FS3 Player’s Guide

Version 1.0

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# 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
* Generic Conflict Resolution (Ability Rolls)
* Character Improvement (Experience)
* Luck
* Combat

## 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. The core rulebook provides examples for a sci-fi military setting, but 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.

## 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 1-12 scale. All characters will have a rating in every attribute.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rating** | **Attribute Meaning** |
| 1-3 | Poor |
| 4-6 | Average |
| 7-9 | Good |
| 10-12 | 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 will define the list of Action Skills and Languages based on the game setting. There is no fixed list for Background Skills; you can have anything from *Underwater Basket Weaving* to *Soap Opera Trivia*.

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 | Rookie |
| 4-6 | Professional |
| 7-9 | Veteran |
| 10-12 | Expert |

## 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 or a game set in the wilds of Africa.

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’re trying to save someone from drowning, or are in a swimming competition, or trying to stay afloat in stormy seas with your clothes on, an Ability Roll would be appropriate.

## What to Roll

In nearly all cases, you will use a Skill for an Ability Roll. In unusual cases, you may substitute an Attribute. Sometimes there will be a Modifier applied to the skill (see Modifiers, page 5) as explained below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Ability** | **Modifier** | **Example** |
| A skill **directly** related to the task at hand. | 0 | Using Firearms to shoot a gun. |
| A skill **loosely** related to the task at hand. | -30 | Using Veterinary Medicine to treat a gunshot wound on a human. |
| An attribute related to the task at hand **if** the task is considered “common knowledge” (see Common Knowledge, page 4). | 0 | Using the Athletic attribute to run a footrace. |
| None of the above situations apply. Make an Untrained skill roll using a skill rating of 0. | n/a | Trying to perform abdominal surgery with no prior training. |

## Modifiers

Modifiers can be applied to Ability Rolls to increase or decrease your chance of success. A modifier is a simple percentage, so a +20 modifier gives you a 20% greater chance of success.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Situation** | **Modifier** |
| Task is easy. | +30 |
| Task is routine. | 0 |
| Task is hard. | -30 |
| Taking your time / no stress. | +20 |

Note: Easy/Routine/Hard is from the perspective of a typical professional. Brain surgery may be difficult, but it’s routine for a brain surgeon.

## Ruling Attribute

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

The Ruling Attribute applies an automatic Modifier to all Ability Rolls using that skill, as shown in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Ruling Attribute**  **Rating** | **Modifier** |
| 1 | -8 |
| 2 | -6 |
| 3 | -4 |
| 4 | -2 |
| 5 | 0 |
| 6 | +2 |
| 7 | +4 |
| 8 | +6 |
| 9 | +8 |
| 10 | +10 |
| 11 | +12 |
| 12 | +14 |

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.*

## How to Roll

FS3 uses a custom dice mechanic. The chart below helps you determine the Roll Result, which determines success or failure:

1. Roll percentile dice. Note: A roll of ‘00’ should be treated as 100.
2. Add/subtract the Ruling Attribute modifier to the die roll.
3. Add/subtract any other modifiers to the die roll.
4. Find the row in the result table corresponding to the ability rating.
5. Find the entry in the row that includes the modified die roll.
6. Look at the top of the column to determine the roll result.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Roll Result | | | | | |
| Ability  Rating | **-2**  **Terrible**  **Failure** | **-1**  **Bad**  **Failure** | **0**  **Failure** | **1**  **Success** | **2**  **Good**  **Success** | **3**  **Great**  **Success** |
| 0 | 1 – 15 | 16 – 35 | 36 – 65 | 66 – 99 | 100 | n/a |
| 1 | 1 – 20 | 21 – 32 | 33 – 40 | 41 – 88 | 89 – 100 | n/a |
| 2 | 1 – 14 | 15 – 24 | 25 – 35 | 36 – 74 | 75 – 94 | 95 – 100 |
| 3 | 1 – 12 | 13 – 21 | 22 – 30 | 31 – 72 | 73 – 93 | 94 – 100 |
| 4 | 1 – 7 | 8 – 15 | 16 – 25 | 26 – 55 | 56 – 85 | 86 – 100 |
| 5 | 1 – 6 | 7 – 12 | 13 – 20 | 21 – 52 | 53 – 84 | 85 – 100 |
| 6 | 1 – 4 | 5 – 9 | 10 – 15 | 16 – 49 | 50 – 83 | 84 – 100 |
| 7 | 1 – 2 | 3 – 4 | 5 – 10 | 11 – 28 | 29 – 73 | 74 – 100 |
| 8 | 1 | 2 – 3 | 4 – 8 | 9 – 26 | 27 – 63 | 64 – 100 |
| 9 | 1 | 2 – 3 | 4 – 7 | 8 – 25 | 26 – 53 | 54 – 100 |
| 10 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 – 13 | 14 – 42 | 43 – 100 |
| 11 | n/a | 1 | 2 | 3 – 12 | 13 – 31 | 32 – 100 |
| 12 | n/a | n/a | 1 | 2 – 10 | 11 – 20 | 21 - 100 |

## 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. The two roll results are compared using the chart below to determine the overall winner.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Character “A” Roll Result | | | | | |
| Character “B” Roll Result | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| -2 | Both Fail | Both Fail | Both Fail | “A” Wins By A Lot | “A” Wins By A Lot | “A” Wins By A Lot |
| -1 | Both Fail | Both Fail | Both Fail | “A” Wins By A Little | “A” Wins By A Lot | “A” Wins By A Lot |
| 0 | Both Fail | Both Fail | Both Fail | “A” Wins By A Little | “A” Wins By A Little | “A” Wins By A Lot |
| 1 | “B” Wins By A Lot | “B” Wins By A Little | “B” Wins By A Little | DRAW | “A” Wins By A Little | “A” Wins By A Lot |
| 2 | “B” Wins By A Lot | “B” Wins By A Lot | “B” Wins By A Little | “B” Wins By A Little | DRAW | “A” Wins By A Little |
| 3 | “B” Wins By A Lot | “B” Wins By A Lot | “B” Wins By A Lot | “B” Wins By A Little | “B” Wins By A Little | DRAW |

### Opposed Rolls With Common Knowledge

If one character in an Opposed Roll has a relevant skill and the other is substituting an attribute under the Common Knowledge rule (see Common Knowledge, page 4), give the character rolling the skill a +20 modifier. This reflects the fact that the skilled character has an advantage because of his training.

### Opposed Rolls Involving More Than Two Characters

The Opposed Roll chart deals only with two characters, but it’s possible for multiple characters to be in conflict with one another simultaneously. In such cases, you can simply compare the raw Roll Results to determine the overall winner.

# 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 number of points will be determined by the individual game based on their 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.
* Skills cost 1 point per rating.
  + Choose skills appropriate to your character, as explained below.
  + Games may impose a minimum number of Background Skills required.

### 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

Individual games 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 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, special 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 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!

* You must have at least 1 quirk.
* Games may impose a 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. “Perfect 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. Games 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 +50 modifier.
* *Before*someone else’s roll (friend or enemy), spend a point to apply a +50 or -50 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 (like if someone gave you a -50 modifier).

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, even if multiple people spend luck to help/penalize someone, only one point applies.

## 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 15).
* 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 not meant to take the place of roleplay.

## 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. The available actions depend on your weapon and skillset, and are described in more detail in

## Order of Actions (Initiative)

Actions within a turn are resolved in order based on an Ability Roll for initiative. Each game will determine which ability is used for initiative, be it an attribute or a skill. The Roll Result (-2 to +3) determines the order of actions, with higher results going first.

It is important to note that Knockout rolls (see Knockout, page 15) 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.*

## Actions

## 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 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 | -5 | Just a scratch. | Slight bruise. |
| Moderate | -20 | Missed everything important but hurts a lot. | Nice shiner / bloody lip. |
| Serious | -50 | Bleeding badly, possibly nicked a bone or something important. | Broken nose / loose teeth. |
| Critical | -80 | Potentially life-threatening. Organ/artery damage. | Concussion or busted rib. |

Players are expected to roleplay appropriate to the injuries they have taken. Wound Modifiers are applied to all ability rolls, and are cumulative. Thus if you have two Moderate wounds you would suffer a -40 modifier to all rolls.

### 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 (see Healing, page 16).

### Knockout

There is no death in FS3, except at the Storyteller or player’s discretion. The worst result of combat is a knockout. This simply means that you have been knocked out of the fight. 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.

At the end of any turn *in which you took damage*, you must make a Knockout Roll. This is a simple percentage roll, with a modifier based on how tough your character is. If you roll lower than your total Wound Modifier, you are knocked out.

Individual games will determine which ability is used for toughness. The modifier is determined from the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Toughness**  **Rating** | **Knockout Roll Modifier** |
| 1 | -20 |
| 2 | -15 |
| 3 | -10 |
| 4 | -5 |
| 5 | 0 |
| 6 | +5 |
| 7 | +10 |
| 8 | +15 |
| 9 | +20 |
| 10 | +25 |
| 11 | +30 |
| 12 | +35 |

### Healing

Wounds heal slowly in FS3. For a wound to heal down to the next lower level, the character must accumulate a number of Healing Points.

Severity Healing Points Required Average Heal Time (current level) Total Healing Time Light 4 4 days 4 days

Moderate 6 6 days 10 days

Serious 8 8 days 18 days

Critical 12 12 days

Each day, a character can make an ability roll based on their toughness ability. Individual games will determine which ability is used for toughness. This determines how many Healing Points they receive that day.

If the character is in the hospital, he receives additional Healing Points. If he is under the care of a physician (in or out of the hospital), the physician may make an appropriate medicine ability roll to award additional Healing Points based on the table below:

Medicine

TBD