FS3 Player's Guide
Version: FS3.2

Table of Contents

Welcome to FS3

FS3 is a generic roleplaying game skills system, specifically designed and optimized for online text-based RPGs (MUSHes).   FS3 provides rules for:

- Character Creation
- Character Improvement (Experience)
- Generic Conflict Resolution (Ability Rolls)
- Combat
- Luck

FS3 Principles

What makes FS3 different from other skill systems?

1. **A lean skill list.** Most skill systems offer a bewildering array of skills, making character creation a chore. FS3 focuses on the skills that are truly relevant to the "action" of the game, whether that's flying fighter jets or riding horses.

2. **A custom dice system.** The FS3 dice system is designed for games where skills are rolled infrequently and deviations from the 'expected' results raise eyebrows. On the whole, characters succeed more often than they do in other systems.

3. **A roleplay-friendly combat system.** The FS3 combat system is designed to be fast and flexible, providing some colorful tactical options without bogging roleplay down in a lot of mechanics.

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Customizing FS3

Like GURPS, FUDGE, and other similar systems, FS3 is a rules framework, not a complete game unto itself. FS3 can be used for anything from high fantasy to gritty historical drama. Skill lists, weapons, armor, etc. will need to be customized for the setting. More about customizing FS3 can be found in the FS3 Storyteller's Guide.

Definitions

Here are some of the common terms used in the FS3 system.

Player – A person playing the game.

Storyteller – The player who is driving the story of the game. (Called the Gamemaster/Administrator in some games.)

Player Character (PC) – A major character whose actions are controlled by a player. One can think of PCs as the heroes of a story.

Non-Player Character (NPC) – A secondary character, normally controlled by the Storyteller but sometimes by other players. One can think of NPCs as the villains or extras in a story.

You – The term "you" and "your" are used interchangeably to refer to you as a player ("roll your dice"), or as your character ("pick your skills").

FS3 Basics

This section describes the basic concepts of the FS3 conflict resolution system.

Abilities

Abilities reflect things that your character is able to do. Running, shooting guns, flying spaceships, talking your way out of a tense situation – these are all things that could be covered by Abilities. There are two kinds of Abilities: Attributes and Skills.

Each game will define the list of available Abilities.

Attributes

Attributes reflect a character's natural talents. Attributes influence related skills, giving an advantage (or disadvantage) compared to someone with equivalent training. They also come into play when no particular skill applies to a given situation.

Barring disability or genetic mutation, Attributes never change; they are set in stone when you are born. For example, you may overcome an academic challenge through hard work and study, but you will not change your underlying academic aptitude.

Attributes are rated on a 1-4 scale. All characters will have a rating in every attribute.

Rating	Attribute Meaning
1	Poor
2	Average
3	Good
4	Exceptional

Skills

Skills reflect a character's knowledge and training.   Skills are fluid, changing over time. You choose an initial set of skills during character creation, and may improve them or learn new skills during the course of the game.

Skills are further broken down into three categories:

- **Action Skills** are those relevant to the game's central "action".
- **Background Skills** flesh out your hobbies and interests.
- **Language Skills** allow you to read and write languages.

The Storyteller sets up the game's Action and Language skill lists. There is no fixed list for Background Skills; you can have anything from *Underwater Basket Weaving* to *Soap Opera Trivia*.

Action and Background Skills are rated on a 0-12 scale. Characters only have ratings in skills they have taken the time to learn and practice. All other skills are considered to be at rating 0.

Rating	Skill Meaning
0	Untrained
1-3	Novice
4-6	Proficient
7-9	Veteran
10-12	Master

- Novice = A student, hobbyist or trainee.
- Proficient = Thoroughly competent. A typical professional level.
- Veteran = A lot of experience or talent.
- Master = An expert or master.

Language Skills don't have a rating. If you have a language skill, it is assumed you are proficient in speaking, reading and writing that language.   You are welcome to roleplay different degrees of language proficiency, including the ability to speak but not read/write, but this is not represented by the game mechanics.

Common Knowledge

It would be silly to expect your character to have a skill on his character sheet for every single thing he knows. Some things are just common knowledge, and it can be assumed your character knows them without requiring you to specify it.

Exactly what falls under "common knowledge" will vary by game. Basic computer knowledge would be assumed in a modern urban setting, but not so much in a WWII game.

When in doubt about whether something would be common knowledge, consult your Storyteller.

Ability Rolls

Ability Rolls are used to determine the outcome of a character's action, whether it's shooting a gun or jumping a chasm.

When to Roll

Ability Rolls should be used judiciously; it is unnecessary (and silly) to roll for every little thing.   RPGs are about *role*play not *roll*play.

For example: If someone does a good job roleplaying their way through bluffing a guard, it probably ought to work. Likewise, if someone attempts to schmooze the princess with the worst pickup line ever, it probably shouldn't work, no matter what you roll.

> **The Golden Rule of Ability Rolls:**
>
> As long as there are no objections from anyone involved in the scene, it is perfectly acceptable to just assume success or failure based on roleplay.

Some situations where you should consider using an Ability Roll:

- The character is under stress.
- Characters are in conflict with one another.
- There are exceptional circumstances that might affect the outcome.

For example, Swimming is a skill that you probably wouldn't roll under normal circumstances. But if you were trying to save someone from drowning or stay afloat in stormy seas with your clothes on, an Ability Roll would be appropriate.

What to Roll

Ability rolls in FS3 utilize a Skill and a related Attribute.

Ruling Attribute

Every skill has a Ruling Attribute, which is the attribute most closely related to that skill. The Storyteller sets the Ruling Attribute for Action skills as part of the skill list. You choose the Ruling Attribute for Background skills during character creation.

The Ruling Attribute is the one used in Ability Rolls by default. There may be situations where the Ruling Attribute is actually not the most relevant one for a given situation. In such cases it is acceptable to substitute another Attribute and use its rating instead.

Example: Joanna chose a Background Skill of Singing, with a Ruling Attribute of Creative. When trying to remember lyrics from an obscure song, she may want to use a Ruling Attribute of Academic instead.

Defaulting

If you do not have a rating in the appropriate skill, you may sometimes default to another skill or attribute.

If the task at hand is "common knowledge" (see Common Knowledge, page 4), roll the related attribute.

For example: Using the Athletic attribute to run a footrace or Academic to remember the capital of Switzerland.

If the task requires specialized knowledge, you may roll an attribute or loosely related skill. The Storyteller must determine an appropriate modifier (usually -3 or more; see Modifiers, page 7) and whether to allow a roll at all.

For example: In a life-or-death situation, a character might attempt to use Veterinary Medicine or First Aid to perform surgery on a human. Neither of these skills directly applies, but both offer some degree of related knowledge.

Modifiers

Modifiers can be applied to Ability Rolls to increase or decrease your chance of success. A modifier is added to the ability rating, giving you more or fewer dice to roll. When considering modifiers, bear in mind that 3 rating points is the difference between a beginner and a professional, so a modifier of + or – 3 is a pretty dramatic impact.

Some general guidance for modifiers is given in the table below.

Situation	Modifier
Task is really easy.	+3
Task is routine.	0
Task is really hard.	-3
Taking your time / no stress.	+2

Note: Easy/Routine/Hard is from the perspective of a typical professional. Even brain surgery is routine to a brain surgeon.

How to Roll

FS3 uses a custom dice system, using 8-sided dice. You roll a number of dice equal to the Attribute rating plus the Skill rating. A die roll of 7 or higher is considered a **Hit**.

In general, a single Hit is sufficient for the roll to succeed, but sometimes it is desirable to get a more fine-grained appraisal of success. In those cases, count the total number of Hits and consult the table below.

Total Hits	Success Level
0	Failure
1	Success
2-3	Good Success
4-5	Great Success
6+	Amazing Success

It is also possible for you to mess up royally. If you get *no Hits* and the number of '1's is *equal to or greater than your Attribute rating*, you have suffered an **Embarrassing Failure**. Usually this means something really bad has happened – not only did you fail, you may have made things worse.

Please bear in mind that even an Amazing Success doesn't mean you solved world hunger or created a silk purse out of a sow's ear. You are still limited by your capabilities.

Example: Zach is rolling Academic (2) + Geography (3). He rolls 5 4 1 1 2. There are no Hits, and the number of 1's (2) is equal to or greater than his Academic attribute. He has suffered an Embarrassing Failure.

Opposed Rolls

When two characters are directly in conflict, you can use an Opposed Roll to determine the outcome. In an Opposed Roll, each character makes an Ability Roll as normal. Whoever gets the most Hits "beats" the other one, though it's still possible for both characters to fail if neither one gets any Hits.

Sometimes it is useful to determine the margin of success – how badly did the winner crush his opponent. If desired, subtract the loser's Hits from the winner's to determine the *net* Hits, and consult the table below.

Net Hits	Margin of Success
0	Draw
1	Marginal Victory
2-3	Solid Victory
4+	Crushing Victory

Example: Bob and Harry are in a shooting competition. They make an opposed roll. Bob gets 2 Hits and Harry gets 3. Harry wins, but only by a little.

Character Creation

This chapter describes the process of making up a Player Character (PC). NPCs are described in the Storyteller's Guide.

The general steps in Character Creation are:

1) Describe your concept.
2) Choose your abilities.
3) Choose your quirks.

Concept

The most important part of a character is the concept. The concept is a short (2-3 sentence) blurb to address the character's occupation, personality and recent backstory. For example:

> *Lieutenant Nikos is a Viper pilot just transferred to the squadron. She lives hard and fast, and with a reverent appreciation for the way of life she has spent her life defending.*

Some games may require you to come up with a more detailed backstory beyond the concept. Some things to consider:

- Family
- Education
- Employment
- Geography (where you've lived and visited)
- Interests
- Beliefs

By touching on some or all of the above points, you can turn a character into a three-dimensional, believable person.

Abilities

The next step in character creation is to choose abilities, including Attributes and Skills. Each character receives a pool of Ability Points to spend on abilities. The Storyteller will determine the size of the pool based on the desired power level and number of abilities.

- Attributes cost 1 point per rating.
  - Remember that you must have at least 1 rating point in every Attribute.
- Action and Background Skills cost 1 point per rating.
  - Choose skills appropriate to your character, as explained below.

o   Games may impose a minimum number of Background Skills required.
- Language Skills cost 2 points per language.

Ability Lists

Each game will have a specific list of Attributes, Action Skills and Language Skills. There is no list for Background Skills; they are free-form so you can choose whatever you want.

Ability Limits

Storytellers may impose limits on how many high abilities you can have, and how many points in Attributes and Action Skills you can have. This is intended to prevent unbalanced characters.

What Skills Should I Pick?

Your character sheet is not meant to be an exhaustive list of everything your character knows. That would be silly. Here is some guidance for what skills to choose:

- Choose any Action or Language Skills that your character would know. They are likely to come up during the course of the game, so take them if they apply.

- Choose Background Skills that are **important** to your character. Just because you played "catch" as a child doesn't mean you need to take the Baseball skill. Take Background Skills to reflect hobbies, interests, education (college major, perhaps), or professional skills not reflected by Action Skills.

- Remember that some things may be considered "common knowledge" based on the game, and you don't need to take skills for those. See Common Knowledge, page 4 for more information.

Choosing Appropriate Skill Levels

Even rating 1 in FS3 represents a fair amount of training and practice in a skill.   Ratings 4 and higher indicate professional level of competence, meaning you could conceivably do it for a living.   It would be rare for someone to have a hobby at higher than rating 3 unless he is a really serious hobbyist!

Quirks

Quirks are little things that make your character unique. They can be physical, social, virtues, vices, or other noteworthy traits. Quirks have no specific game effect. They could provide modifiers to rolls at the Storyteller's discretion, but mostly they are just there to spur roleplay. Be creative!

- The Storyteller may impose a minimum and maximum number of quirks allowed.
- There is no list of quirks; you can choose whatever you want.

Choosing Quirks

Quirks are not for power gaming. "Photographic Memory" and "God's Gift To Women" are too powerful to be quirks, but "Never Forgets a Face" and "Girl In Every Port" are legitimate alternatives.

Quirks just reflect **notable** qualities of your character. What's notable for one character may not be notable for another. Just because someone picks 'Honest' as a quirk does not mean you have to have that quirk to be honest.

Why would you want to pick "negative" quirks? Well, first of all - it's fun to play flawed characters. You can get a lot of roleplay mileage out of them. Also keep in mind that many quirks are two-edged swords, and can work for you or against you depending on the situation.

Experience

At times, the Storyteller may award Experience Points (XP) that can be used to learn new Skills or improve new ones.

Attributes cannot be changed using XP. They reflect aptitudes your character was born with and will only change due to drastic plot developments (disability, genetic manipulation, etc.) at the discretion of the Storyteller.

Quirks are also not affected by XP. Quirks can only be changed through roleplay, at the discretion of the Storyteller.

The following chart shows the cost for improving or learning a skill, based on the current level. The Storyteller may impose additional limitations on how many skills can be raised at once, to prevent someone from saving up a ton of XP and becoming an expert in something overnight.

Current Skill Level	XP Cost For Next Level
0	1
1	2
2	2
3	4
4	4
5	4
6	8
7	8
8	8
9	12
10	12
11	12

Luck

Luck Points are a way of giving player characters an edge against fate. Every character begins the game with 1 Luck Point, and the Storyteller may award more at his discretion.

Ability Rolls

You may spend a single Luck Point to affect Ability Rolls:

- *Before* your own roll, spend a point to receive a +5 modifier.

- *Before* someone else's roll (friend or enemy), spend a point to apply a +5 or -5 modifier to *their* roll.

- *After* your own roll, spend a point to get a re-roll and choose the better of the two rolls.

- Spend a point to cancel a luck point used against you (for example: if someone gave you a modifier you can spend a luck point to avoid it).

Only one Luck Point can apply to a given roll, so you can't give yourself a bonus *and* someone else a penalty in the same Opposed Roll. Also, you can't have multiple people all spending luck to help someone.

Combat

You can spend Luck Points on Ability Rolls made during combat, but luck can also have certain special effects in combat situations. You can spend a Luck Point to:

- Modify attack, defense or initiative Ability Rolls (see Ability Rolls page 14).
  Note: You may only modify one roll per combat turn.

- Recover from a Knockout (see Knockout, page 19).

- Move an injury from one hit location to another.
  Note: This must be done immediately after the injury, and does not affect the damage done; it is purely for cosmetic/roleplay reasons.

Plot Points

You can also spend luck points to affect the outcome of plot points. For example: you might spend a point to have the prosecutor lose key evidence in a trial, or to get a lucky break finding a missing witness. This is entirely at the Storyteller's discretion, and the number of points required will vary based on how much you're pushing your luck.

Combat

Any combat situation could be resolved either through consent or a set of simple Ability Rolls. The only trouble with either of these solutions is that they require a great deal of interpretation. If Harvey shoots Bob, what does he roll? If he gets a good success, what does it mean? If Jane also shoots Bob, how do you fairly determine whether Bob is taken out by the combination of the two wounds?

If combat scenes are a regular occurrence, or if you have combat scenes involving large numbers of players, it helps to have a system to quickly, fairly, and consistently determine the outcome of the combat. The FS3 combat system is intended to fill that need.

Always remember that the purpose of a MUSH is to roleplay. The combat system is designed to support roleplay, not replace it.

Combat Turns

Combat is organized into turns. Turns are not a specific length of time, but generally represent a few seconds. Each turn, a character gets a single action.

- **Attack** – Use a weapon.
- **Aim** – Take careful aim at a target to increase your chance to hit. Aiming with a melee weapon is allowed; it represents sizing up your opponent and waiting for your opening.
- **Suppress** – Fire at a target to "keep their head down". Suppression does no damage, but reduces the target's overall effectiveness in combat. Suppression with a melee weapon is allowed; it represents feints or other distracting moves to keep someone occupied.
- **Reload** – Put in a new clip.
- **Subdue** – You can attempt to subdue another using melee combat. Subduing someone does no damage, but prevents them from taking any action until they execute a successful "Escape" action.
- **Escape** – If you have been subdued, you can attempt to escape during your action.
- **Rally** – You can attempt to rally a knocked out character, giving them a chance at getting back into the fight. This can reflect anything from slapping a lightly-wounded soldier on the face and yelling at him to "snap out of it" to giving a big morale boosting speech to encourage a badly wounded comrade to keep fighting. It does *not* reflect first aid, which is handled by the Treat action.
- **Treat** – Healers can use first aid in combat to tend wounds. If successful, this reduces wound modifiers and may revive a knocked out character.

Additionally, there are "free" actions, which can be done in conjunction with the character's main action. These include:

- Speaking

- Moving
- Drawing or picking up a weapon
- Changing stance (see Stance, page 16)

Order of Actions (Initiative)

Actions within a turn are resolved in order based on an Ability Roll for initiative. The Storyteller will determine which ability is used for initiative, be it an attribute or a skill. The number of Hits determines the order of actions, with higher results going first. In case of ties, choose who goes first at random.

It is important to note that Knockout rolls (see Knockout, page 19) are made **after** all actions have been resolved. This means that a character still gets a chance for a dying gasp even as he's being taken out.

For example: Kid and Jesse are involved in a gunfight. Kid rolls higher on initiative, so he goes first and shoots Jesse. Jesse gets to shoot back, but suffers damage modifiers from Kid's wound. After all the actions are done, Knockout rolls are made and Jesse is taken out.

Stance

As a free action, a character may change their Stance. Stance reflects your general attitude and behavior in the combat. Most stances offer modifiers to attack and defense rolls. See Attack Resolution, page 16 for details.

Stance	Description	Effects
Normal	The default stance.	None
Banzai	An overly offensive, almost reckless stance.	+3 to attack rolls -3 to defense rolls
Evade	Dodging and weaving.	-3 to attack rolls +3 to defense rolls
Cautious	Taking it slow and careful.	-1 to attack rolls +1 to defense rolls
Cover	You are partially behind cover, such as a wall or tree.	Attacks aimed at you have a chance of hitting the cover instead. See Storyteller's Guide for details.

Attack Resolution

Many combat actions result in an "attack" of some sort. The basic steps for resolving an attack are outlined below and described further in subsequent sections:

1.   Determine whether the attack hit, missed, or was dodged.
2.   Determine hit location.
3.   Determine the effect of cover and armor.
4.   Determine damage.

Attack and Defense Rolls

In general, all attacks are resolved using simple ability rolls. The attacker rolls his weapon's attack skill. The defender rolls the *attacker's weapon's* defense skill.

Example: Kelly is stabbing Michael. Even though Michael has a pistol drawn, he defends using the melee combat skill because Kelly's weapon has "melee combat" as its defense skill.

There may be modifiers to either roll based on wounds, the weapon itself, the attacker and defender's stance, or other special situations. A detailed list of modifiers can be found in the Storyteller's Guide.

Use the table below to determine the outcome of the attack based on the result of both the attack and defense rolls.

Roll Result	Outcome
Attack roll fails (no Hits).	Attacker misses completely.
Attacker has **fewer** Hits than defender.	Defender manages to block, dodge, duck, etc. Attack misses.
Attacker has **same or more** Hits than defender. Note: Ties go to the attacker.	Attack hits. Proceed to the next step.

Example: Back to Kelly stabbing Michael. Kelly rolls melee and gets 2 Hits. Michael rolls melee and gets 1 Hit.   Since Kelly's result is greater than Michael's, her attack is successful.

Hit Location

FS3 uses a custom hit location system. Where the attack hit affects damage, determines whether armor applies, and is generally useful for roleplay.

Details of the hit location system can be found in the Storyteller's Guide.

The first step is to figure out where you're aiming. The default assumption is that you're aiming for center of mass. For a human, this is the chest. The better your attack roll, the

closer you'll get to your intended target location. If you don't roll great, you may hit a nearby location or miss completely.

There is no direct modifier for taking a "called shot" in FS3; you just declare that you're aiming for a different body part. However, smaller body parts (like a hand) will require a better roll to hit the desired target location.

The Storyteller designates certain hit locations as "Critical" or "Vital". Hits to critical locations do the most damage, and vital hits do the second most.

Cover and Armor

Both cover and armor have a chance of reducing the damage done by an attack. Details are given in the Storyteller's Guide.

Damage

There are no hit points in FS3. Wounds are tracked individually, but there is an overall Wound Modifier based on all the wounds a character has suffered.   This modifier is applied to all skill rolls while wounded, so the more seriously hurt you are, the less effective you become until finally you are knocked out of the fight.

Damage Levels

There are five severity levels of damage, described below along with examples of what the levels mean for firearms and unarmed damage

Severity	Wound Modifier	Firearms Example	Unarmed Example
Light	-0.25	Just a scratch.	Slight bruise.
Moderate	-0.5	Missed everything important but hurts a lot.	Nice shiner / bloody lip.
Serious	-2	Bleeding badly, possibly nicked a bone or something important.	Broken nose / loose teeth.
Critical	-4	Potentially life-threatening. Organ/artery damage.	Concussion or busted rib.

Wound Modifiers are applied to all ability rolls, and are cumulative (**rounded down**). Thus if you have two Moderate wounds you would suffer a -1 modifier to all rolls.

Wounds that have begun healing or been treated with first aid give only ½ the listed wound modifier. See the Storyteller's Guide for details.

Damage Types

There are two types of damage: Wound and Stun. Wound damage is from things like bullets, knives, car crashes, etc. Stun damage is from fists, tazers, fatigue and other generally non-lethal damage. Stun damage is just as effective as wound damage, but heals much faster

Healing

Wounds heal slowly in FS3. The biggest factor in healing is time, but a character's toughness factors in somewhat, and being under a doctor's care can help. Details can be found in the Storyteller's Guide.

Knockout

There is no death in FS3, except at the Storyteller or player's discretion. The worst result of combat is a knockout, which means you have been taken out of the fight.

At the end of any turn *in which you took damage* **and** your *total Wound Modifier* is 1 or more, you must make a Knockout Roll. This is a simple ability roll using your toughness ability, modified by your total Wound Modifier. The Storyteller will designate which ability is used for toughness, usually an attribute.

If you roll no Hits on your toughness roll, you are knocked out. You can interpret that as being knocked unconscious, killed, writhing in pain, panicked, subdued, or any other appropriate result – as long as you're no longer fighting.