SKILL LIST

The skill list is sorted alphabetically by skill name. Each entry gives the following information:

Name: The skill's name. Technological skills are noted as such; e.g., "Machinist/TL." Skills marked with a dagger (†) *require* you to choose a specialty (see *Specialties,* p. 169).

Type: The skill's controlling attribute and difficulty level; e.g., "IQ/Average."

Defaults: The attributes or other skills to which the skill defaults if you have not studied it. Where there is more than one possible default, use the most favorable. Some skills have *no* default – you *cannot* attempt to use these skills if you don't know them.

Prerequisites: Traits you must possess before you can spend points on the skill. If the prerequisite is another skill, you must have at least one point in that skill. Not all skills have prerequisites.

Description: An explanation of what the skill is for and how it works in play.

Modifiers: A list of common bonuses and penalties for use of the skill. The GM decides whether a particular modifier applies in a given situation. If an advantage or disadvantage *permanently* modifies base skill level rather than simply giving a bonus or a penalty for a specific task, add this permanent modifier to the skill level listed on your character sheet.

Accounting

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, Finance-4, Mathematics (Statistics)-5, or Merchant-5.

This is the ability to keep books of account, to examine the condition of a business, etc. A successful Accounting roll (requires at least two hours of study, and possibly months to audit a large corporation) can tell you whether financial records are correct, and possibly reveal evidence of forgery, tampering, and similar criminal activity.

Modifiers: The time modifiers under *Time Spent* (p. 346) often apply; the Talents (p. 89) of Business Acumen and Mathematical Ability *both* provide a bonus.

Acrobatics

DX/Hard

Default: DX-6.

This is the ability to perform gymnastic stunts, roll, take falls, etc. This can be handy on an adventure, as tightrope walking, human pyramids, and trapeze swinging all have useful applications. Each trick requires a separate skill roll, at whatever penalties the GM sees fit. If you are performing stunts on a moving vehicle or mount, roll against the *lower* of Acrobatics and the appropriate Driving or Riding skill.

You may substitute an Acrobatics roll for a DX roll in any attempt to jump, roll, avoid falling down, etc. As well, you may attempt an Acrobatic Dodge in combat – a jump or roll that avoids an attack in a flashy way (see *Acrobatic Dodge,* p. 375). Finally, a successful Acrobatics roll will reduce the effective distance of any fall by five yards (see *Falling,* p. 431).

Two special versions of Acrobatics are also available:

Aerobatics: The ability to execute tight turns, loops, power dives, etc. in flight. You must be able to fly to learn this skill – although *how* you fly (magic, wings, jet pack, etc.) is irrelevant. Natural fliers might find flight to be as effortless as humans find walking, but they must still learn Aerobatics in order to engage in complex acrobatics. Add +2 to skill if you have 3D Spatial Sense (p. 34).

Aquabatics: The ability to engage in underwater acrobatics. *Prerequisites:* Swimming, *or* the Amphibious advantage (p. 40) or the Aquatic disadvantage (p. 145).

Acrobatics, Aerobatics, and Aquabatics default to one another at -4. Add +1 to these three skills if you have Perfect Balance (p. 74).

Acting

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Performance-2, or Public Speaking-5.

This is the ability to counterfeit moods, emotions, and voices, and to lie convincingly over a period of time. A successful Acting roll lets you pretend to feel something that you do not. The GM may also require an Acting roll whenever you try to fool someone, play dead in combat, etc.

Impersonation is a special type of acting. To impersonate someone, you must first successfully disguise yourself (see *Disguise,* p. 187) – unless your victims cannot see you!

Note that Acting is *not* the same Fast-Talk (the art of the "quick con") or Performance (the skill of screen and stage acting).

Modifiers: +1 for every point of IQ you have over the person you are trying to fool (or the smartest one in the group), or -1 for every point of difference if your victim is smarter than you; -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154); -5 for Truthfulness (p. 159), but only if you are trying to deceive someone. *For impersonation only:* -5 if you are not well acquainted with your subject; -5 if those you wish to fool are acquaintances of the subject (-10 for *close* acquaintances).

Administration

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Merchant-3.

This is the skill of running a large organization. It is often a prerequisite for high Rank (p. 29). A successful Administration roll gives you a +2 reaction bonus when dealing with a bureaucrat, and allows you to predict the best way to go about dealing with a bureaucracy.

Aerobatics

see *Acrobatics,* above

Airshipman/TL

see *Crewman,* p. 185

Alchemy/TL

IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: None.

This is the study of magical transformations and transmutations. In a magical game world, an alchemist would be able to identify concoctions with magical effects ("elixirs"), such as

love potions and healing unguents, and prepare them from suitable ingredients. This is a mechanical process, using the mana inherent in certain things; therefore, those without Magery can learn and use Alchemy, and Magery confers no benefit.

Animal Handling†
IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the ability to train and work with animals. You *must* specialize in a category of animals – the more intelligent the animals, the narrower the category. Examples of interest to adventurers: Big Cats (jaguars, lions, tigers, etc.), Dogs, Equines (horses and donkeys), and Raptors (eagles, falcons, and hawks). The default between specialties is -2 within the same order (e.g., Dogs to Big Cats), -4 across orders (e.g., Dogs to Equines), and -6 for larger differences (e.g., Dogs to Raptors).

To train an animal, make an Animal Handling roll once per day of training. A failed roll means the animal learned nothing; a badly failed roll means you are *attacked.* The time it takes to train an animal depends on the beast's intelligence and tractability (see Chapter 16).

When working with a trained animal, roll against skill for each task you set the animal. This roll is at -5 if the animal is not familiar with you, -5 if the circumstances are stressful to the animal, and -3 or more if the task is a complex one. To put on an *entertaining* circus act, snake-charming show, etc., you must make a separate Performance roll!

This skill can also (sometimes) be used to quiet a wild, dangerous, or untrained animal. This roll is at -5 if the creature is wild or very frightened, or -10 if it is a man-eater or man-killer.

Finally, this skill gives an advantage in combat against animals within your specialty. If you have Animal Handling at level 15, an animal's attack and defense rolls are at -1 against you, because you can predict its behavior. At skill 20, the animal's rolls are at -2.

Anthropology†
IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, Paleontology (Paleoanthropology)-2, or Sociology-3.

This is the science of evolution and culture. An anthropologist is knowledgeable in the ways of primitive (and not-so-primitive) societies. An Anthropology roll might explain, or even predict, unusual rituals and folk customs. This skill requires specialization by species (if left unspecified, assume the anthropologist's *own* species). Specialties usually default to one another at -2 to -5, although there may be no default for completely alien species.

Optional Rule: Wildcard Skills

The professor who has studied *every* science, the swordsman who can fight with *any* blade . . . cinematic fiction is full of heroes who know a little bit about everything in one broad area. The time required to list every last skill such a hero might need, and the difficulty of figuring out which skills to take (and which to *use*), might discourage many gamers from playing cinematic experts. Such broad expertise doesn't exist in real life, but it is all part of the fun in cinematic games!

A solution to this problem is "wildcard skills" or "bang skills": skills that cover extremely broad categories of ability. The names of these skills end in an exclamation point in order to distinguish them from normal skills; e.g., "Science!" is the skill of "all science." *Wildcard skills include and replace **all** specific skills within their area.* For instance, a hero could attempt a Science! roll whenever the adventure calls for a roll against Chemistry, Physics, or another science skill.

Wildcard skills that cover mainly intellectual pursuits are IQ-based, while those that pertain chiefly to physical actions are DX-based. Such skills have no default; to use them, you *must* spend points on them. Buy wildcard skills as Very Hard skills, but at *triple* the usual point cost. For instance, it would normally cost 8 points to buy an IQ/Very Hard skill at IQ level, so Science! skill at IQ level would cost 24 points.

The GM might choose to limit wildcard skills to those with a suitable Unusual Background – perhaps "Cinematic Hero." This Unusual Background should never be available to sidekicks and random thugs! To give each hero a well-defined dramatic niche, the GM might wish to limit PCs to one or two wildcard skills apiece (preferably those that emerge naturally from their character stories).

Some examples:

Detective! (IQ). Replaces Criminology, Detect Lies, Electronics Operation (Security and Surveillance), Forensics, Interrogation, Law, Observation, Research, Savoir-Faire (Police), Search, Shadowing, Streetwise, etc.

Gun! (DX). Replaces *all* specialties of Beam Weapons, Gunner, Guns, and Liquid Projector, as well as all related Fast-Draw skills. Make an IQ-based roll for Armoury pertaining to these weapons.

Science! (IQ). Replaces Astronomy, Bioengineering, Biology, Chemistry, Engineer, Geology, Mathematics, Metallurgy, Meteorology, Naturalist, Paleontology, Physics, Psychology, etc.

Sword! (DX). Replaces Broadsword, Force Sword, Jitte/Sai, Knife, Main-Gauche, Rapier, Saber, Shortsword, Smallsword, and Two-Handed Sword, as well as related Fast-Draw skills. Use in place of such skills as Acrobatics and Jumping for physical stunts while fighting.

Wildcard skills are useful for omniproficient characters. Someone who can pick up and play *any* instrument, or sight-read *any* choral work, would have the Music! skill. If he's gifted with several instruments and can pick up others easily (but does have to learn them first), that's the Musical Ability Talent.

Aquabatics

see *Acrobatics,* p. 174

Archaeology

IQ/Hard

Default: IQ-6.

This is the study of ancient civilizations. An archaeologist is at home with excavations, old potsherds, inscriptions, etc. An Archaeology roll lets you answer questions about ancient history, or identify artifacts and dead languages. It might even reveal information relating to the occult; e.g., Ancient Secrets and Things Man Was Not Meant To Know . . .

Architecture/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Engineer (Civil)-4.

This is the ability to design buildings, and to deduce the design of buildings from their function (and vice versa). A successful Architecture roll lets you learn things about a strange building, find a secret room or door, etc.

Modifiers: -2 if the building is of a strange type; -5 if it is alien.

Area Knowledge†

IQ/Easy

Defaults: IQ-4 or Geography (Regional)-3*

* You have an IQ default only for Area Knowledge of a place where you live or once lived. Geography only gives a default for Area Knowledge of the specialty region.

This skill represents familiarity with the people, places, and politics of a given region. You usually have Area Knowledge only for the area you consider your "home base," whether that's a single farm or a solar system. If information about other areas is available, the GM may allow you to learn additional Area Knowledge skills.

The GM should not require Area Knowledge rolls for ordinary situations; e.g., to find the blacksmith, tavern, or your own home. But he could require a roll to locate a smith to shoe

Geographical and Temporal Scope

Skills such as Area Knowledge, Current Affairs (Regional) (p. 186), Geography (Regional) (p. 198), and History (p. 200) require specialization to specific places and times. In reality, this kind of knowledge is never "clear cut," and tends to spill over into related areas. The following penalties apply when you wish to use such a skill outside your specialty.

Distance

For an area far from your "stomping grounds," use the penalties under *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. 241). However, the speed at which knowledge propagates increases as progressively more powerful tools for managing information appear: printing press, telephone, television, computers, faster-than-light radio, etc. To reflect this, at TL5 and above, the GM may choose to roll 3d against TL+1 (e.g., 9 or less at TL8) to determine whether you are familiar with the distant region from TV, the Internet, etc. On a success, you may *ignore* all distance penalties. (The GM might also wish to use this rule to determine whether a character's Reputation is known far from home in a high-tech setting.)

Time

Time is usually only a concern for History skill – but it could also apply to Area Knowledge skill in a time-travel game, or if someone has been away from home for a *long* time. Use the Long-Distance Modifiers once again, substituting *years* for *miles*. For each point of tech-level difference, *double* the time modifier (a two-TL difference would be ×4, etc.). This is because societies change drastically on all levels when technology increases.

Area Class

"Area classes" are defined under Area Knowledge skill: Neighborhood; Village or Town; City; Barony, County, Duchy, or Small Nation; Large Nation; Planet; Interplanetary State; and Galaxy. Area class becomes important in campaigns that involve a lot of travel. We assume here that the smaller areas are contained within the larger ones.

If you have specialized in a *larger* area and want information about a *smaller* area within it, the penalty is -2 for one class of difference, -4 for two, -8 for three, and so on, doubling each time.

If you have specialized in a *smaller* area and want information about a specific locale within the *larger* area containing it, the most appropriate solution is usually to use the distance penalties described above. However, questions having to do with the *entire* large area use a flat -2 per difference in levels.

Example: Someone with Area Knowledge (Earth) would be at -8 – due to three classes of difference – to know the mayor of Los Angeles. However, someone with Area Knowledge (Los Angeles) would be at -4 to know the location of Mount Rushmore. The same person would be at -10 to know the location of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; the Library of Congress has more to do with Washington than with the United States as a whole, and it's more appropriate to resolve the question by considering distance.

Note that in a setting with multiple planes of existence, Area Knowledge skills for one reality can be dangerously unreliable in another. The GM decides the penalty that he will apply when you try to apply your knowledge of *your* San Francisco to *his* version.

your horse at 3 a.m., or to find the best ambush spot along a stretch of road. "Secret" or obscure information might give a penalty, require a Hidden Lore skill (p. 199), or simply be unavailable – GM's decision. For instance, Area Knowledge of Washington, D.C. gives you the location of the Russian Embassy, but not the KGB's current safe house.

The information covered by Area Knowledge often overlaps such skills as Current Affairs, Geography, Naturalist, and Streetwise. The difference is that Area Knowledge works for a single area: you know the habits of *this* tiger or gang boss, but have no special insight into tigers or gangs in general.

You can learn Area Knowledge for any sort of area. The larger the territory, the less "personal" and more general your knowledge becomes. Almost everyone will have Area Knowledge of *some* type. The "canonical" area classes are:

Neighborhood: For an urban area: the residents and buildings of a few city blocks. For a rural area: the inhabitants, trails, streams, hiding places, ambush sites, flora, and fauna of a few hundred acres.

Village or Town: All important citizens and businesses, and most unimportant ones; all public buildings and most houses.

City: All important businesses, streets, citizens, leaders, etc.

Barony, County, Duchy, or Small Nation: General nature of its settlements and towns, political allegiances, leaders, and most citizens of Status 5+.

Large Nation: Location of its major cities and important sites; awareness of its major customs, ethnic groups, and languages (but not necessarily expertise); names of folk of Status 6+; and a general understanding of the economic and political situation.

Planet: As for a large nation, but more general; knowledge of people of Status 7+ only.

Interplanetary State: Location of major planets; familiarity with all *known* races (but not necessarily expertise); knowledge of people of Status 7+; general understanding of the economic and political situation.

Galaxy: Location of the capitals of interplanetary states and the homeworlds of major races; general awareness of all *major* races; knowledge of individuals of Status 8; general understanding of relations between interplanetary states.

Area Knowledge for anything larger than a galaxy would be meaninglessly vague.

Your IQ-4 default applies to *any* of these classes, as long as you have lived in the area. Defaults are limited by "common knowledge" at your tech level! A TL0 hunter would have a default for every level up to "Village or Town," while a TL8 student would have defaults up to "Planet" level. You must live in an interplanetary or interstellar state to have defaults for levels above "Planet."

In some game worlds, Area Knowledge specialties may exist for parallel realities and other dimensions – Area Knowledge (Cyberspace), Area Knowledge (Dream Realms), etc. The knowledge such skills provide is left to the GM's judgment.

Armoury/TL†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Engineer (same)-4.

This is the ability to build, modify, and repair a specific class of weapons or armor. (It does not include skill at design; for that, see *Engineer*, p. 190.) A successful roll lets you find a problem, if it isn't obvious; a second roll lets you repair it. Time required is up to the GM.

You *must* specialize in one of the following fields:

Battlesuits: All kinds of powered armor, along with any built-in weaponry.

Body Armor: Any kind of unpowered personal armor (but *not* shields). Also defaults to Smith (Bronze)-3 at TL1, to Smith (Iron)-3 at TL2-4, and to Machinist-3 at TL5+.

Force Shields: Any kind of force screen or deflector – be it personal or vehicular. This is the same skill as Electronics Repair (Force Shields).

Heavy Weapons: All weapons used with the Artillery and Gunner skills.

Melee Weapons: Any weapon used with a Melee Weapon or Thrown Weapon skill, as well as all kinds of shields. Also defaults to Smith (Bronze)-3 at TL1, to Smith (Iron)-3 at TL2-4, and to Machinist-3 at TL5+.

Missile Weapons: Man-portable, pre-gunpowder projectile weapons of all kinds – bows, crossbows, slings, etc.

Small Arms: All weapons used with the Beam Weapons and Guns skills. Also defaults to Machinist-5 at TL5+.

Vehicular Armor: All kinds of armored vehicle hulls.

Most specialties default to one another at -4 – but above TL4, there is *no* default between Armoury specialties dealing with armor and Armoury specialties dealing with weapons. The technologies covered by each specialty vary with TL. For instance, Armoury (Small Arms) covers black-powder small arms at TL4, repeating small arms that fire cartridges at TL6, "smart" infantry weapons at TL8, and portable beam weapons at TL10.

The GM should strictly enforce penalties for unfamiliarity. Armoury/TL10 (Small Arms) might cover both beam weapons and portable railguns, but going from one to the other gives you -2 to skill until you familiarize yourself with all the differences.

Modifiers: -2 for an unfamiliar item within your specialty (e.g., plate armor when you're used to mail); equipment modifiers (p. 345).

Artillery/TL†

IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the ability to use a heavy weapon, such as a trebuchet or a howitzer, for *indirect* fire – that is, to put fire onto a target area via a high ballistic arc or similar path. For *direct* fire, use Gunner skill (p. 198). Roll against Artillery skill to bombard the target.

Loaders can make ST-based Artillery rolls to improve the rate of fire of certain crew-served heavy weapons. See the appropriate weapon description for details.

You *must* specialize by weapon type. The available specialties vary by TL, but include one or more of:

Beams: Any kind of heavy energy weapon that is fired from orbit, bounced off a mirror, or otherwise used against targets you cannot see.

Bombs: All kinds of unpowered, free-falling munitions.

Cannon: Any kind of heavy projectile weapon – bombard, howitzer, naval gun, etc.

Catapult: Any kind of indirect-fire mechanical siege engine, such as a trebuchet.

Guided Missile: Any kind of seeking or remotely piloted missile.

Torpedoes: Any kind of powered underwater projectile.

There is *no* default between specialties, some of which (e.g., Torpedoes) cover weapons that bear little or no resemblance to true artillery. Artillery is a single skill only because all the weapons it covers use the same rules.

The weapons covered by each specialty will vary by TL. For instance, Artillery (Cannon) would cover primitive bombards at TL3, brass cannon at TL4, breech-loading howitzers at TL6, and orbital railguns at TL9+.

Familiarity is crucial here! Artillery (Cannon) covers both 81mm infantry mortars and 406mm naval guns, but going from one to the other will give -2 for weapon type (81mm vs. 406mm), -2 for fire-control (visual spotting vs. fire-direction center), and -2 for mount (bipod vs. naval turret), for a total of -6 to skill until you familiarize yourself with all the differences.

Note that Forward Observer skill (p. 196) is generally required to designate targets for Artillery skill.

Modifiers: All relevant combat modifiers; -2 for an unfamiliar fire-control system (e.g., map coordinates when you're used to satellite imagery) or mount (e.g., a naval turret when you're used to emplaced guns), or for an unfamiliar weapon of a known type (e.g., 155mm when you are used to 203mm); -4 or more for a weapon in bad repair.

Artist†
IQ/Hard

Default: IQ-6.

This skill represents talent at a visual art. A successful roll might let you create a recognizable likeness of a person or an object, or a work beautiful enough to sell (the GM should not allow a default roll for this use!). Time required is up to the GM.

Artist is based on IQ, but there are many situations in which the GM could logically ask for a DX-based roll, in which case modifiers for High Manual Dexterity (p. 59) or Ham-Fisted (p. 138) would apply. In rare cases, even a *ST*-based Artist roll might make sense – for instance, to work with a physically tough material.

You *must* specialize in an art form. Common specialties include:

Body Art: Tattooing, piercing, and scarification. Both this specialty and Painting suffice for henna or temporary tattoos, but cosmetic *surgery* requires Surgery skill (p. 223).
Calligraphy: Beautiful and decorative handwriting. You need not be literate!
Drawing: All forms of charcoal, ink, pastel, and pencil work.
Illumination: Decorating written text with miniature paintings and pictures.
Illusion: Creating believable or evocative illusions. *Prerequisite:* magical or psionic illusion ability of some kind.
Interior Decorating: Creating pleasing building interiors by selecting appropriate paints, fixtures, and furniture. *Default:* Architecture-3.
Painting: All forms of painting, whether on paper, canvas, or a wall, and whether with tempera, oil-based

paint, or something more exotic (like blood).
Pottery: Working with various sorts of ceramics – especially clay.
Scene Design: Designing sets for the stage. *Default:* Architecture-3.
Sculpting: Creating three-dimensional art from ivory, stone, metal, etc.
Woodworking: All forms of fine woodwork, including cabinet-making and decorative carving. *Default:* Carpentry-3.

Calligraphy, Drawing, Illumination, and Painting default to one another at -2, and to or from Body Art at -4. Interior Decorating, Scene Design, and Woodworking default among themselves at -4. All other Artist specialties default to one another at -6.

An artist of any kind can take a further *optional* specialty (p. 169) in a particular medium or technique.

Many Artist specialties are used to earn a living rather than to create fine art, and some people regard them as "craft" skills, not "art" skills. It is up to *you* whether you focus on beauty, realism, or functionality.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); -2 if the medium is unfamiliar (e.g., tempera when you are used to oils); -5 if the medium is difficult (e.g., marble, for a sculptor).

Astronomy/TL
IQ/Hard

Default: IQ-6.
Prerequisite: Mathematics (Applied).

This is the study of stars and other extraplanetary objects. An astronomer could answer questions about the Sun, the planets of the solar system, etc. An amateur who can locate stars and use a telescope, but not perform involved calculations, has an *optional* specialty (p. 169): Astronomy (Observational). This specialty does *not* require Mathematics as a prerequisite.

Autohypnosis
Will/Hard

Default: Meditation-4.

This skill allows you to tap reserves of inner strength by entering a trance-like state. It requires a concentration

period of (20 - skill) seconds, minimum one second. You cannot talk or move during the initiation of the trance state. A successful skill roll allows you to do *one* of the following:

Improve Concentration. You get +2 to skill to perform a specific, lengthy mental task (e.g., break a code or write a computer program), but -2 to all unrelated IQ, Perception, and skill rolls. The task must be a relatively sedate one, done in a quiet place (library, lab, monastery, or placid wilderness).
Increase Will. You get +2 to Will (+5 on a critical success) for one hour. This applies to all attempts to resist interrogation, torture, or magical or psionic attack. This roll is at -2.
Negate Pain/Fatigue. Cancels the negative effects of being reduced to less than 1/3 of your FP or HP (but *not* the fatigue or injury itself). This roll is at -4, and you may only make one attempt per hour.

Axe/Mace
see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Battlesuit/TL
see *Environment Suit,* p. 192

Beam Weapons/TL†
DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to use beam small arms. You *must* specialize by weapon type:

Pistol: Any handgun that fires an energy or particle beam.
Projector: Any energy weapon that emits an area-effect cone or field.
Rifle: Any long arm that fires an energy or particle beam.

These specialties default to one another at -4. Treat specific beam types (blaster, laser, stunner, etc.) as familiarities. Other modifiers are as per *Guns* (p. 198). In settings with both beam and projectile weapons, the Pistol and Rifle specialties of Beam Weapons default to the similarly named Guns specialties at -4, and vice versa.

See *Artillery* (p. 178) and *Gunner* (p. 198) for heavier beam weapons.

Bicycling

DX/Easy

Defaults: DX-4 or Driving (Motorcycle)-4.

This is the ability to ride a bicycle long distances, at high speeds, in rallies, etc. Roll at +4 if all you want to do is struggle along without falling off. An IQ-based Bicycling roll allows you to make simple repairs, assuming tools and parts are available.

Bioengineering/TL†

IQ/Hard

Default: Biology-5.

This is the ability to engineer living organisms with specific characteristics, or to create biotechnological products. You *must* specialize:

Cloning: The creation and growth of clones.
Genetic Engineering: The manipulation and modification of genes.
Tissue Engineering: The manufacture of organs and tissues.

These specialties default to each other at -4.

Biology/TL†

IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 or Naturalist-6.

This is the scientific study of the structure, behavior, and habitats of living organisms. You *must* specialize in the life of a particular planet type (see box). If you do not specify a planet type, your native planet type is assumed. The IQ default applies only to the planet type you grew up on. The default between different planet-type specialties is -4.

At TL6+, most biologists have an *optional* specialty (p. 169) as well. The most common options are biochemistry (the study of the chemical reactions that sustain life), botany (the study of plants), ecology (the study of environments), genetics (the study of heredity and genomes), marine biology (the study of ocean life), microbiology (the study of microscopic organisms), and zoology (the study of animals), but more obscure specialties are possible.

Planet Types

Biology, Geology (p. 198), and Meteorology (p. 209) *require* you to specialize by "planet type," as does the "Physical" specialty of Geography (p. 198). If you do not specify a planet type, your native planet type is assumed – so if the campaign will never leave your home world, save space and just write "Geology," "Biology," etc. **GURPS** sorts planets into six broad categories for these purposes.

Earthlike: Essentially, all habitable worlds.
Gas Giants: Jupiter/Uranus types.
Hostile Terrestrial: Venus types.
Ice Dwarfs: Comets and small moons composed almost entirely of snow or ice.
Ice Worlds: Rock worlds covered by a frozen "ocean."
Rock Worlds: Most moons, asteroids, etc.

Unless otherwise specified, all planet-type specialties for a given skill default to one another at -4.

Blind Fighting

Per/Very Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master or Weapon Master.

You have learned to fight blindfolded or in absolute darkness. As a result, you can "sense" your targets without having to see them.

This skill enables you to use senses other than vision – mainly hearing, but also touch and even smell – to pinpoint exactly where your opponents are. A successful roll allows one melee attack or active defense without any penalties for lighting (even total darkness), blindness (temporary or permanent), or an invisible foe. However, attacks made in total darkness, while blind, or against invisible enemies have an extra -2 to target specific hit locations.

If you also know Zen Archery (p. 228), you can shoot targets without seeing them by making rolls on both skills at -6.

An opponent who knows you possess this ability can foil it by winning a Quick Contest of Stealth-4 vs. your Blind Fighting each turn. If he wins, you cannot detect him. However, Invisibility Art (p. 202) never works on you; it is completely useless against this skill.

Modifiers: Background noise gives a penalty: -1 for rain, -2 for heavy rain or a storm, -3 for a crowded, noisy area or heavy machinery, -4 for a full football stadium, or -5 in the middle of an artillery barrage. If you cannot hear *at all,* the roll is at -7, but you may still attempt a roll, as the skill is not completely based on hearing. Add your level of Acute Hearing to the roll. Add the *higher* of your ESP Talent (p. 256) or Telepathy Talent (p. 257).

Blowpipe

DX/Hard

Default: DX-6.

This is the ability to use a blowpipe. You can use this weapon to shoot small, usually poisoned, darts. You can also use it to blow powders at targets within one yard. Treat this as a melee attack, not as a ranged attack. Such attacks are always at +2 to hit.

Modifiers: -2 and up for wind, if outdoors.

Boating/TL†

DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5 or IQ-5.

This is the ability to handle a specific type of *small* watercraft. For large vessels that require multiple crewmen on a "bridge," use Seamanship (see *Crewman,* p. 185) and Shiphandling (p. 220).

Make a roll to get underway, to dock, and whenever you encounter a hazard. If using this skill at default,

also roll when you first enter the boat – to avoid falling in the water!

You *must* specialize:

Large Powerboat: Any boat with an enclosed cabin and an inboard motor. Includes cabin cruisers, houseboats, and patrol boats. *Defaults:* Motorboat-2, Sailboat-4, or Unpowered-4. This specialty (only) also defaults to Seamanship-4.

Motorboat: Any open powerboat – notably speedboats and any of the boats used with the Sailboat or Unpowered specialty when outfitted with an outboard motor. *Defaults:* Large Powerboat-2, Sailboat-3, or Unpowered-3.

Sailboat: Any small watercraft moving under sail. *Defaults:* Large Powerboat-4, Motorboat-3, or Unpowered-3.

Unpowered: Any small watercraft that relies on muscle power, whether it is paddled, rowed, or poled. Includes canoes, rowboats, and rafts. *Defaults:* Large Powerboat-4, Motorboat-3, or Sailboat-3.

Modifiers: -2 for an unfamiliar boat within your specialty (e.g., a kayak when you're used to a rowboat); -3 or worse for foul weather, navigational hazards, etc.

Body Control

HT/Very Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master, Breath Control, and Meditation.

This ability lets you affect involuntary bodily functions such as heart rate, blood flow, and digestion. One use of this skill is to enter a deathlike trance, during which only those who can win a Quick Contest of Diagnosis vs. your Body Control skill even realize that you are alive. This requires (30 - skill) seconds of concentration, minimum one second.

You can also use this skill to flush poisons from your body. To do so, you must first roll against Poisons (or Alchemy, Pharmacy, etc., as appropriate) to identify the poison. You cannot attempt this roll until you know you have been poisoned. In most cases, you only discover this when the first symptoms show! A successful Body Control roll – adjusted by any modifier to the HT roll to resist the poison –

flushes the poison in 1d hours, after which it has no further effect.

Finally, you may use the *higher* of this skill and basic HT to resist any Affliction, magic spell, or psionic attack that is normally resisted by HT.

Body Language

Per/Average

Defaults: Detect Lies-4 or Psychology-4.

This is the ability to interpret a person's facial expressions and body posture in order to gauge his feelings. You can use it like the Empathy advantage (p. 51) or Detect Lies skill (p. 187), but only on a subject you can *see*. You can also use it to get a rough idea of what a party member is doing or about to do in a situation where he cannot communicate with you directly (for instance, when using Stealth). You can only observe one subject at a time.

The ability to read body language in *combat* is a standard part of any Melee Weapon or unarmed combat skill; see *Feint* (p. 365).

Modifiers: All Vision modifiers; physiology modifiers (see box); +4 if your subject is Easy to Read (p. 134). Anything that makes the subject harder to "read" gives a penalty: baggy clothing gives -1, a shield or a voluminous cloak gives from -2 to -4,

and a mask gives -5 (and makes it *impossible* to use this skill if you cannot see the rest of the body!).

Body Sense

DX/Hard

Defaults: DX-6 or Acrobatics-3.

This is the ability to adjust quickly after teleportation or similar "instant movement." A successful roll lets you act normally on your next turn. A failed roll means disorientation: you may take no action other than defense for one turn. A critical failure means you *fall down,* physically stunned!

Modifiers: +3 for either level of Absolute Direction (p. 34). -2 if you changed facing, or -5 if you went from vertical to horizontal or vice versa (you cannot change *posture* during a teleport – only orientation).

Bolas

DX/Average

Defaults: None.

This is the ability to throw the *bolas:* a length of cord with two or more weights attached. Its primary uses are to stop herd animals and to hunt small game, but it can also entangle opponents in combat. See *Special Ranged Weapons* (p. 410) for bolas rules.

Physiology Modifiers

The following skills deal with the health, function, or vital points of living beings: Body Language, Diagnosis (p. 187), First Aid (p. 195), Physician (p. 213), Pressure Points (p. 215), Pressure Secrets (p. 215), and Surgery (p. 223). These skills work as written when working with members of *your* species. When dealing with a member of *another* species, apply the following modifiers:

Species with similar physiology: -2 (human vs. Elf) to -4 (human vs. troll).

Species with very different physiology, but still from your world: -5. This includes all normal animals.

Utterly alien species: -6 or worse (GM's option).

Machine: No roll possible! These skills do not work at all on creatures with the Machine meta-trait (p. 263).

A successful roll against a suitable skill lets you avoid these penalties. This roll is usually against the relevant racial specialty of Physiology, although Biology-4 suffices for common animals.

Bow

DX/Average

Default: DX-5.

This is the ability to use the long-bow, short bow, and all similar bows. It also covers the compound bow, although a person who had never seen a compound bow would suffer a -2 unfamiliarity penalty.

Boxing

DX/Average

Defaults: None.

This is the skill of trained punching. Roll against Boxing to hit with a punch. Boxing does *not* improve kicking ability – use Brawling (p. 182) or Karate (p. 203) for that.

Boxing improves damage: if you know Boxing at DX+1 level, add +1 *per die* to basic thrust damage when you calculate punching damage. Add +2 per die if you know Boxing at DX+2 or better! Work out damage ahead of time and record it on your character sheet.

When you defend with bare hands, Boxing allows you to parry two *different* attacks per turn, one with each hand. Your Parry score is (skill/2) + 3, rounded down. Boxing parries are at -2 vs. kicks and -3 vs. weapons other than thrusting attacks. Boxing also gives an improved retreating bonus when you parry; see *Retreat* (p. 377). For more on barehanded parries, see *Parrying Unarmed* (p. 376).

Brain Hacking

see *Brainwashing,* below

Brainwashing/TL

IQ/Hard

Defaults: Special.
Prerequisite: Psychology.

This is the "black art" of technological personality alteration and mind control. Only intelligence, military, and security services teach it – and only to individuals with suitable Rank or Security Clearance. Even then, it is rare outside police states (except perhaps during wartime).

Brainwashing encompasses many techniques – some proven, others little better than witchcraft. Depending on the setting, these might include drugs, electroshock, hypnotism, sensory deprivation, sleep deprivation, social pressure, subliminal messages, or surgery . . . and most likely a combination of several of these.

Regardless of the techniques employed, brainwashing is handled as a Regular Contest (*not* a Quick Contest) between Brainwashing skill and the victim's Will. Roll once per day. Obviously, the brainwasher has a tremendous advantage: even if the victim wins *this* time, it is only a matter of time before he slips.

Results depend on how effective the GM deems brainwashing to be, but might include insanity, personality alteration, or suggestions that can be triggered by future events. In game terms, the victim can acquire almost any *mental* quirk or disadvantage.

In settings where neural interfaces exist, it might be possible to "hack" the victim's brain using a computer. This takes only a *fraction of a second* per attempt! Brain Hacking should be treated as its own skill, with Computer Hacking instead of Psychology as a prerequisite.

This skill normally has no default. However, GMs who wish to explore the gory details can specify the techniques used in their campaign and have Brainwashing default to one or more of Electronics Operation (Medical)-6, Hypnotism-6, Interrogation-6, Pharmacy-6, Psychology-6, or Surgery-6, as appropriate.

Brawling

DX/Easy

Defaults: None.

This is the skill of "unscientific" unarmed combat. Roll against Brawling to hit with a punch, or Brawling-2 to hit with a kick. Brawling can also replace DX when you attack with teeth, claws, horns, or other "natural weapons."

Brawling improves damage: if you know Brawling at DX+2 level or better, add +1 *per die* to basic thrust damage when you calculate damage with Brawling attacks – punches, kicks, claws, bites, etc. Work out damage ahead of time and record it on your character sheet.

Brawling includes the ability to use the blackjack or sap. An attack with such a fist load is considered a punch at +1 to damage.

When you defend with bare hands, Brawling allows you to parry two *different* attacks per turn, one with each hand. Your Parry score is (skill/2) + 3, rounded down. Brawling parries are at -3 vs. weapons other than thrusting attacks. For more on barehanded parries, see *Parrying Unarmed* (p. 376).

Breaking Blow

IQ/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisite: Trained By A Master.

This skill allows you to find the weakest spot in any object when making a barehanded attack. Each attack requires a separate Breaking Blow roll. Roll against skill *after* you hit. Breaking Blow costs 1 FP per attempt, whether or not you hit.

On a success, your attack gains an armor divisor of (5) against any braced, inanimate, homogenous target (see *Injury to Unliving, Homogenous, and Diffuse Targets,* p. 380), and you may treat the target as if it were Fragile (Brittle) (p. 136) for this one attack.

In a cinematic game, you are not limited to inanimate targets. Your armor divisor affects any *artificial* armor or force field (*not* natural DR), and you may treat homogenous *opponents* as if they were Fragile (Brittle)!

On a failure, your attack gains no special benefits. On a critical failure, you do the damage to your own hand or foot.

Modifiers: -10 if used *instantly,* dropping to -5 after 1 turn of concentration, -4 after 2 turns, -3 after 4 turns, -2 after 8 turns, -1 after 16 turns, and no penalty after 32 turns. -1 if your target is wood or plastic, -3 if brick or stone, or -5 if metal or high-tech composites.

Breath Control

HT/Hard

Defaults: None.

This is the ability to breathe at maximum efficiency. On a successful skill roll, you can increase the time you can hold your breath for any reason (e.g., underwater) by 50%, or regain one FP in only two minutes (you cannot combine this with magic spells that restore FP).

Broadsword

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Camouflage

IQ/Easy

Defaults: IQ-4 or Survival-2.

This is the ability to use natural materials, special fabrics and paints, etc. to hide yourself, your position, or your equipment. To see through your camouflage, an observer must win a Quick Contest of Vision or Observation skill (p. 211) vs. your Camouflage skill.

Depending on the circumstances, successful camouflage might hide its subject entirely or merely blur its outlines to make it harder to hit (-1 to attacker's skill). Camouflage will not improve your Stealth roll, but if you fail a Stealth roll while camouflaged, those who *heard* you must still see through your camouflage to *see* you.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345). Apply a *penalty* equal to the Size Modifier of a large object (e.g., -5 for a tank with SM +5). This makes it difficult to camouflage large objects, but remember that distant observers suffer large Vision penalties for range – see *Vision* (p. 358).

Captivate

see *Enthrallment,* p. 191

Carousing

HT/Easy

Default: HT-4.

This is the skill of socializing, partying, etc. A successful Carousing roll, under the right circumstances, gives you a +2 bonus on a request for aid or information, or just on a general reaction. A failed roll means you made a fool of yourself in some way; you get a -2 penalty on any reaction roll made by those you caroused with. If you do your carousing in the wrong places, a failed roll can have other dangers!

Modifiers: Up to +3 for buying drinks or other entertainment for your fellow carousers; -3 for Killjoy (p. 140); -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154).

Carpentry

IQ/Easy

Default: IQ-4.

This is the ability to build things out of wood. A successful roll lets you do one hour's worth of competent carpentry. A failed roll means the work was bad. The GM may require DX-based Carpentry rolls for certain kinds of fine work.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); +5 if you are being supervised or assisted by someone with skill 15 or better.

Cartography/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Geography (any) -2, Mathematics (Surveying)-2, or Navigation (any)-4.

This is the ability to create and interpret maps and charts. Roll against this skill to map any location as you move through it. At TL7+, this skill includes knowledge of computer mapping techniques and generating maps from sensor information.

Chemistry/TL

IQ/Hard

Default: IQ-6 or Alchemy-3.

This is the study of matter. A chemist can identify elements and simple compounds (but not necessarily drugs, magical substances, etc.). Given proper equipment, he could conduct complex analyses and syntheses.

Climbing

DX/Average

Default: DX-5.

This is the ability to climb mountains, rock walls, trees, the sides of buildings, etc. See *Climbing* (p. 349) for details.

Modifiers: +2 for Brachiator (p. 41); +3 for Flexibility *or* +5 for Double-Jointed (p. 56); +1 for Perfect Balance (p. 74); a penalty equal to encumbrance level (e.g., -1 for Light encumbrance).

Cloak
DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5, Net-4, or Shield (any)-4.

This is the skill of using a cloak or a cape as a weapon. It covers the use of two types of cloak: the waist-length "light cloak" (any cloak, cape, or coat weighing less than 5 lbs.) and the full-length "heavy cloak" (any cloak weighing 5 lbs. or more).

Offensively, you can use a cloak to entangle an opponent – see *Special Melee Weapon Rules* (p. 404) for details. You can also snap a cloak in your opponent's face or simply use it to block his vision, either of which counts as a Feint maneuver.

Defensively, a cloak works much like a shield. It provides a Defense Bonus (+1 if light, +2 if heavy) and gives a Block defense equal to (skill/2) + 3, rounded down. A cloak is not as robust as a shield, though! A light cloak has only DR 1 and 3 HP, while a heavy cloak has DR 1 and 5 HP.

Combat Art or Sport
DX/Varies

Defaults: Special.

You can opt to learn most combat skills in nonlethal forms aimed at either exhibition (Combat Art skill) or competition (Combat Sport skill).

Combat Art skills emphasize graceful movements and perfect stances. Since these skills still give a default to full-fledged, lethal combat skills (see below), they are a logical choice for Pacifists who want *some* combat ability.

Combat Sport skills concentrate on speed of movement and nondamaging attacks. A failed skill roll means a foul that might disqualify you from a tournament! You can make an IQ-based roll against Combat Sport to recall *basic* tournament rules, but to become a qualified judge or referee, learn the relevant Games skill (p. 197).

Combat Art and Sport skills are DX-based, with the same difficulty level and defaults as the corresponding combat skill. A combat skill, its Art form, and its Sport form default among themselves at -3. For instance, Staff Art and Staff Sport are DX/Average skills that default to DX-5, just like Staff skill (p. 208). A fighter with Staff at 15 would have default Staff Art and Staff Sport skills of 12, while an athlete with Staff Sport at 15 would have Staff and Staff Art skills at 12 by default.

Computer Hacking/TL
IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisite: Computer Programming.

This is the skill of gaining illegal access to a computer system – usually using another computer over a communications network. A successful Computer Hacking roll allows you to gain surreptitious access to a system, or to find (or change) information on a system you have already broken into. On a critical failure, you fail to gain access *and* leave some sort of incriminating evidence of your attempt.

This skill is cinematic, and simulates the way computer intrusion works in many movies and novels. It does not exist in realistic settings! Realistic "hackers" should learn a combination of Computer Operation (to exploit OS loopholes and run intrusion software), Computer Programming (to *write* intrusion software), Cryptography, Electronics Operation (Communications or Surveillance), Electronics Repair (Computers), Fast-Talk (to convince legitimate users to reveal passwords), Research (to find documented security holes), and Scrounging (to "Dumpster dive" for manuals, passwords on discarded sticky notes, etc.).

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345). -1 to -10 if you have been away from the field for a long time and have not had a chance to become familiar with the changes. Security measures give a penalty, from -1 for the cheapest commercial security software to -15 for the latest technology. Some measures *resist* your intrusion attempt; treat this as a Quick Contest of Hacking vs. the effective skill of the defenses.

Computer Operation/TL
IQ/Easy

Default: IQ-4.

This is the ability to use a computer: call up data, run programs, play games, etc. It is the only computer skill needed by most end users. Learn Computer Programming (below) to write software and Electronics Repair (Computers) (p. 190) to troubleshoot hardware.

This skill only exists in game worlds with computers. Individuals from settings without computers cannot even use it by default until they have had time to gain familiarity with computers! In settings where it is possible to "jack" your brain into a computer, Computer Operation includes the ability to use a neural interface, but new users initially suffer a -4 penalty for unfamiliarity (see *Familiarity,* p. 169).

Modifiers: -2 or more for an unfamiliar computer, operating system, or program.

Computer Programming/TL
IQ/Hard

Defaults: None.

This is the ability to write and debug computer software. A successful roll lets you find a bug in a program, determine a program's purpose by examining the code, answer a question about computer programming, or write a new program (time required is up to the GM).

In settings where artificial intelligence (AI) exists, those who wish to work with AI must learn Computer Programming (AI). There is no default between this skill and regular Computer Programming. When using Detect Lies, Fast-Talk, Psychology, Teaching, and similar "social" skills on an AI, roll against the *lower* of Computer Programming (AI) and the relevant skill.

Modifiers: -2 or more for an unfamiliar programming language (see *Familiarity,* p. 169). The time modifiers under *Time Spent* (p. 346) will often apply. When writing a program that deals with a specialized field of knowledge, the GM may require a roll against the *lower* of Computer Programming and your skill in that field (e.g., a Mathematics specialty for a complex mathematical program, or the lower of Teaching skill and a "subject" skill for an expert system that will assist users with a particular subject).

Connoisseur†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 and others.

This skill represents an *educated* understanding of art and luxury items. It is vital to art dealers, critics, master thieves, and anyone who wishes to appear cultured. A successful roll lets you predict what critics will think of a piece of art, assess how much it will fetch on the market (+1 to Merchant skill when trading it), or impress the culturally literate (may give +1 to Savoir-Faire or reaction rolls, at the GM's option).

You *must* specialize. Specialties include Dance, Literature, Music, Visual Arts, and Wine. Each specialty defaults to skills used to *study* or *create* the art at -3: Connoisseur (Literature) defaults to Literature, Poetry, or Writing at -3; Connoisseur (Music) defaults to Group Performance (Conducting), Musical Composition, or Musical Instrument at -3; and so on.

Modifiers: Cultural Familiarity modifiers (p. 23); -3 for Killjoy (p. 140).

Cooking

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Housekeeping-5.

This is the skill of being a chef – you do not need it to heat water and open boxes, or to cook rat-on-a-stick over your campfire. A successful skill roll allows you to prepare a pleasing meal. Many chefs have an *optional* specialty (p. 169), such as baking, beverage making, or a particular variety of ethnic cuisine (e.g., Chinese or Martian).

Counterfeiting/TL

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 or Forgery-2.

This is the art of duplicating banknotes and coins. It is only taught by the underworld and government agencies (although this is rare outside of rogue states, except in wartime). Time required varies from days to weeks (GM's option). The GM secretly rolls against your Counterfeiting skill for each "batch" of money.

A critical success means that the fakes *in that batch* are as good as the real thing.

An ordinary success means that your work is good but not perfect. Whenever you try to pass the counterfeit money, the GM makes a *second* skill roll for you, with all the same modifiers. If this roll fails, the recipient spots your handiwork. To successfully pass bogus currency to someone who has reason to be suspicious, you must win a Quick Contest of Counterfeiting vs. the *highest* of his Perception, Forensics, and Merchant.

Any failure on the initial Counterfeiting roll means that the first person to receive the money immediately realizes that it is bogus. Critical failure – on the initial roll or any subsequent roll – has other ramifications: the recipient is an undercover cop, an armed and angry citizen, etc.

Connoisseur represents an educated understanding of art and luxury items. It is vital to art dealers, critics, master thieves, and anyone who wishes to appear cultured.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345). Materials – ink, paper, presses, etc. – stolen from the legitimate mint can give from +1 (a few rolls of paper) to +10 (actual plates or molds). You *must* have a sample of the real thing or you cannot make the attempt at all!

Crewman/TL

IQ/Easy

Default: IQ-4.

This is the ability to serve as *crew* aboard a specific type of large vehicle. It includes familiarity with "shipboard life," knowledge of safety measures, and training in damage control (the use of emergency equipment to control flooding, fight fires, patch the hull, and so forth). Make a skill roll for

basic map or chart reading, practical meteorology, or to recall laws and regulations that pertain to your vehicle.

This skill also lets you steer the vessel. It is easier than Piloting, Submarine, and similar skills because it *only* includes knowledge of how to steer. Specialists handle such activities as plotting courses and operating sensors. These experts report to the captain, who in turn tells you how to maneuver. Make a DX-based skill roll whenever you take the helm – but note that your effective skill cannot exceed your captain's Shiphandling skill (p. 220).

The *average* Crewman skill of an entire crew can be used as a measure of overall crew quality. The GM rolls against average skill whenever the vehicle arrives or departs, in unfavorable conditions, or in battle. Failure and critical failure results depend on the circumstances.

There is a separate skill for each class of vessel:

Airshipman/TL: The skill of handling ballast, gas valves, mooring lines, etc. on a blimp, zeppelin, or other large airship.

Seamanship/TL: The skill of operating anchors, hatches, mooring lines, pumps, sails, windlasses, etc. aboard a large surface ship (but *not* a submarine).

Spacer/TL: The skill of working with airlocks, docking clamps, hull patches, pressure doors, etc. on a large spacecraft or space base.

Submariner/TL: The skill of handling pressure doors, pumps, valves, etc. aboard a submarine or in an undersea base.

Criminology/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Psychology-4.

This is the study of crime and the criminal mind. A successful skill roll allows you to find and interpret clues, guess how criminals might behave, etc. Though this skill does not actually default to Streetwise, the GM might allow a Streetwise roll *instead* in certain situations – especially to predict or outguess a criminal.

Modifiers: -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142).

Crossbow

DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to use all types of crossbows, including the pistol crossbow, prodd (which fires pellets or stones), repeating crossbow, and high-tech compound crossbow.

Cryptography/TL

IQ/Hard

Default: Mathematics (Cryptology)-5.

This is the ability to create and defeat encryption systems, codes, and ciphers. It is of use in wartime, espionage, and even business dealings. It covers all the techniques of your TL, which can range from unsophisticated substitution ciphers to state-of-the-art tactical encryption schemes.

Knowledge of a *specific* system, code, or cipher depends on your Security Clearance (p. 82) and allegiances (national, administrative, or both). In many settings, some level of Security Clearance is a prerequisite to learning this skill *at all*.

Treat an attempt to break an unknown code as a Quick Contest of Cryptography skill between the code-breaker and code-maker. The code-breaker must *win* to break the code. Repeated attempts are possible, but each attempt takes a day. The code-maker rolls only once, when he first creates the code.

Those with Cryptography skill may take an *optional* specialty (p. 169) in making or breaking codes. (The code-breaking specialty is often called "cryptanalysis.")

Cryptography normally has *no* IQ default, with two exceptions. Anyone can devise a trivial code or cipher by making an IQ-5 roll. This won't stall a professional for long, of course. Likewise, anyone can make an IQ-5 roll to attempt to break such a trivial code (but *not* a code devised by someone with Cryptography skill), using the Quick Contest system described above.

Modifiers: Mathematical Ability (p. 90). A computer with appropriate software gives a bonus (provided you know Computer Operation skill): +1 for a home computer, +2 for a minicomputer, +3 or +4 for a mainframe, and +5 or more for a supercomputer.

The *code-breaker* is at +5 if he has a sample of the code with translation, and -5 if the message to be decoded is shorter than 25 words. The *code-maker* receives a bonus for the time taken to create the code: consult the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. 550), look up the time in days in the Range/Speed column (substituting "days" for "yards"), and use the corresponding bonus.

Current Affairs/TL†

IQ/Easy

Defaults: IQ-4 or Research-4.

This is the ability to assimilate *quickly* whatever qualifies as "news" in your world, and to recall it as needed.

You *must* specialize in one of the following areas:

Business: Exchange rates, investment performance, etc.

Headline News: Usually *bad* news, such as assassinations, plagues, and wars.

High Culture: Information on galleries, operas, symphonies, and so forth.

People: The names of and gossip on celebrities, heads of state, and the like.

Politics: Election results, international treaties, etc.

Popular Culture: Hit songs, cool fashions, and hot products, among other things.

Regional: News of all kinds for a specific region (pick one). This is the definitive "town crier" skill at low TLs.

Science & Technology: New discoveries and inventions.

Sports: Scores for recent matches, names of star athletes, etc.

Travel: Where the "beautiful people" are going this year, and how much it all costs.

These specialties default to one another at -4. It is hard to bone up on one kind of news without learning about all the others!

On a successful Current Affairs roll, the GM will inform you of any news within your specialty that pertains to the current adventure (possibly including clues, on a good roll) or give you a small skill bonus (e.g., a success on Current Affairs (Sports) might give +1 to Gambling skill when betting on a boxing match).

Modifiers: -1 per *day* that you have been unable to access news media; -3 if you only have one source; +1 or more for "inside" access to the news (a subscription to an ordinary wire service is worth +1, while a job at an intelligence agency might give +3 or more).

Dancing
DX/Average

Default: DX-5.

This is the ability to perform dances appropriate to your own culture, and to learn new dances quickly. Note that certain physical handicaps make this skill effectively impossible!

Exotic dances abound in fiction and history: blade dancing, bull dancing, fire dancing, snake dancing, etc. The GM may decide that each is a separate DX/Average skill that defaults to Dancing-5.

Modifiers: Cultural Familiarity modifiers (p. 23); -5 if the dance is unfamiliar (a dance is familiar once you have successfully performed it three times).

Detect Lies
Per/Hard

Defaults: Perception-6, Body Language-4, or Psychology-4.

This is the ability to tell when someone is lying to you. It is not the same as Interrogation (p. 202); Detect Lies works in a casual or social situation. When you ask to use this skill, the GM rolls a Quick Contest of your Detect Lies skill vs. your subject's IQ (or Fast-Talk or Acting skill). If you win, the GM tells you whether the subject is lying. If you lose, the GM may lie to you about whether you were lied to . . . or just say, "You can't tell."

Modifiers: +1 for Sensitive *or* +3 for Empathy (p. 51), or -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); +4 if your subject is Easy to Read (p. 134). If the subject is of a different species, the GM may assess a penalty – see *Physiology Modifiers* (p. 181).

Diagnosis/TL
IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, First Aid-8, Physician-4, or Veterinary-5.

This is the ability to tell what is wrong with a sick or injured person, or what killed a dead person. A successful roll gives some information about the patient's problem – *limited to realistic knowledge for your tech level*. It might not determine the exact problem (if the GM feels the cause is totally beyond your experience, for instance), but it always gives hints, rule out impossibilities, etc. No Diagnosis roll is required for *obvious* things, like open wounds and missing limbs!

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); physiology modifiers (p. 181); -5 for internal injuries; -5 or more for a rare disease.

Diplomacy
IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 or Politics-6.

This is the skill of negotiating, compromising, and getting along with others. You may substitute a Diplomacy roll for any reaction roll in a noncombat situation, as described under *Influence Rolls* (p. 359).

Unlike other Influence skills, Diplomacy never gives a worse result than if you had tried an ordinary reaction roll. Failure with Fast-Talk or Sex Appeal alienates the subject, but Diplomacy is usually safe.

A successful roll also allows you to predict the possible outcome of a course of action when you are negotiating, or to choose the best approach to take.

If you know Diplomacy at level 20 or better, you get a +2 bonus on all reaction rolls!

Modifiers: +2 for Voice (p. 97); -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 for Oblivious (p. 146); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154); -2 for Stuttering (p. 157).

Disguise/TL†
IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Makeup-3.

This is the art of altering your appearance using clothing, makeup, and prosthetics. You do not need this skill to don a quick disguise – e.g., to put on a lab coat when you enter a laboratory – but such disguises only fool the inattentive! A *good* disguise requires a Disguise roll and 30 minutes to an hour of preparation.

Roll a Quick Contest of Disguise skill vs. the Perception of *each person* your disguise must fool. Individuals with Criminology or Observation skill may substitute those skills for Perception when rolling to penetrate a disguise. The GM may allow other skills to be of use – for instance, Physician skill might help spot a rubber nose.

When combining Acting (p. 174) with Disguise (that is, when you must change your face *and* your personality), you need only make one roll for each person or group – but it must be the *harder* of the two rolls.

If there is more than one sapient species in your world, you *must* specialize by race – Disguise (Human) is nothing like Disguise (Bug-Eyed Monster). Disguise specialized in your own species is the most common form; just list this as "Disguise" on your character sheet. Disguise skills for physically similar species default to one another at -2 to -4.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345). +4 for Elastic Skin (p. 51). You are at -1 to -5 to disguise yourself as someone very different from you (GM's discretion). Distinctive appearance also gives a penalty – see *Build* (p. 18), *Unnatural Features* (p. 22), and specific disadvantages (e.g., Hunchback, p. 139) for details. Differences in Size Modifier usually make Disguise *impossible*.

You can also learn Disguise (Animals) to deceive nonsapient creatures. This involves wearing animal skins, smearing your body with musk or dung, etc. There is no default between this and other Disguise specialties. Use the following modifiers *instead* of those given above.

Modifiers: +2 if approaching from downwind; -1 for each animal over one of the same type being approached (-1 for every *10* in the case of herd animals); -1 to -3 if the skins are old or in poor condition. Make a Naturalist roll to recall the habits of the animal being imitated; success gives +1 to +3, while failure gives -1 to -3.

Diving Suit/TL
see *Environment Suit,* p. 192

Dreaming

Will/Hard

Default: Will-6.

This is the skill of controlling and remembering your dreams. A successful skill roll lets you experience vivid dreams about a subject of your choosing. Use the Fortune-Telling (Dream Interpretation) skill to *interpret* your dreams. In some game worlds, this might be a useful divinatory technique (GM's decision).

A Dreaming roll can also help you recall a previously forgotten piece of information, or something you witnessed but did not consciously note. This technique is much less reliable than Eidetic Memory (p. 51), though. The GM will describe your dreams to you, working clues into the narrative. It is up to you, the *player,* to spot these hints!

Finally, you can use this skill to combat malign supernatural influences on your dreams. Resolve this as a Quick Contest between your Dreaming skill and your harasser's skill at dream control. If you win, you shut out the external influence.

Driving/TL†

DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5 or IQ-5.

This is the ability to drive a specific type of ground vehicle.

Make an IQ-based Driving roll for basic map reading, to diagnose simple malfunctions, or to recall rules of the road.

You *must* specialize:

Automobile: Any vehicle with three or more wheels that weighs less than 5 tons and does not move on rails. *Defaults:* Heavy Wheeled-2 or other Driving at -4.

Construction Equipment: Any kind of bulldozer, crane, plow, etc. *Default:* other Driving at -5.

Halftrack: Any vehicle that moves on tracks *and* either wheels or skids. *Defaults:* Tracked-2 or other Driving at -4.

Heavy Wheeled: Any vehicle with three or more wheels that weighs 5 tons or more and does not move on rails. *Defaults:* Automobile-2 or other Driving at -4.

Hovercraft: Any kind of air-cushion vehicle. *Default:* other Driving at -5.

Locomotive: Any vehicle that moves on conventional or maglev rails. *Default:* other Driving at -5.

Mecha: Any kind of legged, bouncing, rolling, or slithering vehicle. *Defaults:* Battlesuit-3 or other Driving at -5.

Motorcycle: Any powered one- or two-wheeled vehicle, including those with sidecars. Large motorcycles often have a Minimum ST, just like a weapon (see p. 270). *Default:* Bicycling-4.

Tracked: Any vehicle that moves on tracks. *Defaults:* Halftrack-2 or other Driving at -4.

Note that the ability to "drive" a team of animals is not Driving, but Teamster (p. 225).

Modifiers: -2 or more for bad driving conditions; -2 or more for a vehicle in bad repair; -2 for an unfamiliar control system (e.g., an automatic when you are used to a manual); -4 or more for a vehicle of an unfamiliar type within your specialty (e.g., a race car when you are used to stock cars).

Dropping

DX/Average

Defaults: DX-3 or Throwing-4.

This is the skill of dropping heavy objects on your foes while flying. Treat this as a ranged attack made from above. Learn Dropping if you wish to drop boulders and similar projectiles on individual opponents while on the wing. Use Artillery (Bombs) to attack areas with explosive ordnance, etc.

Economics

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, Finance-3, Market Analysis-5, or Merchant-6.

This is the study of the *theory* of money, markets, and financial systems. It is mainly an academic skill, but a successful skill roll allows you to predict the economic impact of events in the game world: the assassination of a political figure, the demolition of a power plant, the introduction of a new invention, etc. Adventurers with intelligence and military backgrounds frequently have some training in this skill.

Electrician/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Engineer (Electrical)-3.

This is the skill of building, maintaining, and repairing electrical systems. Make a skill roll to diagnose an electrical fault, wire a building or vehicle, etc. Adventuring uses include damage control in combat (e.g., to restore power to a damaged vehicle system) and cutting the power to a building prior to clandestine activities.

Note that *electrical* and *electronic* systems are not the same thing. The equivalent skill for electronics is Electronics Repair (p. 190).

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345).

Electronics Operation/TL†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Electronics Repair (same)-5, or Engineer (Electronics)-5.

This skill lets you use all electronic equipment *within a known specialty.*

Make a skill roll in an emergency situation or for "abnormal" use of equipment – not for ordinary, everyday use. (*Exception:* Unskilled users must always attempt their default roll!)

You *must* specialize. Available specialties vary by game world, but might include:

Communications (Comm): All forms of electronic communications technology: radios, satellite uplinks, laser communicators, etc. Includes knowledge of any standard, current communications codes appropriate to your background. These do not require a skill roll – although attempts to understand or use an unfamiliar code *do* require a roll. At TL5-7, this includes telegraphy: you can send or receive 2 words per minute (wpm) per point of skill at TL5, 3 wpm per point of skill at TL6-7.

Electronic Warfare (EW): All signals-intelligence and jamming equipment, including electronic countermeasures (ECM) and electronic counter-countermeasures (ECCM). In most game worlds, only intelligence agencies and the military teach this specialty – and only to individuals with suitable Military Rank (p. 30) or Security Clearance (p. 82).

Force Shields: Portable, vehicular, base, and starship force shields and deflectors.

Matter Transmitters (MT): All matter transmitters and teleporters. Critical failures can be disastrous, especially when transmitting living beings!

Media: All forms of audio, film, and video editing equipment. If three-dimensional video ("holographics") or sensory recordings ("sensies") exist in the setting, this specialty includes the ability to operate the relevant equipment. Treat different media as mutually unfamiliar technologies.

Medical: All manner of electronic diagnostic and life-support equipment.

Parachronic: Technological means of travel between dimensions or timelines.

Psychotronics: Psionic technology, such as telepathic shields and amplifiers.

Scientific: Laboratory electronics and survey gear. You are automatically familiar with the equipment used with any scientific skill on which you have spent at least one point.

Security: Both operating and circumventing all forms of alarms, security sensors, and area-surveillance technology.

Sensors: Most forms of long-range detection gear, from air-defense radar to starship sensor suites. Certain highly specialized sensors (such as sonar, below) have their own specialties.

Sonar: All types of acoustic detection and ranging gear (normally used underwater).

Surveillance: All forms of concealable or remote surveillance gear: "bugs," hidden cameras, long-range microphones, wiretaps, etc.

Temporal: All manner of time machines. Critical failures can be disastrous for the time travelers! Make separate rolls to "lock onto" and transfer the travelers.

These specialties default to one another at -4; however, the GM is free to rule that in *his* campaign, there is no default between exotic specialties (Parachronic, Psychotronics, etc.) and mundane ones (Media, Security, etc.). The technologies covered by a particular specialty vary with TL. For instance, Electronics Operation (Comm) covers telegraphs at TL5, telephones and radios at TL6, and digital communications systems at TL8 . . . and might cover faster-than-light or telepathic communicators at higher TLs.

Familiarity (p. 169) is crucial here! Electronics Operation/TL8 (Sensors) covers both thermographs on fighter jets and ground-penetrating radars on satellites, but going from one to the other gives you -2 for type (thermograph to radar) and -2 for implementation (jet to satellite), for a net -4 to skill until you familiarize yourself with all the differences.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); -2 for an unfamiliar technology of a known type (e.g., radar when you are used to thermograph) or an unfamiliar implementation of a familiar technology (e.g., air-defense radar when you are used to weather radar); -1 to -10 if you have been away from the field for a long time (this varies by field) and have not had a chance to become familiar with the changes.

Electronics Repair/TL†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Electronics Operation (same)-3, or Engineer (Electronics)-3.

This is the ability to diagnose and repair known types of electronic equipment. Time required for each attempt is up to the GM. You *must* specialize in one of the areas listed under Electronics Operation (above), or in Computers (Electronics Repair (Computers) defaults to Computer Operation-5). These specialties default to one another at -4.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); -2 without plans or schematics; -2 for an unfamiliar technology or implementation (just as for Electronics Operation); -4 to *modify* a device away from its intended purpose.

Engineer/TL†

IQ/Hard

Defaults: Special.
Prerequisites: Mathematics (Applied) at TL5+, plus others as noted.

This is the ability to design and build technological devices and systems. A successful roll lets you design a new system, diagnose a glitch, identify the purpose of a strange device, or improvise a gadget to solve a problem. Time required for each attempt is up to the GM.

Note that engineers are *designers* and *inventors;* they are not necessarily skilled at the routine operation or maintenance of the things they design! For instance, Engineer (Small Arms) lets you design a new assault rifle, but you need Armoury skill to maintain it and Guns skill to shoot it.

You *must* specialize. Possible fields include:

Artillery: Designing whatever passes for artillery at your TL, from trebuchets to smart missiles. *Default:* Armoury (Heavy Weapons)-6.

Civil: Planning highways, aqueducts, buildings, etc. *Default:* Architecture-6.

Clockwork: Designing wind-up gadgetry – watches, mechanical men, and the like. *Default:* Mechanic (Clockwork)-6.

Combat: Building or removing fortifications, trenches, etc. *Default:* Explosives (Demolition)-6.

Electrical: Designing electrical systems, such as power cells and transmission lines. *Default:* Electrician-6.

Electronics: Designing and building electronic apparatus, from computers to starship sensor arrays. (The specific technologies involved – vacuum tubes, transistors, photonics, etc. – will depend on the tech level.) *Default:* Electronics Repair (any)-6.

Materials: Concocting new structural materials. *Prerequisites:* Chemistry or Metallurgy. *Defaults:* Chemistry-6 or Metallurgy-6.

Microtechnology: Designing micromachines. *Default:* Mechanic (Micromachines)-6.

Mining: Designing underground structures. *Defaults:* Explosives (Demolition)-6 or Geology (any)-6.

Nanotechnology: Designing nanomachines. *Default:* Mechanic (Nanomachines)-6.

Parachronic: Designing apparatus for crossing dimensions or timelines. *Prerequisite:* Physics. *Default:* Electronics Operation (Parachronic)-6, but there is *no* default if your society has not discovered dimensional travel.

Psychotronics: Designing psionic technology, such as telepathic shields and amplifiers. *Default:* Electronics Operation (Psychotronics)-6, but there is *no* default for individuals from backgrounds where psionics do not exist.

Robotics: Designing robotics and cybernetics. *Default:* Mechanic (Robotics)-6.

Small Arms: Designing personal firearms, such as guns and portable rocket launchers. *Default:* Armoury (Small Arms)-6.

Temporal: Designing time machines. *Prerequisite:* Physics. *Default:* Electronics Operation

(Temporal)-6, but there is *no* default for individuals from backgrounds without time travel!

Vehicle Type: Designing a single, broad class of vehicle. Examples include Engineer (Automobiles), Engineer (Ships), and Engineer (Starships). *Default:* Mechanic (same vehicle type)-6.

Engineer specialties normally default to one another at -4; however, the GM is free to rule that in *his* campaign, there is no default between exotic specialties (Nanotechnology, Parachronic, Psychotronics, etc.) and more mundane ones (Civil, Combat, Mining, etc.).

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345). Up to +5 to build a gadget if you can give the GM a good description of what you want it to do.

your Enthrallment skill vs. the Will of each audience member. If you win, you affect your audience – see the individual skill description for effects. If you lose or tie, there is no effect. However, if you *critically* fail, your audience instantly turns hostile!

You may never learn these skills at a skill level higher than your Public Speaking skill.

Audience Size: An "audience" can be one listener or a hundred – as many as can hear the tale. However, the number of audience members that you can enthrall at one sitting is limited to your Charisma level *squared,* to a maximum of 25 people at Charisma 5.

Modifiers: All four Enthrallment skills are at -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142). If the *player* actually tells a good tale, the GM should reward him with +1 to +3 to the Public Speaking and Enthrallment rolls!

asleep, *you* become unconscious or fall asleep, you attack the subject, or the subject loses half his HP to injury.

Persuade

Will/Hard

Defaults: None.

This ability allows you to bring an audience over to your point of view, granting you a bonus to your reaction rolls with them. You may use this skill whenever a reaction roll is called for.

If you win the Quick Contest, add your margin of victory to any reaction roll those in the audience make regarding you – for any reason – to a maximum of +3 (+4 on a critical success). If you critically fail, the best possible reaction is Poor (see p. 560).

Time: 1 minute.
Fatigue Cost: 2 FP, whether successful or not.
Duration: Until you do something to change the audience's opinion!

Suggest

Will/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisite: Persuade at 12+.

This ability lets you give your audience a single, simple suggestion. A suggestion should have no complex grammatical clauses – just a subject, verb, object, and at most two modifiers. "Kill the king!" is acceptable; "Kill the king if he doesn't accede to our demands!" is not. A given subject gets +5 to resist if your suggestion goes against his personal safety, and +3 if it goes against his beliefs, convictions, or knowledge.

If you win the Quick Contest, the audience members try to act on the suggestion to the best of their abilities – each assuming that the idea was his own.

Time: 20 minutes of uninterrupted storytelling.
Fatigue Cost: 6 FP, whether successful or not.
Duration: 10 minutes – or longer, if you continue to talk to the audience and can make a successful Suggest roll every 10 minutes! Once the suggestion lapses, audience members only wonder why they acted the way they did if the suggestion was something they would never have done normally.

> *"Kill the king!" is acceptable; "Kill the king if he doesn't accede to our demands!" is not.*

Enthrallment

Will/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Charisma 1 and Public Speaking at 12+.

Bards in fantasy can often influence others through storytelling. The GM may choose to represent this ability using the four Enthrallment skills described below. Depending on the setting, these skills might be magical, psionic, or a cinematic form of hypnotism. Each has a time requirement, FP cost, and duration, and requires *two* skill rolls to use.

At the outset of the tale, roll vs. Public Speaking skill; if you can't grab your audience's attention early on, you won't have much of a chance of controlling them by the end. On a success, proceed to the Enthrallment skill roll; critical success gives +1 on that roll. On a failure, you may still attempt the Enthrallment roll, but at a penalty equal to your margin of failure. Critical failure means your Enthrallment attempt fails automatically.

After the time required to enthrall has passed, roll a Quick Contest of

Captivate

Will/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisite: Suggest at 12+.

This skill allows you to tell a story so skillfully that those listening lose their will and do whatever you want them to do. In effect, they believe themselves to be *in* the tale, and are vulnerable to being manipulated by you, the teller of the tale.

If you win the Quick Contest, the audience becomes intensely loyal to you. They follow *any* direct order you give. In the absence of a direct order, they act in your best interest, *as they understand it.* If you tell someone to do something very hazardous, or that goes against his usual code of behavior (GM's decision), he gets a Will-5 roll to break the captivation. Otherwise, he is your loyal supporter for all intents and purposes.

Time: 30 minutes of uninterrupted storytelling.
Fatigue Cost: 8 FP, whether successful or not.
Duration: Captivation lasts until the subject becomes unconscious or falls

Sway Emotions
Will/Hard
Defaults: None.
Prerequisite: Persuade at 12+.

This ability allows you to instill the audience with any one emotion. Allowed emotions include anger, boredom, depression, disgust, fear, greed, hate, jealousy, joy, love, lust, patriotism, peace, sadness, and unrest.

If you win the Quick Contest, your audience experiences the emotion you select. How they act as a result is up to the GM.

Time: 10 minutes of uninterrupted storytelling.

Fatigue Cost: 4 FP, whether successful or not.

Duration: One hour.

Environment Suit/TL
DX/Average
Defaults: DX-5 and others.

This is training in the use of a specific class of protective suit. Suits designed to shield the wearer from environmental or battlefield hazards frequently incorporate gadgets (such as autoinjectors and sensors) and life-support equipment. Some suits even contain motors to enhance ST or Move. As a result, you do not merely wear such gear – you *operate* it.

Roll against Environment Suit skill to get into or out of your suit *quickly.* A successful roll halves the time required. To activate a specific subsystem of a suit, or to gauge whether a suit is in good repair, make an IQ-based skill roll instead.

When rolling against DX or any DX-based skill while suited up, use the *lower* of your Environment Suit skill and your actual skill level. For instance, if you have DX 14, Stealth-15, and Vacc Suit-13, you will function at DX 13 and Stealth-13 while wearing a spacesuit. Particularly ungainly suits might give -1 or more to DX on top of this, regardless of skill level. On the other hand, some sleek, ultra-tech suits might not limit skills *at all!*

However, Environment Suit is *strictly* the skill of donning and operating the suit. Familiarity with and knowledge of dangerous environments is covered by other skills: Free Fall, Hazardous Materials, Survival, etc.

Each suit type requires its own skill. Examples include:

Battlesuit/TL: All kinds of powered battle armor and exoskeletons. Battle armor and exoskeletons are similar but not identical. If you only have experience with one, you are at -2 to operate the other until you gain familiarity (see *Familiarity,* p. 169).

Diving Suit/TL: All types of *hard* diving suits (as opposed to the wetsuits and drysuits used with Scuba skill). This includes "open dress" gear at TL5 and "hard hat" gear at TL6, both of which use a sealed helmet and supplied air, but not always a full, sealed suit. At TL7+, this skill covers true underwater "hardsuits." The GM may require Swimming rolls to *maneuver* while wearing such a suit. *Default:* Scuba-2.

NBC Suit/TL: All forms of hazardous materials ("HazMat") gear – including sealed, unpowered body armor that can be buttoned down against nuclear-biological-chemical (NBC) threats. Without this skill, you run the risk of misusing the equipment and being exposed to contamination. To *improvise* NBC gear, make an IQ-based skill roll at -5 to -15 to skill.

Vacc Suit/TL: Any kind of spacesuit. In addition to true vacuum suits, this includes suits intended for use in high-pressure, corrosive, and poisonous atmospheres.

Battlesuit, NBC Suit, and Vacc Suit default among themselves at -2. Diving Suit defaults to or from any other Environment Suit skill at -4.

Note that unpowered, unsealed body armor *never* requires an Environment Suit skill.

Erotic Art
DX/Average
Defaults: DX-5 or Acrobatics-5.

This represents general knowledge of advanced sexual technique. IQ-, HT-, and even ST-based rolls are common. Precise game effects are left to the GM's discretion.

Modifiers: +3 for Flexibility *or* +5 for Double-Jointed (p. 56); -3 for Killjoy (p. 140).

Escape
DX/Hard
Default: DX-6.

This is the ability to slip out of ropes, handcuffs, and similar restraints. The first attempt to escape takes one minute; each subsequent attempt takes 10 minutes.

The GM may apply a penalty for particularly secure bonds. For instance, modern police handcuffs would give -5 to Escape. You suffer only *half* these penalties if you dislocate the restrained limb (usually an arm). This requires (20 - skill) minutes of concentration, minimum one minute and a Will roll. However, if you fail your Escape roll by 3 or more when dislocating a limb, the limb suffers 1d damage. On a critical failure, you automatically take enough damage to cripple the limb!

Modifiers: +3 for Flexibility *or* +5 for Double-Jointed (p. 56); any bonus for Slippery (p. 85).

Esoteric Medicine
Per/Hard
Default: Perception-6.

This is the skill of treating illness and injury with techniques grounded in esoteric theory rather than analytical science. It is usually associated with a magical or spiritual tradition. The particulars vary by tradition, but might include acupuncture, massage, alchemical or herbal preparations, or such exercises as breath control and meditation.

The effectiveness of Esoteric Medicine relative to Physician (p. 213) is up to the GM. It might be more effective (especially if it can channel real supernatural power), equivalent but different, or less effective. It should always be at least as good as First Aid (p. 195) – the attentions of a trained healer of *any* kind are preferable to bleeding to death! In TL5+ settings, Esoteric Medicine is often *perceived* as "quack" medicine, regardless of actual effectiveness.

This skill might represent Ayurvedic medicine, *chi* treatment, Hermetic medicine, yin/yang healing, or any other historical or fictional healing discipline. In settings where multiple forms of treatment exist, healers must specialize in one specific tradition.

Exorcism

Will/Hard

Defaults: Will-6, Religious Ritual (any)-3, Ritual Magic (any)-3, or Theology (any)-3.

This is the ability to drive a spirit from a possessed person or haunted location. It is not a magical skill, but a religious ritual. Exorcism is not specific to any one religion. A Malay witch doctor and a Catholic priest can both perform exorcisms; their relative effectiveness depends on the originating culture of the *spirit*.

The length of the ritual is 15 minutes × the spirit's HT. Some spirits wait patiently through the ritual, anticipating the combat to come; others try to distract or even attack you before you can complete the ritual. Once the ritual is complete, roll against Exorcism skill.

On a failure, the spirit remains and you must wait at least a week before you can repeat the ritual. On a critical failure, immediately roll 3d+10 on the *Fright Check Table* (p. 360). Even if you keep your sanity, you may *never* attempt to exorcise this particular spirit again.

On a critical success, you immediately banish the spirit. On a regular success, you meet your opponent in a Quick Contest: your Exorcism skill vs. the *higher* of the spirit's ST or Will.

When fighting a spirit in a living host, add higher of the ST or Will of the possession victim to your Exorcism skill as he tries to "push the spirit out."

If the spirit wins or ties, it retains its current status and you must wait at least a week before you can repeat the ritual. If you win, you drive the spirit from its haunt or victim. The spirit of a deceased mortal is laid to rest. For demons and similar entities, make a reaction roll. On a "Poor" or better reaction, the spirit flees in humiliation. On a "Bad" or worse reaction, the spirit immediately uses whatever resources it has to take vengeance on you and those nearby.

If the exorcism fails at any stage, make an IQ roll afterward. A success means that you learned something about the spirit that will help you in your *next* attempt to banish that foe, giving you +2 on later skill rolls. You may only claim this bonus once for a particular spirit.

Modifiers: -4 if you do *not* have one or more of Blessed (p. 40), Power Investiture (p. 77), or True Faith (p. 94); you might understand the ritual, but you lack holy support.

Expert Skill†

IQ/Hard

Defaults: None.

An Expert Skill represents cross-disciplinary knowledge of a single, narrow theme. When answering factual questions *on that theme,* you may substitute a roll against your Expert Skill for any IQ-based roll against any skill that has a default. Expert Skills do not exempt you from Cultural Familiarity (p. 23) or Language (p. 23) requirements, and never provide the ability to do practical tasks. Experts sometimes complement Expert Skills with related Area Knowledge skills (p. 176), but you must learn these separately.

You *must* specialize by theme, and the GM is free to forbid any theme he feels is too broad. Some examples:

Computer Security: Expertise at combating computer intrusion ("hacking"). Can stand in for Computer Operation, Cryptography, or Electronics Operation to spot "holes" in the security of a computer system. Use Computer Programming to patch or exploit such holes.

Conspiracy Theory: The study of interlocking networks of conspiracies. Can substitute for Anthropology, Geography, History, Literature, or Occultism to answer questions about conspiracies, and can also work as Intelligence Analysis for this purpose (only). This does *not* include hidden inner secrets, which are the province of Hidden Lore (p. 199).

Egyptology: The study of ancient Egypt. Can function as Anthropology, Archaeology, History, Linguistics, or Occultism for that purpose.

Epidemiology: The study of the spread of disease. Can serve as Biology, Diagnosis, Forensics, Geography, or Mathematics when deducing how a disease was spread.

Hydrology: The study of a planet's water. Can be used in place of Biology, Chemistry, Geography, Geology, or Meteorology to answer questions about precipitation, flooding, irrigation, etc.

Military Science: General expertise on military capabilities. Can substitute for Artillery, Armoury, Strategy, or Tactics to answer questions about – but not *use* – weapons or strategies.

Natural Philosophy: A general skill that usually replaces specific science skills (which might not even exist yet!) for scholars at TL1-4. Can be used in place of any science skill (e.g., Biology or Physics) to answer questions about how the universe is *believed* to work.

Political Science: The academic study of politics. Can substitute for Geography, History, Law, Politics, or Sociology when performing political analysis.

Psionics: The study of the psionic mind and brain. Can function as Biology, Diagnosis, Physician, Physiology, or Psychology when dealing with psi phenomena in living beings. *Cannot* substitute for Electronics Operation, Electronics Repair, and Engineer specialties that deal with psychotronics.

Thanatology: The esoteric study of death. Can stand in for Anthropology, Archaeology, Occultism, or Theology when dealing with death and the dead.

Xenology: General knowledge of the *known* races in your setting. Can substitute for Anthropology, History, Physiology, or Psychology to identify a member of a race different from your own, or to answer general questions about the race and its culture.

Explosives/TL†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 and others.

This is the skill of working with explosives and incendiaries.

You *must* specialize:

Demolition: The ability to prepare and set explosives in order to blow things up. Make a roll whenever you use explosives in this way. A failure indicates an error. The gravity of the error depends on the amount by which you failed; a badly failed roll in close quarters can *blow you up!* Time required varies – it takes only a couple of seconds to set a prepared charge, but it might take *hours* to demolish a large bridge or a skyscraper. When setting an explosive trap, use this skill rather than Traps. Rolls to set a "trap" fuse (e.g., a land mine) instead of a timed fuse are at -2. *Defaults:* Engineer (Combat) or (Mining) at -3.

Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD): The ability to disarm and dispose of bombs and other explosives. When disarming a trap, roll a Quick Contest of your Explosives (EOD) skill vs. the Explosives (Demolition) skill of the person who created the device. A failure (or even a critical failure) does not necessarily mean an explosion – the GM can be much more creative than that! Sudden hissing noises, mysterious parts falling off, cramps, itches, and alarm bells are all possible in the right circumstances. It is best if the GM rolls the dice and describes the physical circumstances to the victim. Fright Checks are appropriate for the survivors of a failed EOD attempt! *Prerequisite:* DX 12+.

Fireworks: The skill of *making* pyrotechnic devices – fireworks, flares, smoke bombs, flash grenades, etc. Most of these things can be *used* by anyone. *Default:* Chemistry-3.

Nuclear Ordnance Disposal (NOD): The equivalent of Explosives (EOD) for nuclear devices. Disarming a military nuclear weapon is straightforward; disarming a homemade terrorist bomb might be more difficult. Only a critical failure *verified by a second critical failure* will result in a nuclear detonation. Any lesser failure will – at worst – detonate the high-explosive trigger and contaminate the immediate area with radioactive material . . . not that this is a great deal of consolation to those nearby.

Underwater Demolition (UD): The ability to prepare and set explosives underwater. This is otherwise identical to Explosives (Demolition).

You usually need Scuba skill – or at least Swimming skill – to get into a position where you can use this skill.

These specialties default to one another at -4 *except* for Demolition and UD, which default to one another at -2, and EOD and NOD, which also default to one another at -2.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); -1 to -5 for distractions (e.g., enemy fire or swarms of biting ants) or physical motion (e.g., a rocking boat or speeding bus). The time modifiers under *Time Spent* (p. 346) will often apply.

Falconry

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Animal Handling (Raptors)-3.

This is the skill of "hawking": hunting small game with a trained hawk. It includes knowledge of hunting and training techniques, as well as how to care for a falcon. Finding a wild falcon's nest in spring requires a week's search and a successful Falconry roll; a nest has 1d-3 chicks.

Farming/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Biology-5, or Gardening-3.

This is the skill of growing things. It is usually used to earn a living, but you can also use it to answer theoretical questions about or solve problems related to agriculture.

Fast-Draw†

DX/Easy

Defaults: None.

This skill lets you *quickly* draw a weapon from its holster, sheath, or hiding place. A successful roll means you ready the weapon instantly. This does not count as a combat maneuver; you can use the weapon to attack on the same turn. On a failure, you ready your weapon normally but may do nothing else on your turn. A critical failure means you *drop* the weapon!

You *must* specialize in one of these weapon types: Force Sword, Knife, Long Arm (rifle, shotgun, submachine gun, etc.), Pistol, Sword (any one-handed blade larger than a knife), or

Two-Handed Sword. The GM may add Fast-Draw skills for other weapons (or even tools) that one could reasonably draw quickly.

In addition to the above specialties, there are two Fast-Draw skills that allow you to reload missile weapons quickly:

Fast-Draw (Arrow): Lets you ready a single arrow, bolt, or dart instantly. This reduces the time required to reload a bow, crossbow, or blowgun by one second.

Fast-Draw/TL (Ammo): Reduces the time required to reload any kind of gun or beam weapon. The exact benefits depend on your weapon, but a successful roll always shaves at least one second off the reload time. This skill varies greatly with TL! At TL4, it covers powder-and-shot drills; at TL6+, it includes speed-loading techniques for detachable magazines; and at higher tech levels, it involves quickly replacing energy cells and attaching power cables.

For the Arrow and Ammo specialties, failure means you drop the arrow or bolt, or accidentally discard one round of ammunition. On a critical failure, you drop the entire quiver, powder horn, ammo box, magazine, etc., scattering loose ammunition everywhere!

Modifiers: Combat Reflexes (p. 43) gives +1 to all Fast-Draw specialties; Ham-Fisted (p. 138) gives -3 per level.

Fast-Talk

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Acting-5.

This is the skill of talking others into doing things against their better judgment. It is not taught (intentionally, that is) in school; you study it by working as a salesman, confidence man, lawyer, etc. In any situation that calls for a reaction roll, you may make an Influence roll against Fast-Talk instead; see *Influence Rolls* (p. 359).

If you have Fast-Talk at level 20 or better, you get +2 on all reaction rolls where you're allowed to talk!

Note that Fast-Talk differs from Acting (p. 174). In general, Fast-Talk is used to get someone to make a snap decision in your favor, while Acting is used for long-term dissimulation.

However, there are situations in which the GM could allow a roll on either skill.

Modifiers: +2 for Voice (p. 97); -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 for Oblivious (p. 146); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154); -2 for Stuttering (p. 157); -5 for Truthfulness (p. 159). The GM may ask you for details of the story you are using, rather than just let you say, "I'm using Fast-Talk." Your approach and the plausibility of the story may further modify the roll, at the GM's discretion.

Filch

DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5, Pickpocket-4, or Sleight of Hand-4.

This skill lets you steal objects that are sitting in plain sight . . . without being spotted. Roll against skill to shoplift, snatch documents off a desk, etc. If someone is *actively* watching the item you wish to snatch, you must win a Quick Contest of Filch vs. his Vision roll (or Observation skill, p. 211) to perform the theft unnoticed.

Filch only covers the theft itself. The GM might require rolls against Stealth to get close enough to make the attempt and Holdout to conceal stolen objects afterward.

Modifiers: +3 if the light is dim; +3 if you have a confederate to distract attention.

Finance

IQ/Hard

Defaults: Accounting-4, Economics-3, or Merchant-6.

This is the skill of managing money. It is a *practical* application of Economics (p. 189), much as Engineer skill is a practical application of Physics. A successful skill roll lets you broker a financial deal, raise capital for a new corporation, balance a budget, etc.

Modifiers: Business Acumen and Mathematical Ability *both* provide a bonus.

Fire Eating

DX/Average

Defaults: None.

This is the performance skill of extinguishing flames in your mouth without burning yourself. Make a skill roll for each item you wish to extinguish. On a success, you put out the flames. On a failure, you take 1d-3 damage (minimum 1) to your mouth.

This skill also includes fire *breathing:* igniting a stream of fuel blown from the mouth. At the GM's option, you may use this as an attack (1d-3 damage).

First Aid/TL

IQ/Easy

Defaults: IQ-4, Esoteric Medicine, Physician, or Veterinary-4.

This is the ability to patch up an injury in the field (see *Recovery,* p. 423). Make a skill roll to halt bleeding, suck out poison, give artificial respiration to a drowning victim, etc. Unusual problems must be identified using Diagnosis skill first.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); physiology modifiers (p. 181).

Fishing

Per/Easy

Default: Perception-4.

This is the ability to catch fish – with a net, hook and line, or whatever method is used in your culture. If you have proper equipment and there are fish to be caught, a successful roll catches them. If you lack equipment, you can improvise.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345).

Flail

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Flight

HT/Average

Default: HT-5.
Prerequisite: Flight advantage (p. 56).

This skill represents training for endurance flying. Use the *better* of Flight or HT when rolling to avoid fatigue due to flying. When traveling long distances, a successful Flight roll increases the distance traveled by 20%. If a group of fliers is traveling together, all must make the Flight roll in order to get the increased distance.

Flying Leap

IQ/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master or Weapon Master, and both Jumping and Power Blow.

This skill allows you to make incredible leaps. It costs 1 FP per attempt, successful or not.

On a success, you may immediately attempt a jump. Use the standard jumping rules (see *Jumping,* p. 352), but *triple* your jumping distance. On a failure, you may still attempt the jump, but you receive no bonus and make all jumping-related rolls at -5. On a critical failure, you fall down!

You may use Flying Leap to jump *into* someone as part of an attack. Such attacks are at an extra -2 to hit, but if you *do* hit, triple your ST for damage and knockback purposes. In a slam or collision, calculate Move from jumping distance as described for Super Jump (p. 89), and use this velocity to calculate damage.

Modifiers: -10 if used *instantly,* dropping to -5 after 1 turn of concentration, -4 after 2 turns, -3 after 4 turns, -2 after 8 turns, -1 after 16 turns, and no penalty after 32 turns.

Force Sword

see *Melee Weapon*, p. 208

Force Whip

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Forced Entry

DX/Easy

Defaults: None.

This is the ability to kick in doors and windows, or demolish them with a crowbar, ram, or sledgehammer, without necessarily being adept at melee combat. Make a skill roll to hit an inanimate object with your foot or an impact weapon. Add +1 *per die* to basic thrust or swing damage if you have this skill at DX+1, +2 per die if you know it at DX+2 or better. Add a similar bonus (+1 or +2) to ST rolls made for forced entry. The damage bonus also applies when you use Melee Weapon skills to wreck inanimate objects *out of combat.*

For *subtle* break-ins, use Lockpicking skill (p. 206).

Forensics/TL

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 or Criminology-4.

This is the ability to apply the principles of forensic science and criminalistics, such as the computation of bullet paths and the microscopic or chemical analysis of clues. Some disciplines require other skills. For instance, a forensic pathologist performing an autopsy would roll against Surgery skill.

Forgery/TL

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 or Counterfeiting-2.

This is the ability to create falsified documents (identity cards, passports, etc.). It is not taught except by intelligence agencies and the underworld – although you can always study it on your own.

The time required to create a forgery ranges from days to weeks (GM decides). When you use a forged document, make your Forgery roll *each time* it is inspected – unless you roll a critical success on your first attempt. Failure means someone spots the forgery.

Some tasks require DX-based skill rolls, in which case modifiers for High Manual Dexterity (p. 59) or Ham-Fisted (p. 138) apply. The GM may allow Forgery to default to a suitable Artist specialty at -5 if you are doing the work entirely by hand.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); +3 if you merely *altered* a genuine document; -5 if you did not have a sample to copy. The GM may also assign modifiers based on the severity of the inspection; a routine border check, for instance, would give a +5 bonus.

Fortune-Telling†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Fast-Talk-3, or Occultism-3.

This is the art of interviewing someone in order to learn more about his lifestyle and personality, and then using this information to make an "educated guess" about his future that you can pass off as supernatural divination. Suitable props – star charts, tea leaves, etc. – can enhance the illusion. Knowledge of traditional occult or religious beliefs (especially those of your subject) can also lend an air of legitimacy.

With the GM's permission, you can sometimes use Fortune-Telling in place of Fast-Talk (by making predictions that guide the subject toward a particular course of action), or Interrogation or Psychology (by asking the subject leading questions under the pretense of telling his fortune). This is only possible if the subject believes you are a genuine fortune-teller *and* you take the time to do a full "reading" for him.

You *must* specialize in a particular mantic art. Available specialties include Astrology, Augury (interpretation of natural omens, such as flocks of birds), Crystal Gazing, Dream Interpretation, Feng Shui, Palmistry, and Tarot.

This skill is *not* a paranormal talent, and the GM is under *no* obligation to supply you with hints of future events. You might wish to learn this skill if you have actual divinatory abilities, though, as it enables you to present your predictions in a culturally acceptable way. "I saw it in the stars" may be less likely to get you burned as a witch than "I cast a spell"!

Modifiers: +1 for Sensitive *or* +3 for Empathy (p. 51); any Charisma bonus; -3 if using Fortune-Telling in place of Fast-Talk, Interrogation, or Psychology.

Forward Observer/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Artillery (any)-5, and others.

This is the skill of being a "spotter" for artillery. It includes locating targets (with map and compass at TL6-, global positioning systems and satellite imagery at TL7+), marking targets (using smoke, a laser designator, etc.), matching ordnance to target for best effect, and calling in corrections to any fire you personally observe.

Failure means the ordnance misses the target; critical failures result in severe "collateral damage" or "friendly fire" incidents. The very worst critical failures (GM's decision) drop the ordnance on *your* position!

At higher tech levels, Forward Observer is less about observing targets and more about operating specialized technology such as drones, GPS, and laser designators. To remotely pilot a drone or use a laser designator to direct "smart" munitions onto a target, make a DX-based skill roll. At TL7+, Forward Observer defaults to Electronics Operation (any)-5.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); -2 if you are unfamiliar with the artillery (e.g., aircraft bombs when you are used to naval guns); -3 per 500 yards between you and the target – but divide the actual range by the magnification of any vision aid first.

People often stake vast sums on games, and it might be possible to earn a living as a professional gamer.

Free Fall

DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5 or HT-5.

This is the ability to operate in a free-fall (zero-gravity) environment. Roll against the *higher* of HT or Free Fall when you first enter free fall; see *Space Adaptation Syndrome* (p. 434) for the effects of failure. In addition, whenever you make a DX or DX-based skill roll in free fall, use the *lower* of Free Fall and your DX or skill. For instance, if you had Free Fall-14 and Karate-16, you would roll at 14 or less to land a punch.

Modifiers: +2 for 3D Spatial Sense (p. 34).

Freight Handling/TL

IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the skill of supervising the loading and unloading of vehicles (*laborers* do not require this skill – just their foreman). A successful skill roll cuts the time required by 20%. Also roll against Freight Handling skill any time there is doubt as to whether an item of cargo was lost or damaged; on a success, it made the journey intact.

Gambling

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Mathematics (Statistics)-5.

This is skill at playing games of chance. A successful Gambling roll can (among other things) tell you if a game is rigged, identify a fellow gambler in a group of strangers, or "estimate the odds" in *any* tricky situation. When you gamble against the house, make a skill roll (the GM will secretly modify this roll if the odds are poor!). When you gamble against someone else, roll a Regular Contest of Gambling (p. 197) until one of you wins.

Sleight of Hand skill (p. 221) is helpful if you want to cheat! To *spot* a cheater, roll a Quick Contest of your Gambling or Vision roll, whichever is *higher*, vs. your opponent's Sleight of Hand skill (for card or dice tricks) or IQ (for other kinds of cheating).

Modifiers: +1 to +5 for familiarity with the game being played; -1 to -5 if the game is rigged against you; -3 for Killjoy (p. 140), since you don't care if you win or lose.

Games†

IQ/Easy

Default: IQ-4.

This is the ability to play a game *well*. It includes knowledge of rules, etiquette, and tournament regulations. You *must* specialize in a particular game; possibilities include traditional board games (such as chess, *Go, hnefatafl,* and *mankala*), card games, war games, and computer games.

Many cultures regard the ability to play one or more games skillfully as a worthwhile social accomplishment. People often stake vast sums on games, and it might be possible to earn a living as a professional gamer. Games may also be played to settle disputes. In a fantasy world, a powerful monster or wizard might even challenge a hero to a game – with his life or the lives of his companions at stake!

Knowledge of the rules of a given sport is also a Games skill, but unlike other Games skills, sports specialties only allow you to *judge* an event. To *play,* learn the associated Sports (p. 222) or Combat Sport (p. 184) skill. As a referee, roll against skill to adjudicate a match, spot a subtle foul, determine the winner in a "photo finish" situation, etc. As an athlete, you can use Games to make an Influence roll (see *Influence Rolls,* p. 359) when dealing with a referee or judge, but this use is always at -3 or worse.

When you take a sports specialty, specify both the sport and the league or tournament type; e.g., Games (NFL Football) or Games (Olympic Judo). The rules of different leagues within the same sport default to one another at -2.

Modifiers: Cultural Familiarity modifiers (p. 23). Long-lived games have a body of knowledge that grows through time; therefore, when gamers from different times compete, the player from later in the timeline gets +1 to effective skill.

Gardening

IQ/Easy

Defaults: IQ-4 or Farming-3.

This is the ability to care for plants on a small scale. (For large-scale crops, use Farming skill, p. 194.) A skill roll lets you grow food, medicinal herbs, attractive flowers and trees, etc.

Modifiers: -2 to -4 for an unfamiliar method (e.g., hydroponics or bonsai when you're used to your back yard), crop (herbs, trees, and vegetables all differ), or geographical region. These three penalties are cumulative!

Garrote

DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to strangle a victim with a rope or a wire. See *Special Melee Weapon Rules* (p. 404) for details. Note that you cannot use a garrote to parry.

Geography/TL†

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 and others.

This is the study of the physical, political, and economic divisions of a planet, and how they interact. It is part physical science, part social science. You *must* specialize:

Physical: The study of the physical properties of a planetary surface. A physical geographer could answer questions about climate, terrain, and so forth. You must further specialize by planet type; see *Planet Types* (p. 180). *Defaults:* Geology (same planet type)-4 or Meteorology (same planet type)-4.

Political: The study of political regions – their borders, natural resources, industries, etc. A political geographer could answer questions about land claims, overpopulation, regional economic disparities, transportation networks, etc. *Default:* Economics-4.

Regional: The study of *all* of the above, but specific to a single region: New York, the United States, planet Earth, etc. The depth of knowledge decreases with the size of the region (see *Area Knowledge,* p. 176). *Default:* the relevant Area Knowledge skill at -6.

These specialties default among themselves at -5.

Geology/TL†

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, Geography (Physical)-4, or Prospecting-5.

This is the science dealing with the structure of planets – their crust, mantle, and core. A geologist knows about minerals, oil, ores, etc.; about earthquakes and volcanoes; and about fossils. In the field, he can attempt to find water by using an "eye for country" (see *Survival,* p. 223).

You *must* specialize by planet type. See *Planet Types* (p. 180) for details.

Gesture

IQ/Easy

Default: IQ-4.

This is the ability to communicate through improvised hand signals. A successful skill roll will let you convey one *simple* idea to another person, or understand one simple idea he is attempting to get across to you. Gesture is not suited to complex communication, however.

Modifiers: Cultural Familiarity modifiers (p. 23) definitely apply! Different cultures develop distinct gesture vocabularies.

Group Performance†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 and others.

This is the ability to arrange a performance and direct a group of performers in its execution – in rehearsal, in a studio, or before a live audience. A successful roll means the performance is pleasing. You *must* specialize in a particular performing art. All specialties have prerequisites: the specific skills listed below, plus any *one* of Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Leadership.

Choreography: The ability to instruct and lead a group of dancers. *Prerequisite:* Dancing. *Default:* Dancing-2.

Conducting: The ability to coordinate a group of musicians. Choirs, swing bands, symphony orchestras, etc. are different familiarities; see *Familiarity* (p. 169). *Prerequisites:* Any two Musical Instrument skills, *or* one Musical Instrument and Singing. *Defaults:* Musical Instrument-2 or Singing-2.

Directing: The ability to direct a group of actors. Film, opera, television, and theater are different familiarities. *Prerequisite:* Performance. *Default:* Performance-5.

Fight Choreography: Similar to Choreography, but for Stage Combat (p. 222) instead of Dancing. *Prerequisite:* Stage Combat. *Default:* Stage Combat-2.

Gunner/TL†

DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to use a heavy weapon, usually one mounted on a tripod or a vehicle, to make a *direct-fire* attack – that is, to aim and fire at a target to which you have a line of sight. For *indirect* fire, use Artillery skill (p. 178). Roll against Gunner skill to hit the target.

Make an IQ-based skill roll to take immediate action (e.g., clear a stoppage or restart a crashed targeting computer), should your weapon fail. Loaders can make ST-based skill rolls to improve the rate of fire of certain crew-served weapons; see individual weapon descriptions for details.

You *must* specialize by weapon type. The available specialties vary by TL, but include one or more of:

Beams: Any kind of heavy directed-energy weapon: laser, particle beam, etc.

Cannon: Any kind of heavy projectile weapon – e.g., the main gun of a tank or an ultra-tech railgun on a starship – that fires single shots.

Catapult: Any kind of large, direct-fire mechanical bolt-thrower, such as a ballista.

Machine Gun: Any kind of heavy projectile weapon capable of firing bursts.

Rockets: Any kind of free-flight rocket fired from a mount.

These specialties default to one another at -4. The weapons covered by each specialty vary by TL. For instance, Gunner (Machine Gun) covers hand-cranked Gatling guns at TL5, automatic machine guns at TL6, autocannon at TL7, and electromagnetic machine guns at TL9+.

Familiarity is crucial here! Gunner/TL7 (Machine Gun) covers both tripod-mounted machine guns and aircraft autocannon, but going from one to the other gives you -2 for weapon type (machine gun to autocannon), -2 for aiming system (open sights to HUD), and -2 for mount (tripod to hull mount), for a net -6 to skill until you familiarize yourself with all the differences.

Modifiers: All applicable ranged combat modifiers; -2 for an unfamiliar aiming system (e.g., a camera when you're used to open sights) or mount (e.g., a tripod when you're used to a turret), or for an unfamiliar weapon of a known type (e.g., .30-cal when you are used to .50s); -4 or more for a weapon in bad repair.

Guns/TL†

DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to use a hand-held chemical-propellant or mass-driver projectile weapon. Roll against Guns skill to hit your target.

Make an IQ-based skill roll to take immediate action (e.g., eject a dud round), should your weapon fail.

You *must* specialize by weapon type. The available specialties vary by TL, but include one or more of:

Grenade Launcher (GL): Any large-bore, low-powered small arm that fires a bursting projectile. Includes under-barrel grenade launchers, flare pistols, and ultra-tech "tanglers."

Gyroc: Any kind of small arm that fires miniature rockets.

Light Anti-Armor Weapon (LAW): All forms of rocket launchers and recoilless rifles.

Light Machine Gun (LMG): Any machine gun fired from the hip or a bipod.

Musket: Any kind of *smoothbore* long arm (usually, but not always, a black powder weapon) that fires a solid projectile.

Pistol: All kinds of handguns, including derringers, pepperboxes, revolvers, and automatics, but *not* machine pistols.

Rifle: Any kind of *rifled* long arm – assault rifle, hunting rifle, sniper rifle, etc. – that fires a solid projectile.

Shotgun: Any kind of *smoothbore* long arm that fires multiple projectiles (flechettes, shot, etc.).

Submachine Gun (SMG): All short, fully automatic weapons that fire pistol-caliber ammunition, including machine pistols.

Most of these specialties default to one another at -2, but defaults involving GL, Gyroc, or LAW are at -4 in either direction. The weapons covered by each specialty vary by TL. For example, Guns (Rifle) covers muzzle-loaders at TL4, lever actions at TL5, and self-loaders at TL6+. In particular, *ammunition* varies with TL, from black powder and loose shot at TL4, to smokeless powder cartridges at TL6, to power cells and metallic slivers for TL9+ electromagnetic guns.

Familiarity is crucial here! Guns (Rifle) covers both bolt-action 12.7mm sniper rifles and 5.56mm assault rifles, but going from one to the other gives you -2 for weapon type (12.7mm to 5.56mm), -2 for action (bolt-action to self-loader), and -2 for grip (bipod to hand-held), for a total of -6 to skill until you familiarize yourself with all the differences.

Modifiers: All applicable ranged combat modifiers; -2 for an unfamiliar action (e.g., an automatic when you're used to a revolver) or grip (e.g., a shoulder-fired antitank weapon when you're used to a bipod), or for an unfamiliar weapon of a known type (e.g., a 5.56mm rifle when you are used to a 7.62mm rifle); -4 or more for a weapon in bad repair.

Hazardous Materials/TL†

IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the skill of transporting, storing, and disposing of hazardous materials ("HazMat"). It includes preparing the records that accompany HazMat shipments; applying and identifying warning labels and markings; and knowledge of countermeasures, antidotes, and containment and decontamination procedures. (To operate *personal* protective gear, use the NBC Suit skill, p. 192.)

You *must* specialize by type of HazMat. Common specialties are Biological, Chemical, and Radioactive, but more exotic options (e.g., Magical or Nanotech) may exist in some settings. Mundane specialties default to one another at -5; exotic specialties often have no default at all.

Whenever you deal with HazMat in any capacity, roll against the *lower* of the skill used for the task (Driving, Freight Handling, etc.) and the applicable Hazardous Materials specialty or default. Note that the IQ-5 default represents any layman's knowledge of household hazards. HazMat professionals *deliberately* keep certain aspects of this skill (notably HazMat markings) obscure to avoid alarming the general public. The default does not apply when dealing with such things.

Heraldry

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Savoir-Faire (High Society)-3.

This is the skill of recognizing and designing coats of arms, crests, flags, tartans, and other emblems. A successful roll lets you recognize a knight or a noble from his banner or shield, create attractive and proper arms (without conflicting with existing designs), etc.

In some settings, you might have to specialize in a particular *type* of Heraldry: Coats of Arms (the usual specialty, described above), Corporate Logos (defaults to Current Affairs (Business)-3), or even Graffiti Tags (defaults to Streetwise-3).

Modifiers: Cultural Familiarity modifiers (p. 23). Up to +5 to recognize a well-known design, and down to -5 for an obscure design or one that was retired long ago.

Herb Lore/TL

IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisite: Naturalist.

This is the ability to manufacture herbal concoctions that have magical effects – healing balms, love potions, etc. It only exists in magical game worlds, where it functions much as Alchemy skill (p. 174). Unlike Alchemy, Herb Lore does *not* include the ability to analyze "elixirs." On the other hand, an expert at this skill can locate magical ingredients for free in the wild by making a few Naturalist rolls, while an alchemist requires rare and expensive materials (such as alkahest, dragon's blood, gemstones, and gold) to do his work.

Hidden Lore†

IQ/Average

Defaults: None.

This skill represents knowledge that is lost, deliberately hidden, or simply neglected. Whatever the reason, the general public is unaware of it. It is only available to those who study it specifically.

You *must* specialize in a particular body of secret knowledge. If you wish to enter play with Hidden Lore skills, you must account for this specific knowledge in your character story. The GM might even require you to purchase an Unusual Background before you can learn Hidden Lore skills. Of course, the GM is also free to *forbid* Hidden Lore skills to starting characters . . . or to PCs in general!

To acquire Hidden Lore in play, you must find a reliable source of relevant information. The GM may choose to tie skill increases in Hidden Lore to specific acts – such as reading moldy tomes – instead of allowing you to spend points freely. For instance, an ancient manuscript might let you spend up to eight points (and no more) on a specific Hidden Lore skill.

Remember that most Hidden Lore is secret because somebody powerful wants it kept that way. Thus, discussing or revealing your knowledge can be extremely hazardous.

Possible Hidden Lore specialties include:

Conspiracies: You know details about the conspiracies that underlie every aspect of society. This is factual knowledge (e.g., truths about the Illuminati), not the ability to *analyze* conspiracies. Only available in settings where vast conspiracies really do exist.

Demon Lore: You know the secrets of Hell, the goals of demons in the mortal world, and possibly even the names of specific demons.

Faerie Lore: You have detailed knowledge of the faeries and their secret kingdom(s).

Spirit Lore: You know about ghosts and other spirit entities – names, motivations, etc.

Hiking

HT/Average

Default: HT-5.

This skill represents training for endurance walking, hiking, and marching. It includes knowledge of how to pace yourself in different conditions, and how best to carry a pack. Make a Hiking roll before each day's march; on a success, increase the distance traveled by 20%. The GM may allow bonuses for good maps and good walking shoes, but not for terrain. If a party is traveling together, *all* must make the Hiking roll in order to get the increased distance. See *Hiking* (p. 351).

History†

IQ/Hard

Default: IQ-6.

This is the study of the recorded past (compare Archaeology skill, p. 176). A successful skill roll lets you answer questions about history, and might (at the GM's option) allow you to remember a useful parallel: "Ah, yes. Hannibal faced a situation like this once, and here's what he did . . ."

You *must* specialize. There are two general classes of specialty:

● A limited geographical region – no larger than a small nation – over multiple eras. *Examples:* History (Bavarian), History (Irish), or History (New York State).

● A single *era* (e.g., Victorian period, 20th century) and *one* of a broad geographical region (e.g., Europe), a culture (e.g., Muslim), or an idea (e.g., economic, esoteric, or military). *Examples:* History (20th-Century American), History (Ottoman Muslim), or History (Napoleonic Military).

The sheer variety of possible specialties makes it impossible to list all possible defaults. In general, if two specialties overlap *at all*, then GM should permit a default at -2 to -4.

Hobby Skill

DX or IQ/Easy

Default: DX-4 or IQ-4, depending on the controlling attribute.

Many fields of study have little to do with adventuring or making a living – but people study them nonetheless. Each of these is a separate Hobby Skill. Those that require agility or a delicate touch (e.g., juggling, kite flying, needlepoint, and origami) are DX/Easy skills that default to DX-4, while those that focus on knowledge and trivia (e.g., comic books, rock music, science fiction, and tropical fish) are IQ/Easy skills that default to IQ-4.

A few points in a Hobby Skill can make roleplaying more fun – and possibly come in handy once in a while. You do not need a teacher to learn or improve a Hobby Skill. However, you *cannot* learn skills defined elsewhere in this chapter as Hobby Skills.

Holdout

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Sleight of Hand-3.

This is the skill of concealing items on your person or on other people (usually with their cooperation). An item's size and shape govern its concealability. Some examples:

+4: A BB-sized jewel, a postage stamp.

+3: A pea-sized jewel.

+2: One lockpick, a huge jewel, a dime, a TL9+ computer disk, a letter.

+1: A set of lockpicks, a silver dollar.

0: A TL8 floppy disk or CD, without case.

-1: A dagger, a slingshot, the tiniest handgun or grenade.

-2: An average handgun (e.g., a Luger), a grenade, a large knife.

-3: A submachine gun, a short-sword, a short carbine.

-4: A broadsword, an assault rifle.

-5: A bastard sword, a battle rifle.

-6: A crossbow, a heavy sniper rifle.

Things that move or make noise give an additional -1 or more to skill.

Clothing also modifies effective skill. A Carmelite nun in full habit (+5 to skill) could conceal a bazooka or a battle-axe from an eyeball search. A Las Vegas showgirl in costume (-5 to skill) would have trouble hiding even a dagger. Of course, the showgirl might escape search entirely (unless the guards were bored) because "She obviously couldn't hide anything in *that* outfit!" Full nudity is -7 to skill.

A proper concealment holster helps conceal a weapon; use the equipment modifiers on p. 345. Clothing designed specifically to hide things gives a bonus of up to +4.

To spot a concealed item, roll a Quick Contest of Search skill vs. Holdout. Search defaults to Perception-5 if you haven't studied it. See *Search* (p. 219) for additional rules.

Housekeeping

IQ/Easy

Default: IQ-4.

This is the ability to manage a household. It covers both home economics and domestic chores: cleaning, cooking (but not *haute cuisine,* which requires the Cooking skill), minor repairs (any routine maintenance task that calls for a roll against Carpentry, Sewing, or a similar skill at +4 or better), etc. The main use of Housekeeping is to qualify for the job

of "homemaker," but it can come in handy on adventures – for instance, to clean up evidence!

Hypnotism

IQ/Hard

Defaults: None.

This is the skill of inducing a suggestible state in another person through verbal or mechanical means. It requires five seconds and a successful skill roll to use. If you fail on a *cooperative* subject, you may try again. The second attempt takes five *minutes,* and the roll is at -5. If this attempt fails, you may not try to hypnotize the subject again that day.

A successful Hypnotism attempt puts the subject to sleep. This counts as an anesthetic for the purpose of Surgery. At the GM's option, further Hypnotism rolls might help the subject remember something he had forgotten, while Psychology rolls might help him get over mental problems.

A hypnotized individual is extremely suggestible. Roll a Quick Contest of Hypnotism vs. the victim's Will for each suggestion. The subject resists suggestions that threaten his life or his loved ones, or that go strongly against his character, at +5. You may also give "posthypnotic suggestions," instructing the subject to do something in response to a trigger after the hypnosis ends. The subject's resistance roll for such suggestions takes place when he encounters the trigger. He resists at +1 to Will per week since he was hypnotized.

You *cannot* use Hypnotism as an attack, except in highly cinematic games. You *can* use it on an unaware or unwilling subject out of combat, but he resists at Will+5. If he resists the initial attempt, he is considered uncooperative, and you may not make a second attempt that day. A subject who is unfamiliar with Hypnotism might not know what you attempted, but he suspects *something* – possibly witchcraft!

In all cases, a hypnotic trance lasts 1d hours unless you end it sooner.

Modifiers: +2 if you send hypnotic suggestions via Telesend (see *Telecommunication,* p. 91), since voices in the head are harder to ignore.

Immovable Stance

DX/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisite: Trained By A Master.

This skill allows you to anchor yourself to the ground by properly channeling your *chi,* using secret balancing techniques, etc. Make a skill roll whenever an attack (e.g., a shove or the Push skill, p. 216) would result in knockback or a fall.

On a success, you neither experience knockback nor fall down. On a failure, you are knocked back but still get the usual DX roll to avoid falling down. On a critical failure, you automatically suffer full knockback *and* you fall down.

This skill also helps against attacks with the Judo skill (p. 203). If you fail your active defense (or choose not to defend) against a Judo throw, your attacker must *win* a Quick Contest of Judo vs. your Immovable Stance skill, or his throw fails.

Modifiers: -1 per yard of potential knockback; +4 for Perfect Balance (p. 74).

Innate Attack†

DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This skill represents trained ability with a "built-in" *ranged* attack: fiery breath, super-powered energy bolts, etc. Learn it to improve your odds of hitting with Afflictions (p. 35), Bindings (p. 40), Innate Attacks (p. 61), magical jets and missiles, and similar attacks that originate from *you* as opposed to a weapon in your hand. Roll against skill to hit.

You *must* specialize:

Beam: Any energy blast, magical jet, etc. emitted from the hands. To use this skill, you must have at least one unrestrained hand (although it need not be *empty*).

Breath: Any attack emitted from the mouth, such as dragon's fire or acidic sputum. To use this skill, you cannot be gagged and you *must* be facing your target.

Gaze: Any attack emitted from the eyes – heat vision, a petrifying stare, etc. To use this skill, you cannot be blindfolded and you *must* be facing your target.

Projectile: Any solid projectile or pseudo-solid energy bolt (e.g., Fireball spell) emitted from the hands. To use this skill, you must have at least one unrestrained hand (although it need not be *empty*).

These specialties default to one another at -2.

You use this skill to *direct* your attack, not to *activate* it; therefore, restrictions such as "you cannot be gagged" apply strictly to your ability to make ranged attacks. If you can trigger your attack while restrained, no skill roll is needed to attack your restraints!

You can only learn this skill for ranged attacks. Use Brawling (p. 182) to improve your odds with abilities that require a touch.

Intelligence Analysis/TL

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 or Strategy (any)-6.

This is the ability to *analyze* and *interpret* intelligence data. It allows you to deduce enemy plans and capabilities, evaluate the accuracy of information, rate the reliability of sources, etc. In most game worlds, only intelligence, military, and security services teach this skill – often only to those with a minimum level of Rank or Security Clearance.

The GM makes *all* Intelligence Analysis rolls in secret. On a success, he provides details about the significance and accuracy of your data, or insights into what it means in terms of enemy planning. When you encounter deliberately falsified data, the GM rolls a secret Quick Contest: your Intelligence Analysis vs. the enemy's skill at disinformation (Forgery, Propaganda, etc.). If you win, the GM provides details on precisely what is wrong with the information. It is up to you to deduce what this means, however!

This skill has nothing to do with *gathering* intelligence. Use Current Affairs (p.186) and Research (p. 217) to sift through public sources; Forensics (p. 196) and Search (p. 219) to find physical clues; Observation (p. 211) for human surveillance; and Electronics Operation (p. 189) to work with the satellite imagery, communications intercepts, and related "technical means" common at TL7+.

You may take an *optional* specialty (p. 169) in one particular type of intelligence. A useful specialty at TL6+ is Intelligence Analysis (Traffic Analysis): identifying the purpose and organization of targets by examining intercepted communications traffic.

Modifiers: -1 to -5 for incomplete information; -3 if all your information comes from a single source; -3 for intelligence concerning an arcane scientific or bureaucratic principle, *unless* you have skill in that area (e.g., Engineer (Electronics) for intelligence regarding a radar installation).

Interrogation

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Intimidation-3, or Psychology-4.

This is the ability to question a prisoner. Only intelligence agencies, police and prison services, the military, and the underworld teach this skill.

Roll a Quick Contest of Interrogation vs. the prisoner's Will for each question. This requires 5 minutes per question. If you win, you get a truthful answer. If you tie or lose, the victim remains silent or lies. If you lose by more than five points, he tells you a *good, believable* lie! The GM roleplays the prisoner (or, if *you* are the prisoner, the GM will roleplay the interrogator) and makes all die rolls in secret.

Modifiers: -5 if the prisoner's loyalty to his leader or cause is "Very Good" or "Excellent"; -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); +2 for a lengthy interrogation (over two hours); +3 if you use severe threats; +6 if you use torture*. Increase these last two bonuses by +1 if you have the Callous disadvantage (p. 125)!

* "Torture" does not necessarily mean thumbscrews and the rack. Exposing a prisoner to the object of his phobia (see *Phobias,* p. 148) is an effective torture, as is a believable threat against a loved one. Note that torturing a prisoner is usually considered *vile* behavior, likely bringing retribution.

Intimidation

Will/Average

Defaults: Will-5 or Acting-3.

This is the skill of hostile persuasion. The essence of Intimidation is to convince the subject that you are able and willing, perhaps even eager, to do something awful to him.

You can substitute an Intimidation attempt for any reaction roll; see *Influence Rolls* (p. 359). *Exception:* You cannot intimidate someone who has the Unfazeable advantage!

The results of a successful Intimidation attempt depend on the target. An honest citizen probably cooperates, sullenly or with false cheer. A low-life might lick your boots (even becoming genuinely loyal). A really tough sort might react well without being frightened: "You're my kind of scum!" The GM decides, and roleplays it. If you rolled a critical success – or if the subject critically failed his Will roll – your victim must make a Fright Check in addition to the other results of the Influence roll!

Group Intimidation: You may attempt to intimidate up to 25 people at once, at -1 to skill per five people (or fraction thereof) in the group. Multiple intimidators can attempt to intimidate proportionally larger groups; for instance, three thugs could try to intimidate up to 75 people! Base the skill penalty on the size of the target group divided by the number of intimidators (round up). Resolve the outcome with a single Quick Contest: the *highest* effective Intimidation skill from among the intimidators vs. the *highest* modified Will in the target group.

Specious Intimidation: You can attempt a Quick Contest of Fast-Talk vs. the subject's IQ *before* your Intimidation attempt in order to appear to be intimidating when you can't back it up. If you win, you are at +3 on the subsequent Intimidation attempt, which can go a long way toward offsetting the high Will and Fearlessness of martial arts masters, world leaders, etc. If you tie or lose, however, your Intimidation attempt fails *automatically,* and you suffer a "Very Bad" reaction instead of just a "Bad" one!

Modifiers: +1 to +4 for displays of strength, bloodthirstiness, or supernatural powers (GM's judgment); increase this bonus by +1 if you are Callous (p. 125). Appearance (p. 21) matters: +2 if you are Hideous, +3 if Monstrous, or +4 if Horrific. Size also matters: add your Size Modifier and subtract the subject's. Appropriate Reputation modifiers (positive or negative) certainly count! You get -1 for Oblivious (p. 146) and -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154). Subtract the *subject's* Fearlessness (p. 55) from your roll. The GM may assign a +1 or -1 for especially appropriate or clumsy dialog. Requests for aid are always at -3 or worse.

Invisibility Art

IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master, and both Hypnotism and Stealth at 14+.

This is the fabled skill, often attributed to ninja and other martial-arts masters, of being able to stand in plain sight without being noticed. It requires one second of concentration to activate. After that time, roll a Quick Contest once per *second:* your Invisibility Art vs. the Vision roll of each person who can see you.

Viewers must apply the current darkness penalty to their Vision roll. A viewer who is concentrating on something else or otherwise distracted is at -3; one who is specifically looking for intruders gets +3. If someone sees you and raises the alarm, by pointing and crying out, those who believe the warning get +3 on their *next* roll.

If you win, that person is unable to see you for one second. Otherwise, he can see you normally. Once someone notices you, he is unaffected by this skill until you can get out of sight somehow (which might be as easy as stepping into a shadow), whereupon you may try again.

Note that this skill does not work at all in combat. In particular, if you attack *anyone,* you will immediately become visible to *everyone!*

Modifiers: +3 if you use a smoke bomb or flash grenade before you attempt your roll (you appear to vanish in a cloud of smoke). Your movement modifies your skill roll rather than viewers' Vision rolls: no modifier if you stand still (Move 0), -1 if you move at a slow walk (Move 1), -2 at a fast walk (Move 2), or -5 at a run (Move 3+). If you stand *perfectly* still (requires a successful Breath Control or Meditation roll), you get +1.

Jeweler/TL

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, Smith (Copper)-4, or Smith (Lead and Tin)-4.

This is the ability to work with precious metals, make jewelry, decorate weapons, etc. A successful skill roll allows you to identify a precious metal or gem, or determine the value of a precious bauble.

Jitte/Sai

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Judo

DX/Hard

Defaults: None.

This skill represents *any* advanced training at unarmed throws and grapples – not just the eponymous Japanese martial art.

Judo allows you to parry two *different* attacks per turn, one with each hand. Your Parry score is (skill/2) + 3, rounded down. This parry is *not* at the usual -3 for parrying a weapon barehanded, greatly reducing the likelihood of injury when you defend against an armed foe. In addition, Judo gives an improved retreating bonus when you parry; see *Retreat* (p. 377). For complete rules for parrying barehanded, see *Parrying Unarmed* (p. 376).

On the turn immediately after a successful Judo parry, you may attempt to throw your attacker if he is within one yard. This counts as an attack; roll vs. Judo skill to hit. (Note that in an All-Out Attack, you cannot attempt two throws, but you can make one attempt at +4.) Your foe may use any active defense – he *can* parry your hand with a weapon! If his defense fails, you throw him.

When you throw a foe, he falls where you please. On a battle map, he lands in any two hexes near you. One of these hexes must be *his* starting hex, *your* hex, or any hex adjacent to one of those hexes. Your victim must roll against HT; a failed roll means he is stunned! If you throw him into someone else, that person must roll against the higher of ST+3 or DX+3 to avoid being knocked down.

Finally, you may use your Judo skill instead of your DX for any DX roll made in close combat except to draw a weapon or drop a shield. If you grapple a foe using Judo, and he fails to break free, you may make a Judo attack to throw him on your next turn, exactly as if you had parried his attack.

To use Judo, any hand with which you wish to parry or grapple must be empty. Because Judo relies heavily on footwork, all Judo rolls and Judo parries take a penalty equal to your encumbrance level. For instance, Heavy encumbrance would give you -3 to hit or to parry an enemy attack.

Jumping

DX/Easy

Defaults: None.

This skill represents trained jumping ability. When you attempt a difficult jump, roll against the *higher* of Jumping or DX. In addition, you may use half your Jumping skill (round down) instead of Basic Move when calculating jumping distance. For instance, Jumping-14 would let you jump if you had Basic Move 7. See *Jumping* (p. 352).

Karate

DX/Hard

Defaults: None.

This skill represents *any* advanced training at unarmed striking, not just the Okinawan martial art of *karate.* Roll against Karate to hit with a punch (at no -4 for the "off" hand), or Karate-2 to hit with a kick. You cannot use Karate to attack with claws, teeth, etc., or with a blackjack – use Brawling (p. 182) for that. Karate skill does let you make several special attacks, however; see *Special Unarmed Combat Techniques* (p. 403).

Karate improves damage: if you know Karate at DX level, add +1 *per die* to basic thrust damage when you calculate damage with Karate attacks: punches, kicks, elbow strikes, etc. Add +2 per die if you know Karate at DX+1 or better! Work out damage ahead of time and record it on your character sheet.

Karate allows you to parry two *different* attacks per turn, one with each hand. Your Parry score is (skill/2) + 3, rounded down. This parry is *not* at the usual -3 for parrying a weapon barehanded, greatly reducing the likelihood of injury when you defend against an armed foe. In addition, Karate gives an improved retreating bonus when you parry; see *Retreat* (p. 377). For more on parrying barehanded, see *Parrying Unarmed* (p. 376).

To use Karate, any hand with which you wish to strike or parry must be empty (but you are free to wear heavy gauntlets, brass knuckles, etc. to increase damage). Because Karate relies heavily on footwork, all Karate attacks and parries take a penalty equal to your encumbrance level. For instance, Heavy encumbrance would give you -3 to hit or to parry an enemy attack.

Kiai

HT/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master or Weapon Master.

You can channel your *chi* outward in a mighty shout (*kiai*) that freezes lesser foes. This counts as an attack, and costs 1 FP per attempt, successful or not.

Roll a Quick Contest: your Kiai skill vs. your target's Will. You are at -1 for every full two yards of distance. Your victim resists at +1 if he is Hard of Hearing, at +2 if Deaf! If you win, your target is mentally stunned (see *Effects of Stun,* p. 420).

This skill only works against a single victim; everyone can hear the shout, but your *chi* is focused on that one foe. However, a successful Kiai roll gives you +2 to Intimidation rolls vs. *everyone* within earshot.

Knife

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Knot-Tying

DX/Easy

Defaults: DX-4, Climbing-4, or Seamanship-4.

This is the ability to tie a wide variety of knots quickly and efficiently. A successful skill roll lets you make a noose, tie someone up, etc. If you bind someone using this skill, he must win a Quick Contest of Escape vs. your Knot-Tying skill to free himself.

Modifiers: +1 per level of High Manual Dexterity (p. 59), or -3 per level of Ham-Fisted (p. 138).

Kusari

see **Melee Weapon,** p. 208

Lance

DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5 or Spear-3.
Prerequisite: Riding.

The ability to use the lance: a long, spear-like weapon wielded from horseback. This is *not* a Melee Weapon skill (see p. 208). You may not use a lance to parry – you must block or dodge enemy attacks.

Lasso

DX/Average

Defaults: None.

This is the skill of throwing the *lariat:* a long rope or thong with a sliding noose at one end. Its intended purpose is to snare animals, but it can also entangle opponents in combat – see *Special Ranged Weapons* (p. 410).

Law†

IQ/Hard

Default: IQ-6.

This skill represents knowledge of law codes and jurisprudence. A successful roll lets you remember, deduce, or figure out the answer to a question about the law. Few legal questions have clear-cut answers, however – even an expert will hedge his advice!

You *must* specialize. There are two general classes of specialty:

● The laws of a particular political region (e.g., Canada or France) *within a specific field* (constitutional, contract, criminal, police, etc.). *Examples:* Law (British Criminal), Law (Canadian Constitutional), and Law (U.S. Contract).

● A specialized body of law not associated with a political region. *Examples:* Law (Catholic Canon), Law (International), and Law (Space).

Specialties within the same *region,* such as Law (British Criminal) and Law (British Police), or *field,* such as Law (British Criminal) and Law (French Criminal), default to one another at -4. If both region and field differ, the default is -6 or worse.

In some times and places, a Quick Contest of Law (Criminal) between the defense and prosecution will determine the outcome of a trial. In others, Law functions as an Influence skill (see *Influence Rolls,* p. 359) used to sway the rulings of the judge.

Law enforcers nearly always have a point or two in Law (Police) for their region. This represents knowledge of "proper procedure" when it comes to arrests, evidence handling, interrogation, etc.

Leadership

IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the ability to coordinate a group. Make a Leadership roll to lead NPCs into a dangerous or stressful situation. (PCs can decide for themselves if they want to follow you!)

You may attempt a Leadership roll in combat if you spend your turn doing *nothing* but giving orders and encouragement. On a success, everyone on your side who can hear you (*including* PCs) has +1 on all combat-related Fright Checks and morale checks, and on self-control rolls for disadvantages that would reduce combat efficiency (such as Berserk and Cowardice – or Bloodlust, if you wish to take prisoners). A critical success gives +2. The bonus lasts until your next turn, at which time you may roll again. A group can have only one leader, however! If multiple people attempt Leadership rolls, *no one* gets a bonus.

Note that a minimum level of Leadership is often a prerequisite for high Rank (p. 29).

Modifiers: Any bonus for Charisma (p. 41); -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154). -5 if the NPCs have never been in action with you; -5 if you are sending them into danger but not going yourself; +5 if their loyalty to you is "Good"; +10 if their loyalty is "Very Good." If their loyalty is "Excellent," you do not have to roll!

Leatherworking
DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to work with leather to make belts, saddles, armor, etc. A successful skill roll lets you repair or create leather goods. Make an IQ-based roll to design items that are more artistic than functional.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); +1 per level of High Manual Dexterity (p. 59), or -3 per level of Ham-Fisted (p. 138).

Lifting
HT/Average

Defaults: None.

This is the trained ability to use your strength to its best advantage when you lift. Roll once per lift. On a success, increase your Basic Lift by 5% per point by which you made your roll. This has no effect on encumbrance, or on how much you can carry. See *Lifting and Moving Things* (p. 353).

Light Walk
DX/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master, and both Acrobatics and Stealth at 14+.

This skill allows you to exert very little pressure when you walk. On a successful Light Walk roll, you leave no visible tracks. Tracking rolls to follow you *automatically* fail unless they rely on something more than sight; thus, a human tracker would be baffled, but bloodhounds would suffer no penalty at all.

You can also attempt to walk over fragile surfaces without falling through. Maximum Move under such circumstances is 1/3 normal (GM's decision). Thin ice would require an unmodified Light Walk roll, while rice paper would require a roll at -8!

Finally, a successful Light Walk roll can give a bonus to Stealth when your intention is to move quietly. This bonus equals half your margin of success, rounded down. Minimum bonus is +1.

Linguistics
IQ/Hard

Defaults: None.

This is the study of the principles upon which languages are based. A successful skill roll lets you identify a language from a snatch of speech or writing. As well, make a skill roll once per month when learning a language without a teacher. On a success, you learn at full speed rather than at 1/4 speed (see *Learning Languages*, p. 25).

Lip Reading
Per/Average

Default: Perception-10.

This is the ability to *see* what others are saying. You must be within seven yards, or have some means of bringing your point of view this close. A successful skill roll lets you make out one sentence of a discussion – assuming, of course, that you know the language. If your subjects suspect that you can read lips, they can hide their mouths or subvocalize to thwart you. A critical failure on a Lip Reading roll – if you are where your victims could see you – means that you stared so much you were noticed!

Modifiers: All Vision modifiers (see *Vision*, p. 358).

Liquid Projector/TL†
DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to use a weapon that projects a stream of liquid or gas. Roll against Liquid Projector skill to hit your target.

Make an IQ-based Liquid Projector roll to take immediate action (e.g., patch a leak), should your weapon fail.

You *must* specialize by weapon type:

Flamethrower: Any weapon that projects *burning* liquid or gas. (This does *not* include plasma weapons, which are often called "flamers"; use Beam Weapons skill for those.)

Sprayer: Any weapon that emits a gas or atomized liquid (nerve gas, sleeping gas, etc.), including an ordinary spray can used as an improvised weapon.

Squirt Gun: Any weapon that fires a low-pressure stream of liquid at the rate of one squirt per pull of the trigger.

Water Cannon: Any weapon that fires a continuous jet of high-pressure liquid, usually but not always water, with the intent of causing knockback.

Literature can be useful for finding clues to hidden treasure, sunken lands, Ancient Secrets, and the like.

These specialties default to one another at -4. The weapons covered by each specialty vary by TL; e.g., Liquid Projector (Flamethrower) covers fire-siphons loaded with Greek fire at TL4, while at TL6, it covers backpack tanks that project thickened fuel.

Modifiers: All applicable ranged combat modifiers; -2 for heavy weapons when you are used to portable weapons (e.g., a flamethrower mounted on a tank when you are used to a backpack model), or for an unfamiliar weapon of a known type; -4 or more for a weapon in bad repair.

Literature
IQ/Hard

Default: IQ-6.

This is the study of the great writings. A student of literature would be knowledgeable in the realms of old poetry, dusty tomes, criticism, etc. This can be useful for finding clues to hidden treasure, sunken lands, Ancient Secrets, and the like. The work in question must be available in a language you read.

Modifiers: -5 if you're illiterate (see *Literacy,* p. 24) and relying on oral tradition, save in pre-literate cultures, where this is the norm.

Lockpicking/TL

IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the ability to open locks without the key or combination. Each attempt requires one minute.

If you make the roll and open the lock, each point by which you succeeded shaves five seconds off the required time. (Safecracking and similar challenges can take more time, at the GM's discretion.)

Note that if the lock has a trap or alarm attached, you must make a separate Traps roll to circumvent it.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); -5 if working by touch (e.g., in total darkness). Inside information gives a bonus at GM's discretion. If the GM requires a *DX*-based roll (for instance, to work with a particularly delicate mechanism), modifiers for High Manual Dexterity (p. 59) or Ham-Fisted (p. 138) will apply.

Machinist/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Mechanic (any)-5.

This is the skill of making and modifying mechanical parts and tools. A successful skill roll lets you build parts from raw materials, manufacture tools for use with another skill (such as Armoury or Lockpicking), or modify any simple mechanical device not explicitly covered by another skill. The GM may require an inventor to make one or more Machinist rolls before attempting an Engineer roll to assemble a gadget.

Materials and component size vary significantly with tech level. A TL5 machinist works mainly with brass and steel components that can be seen with the naked eye; a TL10 machinist might work with carbon nanotubes.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345).

Main-Gauche

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Makeup/TL

IQ/Easy

Defaults: IQ-4 or Disguise-2.

This is the skill of using theatrical makeup to enhance a performer's appearance. It is not just the ability to make someone look "pretty" – you can make yourself or others look older, younger, or of a different race or nationality. At TL6+, you can use prosthetics to further enhance the effect. However, you cannot make someone look taller or shorter than he actually is.

Market Analysis

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, Economics-5, or Merchant-4.

This is the skill of predicting the short-term behavior of bond, stock, and currency markets – usually in order to make money! It is the main job skill of professional traders and speculators. Make a skill roll to determine current market trends. On a critical success, you also learn whether a trend will continue or reverse in the future. On a failure, you get no clear answer. On a critical failure, you guess *wrong*.

Modifiers: The Talents (p. 89) of Business Acumen and Mathematical Ability *both* provide a bonus.

Masonry

IQ/Easy

Default: IQ-4.

This is the ability to build things out of brick or stone.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); -3 for simple engineering (erecting scaffolding, moving large blocks of stone, etc.) rather than masonry per se.

Mathematics/TL†

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 and others.

This is the scientific study of quantities and magnitudes, and their relationships and attributes, through the use of numbers and symbols. You *must* specialize:

Applied: The branch of mathematics that interacts directly with the physical sciences and engineering, dealing with mathematical models of the behavior of physical systems. *Defaults:* Engineer (any)-5 or Physics-5.

Computer Science: The theoretical study of data structures and computation. Roll vs. skill to answer questions about what is *possible* with computers. This gives you no special ability to *use* computers! *Default:* Computer Programming-5.

Cryptology: The mathematical study of codes and ciphers. This gives you a *theoretical* understanding of encryption schemes, including how they change with TL and why some schemes are more effective than others. To create or break codes, use Cryptography skill (p. 186). *Default:* Cryptography-5.

Pure: Generic "academic" mathematics. Make a skill roll to answer any math-related question not covered by another specialty. Pure mathematics encompasses dozens of obscure subfields that will never affect the game. If you *must* be an expert in something like "non-selfadjoint operator algebras," you may further note an *optional* specialty (p. 169).

Statistics: The science of assembling and analyzing data for the purpose of calculating probabilities, constructing models, and making forecasts. Roll vs. skill to determine the odds of a particular outcome, given sufficient data about similar situations in the past.

Surveying: The science of determining the area of a portion of the Earth's surface, the lengths and directions of the bounding lines, and the contour of the surface. Make a skill roll to determine the dimensions of any area you can see. More complex determinations require specialized equipment. *Defaults:* Cartography-3 or Navigation (any)-4.

These specialties default to one another at -5.

Mechanic/TL†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Engineer (same)-4, or Machinist-5.

This is the ability to diagnose and fix ordinary mechanical problems. A successful skill roll will let you find or repair one problem.

You must pick a specialty from within *one* of these four categories:

Machine Type: Any one class of nonvehicular machine. Types include Micromachines (miniature machinery, invisible to the naked eye; TL9+), Nanomachines (*molecular*-scale machinery; TL10+), and Robotics (robots and automated factories; TL7+).

Motive System Type: Any one type of propulsion system, regardless of vehicle type. Types include Legged, Tracked, Wheeled, Rockets, and Reactionless Thrusters.

Power Plant Type: Any one type of power plant, no matter what it powers. Types include Clockwork, Steam Engine, Gasoline Engine, Diesel Engine, Gas Turbine, Fuel Cell, Fission Reactor, Fusion Reactor, and Antimatter Reactor.

Vehicle Type: The controls, hull, motive system, power plant, transmission, and even the paint job of *one specific type of vehicle* listed under a vehicle-operation skill such as Driving (p. 188), Piloting (p. 214), or Submarine (p. 223).

Mechanic specialties default to one another at -4, although the GM may modify this for particularly close or distant specialties. The systems covered by each specialty vary by TL. For instance, Mechanic (Light Airplane) covers single-engine biplanes at early TL6, small private jets at TL7, and so forth.

Familiarity is very important here. For instance, Mechanic/TL7 (Light Airplane) covers both propeller-powered seaplanes and small private jets, but going from one to the other gives you -2 for an unfamiliar item (prop-powered plane to jet) and -2 for an unfamiliar implementation (seaplane to regular plane), for a net -4 to skill until you familiarize yourself with all the differences.

Modifiers: -2 for an unfamiliar item within your specialty (e.g., a barge when you're used to battleships), or for an unfamiliar implementation (e.g., a powerboat engine when you're used to automobile engines); equipment modifiers (p. 345).

Meditation

Will/Hard

Defaults: Will-6 or Autohypnosis-4.

This is the ability to calm the emotions, control the mind, and relax the body. To use this skill, you must concentrate for (20 - skill) seconds, minimum one second, and then roll vs. skill. On a success, you enter a trance-like state, which you can maintain for hours.

A meditative trance is required for certain rituals and is a common preparation for prayer. In addition, the GM may permit you to meditate on a particular moral dilemma. On a successful Meditation roll, the GM will "enlighten" you, providing a hint as to which course of action "feels" right.

Melee Weapon

DX/Varies

Defaults: Special.

This is not one skill, but an entire *collection* of skills – one per class of closely related melee weapons. Melee Weapon skills are based on DX, and default to DX-4 if Easy, DX-5 if Average, or DX-6 if Hard. See specific skill descriptions for other defaults.

Make a Melee Weapon roll to hit an opponent in combat. You may also use these skills to parry. Your Parry defense is (skill/2) + 3, rounded down.

Melee weapons fall into broad categories on the basis of overall balance and function. When a rule refers to one of these categories, it applies to *all* weapons in that category and *all* Melee Weapon skills used to wield them. For instance, "fencing weapons" means "all weapons used with any of Main-Gauche, Rapier, Saber, or Smallsword skill."

Fencing Weapons

Fencing weapons are light, one-handed weapons, usually hilted blades, optimized for parrying. If you have a fencing weapon, you get an improved retreating bonus when you parry – see *Retreat* (p. 377). Furthermore, you have *half* the usual penalty for parrying more than once with the same hand (see *Parrying,* p. 376).

Note that fencing weapons are *light* and likely to break when used to parry a heavier weapon. They cannot parry flail weapons at all! You must be relatively mobile to capitalize on their speed and maneuverability: all attacks and parries take a penalty equal to your encumbrance level (e.g., Heavy encumbrance gives -3 to hit or to parry).

The skills in this category default to one another at -3. They also default to sword skills, as noted below.

Main-Gauche (DX/Average): Any weapon normally wielded with Knife or Jitte/Sai skill (see below), used in the "off" hand. With this skill, you may ignore the penalty for using the "off" hand on defense (*attacks* are still at -4) and the -1 for parrying with a knife. To wield a knife as a primary weapon, use Knife skill. *Defaults:* Jitte/Sai-4 or Knife-4.

Rapier (DX/Average): Any long (over 1 yard), light thrusting sword. *Default:* Broadsword-4.

Saber (DX/Average): Any light cut-and-thrust sword. Note that *cavalry* sabers are quite heavy, and use Broadsword instead. *Defaults:* Broadsword-4 or Shortsword-4.

Smallsword (DX/Average): Any short (up to 1 yard), light thrusting sword or one-handed short staff (such as the sticks used in the martial arts *arnis, escrima,* and *kali*). *Default:* Shortsword-4.

Flails

A *flail* is any flexible, unbalanced weapon with its mass concentrated in the head. Such a weapon cannot parry if you have already attacked with it on your turn. Because flails tend to wrap around the target's shield or weapon, attempts to *block* them are at -2 and attempts to *parry* them are at -4. Fencing weapons and knives cannot parry them at all! An unarmed fighter *can* parry a flail, but at -4 in addition to any penalty for parrying unarmed.

The skills in this category default to one another at -3.

Flail (DX/Hard): Any one-handed flail, such as a morningstar or nunchaku. *Default:* Axe/Mace-4.

Two-Handed Flail (DX/Hard): Any two-handed flail. *Defaults:* Kusari-4 or Two-Handed Axe/Mace-4.

Impact Weapons

An *impact* weapon is any rigid, unbalanced weapon with most of its mass concentrated in the head. Such a weapon cannot parry if you have already attacked with it on your turn.

The skills in this category default to one another at -3.

Axe/Mace (DX/Average): Any short- or medium-length, one-handed impact weapon, such as an axe, hatchet, knobbed club, or pick. *Default:* Flail-4.

Two-Handed Axe/Mace (DX/Average): Any long, two-handed impact weapon, such as a baseball bat, battleaxe, maul, or warhammer. *Defaults:* Polearm-4 or Two-Handed Flail-4.

Pole Weapons

Pole weapons are long (usually wooden) shafts, often adorned with striking heads. All require two hands.

Polearm (DX/Average): Any *very* long (at least 2 yards), unbalanced pole weapon with a heavy striking head, including the glaive, halberd, poleaxe, and countless others. Polearms become *unready* after an attack, but not after a parry. *Defaults:* Spear-4, Staff-4, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace-4.

Spear (DX/Average): Any long, balanced pole weapon with a thrusting point, including spears, javelins, tridents, and fixed bayonets. *Defaults:* Polearm-4 or Staff-2.

Staff (DX/Average): Any long, balanced pole *without* a striking head. This skill makes good use of the staff's extensive parrying surface when defending, giving +2 to your Parry score. *Defaults:* Polearm-4 or Spear-2.

Swords

A *sword* is a rigid, hilted blade with a thrusting point, cutting edge, or both. All swords are balanced, and can attack and parry without becoming unready.

Broadsword (DX/Average): Any *balanced,* 2- to 4-foot blade wielded in one hand – broadsword, cavalry saber, scimitar, etc. This skill also covers any stick or club of similar size and balance to these blades, as well as bastard swords, katanas, and longswords used one-handed. *Defaults:* Force Sword-4, Rapier-4, Saber-4, Shortsword-2, or Two-Handed Sword-4.

Force Sword (DX/Average): Any sword with a "blade" made of energy instead of matter. This generally refers to an ultra-tech weapon that projects energy from a powered hilt, but extends to similar effects produced using magic or psionics. *Default:* any sword skill at -3.

Jitte/Sai (DX/Average): Any tined, one-handed sword designed to catch *rigid* weapons. Jitte/Sai weapons are built for disarming, and give +2 in the Quick Contest to disarm an opponent (see *Knocking a Weapon Away,* p. 401). Furthermore, if you attempt to disarm on the turn *immediately* after you parry your opponent's weapon, you need not roll to hit his weapon first. Just state that you are attempting to disarm and move directly to the Quick Contest! This still counts as an attack. *Defaults:* Force Sword-4, Main-Gauche-4, or Shortsword-3.

Knife (DX/Easy): Any rigid, hilted blade less than one foot long, from a pocketknife to a bowie knife. A knife

has a very small parrying surface, which gives you -1 to your Parry score. *Defaults:* Force Sword-3, Main-Gauche-3, or Shortsword-3.

Shortsword (DX/Average): Any *balanced,* one-handed weapon 1-2 feet in length – including the shortsword and any club of comparable size and balance (e.g., a police baton). *Defaults:* Broadsword-2, Force Sword-4, Jitte/Sai-3, Knife-4, Saber-4, Smallsword-4, or Tonfa-3.

Two-Handed Sword (DX/Average): Any *balanced,* two-handed blade over 4 feet in length: greatswords, zweihanders, etc. This skill also covers quarterstaffs wielded like swords, as well as bastard swords, katanas, and longswords used two-handed. *Defaults:* Broadsword-4 or Force Sword-4.

Whips

A *whip* is a flexible weapon made from a length of chain, leather, wire, etc. A whip can be up to seven yards long – but note that a whip two yards or more in length cannot strike at one yard or closer, and is slow to ready after an attack. A whip tends to wind around its target, making it an excellent disarming and entangling weapon. However, a whip's lack of rigidity makes it a poor parrying weapon. For details, see *Special Melee Weapon Rules* (p. 404).

The skills in this category default to one another at -3.

Force Whip (DX/Average): Any whip made of pure energy instead of matter. These are usually ultra-tech devices that project energy from a powered hilt, but magical or psi-tech versions are possible. Most force whips can lash the target but not ensnare him.

Kusari (DX/Hard): A weighted chain wielded in two hands. *Default:* Two-Handed Flail-4.

Monowire Whip (DX/Hard): A whip made of a weighted length of monomolecular wire attached to a handle.

Whip (DX/Average): Any ordinary whip.

Other Weapons

Some hand weapons defy easy classification. For instance:

Tonfa (DX/Average): A tonfa is a baton with a protruding handle on one side. It can function as a baton, but you can also grasp it by the handle and hold it against the forearm in close combat. This grip lets you jab for thrust+1 crushing damage and parry close-combat attacks at (skill/2) + 3, rounded down. Roll vs. skill to change grips. On a success, the grip change is a free action. On a failure, you must spend the entire turn changing grips. A critical failure means you throw your weapon away! *Default:* Shortsword-3.

Mental Strength

Will/Easy

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master or Weapon Master*.
* At the GM's option, a mage or psi may also learn this skill.

You can actively focus your mind to resist mental attacks. This skill replaces Will when you resist magic spells, psi powers, Hypnotism, Invisibility Art, Kiai, and similar abilities. Mental Strength does *not* replace most normal Will rolls. Furthermore, it does not work if you are stunned, asleep, or unconscious – for that, buy the Mind Shield advantage (p. 70).

Merchant

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Finance-6, or Market Analysis-4.

This is the skill of buying, selling, and trading retail and wholesale goods. It involves bargaining, salesmanship, and an understanding of trade practices. It covers all types of merchandise, but many merchants have an *optional* specialty (p. 169) in a single class of goods.

Make a skill roll to judge the value of any piece of common goods, find out where any commodity is bought and sold, find the local fair market value of any commodity, etc.

When two merchants haggle, the GM may settle it with a Quick Contest. The winner adds or subtracts 10% of fair value, depending on whether he was trying to sell or buy.

If you have this skill at *any* level, you get +1 on reaction rolls when buying or selling. If you have this skill at level 20 or better, you get +2.

Modifiers: -3 for Gullibility (p. 137); -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154). -3 for illegal goods, unless you have Streetwise at 12+ or specialize in such goods; -2 in an unfamiliar area, until you have had time to familiarize yourself with local market conditions; Cultural Familiarity modifiers (p. 23). These last two modifiers "stack," and frequently occur together.

Metallurgy/TL

IQ/Hard

Defaults: Chemistry-5, Jeweler-8, or Smith (any)-8.

This is the study of metals and their properties. A successful roll lets you identify metals or alloys, or solve a problem concerning metals, their use, mining, or refining.

Meteorology/TL†

IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the study of the weather, and the ability to predict it. It includes familiarity with technological aids such as barometers and satellite maps, but you can still function without your instruments. (If you can't, you're a meter-reader, not a meteorologist!)

When you wish to predict the weather, the GM rolls against your skill in secret. On a success, he tells the truth; on a failure, he answers randomly, or *lies.* Each skill roll predicts the weather for one day. If one day's roll fails, subsequent ones can't succeed. For instance, a three-day forecast would require three skill rolls: the first for tomorrow, the second for the next day, and the third for the day after that.

A successful roll also allows you to deduce what sort of *general* climate to expect when you visit a new area.

At TL4 or less, this skill is called Weather Sense, and you get +2 to skill in your home area. At TL5 and up, Meteorology is a scientific skill, and you *must* specialize by planet type; see *Planet Types* (p. 180) for details.

Modifiers: Time is a major factor! There is no penalty to predict tomorrow's weather, but you have -1 for 2 days, -2 for 3 days, -4 for 4 days, -6 for 5 days, and an additional -2 per day for each further day. Instrumentation becomes useful with the development of the barometer at TL4, after which equipment modifiers (p. 345) apply. You must know this skill at better than default to claim bonuses for good equipment.

Mimicry†

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 and others.

This is the ability to imitate voices. The Voice advantage (p. 97) gives +2 to skill. You *must* specialize:

Animal Sounds: Lets you emulate a lion's roar, a wolf's howl, a frog's croak, etc. You can only imitate animals that have distinctive sounds. Make a skill roll to attract animals of the type mimicked – or predators that normally hunt those animals – if any are nearby. To fool *people,* you must win a Quick Contest of Mimicry vs. the listeners' Naturalist-3 or Perception-6. *Default:* Naturalist-6.

Bird Calls: Allows you to reproduce the whistles, chirps, and other sounds made by birds. Otherwise, this works as Animal Sounds. *Default:* Naturalist-6.

Speech: Enables you to imitate vocal sounds. This does not allow you to converse in a foreign language, but if you have heard it, you can reproduce the *sound* of it. If you are trying to mimic a specific person, roll at -3. Treat this roll as a Quick Contest vs. the IQ of anyone who knows the person mimicked well. *Defaults:* Acting-6 or Linguistics-4.

Animal Sounds and Bird Calls default to one another at -6. There is no default between these specialties and Speech.

Note that if you have the Mimicry *advantage* (p. 68), there is no need to learn this skill!

Mind Block

Will/Average

Defaults: Will-5 or Meditation-5.

This ability allows you to establish a mental block against psionic or magical attempts to eavesdrop on your thoughts and emotions. The techniques involved are wholly mundane – for instance, doing complicated mathematical calculations, or repeating poetry over and over again. With sufficient training, *anyone* can learn this skill.

To maintain a block, you must make a Mind Block roll once per minute. You must roll every *second* in combat or other stressful situations.

If you succeed, anyone who reads your mind must *win* a Quick Contest of his mind-reading ability vs. your Mind Block skill in order to get useful information. Otherwise, he gets nothing but poetry, multiplication tables, etc. However, if you ever critically fail a Mind Block roll, you thought about precisely what the mind reader wanted to know – in detail – right there in the forefront of your mind!

This skill only works against mind *reading,* not mind control or other mental attacks. If you have a supernatural mind shield, Mind Block acts as a last-ditch defense: only mental probes that pierce your magical or psionic defenses and contact your mind will encounter the block.

Modifiers: +2 if you do nothing but concentrate on blocking; -3 if you are mentally or physically stunned; -2 or more to hide *emotions* rather than thoughts, depending on how strong the GM rules your emotions are – it's hard to block your emotions while sneaking up on your most hated enemy!

Monowire Whip

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Mount

DX/Average

Default: DX-5.

This is the trained ability to serve as a mount for a rider. If your Mount skill exceeds your rider's Riding level, he may use the average of the two skills (round *up*) whenever he must make a Riding roll. If you have *any* points in this skill, your rider gets a minimum +1 to skill. To throw an unwelcome rider, win Quick Contest of Mount vs. his Riding skill.

Musical Composition

IQ/Hard

Defaults: Musical Instrument-2, or to Poetry-2 for song.

This is the ability to compose a piece of music. A successful skill roll means the piece is a pleasant listening experience.

To compose for an ensemble or band *without* a conductor, you must have a skill level of IQ with at least one instrument in the composition and a skill level of IQ-2 with the rest. Roll at -1 per "instrument group" after the first used in the piece; e.g., a jazz composition for a saxophone section, drums, and bass would require a roll at -2.

To compose for an orchestra or band *with* a conductor requires Group Performance (Conducting) skill (p. 198) at IQ level. Roll at -1 per general *class* of instruments after the first used in the piece. Classes include brass, percussion, strings, and woodwinds. Treat choir, harp, organ, or piano as its own class.

This skill includes the ability to read, write, and transcribe music in your culture's notation system (if any). Treat different systems – and different musical traditions – as familiarities (see *Familiarity,* p. 169).

Musical Influence

IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Musical Ability 1 and either Musical Instrument or Singing at 12+.

This cinematic skill allows you to influence the emotions of others by playing a musical instrument or singing. In some settings, this is a magical or psionic talent, or a special form of hypnotism, and works with *any* instrument, as well as with voice. In other settings, this skill is associated with a specific type of magical or ultra-tech instrument.

To attempt Musical Influence, you must first get your audience to sit and listen to your performance. You must also make a successful Musical Instrument or Singing roll. You may then roll against your Musical Influence skill. On a success, you can adjust the reaction roll of your audience – to you or to anyone present – up *or* down by an amount equal to your margin of success, to a maximum of +3 (+4 for critical success).

If you have only a few seconds, or if the audience is not paying full attention to your performance, you may adjust reaction rolls by ±1 at most, regardless of your margin of success.

Listeners who do not wish to be influenced may resist with Will. Hard of Hearing (p. 138) gives +4 to resist, and those with Deafness (p. 129) are completely immune. However, some

science-fiction devices generate vibrations that affect the *body,* in which case a listener's sense of hearing is irrelevant.

It is up to the GM to determine whether this skill works on animals as well as sapient beings. In classic fantasy, it just might!

Musical Instrument†
IQ/Hard
Defaults: Special.

This is the ability to play a musical instrument. With a successful skill roll, you give a competent performance. You *must* specialize in a particular instrument. Defaults between specialties range from -3 for similar instruments to "no default" for utterly unrelated ones, such as Musical Instrument (Drums) and Musical Instrument (Harp).

This skill includes the ability to read music in your culture's notation system (if any). Treat different systems as familiarities (see *Familiarity,* p. 169).

Naturalist†
IQ/Hard
Defaults: IQ-6 or Biology-3.

This skill – crucial for fantasy druids and rangers – represents *practical* (as opposed to scientific) knowledge of nature in its many forms. It includes just enough Biology to tell dangerous plants and animals from benign ones; just enough Geology to locate a cave to shelter in; and just enough Meteorology to know when to take shelter. Roll vs. skill to do any of these things.

In settings where it is possible to visit other worlds, you must specialize by *planet.* The specialties for planets of the same type (see *Planet Types,* p. 180) default to one another at -4. Any larger difference results in no default.

Navigation/TL†
IQ/Average
Defaults: Special.

This is the ability to find your position through careful observation of your surroundings and the use of instrumentation. A successful roll tells you where you are or lets you plot a course.

You *must* specialize:

Sea: Navigation by the stars and ocean currents. *Modifiers:* +3 if you have Absolute Direction (p. 34), or a high-tech global positioning system or inertial compass; -5 (and no use of Astronomy default) if you lack high-tech aids, the weather is bad, and the stars are hidden. *Defaults:* Astronomy-5 or Seamanship-5.

Air: Navigation by the stars and by the terrain below. Modifiers are as for Navigation (Sea). *Default:* Astronomy-5.

Land: Navigation using landmarks and the stars; also called "orienteering." *Modifiers:* +3 if you have Absolute Direction or a high-tech substitute. *Defaults:* IQ-5, Cartography-4, or Mathematics (Surveying)-4.

Space: Navigating through ordinary interplanetary and interstellar space, usually at less than the speed of light (but some science-fiction "warp drives" let you travel at faster-than-light speeds in normal space). *Modifiers:* +2 for 3D Spatial Sense (p. 34). *Defaults:* Astronomy-4 or Mathematics (Applied)-4.

Hyperspace: Also called "astrogation." Similar to Navigation (Space), but used when traveling through "jump space" or "hyperspace." In settings with multiple faster-than-light drive technologies, there may be one Navigation specialty per drive type. Modifiers are as for Navigation (Space). *Defaults:* Astronomy-4 or Mathematics (Applied)-4.

Air, Land, and Sea default to one another at -2. Space and Hyperspace default to one another at -5. There are *no* defaults between these two groups.

Modifiers: -1 to -10 for being in an unfamiliar area (GM's discretion, but an unfamiliar world, star system, etc. should give at least -5); equipment modifiers (p. 345).

NBC Suit/TL
see *Environment Suit,* p. 192

Net
DX/Hard
Default: Cloak-5.

This is the ability to use a net as a thrown or melee weapon. For detailed net rules, see *Special Ranged Weapons* (p. 410).

Observation
Per/Average
Defaults: Perception-5 or Shadowing-5.

This is the talent of observing dangerous or "interesting" situations without letting others know that you are watching. Use this skill to monitor a location, a group of people, or your immediate surroundings for concealed or tactically significant details. This is not the same as gathering clues or making a hands-on search (use Forensics and Search, respectively) – you always use Observation from a distance.

A successful skill roll lets you gather information that is not specifically hidden. For instance, you could case a bank for obvious cameras before a robbery, learn the schedule of sentries, estimate the size of a crowd, or gauge the strength of troops moving in the open. The GM may require an Intelligence Analysis roll to *interpret* what you observe.

To spot deliberately hidden details – e.g., someone trying to sneak up on you, an armed man hiding in the crowd, or a concealed machine-gun nest – you must win a Quick Contest of Observation skill vs. the Stealth, Shadowing, or Camouflage skill (as appropriate) of the other party. The GM should roll the Contest in secret, and should *not* say, "You don't see the machine gun nest concealed in the bushes."

If your attempt fails, you get no details on an obvious item, or fail to spot a hidden one. On a critical failure, someone spots *you* and reacts poorly to the attention . . .

Modifiers: Acute Senses (p. 35), as appropriate; modifiers for cover, darkness, or size; -1 to -10 if the target is concealed by high-tech camouflage or "stealth" technology; +1 to +10 if you possess suitable surveillance devices (a thermograph to spot a concealed sniper, binoculars to observe troop movements, etc.) and succeed at the skill roll to operate them.

Occultism
IQ/Average
Default: IQ-5.

This is the study of the mysterious and the supernatural. An occultist is an expert on ancient rituals, hauntings, mysticism, primitive magical beliefs, psychic phenomena, etc. Note that an occultist does not have to *believe* in the material he studies!

In worlds where everyone knows that paranormal powers exist, Occultism covers lore about these powers and their users. A good roll might provide insights into phenomena that *aren't* related to known powers. However, Occultism provides no details on how talented individuals invoke their powers. For instance, a fantasy occultist would know what magic can accomplish, and could provide advice on slaying demons, but without Thaumatology skill (p. 225), he could not explain the gestures, words, and symbols used by wizards.

In campaigns where many supernatural forces coexist, the GM may *require* occultists to specialize in such fields as Demonology (the study of demons, possession, and pacts), Pneumatology (the study of spirits), and Vampirology (the study of vampires).

Packing
IQ/Average
Defaults: IQ-5 or Animal Handling (Equines)-5.

This is the ability to get loads on and off of pack animals quickly and efficiently. It also lets you get the best performance from pack animals on the road, judge such beasts before purchase, and select the best route for a pack train. If the beasts are ornery or badly trained (GM's judgment), you must make a successful Animal Handling roll before you can attempt a Packing roll. A caravan without at least one master packer (Packing at 15+) moves at 80% its normal speed.

Paleontology/TL†
IQ/Hard
Defaults: Biology-4 and others.

This is the science of fossil study. Make a skill roll to recognize fossils or to deduce an organism's habitat, structure, etc. from fossil evidence. A successful roll – with equipment modifiers (p. 345) for lab facilities – identifies the approximate age of a fossil.

You *must* specialize:

Micropaleontology: The study of fossils too small to be seen with the naked eye. This skill *requires* a lab.

Paleoanthropology: The study of human fossils and tools, and the relation of primitive tribes to their habitats. Also defaults to Anthropology-2.

Paleobotany: The study of vegetable fossils.

Paleozoology: The study of prehistoric animals from fossilized bones, food, feces, footprints, etc.

These specialties default to one another at -2.

Note that an occultist does not have to believe in the material he studies!

Panhandling
IQ/Easy
Defaults: IQ-4, Fast Talk-2, or Public Speaking-3.

This is the art of effective begging: who to approach, how to approach them, and how to avoid legal entanglements. Roll once per hour of begging.

On a success, you net $2.00 times your margin of success. On a critical success, you get some sort of unexpected bonus – perhaps someone buys you dinner or gives you a useful or saleable item (e.g., a raincoat or a new pair of shoes). On a failure, you receive nothing. On a critical failure, you are assaulted or have a run-in with the law.

Modifiers: Any bonus for Charisma (p. 41); +3 for Pitiable (p. 22); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154). You may, if you wish, apply the *opposite* of your usual appearance modifier – that is, a penalty for being attractive or a bonus for being unattractive – unless you are Horrific or Monstrous (p. 21). The GM may assign a bonus if there is a lot of foot traffic in the area, or a penalty if there is no one around.

Parachuting/TL
DX/Easy
Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to survive a parachute jump. Roll once per jump. Failure could mean anything from drifting off course to panic that makes you drop your gear (GM's option). A critical failure means the chute did not open or was fatally fouled (see *Falling,* p. 431). For a jump under bad conditions, make a second roll on landing – for instance, to survive an "ankle-breaker" landing without injury, or to dodge trees on the way down. Make an IQ-based roll to *pack* a parachute.

Modifiers: -2 if your body weight plus encumbrance exceeds your Basic Lift×10.

Parry Missile Weapons
DX/Hard
Defaults: None.

This skill lets you parry thrown or missile weapons with a ready melee weapon. If you are wearing wristbands or gloves with DR 2+, or have at least this much natural DR, you can also parry with your hands. Your Parry score is (skill/2) + 3, rounded down – but based on Parry Missile Weapons skill, *not* your Melee Weapon or unarmed combat skill.

Modifiers (to Parry): +4 to parry large thrown weapons (e.g., axes and spears); +2 to parry small thrown weapons (e.g., knives and shuriken); no modifier to parry arrows; -2 to parry smaller low-tech missiles (e.g., crossbow bolts and blowpipe darts). You cannot parry bullets or similar high-tech projectiles! (*Exception:* Enhanced Time Sense allows you to parry bullets at -5.)

Performance
IQ/Average
Defaults: IQ-5, Acting-2, or Public Speaking-2.

This is the ability to act on the stage or screen. It is different from Acting in that you are trying to impress and entertain people – not *deceive* them. If you studied this skill formally, it includes the knowledge expected of a professional actor from your culture and tech level (stage directions, actor-agent-producer relations, etc.).

Modifiers: +2 for Voice (p. 97); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154); -2 for Stuttering (p. 157).

Persuade
see *Enthrallment,* p. 191

Pharmacy/TL†
IQ/Hard
Defaults: IQ-6 and others.

This is the skill of preparing medicines to treat illness. (To work with *noxious* drugs, use Poisons skill, p. 214.) You *must* specialize:

Herbal: The ability to make and administer remedies prepared from plants. Make a Naturalist roll to *locate* herbs. Before TL5, this is the only specialty available. It replaces Physician (below) and is frequently used in conjunction with Esoteric Medicine (p. 192). At TL5+, this specialty remains available, but Pharmacy (Synthetic) is much more common. *Prerequisite:* Naturalist. *Defaults:* Biology-5, Herb Lore-5, or Naturalist-5.

Synthetic: The skill of preparing drugs under "laboratory" conditions. To *prescribe* drugs, use Physician skill. This specialty is only available at TL5+. *Defaults:* Chemistry-5 or Physician-5.

Philosophy†
IQ/Hard
Default: IQ-6.

This is the study of a system of principles to live by. You *must* specialize in a particular school of philosophy; e.g., Confucianism, Marxism, or Stoicism. (If you study a *religious* philosophy, buy Theology skill, p. 226.) When confronted with someone who subscribes to this philosophy, a successful Philosophy roll might provide insights into his behavior.

You do not necessarily believe in the ideals of the philosophy you study. If you do, you may ask the GM to make a secret roll against your Philosophy skill when you are faced with a moral dilemma. On a success, the GM will "enlighten" you and provide a hint as to which course of action "feels" right given your beliefs.

Photography/TL
IQ/Average
Defaults: IQ-5 or Electronics Operation (Media)-5.

This is the ability to use a camera competently, use a darkroom (TL5+) or digital imaging software (TL8+), etc., and to produce recognizable and attractive photos. You may roll at default to use a camera, but not to develop film or prints in a darkroom.

Modifiers: -3 for an unfamiliar camera; -3 for a motion-picture camera.

Physician/TL
IQ/Hard
Defaults: IQ-7, First Aid-11, or Veterinary-5.

This is the ability to aid the sick and the injured, prescribe drugs and care, etc. Make a skill roll to hasten natural recovery from injury (see *Recovery,* p. 423), and whenever the GM requires a roll to test general medical competence or knowledge. Apply physiology modifiers (p. 181) if your patient is of a different species from you.

At TL4 and below, *this skill does not exist* in most game worlds. Instead, use Esoteric Medicine (p. 192), Pharmacy (Herbal) (above), or both.

At TL5+, medical knowledge is divided between Pharmacy (Synthetic) and Physician. A physician knows a great deal about drugs. He can identify most drugs fairly easily (at -5 without laboratory facilities but +3 if he takes the risk of smelling/tasting the substance), but he cannot *formulate* them unless he also learns Pharmacy.

Physics/TL
IQ/Very Hard
Default: IQ-6.
Prerequisite: Mathematics (Applied) at TL5+.

This is the science dealing with the properties and interactions of matter and energy. Beyond the basics (such as the behavior of moving bodies), a physicist's knowledge includes whatever is understood about electricity, gravity, heat, light, magnetism, radiation, and sound at his tech level.

At TL6+, most physicists have an *optional* specialty (p. 169): acoustics, astrophysics, geophysics, nuclear physics, optics, particle physics, quantum physics, relativity, solid-state physics, etc. Some settings offer exotic options, such as hyperspace physics (the science of hyperspace and jump points), parachronic physics (the study of other realities and timelines), paraphysics (the physics of psi phenomena), probability physics (the study of probability manipulation), and temporal physics (the science of time travel).

Physiology/TL†
IQ/Hard
Defaults: IQ-6, Diagnosis-5, Physician-5, or Surgery-5.

This is the study of the human body and its function. A physiologist knows how bones, muscles, and organs work, and where they are located. In settings with multiple sapient species, you *must* specialize by race. Defaults between species (if any) are up to the GM.

Pickpocket
DX/Hard
Defaults: DX-6, Filch-5, or Sleight of Hand-4.

This is the ability to steal a purse, knife, etc., from someone's person – or to "plant" something on him.

If your victim is aware someone may try to pick his pocket, or if he is generally wary, you must win a Quick Contest of Pickpocket vs. the *higher* of his Perception or Streetwise skill. To outwit a third party who is watching you and the victim, you must win a Quick Contest of Pickpocket vs. the watcher's Observation skill.

Modifiers: +5 if the victim is distracted; +10 if he is asleep or drunk; up to -5 for goods in an inner pocket; and up to -10 for a ring or similar jewelry.

Piloting/TL†

DX/Average

Default: IQ-6.

This is the ability to operate a specific type of aircraft or spacecraft. The default is to IQ, because it takes intelligence to figure out the controls in an emergency, but when you *learn* this skill, always base it on DX.

Roll against Piloting for takeoffs and landings, and in any hazardous situation. Failure by 1 indicates a rough job; failure by more indicates damage to the vehicle. A critical failure is a crash! If you have skill 15+, a critical failure requires an immediate second roll. Only if the second roll is a failure does a mishap occur. Otherwise, it was a "near thing," averted by experience. Air combat requires frequent Piloting rolls as well.

Make an IQ-based Piloting roll for basic map reading or practical meteorology, or to recall aviation laws and regulations.

Remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs) use this skill if the pilot uses some form of telepresence to mimic actually being in the cockpit. Otherwise, make a DX-based roll against the appropriate skill for the task the RPV is performing (e.g., Forward Observer for a surveillance drone).

You *must* specialize:

Aerospace: Any vehicle capable of atmospheric flight to and from orbit. *Defaults:* High-Performance Airplane-2 or other Piloting at -4.

Autogyro: Any rotor-equipped aircraft that uses its rotors for lift but not thrust. *Defaults:* Helicopter-3, any Airplane specialty at -4, or other Piloting at -5.

Contragravity: Any aircraft that relies on ultra-tech or magical levitation. *Defaults:* Vertol-3 or other Piloting at -5.

Flight Pack: Any "strap-on" aircraft. *Defaults:* Vertol-4 or other Piloting at -5.

Glider: Any kind of unpowered, winged aircraft. *Defaults:* Light Airplane or Ultralight at -2, or other Piloting at -4.

Heavy Airplane: Any winged aircraft weighing over 10 tons and flying at 600 mph or slower. *Defaults:* High-Performance Airplane or Light Airplane at -2, or other Piloting at -4.

Helicopter: Any aircraft that uses rotors for both lift and thrust. *Defaults:* Autogyro-2, Vertol-4, or other Piloting at -5.

High-Performance Airplane: Any winged aircraft capable of flying faster than 600 mph. *Defaults:* Aerospace, Heavy Airplane, or Light Airplane at -2, or other Piloting at -4.

High-Performance Spacecraft: Any space vehicle capable of accelerations of 0.1G or more. *Defaults:* Aerospace-4 or Low-Performance Spacecraft-2.

Light Airplane: Any winged aircraft weighing 10 tons or less and flying at 600 mph or slower. *Defaults:* Glider, Heavy Airplane, High-Performance Airplane, or Ultralight at -2, or other Piloting at -4.

Lighter-Than-Air: Any kind of airship or balloon. *Default:* other Piloting at -5.

Lightsail: Any spacecraft that uses a lightsail, regardless of thrust. *Default:* Low-Performance Spacecraft-4.

Low-G Wings: Muscle-powered strap-on wings used in a low-gravity environment with an atmosphere. Learn Flight (p. 195) for endurance flying. *Default:* Glider-4.

Low-Performance Spacecraft: Any space vehicle that accelerates at less than 0.1G. *Defaults:* Aerospace-4 or High-Performance Spacecraft-2.

Ultralight: Any winged aircraft weighing 0.5 tons or less and flying at 200 mph or slower. *Defaults:* Glider or Light Airplane at -2, other Airplane specialties at -4, or other Piloting at -5.

Vertol: Any aircraft that flies by brute-force application of thrust rather than by using rotors or wings. *Defaults:* Contragravity-3, Helicopter-4, or other Piloting at -5.

Modifiers: +1 for 3D Spatial Sense (p. 34); +1 for Perfect Balance (p. 74). -2 for an unfamiliar vehicle within your specialty (e.g., a twin-engine plane when you are used to single-engine craft); -2 or more for unusually primitive *or* extremely complex controls; -4 or more for a plane in bad repair; -2 or more for bad flying conditions.

Poetry

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Writing-5.

This is the ability to compose "good" poetry of any type native to your culture, in any language you know. A successful roll lets you write one good poem in an appropriate amount of time (GM's decision). A failed roll might mean that you couldn't get inspired – or that your audience just didn't care for your work (for whatever reason).

Modifiers: The time modifiers under *Time Spent* (p. 346) will often apply; Cultural Familiarity modifiers (p. 23); Language modifiers (p. 23).

Poisons/TL

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, Chemistry-5, Pharmacy (any)-3, or Physician-3.

This skill represents practical knowledge of poisons. A successful skill roll lets you (among other things) recognize a poison-bearing plant in the wild; extract the poison in a useful form; recognize a poison by its taste in food or drink; identify a poison by observing its effects (+3 if *you* are poisoned); know a proper antidote; or recognize or prepare the antidote from its sources. Each of these feats requires a separate roll.

Modifiers: Acute Taste and Smell (p. 35) gives a bonus to notice or recognize a poison by taste or by scent. Likewise, Discriminatory Smell and Discriminatory Taste (p. 49) give +4 to these tasks when working by smell or by taste, respectively.

Polearm

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Politics

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Diplomacy-5.

This is the ability to get into office and get along with other politicians. It has nothing to do with administration! You can only learn Politics in office or by working for someone in office. A successful skill roll will give you +2 on reactions from fellow politicians. The GM may opt to handle an election as a Quick Contest of Politics.

Modifiers: +2 for Voice (p. 97); -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154). In some jurisdictions, money is another important modifier . . .

Power Blow

Will/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master or Weapon Master.

This is the ability to draw on your inner strength to deliver a devastating blow in melee combat. Roll once per attack. Power Blow costs 1 FP per attempt, successful or not.

If successful, double your ST for damage purposes for the *next attack only.* This attack takes all normal modifiers, and must occur immediately after the Power Blow roll. If you know Power Blow at better than skill 20, you can *triple* your ST by accepting an extra -10 to the skill roll.

You can also use this skill in non-combat situations. For instance, you could use Power Blow to double or triple your ST momentarily in order to move a heavy object. Such feats cost 1 FP and require a skill roll, as described above.

Modifiers: -10 if used *instantly,* dropping to -5 after 1 turn of concentration, -4 after 2 turns, -3 after 4 turns, -2 after 8 turns, -1 after 16 turns, and no penalty after 32 turns.

Pressure Points

IQ/Hard

Defaults: None*.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master or Weapon Master.
* May default to Esoteric Medicine-4 in a cinematic campaign.

This is the art of striking pressure points in order to disable an opponent. To use this ability, you must make a successful attack with Karate (or other appropriate combat skill; see below). This attack is at -2 in addition to any hit location modifier (see *Hit Location,* p. 398). If at least one point of damage penetrates the target's DR, roll a Quick Contest of Pressure Points vs. the victim's HT.

If you win, you temporarily disable your target. A limb is paralyzed and effectively crippled for 5d seconds. A hit to a torso pressure point interferes with the victim's breathing, resulting in suffocation (see *Suffocation,* p. 436); he may roll against HT every second to recover. A hit to the face stuns the victim; he gets an IQ roll every second to recover. A blow to the skull blinds the victim for 2d seconds; see *Blindness* (p. 124).

You can also use Pressure Points with Judo. Roll the Quick Contest described above after successfully applying a lock. This is *in addition to* any other effects of the lock.

The GM may permit warriors to learn specialties of this skill for use with crushing weapons. Examples include Pressure Points (Bow) for use with blunt arrows, Pressure Points (Shortsword) for use with a baton, and Pressure Points (Staff) for use with a staff.

Modifiers: Physiology modifiers (p. 181).

Pressure Secrets

IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master and Pressure Points at 16+.

This skill represents knowledge of the most vulnerable vital points of the human body. It allows you to maim and kill by crushing and tearing vital organs and nerve clusters with deadly precision.

To use this ability, you must make a successful unarmed attack. This attack is at -2 in addition to any hit location modifier (see *Hit Location,* p. 398). If you hit, make a Pressure Secrets roll.

On a success, any damage that penetrates DR is *doubled* – or *tripled* if you targeted the vital organs. In effect, your hands and feet have become impaling weapons!

You can also use this ability with locks and similar grappling attacks. This represents knowledge of exactly where to apply pressure to tear or sprain joints and ligaments. After applying the lock, make a Pressure Secrets roll. On a success, double the damage, shock, or harmful effects of the lock *for that turn.*

This skill is unrealistic and potentially unbalancing. The GM should carefully weigh its impact before allowing it, and may wish to make it very difficult for PCs to learn – or even restrict it to deadly NPC opponents.

Modifiers: Physiology modifiers (p. 181).

Professional Skill

DX or IQ/Average

Defaults: Special.

Many realistic job skills are more useful for making a living than for adventuring. Most such skills do not appear in this skill list – but you can still learn them if you want! Each is a separate Professional Skill. If your "adventuring" skills aren't useful for earning money, a Professional Skill can help you earn a steady income. To qualify for most jobs, you will need the relevant Professional Skill at 12+ (unless you are *supposed* to be incompetent!).

Most professions encompass a body of knowledge. The associated Professional Skills are IQ/Average and default to IQ-5, because the smarter you are, the better you can recall and employ the techniques used at your job. Examples include air traffic controller, barber, brewer, cooper, distiller, dyer, florist, game designer, journalist, prostitute, tanner, vintner, and zookeeper.

A few professions – glassblower, tailor, weaver, etc. – focus more on precision than on recall. These Professional Skills are DX/Average and default to DX-5.

At the GM's option, a given Professional Skill might also default to other skills. For instance, "Journalist" would logically default to Writing-3.

The skills associated with highly paid or respected professions often have prerequisites. For instance, "Air Traffic Controller" might require Electronics Operation (Sensors) skill. Like defaults, prerequisites are up to the GM.

You are free to create your own Professional Skills, subject to GM approval. They should be unique and well defined, *not* just a compilation of existing skills. For example:

Bartender
IQ/Average
Defaults: IQ-5 or Carousing-3.

This is the skill of maintaining a professional-quality bar and interacting with customers in a professional yet friendly way. A successful skill roll lets you mix drinks, recall local laws regarding alcohol, gauge the intoxication level of a customer, or calm an unruly drunk before the bouncer needs to get involved. At higher levels, this skill takes on an element of showmanship, allowing you to present drinks in unique and attractive ways, and to mix them with showy tricks and flourishes.

Propaganda/TL
IQ/Average
Defaults: IQ-5, Merchant-5, or Psychology-4.

This is the skill of indirect persuasion through the media. It is used for psychological warfare by intelligence and military organizations, and for advertising and marketing in the civilian world. Use familiarity (p. 169) to reflect the differences between these areas.

Propaganda works on groups, not individuals. The GM should set the effective Will of the target group based on its size, composition, and resistance to the desired outcome, and then use the *Influence Rolls* (p. 359) rules to determine the results. Success might inform the target audience or even alter its perceptions. Propaganda attempts nearly always take more time and exposure than ordinary Influence rolls, however; how much time is up to the GM.

Prospecting/TL
IQ/Average
Defaults: IQ-5 or Geology (any)-4.

This is the skill of finding valuable minerals. A successful Prospecting roll lets you locate minerals, judge good ore from a small sample (and gauge its commercial value), and find water by using an "eye for country," as described for Survival skill (p. 223).

This skill is "applied geology," and *requires* on-site examination. Prospecting from a distance – using maps, instrument readings, and extrapolation – uses Geology skill instead.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); -1 in a new area of a familiar type, or -2 or more in an unfamiliar type of area, until you have been there for at least a month.

Psychology
IQ/Hard
Defaults: IQ-6 or Sociology-4.

This is the skill of *applied* psychology, which may be learned by academic study or lengthy observation of human nature. Roll against skill to predict the *general* behavior of an individual or small group in a particular situation – especially a stressful situation.

In settings with multiple sapient species, you *must* specialize by race. Defaults between specialties are up to the GM.

If the GM desires extra detail, he may rule that Psychology is split into two specialties: Applied (described above) and Experimental (for scientists who run rats in mazes and so forth). Applied defaults to Experimental-5; Experimental does not default to Applied, as a shrewd observer of people may lack training in scientific procedures.

Modifiers: +3 if you know the subject well; +3 if the subject is of a known deviant personality type; +1 for Sensitive *or* +3 for Empathy (p. 51), or -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142), if diagnosing a subject in your presence; -3 for Callous (p. 125), unless specifically rolling to deduce someone's weaknesses so you can exploit them.

Public Speaking
IQ/Average
Defaults: IQ-5, Acting-5, Performance-2, or Politics-5.

This is general talent with the spoken word. A successful skill roll lets you (for instance) give a good political speech, entertain a group around a campfire, incite or calm a riot, or put on a successful "court jester" act.

Public Speaking includes skill with debate, oratory, and rhetoric, as well as ability with less formal activities such as "punning" and storytelling. Not all speakers possess talent in all of these areas. You may take an *optional* specialty (p. 169) to represent this.

Modifiers: Any bonus for Charisma (p. 41); +2 for Voice (p. 97); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154); -2 for Stuttering (p. 157); Cultural Familiarity modifiers (p. 23); Language modifiers (p. 24).

Push
DX/Hard
Defaults: None.
Prerequisite: Trained By A Master.

This skill allows you to channel your *chi* in order to "gently" push away an adversary or cause him to lose his balance. Roll against Push skill to hit. This counts as a barehanded attack (see *Shove,* p. 372), and your target may attempt any legal active defense.

If you hit, use the *higher* of your ST or your Push skill as your effective ST. Roll *swing* damage for that ST, and double the result. For instance, if you had ST 10 and Push-15, you would roll swing damage for ST 15 (2d+1), and double it. This damage inflicts knockback (see *Knockback,* p. 378) but *never* actual physical injury.
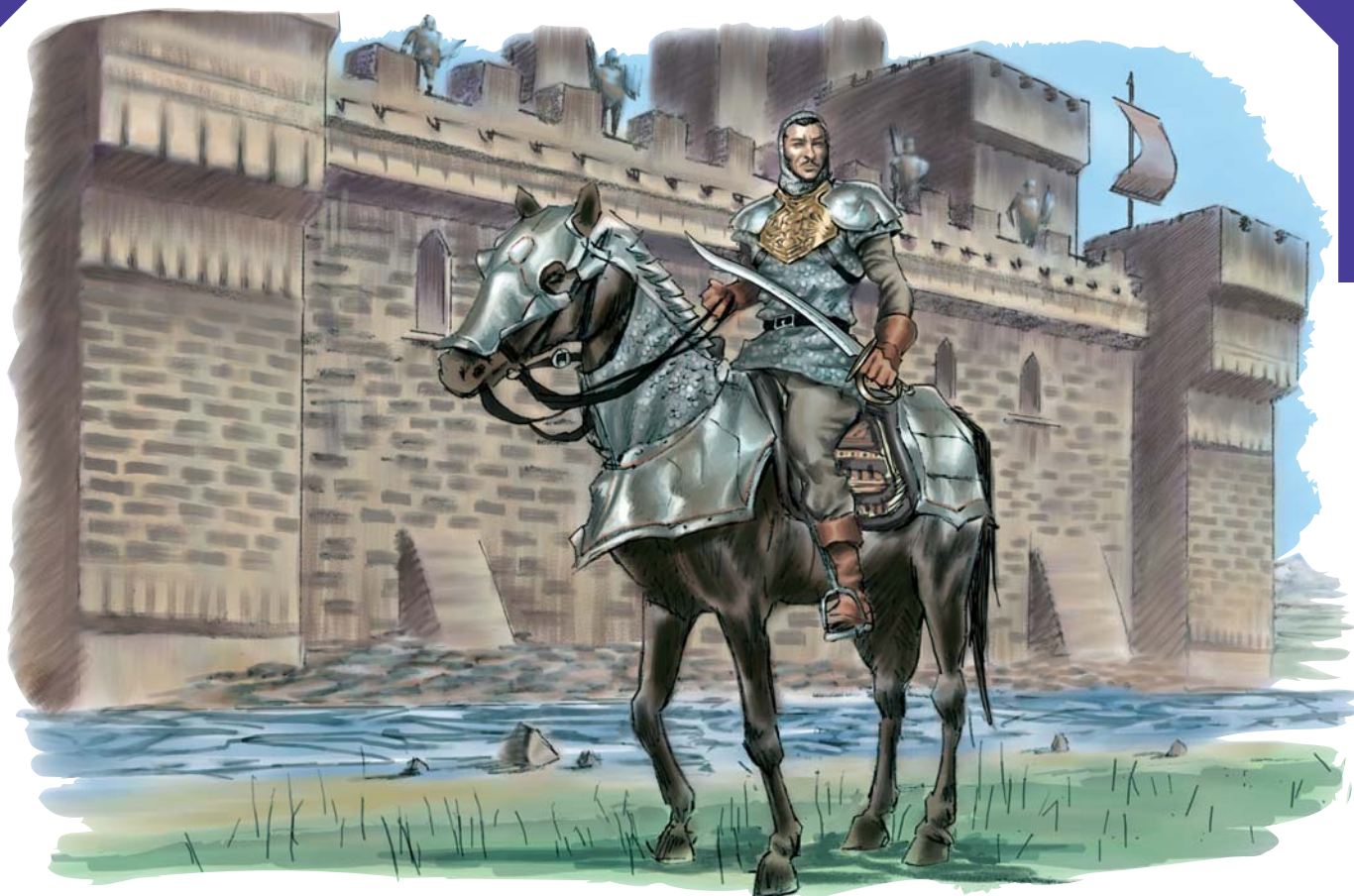
Rapier

> see **Melee Weapon,** p. 208

Religious Ritual†

IQ/Hard

Defaults: Ritual Magic (same)-6 or Theology (same)-4.

This is the ability to perform religious rites – masses, funerals, weddings, etc. – before a congregation. You *must* specialize by religion. This skill includes detailed knowledge of the ritual motions, prayers, and trappings of the faith, as well as the ability to capture and hold the attention of worshipers. For religions that practice sacrifice, Religious Ritual also covers familiarity with sacrificial tools and methods.

To be a priest or holy man at TL1+, you must have both Religious Ritual *and* Theology skill (p. 226) for your religion. TL0 shamans need only learn Religious Ritual.

In worlds where priests can perform miracles, each *magical* ritual or spell is a separate skill, but certain "mundane" religious rituals – such as

sacrifice – can give bonuses to spell rolls. You must always make a successful Religious Ritual roll to claim such a bonus. In other settings, a priest's magic is only as good as his ritual. If this is the case, your roll to work magic is against the *lower* of Religious Ritual and your actual spell skill.

Research/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Writing-3.
Prerequisite: literacy in at least one language (see p. 24)*.
* At TL8+, Computer Operation is also a prerequisite.

This is the ability to do library and file research. Roll against skill to find a useful piece of data in an appropriate place of research . . . *if* the information is there to be found.

At the GM's option, when researching material connected with a "book-learned" skill such as Forensics, Literature, or Physics, you may roll against that skill at -2 instead, if that would be better than your Research skill or default (but this is *not* a general default level).

Modifiers: Language modifiers (p. 24), for research materials in a foreign tongue.

Riding†

DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5 or Animal Handling (same)-3.

This is the ability to ride a particular kind of mount. Make a skill roll when you first try to mount a riding animal, and again each time something happens to frighten or challenge the creature (e.g., a jump).

You *must* specialize by riding beast. Defaults between specialties vary from 0 to -10. For instance, if you have Riding (Horse), Riding (Mule) is essentially the same skill (no default penalty), Riding (Camel) would default at -3, Riding (Dolphin) at -6, and Riding (Dragon) at a whopping -10!

Modifiers: +5 if the animal knows and likes you; +1 or more for a mount with the Mount skill (p. 210); -10 if the animal has not been trained for riding.

Ritual Magic†

IQ/Very Hard

Default: Religious Ritual (same)-6.

This skill gives an understanding of the intellectual and mystical processes involved in the rituals of a particular tradition of spirit invocation. Make a skill roll to determine the purpose of a ritual conducted in your presence, the type of entity being summoned, etc.

You *must* specialize by tradition; e.g., Voodoo or Witchcraft. Specialties default to one another at -5. The processes involved are comparable, but the specific rituals and spirits differ significantly.

In worlds with working ritual magic, Ritual Magic skill is the primary skill of sorcerers. All rituals of power default to it! See the appropriate worldbook for details.

This is the skill of invoking spirits to produce magical effects for nonreligious reasons. The equivalent skill for the more direct, flashy magic of fantasy is Thaumatology (p. 225); knowledge of *religious* rites associated with a tradition is Religious Ritual (p. 217).

Running

HT/Average

Default: HT-5.

This skill represents training in both sprints and long-distance running. Roll against the *higher* of Running or HT to avoid fatigue or injury due to running. When racing someone of equal Move on foot, roll a Quick Contest of Running skill to determine the winner.

Note that you must have legs and be capable of land movement to learn this skill.

Saber

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Savoir-Faire†

IQ/Easy

Defaults: IQ-4 and others.

This is the skill of appropriate behavior in a subculture that has an established code of conduct – for instance, high society or the military. When dealing with that social group, a successful skill roll lets you interact without embarrassing yourself, detect pretenders to high standing, and so on. You may also substitute an Influence roll against Savoir-Faire for any reaction roll required in a social situation involving that subculture; see *Influence Rolls* (p. 359). Roll once per encounter.

You *must* specialize. Common specialties include:

Dojo: How to greet masters, wear weapons, and issue challenges at a karate *dojo,* kung fu *kwoon,* fencing *salle,* or similar academy of the martial arts. *Recognized* skill determines relative standing. In certain places and times, to flout tradition is to risk violent retribution! For competitive martial arts (only), this skill defaults to any relevant Games skill at -3.

High Society: The manners of those of "good" birth and breeding. Status determines relative standing. Roll against skill whenever you must impersonate someone more than three Status levels away from your own. If your Status is negative and you are trying to pass yourself off as someone of Status 1+, or vice versa, this roll is at -2.

Mafia: Proper conduct within a formal criminal organization. This includes such things as codes of silence and showing proper deference to "made men." These protocols often ape those of high society . . . but the penalties for misconduct are far more severe. *Default:* Streetwise-3.

Military: The customs, traditions, and regulations of military service. This also includes knowledge of the *unwritten* rules: what is acceptable even if not regulation, and what is forbidden although there is nothing in writing against it. Military Rank determines relative standing.

Police: As Savoir-Faire (Military), but for civilian police service. This gives knowledge of the *social* protocols for police officers; use Law (Police) for the *legal* protocols. Police Rank determines relative standing.

Servant: Knowledge of how to serve the upper class. Certain procedures are always done *just so* (the salad fork goes outside the dinner fork, the Duke is announced before the Earl, etc.), and certain attitudes in a servant are unacceptable.

Savoir-Faire (High Society) is the most common specialty, and you may list this as simply "Savoir-Faire" on your character sheet. Savoir Faire (High Society) and (Servant) default to one another at -2. There are no defaults between other types of Savoir-Faire.

Modifiers: Cultural Familiarity modifiers (p. 23). +2 if you are of higher standing than those you are trying to impress, or -2 if you are of lower standing ("standing" might mean Rank, Status, skill level, or something else). +2 if you seem to have important friends. -4 for Clueless (p. 126); -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 for Oblivious (p. 146); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154).

Scrounging

Per/Easy

Default: Perception-4.

This is the ability to find, salvage, or improvise useful items that others can't locate. Each attempt takes an hour. You do not necessarily steal your booty; you just locate it – somehow – and then acquire it by any means necessary. Note that if you find something that is "nailed down," you must decide how to try to get it (which might require a roll on another skill).

Modifiers: As the GM sees fit, for the rarity of the item sought.

Scuba/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Diving Suit-2.
Prerequisite: Swimming.

This is the ability to use self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (scuba). Roll when you first enter the water, and again every 30 minutes thereafter, to avoid inhaling water (treat as drowning; see *Suffocation,* p. 436). If you know this skill above default level, a successful roll also lets you spot problems with the equipment before you put it on.

Modifiers: -2 to -4 for unfamiliar scuba rigs; e.g., closed-circuit gear when you're used to open-circuit.

Seamanship/TL

see *Crewman,* p. 185

Search

Per/Average

Defaults: Perception-5 or Criminology-5.

This is the ability to search people, baggage, and vehicles for items that aren't in plain sight. The GM rolls once – *in secret* – per item of interest. For *deliberately* concealed items, this is a Quick Contest of your Search skill vs. the Holdout or Smuggling skill used to hide the item. If you fail, the GM simply says, "You found nothing." (It defeats the purpose to say, "You don't find the gun under his jacket.")

If more than one person is searching, roll separately for each searcher.

The GM should avoid unnecessary rolls. For instance, no human can get a sawed-off shotgun through a body search. Likewise, a knife or jewel simply cannot be found on a normally dressed person without an X-ray or skin search. In general, if the net bonus to the concealer's Holdout roll is +3 or more, a skin search is *required.* If his Holdout is at -2 or worse for size, a skin search will automatically find the hidden item.

Modifiers: +1 for a "pat-down" of an unresisting person (takes one minute), +3 for a thorough "skin search" of a person's hair and clothing (takes three minutes), or +5 for a complete search, including body cavities (takes five minutes). Bonuses for Acute Touch (p. 35) and Sensitive Touch (p. 83) apply to *all* hands-on searches. On a successful Electronics Operation (Security) roll, specialized sensors – metal detectors, X-ray machines, etc. – give from +1 to +5 to find items they can detect (a metal detector won't help you find plastic explosives!).

Sewing/TL

DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to work with fabric using the tools of your tech level. A successful skill roll lets you repair damaged clothing (or any other item made of cloth), modify garments (useful when you must wear another person's clothing, perhaps to impersonate him), or create new clothing or costumes from suitable materials.

Make an IQ-based roll to *design* clothing, at +1 if you have Fashion Sense (p. 21).

Before TL7, someone knows this skill in almost every household. At TL7+, it is rare for anyone but a professional seamstress or tailor to know Sewing – most people work at default (at +4 for a simple task like reattaching a button) and discard items that they cannot mend.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); modifiers for High Manual Dexterity (p. 59) or Ham-Fisted (p. 138).

Sex Appeal

HT/Average

Default: HT-3.

This is the ability to impress those who are attracted to members of your sex. It has as much to do with attitude as it does with looks. If you are not willing to "vamp" someone to get what you want, you won't have this skill – or *want* it.

You may substitute an Influence roll against Sex Appeal for any reaction roll made by someone who is attracted to members of your sex; see *Influence Rolls* (p. 359).

Usually, you may make only one attempt per "target," although the GM might allow another attempt after a few weeks.

Modifiers: +2 for Voice (p. 97); -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 for Oblivious (p. 146); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154); -2 for Stuttering (p. 157). Apply any bonus for above-average appearance (p. 21) – or *double* the penalty for below-average appearance!

Shadowing

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Observation-5, or Stealth-4 (on foot only).

This is the ability to follow another person through a crowd without being noticed. (In the wilderness, use Tracking and Stealth.) Roll a Quick Contest every 10 minutes: your Shadowing vs. the subject's Vision roll. If you lose, you lost the subject; if you lose by more than 5, you were seen.

Once the subject is aware you are shadowing him, roll a Quick Contest every five minutes: your Shadowing skill vs. his Shadowing or Stealth skill. If he wins, he eludes you. If he loses by more than 5, he *thinks* he eluded you. If you critically fail, you lose him *and* follow the wrong person.

Following someone in a vehicle is harder than shadowing on foot. Use the same rules, but you roll at -2 (and may not use your Stealth default).

Modifiers: -3 if the subject knows you. Distinctive appearance gives a penalty – see *Build* (p. 18), *Unnatural Features* (p. 22), and specific disadvantages (e.g., Hunchback, p. 139) for details. If you belong to a visibly different race than most of the people around you, the penalty is up to the GM; it is never smaller in magnitude than the *difference* between your Size Modifier and that of those around you.

Shield†

DX/Easy

Default: DX-4.

This is the ability to use a shield, both to block and to attack. Your active defense with any kind of shield – your Block score – is (skill/2) + 3, rounded down. You *must* specialize:

Shield: Any shield held in place with straps. Such shields have the advantage that you can hold (but not *wield*) something in your shield hand, but the disadvantage of being slow to put on or take off. This is the most common specialty – list it as "Shield" on character sheets.

Buckler: Any kind of shield, usually a small one, held in the hand. A buckler occupies one hand completely, but you can ready it in only one turn and drop it as a free action.

Force: Any shield with a blocking "surface" formed from energy rather than matter.

Shield, Shield (Buckler), and Shield (Force) default to one another at -2.

Shiphandling/TL†

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 and others.
Prerequisites: see below.

This is the ability to act as the *master* of a large vessel. It involves directing the crew in the tasks necessary to control the vehicle's speed and direction. It also covers such duties as keeping the captain's log and inspecting the crew. Someone with Shiphandling skill (at better than default!) should stand watch at all times when the vessel is underway. Roll vs. skill when encountering hazards or maneuvering for battle.

A failed roll when encountering hazards means the vessel is damaged. This might mean anything from scratched paint to crippling damage that requires extensive repairs.

A failed roll in battle means the vessel did not go exactly where intended. The details depend on the vessel, the tech level, and the GM's judgment, but might include weapons being "masked" (unable to engage the enemy), a failed boarding attempt, or drifting out of formation with your fleet (which might deny you the benefits of area defenses, fire support, or tactical communications).

A critical failure under any circumstances means an appropriate disaster. Depending on the TL and situation, this could mean running aground, colliding with another vessel, being dismasted, losing your screws or rudder, or simply giving an order that your crew disregards. Whether they then save your ship for you, or mutiny and flee, is up to the GM.

A critical failure under any circumstances means an appropriate disaster: running aground, colliding with another vessel, being dismasted, losing your screws or rudder, or simply giving an order that your crew disregards.

You *must* specialize:

Airship: Blimps, zeppelins, and similar large airships. *Prerequisites:* Airshipman, Leadership, and Navigation (Air). *Defaults:* Airshipman-5 or Piloting (Lighter-Than-Air)-5.

Ship: Surface vessels, from tugboats to carriers. *Prerequisites:* Leadership, Navigation (Sea), and Seamanship. *Defaults:* Seamanship-5, or to Boating (Large Powerboat)-5 for ships with engines or Boating (Sailboat)-5 for tall ships.

Spaceship: Slower-than-light spacecraft. *Prerequisites:* Leadership, Navigation (Space), and Spacer. *Defaults:* Spacer-5 or any spaceship Piloting-5.

Starship: Faster-than-light spacecraft. *Prerequisites:* Leadership, Navigation (Hyperspace), and Spacer. *Defaults:* Spacer-5 or any spaceship Piloting-5.

Submarine: All forms of large submersibles. *Prerequisites:* Leadership, Navigation (Sea), and Submariner.

Defaults: Submariner-5 or Submarine (Large Sub)-5.

Modifiers: -2 to master an unfamiliar vessel (e.g., an aircraft carrier when you're used to a battleship); -2 for an unfamiliar crew; -2 or more for a vehicle in bad repair.

Shortsword

see ***Melee Weapon,*** p. 208

Singing

HT/Easy

Default: HT-4.

This is the ability to sing in a pleasing fashion. A successful roll means the audience liked your song.

Modifiers: Language Modifiers (p. 24), if you are singing in a foreign language; -2 if the audience does not understand the language; +2 for Voice (p. 97); -2 for Stuttering (p. 157).

Skating

HT/Hard

Default: HT-6.

When you are moving on skates, this skill replaces Hiking skill (p. 200) for routine travel and Running skill (p. 218) for racing. The GM may also require DX-based skill rolls in combat or chases, or for hazardous maneuvers, conditions, or speeds. Under those circumstances, any failure indicates a fall, while critical failure results in 1d-2 damage to a randomly chosen limb.

Skiing

HT/Hard

Default: HT-6.

This replaces Hiking skill (p. 200) when you are skiing cross-country and Running skill (p. 218) when you are racing. Roll once per day of routine travel. The GM may require much more frequent skill rolls – usually DX-based – in combat or chases, or for hazardous maneuvers, conditions, or speeds. In those situations, any failure indicates a fall, while critical failure means 1d damage to a randomly chosen limb.

Sleight of Hand

DX/Hard

Default: Filch-5.

This is the ability to "palm" small objects, do coin and card tricks, etc. Make a skill roll to perform one piece of simple "stage magic." A failed roll means you blew the trick.

When you use this skill to steal, you must win a Quick Contest of Sleight of Hand vs. the Vision roll or Observation skill of potential witnesses to perform the theft unnoticed.

You can also use this skill to cheat at cards, dice, etc. A successful Sleight of Hand roll gives from +1 to +5 on your Gambling roll. Any failure causes you to be denounced as a cheater! In both cases, the exact results are up to the GM.

Modifiers: +3 if the light is dim; +3 if you have a confederate to distract attention; +5 if you have prepared in advance (cards up your sleeve, etc.); -3 if the person you want to fool knows Sleight of Hand himself; modifiers for High Manual Dexterity (p. 59) or Ham-Fisted (p. 138).

Sling

DX/Hard

Default: DX-6.

This is the ability to use the sling or staff sling.

Smallsword

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Smith/TL†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 and others.

This is the ability to work non-precious metals by hand. You *must* specialize:

Copper: Copper itself and its alloys, including brass and bronze. Traditionally, a smith who worked with these metals was called a "brownsmith." *Default:* Jeweler-4.

Iron: The skill of being a blacksmith. Also covers steel, at tech levels where it exists.

Lead and Tin: Any of the softer, "white" metals, including alloys such as pewter. The traditional name for such a smith was "whitesmith." *Default:* Jeweler-4.

These specialties default to one another at -4.

This skill is IQ-based, but ST is important, and some tools have a "Minimum ST," just like weapons.

Smuggling

IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the ability to conceal items in baggage and vehicles. You can also use it to hide an object in a room or a building. Roll against skill to hide an item from casual inspection. In an active search, the searchers must win a Quick Contest of Search vs. your Smuggling skill to find the item.

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345) for specialized smuggling gear. The *difference* between the Size Modifier (p. 19) of the package, vehicle, or room in which you are hiding the item and that of the item itself; e.g., to hide a bottle of liquor (SM -5) in a family car (SM +3), you would roll at +8.

Sociology

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, Anthropology-3, or Psychology-4.

This is the study of societies and social relationships. A successful skill roll lets you judge how well a large group of people will work together; deduce the social pressures contributing to a crime wave, revolution, war, etc.; or predict the most probable outcome of dissimilar societies coming into contact.

Soldier/TL

IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This skill represents a combination of basic military training – the lessons taught at "boot camp" or its equivalent in your game world – and actual combat experience. Only those who have served in an army, militia, etc. are likely to know it.

The GM may require a Soldier roll whenever circumstances would test your battlefield discipline (knowing when to shoot, use concealment, take cover, etc.) or skill at practical field survival (e.g., keeping your feet dry and eating when you get the chance). Roll daily during prolonged military action. Failure means an inconvenience – perhaps a minor piece of equipment fails. Critical failure indicates a disaster: "friendly fire" incident, trench foot, etc.

Soldier includes basic lessons in many fields covered by other skills. For instance, a TL8 soldier learns to strip his rifle without learning Armoury (Small Arms), to use a radio without learning Electronics Operation (Comm), to dig a foxhole without learning Engineer (Combat), and so forth. In a situation where someone with one of those skills would roll at +4 or better for a routine task (see *Task Difficulty,* p. 345), the GM may let you roll against Soldier skill instead. You do not receive the bonus that someone with the full-fledged skill would get, but you *do* suffer any situational penalties.

Soldier can only substitute for skill rolls to do things that would be a believable part of basic training. This means the *routine* use of *standard* equipment by *ordinary* troops – not research, improvisation, or design, and never the operation of new or secret technologies! Soldier cannot replace weapon skills, either; you must buy all such skills separately.

Example: If someone with Electronics Operation (Comm) would be at +4 to call HQ on a standard-issue radio, you could do so with a successful Soldier roll. However, you could *not* use Soldier to fix a broken radio, use an enemy radio, or transmit coded signals.

Spacer/TL

see *Crewman,* p. 185

Spear

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Spear Thrower
DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5 or Thrown Weapon (Spear)-4.

This is the ability to use the spear thrower: a long, flat stick with a notch or a loop at one end. It increases the force with which you can hurl a javelin or similar weapon. It takes one turn to position the spear in the thrower after both are in hand and ready.

Modifiers: -5 in tight quarters (less than two yards of overhead clearance).

Speed-Reading
IQ/Average

Defaults: None.

This is the ability to read *much* faster than normal. Whenever time is of the essence (for instance, when reading the instructions on a parachute as you fall), multiply your reading speed by a factor of 1 + (skill/10); e.g., Speed-Reading-12 would give a factor of 2.2. Make a skill roll to determine whether you retain what you have read.

On a failure, your recall is shaky. Every time you try to remember or use what you read, you must make an IQ roll at a penalty equal to your margin of failure. Roll at +5 if you have Eidetic Memory, or +10 for Photographic Memory. If this roll fails, you cannot recall the information; on a critical failure, you recall badly flawed information but believe it to be true! To eliminate this IQ roll, you must go back and reread the material *slowly*.

Modifiers: Language modifiers (p. 24).

Sports
DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5 and others.

This is the ability to play a particular sport *well* – perhaps well enough to earn a living. Each sport is a separate Sports skill. Most Sports skills are DX/Average and default to DX-5, but those that put a premium on strength (e.g., rugby) might default to ST-5. Some Sports skills might default to one another or to other skills as well.

Make an IQ-based roll to recall the *basic* rules of your sport. Detailed knowledge of the full rules governing leagues and tournaments – as would be expected of a coach or referee – is covered by the relevant Games skill (p. 197).

The GM may rule that certain Sports are useful in combat situations. For instance, Sports (Baseball) might let you use a bat to parry hurled rocks and grenades at (skill/2) + 3, Sports (Bullfighting) might give a Parry equal to (skill/2) + 3 against a slam by a beast that uses a "running head butt," and you might be able to roll against Sports (Rugby) to hit with a slam.

conceal yourself anywhere except in a totally bare room, or move so quietly that nobody will hear you, or follow someone without being noticed. (To follow someone through a *crowd,* use Shadowing, p. 219.)

If someone is *specifically* on the alert for intruders, the GM will roll a Quick Contest between your Stealth and the sentinel's Perception.

You can also use this skill to stalk game. A successful roll (and about 30 minutes) gets you within 30 yards of most animals. Another roll, at -5, gets you within 15 yards.

Modifiers: A penalty equal to your encumbrance level. -5 to hide in an area without "natural" hiding places, or +3 or more if there are *many* hiding places. -5 to move silently if you are moving faster than Move 1. -5 to fool those with Discriminatory Smell (e.g., dogs).

A successful Streetwise roll might let you learn where any sort of illegal "action" is; which local cops or bureaucrats can be bought, and for how much; and how to contact the local underworld.

Staff

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Stage Combat
DX/Average

Defaults: Combat Art or Sport-2, an actual combat skill-3, or Performance-3.

This skill allows you to perform a choreographed fight safely, yet in an entertaining manner. A critical failure indicates an injury: 1d-2 damage to a random location.

Modifiers: -4 for an unfamiliar weapon.

Stealth
DX/Average

Defaults: DX-5 or IQ-5.

This is the ability to hide and to move silently. A successful roll lets you

Strategy†
IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6, Intelligence Analysis-6, or Tactics-6.

This is the ability to plan military actions and predict the actions of the enemy. In most settings, only the military teaches this skill.

A successful Strategy roll lets you deduce, in advance, enemy military plans unless another person with this skill leads them. In that case, the GM rolls a Quick Contest of Strategy. The amount of information gained depends on how well you roll (but *not* on the quality of the foe's plans). If you fail an uncontested roll or lose a Quick Contest, the GM gives you *false* information.

You *must* specialize in a type of strategy – Land, Naval, Space, etc. These specialties default to one

another at -4. The specific units being commanded are less important; even the units of another nation or tech level would give -1 or -2 at most (GM's judgment), as long as you had accurate information about their capabilities.

Streetwise

IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the skill of getting along in rough company. A successful Streetwise roll might let you learn (among other things) where any sort of illegal "action" is; which local cops or bureaucrats can be bought, and for how much; and how to contact the local underworld. Note that you might also be able to get this information by asking a Contact (p. 44). This skill is a measure of your ability to make *new* connections as needed.

You may substitute an Influence roll against Streetwise for any reaction roll made in an underworld or "bad neighborhood" situation; see *Influence Rolls* (p. 359).

Modifiers: +3 if you have a tough reputation (either "good" or "bad") in the area; -3 if you are obviously a stranger in the area. -3 for Low Empathy (p. 142); -1 for Oblivious (p. 146); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 154).

Submarine/TL†

DX/Average

Default: IQ-6.

This is the ability to operate a specific type of underwater vehicle. As with Piloting, the default is to IQ, but when you *learn* the skill, always base it on DX.

Roll against Submarine to dive or to surface, to maneuver in underwater combat, or to negotiate hazardous waters. Failure can mean anything from a slight drift off course to a collision; critical failure may strand the vessel underwater!

Make an IQ-based Submarine roll for basic chart reading or practical oceanography, or to recall nautical laws and regulations.

You *must* specialize:

Free-Flooding Sub: Any small, *open* submersible. The crew is exposed to the water, and must wear underwater breathing gear. *Prerequisites:* Diving Suit *or* Scuba. *Defaults:* Large Sub-5 or Mini-Sub-4.

Large Sub: Any crewed, long-duration submersible, including attack subs and missile subs. *Defaults:* Free-Flooding Sub-5 or Mini-Sub-4.

Mini-Sub: Any small, closed, short-duration submersible, typical of those used for scientific research. *Defaults:* Free-Flooding Sub-4 or Large Sub-4.

Modifiers: -2 for an unfamiliar submarine within your specialty (e.g., a diesel attack sub when you are used to a nuclear missile sub); -4 or more for a vessel in bad repair; -1 to -10 for navigational hazards.

Submariner/TL

see *Crewman,* p. 185

Suggest

see *Enthrallment,* p. 191

Sumo Wrestling

DX/Average

Defaults: None.

This unarmed combat skill represents *any* training at grabbing, shoving, and tripping – not just the traditional Japanese sport of *sumo*. Roll against the *higher* of DX or Sumo Wrestling to hit with a grapple, slam, or shove, or to make or resist a takedown. If you know this skill at DX+1 level, add +1 to ST whenever you make or resist a grapple or takedown, and whenever you attempt to break free, and +1 *per die* to your damage when you slam or shove. These bonuses increase to +2 if you know Sumo at DX+2 or better.

When you defend with bare hands, Sumo Wrestling allows you to parry *once* per turn. You must use both hands. Your Parry score is (skill/2) + 3, rounded down. This parry is meant to ward off slams, grapples, and bare-handed slaps. You parry at -2 vs. kicks and -3 vs. weapons. For complete rules for parrying barehanded, see *Parrying Unarmed* (p. 376).

Surgery/TL

IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: First Aid-12, Physician-5, Physiology-8, or Veterinary-5.
Prerequisites: First Aid or Physician.

This is skill at using *invasive* medical techniques to treat sickness or injury. Roll once per operation. On a success, the operation proceeded without complications. On a failure, the patient took damage – 2d for a simple amputation, 3d for other procedures. Surgery rolls can also facilitate recovery from wounds; see *Surgery* (p. 424).

This skill represents general surgical expertise, which is relatively rare in real life. Most surgeons have an *optional* specialty (p. 169) in a certain part of the body (brain, heart, etc.) or a specific type of surgery (cosmetic surgery, microsurgery, transplant surgery, etc.).

Modifiers: Equipment modifiers (p. 345); physiology modifiers (p. 181); -3 if the area or equipment cannot be properly cleaned and sterilized; -3 for head or chest surgery; -5 for undiagnosed problems. If you lack Physician skill, you are at -5 to do anything but "field-expedient" surgery (e.g., stitch wounds or extract arrowheads, bullets, and shrapnel).

Survival†

Per/Average

Defaults: Perception-5 or Naturalist (same planet)-3.

This is the ability to "live off the land," find safe food and water, avoid hazards, build shelter, etc. You may look after up to 10 other people. To live safely in a wilderness situation, you must make a successful Survival roll once per day. Failure inflicts 2d-4 injury on you and anyone in your care; roll separately for each victim.

This skill also gives an "eye for country." A successful roll shows you the best direction of travel to find flowing water, a mountain pass, or whatever other terrain feature you desire – assuming that it exists.

Finally, you can use this skill to *trap* wild animals. (A city-bred thief could use Traps skill, but he's used to different game . . . so the roll would be at a -5.) Make one roll per trap. It takes about 30 minutes to improvise a trap from ordinary materials, or 10 minutes to set and hide a commercial steel trap. Pit traps for large game take several hours to dig.

Survival often requires skill rolls based on scores other than Percep-

tion. The GM might ask for a ST-based roll to dig a pit trap or erect a log shelter, a DX-based roll to start a fire using primitive techniques (flint sparking, bow and palette, etc.), or even a HT-based roll to avoid nutritional deficiencies from an improvised diet.

You *must* specialize by terrain type. Land-dwellers may choose from Arctic, Desert, Island/Beach, Jungle, Mountain, Plains, Swampland, and Woodlands. Aquatic beings may take any of Bank, Deep Ocean Vent, Fresh-Water Lake, Open Ocean, Reef, River/Stream, Salt-Water Sea, and Tropical Lagoon. Amphibious individuals can pick from *either* list!

Land specialties default to one another at -3, while aquatic specialties default among themselves at -4. Island/Beach and Tropical Lagoon default to each other at -4, as do Swampland and River/Stream, but there are no other defaults between land and aquatic specialties.

In settings where it is possible to visit other worlds, you must also specialize by planet. Each Survival specialty defaults to the *same* terrain type for a *different* planet at -4. The defaults between terrain types given above are at an extra -4 between different planets. All this assumes the two planets are of the same planet type (see *Planet Types,* p. 180). There is *no default at all* between Survival skills for two planets of different planet types.

At the GM's option, extreme man-made terrain may call for unique specialties; e.g., Survival (Radioactive Wasteland). Most such specialties have *no* default of any kind.

See also *Urban Survival,* p. 228.

Modifiers: Up to -5 for extreme weather conditions. Equipment modifiers (p. 345).

Sway Emotions
see *Enthrallment,* p. 191

Swimming
HT/Easy

Default: HT-4.

This is the skill of swimming (whether on purpose or to keep afloat in emergencies) and lifesaving. Roll against the *higher* of Swimming or HT to avoid fatigue while swimming or injury due to aquatic misfortunes.

When racing someone of equal water Move, roll a Quick Contest of Swimming to determine the winner. See *Swimming* (p. 354).

Note that Swimming does *not* cover high diving – that's Sports (Diving).

Symbol Drawing†
IQ/Hard

Defaults: Special.

This is the art of scribing magical symbols. Depending on your magical tradition, you might carve these symbols with a ritual dagger, draw them on the ground or an altar using blood or ceremonial powders, write them in ink, trace them in the air with a wand or your fingers, or something else. You *must* specialize in a particular magical tradition.

In traditions where magical power flows from the caster, nature, spirits, etc. as opposed to the symbols themselves, the symbols provide a focus that aids magic use. Roll against Symbol Drawing before each ritual. On a success, add half your margin of success (round down) to your skill with the *next* ritual you conduct over the symbols. This kind of Symbol Drawing defaults to Ritual Magic (same)-4. For instance, Symbol Drawing (Voodoo) defaults to Ritual Magic (Voodoo)-4, and lets you draw the *vevers* used in Voodoo ritual.

In traditions where the *symbols themselves* imbue items or places (or even *people,* in the case of tattoos) with magic, the magic is only as good as the symbols. Roll against the *lower* of Symbol Drawing and your skill with the enchantment itself. This is most common in rune magic. Each runic alphabet is a separate Symbol Drawing skill with no default. For instance, Symbol Drawing (Futhark Runes) would let you scribe the runes used in Norse magic.

More-exotic traditions may have their own rules; see the appropriate worldbook for more information.

Modifiers: -1 or more if using non-traditional means to mark the symbols; -1 or more if placing the symbols on any surface other than those prescribed by your tradition.

Tactics
IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 or Strategy (any)-6.

This is the ability to outguess and outmaneuver the enemy in small-unit or personal combat. In most settings, only the military teaches this skill.

When commanding a small unit, roll against Tactics to place your troops correctly for an ambush, know where to post sentries, etc. At the GM's option, a successful roll might even provide clues as to *immediate* enemy plans. To outmaneuver enemy units, you must win a Quick Contest of Tactics with their leader. All of this only applies when you lead a group small enough that you can give each warrior orders *personally* – or through at most one subordinate. Thus, radio and similar technologies can greatly enhance your command abilities!

In personal combat, you may make a Tactics roll before the fight begins if you had *any* time to prepare. On a success, you start the fight in an advantageous position – e.g., behind cover or on higher ground – as determined by the GM. The better the roll, the greater your advantage. If you fail, or do not attempt a Tactics roll, you are in a random location (or one of the GM's choosing) when combat begins. Fighters without Tactics skill *always* start combat this way.

Even in an ambush or similar "surprise" situation, the GM will use the *better* of your Tactics skill and your Perception to see if you spotted the danger on time.

Teaching
IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5.

This is the ability to instruct others. If you have Teaching at level 12+, you may act as a teacher for game purposes. For more on teaching and learning, see *Improvement Through Study* (p. 292).

Modifiers: -3 for Callous (p. 125); -1 to -4 for Shyness (p. 142). Apply both the teacher's *and* the student's Language penalties (p. 24) in the language of instruction.

In traditions where magical power flows from the caster, nature, spirits, etc., as opposed to the symbols themselves, the symbols provide a focus that aids magic use.

Teamster†

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5, Animal Handling (same)-4, or Riding (same)-2.

This is the skill of driving a team of animals pulling a wagon, chariot, etc. It includes the ability to harness and care for the beasts, and judge them for quality before purchase. If the animals are ornery or badly trained (GM's judgment), you must make a successful Animal Handling roll before you can attempt a Teamster roll.

For normal travel, make a Teamster roll once per day. When moving at a gallop (80% or more of the animals' full Move) or when executing complex maneuvers with a chariot in combat, roll *every 10 seconds.*

A failure usually means nothing worse than lost time or a wider turn than intended. A critical failure – or *any* failure at a gallop – spills the wagon or chariot. Treat this as a five-yard fall for each passenger and animal involved (see *Falling,* p. 431). As well, roll 2d for each beast; on a 12, a leg is broken! You will have to make Animal Handling rolls to calm the beasts. Time required to reload the cargo depends on the load, terrain, and weather.

You *must* specialize by animal type; the most common specialty is Teamster (Equines), which covers horses and mules. Teamster specialties default to one another at -3.

Modifiers: -2 for more than four animals; -2 for a team of unfamiliar animals; up to -5 for bad terrain.

Thaumatology

IQ/Very Hard

Default: IQ-7*.
* There is *no* default in a nonmagical setting, or for those who have never witnessed "real" magic.

This is the academic study of magical theory and the "physics" of mana. *Anyone* may learn this skill, but it is easier for a mage; add Magery to IQ when learning this skill, just as for spells.

The main use for this skill is magical research. When creating a new spell, use the rules for inventing (see Chapter 17), but replace Engineer skill with Thaumatology. A successful skill roll can also identify an unknown spell when you see it cast, deduce the ramifications of a critical success or failure with magic, determine the spells needed to enchant a magic item to perform as desired, etc. The better your roll, the more insight the GM will provide.

This is the study of *fantasy* magic – fireball spells, rings of power, etc. The equivalent skill for traditional, spirit-mediated sorcery is Ritual Magic (p. 218), while holy magic might require Religious Ritual (p. 217) or Theology (p. 226). However, a Thaumatology roll at -5 will allow a thaumatologist to relate these different varieties of magic to "standard" wizardry. Exceptionally weird powers or otherworldly artifacts might give a larger penalty!

Theology†

IQ/Hard

Defaults: IQ-6 or Religious Ritual (same)-4.

This is the study of a particular religion: its gods, cosmology, doctrines, scriptures, etc. You *must* specialize by religion. There are usually no defaults between specialties, but the GM might permit a default at -4 or so for belief systems that have similar origins, or where one is derived from the other.

Alternatively, you may study the similarities and differences between religions; this is Theology (Comparative). The Theology of any religion routinely studied by scholars in your game world defaults to this specialty at -5.

To be a priest or holy man at TL1+, you must have both Theology *and* Religious Ritual skill (p. 217) for your religion. TL0 shamans need only learn Religious Ritual.

You do not necessarily believe in the religion you study – faith comes from within, not from book learning! If you do, you may ask the GM to make a secret roll against your Theology skill when confronted with moral uncertainty. On a success, the GM will advise you on which course of action "feels" right, given your beliefs and understanding of scripture.

Throwing

DX/Average

Defaults: DX-3 or Dropping-4.

This is the ability to throw any small, relatively smooth object that fits in the palm of your hand. Examples include baseballs, hand grenades, and rocks. (Boomerangs, javelins, knives, etc. require their own specialized skills; see *Thrown Weapon,* below.) Roll against skill to hit. Furthermore, if you know Throwing at DX+1 level, add +1 to ST when figuring throwing distance (but *not* damage). Add +2 to ST for Throwing at DX+2 or better.

If you do not have this skill, roll against your default to hit a specific target, but against *full* DX to lob an object into a general area.

Throwing Art

DX/Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master or Weapon Master.

This is the cinematic ability to throw anything you are strong enough to lift: knives, medicine balls, televisions . . . *anything!* Roll against skill to hit. Furthermore, if you know Throwing Art at DX level, add +1 to ST when figuring throwing distance, and +1 *per die* of damage with thrown weapons. These bonuses increase to +2 if you know Throwing Art at DX+1 or better. If you are a Weapon Master, this bonus is *instead of* the usual damage bonus for your weapon.

You can use the items you throw as improvised weapons. Treat forks, kitchen knives, and other long, sharp objects as daggers. Any small, blunt object does thrust+1 crushing damage. Baseball bats do swing+1 crushing. Pencils do thrust-3 impaling. Playing cards do thrust-3 cutting.

Throwing Art lets you throw anything covered by the Throwing and Thrown Weapon skills. If you have Throwing Art, you do not need those skills.

Thrown Weapon†

DX/Easy

Defaults: DX-4 and others.

This is the ability to hurl any one type of thrown weapon. You *must* specialize:

Axe/Mace: Any axe, hatchet, or mace balanced for throwing (but *not* an unbalanced battleaxe or maul!).

Dart: Any sort of small, finned dart. Games (Darts) defaults to this skill at no penalty. *Default:* Throwing-2.

Harpoon: Any sort of *tethered* spear. *Default:* Thrown Weapon (Spear)-2.

Knife: Any sort of knife.

Shuriken: Any sort of hiltless blade, notably *shuriken* ("ninja stars"). *Default:* Throwing-2.

Spear: Any sort of spear, javelin, etc. *Defaults:* Spear Thrower-4 or Thrown Weapon (Harpoon)-2.

Stick: Any balanced and shaped throwing stick, such as a boomerang. This type of throwing stick does not return to the user.

Tonfa

see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Tracking

Per/Average

Defaults: Perception-5 or Naturalist-5.

This is the ability to follow a man or an animal by its tracks. Make a Tracking roll to pick up the trail, then roll periodically to avoid losing it. The frequency and difficulty of these rolls depend on the terrain:

Jungle, Plains, or Woodlands: Roll every 30 minutes.

Arctic, Desert, Island/Beach, or Mountain: Roll at -2 every 15 minutes.

Swampland: Roll at -4 every 5 minutes.

Urban: Roll at -6 every minute!

You may also use this skill to *cover* your tracks. This doubles your travel time! A successful roll means you have hidden your tracks well enough that only someone else with this skill can see them. If another tracker follows you, the Tracking rolls above become Quick Contests of Tracking skill. If he loses any of the Contests, he loses your trail.

To stalk game once you have tracked it, use the Stealth skill (p. 222).

Modifiers: -5 if the trail is more than a day old, or -10 if more than a week old. +3 if you are following a man, or +6 if following a group of men. Superior senses help *a lot:* bonuses for Acute Vision (p. 35) and Discriminatory Smell (p. 49) usually apply, and many superhuman senses (Infravision, Subsonic Hearing, etc.) give situational bonuses.

Traps/TL

IQ/Average

Defaults: IQ-5 or Lockpicking-3*.
* Also defaults to DX-5 if you are *disarming* or *resetting* a trap, but not if you are detecting or building one.

This is the skill of building and nullifying traps. A successful Traps roll will (among other things) disarm a trap once you have found it, reset it after you pass, or build a new trap (given suitable materials). Time required is as for Lockpicking (p. 206).

To *detect* a trap, make a Perception-based skill roll.

Note that for the purposes of Traps skill, detection devices are "traps." Thus, this skill covers everything from covered pits to elaborate electronic security systems!

Modifiers: Infinitely variable. The more sophisticated the trap, the harder it will be to disarm, reset, build, or find – and a given trap might be (for instance) easy to find but hard to disarm. The GM should be creative! Equipment modifiers (p. 345) apply to most rolls to set or disarm traps.

Bonuses for Acute Vision (p. 35) apply to rolls to detect traps (only).

Two-Handed Axe/Mace
see *Melee Weapon*, p. 208

Example of Character Creation (concluded)

Dai has spent 203 of his 250 points, leaving him with 47 points for skills. Reading through the skill list, we see *dozens* of skills that suit a master thief – but since we're on a budget, we settle on the following.

First, a thief *must* be stealthy. For this, Dai needs the Stealth skill (p. 222). We want this to be reliable, so we choose skill level 16. At that level, only a roll of 17 or 18 will fail . . . and that's a failure for anyone. Stealth is a DX/Average skill. Since Dai's DX is 15, level 16 is DX+1 for him. From the *Skill Cost Table* (p. 170), we learn that a level of Attribute+1 in an Average skill costs 4 points.

Any thief worth his salt can pick pockets and open locks. This calls for Pickpocket (p. 213) and Lockpicking (p. 206). We want to buy Dai a 15 in both – not as high as his Stealth, but still reliable. Pickpocket is DX/Hard. Skill 15 is DX level, and from the table, we see this costs 4 points for a Hard skill. Lockpicking, on the other hand, is IQ/Average. With Dai's IQ 12, skill 15 is IQ+3 level. This costs *12* points – it's very expensive to raise a skill so far above its controlling attribute!

We also want Dai to be an adept second-story man and escape artist, so we spend 1 point apiece on Climbing (p. 183) and Escape (p. 192). Climbing is DX/Average; 1 point buys DX-1 level, giving skill 14. Escape is DX/Hard; 1 point is only good for DX-2 level, or skill 13. Of course, we selected these skills knowing that Dai's Flexibility advantage would give +3 to both! His Perfect Balance adds *another* +1 to Climbing, too. His final levels are Climbing at 18 and Escape at 16.

To case an area before he strikes, Dai needs Observation skill (p. 211). This is Per/Average. But Dai's Perception is a whopping 15, so he doesn't need to spend many points: 2 points buys Observation at Per level (15), which is more than good enough.

Since stealth can fail, we want to give Dai some combat skills for backup. We decide that he prefers knives. Knife skill (p. 208) is fine for melee combat, but we also want Dai to be good at the quick draw and with throwing knives. Fast-Draw (p. 194) and Thrown Weapon (p. 226) fit the bill. Both *require* a specialty – in this case, "Knife." All of these skills are DX/Easy. With Dai's low ST, he'll need *superb* aim to make a knife effective, so we settle on 17 in Knife and Thrown Weapon (Knife). This is DX+2 level, which costs 4 points per skill. Fast-Draw (Knife) is a neat trick, but skill 15 is plenty. This costs 1 point.

To reflect Dai's medieval background, we decide that he is a fair hand with the shortsword. But not *too* good – swords are expensive, and Dai grew up poor. We give him the Shortsword skill (p. 209) at 15. Shortsword is DX/Average, so this costs 2 points.

As an ISWAT officer, Dai should know how to shoot. A slim target pistol sounds like his kind of gun. Reviewing the Guns skill (p. 198), we see that pistols call for the "Pistol" specialty. Guns are new to Dai, so we spend only 1 point. Since Guns (Pistol) is DX/Easy, this buys DX level: a very adequate 15.

To *conceal* all these weapons, Dai needs Holdout skill (p. 200). This is IQ/Average. Dai doesn't routinely carry concealed weapons, so we just give him IQ level – 12 – for 2 points.

We decide to give Dai some "background skills" next. He grew up on the street, so Urban Survival (p. 228) fits: it's the ability to scrounge food and shelter in the city. A Per/Average skill, 1 point buys Per-1 level, or 14. Filch (p. 195) covers shoplifting. It's DX/Average; 1 point buys DX-1, also 14. Survival has a social side, too. We give Dai Fast-Talk (p. 195) to talk his way out of jams and Streetwise (p. 223) to deal with professional criminals. Both are IQ/Average. We buy IQ level (12) in each, at 2 points a skill.

Dai has now spent 44 of his remaining 47 points. We decide to put his last three points into skills that complement his advantages.

Rereading the descriptions of his advantages, we see that Perfect Balance gives +1 to Acrobatics (p. 174). That's definitely Dai's style! Acrobatics is DX/Hard, so 2 points buys DX-1 level, or 14. With the +1 for Perfect Balance, he gets a 15.

We also discover that Absolute Direction gives +3 to Body Sense (p. 181): the skill of reorienting yourself after teleportation. This sounds ideal for Dai! We put 1 point into Body Sense, which is DX/Hard. This buys DX-2 level, or 13. The +3 for Absolute Direction makes this 16.

At this stage, Dai has spent all 250 points. If we wanted to add more abilities, we could add more disadvantages to pay for them – but we want Dai to be carefree, not saddled with problems.

Now it's time to write it all down. Dai's character sheet appears on p. 311.

Two-Handed Flail
see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Two-Handed Sword
see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Typing
DX/Easy

Defaults: DX-4 and others.

This is the skill of using a type-writer. Typing speed is skill × 3 words per minute (wpm) on a manual, skill × 5 wpm on an electric typewriter or computer keyboard.

This skill defaults at -3 to any skill that involves a lot of typing, notably Administration, Computer Operation, Research, and Writing, and Professional Skills such as Journalist. If you have such a skill, Typing skill is redundant (unless you wish to work as a professional typist).

Urban Survival
Per/Average

Default: Perception-5.

This talent covers the *physical* part of staying alive in a city environment, whether it's overpopulated or empty. (The *social* problems of city survival are covered by Streetwise skill.) A successful skill roll allows you to find clean rainwater; locate manholes from above or below; quickly locate building entrances, exits, stairwells, etc.; recognize and avoid physically dangerous areas, such as crumbling buildings; make and read city maps; find your way out of strange city areas; find a warm place to sleep outside in cold weather; and locate common types of buildings or businesses without asking anyone, just by your "feel" for the way cities are laid out.

Vacc Suit/TL
see *Environment Suit,* p. 192

Ventriloquism
IQ/Hard

Defaults: None.

This is the ability to disguise and "throw" your voice a short distance. A successful roll lets you throw your voice well enough to fool your audience.

Modifiers: +5 if you have a dummy or confederate to distract your audience (it's easier to "see" a face talk than it is to believe the voice comes from an immobile object); -3 if the audience has reason to be suspicious.

Veterinary/TL
IQ/Hard

Defaults: Animal Handling (any)-6, Physician-5, or Surgery-5.

This is the ability to care for a sick or wounded animal. You may take an *optional* specialty (p. 169) in a particular type of animal.

Modifiers: +5 if the animal knows and trusts you; -2 or worse if the animal is of an unfamiliar type.

Weather Sense
see *Meteorology,* p. 209

Weird Science
IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: None.

This skill allows you to formulate astonishing new crackpot scientific theories that are far ahead of their time . . . or at least utterly different from the usual assumptions of your tech level. You may attempt a Weird Science roll whenever you work on a new invention (see Chapter 17) or investigate an *existing* item of weird technology (e.g., a UFO).

On a success, you get +5 on an invention attempt (but only +1 if using the Gadgeteer advantage, since Gadgeteer already gives you favorable die rolls for thinking "outside the box"). If investigating weird technology, success gives +2 to any skill roll you make for this purpose – and the GM might even allow a default skill roll to *operate* the device!

On a critical success, you get these bonuses *and* some incredible insight into a totally different problem! Critical failures are always spectacular, although not necessarily fatal or even dangerous.

Whip
see *Melee Weapon,* p. 208

Wrestling
DX/Average

Defaults: None.

This skill represents training at grappling and pinning. Roll against the *higher* of DX or Wrestling to hit with a grapple, or to make or resist a takedown. Furthermore, if you know Wrestling at DX+1 level, add +1 to ST for the purpose of making or resisting any choke, grapple, neck snap, takedown, or pin, and whenever you attempt to break free. Add +2 to ST for Wrestling at DX+2 or better.

When you defend with bare hands, Wrestling allows you to parry *once* per turn. You must use both hands. Your Parry score is (skill/2) + 3, rounded down. This parry is at -3 vs. weapons. For complete rules for parrying barehanded, see *Parrying Unarmed* (p. 376).

Writing
IQ/Average

Default: IQ-5

This is the ability to write in a clear or entertaining manner. A successful roll means the work is readable and accurate.

This is mostly useful to earn a living or write for **GURPS,** but can sometimes help on adventures . . . or after them. The report of a spy, soldier, or private investigator is far more useful if it is well-written!

Modifiers: The time modifiers under *Time Spent* (p. 346) will often apply; -5 if you are writing about an unfamiliar subject; Language modifiers (p. 24).

Zen Archery
IQ/Very Hard

Defaults: None.
Prerequisites: Trained By A Master or Weapon Master, Bow at 18+, and Meditation.

This skill allows you to strike difficult targets with ease when using a bow. On a success, add up the penalties for size and speed/range, and then divide them by three (round down).

Modifiers: -10 if used *instantly,* dropping to -5 after 1 turn of concentration, -4 after 2 turns, -3 after 4 turns, -2 after 8 turns, -1 after 16 turns, and no penalty after 32 turns.