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 (Skill Rolls)
* Combat and Damage
* Character Improvement (Experience)

## 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” may be 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 attributes.

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** exist to 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; they just cover everything else.

Skills are rated on a 1-12 scale. Characters only have ratings in skills they have taken the time to learn and practice. All other skills are considered to be “untrained” (effectively a rating of 0).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rating** | **Skill Meaning** |
| 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. In a modern urban setting, driving a car would be considered common knowledge, but in a game set in the roaring 20’s that would be a more unusual skill.

Exercise common sense when it comes to common knowledge skills. When in doubt, 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. | -15 or -30 depending on how related the skill is | 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). | -20 | Using the Athletic attribute to run a footrace. |
| None of the above situations apply. | n/a – character must make an Untrained skill roll using a skill rating of 0. | Trying to perform abdominal surgery with no prior training. |

## Modifiers

Modifiers are 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 |

## How to Roll

FS3 uses a custom dice system.

# Character Generation

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 Generation are:

1. Describe your concept.
2. Choose your abilities.
   1. Choose attributes.
   2. Choose action skills.
   3. Choose background skills.
   4. Choose language skills.
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.

You can flesh out your character even further by coming up with a more detailed backstory beyond the concept. Some things to consider:

**Family** – Describe your family. What do they do? How you get along with them? Who you turn to when the chips are down?

**Education** – Consider where you were educated. Did you attend university? What was your major? Did you have any non-traditional schooling?

For military characters, bear in mind that admission to modern military academies is often highly competitive, and requires the character to serve several years in the military upon graduation.

For doctors, bear in mind that becoming a full-fledged doctor can take anywhere from 10-14 years depending on specialty (counting university, medical school, and residency).

**Employment** – What do you do for a living? What are your career goals? Is that the only job you’ve ever had, or were there others? Part-time work done during teen/college years can often be good fodder for background details.

**Geography** – Where have you lived? Why did you move there? What about places you’ve visited?

**Interests** – What do you do in your spare time? Do you have hobbies? A favorite sports team? A type of novel you like to read? A favorite video game or TV show?

**Beliefs** - What do you believe in, and perhaps more importantly - why? Are you religious? Political? Would you ever steal? Kill? Lie under oath?

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