



## CORE RULE BOOK

Alpha Version 1.2

Created by Josiah Brooks and Shad Brooks

# Introduction

**Cogent Roleplay** – a Tabletop Pen and Paper Role-playing game that's easy to learn, but has the depth and sophistication for the most demanding or role-players. The Cogent Roleplaying System aims to provide you with the tools you need to experience adventures as any character you can imagine, such as a great hero, scoundrel, villain, thief, rogue or any other. Your stories will unfold in all kinds of worlds and settings, such as classic medieval fantasy, science fiction, space opera, zombie apocalypse, steampunk, superhero – or something of your own unique creation. Have fun, be fearless, and create your own stories worthy of the greatest myths and legends!

## A message from the authors...

Let us introduce ourselves – we are Josiah Brooks ([Jazza](#)) and Shad Brooks (of [Shadiversity](#)), two nerdy brothers who have always enjoyed role-playing and all it has to offer. We created Cogent Roleplay to address the rampant problems in many PnP (Pen & Paper) RPGs (Role-playing Games), such as:

- Game systems and rule sets made purely to make money, where the core rules are incomplete so they can sell endless expansions with new character classes, skills, and rules. Not only does this result in a worse system as the focus was on making money rather than making the best system possible, it ends up creating a confusing mess of endless rules that often break the game's balance. Instead of making a restricted list of character classes and rules, in Cogent, we give you the structure to make any character you can think of for any setting imaginable and the tools for them to be able to attempt anything they could reasonably try.
- Rules that are restricted to game settings, forcing you to buy a whole new rulebook, and learn new mechanics, to play in another world. Cogent can be easily adapted into any world setting, often times without any preparation.
- Poor game structures that are kept purely for traditions sake, preventing innovation.
- Huge, overly complex rules, that make it extremely difficult for new players, and bog down gameplay with redundant processes.
- Things that prevent player creativity. In cogent, we want to empower players to attempt anything their characters could reasonably try, and not respond with, no, the that's not allowed in the rules.
- Role-playing games that put their mechanics before the true purpose of a pen and paper RPG, the narrative you create with your friends.

For these reasons we feel you'll have a more rewarding experience with Cogent as it resolves all these issues, while providing new and innovative ways to experience tabletop role-playing.

Cogent Roleplay is currently in its late Alpha phase, Beta soon, where the rules are being updated and improve regularly, as will the tools we create to accompany them – but even so,

we believe Cogent has the potential to be the Tabletop RPG for the next generation – for these reasons:

- Cogent Roleplay is simple for beginners and easy to learn – but has depth that can be mastered and explored by experienced players.
- In the new age of content, where video content, audiobooks and podcasts reign supreme – Cogent is uniquely structured to enable the best storytellers to tell interesting and diverse stories, naturally suited to every setting, genre and play style, and share them with the world.
- We understand that in order to build an RPG system that will cater to the widest range of stories and personalities, we need to be extremely community oriented as we develop the rules and tools for Cogent – and we will build Cogent from the ground up to serve the community that builds and contributes to it.

It is our hope that Cogent provides you with endless hours of fun. If you have any suggestions regarding the rules or how the Cogent Roleplaying system could be improved, please send us your feedback through our discord group and social media pages. With your help, we'll polish and refine these rules to make Cogent the best pen and paper RPG system in the world.

Thanks for checking out Cogent Roleplay, we hope you have a blast!

# What is Role-Playing?

As the term implies role-playing means to take on the role of someone else, specifically, a character you will play the role of in your game. **Role playing** is by far the most important aspect of the **Cogent Roleplay** system. Everything in this game is made to promote better, more immersive and satisfying Role-play. That being said, the ultimate thing that'll enable you to experience this is your own imagination and creativity.

Any character you take the role of could be yourself in a fictional setting; an alter-ego who just so happens to be a heroic knight, daring space captain or cunning super spy. On the other hand, the character you play could be someone completely different, which will often open up roleplay experiences previously unimagined! In any case, being consistent and true to whatever character you're playing will prove most rewarding.

The actions you attempt while role-playing are governed by simple rules and character statistics, the role of dice determine the results. This dice rolling simulates the chaotic unpredictability and suspense of real life, there's always a chance of failure – but failure isn't a bad thing! Often it's the failures that unlock the most suspense in your game, and result in some of the most hilarious stories.

The core structure of any Tabletop Role-Playing game is made of two components:

- Players who take on the role of the **player characters** (sometimes referred to as **PCs**), and act out the character's dreams, goals and aspirations.
- A **Narrator** (traditionally referred to as a Game Master or Dungeon Master), who acts as referee and drives the game and story forward by controlling the world that the players are interacting with.

## How is Role-Playing Done?

Players take on the *role* of their character, meaning that regardless of their own ambitions or desires as a player, they should *act* how that character would act.

Here is a **bad** example of roleplay:

### **JOHN (Character: MARCUS)**

“My character says to Tim’s character that we should be careful of an ambush.”

The problem with interactions like this is that it's impersonal. The players need to step inside their own character and speak as that character. Therefore, if John's character Marcus is a selfish and impatient rogue, the role-play might proceed something like this:

### **JOHN (MARCUS)**

“(To Tim’s character, Gareth) Hey meatbag, tread carefully! Bandits roam these parts and I wouldn’t be surprised if some may be lying in wait to ambush us...”

John would then wait for Tim to respond in character. For example if Tim’s character is a hot-tempered thick-headed warrior named Gareth, the roleplay might proceed something like this:

### **TIM (GARETH)**

“Foolish bandits, why would they be lying in wait if their intent is to ambush travelers? Surely it would take too much time to stand up!”

### **JOHN (MARCUS)**

“Yeah, you should ask them that if we come across any.”

### **TIM (GARETH)**

“I will!”

Speaking freely as your character (warts and all) will enhance the immersion of the game and make it a lot more fun. Not only should the player speak as their character, but they should speak the same way their character would speak. You can even speak in an accent if you want!

The player characters will come across many other characters controlled by the Narrator. These are called ‘**non-player characters**’ and are often referred to as ‘**NPCs**’.

The Narrator is the most important person in any tabletop Role-playing game as you can’t play without one. They describe everything in the game’s world and setting to aid the players in visualizing the adventures. They run the game through the rules of the system, informing the players when they are required to make dice rolls, which will then determine the success or failure of their actions.

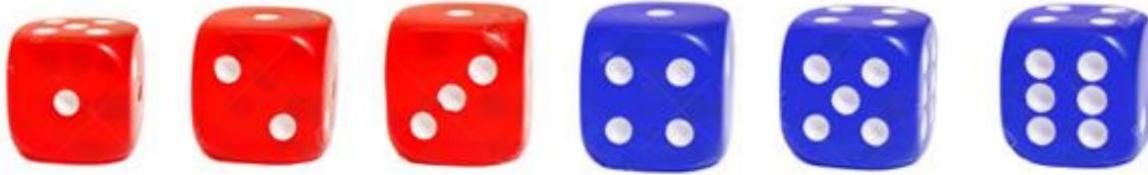
Ultimately, a well-crafted Pen and Paper Role-playing game provides structure and immersion to something humans have done for literally thousands of years; communal storytelling.

# The Challenge Level

Cogent Roleplay revolves around a simple mechanic called the '**Challenge Level**', or '**CL**'.

When a player character chooses to make an action within the game, the Narrator can assign them a **CL** based on the difficulty of what they will attempt to perform – the more difficult the task, the higher the **CL**, ranging from 1 (a common task) to 8 (inconceivable!).

The characters' statistics (see Character Creation') will determine the amount of dice that can be rolled against the **CL**. Each dice represents a 50/50 chance to gain a **win** or **loss** towards the CL (unless a Destiny Point is used, see Destiny Point).



On a traditional 6-sided dice (or 'D6') any dice roll that shows a 1-3 is considered a loss, while any dice that shows a 4-6 is a win.

To pass the **Challenge Level** you must roll enough **wins** equivalent to, or greater than, the set **CL**.

For example:

*Your character wants to climb a wall and the Narrator assigns this task a CL of 3. You have five dice to roll which means at least three dice must achieve a win to succeed against the CL.*



The more dice a player has to roll against a CL, the higher the chance they will succeed.

#### SEE CHEAT SHEET REFERENCE: CHSH.1 Challenge Level (CL) Difficulty Scale

Challenge levels are assigned to any task that has a reasonable chance of failure. The more difficult the task, the higher the **CL**. These **CL** ratings are classified as follows:

Common Task	CL 1
Uncommon Task	CL 2
Specialized Task	CL 3
Difficult Task	CL 4
Extremely Difficult Task	CL 5
Unrealistic Task	CL 6
Virtually Impossible Task	CL 7
Inconceivable Task	CL 8

For every action the players wish to perform, it's the Narrator's job to assess each request and judge how difficult such a task would be. Using these classifications, they then assign the CL. Below are some examples of CL's a Narrator might choose to assign to various tasks. Each Narrator is entitled to make their own judgements on how difficult a task is, and CL's will often vary between Narrators, campaigns, task circumstances and game sessions.

EXAMPLE ACTION	EXAMPLE CL
Climb a rope 20 meters in the rain	4
Do a triple back-flip	5
Ride a horse without a saddle	3
Override the console of a basic space craft	4
Catch a flying arrow	6
Lift a car	7

A narrator may be tempted to assign a higher or lower CL to a more capable character because such tasks would be easier to them based on their skills. **DO NOT DO THIS.** CL's should be always be assigned based on how difficult the task would be to a regular person in that setting. It is a character's skills (or lack thereof) that will affect their potential to succeed in an action – not an altered CL.

Every character begins with a base of three dice (or **3 D6**), called the 'base roll'. The player then adds additional dice to their base roll for every point their character has in any **attribute** and **skill** that is applicable to the task.

Example:

*A character attempts to pick a lock – the Narrator assigns a **CL** of 3 (a specialized task).*

1. *The player begins with their base roll (**3D6**).*
2. *The player has two points in the skill ‘infiltration’, which can be applied logically to complete the task (**+2 D6**).*
3. *The player has 1 point in the attribute ‘intelligence’, which is the core attribute of ‘infiltration’, and will receive an additional die for this (**+1 D6**).*
4. *The player rolls the total of **6 D6** against the **CL**.*

As previously mentioned, the players’ roll is successful if the number of **wins** is equivalent to or greater than the **CL** assigned to the task.

# Actions and Conflicts

**Challenge Levels** come in two forms; **Actions** or **Conflicts**.

- *An **Action** is any task a player makes against something that cannot intentionally resist*
- *A **Conflict** occurs when the player makes an action against something that can resist*  
*Actions: Success and Failure*

## Actions: Success and Failure

Something that is absolutely crucial in Cogent Roleplay is how success and failure can be treated. For example, most often people think of failure as **Literal Failure** of the task – Failing to pick a lock means... well, you failed to pick a lock. Dice rolls are most often interpreted this way, and is standard practice in many PnP RPGs.

In addition to Literal Failure, Cogent Roleplay encourages the use of something called **Narrative Failure**. Narrative Failure doesn't mean that the action itself failed, rather the desired outcome.

For Example:

*If a player is trying to sneak into a walled city and fails the assigned CL, a Narrative Failure might mean that they still climbed the wall (as intended), but are greeted by a guardsman at the top of the wall (... clearly not the desired outcome!). It might also mean when they crest the wall they knock off a loose stone which crashes to the ground below, making a VERY loud noise.*

*If the player's roll produces only **losses** and no **wins**, this can be considered a critical fail. The narrator might have the wall fall over while the character is clinging to it, crushing the king who just so happened to be walking by on the other side in front of countless witnesses.*

**Narrative Failure** may provide interesting avenues of storytelling, and add loads of fun. Of course sometimes **Narrative Failure** just doesn't fit or a **Literal Failure** makes more sense. It's the Narrator's job to decide when to use either method.

## Reflexive Actions

Situations may arise in which a player must respond reflexively to a threat, which may have the potential to harm or injure them. In these situations the Narrator will tell the player to respond in a specific way, which will vary based on the threat.

Threatening challenges like this will ascribe injury to a character based on the amount of failed dice required to succeed the CL (within context of the level of danger the task entails).

For Example:

Response to Threats:	Roll:	Result:
An ‘acrobatics’ check while falling from a dangerous height	CL of 4, the character rolls with 6 dice receiving three wins	The character missed the CL by 1 and receives a level 1 injury (see injury under combat)
A ‘survival’ roll to find food in the wilderness	CL of 3, the character rolls with 7 dice receiving 4 wins	The character successfully finds food
A ‘strength’ check to resist the effects of an ingested poison	CL of 6, the Character rolls with 7 dice and receives only 3 wins	The character missed the CL by 3 and receives a level three injury, meaning they will die unless treated in the near future

(For more on Levels of Injury, see page 31 TO DO: add link here)

## Conflicts

A **conflict** occurs when an action is taken against another character that can actively oppose it. Conflicts may arise in various forms, such as combat, arm wrestling, seduction, or sneaking up on someone. Both parties involved will be required to make a roll, applying the appropriate attribute and/or skill points (determined by the situation).

Within conflicts where all characters are considered aware and **active**, rolls that are tied/equal are simply re-rolled. If one of the characters within the conflict is using the perception skill (most often due to being unaware of the opponent’s actions), they are considered **passive** and will win in the case of a tie.

Examples of conflicts that involve multiple active opponents:

*Arm wrestle, combat, foot race, battle of wits, bartering with a shopkeeper etc.*

Examples of conflicts that involve a passive opponent:

*Lying to someone, sneaking up on someone, seducing, pick-pocketing etc.*

Most Conflicts are simple and require each character to make one roll. When conflicts take several rolls to resolve (such as in combat) the conflict is conducted in a Round by Round format (see Combat, page 30).

SEE CHEAT SHEET REFERENCE: CHSH.2 Active/Passive Notes

# Character Identity

Tabletop Role-playing really begins for the players with Character creation. Here you must think of a character you wish to play. This could be an alternate version of yourself or someone completely different. The possibilities are endless and you'll always be able to find a character you want to play.

A real and well-rounded character can't just be summarized into a morality archetype. A real person generally does both good things and bad things, motivated by core characteristics. This doesn't mean that your character can't be wholly good or wholly evil, just that a character's actions shouldn't be structured by the player character or Narrator around a pre-set archetype, as this will most likely produce a boring character. A wholly good character is still capable of bad things if they have a powerful enough reason or motivation to do so.

The key is being consistent to who your character is and you determine who they are at the very beginning.

Remember that in settings with action, swords, magic, guns or lasers, Characters die. Cogent Roleplay is a game with rules – rules that are there to provide an appropriate level of challenge. Sometimes failure will simply lead to your character's death. This can (believe it or not) be fun. Your character may even opt to go out in a blaze of glory. Of course sometimes it's not particularly fun, but if the dice decide it's your character's time to die then there's not much that can be done about it! We suggest you always have a second character concept ready to make a new character in case your current character dies.

## A few words on: Playing as a Group

Something that's quite important to keep in mind before you dive into making your character is the 'party', the other characters your fellow players will be controlling.

The Party needs to have a reason to at least stick together. They don't necessarily have to get along; though it helps the party achieve their goals, getting along in-game isn't necessarily more or less fun. A character that doesn't mesh well with the other characters can actually add a lot of fun and realism in roleplay, though it needs to be handled with maturity so players don't take offence to things the **character** does in game when the player is simply being true to their character. It's only difficult to play a character that doesn't get along with other characters when they don't get along so much that it's unrealistic for the characters to stay together.

As mentioned before the party needs at least a reason to stay together otherwise it defeats the purpose of the game. You can't play as a group if one of the characters leaves the party for in-game reasons. Still if a player does this out of being true to their character, there is nothing stopping them from making a new character that can join the party soon after.

### **Creating a Character:**

When making a character, try to match the seriousness and realism of them to the setting and genre you're playing in. Make them real, give them goals and a history. Indeed on the Cogent Roleplay Character Sheet there are several Core Characteristic requirements to be filled out:

#### **Character disposition**

Are they happy, sad, moody, funny, cautious, untrusting, stupid, smart, tactical, shy or boisterous? The list can go on and on. This doesn't mean that they can't be in any other mood, just that generally a person's standard disposition is quite consistent throughout their lives. It is often wise to base these dispositions on a character's history and beliefs/morality, to build a character with depth and motive.

#### **Character History**

A good history can help shape who your character is in great ways. You don't have to write a novel but generally the more detailed the better – of course there isn't a lot of room on the character sheet for a detailed character history, but you may choose to write one elsewhere. A good history can make your character feel much more real which will then in turn help your role-play be more convincing, rewarding and fun.

#### **Beliefs / Morality**

It's hard to find a person without a specific world view, with defined things that they see as good or evil. So a realistic character should also have these things. Even having no morals or belief is a morality and a belief. No matter what you chose for your character you should always answer why your character believes the things they do and **why** they see things as evil and things as good. This will define your character even more

#### **Goals / Aspirations**

Everybody has goals or aspirations. They're one way people give purpose to their lives, so what purpose does your character see for themselves? This specific characteristic will very much guide what your character will do in game. It's recommended that you choose several long-term and short-term goals and aspirations. Following these suggestions will guide you to make a very well defined character. The next step is to define them through their statistics.

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# Character Statistics

Characters statistics in Cogent Roleplay can be broken down into two categories which determine the bonuses (or penalties) you receive when rolling against **Challenge Levels** encountered in the game, whether **Tasks** or **Conflicts**. These categories are:

## Attributes & Skills

By default, player characters will be given **2 Attribute points** and **8 skill points** they may assign to their character during character creation.

### Attributes

By default, player characters will be given **2 Attribute points** they may assign to their character during character creation.

Attributes represent the physical abilities of your character. There are three:

- **Strength**
- **Reflex**
- **Intelligence**

On the character sheet they look like this:

### Attributes

STR: (STRENGTH)					
REF: (REFLEX)					
INT: (INTELLIGENCE)					

When assigning a point to an attribute or skill, simply ‘shade’ a box in with your pencil as shown above.

These three attributes cover all of the actions your player might attempt. Upon first glance it can seem like many physical abilities or qualities a person can possess are missed (most other roleplay systems have a lot more), such as stamina, constitution, speed, knowledge, charisma etc. but in Cogent, these things are incorporated into the three Attributes above. Things like

constitution and stamina are covered in strength, speed in reflex, and knowledge and charisma in intelligence. There's no need to over-complicate it!

Each of these attributes apply to certain skill checks and to all combat rolls. From a combat perspective, one point in Intelligence and one point in Reflex have the same dice bonus as two points in strength. This is because a fast or clever opponent may very well be just as challenging as a strong one.

In addition to granting bonus dice to appropriate rolls, each attribute also gives a specific advantage unrelated to dice checks. These are:

- **Strength:** For every point in strength the character can **reduce a victory level** achieved against them in combat once every combat encounter
- **Reflex:** As combat is conducted in a round by round format, the player with the highest reflex gets **priority** in that round.
- **Intelligence:** For every point in intelligence the player receives **3 additional skill points** to spend.

Think of it like this:

An average person in any setting will have the equivalent of **0 points** in each. **1 point** in any of these attributes equates to the character being professional or naturally gifted in that area. **2 points** in any one attribute would equate to being elite or 'world-class' in that aspect.

For example:

	<b>0 Points</b>	<b>1 Point</b>	<b>2 Points</b>
<b>Strength</b>	Average	Professional wrestler or weight lifter	Olympic level weightlifter or world champion fighter
<b>Reflex</b>	Average	Semi-pro race car driver or gifted acrobat	Gold-medalist gymnast or master martial artist
<b>Intelligence</b>	Average	University science teacher or a skilled con artist	Award-winning particle physicist or 'Sherlock Holmes' level detective

Some settings (depending on the narrator) may allow for over 2 points in one attribute. These are mostly justifiable through means of superhuman powers, genetic anomaly, magical enchantment or advanced technology.

## Skills

### Overview

By default, player characters will be given **8 skill points** they may assign to their character during character creation. Players may gain additional points to spend in this phase by either accepting a Disabling Characteristic (See: “Disabling Characteristics”) or by assigning attribute points to Intelligence (+3 skill points per point in Intelligence). Each point represents an additional dice the character receives when making dice checks using the applicable skill.

Skills	
Core (+STR +REF +INT)	
Perception	
Strength Based (+STR)	
Athletics	
Grapple	
Swim	
Aim/Throw	
Reflex Based (+REF)	
Acrobatics	
Ride/Pilot	
Sleight of Hand	

Just like with Attributes, when assigning a point simply ‘shade’ a box in with your pencil as shown above. The tapered box on the far left is there to ‘cross out’ if you take a negative in a skill.

Although this tapered ‘negative’ box is also present in the Attributes section, players may not choose to have a negative in an attribute – it is only there in case a disabling characteristic demands a negative be applied to an attribute.

Every **skill** has an attribute (or attributes) it is based on. For example, the skill **‘Persuade’** is based on the Attribute **‘Intelligence’**. When rolling a skill check, players must add both the skill points applicable (1D6 per skill point), as well as a dice for each point in the Attribute it is based on.

For Example, your character has 1 point in **Strength** and 3 points in **Athletics**. When they perform an athletics check they will begin with their base of **3D6**, add **1D6** for their **STR** Attribute, and **3D6** for their **Athletics** skill. The result is **7D6** to roll with:

Attributes			Skills			
STR: (STRENGTH)						
REF: (REFLEX)						
INT: (INTELLIGENCE)						

Skills checks may be attempted even if your character has no points spent on that specific skill. In this case players add the normal bonus from an associated attribute being **Strength**, **Reflex**, or **Intelligence** (if any) to their base **3D6** when making any dice check.

There are some actions that are solely Attribute based, such as lifting something heavy (strength) or making a mathematical calculation (Intelligence). These checks are referred to as either a **Strength Check**, **Reflex Check**, or **Intelligence Check**.

Skills are divided down into three categories, each of which have different base Attributes or applications. These categories are:

- **Core Skills:** Perception, or Strength/Reflex/Intelligence Based Skills. Max 4 points per core skill. Players may take 1 'negative' and apply the point to any other skill
- **Vocations:** Skills which define a character's class, and applies to assists (see: Assists, page 28) Max 4 points per vocation. Players may not take 'negatives'
- **Proficiencies:** Applicable to combat rolls and can be used to assist (see: Combat, page 30, see: Assists, page 28) Max 2 points per proficiency. Players may not take 'negatives'

Each skill point represents an additional dice the player may roll with when making corresponding **CL** dice checks.

### *Core Skills*

For detailed descriptions of core skills see: part 3 – skills in detail, page 19

**Perception:** Unlike the other core skills, Perception rolls receive a bonus **D6** for **EVERY attribute point**.

Whenever anything happens around the players they should get a chance to notice it, this is what the perception skill is used for. Searching, noticing things out of the corner of your eye, this all comes under perception. It is also used to counter stealth, persuasion and deception rolls made against the player.

**Strength Based Skills:** Each of these skills, when applied to rolls, receive a bonus **D6** per **STR**.

Athletics

Grapple

Swim

Aim/Throw

**Reflex Based Skills:** Each of these skills, when applied to rolls, receive a bonus **D6** per **REF**.

Acrobatics

Ride/pilot

Sleight of hand

Stealth

**Intelligence Based Skills:** Each of these skills, when applied to rolls, receive a bonus **D6** per **INT**.

Deception

Persuasion

Infiltration

Survival

# Core Skills In Detail

These are the primary common skills generally used by most people. These skills can have a max of four points spent on each of them, and a player may also take a single ‘negative’ point from one of these skills, and apply the removed point elsewhere. Core Skills cannot be added into combat rolls. The only way Core skills can aid combat rolls is through assist.Perception

Perception stands apart from other Core Skills, as it is one of the most widely used skills. It is used as the defense against deception, persuasion and stealth, and it will be common for the Narrator to require players make environmental ‘Perception Checks’ to gauge how much the characters notice regarding current happenings or places, whether obvious or subtle.

Every character is going to rely on perception in one way or another and though players can spend skill points on perception like any other skill (max being 4), perception rolls gain an additional **+1D6** for any **attribute points**, where the other core skills each have a base attribute they are tied to (STR, REF or INT).

## Strength based skills

### Athletics

The Athletics skill is to be used for endurance dice checks, running speed dice checks and other logically applicable things like jumping

### Grapple

Grapple encompasses hand strength and your ability to hold on to things, like dangling from a rope or climbing a wall. Sometimes the definition of the word Grapple can be used to refer to wrestling and martial arts, according to Cogent this definition does not apply. The grapple skill, like all skills, cannot be used in combat rolls, though it can be used to assist. Grappling in the sense of wrestling, judo, submission holds use a different skill set to the grapple skill and can be selected as a proficiency.

### Swim

Applicable to feats whereupon a character desires to not sink in liquid. This may be more difficult if a character is wearing heavy clothing or resisting conflicts at the same time.

### Aim/Throw

The core throwing ability is different to throwing a weapon. This skill is used to throw an object to another character in the game, throw a grappling hook over a wall successfully or drop an object onto someone else’s head. Of course the Aim/Throw skill can be used to assist thrown based weapons and likewise, thrown based combat rolls can be used to assist Aim/Throw checks.

## Reflex based skills

### **Acrobatics**

Dodging, performing aerobatic feats such as flips and handsprings

### **Ride/pilot**

Riding a horse, driving a car/cart, piloting a spaceship. When the ride skill is chosen the player must choose what type of animal or craft it applies to

### **Sleight of hand**

Picking pockets, or doing anything with your hands that you want to remain unnoticed, or which takes more ‘hand skill’ than normal tasks.

### **Stealth**

Sneaking, hiding from others and moving with no noise

## Intelligence based skills

### **Deception**

Deception can be used for disguise checks and anything that is meant to mislead others. An important thing to note regarding deception, is that the knowledge of the person you are trying to deceive/persuade should affect the CL of the roll. For instance trying to tell someone that you’re the queen of England, even though you’re a man, to a person who has seen the queen is mostly impossible no matter how convincing you are. In these situations, while the character may attempt such a lie, the Narrator may also apply a severe ‘negative’ to the Skill Roll, such as -4D6. The player may then proceed to roll against the opponents perception skill will the negative applied.

### **Persuasion**

This skill can be used in very similar ways to deception. It can even assist a deception check as a deception check can assist persuasion in most circumstances. If a player attempts to persuade a PC or NPC to do something they would naturally be opposed to, the Narrator may assign negatives to the players dice roll.

### **Infiltration**

Picking locks, hacking a computer, opening a safe, knowing likely security measures of a guarded castle or bank.

### **Survival**

Hunting, finding food when you need it, tending to injuries.

## Vocations

Vocation skills can only be used to assist other skill checks (see assists page 28). Essentially vocations can be seen as the character class component of Cogent Roleplay. A vocation can be many things like the classic fantasy character classes such as knight, druid, wizard, ninja, soldier or more mundane vocations like blacksmith or baker

The Vocation skill category is unique among the skills. It cannot be used to make Skill Checks, unless it's directly associated with the skill and is not covered by another skill, such as the baking vocation to cook bread. A Vocation is essentially an 'assist' skill, meaning in most situations, it can only be used to make assist rolls to other skill checks or combat rolls, and only if the vocation has logical and obvious association with the skill or combat roll you are trying to assist (and is approved by the Narrator).

For example, you could pick the vocation 'ninja', and use this vocation skill to assist sword combat, or stealth, but you CANNOT use 'vocation, ninja' to make stealth checks. Vocations do not supersede other skills. Vocation skill points cannot be added into any dice check except when attempting an assist.

### **Examples of vocations:**

- Blacksmith
- Computer Expert
- Carpenter
- Baker
- Artist
- Ninja
- Soldier
- Specific combat discipline (A specific martial art)
- Ranger
- Thief
- Barbarian
- Samurai

The player has the freedom to pick almost any vocation, but can't pick all-encompassing metagame vocations like, 'God', or 'master of everything'. It has to be a logical and pre-established Vocation fitting within the game world the Narrator has prepared.

Though the player has freedom to choose their Vocation, their choice must be approved by the Narrator, who may also clarify how the chosen Vocation works in the Narrator's setting – for example, a ranger is quite different in modern military compared to fantasy, and in different fantasies there may be differences in seemingly traditional Classes/Vocations.

A character can have more than one Vocation and can spend a maximum of four points in each Vocation. A player may not assign Vocation ‘negatives’ unless the Narrator says otherwise.

## Proficiencies

Proficiencies encompass combat focused skills. Core skills cannot be used to attack (though they can be used to assist attacks) – where proficiencies can. Each point spent on a proficiency grants +1d6, added to the character’s combat roll.

## Combat

The proficiency skill category encompasses combat applicable skills. The core skills cannot be used to attack (though they can be used to assist attacks). Each point spent on a proficiency grants **+1d6**, which is added to the character’s combat roll.

Proficiencies are more specialized and rare than Core Skills. Because of this, and to keep combat balanced, **Each proficiency can have a maximum of 2 points** (this is in contrast to general skills and vocations which each can have maximum 4).

Proficiencies accommodate things like supernatural abilities (magic or superpowers). If there is to be magic within a campaign setting, a player may need to specify a sub-type of magic as a Proficiency Skill by spending points on it to be able to use it in game (see example magic system, page 52).

Proficiencies are added to the base **3D6** in combat rolls. In non-combat CL Tasks (such as Skill Checks) a character’s proficiency may be used in an ‘assist’ roll if it can logically be justified.

A character can have more than one Proficiency, and cannot have Proficiency ‘negatives’.

## Weapons

Players may assign their character a ‘Weapon Proficiency’, such as ‘Weapon Proficiency, Longbow’. Weapon proficiencies may vary depending on the setting. Please remember that the Narrator has freedom to define how any proficiency works within their setting.

Weapons are divided into sizes and categories. These are further explained in the chapter, ‘Combat’ (see Combat, page 30). Shown below are the various Weapon Proficiency categories accompanied by examples of applicable weapons from various world settings:

### Thrown weapon

Throwing dagger, shuriken

### Flex ranged

Bows, crossbows

**Small handed weapons**

Dagger, shortsword.

**Small hafted weapons**

Small axe, crowbar, pick, kama

**Medium long hafted**

These are one handed weapons that carry a top heavy implement on the end of a haft or shaft such as a one handed, axe, mace or warhammer

**Large long hafted**

These are two handed weapons that carry a top heavy implement on the end of a haft or shaft such as a two handed, axe, mace or warhammer

**Medium swords**

These are the one handed swords such as Arming-sword, sidesword, broadsword, onehanded falchion, messer, one-handed scimitar or wakizashi

**Large swords**

These are the two-handed sword such as Longsword, katana, two-handed falchion, two handed scimitar or kriegsmesser

**Reach Polearms**

These are long two handed weapons with reach such as the spear, halberd, poleax or greatsword (historically a Greatsword is more like a polearm than a sword)

**Hand ballistic**

Handgun or Uzi

**Shoulder stocked ballistic**

Rifle or Shotgun Heavy ballistic Bazooka, heavy machine gun or minigun

**Unarmed**

Unarmed martial arts or fist like weapons such as brass knuckles and punch daggers.

*(Please note that the weapons that are given as examples in each proficiency category are simply examples. Players or Narrators may very well invent variations of these weapon types.)*

**Metahuman (Magic and superpowers)**

The proficiency skill category is also to be used for supernatural, or metahuman abilities if the setting you're playing in has any. (For the sake of simplicity, from this point onward any type of magic, superpower or sci-fi enhancement will simply be referred to as 'magic', and when referred to, it applies also to all supernatural abilities that could be added into any setting).

The Narrator will assign a proficiency skill for each specific magic type that exists in the setting.

The following must be considered when a Narrator decides how the magic works in the setting:

- Can anyone attempt to perform a spell even without the specific proficiency skill in the same way anyone can pick up a sword and try to use it? Remember that in both cases with the sword and magic, having no proficiency with them would result in many failed rolls. Can only people with at least 1 proficiency point in the magic use it?
- Do you want magic to be more powerful than normal weapon skills, or have it balanced?  
\*
- How encompassing do you want the magic to be? Is there a single magic proficiency or is it broken down into categories such as earth, air, fire and water, or Sorcery, Wizardry, Witchcraft, druidism, Necromancy and Holy?
- Is there a limit to the magic's use? Can a player only cast a certain amount of spells a day or per combat encounter?

\* *A few words on Magic and Weapons:*

*As will be explained in the combat chapter every weapon receives a weapon bonus depending on its type. This bonus stays when making any roll that uses the weapon proficiency and generally results in more dice to roll with when using proficiencies than with skills. It's up to the narrator if they wish to add weapon type bonuses to magic proficiencies.*

*For instance, using a wand might grant a +1 dice while using a staff might grant a +2. Alternatively if the narrator does not wish to add weapon bonuses to magic proficiencies they might decide that the magic simply cannot be used without a wand or staff.*

*If weapon bonuses are added to magic proficiencies, the magic will then have the same amount of dice as other combat/weapon proficiencies – this might seem balanced but it may not be – It can potentially make magic more powerful than common combat/weapon proficiencies depending on setting. A player can do far more with telekinetic powers than with a sword.*

*Magic generally comes off to be far more versatile and usable in more situations than the basic combat/weapon proficiencies. Taking away the weapon bonuses for magic balances this as magic based proficiencies will generally have less total dice as a result, making them less effective in combat, but they will be as versatile as they were. So the trade in balance is versatility vs a higher chance of success, and being stronger in combat.*

In the chapter: supplementary Content, we have provided an example magic system that can be used or adapted into various settings – or used as a model on which you may craft your own (see Example Magic System).

# Disabling Characteristics

Playing as an ‘unstoppable fighter’ can be less satisfying than playing an average fighter who struggles to beat a strong challenge. The greater the challenge a player overcomes, the more satisfaction the achievement. This concept also applies with characteristics. Often, disabling characteristics can create a richer and more entertaining character.

Taking on such a disabling characteristic does restrict the way in how you’ll play your character in game, that’s why they are called **disabling** characteristics. It will make your role-play more challenging and thereby more satisfying. However, because such characteristics are restrictive, it’s only fair that the player who chooses to have one for their character receives an equivalent bonus. This bonus is also in place to encourage players to take on such characteristic who wouldn’t do so normally.

If you choose a Disabling Characteristic from the table below, or create one that the Narrator approves, you will receive one **additional Skill point** to spend in character creation.

Alternatively you may roll a twenty sided dice, the resulting number corresponding to the table below, and take the Disabling Characteristic associated. This cannot be taken back. If you choose to roll for a Disabling Characteristic you must keep it! It will forever be a part of that character. In doing this you will receive **two additional skill points** to spend.

A player may apply (or roll for) as many disabling characteristics as they want, unless the Narrator stops them past a certain point.

You don’t need to take a characteristic listed on the table provided, you’re free to make up whatever disabling characteristic you can think of, and your Narrator will decide if the characteristic you have chosen is disabling enough to receive the standard bonus given in the rules.

Disabling Characteristics should always be chosen or rolled before any points are assigned to Skills, otherwise often you may find that a disabling characteristic might utterly disqualify a skill you have chosen. For example, it’s obviously hard to use the skill deception if you have the Disabling Characteristic, ‘Can’t Lie’.

Narrators should also be aware that it is possible for the player characters to overcome many disabling through the narrative of the story. A character whose life was saved by a race which they have an extreme prejudice against might rightly have their prejudice soften or even go away.

SEE CHEAT SHEET REFERENCE: CHSH.3 Disabling Characteristics

Following is a list of 20 disabling characteristics a player may roll for, including detail:

**\*Narrator must define specifics  
provide definitions and examples and penalties**

**1. Missing a bodily extremity/limb**

The obvious example is that the character could have lost their hand or foot, but this may also include another extremity such as a nose or a reproductive organ.

**2. Feeble (-1 to all Strength\* based skills and Strength Checks)**

This may mean the character is malnourished, genetically weak, or may be the result of an injury. The character is far weaker than a normal person.

**3. Heavy (-1 to all Reflex\* based skills and Reflex Checks)**

The character may be big boned, have lots of muscle, or be excessively overweight.

**4. Dim-witted (-1 to all Intelligence\* based skills and Intelligence Checks)**

A result from a bad head injury, or the character may simply be stupid.

**5. Phobia**

This is a debilitating fear that the character possesses that is to be selected by the narrator and can range from heights, to spiders or little children

**6. Extreme prejudice**

Race, culture, sexual orientation, political affiliation or religion. The Narrator is free to be creative, for example, making the character want to kill every person that supports a specific sports team, or hold irrational hatred to those who wear anything with ribbons.

**7. Compulsive liar**

This characteristic needs to be played in the right way – the player shouldn't lie about everything to the point that it's impossible to hold a conversation with them. Generally it would be about anything concerning their achievements or anything that would give them an advantage no matter how small, like claiming the gold coin a character found on the ground, or inventing feats of heroism while constantly trying to seduce people.

**8. Kleptomaniac**

Kleptomania is not necessarily the desire to steal but rather a compulsive need to have most things they see for reasons other than personal use or financial gain. Many of the items a kleptomaniac steals are useless to them and the item's value does not weigh in on their compulsion at all, thus most items a kleptomaniac steals are worth very little.

**9. Paranoia**

The extreme belief that every person they meet will eventually betray them, that the government is run by an evil cult or that if they ever urinate on the grass they will become infected with a terminal disease.

**10. Over-emotional (specific emotion)**

Cannot control their anger, every time they see an old person they burst out into hysterics, whenever they become fearful they utterly freeze up and cannot move or the character breaks down and cries whenever anyone says the slightest thing negative about them.

**11. Very Forgetful**

This does not mean forgetting everything to the point that the character is an unintelligible drooling oaf. This characteristic can manifest in such ways as a character always forgetting where they are and getting lost all the time, forgetting plans,

directions or instructions. They might never be able to remember the names of people, towns or countries, or they may constantly forget where they put their items.

**12. Paraphilia**

A paraphilia is characterized by an abnormal sexual attraction, typically involving extreme or dangerous activities, such as being sexually attracted to fire, or lamps.

**13. Overconfident** (cannot spend points on an applicable skill during character creation)

You are extremely overconfident in a specific skill, such as stealth, and will feel that you'll always succeed in any activity using it. You will readily resort to any method that can employ the said skill and volunteer to use it whenever the opportunity arises.

**14. Incapable of Lying** (specific parameters required)

This is not a blanket restriction, the character will be able to lie, but not in circumstances the narrator specifies – such as not being able to lie to a certain gender. It might also mean a character can't speak any 'untruths' but are still able to mislead people (like the Aes Sedai in 'the Wheel of Time' novels). It may also mean the character has a very prominent physical tell whenever they lie such as sneezing or farting.

**15. Addiction**

This is not simply a preference of a certain thing, it is a disabling addiction, something that the character has withdrawals from if the addiction isn't satisfied often. The addiction itself can include things like sex, drugs, specific foods, or even murder.

**16. Delusion**

Examples: having an imaginary friend, hearing voices, or honestly believing that pot plants are secretly an invading alien race.

**17. Imperceptive** (Cannot apply standard base 3D6 to environmental perception\* rolls)

**18. Gullible** (Cannot apply standard base 3D6 to perception\* rolls VS. deception)

**19. Impressionable** (Cannot apply standard base 3D6 to perception\* rolls VS. persuasion)

**20. People-Pleaser** (Overly agreeable, 'yes man')

\* Skill point(s) cost double during character creation

# Destiny Points

In Cogent we want you to create a character that feels real, has motives, desires, goals, flaws quirks and opinions. We feel that the more in depth your character is, the more you will be drawn into the game you are playing. As a type of reward system to encourage this, Cogent Roleplay implements what we call **Destiny points**, which should be awarded to players for exceptional roleplaying.

A Destiny Point represents the character's influence on fate, their place in the universe and how their will may affect it. It can be spent in either one of three ways:

- Before any roll with d6 dice

A character may spend a Destiny Point before any d6 based roll, usually a particularly important one if they're using their points wisely, which will give them a special destiny advantage in the roll. Instead of the usual 4-6 on a d6 being considered a win, each dice that rolls a 3 or higher will be considered a win, meaning 3-6. This increased the chances of rolling winning dice considerably but does not guarantee it, there is still a chance of failure.

- After any roll with d6 dice

A character may spent a Destiny Point after any d6 based roll to add a single win in addition to what they achieved. They may do this multiple times on any roll or separate rolls, for as many Destiny Points they have.

- To Re-roll a Destiny Roll

A Destiny Point may be spent to force the narrator to re-roll a Destiny Roll, but they must accept the result even if it is worse, unless they have another Destiny Point to spend for another re-roll.

Every character starts with 3 Destiny Points at character creation (unless the Narrator says otherwise). At least 1 Destiny Point should be awarded to each player after every play session. The narrator may also award players additional destiny points throughout the game for exceptional roleplaying. Examples range from the player doing something that works towards their character's goals, when they achieve something significant, or they do something particularly in line with their character's personality even if it was at the detriment to their wealth or progress.

# Commerce Points

The commerce point system is optional and the Narrator can choose to use it or resort to a traditional numeric method (Keeping track of the number of dollars or gold coins a player has earned or spent). The Commerce point system provides an easier way to govern the commerce of your games without the need to constantly calculate purchases and total currency amounts.

Below is an item value system that ranges from 1 to 8 that is to be used by the narrator to help calculate the value of any given item in the game.

**Item Value** (*these values are suggestions, as narrative settings and their values will vary*)

1. A meal, simple pants, bottle of rum, night at an inn, a video game, rope/camping gear
2. An extravagant night out, an adequate weapon, common livestock, shack
3. A well-crafted weapon, a basic horse/car/vehicle, average armor, a small building
4. A very fancy horse/vehicle, home, extravagant weapon, full plate armor, bodyguards
5. A mansion, yacht, jet, estate, small army, established business, patent of nobility, small starship, weapon of mass destruction
6. A castle/skyscraper, enterprise level company, large army, a town, carrier starship
7. Metropolis, armada, small country
8. Kingdom, nation, established planet (sci-fi)

At the beginning of the game the narrator will assign the players a number of commerce points based on their background (a beggar who grew up on the streets would have a lot less money than a knight from a noble family) and then throughout the game the players may receive additional points when they do an action that would gain them more money, or lose commerce points when making purchases.

Commerce points and associated **Levels of Wealth**

1. Pauper/Homeless
2. Commoner
3. Tradesperson/craftsman
4. Well off, higher income
5. Wealthy, successful merchant
6. Rich, CEO
7. Magnate/Tycoon, Captain of Industry
8. Owns a powerful nation (**max**)

Players can purchase any item that has a value score equivalent to, or less than, their total commerce points. Purchasing an item/service with **value equivalent** to your current level of commerce points will **subtract/cost 2 commerce points** from your total pool.

Purchasing an item/service with value equivalent to **1 point less than** your current level of commerce points will **subtract/cost 1 commerce point** from your total pool.

Purchasing an item/service with value equivalent to **2 points under or less** than your current level of commerce points will **not remove any points** from your total pool – unless purchased in large quantities or regularly.

One way to think about it might be like this:

Purchasing an item with a value equal to my level of wealth, will cost a great deal of my total finances (Such as someone with a high income [4 commerce points] buying a nice home [lvl 4 purchase, costing two commerce points], reducing their financial status to ‘common’ [level 2] after the purchase is made).

This ratio of cost for the specified item values is present because commerce points go up exponentially in value. If item values need to be compared to one another, for a general guide their values can be thought of as 1 of 10 going up, or 10 of 1 going down. EG: 10 cars (each with an item value of ‘4’) might equate to the value of a single house (item value 5). This is an example, but we recommend players use this mechanic as a guide rather than a means of precise valuation.

This means that the third commerce point is essentially worth ten level two commerce points and the fifth commerce point is worth one hundred level three. The narrator needs to take this into account when awarding commerce points as going from **2 to 3** commerce points is infinitely more easy than going from **5 to 6**.

Players will gain commerce points throughout gameplay which will be assigned by the narrator as reward for quests (as the narrative dictates) either through the flow of narrative (finding treasure) or roleplay (selling loot to shopkeepers).

## Suggestion for Selling/Bartering

The item value when reselling to a vendor should be considered one point below its suggested/original level of wealth value.

To help make the experience of buying/selling dynamic for players, a narrator might consider allowing the cost of a desired item to 'drop' by one level of value, if they succeed a 'persuasion' or 'deception' check vs. a vendor. Likewise, the item may also become more difficult to obtain if such a dice check is failed.

A narrator may also decide to allow the players to use their destiny points in making purchases more attainable, if this can be justified through narrative in a satisfying way. That being said, keep in mind that destiny points scale at a level of **1:1**, while commerce points scale at a ratio closer to **1:10**, therefore a narrator may decide it may cost **a single destiny point** for a **level 3** item to be lowered to a cost of **2 commerce points** to a player, but it might cost **2-3 destiny points** to bring down the cost of an item valued at **level 5-6**.

## Player/Narrator Negotiation

Cogent is a flexible system with purposeful provision for interpretation and adaptability. We're not going to spell every single thing out for you (like specifying each and every circumstance where a specific skill can be used to assist another skill, or spelling out every possible vocation you're allowed to pick). If we did this we feel it would make the game system restrictive and complex, which would result in a worse game by the end.

You're smart and we trust you to see ways in which certain aspects of Cogent can benefit your character, in things such as skill interaction, assists and combat modifiers.

However, because every person is an individual, they'll very likely see different ways certain things in the game can be interpreted and thereby how they feel it should affect the gameplay. This is wonderful and we encourage every player and narrator to do explore their creative ideas as it enriches and enhances the gaming experience.

In these situations it becomes important to familiarize yourself with the process of friendly player/narrator negotiation. If you as a player honestly feel that your character should receive a bonus, such as an additional dice to roll with, because of some kinds of in-game circumstance, you should feel free to suggest this to the narrator. Narrators shouldn't feel defensive if a player makes such suggestions – this is a great thing and shows how engaged your players are in your game. Try to give fair consideration to every suggestion or request a player puts forward. We're not saying you have to agree to everything, only to give honest consideration to such suggestions, and explain why you disagree if you do.

Players, if the narrator disagrees with you, once you have presented your argument, it is then your responsibility to accept the Narrator's decision and **don't argue further!** That's when the roleplay experience gets much more frustrating, so if you feel the Narrator is giving you 'lemons', just try and make 'lemonade'.

### The Narrator shouldn't hold your hand, be creative to survive

Even in the most hopeless situations, clever thinking can achieve a great deal. Don't just rely on your character statistics to win conflicts in your game. Remember you are creating a story with your friends, so approach everything in the game in a narrative way. Don't just say "I attack", describe how you are attacking, think outside the box every once-in-a-while, and a good Narrator will reward clever role-playing.

### Roleplay can progress the game as much as combat (negotiation, lying, buying etc)

An entire role-play session can be very rewarding even if a single combat dice isn't rolled. The main element in a role playing game is the role-playing, not the combat, so don't expect to fight every time you play. There are plenty of other challenges and dice rolls that will need to be done outside of combat and never think that combat is the only way to get out of sticky situations. Remember the key is to do what your character would do, so if your character would resolve most conflicts through combat, then go right ahead, but there are many other character types to play other than battle focused adventurers, and they can be just as enjoyable.

# Assists

Core Skills, Proficiencies and Vocations can all be used to perform assist rolls. An assist roll is a role players can make to (potentially) gain additional dice to aid their primary action/objective. Assist rolls are made before the action which the player wishes to receive the assist. Assists may be applied to any logically applicable roll – and the player must first ask the Narrator if the assist roll is appropriate.

If the player is in a position where a skill they possess would logically assist or grant an advantage to another skill or combat roll (whether their own or another player's) the Narrator can assign a **CL** based on the difficulty of the assist.

If the **assist** check was successful, additional **wins** are added to the result of the skill or combat roll the player has assisted – equivalent to the amount of wins achieved OVER the Assist **CL** in the assist check

For example:

**3 wins** against an assist **CL of 3** does nothing to assist the following action, but **4 wins** will grant **+1 win** to the result of the assisted action's roll.

On the other hand, if a player achieves only **1 win** in an assist roll of **CL 3**, the player will then face a penalty of **-2**, to be deducted from the result of the assisted action's roll. This means that any assist can backfire, and as such carries an element of risk.

Each player can only attempt 1 assist each round. This means that if a player has 2 skills that could logically assist another skill check or combat roll they must choose between those 2 skills.

The amount of wins or losses gained from an assist can never be greater than the challenge level of the assist. For instance you can only ever receive an additional **3 wins or losses** to a skill or attack that you're trying to assist if the assist check had a **CL 3**. Likewise an assist check with a **CL of 4** will add a cap at max **4 wins or losses** depending on the outcome of the assist check.

The CL of assists are never lower than CL 3 and the Narrator will determine if the **CL** is higher depending on situation and what the player is attempting.

You cannot assist another player when already doing something complex. For example, you cannot assist a friend fight an enemy while you are trying to pick a lock (though you could still assist yourself in picking the lock if you have an applicable skill).

When logically applicable, **combat rolls** can actually be used to assist general attribute checks or skill checks.

### Example Scenario:

You wish to make an acrobatics check (**CL 4**) but the **CL** is **1** point less than the total amount of points you have in the Acrobatics skill and in **Reflex (5D6)**, a hard check to make – however you also have **2** points in the martial arts proficiency. In this case you can use your martial arts combat roll (outlined in chapter: combat page 30) to perform an assist to your acrobatics skill check.

Your total combat roll is **7** and the narrator sets the assist at **CL 3**. You roll **5 wins**, meaning you will now receive **+2 wins** toward the result of your following acrobatics check.

The acrobatics check is **CL 4** and you have **1** point in **REF**, and **1** in **Acrobatics**. Added with your standard base of **3D6**, you have **5D6** to roll with in total. You roll **4 wins** which would mean a loss if not for your assist, providing **+2 wins** making the new total **6**, meaning through using an assist you have succeeded a difficult Challenge Level!

This type of assist from a combat roll can be done with many different combat types (proficiencies) if logically applicable, such as other weapon proficiencies and magic based proficiencies.

Within Cogent Role-play, we don't outline every applicable situation where a given skill can be used. It's up to the players and Narrator to negotiate how these skills can be logically applied to different circumstances.

Having said this, if you are acting as the Narrator you will find that players will try for some very thin connections between a given skill they possess and the situation they are in to attempt a skill check or a possible assist. The players must feel free to express their logic to the Narrator and the Narrator should listen to all requests fairly – cooperative negotiation is something that the players and narrator should engage in as it helps the narrative reach new creative levels – but in the end it will be the narrator's call and the players must accept what the Narrator decides.

# Combat Fundamentals

When a character's life is on the line, every asset they possess is brought to bear in order to win. Thus every attribute; strength reflex and intelligence, can be added to the combat roll.

Combat Rolls are calculated by adding:

- Base **3D6**
- + All attribute points (**STR/REF/INT**)
- +1D6 for each point in any **Combat Applicable Proficiency** (*Relevant to what the character is wielding or doing*)
- + Any applicable **weapon bonus**

For Example:

Sir Terrik the knight has challenged another knight to a duel. Terrik's combat roll is calculated thus:

- Base of **3D6**, plus +1D6 from **STR** and +1D6 from **INT**
- **2D6** from his two skill points invested in a **Medium Sword Proficiency** (which can be applied as he is wielding a medium sword)
- +1D6 from his arming sword (the bonus for a medium weapon)

*His total Combat Roll is **8D6**.*

# Victory levels

A successful combat roll results in a level of **victory** against your opponent(s). Your combat roll stands as both an **attack** and **defence**. It represents your character's overall combative performance for that round, and not necessarily a single 'swing' of their weapon.

Each character's combat roll is compared to that of the charterer(s) or non-player character(s) they oppose. Every **win** a character has over another's roll, means a **level of victory**, from which they may choose an outcome:

## Level 1 victory

- Minor Injury, opponent receives – **1D6** to all physical based dice checks but will naturally heal over the next few days, or faster if treated actively. This can be negated by strength or armor.
- Stagger (-**2D6** for one round)
- Enter into **close combat** (not available to ranged combat rolls)

## Level 2 victory

- Medium injury – **2D6** to all physical based dice checks and must be treated relatively soon, otherwise further penalties may apply (infection etc). This can be reduced by strength or armor to a lower injury or fully negated.
- Disarm
- Any lower outcome

## Level 3 victory

- Serious injury – **3d** to all physical based dice checks and the character will die in time if the wound is untreated. This can be reduced by strength or armor to a lower injury or fully negated.
- Trip
- Any lower outcome

## Level 4 victory

- Fatal injury – **4d** to all physical based dice checks, incapacitated, and will die very soon if untreated. This can be reduced by strength or armor to a lower injury or fully negated.
- Dismember arm or leg, which also gives a serious injury to the opponent. (not available to ranged combat rolls unless magic or explosive projectiles are involved)
- Any lower outcome

## Level 5 victory and higher

- **Death blow.** An instant kill unless the character has a high strength or is wearing armor and uses them to reduce either the level of victory or injury.
- Any lower outcome

Injury levels do not stack in fatality but do stack in dice penalty – meaning two medium injuries do not equate to a fatal injury where the character will die immediately if untreated, but the character does receive -2D6 to all physical dice checks TWICE, meaning they will have -4D6 in total.

## Defense rolls

A Defense Roll is a variant of the Combat Roll. It is used when a character is either in a position where they cannot perform any type of Combat Maneuver to their opponent (E.g. too far away from an opponent using a ranged weapon against them while only armed with a melee weapon), or they want a greater chance to survive as their standard Combat Roll is too low (fleeing after receiving an injury).

A Defense Roll is calculated in the same way as the Combat Roll but adds an additional +2D6 to roll with. No matter the result of the Defense Roll, the character cannot achieve a level of victory because the character was purely focused on protecting themselves, and not on attacking.

# Combat Actions and Timing

Combat is run in a Round by Round format. Each character can perform 1 action within a round (usually a combat roll) with liberties in regard to the narrative flow of the game. For instance it doesn't take an action to shout out something to another character while fighting a monster, though it would take a round to explain something complicated.

Narrator mustn't time a player's dialogue to make sure it falls within restrictive timing. Remember narrative flow will make things run far smoother if you are a little relaxed in regard to things like this, while still having limits – you wouldn't want to let a player pass on huge amounts of information in a single round, in the middle of a battlefield. In those cases you might say something like, "it will take several rounds to explain everything you want".

Round by Round combat isn't played using any grids, timers, boards or miniatures, though sometimes a rough map or drawing of a room or location may help. There isn't a strict distance characters can move within a round, this is left up to Narrator's and player's own reasoning. A player with higher agility, strength and athletics skill would be able to run faster and farther than another player with less, and it doesn't take that much thought to figure out how far a person can run within a round.

Actions in combat rounds are not solely movements and attacks. A combat action can really be anything a person could do within a few seconds, such as turning over a table, swinging from a chandelier, or dropping a boulder onto an enemy. The Narrative flow you develop while playing will guide you in what the players can do in game, and how long it will take to do it.

## Round order

Every action within Round by Round conflicts happen almost at the same time or in direct succession of one another. This means that one character's action is NOT explicitly followed by another character's action. It should be considered as everything happening together.

To make sense of this potential 'chaos', there is a declaration phase and a performance phase.

## Declaration phase

The Character with lowest reflex declares what they are doing first. That might seem odd as you could think characters with higher reflex should get to move first – but this is the declaration phase – no one is moving yet. If two Characters have the same agility, they each roll 1D6, where the highest resulting roll gets to declare later for the rest of the combat encounter.

Players who declare LATER hold an ADVANTAGE in combat.

Once a player has declared what they are going to perform, they cannot change their mind. They are locked into performing that action in this round. The players who declare after another can chose an action that counters or complements the declared action of another character.

This means that characters with highest Reflex can see or react to what their opponents are going to do.

For Example:

Leon, a player character, is dueling Dartane, a non-player character. It's a new combat round and Dartain has a lower Reflex than Leon so he must declare his action first.

Dartain declares that he intends to jump on top of a table to get a height advantage against Leon, ready for his attack. Leon, knowing Dartain's intent declares that he wishes to knock the table over whilst Dartain jumps on top of it.

### **Performance phase**

Once all characters have declared their action, they make their rolls. Though things mostly happen simultaneously within the round, it's sometimes important to know which blade landed before another, or who managed to perform their action a little bit faster than another. In these situations, the character with higher reflex will always win.

For Example:

The Narrator decides that it will be a standard combat action for Leon to knock over the table but Leon won't receive his weapon bonus for this action as he is using a rapier which isn't suited for knocking over tables (if Leon was using something heavy like a greataxe, it could be used to smash down on the side of the table to knock it over and the weapon bonus might be appropriate).

Leon's roll is a base of 3D6, +2D6 for his points in Reflex, making 5 dice to roll with in total.

The player controlling Leon asks the narrator if he can apply his acrobatics skill. The narrator agrees, giving Leon a further +2D6 (7D6 total).

Leon rolls his 7 dice, resulting in 4 wins. These 4 wins become the CL his opponent, Dartain, must match in order to succeed his declared action and remain on his feet.

The Narrator instructs Dartain to make an acrobatics check to jump on the table. Under normal circumstances (unopposed) this would have been easy, requiring a CL of 1, but now Dartain must make an acrobatics check against CL 4, quite difficult for a skill check.

If Dartain succeeds his action, he will have an advantage in the next round of combat (higher ground), and If he fails, he will have a disadvantage (staggered, or prone, depending on the roll, see Combat Modifies, Page 38).

Where ‘declaration’ happens in reverse (slowest players declare first), during ‘performance’, the order is reversed, players with the fastest Reflex in that encounter acting out their intentions first.

## Armor

Armor can be used to reduce injury level (not victory level, which only Strength can reduce). Wearing lots of armor will also add weight which negatively affects a player’s combat roll.

Armor levels are set by the type of armor the character is wearing, described below. In the case of shields, the armor rating stacks with worn armor. A character wearing full plate (4 armor) and using a shield (2 armor) will have an armor rating of 6. This is the highest armor rating in the game, but will also remove -3D6 from their combat roll

PLEASE NOTE: Injury reduction from armor is not applicable while in Close Combat (See Combat Modifiers, page 38)

### Armor level 1

- Leather armor
- Gambeson (padded)
- Chain shirt (hauberk)

### Armor level 2

(-1d to combat roll)

- Breastplate
- Full Chainmail
- Shield

### Armor level 4

(-2d to combat roll)

- Full plate armor

A character can reduce injury levels by the equivalent amount of levels they have in armor, per combat encounter. When another fight begins (another combat encounter) the character's preset injury reduction from their armor level is reset.\

For Example:

Victoria is a noble knight and is attacked unawares by a backstabbing rogue.

The rogue achieves a level 3 victory and chooses to inflict a serious injury. Victoria is wearing full plate armor and can reduce up to 4 points of injury throughout this conflict.

Reducing this serious injury by 3 points times will negate it; one to reduce it to a medium injury, a second to reduce it further to a minor injury, and another to remove the injury entirely.

Victoria chooses to do so, which will leave her one last injury reduction from her armor for that combat encounter, but enable to fight without such a disadvantage. She will however, be fighting with -2D6 to her combat roll due to her heavy armor.

When achieving a victory in combat you can choose to inflict an injury – but if your opponent is wearing armor choosing to inflict an injury will be more easily countered through their injury reduction. However, other actions chosen through a victory, such as staggering, disarming or tripping an armored opponent, cannot be negated with armor, see Combat Modifies, Page 38).

For a more sophisticated approach to the armor rules within Cogent Roleplay, please see Hardcore Combat

# Weapon Modifiers

Each weapon inherently provides advantages over other weapons. The following is a guide and can be altered as the Narrator sees fit.

## Ranged (bows, crossbows etc.)

- +2D6 weapon bonus at range
- -3D6 in melee combat

## Unarmed

- **-1D6** unless wearing some type of hand protection such as bracers or gauntlets, in which case there is no change in dice.
- **Disarming Bonus**
  - Can be used in close combat and receives bonus in disarming actions. A player must be in close combat to disarm another player while being unarmed.
  - Once in close combat, if declaring to attempt a disarm, the player receives +4D6 to their combat roll, but the roll cannot be used to inflict any other injury victory (this means they cannot delegate their attack to inflict an injury or execute a trip regardless of how high the attack roll is).

## Small weapons (Daggers, Hatchets, Shortsword etc.)

- No change in dice, but can be used in close combat

## Medium weapons (Arming sword, Battle axe, Warhammer etc.)

- +1D6 weapon bonus

## Large weapons (Longsword, two-handed axe, short poleaxe etc.)

- +2D6 weapon bonus

## Reach weapons (spear, Halberd, Greatsword, long poleaxe etc.)

- **+3D6 weapon bonus**
- Reach is a significant advantage in combat, and is reflected in the higher weapon bonuses – but the Narrator is free to negate all dice bonuses if they feel the reach weapon would not work as effectively due to narrow confines such as an alleyway or hallway.
  - Medium weapons and smaller can be used to enter into close combat against any character using reach weapons (see close combat under combat modifiers).

**Hand ballistic** (Handguns, hand SMGs etc.)

- +2D6 weapon bonus at range
- -3D6 in melee combat

**Shoulder stocked ballistic** (Rifles, shoulder stocked SMGs, fully automatic rifles etc.)

- +4D6 weapon bonus at medium range
- -4D6 in melee combat

**Heavy ballistic** (Bazookas, heavy machine guns, miniguns etc.)

- +6D6 weapon bonus at range
- Cannot be used in melee combat

For a more sophisticated approach to the weapon modifiers and ranged combat rules within Cogent Roleplay, please see chapter six: Hardcore rules

# Fighting Groups

As mentioned, a character's combat roll stands as both offence and defence. If a character is acting offensively against **several** opponents at once, in one round they are able to engage against the equivalent to *half their total combat roll, rounded down*. This can mean that larger weapons (which grant a greater bonus to combat rolls) make it easier to defend against, or attack and hit, multiple opponents.

Ranged weapons usually cannot achieve victories against more than one opponent per round (this is dependent on setting and allowances from the Narrator, for example; a fully automatic machine gun can hit multiple opponents in a single round, see Hardcore Ranged Rules, page 49). However, a ranged combat roll still stands as a defence against more than one incoming attack; indeed any character can defend against a number of opponents in a single round.

For Example:

Sir Terrik is fighting two goblins. Terrik has a combat roll of 8D6. This also means that Terrik is capable of defending against, and achieving victories against, a maximum of 4 adjacent opponents in a single round.

The two goblins he has engaged each have combat rolls of 7D6 (base 3D6, +2D6 REF, +1D6 from medium swords proficiency and +1D6 from their medium weapons).

One of the goblins rolls 4 wins and the other rolls 5 wins.

Terrik rolls 4 wins.

This means that he matched one of the goblin's rolls but was beaten by the other. The Goblin chooses to inflict a minor injury with its level 1 victory against Terrick.

The next round Terrick rolls 6 wins with his recalculated combat roll (a total of 7D6, due to his injury inflicting -1D6), and the goblins each roll 3 wins.

Terrik achieves a level three victory against both goblins and he chooses to inflict a serious injury to each.

As a serious injury will kill a character if not treated in the near future, the goblins retreat leaving a trail of blood.

# Melee Vs. Ranged

The advantage with melee is that your single offensive combat roll can inflict injury to several opponents that did not match your combat roll.

The advantage with ranged fighting, is that no combat maneuver can be performed against you so long as your opponent is not adjacent to you. Melee combatants, no matter how high their combat roll, cannot inflict injury unless they are close enough. One common disadvantage with many ranged weapons however, is that no matter how high your combat roll, you can only inflict injury to one opponent each round.

Guns and bows are meant to be used at range and don't perform well in melee combat. If a character using melee weapons wants to engage in combat against an opponent using ranged, the character with the ranged weapon will incur the standard penalty as described in weapon modifiers, but not right away. The character using the melee weapon must close the distance and the narrator will determine how many rounds this will take (it might not take any rounds if the character is close enough).

In the first round where the Melee combatant gets to attack, the ranged combatant might still not receive the ascribed penalty, if they have higher reflex.

If the melee combatant has higher reflex and is close enough they can close the distance to a combatant using a ranged weapon before they can fire. In this instance the ranged combatant received the appropriate penalty for using ranged weapons in melee combat. Also the combatant using the ranged weapon can only injure the melee combatant attacking them if they declared that they were aiming for that combatant in the declaration phase (they might have been aiming for another person), for ranged weapons can only achieve victories against one opponent in a round.

If ranged combatant was aiming for someone else, their attack can still hit whoever they were aiming for with no reduction to their roll, but when comparing their roll against anyone attacking them in melee combat, their combat roll is reduced by the weapon type.

# Combat modifiers

There are many circumstances in combat where a player would logically receive either a bonus or penalty to their combat roll. Below are some examples of standard combat modifiers and if a player feels they should receive a bonus that is not covered by the following suggestions they are free to request the bonus from Narrator and the Narrator will make the final choice. Likewise the Narrator is free to impose a penalty not covered in the following examples if they feel it is applicable.

## Dual wielding

Dual wielding does not give an additional combat roll in a round. What it does is grant an additional dice bonus depending on the weight of the second weapon being used. To duel wield the character must have at least one proficiency point in both of the weapons being used to receive any bonus.

### **Small secondary weapon**

+2D6 to all combat rolls

### **Medium secondary weapon**

+1D6 to all combat rolls

**PLEASE NOTE:** If you are dual wielding, your combat roll is made up using the proficiency and/or weapon bonus of your primary weapon, NOT any proficiencies or weapon bonuses for BOTH weapons.

For Example:

Kelvin wields a Rapier and a Dagger. His attack role is made up as such:

- Base of 3D6, plus +1D6 from INT and +1D6 from REF
- 2D6 from his two skill points invested in a Medium Sword Proficiency
- +1D6 from his rapier weapon bonus (the bonus for a medium weapon)
- +2D6 for the dagger he is also wielding (this bonus can ONLY be added because Kelvin has at least one point in the Small Weapon proficiency)

If Kelvin were to be disarmed from his primary weapon in combat, he will lose any dual wielding bonus, and must revert to the dagger as his primary weapon until his rapier is recovered.

## Close Combat

'Close combat' means the fight is so close in physical proximity that the character's bodies are pressed up against each other in a grapple or wrestle. Being in close combat negates the use of

larger weapons and thus the weapon bonuses of any weapon, medium and larger, are lost when in close combat.

In this scenario, a character using a medium (or larger) weapon is considered ‘unarmed’ and as such will receive any applicable penalties.

Entering into close combat is a maneuver which minimally requires victory level 1.

Injury reduction from armor is not applicable while in close combat.

Additionally, you can use a medium weapon in close combat if your opponent is using a reach weapon.

## Circumstantial modifiers

### **High ground = +2D6**

Bonus received through achieving a height advantage against an opponent, IE standing on a table, riding on a mount etc.

### **Flank = +2D6**

Bonus received when attacking an opponent actively engaged in something else, IE attacking another character, picking a lock, etc.

### **Staggered = -2D6 (one round)**

Penalty received if the opponent selects to stagger through a victory level, or if the Narrator applies it, IE sand is thrown in a character face, or they slip on oil, etc.

### **Off guard = CL in lieu of defense roll**

CL determined by Narrator IE, attacking a soldier from behind may require a successful ‘Stealth’ check, then the attack (which they cannot defend against) will be a CL assigned by the Narrator, which the player will roll against with a normal combat roll (without a flanking bonus). Any wins achieved over the CL counts towards the level of victory. Failing the CL commences the next round of combat, where the opponent is then engaged.

### **Lying down / Prone = -4D6**

Penalty lasts for one round or until the character readies themselves, unless they are incapacitated/sleeping. In combat, the penalty counts as taking place during the action of getting up while defending.

### **Unequal equipment = how unequal the difference**

In combat or out of combat, the task will be much more difficult if the character is not equipped to do so. Picking a lock is much more difficult without lock picks but not impossible. A master lock picker might be able to improvise. Killing a person with a stick is much harder than with a sword. If a character is attempting to perform a task without the appropriate tool, the Narrator

assigns an appropriate bonus or penalty to the player, which they must apply when rolling against the CL or when in combat.

**Distance** = -dice based on excessive distance according to the weapon being used  
A thrown axe will receive greater penalties at distance than a longbow

**Charge** = +1D6

If there is enough distance between the character and opponent, they may 'charge', adding momentum to their attack.

**Brace** = +2 wins to a combat roll against a **Charge**

A brace is a move purely to counter a charge and can only be done if they have fast enough reflex, or a full round before the charge to prepare. A character with a higher reflex will be able to declare their action after a player who declares their charge. Bracing uses the opponent's charge momentum against them, enabling a prepared defender to more easily stagger, trip or injure the charging opponent.

For Example:

A troll charged Marcus with a combat roll of 6D6, +1D6 for the charge.

Marcus, being aware of this due to his higher Reflex, will brace against the attack with his combat roll of 7D6.

The troll rolls a total of 4 wins, and Marcus rolls a total of 3 wins, +2 additional wins due to his high reflex allowing him to brace against the charge. If he were slower to react, Marcus may have been injured in the charge, but due to bracing he is now able to either stagger or injure his opponent.

PLEASE NOTE: You may further reinforce your 'brace' by making the entire action 'defense', gaining a further +2D6, however no victory levels can be achieved in doing so

**Incapacitated**

If a character is incapacitated, they are held in place, tied up, or unconscious and therefore cannot fight back or defend themselves. Armor levels are disregarded and the CL a character must exceed to obtain ANY victory level against them is CL1.

# Chases

Chases are far more common than you might think. Just watch any action movie and see if there's a chase scene (there usually is).

In Cogent, chases begin by the Narrator setting a distance level out of 3 categories to the characters in the chase, those being a close distance, medium distance, or long distance.

At a Close Distance, the characters engaged in the chase are relatively near each other, but not near enough to engage in combat without ranged weapons. Narrators must keep 'relativity' in mind when deciding on a level of distance – a Close Distance in a car chase might be considered far away for a chase on foot.

When on foot, the characters use the athletics skill to make chase rolls

When using a vehicle (including mounts) the characters use their ride/pilot skill.

From the initial distance set by the narrator, the players roll against each other using the applicable skill (athletics or ride/pilot). Please note that other skills, vocations and proficiencies can be used to assist the chase role, such as using acrobatics to jump and weave through obstacles to lose your pursuer.

If the pursuer wins the chase roll, the distance between the characters is reduced. If a pursuer wins the chase roll against the target in a close distance, the pursuer 'catches' those trying to flee.

If the characters trying to flee win the chase roll, the distance between them and their pursuers increases until a successful roll at a long distance, whereupon the characters have successfully fled.

When the distance is closed, the target trying to flee were literally stopped, IE their horse can be tripped over, dismounting the target, or their car was run into a tree or wall, damaged so it no longer functions – or they ran into a corner with no easy escape or they were tripped up and are now prone.

The level or severity in how the characters were stopped will depend on how severely they failed the final chase roll. The narrator might even use a destiny roll to determine how bad.

Narrators should use chase scenes as an opportunity to bring excitement to the narrative. Be careful not to let chase scenes become a simple turn-by-turn scenario of "you get closer" or "you get farther away". Instead, describe the obstacles, and make it difficult and exciting.

# Fundamentals of Narration

As this is the very first version of the Alpha of the Cogent Roleplay system, there is much that can be added to these chapters, in particular this chapter on Narration. For now, we will simply encourage Narrators to be inventive, focus on engaging the players through descriptiveness and making sure all participants get equal time.

Beyond these things, it is the Narrator's role to guide the story and provide the fun (no pressure!), and sometimes even Narrators need a little help to keep things fresh and avoid claims of bias towards specific outcomes.

It is for these reasons, that we use a mechanic called the Destiny Roll.

# The Destiny Roll

So far untouched in the text of this manual, the Destiny Roll stands alone as an extremely powerful and dynamic storytelling tool. A destiny roll is made by a 20 sided dice, or D20, and is made by the Narrator, or assigned by the Narrator to be made by a player.

This roll can be applied to endless scenarios, and is used to allow the Narrator to let fate – the roll of a dice – to decide what direction the story will move on in, be that for or against the players goals and desires.

The higher the roll is, and the closer the roll is to 20, the more advantageous the result is to the player(s). Adversely, the lower the roll and the closer it is to 1, the worse the disadvantage. Furthermore, rolling a 20 is considered a critical success, and may allow the Narrator to assign exceptionally advantageous circumstances to the party or player. Likewise, rolling a 1 is always to be considered a critical failure, and will result in all kinds of things the players won't want. Whether they be revealed as immediate or delayed consequences is up to the Narrator.

These rolls may be used in situations of great intensity, to help the Narrator guide the path of the action. They may be used to help break up monotony at random times to see if something good or bad encounters the player, or even what the weather is (see Weather stuff Page #), and they may also be used to determine the intensity of consequence of a players choice.

Here are a few simple examples of the Destiny Roll in action

Scenario	Destiny roll <5	Destiny roll between 6-14	Destiny roll >15
<b>A battle has been waging for several rounds, and the enemy is about to unveil a new threat...</b>	A colossal dragon, loosely chained and ready to attack anything in sight!	A squad of angry soldiers led by a menacing captain!	A siege weapon preparing to fire, but it seems to be constructed late, and might fall apart
<b>The players enter an alley and are greeted by...</b>	A gang of thieves, with weapons drawn!	The town drunk, who looks at you with seductive eyes	An attractive nurse leaving a homestead
<b>You fall through the floor into the room below...</b>	A dungeon, with no apparent means of escape...	A courthouse, whereupon several officials gasp in surprise!	A whorehouse which has been desperate for new customers!

## **Hardcore Combat and Supplementary Content:**

For Hardcore Combat details and Supplimentary content including and example magic system and guides for expanding upon the core rules, please visit the official Cogent Roleplay website and rule book:

[www.CogentRoleplay.com](http://www.CogentRoleplay.com)