Push Rites for +1 Obligation. Use *Patron's Gift* for scene-long imbue (activation: 1 action, once/scene).

Invoker (Symbol Path) Purchase one or more *Patron's Symbols* (4 XP each). Perform Rites as rituals (Significant Time, always marks +1 Obligation). Use *Crack the Seal* for instant casts at the cost of setting the Symbol to *Compromised* and marking +2/+3 Obligation.

12.7 Session Zero Tips

- Establish the table's tone and stakes; tie Drives to setting fronts.
- Map Bonds among PCs; mark possible bond-driven Boon triggers.
- Seed 1–2 personal Complications per PC for early spotlight.
- Discuss Patron choices and what their omens look like.

13 Advancement & XP

Advancement in Fate's Edge reflects meaningful growth in capability and standing. XP is awarded for table-facing accomplishments, hard choices, and the dramatic friction that defines your story. Boons can be converted sparingly to accelerate growth.

13.1 Awarding XP

Choose a session pacing dial and stick to it for a campaign arc.

Gritty:

4–6 XP per session (slow burn).

Standard:

6–10 XP per session (default pace).

Heroic:

10–14 XP per session (fast growth).

13.1.1 Session Awards (Guidelines)

- **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:** +1–3 XP
- **Bond/Flag Driven Play:** +1–2 XP
- **GM Curveball Award:** +0–3 XP

13.1.2 Milestones

- At the conclusion of a major story arc, award **+8–12 XP to all players**.
- Grant **+2 XP** to one player for a signature moment of the arc.

13.1.3 Boon Conversion

Once per session, during downtime, a character may convert **2 Boons** → **1 XP** (max **2 XP** via conversion per session). All normal Boon limits apply (hold 5; trim to 2 at scene end).

13.2 Spending XP

Attributes:

Cost = *new rating* × 3. Downtime = *new rating* in days.

Skills:

Cost = *new level* × 2. Downtime = *new level* in days.

On-Screen Followers:

Cost = *Cap*². 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).

Talents/Minor Assets:

As listed (e.g., Caster's Gift 2 XP; Patron's Symbol 4 XP).

13.3 Rush Rule

You may *skip downtime* when buying or upgrading, but the GM creates a **Haste clock [4]**. If the clock fills, the new ability or asset carries flaws or narrative complications.

13.4 Tiers of Reputation

Reputation tiers reflect how the world responds to you.

Tier I — Rookie (0–40 XP):

Local reputation; prestige locked.

Tier II — Seasoned (41–90 XP):

Regional notice; prestige abilities may unlock.

Tier III — Veteran (91–150 XP):

National influence; second follower slot suggested.

Tier IV — Paragon (151–220 XP):

Movers and shakers; rivals emerge to challenge.

Tier V — Mythic (221+ XP):

Legendary status; kingdoms and cults respond.

13.5 Advancement Notes

- Attribute cost scaling encourages diversification over single-stat spikes.
- Skill mastery yields tangible, fiction-first benefits.
- Prestige abilities (6+ XP) should be gated by narrative milestones or patron bargains.

14 Range & Position Quick Reference

This section condenses the guidance from §8 into table form for fast table use.

14.1 Range Bands

Band	Default	Notes
Close	Touching	Grapples, knives; polearms from Near at Limited Effect.
Near	Assumed	Same room/street segment; quick step away.
Far	Distant	Same site but not in reach; needs time/route/long implement.
Absent	Off-screen	Outside scene frame; needs cut/travel to interact.

14.2 Movement (beats, not meters)

- **1 Move** shifts one band: Close↔Near or Near↔Far.
- **Dash (Action)** shifts two bands: Close→Far or Far→Close.
- **Terrain/Obstacles** may add +1 Move or require a test first.
- **Absent↔Scene** use a Travel clock [2–4] or a quick cut; under pressure treat as Risky.

14.3 Melee Flag

Mark two parties **in Melee** when they are in Near and directly engaged.

- **Enter:** 1 Move from Near (Risky if under fire).
- **Leave:** 1 Move to break off; if threatened, test *Disengage* at Risky. On Partial/Miss: soft consequence, remain in Melee.

14.4 Targeting & Tools (defaults)

Type	Default Reach / Off-band Rules
Melee/Touch	Close only (Near on long polearms at Limited Effect).
Thrown / Short magic	Near; at Far impose Limited Effect or +1 DV unless source says otherwise.
Firearms / Long bows / Line spells	Near and Far if stated; at off-band, reduce Effect or +1 DV.
Social	Near by default; at Far need voice/signal/proxy; at Absent need message/oath/setup.
No line of sight	Raise DV by +1, drop Effect one step, or require [REVEAL]/[MARK].

14.5 Perception, Stealth, Cover

- **Notice:** Near normal; Far harder (DV +1 or Limited Effect) especially with noise/cover.
- **Hide:** Break LoS or move to Far; at Absent you're off-frame unless tracked.
- **Cover:** Improves Position or reduces consequence severity; quality/angle sets bump.

14.6 Position (Controlled / Risky / Desperate)

Position affects consequence severity on Partial/Miss (not DV).

- **GM Spend (1 SB):** Shift Position one step worse for current action or apply a brief environmental shove.
- **Player Spend (1 Boon):** Shift Position one step better for current action or cancel a single 1-step GM shift.
- **Narrative Triggers (free):** Flanking, reinforcements, collapsing cover, superior leverage can move Position one step (say why).

Limits: One Boon shift per action. Multiple forces don't stack beyond one step each way—resolve in order declared.

14.7 GM Quick Cues

- Default to **Near** and **Risky/Standard**. Ask: "Do you need a beat to get there?" If yes, spend a Move.
- Call **Melee** when knives are actually in play; don't track hexes.
- Prefer one strong twist over nickel-and-diming with many petty penalties.

15 Travel Framework

Adventuring often means crossing dangerous or unknown lands. The travel framework provides pacing tools to turn journeys into dramatic scenes without micromanaging miles.

15.1 Legs and Clocks

- Break long journeys into **legs**, each representing a significant change in terrain, danger, or political region.
- Each leg is tracked with a **Travel Clock [4]** by default.
- A leg completes when the clock fills through **progress actions, encounters, or scene resolution**.

15.2 Roles on the Road

Assign roles each travel leg (rotate or repeat as desired):

Guide:

Sets course, reads signs, rolls navigation.

Scout:

Moves ahead; first contact with hazards, ambushes, or terrain.

Quartermaster:

Manages food, supplies, and encumbrance.

Watch:

Maintains vigilance; first line against ambush or mishap.

15.3 Encounters & Events

When advancing the Travel Clock, the GM may also introduce:

- **Discovery:** Ruins, strange omen, hidden site.
- **Hazard:** Terrain challenge, illness, weather.
- **Encounter:** Bandits, emissaries, beasts.
- **Complication:** Bond tested, supplies strained, rival pursuit.

15.4 Encounter Frequency

- For every 1–2 segments filled, insert one encounter or hazard scene.
- Each leg should include **at least one meaningful encounter**.

15.5 Resolution

- When a Travel Clock fills, narrate arrival at the new region, with fallout from any hazards or complications unresolved.
- If complications remain, they carry forward into the next leg until resolved.

15.6 Deck of Consequences Integration

- Draw from the **Deck of Consequences** when rolling travel hazards or unexpected encounters.
- Crown Spread or Campaign Clock can foreshadow upcoming travel-related events.

15.7 GM Quick Cues

- Travel should **advance story stakes**, not pause them. Use it to foreshadow threats, deepen bonds, or reveal patron omens.
- Let players showcase talents in their assigned roles.
- Mix discovery and hardship to keep legs tense but rewarding.

16 Deck of Consequences

The **Deck of Consequences** is a narrative tool for injecting drama, setbacks, and twists. It replaces or supplements GM fiat with randomized complications that remain thematically consistent.

16.1 Deck Structure

- Use a standard 52-card deck (jokers optional).
- Divide into four suits, each tied to a **theme of complication**.

Suit	Theme	Examples
Hearts	Social / Emotional	Betrayal, love triangle, family drama, ally under strain.
Clubs	Physical / Violent	Ambush, wound, fatigue, weapon break.
Diamonds	Resources / Wealth	Supplies run low, theft, loss of funding, gear breaks.
Spades	Mystical / Supernatural	Omen, curse, patron demand, haunting.

16.2 Card Ranks & Severity

Ace:

Scene-altering twist; compels immediate response.

King/Queen/Jack:

Major complication with lasting effects.

10–8:

Moderate complication that reshapes current scene.

7–5:

Minor complication; nuisance, but creates tension.

4–2:

Subtle complication or foreshadowing omen.

16.3 Jokers (Optional)

- Red Joker: Catastrophic event (environmental collapse, patron intervention).
- Black Joker: Dark boon (immediate help, but with lasting cost or debt).

16.4 Usage in Play

- **Trigger:** GM may draw when a roll shows multiple 1s, when SB overflows, or during travel (see §15).
- **Cadence:** Aim for 1–2 draws per session, more if the tone skews chaotic.
- **Integration:** Complications should align with fiction already present; do not derail core arcs.

16.5 Crown Spread Integration

Use the Crown Spread (see §18) to seed campaign-scale twists. Draw 5–7 cards in Session 0 to foreshadow long-term arcs.

16.6 Campaign Clock Tie-In

When the Campaign Clock advances, the GM may flip a card face-up from the Deck of Consequences to signal how pressure is mounting.

16.7 GM Quick Cues

- Translate raw card results into fiction, not mechanical penalties alone.
- Complications should build on what’s already happening, not restart the story.
- Respect player agency: allow clever mitigation, but ensure consequences land.

17 Player Archetypes at the Table

Fate's Edge gameplay flexes to different player archetypes. These roles are not strict classes but rather **approaches to play** that help a group balance spotlight and tone.

17.1 The Solo

- **Focus:** Mastery of self, independence, one-on-one drama.
- **Strengths:** Quick spotlight scenes, duelists, scouts, specialists.
- **Risks:** Can drift into isolation or hog solo arcs. Needs explicit ties to group goals.
- **GM Tools:** Use Bonds, rival duels, and one-on-one omens to keep engagement tethered to the group.

17.2 The Mixed

- **Focus:** Hybrid adaptability—both support and lead.
- **Strengths:** Bridges gaps in group dynamics; excels in team tactics.
- **Risks:** May feel overshadowed by extreme specialists.
- **GM Tools:** Spotlight them when versatility matters: flexible magic, leadership, negotiation, or sudden pivots.

17.3 The Mastermind

- **Focus:** Schemes, plans, and command over the long arc.
- **Strengths:** Drives strategic play, coordinates others, excels in intrigue.
- **Risks:** May over-plan or dominate spotlight with metagame thinking.
- **GM Tools:** Challenge them with shifting information, patron demands, and rivals who anticipate their moves.

17.4 Balancing Archetypes

- A healthy table mixes all three archetypes, ensuring solo tension, group cohesion, and strategic play coexist.
- Encourage players to flex between archetypes scene by scene; they are fluid, not fixed.
- Spotlight balance: in a 3-hour session, each archetype should anchor at least one major scene.

17.5 GM Quick Cues

- Use archetypes as a lens for framing scenes: duel for Solos, shifting tactics for Mixed, grand reveals for Masterminds.

- When spotlight imbalances arise, rotate complications or bonds to another archetype’s strength.
- Archetypes inform how patrons and factions court PCs: Solos as champions, Mixed as envoys, Masterminds as plotters.

18 Campaign Frame: The Crown Spread

The **Crown Spread** is a campaign-framing tool that uses a spread of cards to establish the long arc of a story. It provides seeds for GMs and players alike to weave motifs, omens, and foreshadowed events.

18.1 Setup

- In Session 0, lay out 5–7 cards in a semicircle (the “Crown”). Use either the **Deck of Consequences** or a standard card deck.
- Each card anchors a motif, omen, or looming event.
- Record the spread openly on a Campaign Sheet or digital log.

18.2 Interpreting the Spread

Position 1 (Root):

The underlying tension or theme of the campaign.

Position 2 (Crest):

A key faction or patron influence that will rise.

Position 3 (Crown):

The climax image or major confrontation the arc builds toward.

Position 4 (Left Hand):

A bond, ally, or relationship that anchors play.

Position 5 (Right Hand):

A rival, betrayer, or challenger who pressures the party.

Optional 6+7:

Expansions for setting-wide twists (environmental, mystical, or political).

18.3 Using the Spread in Play

- Each drawn card becomes a **Foreshadow Clock [4]** attached to its motif. Advance the clock when events lean toward that omen.
- When a Foreshadow Clock fills, the motif manifests concretely in play (e.g., a faction rises, a betrayer reveals themselves).
- Tie Spread cards to **Campaign Clocks** for pacing (see below).

18.4 Campaign Clock

The **Campaign Clock** tracks rising stakes across the arc.

- Default size: [8].
- Advance the Campaign Clock when: multiple SB overflows in a session, when travel legs resolve with major cost, or when Spread omens manifest.
- On fill: the Crown confrontation arrives. Play through its fallout as campaign climax.

18.5 Ending & Legacy

- After the Crown confrontation resolves, hold an epilogue session.
- Resolve any remaining Foreshadow Clocks as epilogue vignettes.
- Players may mark **Legacy Bonds**—new anchors for future campaigns or descendants.

18.6 GM Quick Cues

- The Spread is not a railroad—it foreshadows, not dictates.
- Reinterpret cards liberally as play evolves; symbols matter more than literal events.
- Remind players of their omens between arcs to build tension and payoff.

19 Tags & Outcomes Cheat Sheet

This section condenses common tags, outcomes, and modifiers into a one-glance reference. It supplements the full explanations in §10.

2pt

19.1 Core Action Outcomes

Result	Meaning	GM/Player Guidance
Hit (6)	Full success	Effect as stated, no new cost.
Partial (4–5)	Success + cost	Complication, worse Position, reduced Effect.
Miss (1–3)	Failure + cost	GM spends SB, introduces backlash/complication.
Critical (2x6)	Strong hit	Upgrade Effect or create new advantage.

19.2 Common Tags

Tag	Quick Reference Effect
[AREA]	Hits all in zone; collateral risk.
[ARMOR]	Grants +1 Resistance against matching Harm.
[BANISH]	Expel Outsider; vs. Cap. On hit, it departs or weakens.
[BOUND]	Immobilizes target until broken.
[COUNTER]	Interrupt cast/ability in progress (DV by fiction).
[DISPEL]	End/suppress ongoing effect.
[FOLLOW-UP]	Trigger additional linked action; usually free if fiction permits.
[HEAL]	Remove or downgrade Harm/Condition.
[ILLUSION]	Fictional effect; resisted by disbelief or disruption.
[MARK]	Target acquires tracer; next action gains +1 die.
[REVEAL]	Expose hidden or cloaked subject.
[TETHER]	Bind two entities; strain if separated.
[WARD]	Block specific entity/domain; test Cap to cross.

19.3 Position & Effect Shorthands

- **Position:** Controlled (safe), Risky (default), Desperate (big payoffs, big costs).
- **Effect:** Limited (weak), Standard (expected), Great (strong, extra reach).
- GM can spend 1 SB to worsen Position one step; Player can spend 1 Boon to improve Position one step.

19.4 Backlash Reminders

- On Partial/Miss with Weave & Cast, expect backlash colored by Element (fire burns, fate twists, etc.).
- Backlash does not add SB directly—it is a GM SB spend colored by the roll's Element.

19.5 Obligation Reminders

- Warlock Rite: +1 Obligation on completion, +1 more if Pushed.
- Invoker Ritual: Always +1 Obligation, even out of scene. Crack the Seal: +2/+3.
- Multi-symbol overload: carrying 4+ Symbols = +1 Obligation on first ritual each scene.

19.6 Quick Costs

- **Caster's Gift:** 2 XP. Required for Weave & Cast.
- **Familiar/Thiasos:** 2 XP. Required for Patron's Gift.
- **Codex:** 4 XP. Full Rite access; Obligations apply.
- **Patron's Symbol:** 4 XP Minor Asset. Invoker ritual access.

19.7 GM Quick Cues

- Default to Near + Risky + Standard.
- Use tags as handles for rulings—if a move fits the tag, apply its shorthand.
- Complications escalate campaigns; use Clocks and the Deck of Consequences for follow-through.

20 Design Philosophy Guardrails (Flow-First GMing)

Fate's Edge is built to **keep play flowing**. If you remember nothing else: **The Narrative is primary**. Mechanics exist to shape *how* the story changes, not *whether* it moves. This section translates the rules into plain, table-ready guidance—especially for new GMs.

20.1 Simple Translations

Story Beats (SB) ⇒ Story Beats:

1s on dice give you *beats* to spend. Spend them on twists, escalations, or new information. One strong beat is better than three tiny ones.

Clocks ⇒ Checkboxes/Lists:

A Clock is just a short checklist that tracks progress or rising danger. When it fills, the listed thing *happens*. Name it and tick it when fiction leans that way.

[TAGS] ⇒ Gates with a Cost:

Tags are labels that unlock specific effects (e.g. [WARD], [BANISH]). They don't do anything alone. They appear on Talents, Rites, or Spells to say, "Yes, you can do this—*here's the price and limits*."

20.2 The 30-Second Adjudication Loop

Use this loop to resolve almost anything without breaking flow.

1. **Clarify intent and approach.** "What do you want, and how?"
2. **Set stakes and Position.** "If it works, what changes? If it fails, what bites?" Start *Risky/Standard* unless fiction says otherwise.
3. **Roll & read.** Count 6+ as successes; each 1 gives you SB (beats). Compare successes to DV.
4. **Spend one beat well.** Cash SB on one memorable twist or tick a relevant Clock.
5. **Push forward.** Describe how the fiction is now different; ask, "Who moves next?"

20.3 When to Reach for Mechanics (and When Not To)

- **Roll** when uncertainty + meaningful stakes exist *now*. Otherwise, say "Yes" or offer a choice/cost.

- **Use a Clock** when danger or progress builds over time (guard alert, ritual, chase, social sway).
- **Draw from the Deck** when you want an oracular twist consistent with the current tone.
- **Skip subsystems** if they slow the table. You can always tick a Clock and move on.

20.4 Defaults That Keep Things Moving

- **Range/Position:** Assume *Near* and *Risky/Standard*. Ask: “Do you need a beat to get there?”
- **DV:** 2 for small/local, 3 for scene-scale, 4 for big swings, 5+ for set-pieces/rituals.
- **Boons:** Misses on meaningful actions grant Boons (player fuel). Trim to 2 at scene end.
- **SB Budget:** Prefer one strong spend over many petty taxes. Bank sparingly and pay off soon.

20.5 Rookie GM Comfort Dials

You can use these dials to simplify play, then loosen them later.

Soft SB:

For your first 2 sessions, cap each roll’s SB spend to **1–2** unless it’s a set-piece.

Visible Clocks:

Put Clocks on the table. Name them aloud: “*Guards Incoming [4]*”. Tick them in ink.

Tag Cards:

Print a one-liner for frequently used Tags ([WARD], [BANISH], [COUNTER]). Hand them out when a power is active.

One Move, One Sentence:

Every ruling should end with one sentence that states the new situation.

20.6 Narrative-First Rulings (with Examples)

Example 1: The Locked Gate Player: “I pick the lock fast before the patrol rounds the corner.” GM: “Risky/Standard, DV 3. If it works, you’re through; if it fails, the patrol clocks closer.” Roll shows 1 SB. GM spends 1 SB to tick *Guards Incoming [4]*. “You’re through, but boots echo—two ticks left.” *Flow continues.*

Example 2: The Shadow Rite Player Invokes a [WARD]. “You’re safe unless Outsiders test the edge: DV = Cap. If one hits, its Leash gains +DV. Your Push would add +1 Obligation—do you Push?” The scene stays in motion; costs and gates are clear.

Example 3: Fire Cast Backlash Caster hits but shows two 1s. GM picks one strong backlash: “Flare blinds you; Position -1 for the next action.” No rules dive; *one beat lands*, story moves.

20.7 Let the Fiction Lead

- Say what the world does next. If a rule is unclear, follow the fiction and note a ruling; refine between sessions.
- If you forget a tag nuance, ask: “What is the effect trying to *gate*?” Charge a cost (time, risk, Obligation, or a tick), then go.
- Tie SB spends to **visible** outcomes: a new foe appears, a path closes, a clock advances.

20.8 Common Pitfalls and Fixes

Over-cranking SB:

If scenes feel punitive, halve your SB spends for a while or cash them into visible Clocks instead of immediate penalties.

Clock Sprawl:

Merge redundant Clocks. Each active scene rarely needs more than **2–3**.

Tag Paralysis:

If a player stalls waiting for a perfect tag, paraphrase: “Sounds like [VEIL]. DV 3. Want to roll?”

Rules Drift:

If table memory conflicts with text, pick the ruling that keeps flow, then sticky-note a TODO to reconcile after play.

20.9 The Four Questions (Cheat Prompts)

When stuck, ask out loud:

1. If this goes right, what changes? (*Intent*)
2. If this goes wrong, what bites back? (*Stakes*)
3. What single twist will make this memorable? (*SB spend*)
4. Who moves next? (*Momentum*)

20.10 Design Guardrails (for Consistency)

- **Narrative Primacy:** Mechanics serve story, not replace it.
- **Risk as Drama:** Every roll carries potential for triumph+complication.
- **Meaningful Growth:** XP changes characters and the world.
- **Consequence Weight:** Choices ripple outward; nothing is free.
- **Fail Forward:** Misses fuel Boons; 1s become SB (beats).

20.11 Session Checklist (One Page)

Before play: set tone, stakes, and clocks in plain sight.

During play: adjudicate with the 30-second loop; spend one strong beat; move on.

After play: award XP, clear/advance Clocks, note rulings to revisit.

If you keep the flow, the game will carry you. The rules are rails you lay just ahead of the train.